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CREATURE COMFORTS: THE EXCHANGE AND CONSUMPTION OF SUGAR, TOBACCO, AND OTHER EVERYDAY STIMULANTS DURING THE GREAT WAR

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Abstract

This project explores the mobilization efforts undertaken during the First World War in their broadest sense. No war to date required nor mobilized the amount of *materiél* that was consumed from 1914-1918. These efforts included not only the physical organization and deployment of men and supplies. Recent scholarship has shown that morale was also mobilized and remobilized during the war. This study focuses on where these efforts converge: the use of everyday psychoactive stimulants and their effects on morale at the front, and the economic mobilization of these goods and industries *en masse*. As such, this project highlights the importance of a variety of agricultural products that are quite unnecessary to human subsistence, but have nonetheless come to be considered indispensable from everyday consumption. These ordinary goods include sugar, tobacco, coffee, tea, as well as alcoholic beverages. This work analyzes how the British and German armies were supplied with and obtained these stimulants, and the role these seemingly mundane comforts played in soldiers' daily lives, emphasizing how they influenced the mediation of relationships amongst the men at the various fronts.

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GERMAN ENGINEERS IN CAMP

Introduction

The campfire roars, smoke billowing into the surrounding countryside. One soldier stokes the blaze, while another steadies the pot containing the group's afternoon meal. Nearby another pair relaxes, calmly reading and exhibiting little care to the events beyond the pages they are so engrossed in. To their immediate left, another duo is engaged in some sort of intimate exchange, either the sharing of text or parcel: the photograph does not make it clear. To the viewer's left, one sees three men doing some laundry. One from this trio coolly has a cigarette hanging from his lip as he goes about his business. Just to the fore, three are peeling potatoes, undoubtedly for the meal ahead. Two of them are also enjoying a smoke, taking a break from the monotonous work of combat. On the opposite side of the group's makeshift stove, one German shares a drink with a comrade. Whether it is wine or beer, it makes little difference. Both appear to be relishing the afternoon, comfortably resting on the grass. In the background one sees two more groups wrapped up in conversation. For the pair on the viewer's far right, this dialogue presumably related directly to the war itself. Only one member from this unit of German engineers appears disengaged, choosing to observe the surrounding events much like the photograph's viewers.[1]

This bucolic scene is not what one would typically associate with the combat experience of World War I. One instead expects to see images of mud, blood and mechanized mass death; rats the size of small dogs feeding on rotting flesh; and barbed

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[1] "German Engineers at Camp" Photos of the Great War, World War I Gallery. <http://www.gwpda.org/photos/coppermine/index.php?pos=-1765> Accessed February 22, 2010.

wire entanglements separating the warring trench lines, with nothing but the horrors of No-Man's Land dividing the German and the Entente forces. Those exist too. However, soldiers' daily experiences were far more complex than this monolithic perception suggests. Considering the nature of the industrial conflagration that enveloped the Western Front and replicated around the globe, such moments of respite, no matter how brief, were fundamental to maintaining soldier morale. Scholars have long recognized this trend, both in the *longue duree* of warfare as well as within the specific context of the First World War. What is more, scenes like the one described above were just as prevalent as those images commonly associated with the front line.

The First World War has often been posited as one of, if not the most absurd human debacle in history. George F. Kennan famously called it the "seminal catastrophe" of the twentieth century. Sir John Keegan began his survey of the conflict by proclaiming that, "The First World War was a tragic and unnecessary conflict."[2] Paul Fussell, in his influential study on the war went a step further, arguing that all wars are absurd and "ironic because every war is worse than expected," in that "[e]very war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends."[3] However, he asserted that, "the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century."[4] Fussell even went so far as to

[2] John Keegan, *The First World War*. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998), 3.
[3] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.
[4] Ibid, 8.

say that the war "reversed the Idea of Progress."[5] Recent monographs on the war have echoed such notions. Geoffrey Wawro's *A Mad Catastrophe* combines both the supposed craziness and the cataclysm of the war in three short words.[6] This is but one of several works that has recently been published, incidentally on the eve of the centenary, that have channeled such enduring perceptions.[7]

Fortunately there is a prevailing perspective within the field of First World War studies that underscores the nuances of the conflict, combat motivations, and other comparable themes. Many of the resulting analyses are inspired by interrelated questions about endurance, mobilization, and the maintenance of morale. As this scholarship has shown, the national military efforts that were undertaken were not merely confined to the physical organization and deployment of men and supplies. In fact, these studies have demonstrated how morale was likewise mobilized, and remobilized over the course of the conflict. One byproduct of such inquiry has been an increased academic interest in soldiers' daily routines. The resulting works have led to a sharpened understanding of the everyday experience of the combat soldier and how distinctive front cultures developed. This cohort culture that emerged out of these combat experiences included patterns of consumption, shared enjoyment, consolation, inebriation, socialization and gift exchange.

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Geoffrey Wawro. *A Mad Catastrophe: The Outbreak of World War I and the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire.* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014).
[7] Another telling example is Margaret MacMillian's *The War that Ended Peace: The Road to 1914*, which taps into the commonly held idea that the century following the defeat of Napoleon was an era of unprecedented perpetual peace. This perception unfortunately obscures the incredible violence that was a central feature of European imperial expansion, the social unrest of the period, the multiple wars for national unification, and the like.

This study focuses on where these efforts converged: the use of everyday stimulants and their effects on soldier morale at the front. As such, this project highlights the importance of a variety of agricultural products that are quite unnecessary to human subsistence, but have nonetheless come to be considered indispensable from everyday consumption. These commonplace luxury items include: sugar and sugar based goods; tobacco products like cigars and cigarettes; caffeinated beverages such as tea and coffee; as well as a host of alcoholic beverages.

In the chapters that follow, I hope to provide further insight into why soldiers largely chose to endure the horrors of war. I argue that the psychoactive, everyday stimulants that were routinely consumed were a key component in how British and German soldiers mediated their daily experiences with the conflict. These seemingly mundane products served a variety of purposes for soldiers at the front. On the one hand, they could provide soldiers with a break from the monotony of the 'work' of industrial war, and the mass-produced rations that were part-and-parcel of soldiering. What is more, these goods were used to both physically and psychologically manipulate the body. Equally as important, these products were employed by soldiers to mediate their relationships. At its core, this study is about the dynamics of human relationships during times of war. By analyzing soldiers' interactions through the medium of everyday stimulants, we are granted a unique perspective into how soldiers fostered their relationships with their peers, superiors, loved-ones, friends and acquaintances, and local populations near the front. In the process, soldiers turned to both familiar and newly learned modes of escape in an attempt to endure the strains of combat.

Soldiers' use of everyday stimulants during war was not a new phenomenon that developed during World War I. A recent *New York Times* article proclaimed to illustrate "How coffee fueled the [U.S.] Civil War."[8] In this brief survey, Jon Grinspan notes how Union soldiers were issued "roughly 36 pounds" of the caffeinated commodity each year.[9] There are sources that indeed corroborate the widespread use of coffee. Alfred C. Willett, who served with the 113th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, scribbled in a letter home in January 1862 how he and his unit "live very fashionable," as they "have Crackers [*sic*] all the time now and coffee three times a day."[10] Later that month, Willett noted again how his unit "git [*sic*] plenty of crackers and bacon and some times [*sic*] beef and all the coffee we want."[11]

Still in an era before the physiological effects of caffeine were known, some soldiers reportedly found a "wonderful stimulant in a cup of coffee," while others allegedly considered it a "nerve tonic."[12] Alluding to socio-cultural shifts above the Mason-Dixon Line prior to the war, Grinspan contends that, "coffee was emblematic of the new Northern order of fast-paced wage labor."[13] Nonetheless, most soldiers purportedly found coffee to be "simply delicious" and "soothing," and as such, a phenomenal way to rest following a long march.[14] Indeed, many European soldiers employed comparable stimulant comforts prior to the 1860s and up to August 1914.

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[8] Jon Grinspan, "How Coffee Fueled the Civil War," *The New York Times*, 9 July 2014.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Charles E. Willett, ed., *A Union Soldier Returns South: The Civil War Letters and Diary of Alfred C. Willett, 113th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*, (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1994), 12.
[11] Ibid, 13.
[12] Grinspan, "How Coffee Fueled the Civil War."
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

With this in mind, what makes soldiers' use of everyday stimulants during World War I a unique historical experience, in both the history of Western Civilization and military history?

What makes the First World War, and all of its component parts a unique historical event is inextricably linked to how the conflict reflected modern European society at the dawn of the twentieth century. Two of the defining themes of this modern society were speed and mass, and their interrelationship with one another. The introduction of the internal combustion engine, telegraphy, advances in food preservation and production techniques, and countless other innovations converged to create what John Terraine has called the "sinews of war."[15] The experience of the First World War encapsulates the struggle of Europe's modern, imperial societies attempt to harness these phenomena through the complete national and imperial mobilization of all available resources in the pursuit of national defense.

The result of these efforts can be arguably labeled the "First Industrial Revolution War."[16] Obvious examples can be drawn from armaments production, military and commercial logistics, and the mass production of munitions, equipment, and foodstuffs. These trends have been at the center of specific studies on the evolution of the armaments industry prior to the conflagration, and most agree that the sheer scale of devastation wrought during the war would have been impossible without the industrialized weapons and cold war style arms race that predated the so-called July Crisis. Additionally, the

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[15] John Terraine, "The Substance of War," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle, ed., Kindle Edition, (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), Loc. 551 of 23271.
[16] Ibid, Loc. 371 of 23271.

relative speed of transport that was used to shuttle men and materiel across vast distances has been credited to the massive scale of the conflict. True, this was used to some effect in the U.S. Civil War, and arguably more famously during the Franco-Prussian war. However, while in many ways still primitive, without these base advances in transportation technologies, it would have been impossible to mobilize and deploy the size of the armies and armaments that were sent around the globe.

Even the trenches of the Western Front, so ubiquitous in Western popular memory, reflect the realities of speed and mass and how these two phenomena could often collide with one another. Digging trenches had been a staple in the execution of military operations long before the stalemate that has become synonymous with the years 14-18. Trenches were used in response to the devastating effect of machine gun fire during the Russo-Japanese war, and had been relied upon in previous wars as well. As Michael Neiburg has rightly observed, digging trenches is first and foremost a survival mechanism employed by soldiers. And while not commonly associated with the war on the vast Eastern Front, the combatant armies deployed to this theater also routinely utilized trenches. Once again, what made this experience particularly unique was the amalgam of speed and mass, coalescing with technological and intellectual evolutions in mobile and siege warfare. Under the circumstances, the sheer quantity of men and materiel ground down any relative speed needed for advance and breakthrough.

One area where the dual phenomena of mass and speed have been underappreciated in the field of First World War studies, and arguably the *longue duree* of military history at large, is in the realm of food production. The ability to feed the

millions of soldiers fielded by the war's belligerents was a prerequisite for the scale of conflict that raged. Prior to 1914 many aspects of food production had undergone some form of mechanization and industrialization, and as we will see, this was perhaps no truer than in the production of everyday stimulants.

A sample of the monetary value of charitable donations acquired by the Dresden War Association for 196 Saxon army field formations for the Christmas 1915 holiday provides a snapshot of the scale of comforts deemed necessary for the nearly 44,850 men in the field.[17] In total 204,867.67 Deutschmarks worth of comforts were acquired.[18] This included: 20,0258.12 Marks worth of tobacco products, 18,111 Marks worth of wine and cognac, 8,953.95 Marks worth of chocolate and sugar, and 8,998 Marks worth of *Pfefferkuchen*.[19] All one needs to do is replicate this instance several times over to get a sense of how massive this war was. This was a conflict of unprecedented scale that required the mobilization of unheard amounts of *materiél* from all corners of society.

The attempt to harness speed was likewise reflected on the battlefield in a variety of ways. On the one hand, speed equated to how fast men and supplies could be transported to and from the front. This could and indeed did vary, depending upon military necessity and availability, never mind geographical distance, weather, and other myriad impositions. Under the circumstances, the delivery of mail, rations, and other such items could be delayed. Additionally, these trends were reflected in the consumer habits and leisure rituals of the period. One germane example that will be explored in

[17] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben," Nr. 184.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

more detail in later chapters is the shift from pipe and cigar consumption to cigarettes, which can be partially attributed to the relative short time frame that one can consume this stimulant in.

In order to maximize mobilization, the combatant nations increased their control on all sectors of society. As some scholars have noted, power was often gladly relinquished to the power of the state as part of the perceived need for national defense and survival.[20] At the beginning of the twentieth century one can see an increase in state intervention in societal affairs, and the war certainly accelerated this trend. This movement trickled to all segments of society, including the procurement and distribution of foodstuffs, which often included the commonplace luxuries and stimulants under examination.

There were certain societal factors that also made World War I a unique socio-military experience. One of the oft-criticized elements of industrialization, not to mention anxiety-inducing features, has been the depersonalization that was a central feature of this process. These fears were comically portrayed in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, and later in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, to name but two celluloid examples. New fields of inquiry, such as sociology, psychology, and scientific management prompted societies to try and solve local and national problems. One of the central problems Europeans tried to solve was how to better achieve individual and collective efficiency. These motifs were

[20] For one such example, see Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Soceity in Modern Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

transplanted to military operations as the provision of foodstuffs to the soldiers at the front needed to be both efficient while providing caloric sustenance.

There are certain, one might say timeless, elements that can be found in all wars. Of particular importance here are those commonalities found amongst soldiers and their cohort behaviors. Often associated with the so-called war poets of World War I, feelings of disillusionment and indifference were but a handful in a gamut of emotions and feelings soldiers had to cope with. Additionally, all soldiers—past and present—carry the expectation that their basic needs will be adequately met as part of the social contract between soldier and superior. The difference, arguably, lies in how basic needs are defined and tended to.

Equally timeless is the soldier's preoccupation with foodstuffs and comforts. This is reflected in a diary entry Reverend Oswin Creighton C.F. penned in early 1917 during the Battle of Arras, as he contemplated the primacy that consumables played in the daily life of soldiers at war. "It is really extraordinary the part played by the stomach in life," the Reverend noted.[21] "It simply rules the world," he professed, "and affects all our outlook on life. We are paralysed [*sic*], absorbed, by it."[22] Dwelling on food, drink, and smoke was such a pervasive pastime amongst soldiers, Creighton observed, that "[t]he chief topic of conversation is rations with the men, and food and wine with the officers."[23] The reverend lamented that "Man shall not live by bread alone," however it was food and other ingestible accoutrements that dominated every aspect of the soldiers'

[21] Laurence Housman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen*, (Philadelphia, PA: Pine Street Books, 2002), 79.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

experience.[24] Creighton even resorted to holding his services in the local canteens, however that idea allegedly backfired. Prior to the service, the reverend noted, "Men pour into my canteens and buy everything up."[25] However, "The men filed out when it began and were back again for cocoa when it was over."[26] Ultimately, the good reverend capitulated, recognizing that the "Men do not want to think or learn."[27] In short, he concluded, combat soldiers are merely "weary, sodden, patient, hungry, cheerful, good-natured animals…"[28]

The war itself has often been posited in either-or dynamics, both within popular culture and the historiographical canon. The most obvious debate centers on the purpose of the war and its perceived negligible results, as previously highlighted. Revisionist scholars have tried to remedy this perspective, demonstrating how states and citizens felt the need for national and imperial defense, both real and imagined. The soldiers' experiences themselves have likewise found themselves lumped into comparable either-or dichotomies. For those that have relied upon the experiences of the so-called "war poets" and the upper classes, the war has often been portrayed as a tragic burden, with industrial combat crushing a bygone era of innocence.[29] Such an approach can and has been used to buttress the absurd war mythos. On the other hand, those that opt to rely more heavily on sources detailing the experiences of the working class argue that modern European

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] For two premier examples of this approach, see: John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); and Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

society was actually far more equipped to handle to horrors of the front than typically acknowledged.[30]

The fact of the matter is that these sorts of comparisons obscure the nuances that made up both individual and collective experience. Part of the problem with historicizing the individual soldier's experience during the First World War lies in the fact that millions of civilian males served, on both sides of the battlefield. Within each army one could serve in a wide array of units, including the infantry, artillery, engineers, logistics, and countless other roles—each of which could easily bring entirely different experiences. This is not to mention the role of geography in the different theaters of operations. As such, can a truly representative consensus of soldiers' experiences ever be reached?

Another central debate in the field of First World War studies has centered on soldiers' or given groups of soldiers' proclivity towards coping with the strains of faced at the various fronts. For instance, some have argued that the working classes tended to be remarkably resilient in the face of mechanized mass death because of their exposure to such conditions in civilian society prior to the war. Others have argued that this glib perspective trivializes the strains and horrors that these soldiers had to endure at the front. This either-or approach can obfuscate the fact that the daily experience of war often intensified societal burdens, and the anxiety, fear, boredom, surveillance, and increased adherence to constructs of time that had emerged as common features of modern, industrialized society. In this vein, it should come as no surprise that the

[30] One such example from the British perspective can be seen in Adrian Gregory's *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

soldiers of the front turned to familiar methods, rituals, and products to mediate these experiences.

Soldiers found enjoyment in a variety of sources that helped them disengage from the realities and strains of combat. Similar to the ubiquitous references to everyday stimulants, soldiers' letters, diaries, and memoirs contain numerous references to the enjoyment found in a change of weather, birds singing, playing sports, reading, and other leisure activities. As we will see, what makes the consumption and exchange of everyday stimulants a unique element of the soldier's experience is the dual role that these products played physiologically and emotionally.

Another debate that has emerged in the field of First World War studies has centered on whether the war marked a caesura from all prior experience, or merely accelerated societal changes that had already begun. The study of the place of everyday stimulants in soldiers' experiences shows how it was simultaneously both. In some cases the consumer experience of the war reinforced, and therefore further cemented some of Europeans' preexisting behavioral and consumption patterns. Sugar consumption in England is one example of this. However, there were other habits that were formed that evolved from preexisting modes of consumption, and as such, accelerated the expansion of such practices. The widespread expansion of cigarette consumption is the preeminent example of this phenomenon.

World War I as a Reflection of Civil Society:

Tammy Proctor has recently noted that war "blurs" the boundaries of what constitutes a soldier and a civilian, and broaches the fluidity of identity that typically results.[31] Proctor also observes that the militaries of Europe were simultaneously "professionalizing and shedding their rough image of the past," in the process "becoming both more and less civilian."[32] The result was that common civilian mores and consumer patterns became a permanent part of military life. Reinforcing this trend, she contends, was the fact that citizen soldiers were "eager to retain their civilian identities."[33] As we will see, the practice and perpetuation of civilian consumer rituals were one way soldiers were able to achieve this.

John Horne observes that the Western European belligerents put "great emphasis" on morale.[34] Indeed, the major combatants had "to keep mobilizing their soldiers' will to continue" to fight.[35] The supply of everyday stimulants is but one manifestation of this need. Horne also illustrates how "the plans and projects of the state… sought to stimulate and control 'opinion' and 'morale,'" both at home and at the various fighting fronts.[36] His word choice may seem innocuous enough, but the idea of "stimulating" opinion, in light of the topic at hand, merits at minimum a momentary pause. Indeed, all used these products to "stimulate" morale on a daily basis during the war.

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[31] Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918*, Kindle Edition, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 3.
[32] Ibid, 5.
[33] Ibid, 14.
[34] John Horne, ed., *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.
[35] Ibid, 5.
[36] Ibid.

In regards to the British Army, Ian Beckett has noted that because the vast majority of "servicemen were civilians first and foremost," this "was a significant factor both in maintaining the army's morale during the war during the war and in preventing any large scale post-war revolutionary unrest."[37] What is more, Beckett argues, as does Adrian Gregory and others, "Subordination and tedium were commonplace in British industrial society, while popular culture made light of hardship and enabled men to normalize their emotions under stress."[38] Beckett also underscores how "the mass export of British popular culture and the civilian pattern of recreation that resulted" contributed directly to British morale, and is a trait that made it unique in comparison to other European belligerents.[39] The familiar ritualized consumption of creature comforts was one such manifestation.

Gary Sheffield explains that "The working-class soldier's previous experience as a civilian prepared him for the army," in that the said individual was often found "used to subordination and tedium, tow of the principal features of military life."[40] As Sheffield highlights, "the nuances of military society were not dissimilar from those of wider society, which was divided by economic and cultural factors into a number of mutually exclusive groups." Additionally, As Sarah Cole has observed, the influence of the Public School ethos placed particular "emphasis on individual submission to group loyalty, privileging the idea of affiliation higher than personal comfort or desire."[41] Under such a framework, it should come as no surprise that soldiers brought familiar modes of escape

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[37] Ian Beckett, *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, Kindle Edition, (South Yorkshire, U.K.: Pen and Sword Books, 2004), Loc. 597 of 7960.
[38] Ibid; and Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War*.
[39] Beckett, *A Nation in Arms,* Loc. 597 of 7960.
[40] Gary Sheffield. *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War*, (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 70.
[41] Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 146.

and ritual from their civilian lives to the trenches, including the consumption and exchange of creature comforts.

Martin van Creveld has summarized European society prior to 1914 as having evolved from "what had for millennia been essentially agricultural societies" to being "metamorphosed into fully industrialized ones."[42] Germany had increased industrial output by 200 percent between the time of unification and the outbreak of war, and Britain had even increased by 60 percent.[43] In particular, the expansion of electrical and chemical industries in Germany prompted not only exponential industrial growth, but also accelerated migration from the agrarian countryside to the urban cities. As Volker Ulrich has noted, the German Reich at the time of its founding had only eight cities with a population of over 100,000.[44] Forty years later this number had skyrocketed to 48.[45] In terms of national population, from 1871 through 1910 the total number of Germans living in cities increased from 11 to 37 percent.[46] By 1914 this had increased yet again to some fifty percent, marking the most rapid change in urbanization in Europe.[47]

By the outbreak of war, Germany had recently undergone a period of unprecedented industrialization. However, as Steven Broadberry and Mark Harrison note, "its modernization was highly unbalanced."[48] "But perhaps the most obvious sign of Germany's relative backwardness," they point out "was the high share of the labour force engaged in low-productivity agriculture." Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich

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[42] Martin van Creveld, *Command in War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 268.
[43] Ibid, 148.
[44] Volker Ulrich, *Die Nervöse Großmacht 1871-1918: Aufstieg und Untergang des Deutschen Kaiserreichs*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Tachenbuch Verlag, 2007), 138.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, eds., *The Economics of World War I*, Kindle Edition, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Loc. 613 of 7625.

even go as far as to argue that the war itself did not begin as an industrial war, but evolved into one.[49] To support this view, they argue that industrialization only occurred after all cottage industries merged; providing the example of gun manufacturing, which some 60 percent was done privately in small firms prior to the war, as a case in point.[50]

Regarding notions of comradeship, Robert Nelson has argued that in the case of the German army because of the military reality that resulted from the physical occupation of foreign lands, there was a need to imagine oneself and one's comrades "as honest, dutiful, loyal, hard-working, comradely gentlemen."[51] Further justifying the need for such imagery and ideal, he notes, lies in the fact that regionalism was a persistent problem in the adolescent Reich.[52] While one often speaks of a unified "German" army, the fact remains that the *Kaiserreich* was still very much an infant state, and regional differences persisted, with Saxon, Bavarian, and Prussian identities remaining strong. Such differences were so pronounced that the British and Commonwealth forces often commented on this. Although regional differences were present in some of the British units, this was in no way nearly as pronounced as they were amongst the "German" ranks.

One commonality that all soldiers shared, regardless what side of the battlefield they were on, was that "virtually all looked for a mixture of justification and escapism."[53] Robert Nelson claims that trench newspapers fulfilled this dual need amongst German

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[49] Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich, *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2013), 189.
[50] Ibid, 191.
[51] Robert L. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 152.
[52] Ibid, 239.
[53] Ibid, 4.

soldiers, however this can be equally applied to both their British counterparts as well as in creature comforts. Regarding the latter, these items could symbolize the justification for war in myriad ways, ranging from the subtle reminders of home and hence what one was defending, to the social contract between soldiers and the state.

There are many ways in which the use of everyday stimulants amongst the British and German soldiers highlights the fundamental differences in each of these armies. Primarily, Great Britain had far superior access to many of the stimulants consumed, and this only increased during the war as a dual result of the Blockade and concamitant diminishing supplies in Germany. While there were shortages in Britain during the war, civilians and soldiers never faced the same deprivations that forced the German government to incorporate en masse the use of *Ersatz* and *Surrogaten* products. Scholars have demonstrated that economic mobilization in Germany was a "dismal failure," as the economy "flatlined at 20 to 25 percent below" its prewar output.[54] As Steven Broadberry and Mark Harrison point out, "The one thing that could not be overcome was a deficit of resources.[55] What is more, while the increasingly militarized German state sought to provide for the wellbeing of the armies in the field, it did so to the detriment of the civilian populace at home. As such, this paradoxically reduced trust in the German state from both sides, culminating in the 1918 November Revolutions.

While there are many differences between the warring armies, and the states from which they came, there are some elemental similarities that are evident in the mass of soldiers' writings that have survived. As a general rule, soldiers on either side of the front

[54] Broadberry and Harrison, *Economics of World War I*, Loc. 472 of 7625.
[55] Ibid.

tended to live in the "here and now," as they faced their potential deaths. As such, these men employed familiar and comparable routines to endure the strains of industrialized war, although the individual objects used in these rituals could and indeed did differ.

As we will see, the soldiers who went off to fight in the First World War by and large had preconceived expectations of what they should be provided given their sacrifice for the defense of the nation. This social contract existed on multiple levels: between soldiers and the military hierarchy, between soldiers and the home front, and even between the soldiers themselves. What makes creature comforts unique is that while nutritionally unnecessary to human subsistence, these goods had become indispensable from everyday consumption precisely because of their dual psychoactive and social symbolic value. The provisioning of these goods communicated to soldiers that they were being looked after, were not forgotten, and a host of other meanings.

Commonplace Luxuries, Everyday Stimulants, and *Genussmittel*: A Note about Terminology

In this study I use four terms rather interchangeably, and at times in some compound form. As the title suggests, this analysis focuses on the role of creature comforts. However many other items, edible or not, can fall into this category. I likewise use the phrase consumable luxury; however I have found this to be problematic because of the fluidity and subjectivity inherent in how it is defined. Under the circumstances of war, what constituted a commonplace luxury certainly could vary both from soldier to soldier, and could likewise be influenced by whatever situation they may have found

themselves in. Although there are countless references to commonplace luxuries in soldiers' writings, it should be noted that these men experienced cycles of both want and plenty. These items, furthermore, were not only subjectively defined, but also culturally defined. What is more, as new habits were learned, the notion of what constituted luxury consumables versus requisite needs similarly evolved.

I also use the German term *Genussmittel* because it underscores the enjoyment factor inherent in both the act of consumption and any perceived pleasurable benefit bestowed upon it. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has critiqued this word and concept because it does not inherently suggest the physiological and psychoactive component typically found in these commodities.[56] However, an inverse critique can be levied against the term everyday stimulant, as this phrase does not account for the enjoyment that is often central to the consumption process of the goods. The idea of semi-luxury is also problematic, as it connotes more widespread availability. Indeed, access to these products, especially amongst soldiers deployed, could be at times quite limited. Under such conditions, these goods could be valued as outright luxury items.

Soldiers' expectations and the dynamic nature of the reality they found themselves in on a day-to-day basis were reflected in the medium of everyday stimulants. Over the course of the war, there was also a constant process by which soldiers reconceived and continually (re)imagined what sustenance foodstuffs and *Genussmittel* were and could be, and how sustenance foods vis-à-vis *Genussmittel* were defined. As

[56] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993), xiii.

such, even a loaf of bread (which could contain sugar), could become an enjoyment to a soldier at any moment in time, especially when supplies and access became limited due to shortages, price fluctuations, and other limiting factors. On this note, how individuals chose to define what was nutritionally necessary versus what the governments and military authorities deemed were nutritionally necessary, as opposed to merely being a commonplace luxury, could differ and vary indeed.

One can see discursive ebb and flow present in soldiers' discussions about everyday stimulants during the war. Much of this was dictated by what was available to a given soldier—or group of soldiers—at any given time. What is more, this is one key area where the differences between the multiple theaters of operations become most evident. The Western Front fell in a region of Europe that was either directly on or within proximity of heavy industrialization and farming. Despite the destruction wrought over the region, this paled in comparison to the damage inflicted upon the Eastern Front. Compounding matters in this theater was the complete lack of modern infrastructure, which was exacerbated by the Russian military's slash and burn tactics. This not only affected what resources could be obtained or directly extracted (for both sustenance and *Genussmittel*), but also logistics, military operations, and occupational policies. One can make comparable claims about the British experience in Salonika and Mesopotamia. In each of these cases, the foreign nature of the foodstuffs experienced in these theaters was exacerbated by geographically imposed strains on supply.

Chapters at a Glance:

This project examines the role of everyday stimulants in the daily lives of British and German soldiers in six demarcated ways. The first chapter will explore the physiological effects that psychoactive everyday stimulants held, as well as their psychological value amongst soldiers at the front. As such, the psychoactive effects that these products produce in the human body will be surveyed. Fundamentally these products provided soldiers with a quick and efficient way to mediate their experiences with the war. As we will see, the employment of these products could and many times did echo pre-war societal norms. Central to this discussion is how soldiers strove to replicate previous modes of consumption at the front in order to create a sense of normalcy in an otherwise chaotic and unpredictable world. Within this framework, the physiological ways in which these products were both used, and advertised how they could be used, prior to and during the war will be examined. Through using insights from historian Alf Lüdtke, we will explore how soldiers translated such practices to battlefield conditions, culminating in what was perceived as a break from the work of industrial war.

The primary focus throughout this study will be on sugar-based goods and tobacco products. Both of these are exotic, plant-based products that had previously undergone the technological shift to mechanized mass production prior to 1914. The result was a highly synthesized and concentrated version of each plant, which was then marketed and sold beyond the realm of luxury item to conspicuously consumed mass stimulant. Adding to the appeal of these commodities is the power they purportedly held in alleviating a host of ailments. For instance, prior to the war sugar had been touted

as being a legitimate source of energy, and as such, a bulwark against fatigue. Tobacco, on the other hand, was perceived as being able to quell nervousness. Both of these scourges were common preoccupations in European society at the dawn of the twentieth century, and any remedies that could resolve these individual and societal issues were quite welcome.

The second chapter examines the social and cultural ways that soldiers used everyday stimulants to mediate their relationships with their peers at the front. At the core of this analysis are the insights from the field of social anthropology on gift exchange, the communicative and symbolic value that commonplace objects can hold, and the theatricality and performance found within daily public interaction. As will be demonstrated, soldiers employed the sharing of creature comforts as a form of "social shorthand" to communicate a wide range of basic ideas, such as "I am a good comrade," "I can be relied upon," "I acknowledge your sacrifice," "I am friendly," and so on.[57] This chapter will not only consider how these goods were used to foster bonds of comradeship and friendship, but also how these objects could potentially strain relationships and thus adversely affect morale.

In addition, this chapter aims to highlight how soldiers taught their fellow comrades these behaviors of exchange and consumption at the front. Part of this process was rooted in the pre-established patterns that many brought with them from civilian life to the front. Through the process of intermingling and socialization, soldiers invariably

[57] Sara Haslam, "A Literary Intervention: Writing Alcohol in British Literature 1915-1930," *First World War Studies*, Volume 4, Issue 2, 2013. Haslam uses the term "social shorthand" to describe how the sharing of alcoholic beverages were used by soldiers to communicate comradely intentions, however this can be readily applied to all such *Genussmittel*.

learned and developed new habits, many of which the survivors would carry into the post-war era, thus altering societal consumption and exchange patterns at large. What is more, this phenomenon has implications beyond the simple sharing of stimulants. After all, if one could be taught the practice, with all of its inherent symbolism and anthropological value, of sharing a cigarette, could not one just as well be taught how to kill?

Chapter three shifts our focus to the various means by which soldiers were able to acquire these goods, setting the format for the remainder of this study. The primary mode of acquisition was naturally from the military itself, either in the form of rations or through military run canteens and casinos. As scholars have often recognized, the primary concern for these large, industrialized armies was efficiency. While true, both British and German military authorities went to great lengths to acquire and provide everyday stimulants to soldiers. On the one hand, the supply of many of these products was justified by any previously preconceived physiological benefit. Secondly, it was recognized that providing familiar modes of comfort could help to bolster soldier morale, which in turn fostered unit cohesion and helped to net efficiency. This is evident in a range of sources, including military cookbooks and the studies and inquiries conducted by military leaders and advisors. In other cases historical precedent was used to justify the provision of certain comforts, as exemplified by the British rum ration.

Fundamentally, the provisioning of these goods could serve to communicate to soldiers that their efforts did not go unnoticed. As such, the insights provided from the field of social anthropology on the symbolism behind gift exchange are relevant here.

While a phenomenon that Gary Sheffield has used to analyze the relationship between the officer corps and the rank and file in the British army, he would be the first to admit that some notion of a "deferential agreement" existed on both sides of the field of battle. There was the expectation amongst the soldiers that their commanding officers and the militaries themselves would provide not only pay and basic rations, but also the everyday stimulants they had become accustomed to in civilian life. Part of this expectation was rooted in the deferential agreement, which is in essence an unspoken social contract that centered on the understanding that in return for loyal service the military hierarchy would look after the well being of their soldiers.

The fourth chapter explores the role that the home-front played in supplying everyday stimulants and commonplace luxuries to the soldiers at the front. These gifts from home often augmented what soldiers received either from their respective militaries or locally. Keeping very much in tune with the motifs propagated during the war, these products were used by those at home to demonstrate their appreciation for the sacrifice soldiers were making on their behalf. Under the circumstances, these goods not only served as a symbol of gratitude, but also gave soldiers a means by which to remember "better" times at home. In fact, such seemingly simple reminders could even serve as a reminder of why they were fighting in the first place.

Over the course of the conflict, many soldiers expressed a certain degree of expectation for such comforts to be sent from loved ones to the front, especially if the financial means were available to do so. This reflected a form of social contract as well, this one bound between the soldiers and the citizens they vowed to defend. However,

soldiers were equally cognizant of any sacrifice that loved-ones and acquaintances may be making by foregoing some rationed item to send such a gift to them up the line. As such, if a given soldier could obtain a comparable item fairly easily and/or at a reasonable cost to him locally, he would instruct his loved ones to not go through the perceived unnecessary burden. Under the economic dislocations and unnatural price increases brought about by the war, a well intended parcel could symbolize a disproportionate sacrifice and make the recipient feel guilty, thus negating the desired effect and being a detriment to morale. That said, those at the home-front proved more than willing to give to loved ones, acquaintances, and co-workers off at the front these small tokens of their gratitude. This is quantitatively demonstrated through the sheer amount of goods shipped to the various fronts from 1914-1918.

The fifth chapter investigates the role that charitable voluntary aid organizations in Britain and Germany played in providing soldiers with creature comforts. This proved to be one of the central means by which soldiers obtained *Genussmittel* at the front. Similar to previous chapters, the relevance of social anthropology's insights into gift exchange will help shed light on the symbolic role that the provisioning of commonplace luxuries via these organizations played in not only soldiers' lives at the front, but also in those at home. These organizations created a venue for volunteers and donors to feel like they were actively contributing, no matter how perceivably small the act, to the wellbeing of their family and friends at the front while contributing to the war effort at large. Voluntary aid organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Red Cross were reliant upon the combination of motifs of sacrifice and individual acts of

self-mobilization, both for donations as well as for volunteers to deliver and serve these products to the men deployed at the various theaters of operations.

Although the goods that all of these organizations provided could stimulate morale, the facilities themselves–canteens, libraries and reading rooms, marquees, and the like—were equally as important as the goods provided. These settings gave soldiers a place to escape the war, albeit however briefly. What is more, these spaces could give soldiers the opportunity to not just socialize, but also to be alone. This rarity in army life was clearly coveted by many soldiers, many of who praised such opportunities in their diaries and letters back home. In each case, the central element of mediation was the luxury stimulant that was often procured on site. As we will see, these efforts were largely welcomed by the military authorities, as they not only helped augment official supplies of these products, thus bolstering morale, but in some instances helped limit the ranks' exposure to less "wholesome" avenues of obtaining comparable goods.

Indeed most organizations pursued their own agendas, and imbued the products provided with a set of symbolism that often communicated the organization's goals. Concurrently, corporations aimed to profit off of the voluntary spirit of civilians, and marketed their wares appropriately. The premier example of this is found in the tobacco industry, especially in Britain. However, soldiers routinely pursued their own interests in this relationship, using all facilities and products available, regardless of any pre-appointed commercial, moral, or religious purpose. Yet, despite the largely good intentions behind the provisioning of such gifts, the receipt, distribution and availability of goods collected and distributed by voluntary aid organizations could just as well

exacerbate tensions amongst the ranks because of perceived inequalities in terms of who received what. This is perhaps most evident in the quantities of *Liebesgaben* sent to officers versus the rank-and-file in the German armies.

The final chapter will consider the last major point of acquisition: the civilian populations near or at the battlefront. Similar to the previous sections, the role that everyday stimulants and commonplace luxuries had in mediating relationships will be explored, illustrating the dynamics found within seemingly mundane exchanges made between soldiers and the local populace. Under these circumstances, many urban areas near the front, such as Ypres for the British and Lille for the Germans, were transformed into seedy, frolicking party centers that soldiers would use to stage a last hurrah before they went up the line, many never to return. However, not all venues of exchange necessarily perpetuated this sort of behavior. There were those estaminets and cafes in the towns and villages near the combat zones that simply provided soldiers with a place to rest and to enjoy some of the luxuries that have been the lens of this study, yet each with its own set of revolving limits.

During the examination of the relationship between soldiers and local civilians, I utilize some of the insights provided by those who have theorized about travel literature to explore how soldiers interpreted their experiences and routine exchanges. Although these interactions could perpetuate stereotypes, they could just as well be perceived as breaking them, as seen for instance in some of the social exchanges between German soldiers and the civilians in occupied France and Belgium, or between German-Jews and local Jewish populations in Eastern Europe. What makes the mass phenomenon of travel

during war fundamentally different than tourism, of course, is that it is characterized by extreme violence. This was especially the case in the German armies, who found their soldiers largely occupying large swaths of foreign soil and their local inhabitants. Under these unique circumstances, each historical actor would pursue their own interests in each moment of exchange: the soldier trying to acquire a given luxury and take a break from the strains of industrialized war and all of its trappings, while the local was often trying to turn a profit or merely to survive.

To close, we will consider some of the long-term consequences that came out of the use of everyday stimulants in maintaining soldier morale during the First World War. For many, consumption patterns had been permanently altered, as Europe's young men learned to smoke cigarettes, Germany's young men learned to enjoy chocolate, and so on. These shifts had implications not only for the larger global agro-industries, but also for the general health and wellbeing of Europeans going forward in the twentieth century. Additionally, we will consider if and how the ritualized exchange and consumption of everyday stimulants contributed to Great Britain's victory over Germany.

There are several key themes presented throughout this work that unify the chapters. One such idea explores how these products were employed to mediate relationships, be they with one's peers, superiors, loved-ones, civilians back home, or locals near the front. Another persistent theme is that of collective societal expectations, and the notion that a series of social contracts existed within each set of performed social bonds. A central component to this, and consequently another continuous theme is the communicative value inherent in social exchange: in this case the sharing of stimulants.

Finally, the centrality of routinization, habitualization and therefore ritualization of the mundane, daily episodes that were an omnipresent feature of the various fronts will also be considered throughout, including the effects these performances had on both the individual and the social group writ large.

Summary of Research Methodology:

Quite simply, this project would have been impossible without the keyword search options available on Internet search engines, archival websites, and the like. Following intensive Internet research and scouring published primary sources, I began my research in England, splitting time initially between the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and the British National Archives at Kew (TNA). The online searching capabilities and detailed file descriptions at IWM proved that such a project was even possible. By running simple keyword queries, I generated a master list of documents to view upon arrival. I was able to replicate this pattern somewhat at TNA, focusing my queries on both specific stimulants and branches of the military hierarchy. Additionally, I found Ian F. W. Beckett's published guide to TNA's sources on the First World War to be indispensable.[58]

Researching German records unsurprisingly proved to be far more complicated. Due to the impact of the aerial bombing of Germany during the Second World War, many of the records for the Imperial German armies, especially the Prussian elements, have

[58] Ian F.W. Beckett, *The First World War: The Essential Guide to Sources in the UK National Archives*, (Kew, U.K.: Public Records Office, 2002).

been destroyed. Compounding matters is the fact that what material does survive is dispersed around the country in national, state and local repositories. Incidentally, this decentralization of materials probably helped to save some of the documents used here (and in other works on the subject) from the Allied bombs. While the vast majority of archival finding aids did not have the same electronic search capabilities as their British counterparts, there were some exceptions. For instance, I learned of the Dresden War Association materials via a keyword search for *Liebesgaben* online through the Saxon State Archives website. Since most British soldier materials (letters, diaries, memoirs, etc.) mention *Genussmittel* in varying degree, coupled with what I had read in published German sources like Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel* and Herbert Sulzbach's *With the German Guns*, I figured the same would hold true in most archival files. As such, I simply targeted individual soldier files and went to the archives where they were held to view them. The product of these efforts is what follows.

Chapter I:
Manipulating the Body: The Ritualistic, Physiological, and Psychoactive Uses of Creature Comforts

In an interview given to the Imperial War Museum, Private Bill Smedley, a veteran of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) recounted the exploits of his wartime experience. When the conversation turned to the specifics of rations, he specifically recalled how the "cigarette ration was I think forty every fortnight… Flag cigarettes they were, Woodbine."[59] Smedley claimed that he chose not to "smoke many," because he preferred to save them to trade "for food with the chaps that really went mad for cigarettes."[60] Fully cognizant of the tobacco good's popularity amongst his comrades, Smedley mused, "Oh there's no doubt about it, very soothing a cigarette."[61] Whether he recognized it or not, something as simple as a cigarette contained a dual physiological and psychological value that could help a soldier endure the strains of war. As we will see, soldiers across the board held everyday stimulants across the board in comparable esteem.

So how exactly did everyday stimulants like tobacco goods, caffeinated beverages, sugar laced treats, and alcoholic drinks help soldiers physiologically and psychologically mediate their experiences with the war? In the face of the hardships brought by war, ranging from sheer terror to utter boredom, soldiers often turned to familiar civilian modes of escape. One of the most common methods of coping with the array of experiences and concomitant emotions was through the routinized use of everyday stimulants. Although the fact that these items have psychoactive properties

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[59] Imperial War Museum (IWM), *Voices of the First World War*, Podcast 20: "Trench Life."
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

should not be underestimated, equally important to consider is the habituated ritual of individual consumption. These products, as scholars have noted, had long since been accepted as bona fide ways to escape the doldrums of civilized, agriculturally based society. As such, turning to these "soft drugs" to cope with the malaise of industrialized society was the norm by the outbreak of the war, and World War I was not necessarily a caesura in terms of altering consumer desires. What did make the First World War unique, however, was the mass exposure to what were more efficient means of consumption and inebriation. The cigarette perhaps best epitomizes this shift, although the expansion of chocolate consumption by Germans also speaks to this trend. These consumption patterns were further reinforced by the scale of product needed for the concentrated mass numbers of consumers that had come to desire each product.

Broadly speaking, one can see a perpetual cycle that led to increased consumption and dependence upon these stimulants. The availability of a given stimulant reinforced both individual needs and cravings, which were compounded by the addictive qualities inherent in each. Such feelings were augmented by any benefits, both actual and perceived, a given stimulant provided. The need for efficient and quick carriers, dictated by the helter-skelter tempo of industrialized war, further reinforced this trend. Hence, tea packets premixed with sugar, or cigarettes (a more "efficient" way of smoking tobacco), became common modes of consumption.

This chapter will explore the psychoactive nature of everyday stimulants, and how these goods helped soldiers to psychologically cope with the experience of war. Additionally, this chapter will also survey how these products were likewise employed

by soldiers to physically manipulate their bodies, as they attempted to cope with the elements imposed by weather, hunger, and other debilitating external phenomenon faced at the various fronts. Within this discussion, we will also explore how some of the manufacturers of these products couched their wares as cure-alls for the scourge of the day: nerves and nervousness. Equally important to consider here in this first chapter is the history of some of these products, notably cigarettes and sugar, and their rise from exotic, tropic luxury to cheap, mass-produced commodity. Finally, the role of individualized ritual consumption as a break from the industrial "work" of war, and the place of everyday stimulants in this process, will be considered.

What's the Appeal? Psychoactive and Physiological Properties of Everyday Stimulants

Many of the creature comforts consumed by soldiers during the war played multiple physiological roles. In nearly all cases, these items could quite literally stimulate the body, often through the compound effects of caffeine and sugar, thus providing soldiers with a needed jolt of energy. What is more, some of these goods could provide extra calories as well, most notably sugar laced products. Tobacco was used by soldiers to both suppress appetite as well as to combat the stench of the trenches. Hot, caffeinated and sugar-laced drinks had the dual effect of warming the body while giving a short boost of energy. The same traits were perceived in the contested tot of rum or the congenial swig of schnapps, grog, or some other spirit. On a related note, and as we shall see here in a couple of examples momentarily, alcoholic beverages could also provide

soldiers with a way to literally cleanse themselves, both by inducing vomiting or as a bathing instrument.

David T. Courtwright has illustrated how humans have long employed psychoactive stimulants humans to combat boredom and the general melancholy of civilized life. The perceived need for such items, Courtwright argues, increased with the dislocation and dehumanization fundamentally caused by industrialization in the nineteenth century. Courtwright contends that psychoactive products like the everyday stimulants under examination are elementally an *Ersatz* for pleasure and comfort. Furthermore, these goods have been used to palliate, control, and exploit labor for hundreds of years—both through use of these goods, and in an attempt to extract these resources. Industrialization, he observes, brought with it the perceived need for individuals to self-medicate themselves through psychoactive products in order to endure the strains of the modern life. These range from feelings of anxiety and alienation, to the physical toils of one's labor.[62] The supplying and individual procurement of stimulants is where habituated consumer patterns converged in the experiences of soldiers of the First World War. Scholars have noted how World War I in many reflected the experiences and trauma of industrialization, and the employment of psychoactive products is an oft-overshadowed element of this mirroring.

[62] David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*, Kindle Edition, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Arthur Marwick has noted that during the eighteenth century "beer was clearly regarded" amongst Britons "as a necessary adjunct to work."[63] "In Edwardian times," Marwick notes, "heavy drinking of an evening was still an important leisure activity of a big section of the people."[64] What is more, he highlights, "for many heavy manual workers it was felt to be an essential support to the earning of their daily bread by the sweat of their brows."[65] As such, British society on the eve of World War I represents a culture that had a deeply rooted predisposition to such rituals of consumption, and with them, associating such rituals as symbols for rest, the logical counterpoint to work. Under such conditions, it should come as little surprise that Britons that went to the front brought these tendencies with them as a form of respite from the break of the industrial work of war.

The main reason why any of these consumables hold any widespread cultural, and by extension anthropological, appeal is rooted in the stimulating effect that each of these psychoactive products have. By and large, Europeans recognized that these goods could either enhance performance, thus increasing efficiency, or just as importantly they could soothe one's nerves. Additionally, these so-called "soft drugs," namely caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and sugar, have been a central component of human consumption because they are profitable to make, yet are arguably not completely debilitating to humans—at least in

[63] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965), 62.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

the short term. As is demonstrated in these soldiers' experiences, the use of one stimulant often reinforced and/or contributed the consumption of others.[66]

Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes that each of the stimulants under examination has been at one time or another imbued with perceived health/ physiological benefits, typically with little to no basis in scientific reality.[67] This raises the question of what, if any, placebo effect these products had or could have. Indeed, these products have little, if no nutritional value, yet have come to be considered indispensable from human consumption. What makes the appeal of consumable stimulants particularly peculiar is the fact that many of these plant-based products are typically recognized as acquired tastes. Caffeinated beverages are often bitter to the palate without the addition of some type of sweetener. Beer, also with its bitter taste, is likewise an acquired taste. When one smokes tobacco for the first time, the first attempt to inhale immediately prompts one to cacophonously gag and cough. The lone exception here is sugar, which humans have been evolutionarily "hard-wired" to crave.

Not all stimulants produce a "stimulating" effect like coffee and sugar. However, as David T. Courtwright asserts, these products can be loosely grouped together because of the ways they manipulate the body physiologically and psychoactively. Sarah Haslam has observed that, "alcohol is not a 'true stimulant,' like tea and coffee, but acts by 'paralysying the controlling nerve centres.'"[68] Regarding nicotine, Wolfgang Schivelbusch

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[66] See Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, Chapter 1: "The Big Three: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Caffeine," Kindle Edition.
[67] Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 37.
[68] Haslam, "A Literary Intervention," 222.

notes that the narcotic "does not stimulate the nervous system, but rather dulls it."[69] Because of this physiological effect, he observes, nicotine is fundamentally "a nerve toxin."[70] The similarities with alcohol do not end there, as Schivelbusch notes that "only after one gets used to it does smoking become a pleasure."[71] On the whole, these products provided soldiers with the means to choose between sharpening the senses, dulling them, or performing both simultaneously (such as drinking caffeinated, sugar-laced tea while smoking a cigarette).

One should be equally cognizant of the addictive properties of each of these stimulants. The narcotic powers of nicotine have long been known, and scientists at the dawn of the twentieth century recognized that concentrated doses of the drug could kill a human. Programmes designed to help people kick their smoking habit were advertised in newspapers in the period prior to the war, suggesting that at least some of the side effects of tobacco consumption were known. Caffeine likewise has addictive qualities, causing major headache withdrawal symptoms when use is suspended. Less known until just recently is the true addictive power of sugar. Recent studies have shown that humans can actually become more addicted to sugar that to cocaine![72] As such, shortages in everyday stimulants could literally be painful for soldiers away at the front.

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[69] Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 97.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] *CBS This Morning*, interview with Dr. Mark Hyman, "Sugar: Is it as addictive as cocaine?" 24 February 2014.

From Elite Luxury to Everyday Stimulant: A Brief Historical Survey of Commonplace Psychoactive Comforts

Scholars have demonstrated how industrialization and mechanization both fostered the arms race of the early twentieth century, which helped lead to the massive scale of the First World War. Indeed, technological advances across numerous sectors of society directly influenced the conduct and operations of the scores of men that marched to war with the guns of August in 1914. However, the mechanization in the production of many foodstuffs and associated commodities industries has been an oft-overshadowed requisite in this process. The vast majority of the everyday stimulants consumed by the soldiers of the First World War underwent comparable paths of expanded production and consumption, evolving from exotic luxuries to mass commodities. An integral facet of this expansion was the dual impact of industrialization and mechanization within production itself. As David T. Courtwright asserts, "industrialization democratized access to psychoactive drugs as prices were made more affordable by the surplus created."[73] Consequently, by the outbreak of the First World War these onetime luxury items had been in many instances conflated by the consuming public with necessary subsistence foods.

Two of the most widely consumed stimulants during the war were sugar and tobacco (nicotine). Some of these industries had undergone heavy industrialization well prior to the end of the nineteenth century. Sugar production certainly falls in this category, even pre-dating Adam Smith's famous division of labor examples. On the other

[73] Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, Loc. 145 of 5179.

hand, with the advent of mechanized cigarette rollers and the development of flue curing near the end of the nineteenth century, tobacco manufacturers were able to simultaneously create a more palatable product all while at a reduced production price. With the soldiers of the First World War, tobacco companies found a captive market base for this cheap and potentially lucrative good.

By the outbreak of war in 1914, tobacco products had already been established as a staple consumed by European armies. English, Dutch, and Spanish sailors had brought the habit back to the Continent during the sixteenth century. Consumption was then taught to German soldiers during the Thirty Years' War. In a similar fashion, British soldiers began to learn how to smoke cigarettes during the Crimean War. However, without full-scale mechanization, coupled with the chemical palatability brought about by flue curing, cigarettes remained a fringe product in England—and Germany—until the First World War.[74]

As Robert Proctor has noted, there is nothing intrinsically natural about smoking a cigarette, or any other form of tobacco product for that matter.[75] During the era of the First World War, and for some demographics following the conflict, tobacco companies around the globe had to pump resources into teaching would be clients how to smoke. Proctor himself sites courses that were held during the 1930s put on by the American Tobacco Company that aimed to teach women how to smoke.[76] However, attempts to teach smoking existed in print advertising both prior to and during the war. What is more,

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[74] Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, Loc. 291-317 of 5179.
[75] Robert Proctor, *Golden Holocaust: Origins of the Cigarette Catastrophe and the Case for Abolition*, Kindle Edition. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).
[76] Ibid.

advertisements taught Europeans not just how to smoke, but also that cigarettes and other tobacco products made ideal gifts.[77]

Sugar, as noted moments ago, underwent a comparable process of mechanization, however far earlier. This was due in large part by the desire to obtain the purest and most palatable product possible, all while attempting to avoid spoilage. In his essay "Sugar in the Caribbean: Turning Sunshine into Money," G.B. Hagelberg illustrates how sugar became a staple in modern society. Discussing the multipurpose usage of this good, Hagelberg explains that fundamentally, "sugar is a piggyback food," and as a result it has come to be "consumed in large quantities."[78] This has happened, he notes, because sugar "is sweet in a not very intense way and makes its carriers more palatable."[79] Some of these products include longtime caffeinated beverage favorites such as tea, cocoa, and coffee. Illustrating the dialectical appeal of sugar, Hagelberg contends that, "Conversely, sugar that did not give energy would be empty sweetness."[80] Elaborating further on sugar's dietary utility, Hagelberg notes that, "The symbiotic nature of sucrose, revealed in the way it plays its roles as an energy source and sweetener, is confirmed by its further functions as a preservative, flavor enhancer, bulking agent, and stabilizer."[81]

While the appeal of sugar and its many uses is evident, how and when did it become so widely used in Europe? Part of the answer lies in the evolution of European consumer patterns. The other reason is intimately bound in the production and

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[77] This theme will be discussed in the following chapter.
[78] G. B. Hagelberg, "Sugar in the Caribbean: Turning Sunshine into Money," in *Caribbean Contours*, Sydney Mintz and Sally Price, ed., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 85-126, 87.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

distribution of sugar. In his opus *Sweetness and Power*, Sydney Mintz illustrates this very development in England, characterizing the invasion of sugar into the European diet in the early modern era as a shift from luxury spice, to staple commodity. According to Mintz, this process culminated roughly during the period from 1750-1850, when Europeans—and more specifically Britons—were at a minimum "introduced to sugar."[82] Mintz traces European sugar consumption back to the Middle Ages, noting how European nobles used the Middle Eastern novelty as a spice for food, as medicine, and as a symbol of power. Demonstrating the latter, Mintz shows that both crown and church employed massive marzipan, and later sugar based structures, like those still commonly found in the shops of the old Hanseatic city of Lübeck, as a projection of power. In the process, these items were designed to first awe the eye, and then awe the taste buds.[83]

With the expansion of the mercantilist system and the subsequent increased access to wealth, noble and clergy were no longer the only segments of society who could afford to imbibe in these luxuries. Despite the fact that prices of the coveted good "rose steeply after 1570, more than quadrupling… in the last thirty years of the sixteenth century," merchants acquired the excess capital to purchase the good.[84] This process has been briefly summarized by Henry Hobhouse. In his monograph *Seeds of Change: Six Plants That Transformed Mankind,* Hobhouse discusses how sugar and other plants used by

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[82] Sydney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 147-148. The final phase, according to Mintz is the post 1850 epoch, in which sugar became the pervasive good that we know of today.
[83] Ibid, 93-95. The consumption of these goods, according to Mintz, reinforced symbols of power. In light of this, Mintz's contention reinforces the anthropological perspective of holidays as a harkening back to ages far gone as exhibited in gingerbread houses and *Dia de los Muertos* candies. Furthermore, Mintz presents, the one-time playthings of the rich are now the goodies given to children.
[84] Ibid, 95.

Europeans, while providing some overt benefit for themselves, was often cultivated at the expense of others.[85] In the case of sugar, Hobhouse illustrates that with the burgeoning taste for sugar in Europe, so too did the need for slave labor to produce the labor-intensive crop.[86] As Hobhouse points out, these "wealthy western Europeans had turned to sugar rather than honey, and even before the advent of tea, coffee, and cocoa, sugar dependence was great enough to bring the New World into the reckoning to redress the balance of the Old."[87]

While the introduction of sugar into the diet of the European landed and fiscal elite was important, the expansion of the good into all aspects of society ultimately came with the introduction of other colonial goods. One way Europeans circumvented the gag inducing taste of many everyday stimulants was by lacing it with sugar. As sugar expert G.B. Hagelberg has noted, sugar would never have come to be cultivated "on such a large scale" nor have come to "play such an important dietary role if it were not sweet."[88] "Without sweetness," Hagelberg attests, "centrifugal sugar would be mere 'empty calories,' to echo the inane cliché of food writers."[89]

Although the full caloric potency of sugar may not have been fully recognized until the nineteenth century, that does not eliminate sugar's presence as both stimulant and supplement, recognized or not, in the early modern period. Indeed sugar played a unique role in the role of everyday stimulants in soldiers' lives. The post-war writings of

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[85] Henry Hobhouse, *Seeds of Change: Six Plants That Transformed Mankind*, (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2005), 80.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Hagelberg, "Sugar in the Caribbean," 87.
[89] Ibid.

William Beveridge provide insight into the value that sugar had not only as a caloric source, but also as a food that could efficiently, especially in times of war, replace more costly foodstuffs.[90]

The work of Beveridge's contemporary, Noël Paton, echoed these claims. Describing the value that sugar had in augmenting caloric needs, Paton noted in 1919 how "Its energy value is high" with a caloric content of "1,820 calories per lb."[91] Adding to sugar's list of "benefits," he claimed, "*Sugar* is a most valuable vegetable food, requiring practically no digestion and being very rapidly absorbed and burned in the body."[92] "No food surpasses it as an immediate and readily available source of energy," Paton argued, suggesting specifically that, "its supply to front line troops should be liberal."[93]

Yet part of what made sugar so appealing in the first place was its taste, and to say that the British had developed a sweet tooth prior to the Great War is indeed stating the obvious. The national average weekly consumption of the multifaceted luxury good, stimulant and caloric supplement in Great Britain was roughly 1.46 pounds per person between 1909 and 1913.[94] By 1914 this had increased still to 1.49 pounds per person.[95] Even by the end of 1915 consumption increased to an average of 1.58 pounds per person per week.[96] However, average consumption decreased on average to 1.21 pounds per

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[90] William Beveridge, *British Food Control*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Economics and History, 1928), 250.
[91] Noël Patton, *Army Rations,* (1919), 12.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power,* 197.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

person/ per week by 1916, and even further still to one pound in 1917.[97] In the last year of the war, weekly per capita sugar consumption had bottomed out at .93 pounds.[98]

Part of what makes studying the role of sugar as *Genussmittel* in the armies of Europe so particularly problematic is that this caloric stimulant was used as an ingredient in pretty much everything. Consequently, many of the products that sugar was used in were at times deemed by the belligerent to be food staples. This acceptance reflected societal norms, which considered these items to be indispensable from everyday consumption. Arguably the most important product that falls in this category is bread, long established as a cornerstone in the European diet.

Sugar production, and by extension consumption, in Europe had long been vulnerable to the market whims exacerbated by war. It was, after all, during the Napoleonic wars that beet sugar was expanded as a viable substitute to cane sugar. With the shortages in Germany during World War I, there was once again a need for a reliable substitute. In response, rutabagas came to be seen as a legitimate option to augment sugar supplies due to their high natural sugar content.[99]

Cultural perceptions and societal access to these products were likewise influential in fostering addiction to everyday stimulants. Patterns of tea and sugar consumption in Britain underscore this issue. Sugar, once regarded as an item that only the nobility could buy, became more readily available as a result of increased production, shifting the item from luxury to staple good. Conspicuous consumption of sugar by Britons led to more

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] These insights were provided by Roger Chickering during the recent roundtable panel, "Not So Quiet on the Eastern Front," hosted by the German Studies Association in Denver, Colorado, October 2013.

people becoming literally hooked on the stuff. This was further compounded when sugar started being used as an affordable caloric substitute for the poorer classes. Tea has a comparable consumption trajectory. Also a one-time luxury good, tea was eventually seen as a way to emulate upper-class tastes, but also as a morally preferable alternative to beer. Reinforcing this trend was how tea and coffee houses evolved to become the moral antithesis to the public house.[100]

The Scourge of the Century: Nerves and Inefficiency

Two of the foremost societal scourges that Europeans were obsessed with during the fin-de-siecle were nerves (and nervousness), and efficiency. Anson Rabinbach has noted that in this era fatigue "became the most apparent and distinctive sign of the external limits of body and mind."[101] Consequently, he observes, fatigue itself became "the most reliable indicator of the need to conserve and restrict the waste and misuse of the body's unique capital—its labor power."[102] He notes that prior to World War I, European society traced many societal ills to being repercussions of fatigue, including drunkenness, opiate addiction, familial breakdown, and even crime.[103] The goal, therefore, was to optimize performance. As such, overcoming fatigue and one's nerves was translated into a societal problem that could be rationalized, scientifically problematized, and therefore solved. Such solutions included the scientific management of Taylorism and the multiple offshoots that it inspired.

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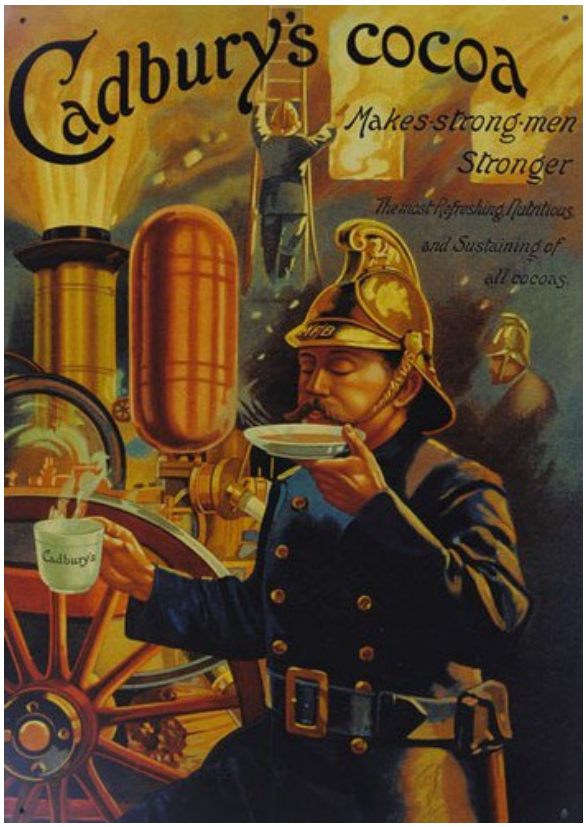
[100] Although, it should be noted the landed elite looked down at coffee houses at one time because of their association with revolutionary activity.
[101] Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 6.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 22.

In this environment, a host of everyday stimulants were touted as cure-alls that could help relieve the strains of modern, industrial society on one's nerves by increasing strength and virility. In an advertisement from the era, Cadbury's cocoa proclaimed that its hot cocoa was able to "Make strong men Stronger," through the consumption of the "most refreshing, nutritious, and sustaining of all cocoa."[104] In the image below (Image 1), we see a strapping member of the fire brigade, taking time out from his duties to replenish and relax over a warm cup of cocoa. Clearly Cadbury's were trying to alter popular perceptions that chocolate was merely a treat for innocents, namely women and children. In this image, we see some foreshadowing of the use of hot cocoa at the front, which was handed out in countless cupfuls by philanthropic organizations like the YMCA.



[104] "Cadbury's Cocoa," circa 1900, <http://content.artofmanliness.com/uploads//2012/12/fire.jpg> Accessed 1 September 2014.

Concerns over the dual problems of fatigue and nerves had implications for the civilian soldiers at war from 1914-1918. Citing Jean de Bloch, Rabinbach explains that under the conditions of attritional warfare "the physical condition of the troops would decide the outcome."[105] Indeed, there were debates over military minutiae such as drill, which centered on how much, if any was acceptable, what was drill's fundamental purpose, and did its practice justify the expense of valuable energy? "Battle fatigue played a central part as the key physiological aspect of the individual's ability to resist the onset of pathological fear or panic," Rabinbach observes.

This concern is still prevalent in the minds of military leaders today. Recently, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) B.P. McCoy of the United States Marine Corps described the extreme exhaustion that sets in following battle. Although he detailed events during the United States recent war in Iraq, his general observations are nonetheless salient for our discussion here. "Each day of fighting has been the equivalent of completing a major physical endurance event such as a marathon," LTC McCoy explains, "with the added bonus of the nervous system's parasympathetic response to extreme exertion, stress, and doses of adrenaline, where the body and mind crash afterwards in an effort to recoup from the effort."[106] Elaborating further, he notes that the fighting at Al Kut during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM consisted of "Twenty minutes of a nearly indescribable assault on the senses and emotion, twenty minutes of supreme physical effort."[107] "As the shooting

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[105] Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 226.
[106] Lieutenant Colonel B.P. McCoy, *The Passion of Command: The Moral Imperative of Leadership*, Kindle Edition, (Marine Corps Association, 2011), Loc. 106 of 1862.
[107] Ibid, Loc. 279 of 1862.

stops the senses equalize and return to normal," he explains, and then the "body takes stock of the energy it expended in the crisis and exhaustion sets in."[108]

Under the constraints that were imposed by limited supplies and material shortcomings, myriad substitutes were employed. Most scholars of the First World War are familiar with the *Ersatz* and *Surrogaten* foodstuffs engineered, endorsed, and forced upon the German nation by the Imperial War Nutrition Office (and other state organizations such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Arbeitsphysiologie).[109] However, many of the creature comforts under investigation could be, and indeed were also used as caloric substitutes as well as an *Ersatz* for rest and recuperation.

Habitualization, Ritualization, and Consumption at the Fronts

During the war British and German soldiers practiced an array of daily rituals that came to compose the core of their experience. Some of these were learned at the front, while many others were replicated from civilian life. Within the former, such rituals included those that were imposed by the military hierarchy, such as stand-to, parades, and drill. Still other rituals were controlled and managed by the rank and file at a more localized level. Even meal times were regimented in this fashion. Some of these rituals incorporated much fanfare and pomp and circumstance. Often times these practices were employed as survival mechanisms, such as the 'live and let live' system described by Tony Ashworth.

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[108] Ibid.
[109] Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 262-263.

Alf Lüdkte explains that "routines function to 'relieve' the individual of constant uncertainty or doubts."[110] Moving beyond the individual, Lüdtke contends, that for "social groups and institutions, routinization means 'submission to authority' as a precondition of their 'stability.'"[111] Rituals and everyday performance are a ubiquitous part of social life and discourse, and this was certainly the case during World War I. Indeed, even political legitimacy, John Horne observes, "gained constant reinforcement from the rituals, symbols and repeated gestures that became characteristic of national politics."[112]

Denis Winter noted that night was typically the busiest time during the troglodyte war of the trenches, and as such, fundamentally turned the *daily* routine of civilian life on its head.[113] Such a lifestyle, if one could call it that, led to a serious lack of sleep. "If sleeplessness gave to a man a Kafka-like sense of unreality and de-personalization," Winter observed, "then his submergence in trenches could only add to it."[114] Hence one of the great paradoxes of the war: the need to militate against fatigue in an environment dominated by sleep deprivation. In such an environment, caffeine and other such stimulants became increasingly more important.

Many times these daily rituals were codified in the language of the period. Soldiers would often refer to the work of war, which served to create linguistic normalization, themes that both Alf Lüdtke and Aribert Reimann have explored.[115]

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[110] Alf Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Horne, *State, Society, and Mobilization*, 2.
[113] Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War*, (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 86.
[114] Ibid. 101.
[115] Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006); and Aribert Reimann, *Der Grosse Krieg der Sprachen:*

Soldiers often made references that further underscored the routinization and by extension, ritualization of the violence of the front. This was particularly the case with those that endured combat on the Western Front. Soldiers would refer to the morning bombardments as the "morning hate." On a related note, British soldiers used the slang "iron rations" to describe any German artillery shells. British soldiers likewise couched battle, let alone the war at large, as "the show," suggesting a theatrical element to warfare. The German word *Kriegsschauplatz* (theater of war) evokes a comparable reference to performance.

Another linguistic ritual in the British army was grousing. According to David Englander, "grousing was a fluid form of social interaction by which officers and other ranks defined and re-defined their relationship within the rigid and otherwise unworkable framework created by King's regulations."[116] What is more, Englander asserts, this "on-going process of negotiation which probably constituted the single most important means by which troop morale was maintained."[117] This observation has multiple implications for this study. Firstly, it buttresses the fact that soldiers were routinely active agents in defining their relationship to both their superiors and the war itself. Secondly, most practices of verbalized grousing often went hand in hand with some sort of consumption of stimulants. Whether soldiers were commiserating over the shared enjoyment of a cigarette, or grousing by way of some drunken sing-song, in each instance and countless

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Untersuchungen zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland und England zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs. (Essen, Germany: Klartext Verlag, 2000).

[116] David Englander, "Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918," in John Horne, ed., *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 125-143, 142.

[117] Ibid, 142-143.

others, everyday stimulants served as the mediating factor in each ritualized performance of soldier daily life.

While routinization was a central feature of military life, this does not mean that all necessarily enjoyed the modicum of security and predictability it provided. J.W. Browning, who served with the BEF, complained to his diary how he and his mates were "still diggin [*sic*] trenches and enemy still shelling then have to keep lying down to dodge them."[118] This was better than the alternative, as he quipped, "dont [*sic*] mind that so long as we are alive and kicking."[119] He reiterated the point again, how it was the "Same routine diggin [*sic*] trenches all night."[120] This was accompanied by "heavy artillery of ours and enemy firing all day and half the night."[121] To make matters worse, Browning lamented how it was "Sunday and no beer."[122] "I think I will be a teetollar [*sic*] after this turn out," he groused.[123]

Many times, the daily rituals soldiers practiced were replicated from civilian society. The replication of pub and *Stammtisch* culture at the various fronts are but two parallel examples. As we shall later see, even the practice of engaging in rounds, the unique social act of buying drinks for one's immediate circle of companions was transplanted around the globe. The clinking of glasses in a toast, likewise imbued with its own set of comradely symbolism was also present. British tea-time and its German counterpart *Kaffee und Kuchen* were also brought to the front. Even new forms of

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[118] IWM, 04/19/1, Papers of J.W. Browning.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

exchange, such as the sharing of cigarettes, which tobacco companies were frantically trying to impose as a societal trend, were taught, replicated, and expanded among the numerous fronts. Many of these performance rituals carried their own particular set of rules, clearly understood amongst those who chose to participate. What is more, many of these rituals required specific paraphernalia in order for a given ritual to be practiced. While many of the practices were not wholly original, the scale and mobilization of the resources needed to perform these mundane social acts is partly what made the experience of the First World War particularly unique.

At its core, the ritual of smoking was a consumption pattern habitually replicated by soldiers across the multiple fronts. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has asserted that of equal importance to the stimulant effect within the act of smoking itself are the ritualized movements one makes in preparation and practice.[124] This is not to mention the effect that anticipation plays on the human brain, notably in the release of dopamine, which increases any feelings of pleasure gleaned from the consumption ritual, working in tandem with any psychoactive narcotic effect. For Schivelbusch, most of the pomp and circumstance of tobacco consumption is found in preparing to smoke a pipe or cigar, or in the paraphernalia employed.[125] It should be noted that these items, plus the act itself, could also reflect one's societal class. However, Shivelbusch argues that the cigarette does not carry the same process of ritualization: "You simply put it between your lips."[126] Yet this omits the more subtle consumption rituals that have been propagated by cigarette

[124] Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise,* 185-187.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

manufacturers ever since the mechanization of production. All one needs to do is light up, breath in, and relax.

J.A. Johnston of the BEF recalled how ubiquitous tobacco consumption was at the front during the war. "The mornings of the days spent at Humbercamps were taken up with various parades and the practising [*sic*] of attack," Johnston recalled of his time in reserve camp, while "the afternoons were free to us, the evenings, if unlucky, with making one's way up to the trenches again on a digging party."[127] Describing the local extra-curricular activities soldiers engaged in, Johnston penned, "If not on a digging party one could go to the nearest estaminet with the certainty of finding one's comrades having a sing-song or a smoking concert—I almost wrote smoking 'contest,' for true enough the air was thick and blue with tobacco smoke long before the end."[128]

Many advertisements submitted to the Minoli Tobacco Company in Germany as part of their advertising competition in 1916 demonstrate the increasingly accepted societal belief in such rituals. In the process, these advertisements sought to teach would be consumers not only the benefits of cigarettes, but also how best to use them to relax. Some of the submissions show how the cigarettes can be part of an individual's break from the tedium of the work of war. In one such example, viewers are invited to see a German soldier calmly relaxing, standing shin deep in murky water in a trench, leaning against the parapet. The soldier is all by himself, with his only companions being some barren trees in the background and a couple flowers sprouting from the trench

[127] IWM, 02/29/1, Papers of J.A. Johnston. Johnston served with the Machine Gun Section of the 13th Rifle Brigade (111th Brigade, 37th Division).
[128] Ibid.

embankments. His rifle is also nearby facing what one can presume is No Man's Land. Despite this dreary picture, the solder appears to be quite content, with a sort of half smile as he exhales a puff from nothing other than his Manoli cigarettes. Conveniently, he has a full box, located on a shelf dug into the trench wall awaiting his next break (Image 2).[129]

There were, however, some rituals that soldiers had to learn from their peers while in training camps or at the front. In the British army, one such oft-practiced ritual green soldiers had to learn was how to take their tot of rum. In most cases, one simply observed what their comrades were doing and mimicked the act. The recollections of Ben Clouting, an underage volunteer with the BEF, provide insight into what amounted to an individual learning curve. "During the first cold snap we received our first rum issue," he

[129] Advertisement for Manoli Cigarette Company, *Das Plakat*, August 1917.

remembered, "which we were to drink straight down."[130] Clouting recalled how "The old soldiers showed no hesitation tipping their heads straight back, so following suit I downed my share."[131] The young Tommy was in for quite the surprise. "My goodness," he proclaimed, "my eyes nearly popped out of their sockets! I'd never tasted rum before in my life and this was neat navy rum; I thought my throat was on fire."[132]

There were those who similarly learned how to smoke during the war. Paul Wittenburg was one such soldier, and he recounted in passing how it was because of the war that he had learned his smoking habit. "On the retreat a supply depot had yet been dissolved, so each got food, and all had gotten sugar," he said.[133] The German veteran went on to explain how he and his comrades shared these goods with "our farmer's wife, who was of course very delighted about this."[134] "In addition, each had received a box of cigars," he noted, recalling how "Back then I was a heavy smoker, I had developed the habit in the war, the good cigar gladdened me very much and I puffed it in short time."[135] By this point Wittenburg had undoubtedly rehearsed the seemingly trivial ritual countless times.

One's social class could at times dictate what types of stimulants a given soldier consumed. Reinforcing such practices, especially earlier in the war, was the military hierarchy. A quick example of this can be seen in how officers in the British Army drank

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[130] Richard van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2005), 84-85.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Bundesarchiv-Kriegsarchiv Freiburg (BA-KA), MSg 2/2640, Nachlass Paul Wittenburg. Wittenburg began his military service as a volunteer with the Feldartillerieregiment 24.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

whiskey, while the rank-and-file often drank issued rum. Class could likewise dictate modes of tobacco consumption; the ritual of pipe smoking immediately comes to mind. Cigarettes, on the other hand, with their uniform look, and consumed in large part because of their speed and convenience, could be perceived as an egalitarian luxury good. Officers and rankers alike smoked them, especially when in the forward trenches. Sir John Keegan has credited the war as creating a more egalitarian society in Britain.[136] While one should be cautious in making such claims, minor symbols such as the neutral cigarette can be seen as assisting this trend.

Erich Maria Remarque began his novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* with a nod to the primacy that consumable stimulants played in the daily lives of the soldiers who fought in the First World War. The novel begins with Remarque's protagonist Paul Bäumer and his comrades having recently returned from a stint at the front, at long last behind the lines receiving a belly full of food, new rations, and some much needed rest. According to Paul, in direct comparison to the meal just eaten, "more important still is the issue of a double ration of smokes."[137] "Ten cigars, twenty cigarettes, and two quids of chew per man; now that is decent," he elaborates.[138] Apparently not too keen on snuff, Paul "exchanged" his "chewing tobacco with Katczinsky for his cigarettes, which means" he received "forty altogether."[139] After the transaction, Bäumer quipped, "That's enough for one day."[140] This market style setting allowed each member to procure the goods that each found to be of more value. These in turn, would help individuals perform the

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[136] John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1978), 225.
[137] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, A.W. Green, trans., (New York, NY: Fawcett Crest, 1975), 2.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.

everyday rituals of soldiering. For Bäumer, some of these rituals were apparently performed upwards of fifty times per day.

The ritual of consuming everyday stimulants could also be imbued with its own share of superstitions and taboos. Arguably the most famous superstition rumored to come from the experiences of sharing during the First World War was the idea that it was unlucky to be the third person in a group to light their cigarette from a shared match. According to the superstition, the striking of the match gave a sniper warning that someone was nearby. The sharing of the same match with a second person provided the sniper with enough time to determine if the smoker was either friend or foe. However, passing the match to a third member allegedly gave said sniper requisite time to aim and fire, thus killing the unlucky fellow. It should be noted that this superstition has been associated not just with World War I, but also with the Crimean and Boer Wars.[141]

It is important to note that when one faces imminent death, as a soldier commonly does, and especially where there are constant reminders of one's likely demise, a person does not necessarily think of any long-term health effects caused by the survival and coping mechanisms they turned to. This trend is reflected in the widespread consumption of various luxuries, notably alcohol and tobacco goods. Of those that survived, there were undoubtedly countless scores of men who went home just as poor as they had entered, having spent all of their pay on booze, fags, gambling, and women. And who can really blame them?

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[141] Rudolph Brasch, *How Did it Begin: Customs, Superstitions and Their Romantic Origins*, (Sydney, Australia: Harper Collins, 2012).

Manipulating the Body at the Front:

Many soldiers on both sides of the line recognized how they could use everyday stimulants to physically manipulate their bodies during times of stress, helping them to further endure the strains of war. One main way these men would often use everyday stimulants was to help them stay awake. An excerpt from the diary of H.L. Chase of the BEF provides insight into how those at the front employed caffeinated beverages to help alleviate sleep deprivation during times of intensified combat. Chase served as a medic with the BEF during the war, and recounted how on one occasion in early July 1916 he and his comrades were reliant upon caffeinated stimulants to help them keep pace while tending to the wounded sustained during a particularly heavy German strafing of the British lines. He scribbled down in his journal how it was "An awful time with hardly any sleep, continual firing, and no time to think of food…"[142] Quantifying the carnage, Chase described how, "Altogether we had about 1500 [stretcher] cases through in 36 hours while at Couin they dealt with 2000 [stretcher] cases in 24 hours, which is probably a record for a field ambulance."[143] "Fortunately," for Chase and his comrades, "tea, cocoa and coffee were going nearly all night and day and they sustained us."[144]

Tea, long a staple drink of the British, was unsurprisingly a key source for soldiers to take respite from the war, no matter how momentary it might be. On the other hand, one of the most contentious "soft drugs" served to soldiers in the British forces was the rum ration. J.A. Johnston discussed the value of the small ration to soldiers at the

[142] IWM, 06/54/1, Papers of H.L. Chase. Chase served with the 2/1st London Field Ambulance (56th Division).
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

front, and the physical benefits it perceivably provided. He recalled how "It was heartbreaking work to dig hard all day and get the trenches clear, only for the other side to cave in and the whole thing to do over again."[145] Compounding matters, he noted how it was typically "pouring with rain and, not being able to work in our greatcoats, we were soon wet though while the mud became like glue and stuck to the shovels."[146] "It was over our boot tops or clothing at night," the veteran lamented about the mud and wet. However, there was a solution to combating these elements: rum. Johnston reported how he and his comrades often "read in the newspapers sent from home of people who protested against this issue of rum."[147] "Needless to say, the protests were from those who did not, indeed could not, understand the conditions under which the soldiers lived, fought, and died," asserted Johnston.[148] "The issue of rum," he argued, "was the saving of many a life when, through the cold and rainy weather, men were going down like so many ninepins from pneumonia and frostbite."[149]

In a letter to his friend Charles, British Sergeant Ernest Boughton Nottingham praised the rum ration. Setting the scene, the sergeant lamented about his plight: "Rain, pitiless rain, soaking and numbing."[150] Fortunately for him, he had the perfect solution. "Blessed the tot of rum," Nottingham proclaimed, "which unlocks quickly a man's reserves and allows him to 'carry on' for the necessary hours."[151] Nottingham expressed content throughout his letters in the elemental, despite the omnipresence of death and

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[145] IWM, 02/29/1, Papers of J.A. Johnston.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Housman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen*, 201. Nottingham served with the 15th London Regiment before being killed in action on 7 June 1917.
[151] Ibid.

destruction.[152] It was through these goods that Nottingham could find restorative peace, taking solace in the moment with his tot, thus allowing him to continue both the work and performance of war.

As Sara Haslam has noted, alcohol had long been associated as "a curative."[153] However, she is quick to point out the irony in using alcohol to warm the body, because the drink itself actually causes blood temperature to fall, thus making one "feel warmer."[154] In any event, this physiological ruse helped many a soldier to psychologically endure the strains and discomforts of military life, regardless of what is in essence a placebo effect.

Not all soldiers, however, appreciated the rum ration, let alone any presupposed health benefits. Harry Gore of the BEF complained how during one time in late-May 1917, his "Company had been in for hours and were all asleep…"[155] Allegedly he came back to find that they "had left us tea laced with rum."[156] While potentially a godsend, Gore felt otherwise: "It was cold and was not worth drinking anyhow."[157] So not only was the cold tea unappealing, the fact that it had been "improved" with rum made it even worse.[158]

Ernst Jünger confessed to how he would often use alcohol as nerve tonic during acute periods of stress stemming from battle. "We were reconciled, however," Jünger

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[152] Ibid.
[153] Haslam, "A Literary Intervention," 226.
[154] Ibid, 227.
[155] IWM, 01/36/1, Papers of H. Gore. Gore served with the 12th Battallion Rifle Brigade (60th Brigade, 20th Division) from July 1915 through February 1916, and with the 16th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (100th Brigade, 33rd Division) from July 1916-December 1918.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

recalled one instance, "when Schultz discovered me behind a bush in close confabulation with a bottle of Burgundy that I had brought with me to invigorate me for the precarious adventure and to calm my nerves, which had been on the stretch for nine days past."[159] Here, Jünger was not using alcohol for any perceived health benefit, but rather to manipulate his body by dulling his nerves, thus giving himself a little "liquid courage."

While the consumption of alcohol was a routine pastime for Jünger and his comrades, he also found other creature comforts to hold rejuvenating properties. "At last there is a rattle of the dixies," Jünger wrote, "as the party sent for the coffee comes back along the communication trench."[160] "It is seven o'clock and the round of night guards is ended," following which "I go into the dugout and drink some coffee and have a wash in a Bismarck herring-tin."[161] The small ritual purportedly made Jünger "so cheered up that the will to lie down again" purportedly "deserted" him.[162]

On another occasion, during a particularly unnerving evening where Jünger claimed to have been "within an ace of being killed," he recalled how the soothing effects of stimulants and food helped to bolster both his and his comrades' spirits.[163] Feeling "Somewhat done up, we entered into possession" of their new billets, "and flung ourselves down on the straw-covered bed boards," Jünger confessed.[164] Following "a good feed and a pipe of tobacco," he proclaimed how, "we felt more ourselves again."[165]

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[159] Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, Michael Hoffmann, trans., (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 2004), 159.
[160] Ibid, 41.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid, 172.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

While the food held nourishing value, the nerve tranquilizing effects of the nicotine coupled with the physical action of taking deep breaths worked in tandem to relax the ragged soldiers. Additionally, the familiar and habituated ritual consumption itself also served to calm the previously agitated soldiers.

Other soldiers extolled the value that tobacco goods had in helping to mitigate hunger. Alfred Lempelius, who served with the Imperial German Army, described this perception, noting how, "A feast was recurring each time the two days. "At home" day, it's called, the day where bread and condiments, sugar and smoking goods were given," he elaborated.[166] "Then one saw noisy, happy faces and only now, when by chance a package from home arrived on the same day, were positively dined."[167] But the benefits did not end there: "The best comfort on the starving days (these are the days which followed each time the At Home day) was the beautiful tobacco that one delivered to us in clear bulk.[168] The entire day outside of duty cigarettes were rotated to numb the rising hunger."[169]

Aside from the effect that nicotine had on one's nerves or to help limit hunger, tobacco products were routinely employed by soldiers to combat the stenches that were an omnipresent feature at the front. Max Bässler, for instance, insinuated in a letter home while stationed near Ypres in May 1915 how soldiers often smoked in order to mask the stench emanating from the rotting corpses, mud, and grime of the trenches. He noted that

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[166] Alfred Lempelius, *Erster Weltkrieg: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen eines jungen Soldaten,* <http://www.archiv-der-zeitzeugen.com/Files/files/PDFLempelius_ErsterWeltkrieg_22.pdf>
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

he was sent out to exhume some dead comrades that had initially been hastily buried with the purpose of giving these fallen countrymen a proper burial site and funeral.[170] This work, he noted, needed to be completed under the cover of complete darkness so as to not attract any enemy fire from the British lines. "In the opaque darkness stood the working-party with spades and picks," Bässler wrote.[171] Describing the grisly scene he noted how, "Silently we went our way. Outside the trench we divided up into small groups and I went with the one to fetch Beer's body. We had to dig deeper than we expected."[172] "A horrible, sickly-sweet smell rose from the earth," however Bässler and the recovery team "dared not smoke," to mask the stench, "because of the enemy."[173]

Much has been said about the mud, rain, and rats of the trenches, so much so that it has come to dominate much of the popular understanding of the combat experience of the First World War. The fact of the matter is that soldiers in all theaters of operations had their own pests and issues to cope with, many of which made the daily rituals of eating, drinking, or smoking potentially that much more difficult. Describing the reserve trench lines while deployed in Gallipoli, A.R. Peters penned in his diary that although there was "Plenty of room" and he was mostly "comfortable," this comfort was accompanied by "Crowds of sandbags + flies."[174] The pests were so numerous, he noted, that they came "about in bucketfuls."[175] Making matters worse, "Everything [was]

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[170] Phillip Witkop and A.F. Weed. ed., *German Students' War Letters*, (Philadelphia, PA: Pine Street Books, 2002), 234.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] IWM, 88/52/1, Papers of A.R. Peters. Peters served with the Drake Battalion (1st Naval Brigade, RND).
[175] Ibid.

covered with dust + sand."[176] Consequently, he noted, even "Eating [was] rather a painful operation on account of the disappointment of some million flies who wish to partake of the repast."[177] "Thinking seriously that when I am dead," Peters mused, "I shall not be worried by flies or dust which are the plague of Gallipoli."[178]

Dick Barron recalled how while in Gallipoli he and his mates would often use cigarette smoke to chase away the interminable number of flies hovering about. When rations were served, the problem was, as highlighted above, unsurprisingly acute. "They were almost cloud-like," Barron explained, "and anything sweet or edible, they used to descend on it, it was fly telepathy I suppose!"[179] The pestilence was so bad that one "could hardly get a mouthful of bully beef" into their "mouth before it was covered in flies."[180] Soldiers took to either waving their "hand[s] over them or lit a cigarette and blew the smoke onto the food to chase the flies away."[181]

The recollections of Trooper Albert "Smiler" Marshall illustrate how soldiers would use commonplace stimulants to manipulate their bodies a bit further, as well as how they were traded amongst comrades at the front: "I didn't smoke much but you got plenty of cigarettes issued and someone would say, 'Who'll give me one or two smokes for the rum ration?' I used to give them my cigarettes for the ration so my water bottle

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Richard van Emden and Steve Humphries, *Veterans: The Last Survivors of the Great War*, (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword, 2005), 51. Barron served with the 2nd London Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.

was always three parts full."[182] "Now, when we got in the front line the orderly officer and orderly sergeant came round twice during the night, once just before twelve and again between five and six in the morning," he recalled.[183] After the orderly had gone, Marshall confessed, "…as quick as lightning I unwound my puttees and took my boot off and my sock and poured some rum into my hand, took a little lick myself, and then rubbed my toes for ten minutes then put my boot and puttees back."[184] "You were not allowed to take clothes of any description off in the front line, not for three days," Marshall explained, and "When they went by next time I did the same to the other foot and therefore I kept good feet."[185] Justifying his actions, the veteran noted that "If you didn't attend to your feet well, if the frost penetrates them and your boots are wet through, then your feet can go black if you aren't very careful."[186]

In Desperate Need of a Fix: *Ersatz* Stimulants at the Fronts

There were those cases when soldiers, as a result of a variety of factors, could not access the everyday stimulants they desired. Describing the tobacco shortages in the British lines, and how soldiers attempted to remedy these shortages during the Siege of Kut, W.D. Lee recalled how, "Tobacco became scarce, and the troops began smoking tea-leaves and anything that raised a cloud."[187] "Leaves of unknown weeds were dried in the

[182] van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, 85. Marshall served with the 1/1st Essex Yeomanry.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] IWM, 91/25/1, Papers of W.D. Lee. Lee served in one of the heavy batteries of the 6th Division (Indian 6th Division Expeditionary Force).

sun," he elaborated, and were, "treated with salt and cut to resemble tobacco."[188] According to Lee, this *Ersatz* blend "was generally known as 'Kut Mixture.'"[189] In fact, "even paper was scarce, so cigarettes were made with the pages torn from the soldiers 'Small-Books.'"[190] Recounting the experience, Lee noted that the "heavy smoke and the smell reminded [him] of a gunpowder factory, and often left the smoker with a terrible headache."[191] What limited amounts of tobacco that was found amongst those killed "were auctioned, and realized some very high prices—more than £6 being paid for a hundred cigarettes on one occasion."[192] Summarizing his addiction, Lee lamented, "I would have given a lot for a cigarette, and used to feel the hunger badly at times."[193]

In his memoirs, Harry Gore described the coffee he was served after he was injured in battle and subsequently captured by the Germans. "At Lille Station we were taken over by Red Cross Officials and received refreshment," Gore recounted.[194] "Whilst I was getting some food and coffee made of acorns my seat was taken over by a tall Prussian Guardsman but when I arrived back he kindly gave up the seat," he continued.[195] This brief recollection illustrates what items Germans would use as substitutes for one-time staple items.[196]

General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck recalled some of the ersatz *Genussmittel* he enjoyed while deployed in Africa. "Sometimes during the march back to Windhuck I did

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] IWM, 01/36/1, Papers of Harry Gore.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.

not feel very well; when kneeling down I blacked out," he recalled.[197] "As we had no doctor in the command and the staff veterinarian was not responsible for human diseases," he continued, "the cause of suffering could not be determined."[198] "We received at the time as '*Genussmittel*' an alcohol free drink from Cape Town," he noted.[199] "The stuff was so miserable that both my chaps refused it," General Lettow-Vorbeck remembered, "So as a result I had three portions, which I found to be welcomed refreshment."[200]

Conclusion: The Reinforcing Effects of Everyday Stimulants

In his insightful study on touch and intimacy as portrayed in First World War literature, Santanu Das highlights the centrality of touch in the everyday experience of soldiers during the war. He notes how much of this troglodyte war played out at night and in darkness, where vision would often deceive, if not outright fail a person. As such, touch became a way to feel, see, and therefore, interpret one's surroundings.[201] Due to the sheer number of men crammed into the geographical and physical space of the Western Front, men could find themselves quite literally climbing over one another. Under these circumstances, and important for our consideration in this study, there undoubtedly existed a need to mediate, if not limit social proximity outright.

Santanu Das also goes on to describe what makes the human senses so particularly

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[197] BA-KA, N 103/24, Nachlass Lettow-Vorbeck.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

unique, and how when used in concert these can accentuate experience and help one both perceive and interpret a given situation, thus constructing one's perceived reality. According to Das, perhaps no other sense or sensual experience is as inexorably linked to the other senses, both physically and psychologically, as taste. For example, the relationship between taste and touch could yield the interpretation of hot versus cold or hard versus mushy. However, these linked sensory interpretations are not necessarily limited to such polarizations. Additionally, multiple sensations can be linked simultaneously, spanning over multiple senses, creating a unique, individualized psychological interpretation and response.

As Rachel Duffet has noted in regards to the relationship between food consumption and sensory interpretation, the act of eating is laden with psychological interpretations and responses.[202] This partially helps to explain why soldier complaints about rations during the war are so ubiquitous in the sources. As Duffet has observed, the foreign nature of many of the foodstuffs soldiers were required to eat for sustenance could have a detrimental impact on one's psyche, and thus morale. While calorically sufficient, the relative lack of palatability, coupled by unappetizing textures, made fulfilling the psychological need for familiar creature comforts all the more important to enduring the hardships of war.

It is now commonly known that even anticipating the ritual inherent in consuming everyday stimulants prompt chemical reactions in the brain, most notably the release of

[202] Rachel Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War*, (Manchester, U.K.:Manchester University Press, 2012).

dopamine. The socio-anthropological role of these products is the topic for the next chapter, however the chemical role that anticipation can bring merits brief reiteration here. When a given soldier would look forward to enjoying a cigarette, a sugar-laced cake, a cup of tea or coffee, or a pint of beer, the brain would release dopamine into the system. Working in concert, the psychological and physiological value inherent in the replicated, habituated ritual of consuming everyday psychoactive stimulants helped soldiers endure the hardships of industrial war.

Chapter II
The Performance of Sharing: Exchange of Everyday Stimulants and the Mediation of Peer Relationships at the Fronts

In his memoirs, Ernst Jünger fondly recalled many of the intimate interactions and ritualized exchanges he had with some of his fellow officers. "We were four officers with the company commander," he reminisced, "and we passed our days together on the best of terms."[203] Highlighting the routine nature of their interactions, he described how they "met for coffee in the dugout of one or the other of us every day, or sat together in the evening over a bottle or two and smoked, played cards, and comported ourselves like soldiers of fortune."[204] "Those pleasant hours in the dugout outweigh the memory of many days of blood and dirt and exhaustion," Jünger professed.[205] "They were, too, only possible during the long periods of, comparatively speaking, quiet trench warfare," he elaborated, "during which we became completely at home with each other and fell into almost peace-time habits."[206]

Soldiers' diaries, letters, and memoirs—both published and archival—are replete with comparable references to the sharing of creature comforts with their fellow brothers-in-arms. Photography, very much still in its infancy, likewise provide provocative examples that have been frozen in time. Indeed, such camaraderie has been referenced before in First World War historiography, as well as in popular literature. However, the role of everyday stimulants in mediating these relationships has received far less attention. This chapter aims to fill this void, analyzing how consumable creature

[203] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 59.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

comforts were employed by soldiers to mediate their relationships with their peers during the war.[207] I argue that in addition to the formative cohort experiences of battle, military drill, and mealtimes, the commonplace exchange of everyday stimulants were a central medium for bringing disparate groups of individuals together, thus augmenting the formation of small group, cohort dynamics.

By using these goods and products as an analytical lens, one can examine how soldiers learned to endure the war emotionally, and how they routinely negotiated their relationships through seemingly mundane patterns of social exchange. As we shall see, these commonplace encounters were an integral component in the parallel individual and collective efforts to routinize one's daily experience and endure the hardships of war. Through using theoretical insights from the field of Social Anthropology, we can better interpret not only what these goods symbolically meant to soldiers at the front, but also how they could help these men mediate their relationships in the first place.

The Ritual Performance of Gift Exchange: A Social Anthropological Perspective

One of the key vehicles through which soldiers from all walks of life were able to mediate their relationships with their peers and superiors at the front was through the sharing of creature comforts. The simple sharing of a cigarette, or to use Sara Haslam's example of alcoholic beverages—let alone any other consumable luxury for that matter—were used as a form of "social shorthand" to communicate an array of feelings and

[207] Indeed these products were also used to mediate relationships between officers and the rank-and-file. This aspect will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

desires.[208] As such, these products not only brought soldiers together, but they were also often employed to limit how close soldiers would allow others to get to them physically and emotionally. In the process, the average soldier learned both what to expect from his peers, and in turn, how to perform around them. When at its most successful, these basic social interactions between teams of a couple to several men contributed to the foundations for unit cohesion. This was all the more important considering both the potentially high turnover rate (due to military transfers and casualties), as well as the wide ranging civilian backgrounds from which these men came.

Here is a brief, yet telling example of this phenomenon at play. Reflecting on how he and his fellow comrades endured the strains of the front, Jim C. Tait who volunteered to serve with the BEF quipped, "Of course we had our happy times; when sharing a cigarette, puff by puff, with pals who lined up with the request, 'After you…!'"[209] The previous pages of the short recollections that accompany his diary are dedicated to recounting the horrors of the Western Front that have since been permanently ingrained in our minds. Yet soldiers like Tait largely *chose* to endure such hell, and the sharing of everyday stimulants provided an important role in this process. After all, soldiers' letters, diaries, and memoirs are filled with comparable episodes of exchange. But how can one tease out their social significance? Fortunately, the observations that the field of Social Anthropology has contributed regarding group interactions and gift exchange

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[208] Haslam, "A literary intervention," 223. Haslam uses the phrase "social shorthand" in her survey on the use of alcohol amongst British army. Such sentiments were also echoed by David T. Courtwright in his study *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*.

[209] IWM, P 315, J.C. Tait Papers. Tait served with the 10th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment (92nd Brigade, 31st Division) in Egypt from November 1915 through February 1916, and in France from March 1916 through June 1916.

provide a valuable theoretical base for interpreting how these mundane products helped soldiers endure the strains of combat and mediate their relationships with their peers. Furthermore, the incorporation of these perspectives echoes the interdisciplinary trend that we are increasingly seeing in both the field of First World War studies and military history itself.[210]

One primary way that social anthropology can shed light on the nuances inherent in the sharing of everyday stimulants is through the field's insights on the dynamics of human relationships. The work of F.G. Bailey provides a prime point of departure, especially his analysis on the correlation between culture and action. Bailey has posited that one can "think of a culture as a set of rules for interpreting experience and shaping action."[211] Elaborating further on this notion, Bailey explains that, "The rules [of society] are learned from other people, so that, in a sense, all culture grows out of social interaction, out of communication."[212] As previously suggested, soldiers both learned how, and actively defined how to act with and around one another, and in the process directly shaped how the cohort culture of the front evolved. Soldiers also learned how to mediate their relationships, in varying degree, which proved essential in the maintenance of individual and collective morale. Thus, the sharing of a beer at a replicated *Ersatz* pub or *Stammtisch* near the front, or even just the casual swapping of cigarettes in the line

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[210] For instance, Rachel Duffet has recently utilized the theoretical insights of Levi Strauss in her work on British Army rations. One could even trace such trends back further to Tony Ashworth's groundbreaking sociological study on the so-called "Live and Let Live" system. See Rachel Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2012); and Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System.* (London: Pan Books, 2000).
[211] F.G. Bailey, *The Tactical Uses of Passion: An Essay on Power, Reason, and Reality,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 13.
[212] Ibid.

were central societal mores of the daily soldier experience that were taught, replicated and expanded on both sides of the battlefield along the multiple fronts.

Learning the societal mores that were deemed acceptable at the front was a key component not just for coping with the tangible stresses of combat. These mores were central for soldiers to navigate all the trappings of military life, including its dialectical anonymity and perpetual surveillance. As Tammy Proctor has recently noted, the civilians that went to war in 1914 "had to be taught war and its rules, and this education extended not just to the raw recruit in the army or navy but to the entire populace of nations at war."[213] The observations of F.G. Bailey can help us interpret how these individuals engaged in this process. He maintains that, "It is a matter of knowing how to live in society, how to manage social space so that one is neither lonely nor overcrowded."[214] Adapting to this structure is critical, Bailey explains, so one can "preserve one's individuality and identity and self-respect while at the same time serving the interests of the community to which one belongs."[215] This theory suggests that the individual plays a pivotal role in defining, interpreting, and mediating one's socio-cultural surroundings. When applied to soldier interactions, one can see that these men concurrently learned how to behave socially and how to mediate their relationships; the both of which proved equally vital in the maintenance of individual and collective morale.

Erving Goffman's observations on performance rituals can be placed in dialogue with Bailey's theories about society and culture, giving us a more nuanced interpretation

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[213] Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 14.
[214] F.G. Bailey, *Gifts and Poison: The Politics of Reputation*, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1971), 3.
[215] Ibid.

of soldier interactions and exchange. According to Goffman, people interact with each other in a way that parallels live theater. In a given setting, Goffman argued, each person learns and knows their roles, as well as the boundaries of each social performance. In all social interaction, Goffman theorized, there are divisions between where such "acts" are prepared and where they are performed, with each group member playing a central role in maintaining, perpetuating, and guarding these divisions. Goffman explained that, "We often find a division into back region, where the performance of a routine is prepared, and front region, where the performance is presented."[216] This division is also the realm where any "secrets that could give the show away are shared and kept."[217] Goffman also noted that access to these divisions is typically highly guarded by the group. "Among members of the team we find that where familiarity prevails," Goffman postulated, "solidarity is likely to develop…"[218] As we can see, the ritual performance of sharing creature comforts amongst comrades—as part of the learned, culturally accepted and even expected, routine element of performance—was integral to fostering a sense of solidarity within the ranks.

One can use the theories of Richard Schechner to buttress the application of those presented above. According to Schechner, "Performance is a very inclusive notion of action; theatre is only one node on a continuum that reaches from ritualization in animal behavior (including humans) through performances in everyday life—greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes and so on—to rites, ceremonies and performances [such as]

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[216] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1959), 238.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

large-scale theatrical events."[219] He likewise observed that, "…the differences among ritual, theater, and ordinary life depend on the degree spectators and performers attend to efficacy, pleasure, or routine; and how symbolic meaning and effect are infused and attached to performed events."[220] Fundamentally, Schechner proclaims, "In all entertainment there is some efficacy and in all ritual there is some theater."[221]

Erving Goffman has provided us with a germane example of this phenomenon at work. Discussing pub culture in nineteenth century Britain, Goffman attested that these establishments "provided a backstage setting for workmen, little distinguishable from their own kitchens."[222] One will quickly recognize this delineation of public spheres. However, it is what Goffman suggested about the pub as providing a backstage setting that is perhaps more salient. Pubs, like their Western Front counterparts the canteen and *estaminets*, not to mention the more commonplace interactions when small groups of men huddled together in a dugout or the like, provided areas where small groups of men could gather, communicate, and form bonds away from those they did not want to interact with. This could include members of the same unit, commanding officers, or simply the war itself. The unifying object in each of these cases was many times the shared psychoactive stimulant, be it alcohol, tobacco, caffeinated beverage, or sugar-laced sweets. The same could easily be said for the German counterpart, the *Stammtisch* or *Stammkneipe*. And soldiers did not necessarily need four walls and a roof to create such boundaries. Bodies, both of human beings and of the geographical environment, served as physical barriers

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[219] Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory: 1970-1976*, (New York, NY: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 1.
[220] Ibid, 152.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 238.

that helped to concurrently limit observation while fostering interactions within these small group settings.[223]

Another analytical concept that the field of social anthropology lends to our study pertains to the motivations behind gift exchange. In his classic work *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss challenged the existence of "free" gifts in society, deliberately given with no expectation of any return. He instead argued that the opposite exists: gifts are fundamentally given in the pursuit of self-interest. According to Mauss, the obligation to reciprocate gift giving sets up a perpetual cycle. Providing a relevant example to our discussion here, Mauss quipped that, "In that separate existence that constitutes our social life, we ourselves cannot 'lag behind', as the expression still goes."[224] In fact, we "must give back more than we have received. The round of drinks is ever dearer and larger in size," he proclaimed.[225] While often true, as F.G. Bailey has argued, gifts cannot be too large, as "[t]he overgenerous gift, so big that it cannot be returned becomes a humiliation."[226] This helps us begin to explain why cigarettes, sweetened treats, glasses of beer, and other stimulant comforts made such ideal gifts for exchange amongst soldiers at the front. However, these gifts could just as well have their limits, as access to capital—never mind the products themselves—was not necessarily egalitarian.

The reasoning behind why a gift cannot be so (over)generous that it cannot be repaid stems from the potential damage it may do to the receiver's pride. If this is the

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[223] For more on the role of human touch and proximity in the daily experience of soldiers during the First World War, reference Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature,* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[224] Marcel Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, W.D. Halls, trans., (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 65-66.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Bailey, *Gifts and Poison*, 24.

result of a gift exchange, then it could potentially do far more symbolic, and by extension, individual and social harm than good. Some possible results range from feelings of embarrassment and shame to outright frustration and anger. One could use such logic to at least partially explain why Berlin soup kitchens went largely unused during the war, as Belinda Davis has recently pointed out.[227] Additionally, one must also bear in mind the ulterior motives behind the communicative value of gift exchange. The act of gift giving could symbolize a paternalistic, even patronizing belief held by the giver. Such acts symbolizing feelings of superiority and inferiority could likewise be potentially just as toxic.

Social anthropologists have also supplied a meta-theory that can be useful in allowing us to decipher the symbolism inherent both in the gifts and the gift exchange process itself. Victor Turner postulated that individual objects hold the potential to "condense many references, uniting them into a single cognitive and affective field," and in the process create a symbol.[228] These symbols, Turner maintained, have the power to prompt action; as *significata* they "may be expected to arouse desires and feelings."[229] Simply put, he states, "Symbols instigate action."[230] Thus, the sharing of something as insipid as a cigarette could communicate to a given soldier that the provider is a good comrade, is perhaps even a friend, and by extension could be relied upon. This could, in

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[227] Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 137-158.
[228] Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 55.
[229] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 28.
[230] Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 55.

theory, also prompt a reciprocal exchange of good will and comradeship at some point in the future.

Historians have acknowledged that the civilian soldiers who fought in the First World War were particularly receptive to forming social bonds beyond the family unit, and this practice was transplanted to the various theaters of operations in a variety of ways. Adrian Gregory has noted that clubs, trade unions, and reserve military units (i.e. Territorials) set the tone for the social interaction and unity that was replicated during the war.[231] Peter Grant has cited these examples in his recent work, and elaborated on how this translated into increased philanthropic participation in Great Britain.[232] What is more, as Rachel Duffet has recognized, the rank and file of the BEF "believed that the power of an emotion, love, could be made tangible through the physical vehicle of food."[233] Echoing Santanu Das, Duffet claims, "the food offered by, or shared with, friends in the trenches also carried some remnant of this maternal love."[234] German society had comparable elements that had been growing since the nineteenth century, and it should come as little surprise that these men on both sides of the battlefield would attempt to replicate familiar societal bonds and rituals from civilian life across the multiple fronts.

Thanks to these theoretical insights provided by the field of social anthropology, we can now return to the recollections of Jim C. Tait, as well as the countless others, and

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[231] Gregory, *The Last Great War*.
[232] Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).
[233] Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting*, 63.
[234] Ibid.

analyze the multitude of meanings that the sharing of creature comforts amongst soldiers held. Not only is the sharing of cigarettes, or other any other stimulant for that matter, a social act that is learned, but it is also one that reflected contemporary consumer culture. Furthermore, by participating in the ritual of the communal sharing of cigarettes and other creature comforts, soldiers like Tait communicated to their peers through their actions that they were ostensibly good comrades and could be relied upon. What is more, if a cigarette or other stimulant was given to a fellow soldier who did not have one, this ostensibly could be easily repaid in the future, further reinforcing the cycle. The small gift represented by the luxury typically would not arouse feelings of shame in the receiver. This is largely because the gift itself was not so "over-generous" that it could not be reciprocated at a future date. Coupled with the sheer quantity of such products normally available at the fronts, this helps to explain why these exchanges—and references to them—are so ubiquitous.

Ideal Symbols/ Ideal Gifts

Some stimulants certainly lent themselves better to the fleeting moments of interaction that were pervasive at the various fronts more than others. The detriment to one's health aside, cigarettes were among the most widely shared stimulant at the front. Soldiers often employed cigarettes as a form of "social shorthand," and by extension, as a means to mediate one's relationships with those at the front. Soldiers' memoirs, letters, and diaries often reference the omnipresent swapping of the stimulant at the front. The offering of a cigarette, almost like a handshake, had come to be viewed as a symbol of

friendship, or at bare minimum, comradeship, and this simple practice was rehearsed and reinforced countless times a day across all fronts from 1914-1918. There were also those occasions when cigarettes were exchanged between enemy combatants. The fact that cigarettes tended to be affordable, never mind their sheer numerical presence due to rations, canteens, and other modes of acquisition, made them an ideal symbolic gift. Aside from supposed preferences in taste—which one could argue was merely propagated by advertisers as well—there were really no distinguishing characteristics that could reinforce class barriers. What is more, if one follows Mauss' and Bailey's arguments, the sharing of a cigarette typically did not make one feel put out. One could more often than not return the favor and reciprocate at a later date, thus reinforcing the gift cycle.

This trend was reflected in the advertisements of the period. For instance, the winning entry for the aforementioned 1916 Minoli cigarette ad campaign, which included a monetary award of five hundred Marks, depicts three soldiers enjoying both a beautiful day and their rations. All of the men have satisfied grins. What appears to be an older gentleman sits on the viewer's left. In addition to the apparent difference in age, the collar of this man's uniform bears different coloration than that of the others, thus implying that he is of a higher rank. He is enjoying a cigarette, like his counterpart to the far right, but he is partially detached from the other two in the image. However, it is via the sharing of the cigarettes that he is part of the camaraderie of the scene, but still able to maintain his distance.[235]

[235] Advertisement for Manoli Cigarette Company, *Das Plakat*, August 1917.

The other two soldiers look to be closer in age and rank. The one in the center, who seems to have offered cigarettes to the cadre, wears a *Pickelhaube*, the old military helmet of the Prussian army. Through this association, the viewer is told that Manoli cigarettes have been part of the German military tradition since at least the era of Moltke the Great, if not earlier. The men exchange what can be interpreted as timeless glances of gratitude. For the soldier on the viewer's right, this consists of both the gift of the cigarette and the camaraderie shared between the men. For the center figure, the emphasis is on the latter, however this may be even stronger as this soldier looks thankful for having someone to share his gifts with. He is able to be a good comrade, but without divulging much beyond sharing a space and a cigarette (Image 3).

The second place image, which happened to win a prize of three hundred Marks, portrays a similar group, likewise consisting of three soldiers. However, this illustration portrays the soldiers less as cartoons than the one that took top honors. What is more, all of the soldiers, judging by their uniforms, appear to be of equal rank. And instead of being near the front out in the countryside, this cadre appears to be well behind the lines

as the wall and posted Manoli advertisements suggest. Like the first place image, one of the smokers is seemingly disengaged from the activity of the other two. He sits to the viewer's left, and appears to be taking his initial puffs. The other two are huddled around a magazine, the *Manoli Post*. Both have smiles that suggest enjoyment. This includes enjoyment in the magazine, the cigarettes they are smoking, and each other's company. This enjoyment is still one that is limited, however, each soldier—to borrow F.G. Bailey's phrasing—keeping the other at arm's distance. And while the soldier on the left appears to be alone, he is not. The cigarette once again links the straggler to the group, reinforcing these loose bonds of camaraderie (Image 4).[236]

As we can see, soldiers were not the only active agents involved in ascribing various characteristics to commonplace luxury goods. This had indeed been in practice for decades, and in some cases millennia.[237] What made the experience of the First World

[236] Advertisement for Manoli Cigarette Company, *Das Plakat*. August 1917.
[237] Recall for instance the evolving perception of sugar discussed in Chapter One.

War unique in this regard was the rise of commercial advertising, both just before and during the war. As a result, some products had already come to symbolize a variety of things rooted in the desire to peddle more products. For instance, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch has noted, prior to the war "the cigarette had become the symbol of modern life par exellence."[238] In this one object, he maintains, "speed, transience, the hectic big city, and advertising," were all symbolically represented.[239] True, the cigarette did condense the act of smoking into a more time efficient exercise. However other symbols were heaped upon the "little white slaver."[240] Advertising firms, in an effort to boost sales, had touted cigarettes as an ideal gift long before the guns of August.

Prior to the outbreak of war, companies selling everyday stimulants tapped into the motifs since theorized by social anthropologists to increase sales. For example, an advertisement for De Reszke cigarettes in *The Times* from Monday, 12 December 1910 proclaimed, "As a CHRISTMAS GIFT most men would welcome a box of 'De Reske' Cigarettes, because—apart from the personal pleasure and enjoyment they provide—to receive a box… is looked upon, amongst men, as a compliment—as an acknowledgment of 'good taste.'"[241] The advertisement explained that this was "due to the fact that 'De Reszke' Cigarettes are invariably chosen by the most discriminating and critical smokers of all nations—men whom nothing but the best would satisfy."[242] In this case, De

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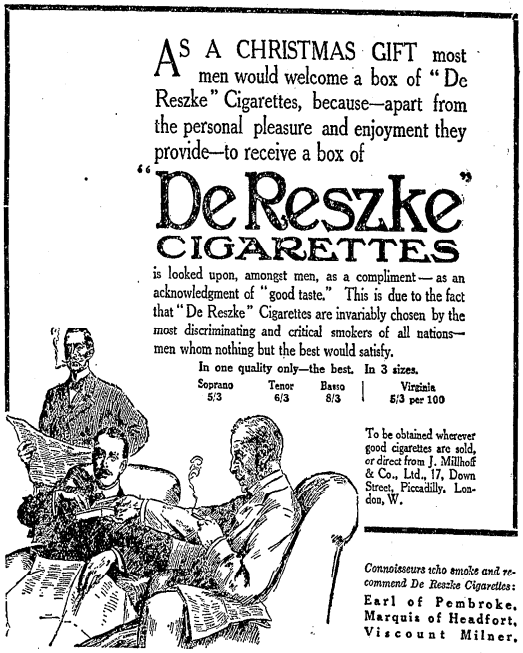
[238] Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 185.
[239] Ibid.
[240] This moniker comes from the counter image that temperance organizations often ascribed to cigarettes during the war, especially in the United States. For more on this, see Cassandra Tate, *Cigarette Wars: The Triumph of 'The Little White Slaver*,' (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[241] "De Reske Cigarettes," Advertisement, *The Times*, 12 Decemeber 1910.
[242] Ibid.

Reszke was both portrayed as an ideal gift, and a medium for conspicuous consumption. This is but one of several advertisements that proclaimed the gift value of cigarettes, long before the war and the Soldier's Tobacco Fund was even formed (Image 6).



The ritualized exchange of creature comforts could also communicate historical traditions, linking soldiers with unit heritage and patterns of socialized ritual exchange from previous wars. Robert Graves in his memoir *Goodbye to All That* recounted the historical roots of a drink that was allegedly commonly ordered amongst those men-in-the-know of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. "Once in France a regular major of the Royal Fusiliers entered the mess of the Nineteenth (Bantam) Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers," Graves recalled.[243] "He greeted the mess with 'Good afternoon, gentlemen,' and called for a drink from the mess-sergeant," Graves continued.[244] "After he chatted for

[243] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography*, (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1998), 86.
[244] Ibid.

a while," Graves explained how the major "asked the senior officer present: 'Do you know why I ordered that drink from the mess-sergeant?'"[245] The mess-sergeant replied, "'Of course, you wanted to see whether we remembered the Peninsular War.'"[246] Graves then explained how "The Royal Fusilier nodded," and replied, "'Our mess is just along behind that wood there. We haven't forgotten either.'"[247] "After Albuherea," according to Graves, "the few survivors of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Royal Fusiliers had messed together on the captured hill; deciding that henceforth and for ever, the officers of each regiment would be honorary members of the other's mess, and the N.C.O.'s the same."[248]

There exist comparable examples from the records of soldiers who served with the German armies. Ernst Jünger recounted how, while straining to identify a group off in the distance with prompts for the daily password failing, he and his comrades "kept on calling out for a good five minuets, and even shouted out the old battle-cry of the 1st Battalion, 'Luttje Lage,' an expression signifying schnapps and beer, known to every Hanoverian."[249] In this case, Jünger and his comrades were not greeted affirmatively in return, as "Only a strange and incomprehensible shout came in reply."[250] Jünger made reference to this tradition later, recalling how he and his comrade "jumped out of the trench and made for our own lines over the top as the first bullets whistled around us."[251]

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[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 150.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid, 200-201.

When they made it to "French first line" they "came on Lieutenant von Kienitz's party," and "When the cry of 'Luttje Lage!' rang out, we knew we had the worst behind us."[252]

Sharing Comforts, Sharing Comradeship

Literally the most visual sources that depict how soldiers employed goods like tobacco products and alcoholic beverages to mediate bonds are photographs from the era. Although Tessa Morris Suzuki rightfully highlights the limits that photography has as historical document, especially in regards to the issue of staging, photographs from the era of the First World War are nonetheless important to consider in our discussion for this very reason.[253] Fortunately for us, there were those photographers who consciously chose to despite how soldiers interacted on these intimate levels. The photo discussed in the introduction of this work exemplifies this trend. Of course, there are countless other images that follow this pattern and implicitly illustrate these theatrical interactions at play.

In one such image, viewers are invited to observe a group of German soldiers relaxing in either their barracks or a casino. At the center of the photo sits a wooden table with multiple glasses of dark beer. Some are full, others only half. Three musicians stand surrounding the left edge of the scene, framing the stage to only include those events near the table. A harmonica player sits to the left demarcating the outermost boundary of this intimate setting. Sitting at the table are two men toasting. Viewers will note that the one

[252] Ibid.
[253] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*. (London: Verso, 2005). See in particular pages 71-74 on so-called "fake photographs."

to the right is visibly younger. To the far right of the picture there are two others who appear to be only partially engaged in the performance ritual. The soldier standing helps to form the right most outer edge of the *gemütlich* scene. He raises his glass in unison with the two at the center. Cheers of "*Prost!*" or "*Zum wohl!*" presumably rang out, although the viewer cannot be certain. The soldier sitting at the keg appears to be pouring himself another round, and one may assume that the others would soon follow. In the interim, he is like us, a viewer: attached but still separate, yet nonetheless linked via continued consumption (Image 6).

This group may very well have been having a great time as the picture depicts.[254] However, this photograph looks staged in the way Morris Suzuki cautions us to be wary of. Yet more importantly, the image depicts the theatrical staging that some social anthropologists have theorized. The entire group of soldiers look posed, ready to

[254] "German Soldiers Relaxing in Barracks." Photos of the Great War, World War I Gallery. <http://www.gwpda.org/photos/coppermine/index.php?pos=-1082> Accessed February 22, 2010.

perform the roles that the observer, and their brothers-in-arms, expects of them. The six men surrounding the duo in the center serve as a backdrop to the action occurring at the table. Viewers are encouraged to feel a sense of comradely warmth as two different worlds, once set apart by age, come together. However this merger is tenuous as it centers on the simple act of sharing a beer. Both men, while being able to come together in a shared act of camaraderie, are also able to keep each other at arms length, in some cases quite literally. The toaster at the periphery of the photo is able to one up the duo in this regard; yet still maintains his role as a member of the cohort.

There are numerous textual examples that parallel the scenes described above. In one such case, Herman Rehfuß penned in his diary in January 1915 how he and his comrades "no longer know Sundays and holidays."[255] However, there was a respite from such drudgery on one occasion, when "Midday at two o'clock [I] visit[ed] Oberleutnant Werner (previously acquaintance and colleague) and my *Bundesbruder* Bühler."[256] After riding together to Büsel "to observe the battery," they "spend some very jolly hours in the officers barracks: singing, wine, schnapps, beer, sausage, pan fried potatoes, punch, coffee… everything is there."[257] According to Rehfuß, "It was really a *gemütlich* time."[258] Opting to stay up a bit later that evening than normal, Rehfuß "invited the other junior officers and we sang, jolly and funny, with a glass of grog."[259]

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[255] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/206, Nr. 11, Nachlass Hermann Rehfuß. Rehfuß began the war as a *Vizefeldwebel* with the 3. Batterie des Landwehr Fußartillerie 13. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 5 December 1914 and later to Battery Commander. He was discharged from military service on 5 December 1918.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.

Rehfuß scribbled in his diary about a comparable episode that occurred merely days later. "It is snowing. Finally it seems that winter is coming," he observed.[260] "Karle Bühler and a head doctor have joined us," he continued, noting how he and his mate had met said doctor the Sunday before, liked him and as such found his company enjoyable.[261] The men "Through coffee, beer and punch experience[d] a royally happy day in our officer's barracks."[262] Following this, the group went "for dinner in the village (*Fleischküchle* and salad)."[263] Considering the day's festivities a success, and feeling "[w]ell satisfied," his "guests [left] at ten o'clock back to Waldighofen, and promis[ing] to come again."[264]

The war diary of Dr. Kurt Schmidt presents us with a comparable account; and within his description the image of the theatricality inherent in the ritual of toasting, in this specific instance to newfound comradeship. "From Noyon [the battalion] goes over Appilly-Chauny, Liceny, Conoyle Chauteau toward Pinon," he wrote.[265] Once there, "the battalion was split among the surrounding localities."[266] "We have a comparatively good room," he surmised.[267] Then, the celebration began: "Cheers, new comrades! What will the future bring?!?! Let us enjoy the hours in which we feel like we are living. We were living the beautiful life, fate now standing dark in the background. Cheers! To good

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[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid
[265] BA-KA, MSg 2/5605, Nachlass Kurt Schmidt.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid.

comradeship!"[268] The soiree was soon interrupted, however, by the order to prepare for the Kaiser's regimental visit the next day.[269]

It is well known that alcohol can help one drop their guard and lower their inhibitions. Herbert Sulzbach tapped into this theme in some detail in his diary entry from 5 September 1916. He noted how he and his battery comrades that evening "had another little celebration... the occasion being the successes on all fronts; it was very jolly, as always."[270] "[T]he good-hearted chaps," Sulzbach explained, "once they have a bit of drink in them, start singing a mixture of folk-songs and military ditties, some gay and some sad..."[271] This very easily could have been the scene of the recently aforementioned picture. Not only were these men letting their guard down enough to perform and sing, they were also performing the rituals deemed representative of good comradeship, and in the process communicating that each was willing to be a participating member of the cohort.

The sharing of parcels from home, and more specifically the consumable comforts they often contained likewise provided soldiers with the opportunity to contribute to the routine performance of sharing and consuming that was a pervasive element of soldiers' experiences. J.A. Johnston of the BEF recalled how while he and a chum were on relief in Albert during the Battle of the Somme he had "received a parcel from home that evening and well remember B__ [*sic*] and I sitting with it between us as we ate every scrap that

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[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Herbert Sulzbach, *With the German Guns: Four Years on the Western Front*, Richard Thonger, trans., (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword, 2003), 88.
[271] Ibid.

was eatable."[272] Describing the edible luxuries, Johnston elaborated, "There were, amongst other things, a tin of fruit salad and a pot of cream, we finished that and went on to various cakes, and bars of chocolate, toffees, etc."[273] Following the smorgasbord of confectionary stimulants, "the ration of rum came so we had it as well, and finished off the meal with a smoke."[274] "A goodly mixture but," Johnston opined, but "as we said at the time, if we had to go back to the line it was the easiest way of carrying eatables."[275]

Harry Gore, also of the BEF, recalled how he and his comrades similarly would share their edible and drinkable comforts while up the line in early 1917. "For some reason I forget," Gore confessed, "the Lewis Gun team was a bit short on rations and as we were in for a week, we were a bit hungry."[276] "Fortunately," for Gore and his mates "there was a fair supply of tea so we drank a lot of hot tea and some of us had private supplies of food in our haversacks which we shared, so we soldiered on all right."[277] One could presume that these foodstuffs included everyday stimulants, especially considering their constant presence at the front. While not explicitly described, the comradeship communicated in these simple exchanges is still quite evident.

Dr. Kurt Schmidt ruminated in his diary his thoughts about comradeship, and how the sharing of comforts helped to foster these bonds. "Comradeship!" the doctor proclaimed, "In the trenches it shows its true colors."[278] According to Schmidt, it was

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[272] IWM, 02/29/1, J.A. Johnston Papers.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] IWM, 01/36/1, Harry Gore Papers.
[277] Ibid.
[278] BA-KA, MSg 2/5605, Nachlass Kurt Schmidt.

here that "one is singly dependent upon the community, upon the hearts of comrades."[279] The result, according to Schmidt, was "many a smelting of the mind, [a] mental reassessment is carried out there before the front."[280] "How the petty, low, [and] ugly that often divides man from man sinks," he continued, contending how "hate and envy, often so insignificant things of everyday existence, dwindles."[281] Schmidt believed "personally, [that] comradeship is bound deeply in winter."[282] "We share everything," he recorded, even "The first butter-bread since the march out," which according to him was "the finest delicacy."[283] As this piece suggests, basic sustenance foods could likewise be couched as being creature comforts.

In a letter home, composed in early December 1914, Kurt Schlenner likewise described the symbolic role that the sharing of *Genussmittel* from care packages received could have in forming one's opinion on what constituted a good comrade versus a poor one. Schlenner articulated that comradeship amongst those at the front was rooted in the relationship "between man and man among those who are constantly dependent on one another."[284] Schlenner maintained that, "No test enables one to divide people up into good and bad so easily as that of comradeship."[285]

One example in the metric that the young Berliner provided was how "One can draw delicate distinctions too when a big load of parcels from home comes in."[286] Elaborating on this concept, Schlenner explained how "The bad comrade gives away only

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[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 26-28.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.

what he doesn't want, and the only worst because he can treat himself to something better."[287] On the other hand, he proclaimed, "the good one shares everything equally, and even prefers to eat the outside of the cake himself and give away the middle."[288] Noting how the various manifestations of comradeship could vary from group to group, he wrote, "It is a fine thing though, that, whereas in Satzkorn in the training-camp there were quite a lot of 'bad', the race is now nearly extinct, for the war forces us to draw nearer to one another as each one sees how much he depends on others."[289] What this brief passage suggests is that an expectation existed amongst soldiers that their fellow comrades would not only share their edible luxuries, but that they would also do so in a manner that granted equitable distribution amongst the group.

The nature of comradeship was a topic that apparently fascinated Schlenner. Providing a concrete example of this dynamic at play, he described for his family how, "The other night in Amersfeld I was on guard in wonderfully beautiful, bright moonlight, in the road outside our quarters and was amusing myself by smoking and singing."[290] "Columns kept passing," he continued, "sometimes Artillery, sometimes Army Service Corps. 'Good evening, Comrade!' they all called out to me as they went by."[291] "Once a door on the other side of the road opened and a Pioneer or somebody called out, 'Hi Sentry!'" Schlenner explained, "and almost at the same moment I found a glass of beer in

[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.

my hand."[292] Evaluating the inherent symbolism that punctuated this seemingly trivial episode he noted, "These are little things, but they show a comradeship which warms one's heart."[293] "It makes so many things easier," he professed, and "I think that this alone must give us a great pull over the motley crew of enemies facing us."[294]

Such moments of interaction, no matter how fleeting, often made indelible marks on the soldiers at the front, so much so that they consistently made reference to them in their diaries and letters home. In a comparable example, Fritz Fehrle penned in his diary how soup and bread, accompanied by a welcome glass of German beer eased his burden: "Early the following day we made our way to the casualty station towards Montfaucon," he wrote.[295] "It was already midday. In dear comradeship we were given (*spendeten*) by the Prussian Jägers that were there warm soup from their field kitchen."[296] After briefly discussing the continued trek, Fehrle continued: "And I was lucky. A car braught me to Romagne, where I laid for a few hours in the church. Oh how that did us good: the first bed, the first buttered bread, and the first glass of beer in a week."[297] This gift was adjoined with "familiar words from home," as "Doctors and Nurses from Swabia (east of Baden-Württemburg) had us in their care."[298] As we see here, the sharing of such seemingly mundane items could also be symbolic references to one's identity, thus

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[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 5, Nachlass Fritz Fehrle. Fehrle served as *Vizefeldwebel* of the 6. Kompanie des LAndwehrinfanterieregiments Nr. 124, and was promoted on 5 September to the rank of Lieutenant.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

simultaneously linking an individual to a specific cohort group and serve as a subtle reminder as to why one was fighting in the first place.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, there were those soldiers that fought in the Great War who had learned the comradely socialization rituals that were performed routinely at the front well prior to being sent to the various theaters of operations. In Britain, this can be seen in the recruits that composed the Pals or Chums Battalions. These are concrete examples of instances when soldiers volunteered to serve King and Country with the caveat that they would be allowed to do so with their friends, neighbors, coworkers, and the like. As such, these men brought many of the social habits they had learned in civilian life to the front. A germane example of how this behavior was replicated can be seen in the recollections of Private John 'Jack' Davis, who volunteered to serve with some "thirty of [his] colleagues" who were members "at the Liberal Club." Reminiscing about the evening he and his mates joined up, he recounted how they "had a night out, the group of us, for once you accepted the traditional king's shilling, you're in. So, it being our last night of freedom, we made the best of it with the boys."[299]

Describing the importance that signing up with a group of pals could have on morale, Private Joseph Henry Yarwood recalled that, "Of course it was nice to go and join up with your pals, because you'd got somebody you knew with you, somebody you could rely on, a much happier feeling than if you were going into a strange crowd."[300] Soldiers who happened to be members of the British Territorials had also learned what

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[299] Richard van Emden, *Britain's Last Tommies: Final Memories from Soldiers of the 1914-18 in their Own Words*, (London: Abacus, 2006), 49.
[300] Ibid, 51.

had come to be considered acceptable social behavior, practicing these performance rituals annually while at training camp. Private Alfred Anderson noted how "As members of the territorials [*sic*], we had our annual camp when we were able to get away from work and enjoy some time with good friends."[301] This undoubtedly included all the habituated consumer patterns that were part-and-parcel of both British society and the experience of soldiering.

For some, however, getting on in new social environments appeared to be no problem at all. Private Robert Burns, for instance, recalled how he and his new found mates "were all in it together, pals."[302] Recounting the questions and resulting conversation that came during those primary initiations of social baptism, he reenacted: "'Where do you come from?' 'What do you do?' 'Where did you work?' 'Any cigarettes?' 'Got a light?' 'Are you married?' 'No?' 'Any girls?' 'Oh yes, half a dozen!'"[303] In each instance, everyday stimulants served as a central medium of interaction.[304]

While rare, there were moments in soldiers' writings when they verbalized their desire to contribute directly to the gift exchange that was so commonplace at the front. In one such letter sent to his mom in late September 1916, Sir Arthur Rucker explained how he would "be very glad [to receive] preserved meats i.e. Potted Ham + Chicken etc etc.

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[301] Ibid, 40.
[302] Ibid, 52.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.

[*sic*] also shrimp paste. Anything of that nature would be enjoyable."[305] He then requested some "Biscuits (of the nicer varieties)," claiming that he wanted to contribute to the mutual exchange of common gifts amongst his fellow officers: "The other people get 'em + [*sic*] I think I should contribute my share," he proclaimed.[306] Rucker's letters home suggest that he was more than willing to share the gifts sent to him by his loved ones and acquaintances. This tendency was communicated once again in a letter dated 15 October 1916, when he explained to his mom how they had "been enjoying the contents of your parcels," and the "sweets have proved very popular."[307] As we can see, Rucker wanted to do his bit in contributing to the community pot, as it were. Additionally, following the social-anthropoligical insights on gift exchange, he did not want to appear as though he was "lagging behind." As such, the sense of shame insinuated by Rucker's prior lack of contribution should not be overlooked.

Comradely Bonds, Enduring Limits

It is the malleability in meaning that contributed to everyday stimulants having the power to bring seemingly disparate individuals and groups of people together. A prime example of this can be seen in the so-called 1914 Christmas Truce. Taken at face value, products such as a cigarettes and alcohol helped to foster overt forms of what Tony Ashworth has defined as the 'live and let live' system. This form of direct fraternization

[305] IWM, 01/5/1, Sir Arthur Rucker Papers. Rucker served as a 2nd Lt with the 15th Infantry Base Depot in August 1915, then with the 12th Battalion Suffolk Regiment (121st Brigade, 40th Division) until he was injured in July 1917.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.

did bring men in some sectors of the Western Front out of their trenches and into No Man's Land in common celebration of the Christmas holiday. Tales abound of how many found their counterparts to actually be quite like them. It is unsurprising, therefore, that this episode has come to epitomize the absurd war mythos (and the absurdity of war itself) that dominates public perceptions to this day. The fact remains that similar episodes were replicated even as recently as the Yom Kippur war, in which following the initial cease fire a progressive truce began along the lines and the one time Israeli and Egyptian adversaries brewed coffee together and played football.[308] However, such bonds can and do have their limits.

A letter from British Captain Sir Edward Hamilton Westrow Hulse to his mother dated 28 December captures some of the atmosphere of that storied Christmas. He reported how he and some of the men from his unit met their German adversaries out in No-Man's Land. After some initial interaction, the captain purported that the Germans claimed "that they had no feeling of enmity towards us at all, but that everything lay with their authorities, and that being soldiers they had to obey."[309] At first the visits between the two sides were brief, and they "parted after an exchange of Albany cigarettes and German cigars."[310] Discussing how common these exchanges were where he was stationed, the captain recounted how later that day, "One of our fellows offered a German

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[308] Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East*, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2004).
[309] Housman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen*, 144-151. Hulse served with the Scots Guards before being killed in combat on 12 March 1915.
[310] Ibid.

a cigarette."[311] The German questioned, "Virginian?"[312] The Scot affirmed.[313] The German then retorted, "No thanks, I only smoke Turkish." The incident allegedly supplied all "with a good laugh."[314]

Hulse's descriptions did not end there. In the letter to his mother he described how his comrade George had just arrived on the scene and proclaimed, "Well, my lads, a Merry Christmas to you! This is d—d comic, isn't it?"[315] George reportedly addressed the mixed crowd of Germans and Britons, proclaiming "that he thought it only right that we should show that we could desist from hostilities on a day which was so important in both counties."[316] "Well, my boys," George allegedly continued, "I've brought you over something to celebrate this funny show with."[317] He then apparently "produced from his pocket a large bottle of rum (not ration rum, but the proper stuff)."[318] The celebration then continued as "One large shout went up, and the nasty little spokesman uncorked it, and in a heavy, ceremonious manner, drank our healths [*sic*], in the name of his 'camaraden' [*sic*]; the bottle was then passed on and polished off before you could say knife…"[319] In addition to the sharing of stimulants, the language employed to describe the "show" is equally telling, in that it echoes the theatricality inherent in social interactions, no matter how small and routine they may be.

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[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.

George Jameson, another member of the BEF, reminisced how his comrades "Keith and Philip Ridley, two of my section, came dashing into the billet during the morning and said, 'What do you know, the Jerries are out on the top.'"[320] His mates continued their amazing story, explaining how the Germans were "walking about... dishing out drinks and cigarettes—there's no fighting going on!'"[321] "Well we'd noticed the place was very quiet," Jameson explained, claiming how he "didn't believe it."[322] Jameson told one of his pals that he "can't go [because] I'm duty bloke for the morning but hop off and see what you can find."[323] As the story goes, Keith, Philip and Lesley Wood set off. When they came back around about lunchtime, "Keith [returned] with one of the Landwehr hats on—the grey thing with the red band round the button—Philip had a water bottle."[324] According to Jameson, "They'd had drinks, they'd had smokes and they'd been walking about. You just wouldn't believe it!"[325]

Although often associated with the British and Germans, comparable exchanges also took place between the French and German lines. German Artillery Officer Herr Ricker recalled that "Christmas Day when the German and the French soldiers left their trenches," and "went to the barbed wire between them with champagne and cigarettes in their hands."[326] As Ricker described it, the two sides "had feelings of fraternization and shouted they wanted to finish the war."[327] According to Ricker this "lasted only two days

[320] IWM. Voices of the First World War Podcast, Episode 9 "The 1914 Christmas Truce."
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.

one and a half really," as eventually a "strict order came that no fraternization was allowed and we had to stay back in our trenches."[328]

Although these goods could serve as a medium to bring adversaries together, the power that these products hold in fostering relationships should not be overstated. In short, cigarettes, sugar-laced goods, alcoholic beverages and the like are not a panacea for International Relations (obviously!). In fact, this episode was far more complex than popular representations like Stanley Weintraub's *Christmas Truce* and the film *Joyeaux Noël* present, as well as the vignettes discussed above. What is more, if the sharing of *Genussmittel* were indeed that unifying, then the war (and presumably others) would have ended. But such exchanges cannot be unifying in and of themselves, as these products are merely conduits through which social exchange can occur. What happens after the exchange can, and indeed did vary.

As Tony Ashworth has demonstrated, there were certain groups of soldiers that seemed to be particularly inclined to either engaging in or abstaining from the overt forms of 'live and let live' like those we see in the Christmas Truce of 1914. Some of these supposed predispositions were at times perceived to have been rooted in one's local identity. For example, Prussians were often seen by members of the BEF on the Western Front as having an acute martial spirit and being particularly tenacious on the battlefield, and also the primary culprits for the war in the first place. The Saxons and Bavarians, on the other hand, were often times regarded as being less inclined to engage in direct combat. The Saxons, in fact, were imagined as being but mere cousins to their British counterparts,

[328] Ibid.

coerced into war by the wicked Prussian Kaiser. This notion is reflected in the memories of Archibald Stanley, amongst others, who recalled interacting with some Saxons during Christmas 1914. "I tell you what happened on Christmas Day 1914, and people don't believe it," Stanley began, "We had this unofficial truce."[329] "We met in no man's land on Christmas Day 1914," and "We shook hands—they were Saxons—and I heard one fellow talking English."[330] Stanley asked, "'You speak English?' You know what he said? 'Cor blimey mate [*sic*],' he said, 'I was in a London hotel when the war broke out!' I thought that topped it. He'd got the London accent…"[331]

Some German units held comparable views of various members of their British counterparts. What is more, and although far more limited in scope, British and Saxon, Bavarian, and other "German" units met once again, as circumstances permitted, to exchange such luxuries and stimulants at Christmastime in later years of the conflict. Furthermore, Ashworth maintains, holidays were not the only reason that soldiers would choose to engage in either direct or covert exchanges. Ernst Jünger described one such occasion when the trench lines were so flooded that it forced the troglodytes above ground. Soaked to the bone, Jünger emerged from the trenches and "could scarcely believe my eyes," as the one-time "field of battle that hitherto had been marked by the desolation of death itself had taken on the appearance of a fair" between the previously warring Germans and British.[332] According to Jünger, "there was a lively traffic and exchange going on in schnapps, cigarettes, uniform buttons, etc. in front of the wire," all of which

[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 51.

appeared to create "a most bewildering effect."[333] However the bazaar was short lived as a shell, which "dropped one of our fellows dead in the mud," caused all to scatter "like moles into their trenches."[334]

Medics would also routinely use everyday stimulants as a means to placate the wounded and dying, regardless of what uniform they were wearing. Andrew Bowie recalled one such instance in October 1918 when he and his unit tended to a dying German prisoner. Bowie noted how the boy, aged sixteen, had sustained lethal shrapnel wounds barely above the hip and had been bleeding profusely. Bowie recalled how the 'poor' lad was able to communicate a bit in English, and had allegedly been advised by his mum to surrender to the British "at the first opportunity."[335] According to Bowie, some of his comrades entered the intelligence command post "to look at him, about a dozen of us, and they were giving him chocolate. He could eat a little."[336] As Bowie described, the group of men "felt he was their own brother, there was an atmosphere of love, he wasn't the enemy then, he was a mother's son."[337] Sadly the young chap reportedly died when being transported by the stretcher-bearers back to the rear.

Everyday stimulants were also often employed as communicative devices during moments of capture. Ernst Jünger described one such instance involving some English soldiers following a trench raid. "One after another turned the corner of the traverse and unbuckled his belt while our rifles and revolvers were threateningly leveled," Jünger

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[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid.
[335] van Emden and Humphries, *Veterans*, 210-211. Bowie served with the 1st Queens Own Cameron Highlanders.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Ibid.

explained.[338] "Most of them showed by their confiding smiles that they trusted in us as human beings," as they surrendered.[339] Still, he noted, some "[o]thers held out cigarettes and chocolates in order to conciliate us."[340]

Episodes like these, while highly instructive on the nuanced nature of soldier interactions and the day-to-day culture of the front, can be and often are misappropriated by pacifist groups and popular culture at large that argue for the absurdity of war at large. Such exchanges suggest the elemental, in that we are all human and have the capacity to put aside one's differences and stop the violence. However, this view obscures the myriad other human emotions that are both part of the human experience, and exacerbated by the strains of war. These include, but are not limited to: fear, anger, hatred, and sadness. While the exchange of everyday stimulants could be powerful enough to encourage social interaction between enemies during a holiday, which incidentally centers in part on gift exchange, such interactions were not powerful enough to survive the desires of the high commands to push through, let alone the emotional passions that grew over the years that followed.

The Struggle of Mediating Relationships

The dynamics of soldiers' relationships with their peers and superiors is one that could just as easily be fraught with tension. On the one hand, soldiers were constantly surrounded by their brothers-in-arms, not to mention under constant military

[338] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 228.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.

surveillance—both from their superiors and from the enemy. Under these conditions, one was seldom "alone." The desire to be alone is an oft-overlooked aspect of soldiering. As such, the need to mediate one's relationships, as well as to get away from the surveillance of one's peers and superiors, let alone the war itself, was equally vital to the maintenance of morale and should not be underestimated. However, as most soldiers found out, the opportunities to achieve this end could be incredibly limited.

When the opportunity for some much-needed time alone presented itself, soldiers certainly appeared to relish it. As with many other mundane experiences during the war, everyday stimulants were often employed, this time as a way to relax while away from one's comrades and the war itself. For example, Frederick Manning in the opening pages of his novel *Her Privates We* provides his main character Bourne with a ritual cigarette break during the Battle of the Somme. After traversing the battlefield, Bourne dropped into an anonymous dugout.[341] Despite that "the world seemed extraordinarily empty of men," Bourne still "knew the ground was alive with them."[342] After realizing that his newfound position was momentarily devoid of the mass of men, and that he was free for the moment from any direct threat or interaction, "he collapsed there, indifferent to everything."[343] Lying there in the earth, "with shaking hands" Bourne "felt for his cigarettes, and putting one between his lips struck a match."[344] In that moment the soldier turned to a familiar ritual: smoking a cigarette. Respite had come at long last for the weary soldier. Bourne decided in this much needed moment to himself to first "finish

[341] The reader soon learns that it is a British position.
[342] Frederic Manning. *Her Privates We*. (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 1.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.

his cigarette, and then move on to find his company" in the chaos that raged around him.[345] He needed distance not only from the battle, but also from his comrades in the BEF.

Manning's protagonist was slightly delayed in returning to the work of war. In the dugout, Bourne found "a small metal disk reflecting in the light."[346] This turned out to be "the cap in the cork of a water bottle."[347] But the canteen did not hold water. Bourne "uncork[ed]" the container, "put it to his lips and took a great gulp… discovering that he was swallowing neat whiskey."[348] After taking another few "discrete" swigs from the bottle, all the while "meditating a more prolonged appreciation," Bourne recapped the canteen and hid it, as he heard other soldiers "groping their way down" the dugout stairs.[349] He was no longer alone.

One of the great ironies of war is that while one was often surrounded by people, feelings of loneliness could creep into one's psyche. As veterans from multiple wars have confessed, soldiers could often feel pangs of intense loneliness. Such feelings could often be intensified during the heat of battle, when fear compounded these emotions. Regarding such emotions, Ernst Jünger confessed, "You cower in a heap alone in a hole and feel yourself the victim of a pitiless thirst for destruction."[350] Compounding matters, he elaborated, "It is dark, too; and you must find in yourself alone all the strength for holding out." Describing how one responds while such feelings are coursing through one's mind,

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[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid, 2.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 226-227.

Jünger notes, "You can't get up and with a *blasé* laugh light a cigarette in the wondering sight of your companions."[351]

In another episode Jünger confessed of how prior to leading an attack, "There's a lonely, sinking feeling in the stomach as one speaks to the section leaders." One "tries to make jokes," he continued, "and keeps running to and for as if before an inspection by the divisional commander."[352] "In short," Jünger summarized, "one tries to be as occupied as possible in order to escape the thoughts that drill into the brain."[353] In this instance, temporary solace was found as "One of the men offered me a cup of coffee heated in a trench cooker."[354] "Its warmth cheered me to the marrow," Jünger claimed.[355] While the beverage itself probably quite literally had a warming effect, one could argue that the gesture itself was just as warming, serving as an extension of physical touch. As such, the words chosen to describe this simple scene provide a glimpse into the multiple values such subtle, yet essential acts of exchange could do for those feeling alone.

Many have spoken about the isolating effects that warfare has on the individual. This is one of the central tenets of Eric Leed's monograph *No Man's Land*, which partially aims to demonstrate just how utterly alone many German volunteers often felt during their wartime experience.[356] Edward W. Wood Jr. in his catharsis *Worshipping the Myths of World War II* echoes this idea, especially when one is actually in combat.[357]

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[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I,* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
[357] Edward W. Wood, Jr. *Worshipping the Myths of World War II: Reflections on America's Dedication to War*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006).

However, Frederick Manning presents a different perspective on this phenomenon in the opening pages to his account. Bourne is presented as needing to take a moment to himself, to collect his thoughts, and to calm his nerves in the thick of combat. His short cigarette break, coupled with the surprise tot of whiskey provided him with both a respite from the war and a temporary way of limiting his interactions with his comrades. The whiskey itself provided an unexpected bonus during this break from the multitude of stresses in combat. What is more, it is telling that Manning chose to interrupt this moment not by shellfire, but by the scampering footsteps of British comrades coming into the dugout. Like all things in life, sometime people need a break from each other as well, as this passage so eloquently demonstrates.

While popular memory has focused on the horrors of combat, it should be noted that much of the soldiers' time could also be remarkably boring. Such feelings certainly contributed to individual loneliness. To pass the time, soldiers would look for opportunities to casually commiserate with their comrades, often over a smoke, drink, or some other shared stimulant. One poignant example of this comes from the observations of the perceptive Ernst Jünger. "Such distractions are welcome," Jünger confessed, "and it is easy to be talkative, if only to fill in the endless hours of darkness."[358] He then went on to explain how it was for this reason that he opted to stay and chat with one anonymous individual, "and drink in with rapt all the nothings he can tell me."[359] Feeling a certain privilege because of his status as a NCO, Jünger explained how he would "be led

[358] Jünger. *Storm of Steel, 38*.
[359] Ibid.

into amiable talk with the officer on duty, who feels a bit lonely himself."[360] In fact, Jünger alleged, "He will even talk to me like a brother, and in a low and earnest voice pour out all his hopes in secret."[361] Jünger too confessed his desire for a modicum human intimacy: "I have a longing for a little warmth and something human in all this unnatural loneliness."[362] Inevitably the conversation "flags. We are tired out."[363] "Phlegmatically we stand in a fire-bay," Jünger continued, "leaning against the trench and starting at the glow of each other's cigarettes."[364]

While positive tales abound in the sources, there are definite moments when even the mere exchange of creature comforts could cause strain, both in morale and in relationships. A letter penned by Private J.G. McDonaugh to his wife in June 1918 further illustrates these nuanced meanings that such products and exchanges held for soldiers. McDonaugh was serving with the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) with the BEF on the Western Front in the summer of 1918 when he reported receiving a generous parcel from home. In response to this care package sent by his wife, McDonaugh replied, "I received your parcel quite safely on Monday here, + everything quite safe inside + not a bit crushed."[365] "The Jam Tart was a '<u>Sweet</u>' surprise + very nice too," he penned, "also the Cake which we had for supper last night."[366] "But you must <u>not</u> send them so

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[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.
[365] IWM, 67/111/1, J.G. McDonaugh Papers. McDonaugh served with the Royal Army Service Corps (RAMC) during the war.
[366] Ibid.

often dear," McDonaugh urged, "as you will spend all your pocket money."[367] "Besides," he continued, "Bill feels a bit awkward, I thinks, [*sic*] as his good lady is not so fortunately placed as you + cant [*sic*] send him much, so I'll let you know when to send the next. Now, say you dont [*sic*] mind, wont [*sic*] you ducks?"[368]

Primarily, McDonaugh shows gratitude for the gift. Clearly it provided him with not only a break from the monotony of standard rations, but it also demonstrated to him that his wife had not forgotten him and had made a relative sacrifice on her part to show this to him. Additionally, McDonaugh's letter alludes to how he routinely shared these treats with his mate Bill, thus illustrating how these goods could be used to bring folks together and facilitate comradeship. However, the letter tips us to further insights into this relationship, as McDonaugh suggests that his comrade might have felt awkward for not being able to contribute as regularly, if at all, to their ritualized gift cycle. Consequently, he wanted to place limits on the amount of goods received from home to both ease the financial sacrifice of his wife, as well as the emotional guilt of his comrade for not being able to always reciprocate.

Paul Wittenburg, who served with the German armies during the war, found himself on the opposite end of such a situation, and felt compelled to beg one of his fellow soldiers to share some of his cookies. "I had come to a munitions cart, now also with the front," he recalled of that early February.[369] "Near us stood the light munitions

[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.
[369] BA-KA, MSg 2/2640, Nachlass Paul Wittenburg.

column, that Hans Bielefeldt was a member of," he continued.[370] Bielefeldt, he recounted, was sitting "on the limber and nibbled on some cookies."[371] According to Wittenburg, "He had already gotten parcels, whereas I was still without a post."[372] Wittenburg noted how he had been particularly craving such delicacies because he had been eating poorly as of late. Prompted by such desires, he "begged Bielefedt for a trifle of a gift."[373] Judging from the text, it appears as though he was never obliged.

These excerpts allude to the reality that not all soldiers had equal access to creature comforts. Under the circumstances, these men at times were solely dependent upon the generosity of their comrades to share some of the gifts they received from home, which was often done, and typically quite happily. In response, these men could contribute their fair share to the gift cycle at a later time by sharing items acquired at a local estaminet, canteen, in official rations, or with gifts sent more anonymously, such as those that came from philanthropies, local organizations, or company funds. However, as we can see, not everyone was willing to participate in such social rituals.

Other social situations central to army life could likewise cause angst and strain relations amongst the men at the various fronts. Frank A. Haylett, who served with the BEF, recognized the expectations of sociability surrounding pub culture and the strains that this could cause in one's relationships. In a letter to his wife and daughter dated 24 February 1916, he described how, "Some of the Sergeants are beer swillers + it cost me 9d

[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.

in about 10 seconds this morning."[374] Vowing to avoid getting caught in rounds as best he could, Haylett pledged, "I shall dodge that sort of thing as much as I can."[375] Evidently feeling a bit out of place, Haylett confided, "I am a round man in a square hole. I am not an ordinary corporal + cannot sit with them at their table."[376] Elaborating on his hierarchically imposed isolation, he continued, "I am not a full sergeant + cannot go to the Sergeants mess" either.[377] "I ought eventually to dine with the officers," he explained.[378] However, Haylett felt that he was denied access to what should have been his proper social cohort because he could not financially afford to keep pace with them in the pub. The interim solution he came up with was having his "meals brought down by my orderly," and to "eat them with my first clerk."[379]

Haylett returned to his concerns over the financial costs concomitant with British pub culture in another letter to his wife later that May. In the note Haylett expressed enthusiasm over the prospect of getting to visit his wife during the upcoming weekend. His enthusiasm, however, quickly turned to dismay. "Can we afford it," he questioned, noting how "Out of my 10/6 per week I am not able to save much—although I hardly ever go to a public house."[380] Elaborating on how going to the pub could easily drain one's pocketbook, he penned, "I know what it means—You cannot get out without

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[374] IWM, 02/35/1, F.A. Haylett Papers. Haylet served with the Royal Flying Corps during the war, with the No. 2 Balloon School of Instruction at Lydd from February 1915 through April 1917 as both a Quartermaster and Air Mechanic before being deployed to France with the No. 42 Kite Balloon Squadron RFC from May 1917 through March 1918.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.

treating first one then another + sometimes perhaps 6 at a time."[381] Of course, to the uninitiated, the easy solution would be to not engage in rounds. However, as Haylett wryly insinuated, this could be social suicide: "If you dont [*sic*] go there they cannot say you are unsociable."[382]

We can see several cultural phenomena at work here. Not only is it evident how such products served as a central medium for interaction, but we also have a specific example highlighting explicitly what Marcel Mauss claimed. The cycle of beer can and does indeed get larger and larger with time. What is more, there is clearly a socio-cultural expectation on the part of the sergeants that a superior would treat his subordinate ranks to a drink. Although a topic for discussion in our next chapter, it merits brief acknowledgment here that this perception suggests some of these relationships were defined by the deferential agreement, in that a ranking officer is expected to do little things, such as buying a round for the guys, in order to demonstrate his care. Haylett's letters home show that he was at least cognizant of these roles and expectations, and knew what he needed to do if he wanted to communicate to the men under his command that he was a good and, by extension, reliable leader. But any expectations had deeper, cultural roots. In the latter letter, Haylett clearly exhibited concern about being labeled by his comrades as "unsociable." This highlights that the aforementioned cultural predisposition to this sort of behavior amongst chums were deeply rooted in British

[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.

cultural norms about ritualized acts of social exchange, notably in pub culture. Unsurprisingly, these mores were replicated in the British army that went to war in 1914.

In examining these episodes we can also see the limits that these types of interactions could have on fostering social interaction, and how they could just as well cause moments of anxiety. In short, Haylett did not feel like he belonged to any social group. He was by and large prohibited from engaging with either cohort due to the compound effects of socio-cultural expectations and economic factors. The regimented culture of the British army, according to Haylett, further discouraged him from socially engaging with the sergeants of his regiment. Compounding matters was the fact that Haylett felt that he could not financially afford to fraternize with those equal in rank. One could surmise that he had to learn to be content with sharing the social experience of eating and drinking with his first clerk. However, one could just as well interpret Haylett's concerns and claims as a way to assuage his wife that he was not actively participating in any shenanigans while he was away. Since we do not have her letters to him, one can only speculate about his true motives.

The camaraderie and friendships that developed at the front that revolved around the sharing of stimulants and the cohort experience of combat certainly helped many soldiers to endure. However, there were instances when over-indulgence could also strain relationships. Drunkenness was perhaps one of the most significant detriments to not only order, but also morale and collective esprit de corps, in that it could influence how one viewed their fellow brothers in arms. An example of this can be seen in a letter penned by Herbert Weisser, who served with the German armies, from early March 1915.

"We were given to understand that heroic deeds were of the essence and the most frequent result of war," he mused, "But is that so?"[383] He then noted how some perceivably heroic deeds were merely the result of happenstance and quick reaction, stemming not from any real act of bravery, as the actor had only time to react and not think things through. He quickly went on to deride those actions of war that "perhaps" resulted from "the bloodthirstiness and unjust hatred which [*sic*] a nation's political views spread among all its members."[384] After pausing momentarily to acknowledge that some heroic deeds do actually occur in war, and questioning how this and the frequency of said acts during peacetime, Weisser turned his attentions to the perils of drink. "And what of the drunkenness, the brutality in both the aesthetic and ethical sense; the spiritual and physical slothfulness, when does one ever hear of them in accounts of war," he questioned?[385] Such a stance would surely find resonance amongst teetotalers in England.

While undoubtedly in the minority, there were those in the German ranks that chose to abstain from drink. For instance, Ernst Schallert reported to his parents in early 1915 how he had recently met "An Austrian doctor, who is also a total-abstainer."[386] These two, along with an officer from his battalion would apparently "go for delightful evening walks while the other gentlemen were paying their devotions to Bacchus."[387] It is interesting to note that these bonds seemed to center on abstaining from certain creature comforts and the mutual decision to eschew alcohol. What is more, Shallert's sarcastic

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[383] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 110.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Ibid, 102.
[387] Ibid.

derision evokes a tone of moral superiority that at a minimum could strain his relationships with his other comrades. In any event, those that chose to moderate or even abstain from drink in the German ranks were undoubtedly in the minority, especially when one considers the central role that beer has historically played in Germanic gastro-culture.

While having comrades that reeked of alcohol, or could barely "stand-to" after a night of carousing, alcohol consumption could also contribute to moments of insubordination, let alone outright crime. At their worst, these incidents could lead to courts martial and even execution. In the instance of the BEF, Julian Putkowski and Mark Dunning have recently noted that "of the thirteen British soldiers who were ultimately executed by the British military authorities on account of murder, drunkenness figured prominently in the cases and resulting charges brought up against them."[388]

More detrimental to morale was when mates and friends, with relationships often forged over hours sharing creature comforts, were wounded and sent home to recover, or even worse, killed. Unsurprisingly, those friends left behind often lamented their loss. An example of the former can be seen in the diary of J.W. Lewis, who on 15 February 1918 upon learning that the his dear mate Corporal Williams was being invalided back to base hospital, and almost certainly back to Blighty, wrote how the "news today [was] both good an bad."[389] While happy that his friend would finally be out of harm's way, he

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[388] Julian Putkowski and Mark Dunning. *Murderous Tommies: The Courts Martial of Thirteen British Soldier Executed for Murder during the First World War*. Kindle Edition. (South Yorkshire, U.K.: Pen & Sword, 2012).
[389] IWM, 01/48/1, J.W. Lewis Papers. Lewis served as a wireless operator with the 38th (Welsh) Heavy Battery Royal Garrison Artillery from March 1916 through April 1917.

would nonetheless miss his friend and the support that he provided. Elaborating on this mix of emotions, Lewis confessed that although he was "honestly glad that he is going home for a well-earned rest," he would nonetheless "miss him more than I can say."[390] Reflecting on the value of his friendship, Lewis penned how "It rarely falls to the lot of the wicked to be blessed with 'friendship' of such as he."[391] Their bond, he elaborated, "has stood the test of Good-times and bad," as they "…had the great seal set on our friendship by circumstances not usually met with."[392] As we see here, Lewis does not explicitly call attention to the routine sharing of drinks, smokes, and other small luxuries, instead generalizing them with the other experiences merely as "Good-times and bad."[393] Still grappling with the complexity of emotions, he concluded that, "Although his going will leave a blank in my life, it is my very earnest hope that he will not be called upon to again withstand the horror and hardships of 'Life at the Front'." [394]

George Littlefair, who served with the BEF in Western Europe lost his dear friend Joe Coates because of shrapnel wounds sustained at the front. According to Littlefair, his brother-in-arms was routinely careless, often times not ducking while in the trenches. Describing the friendship, Littlefair recalled some eighty years on how "We were a good pair of pals. We shared everything down to the paper and pen we needed to write home with and the blacking to polish our buttons..."[395] Undoubtedly, these men would likewise share any everyday stimulants and commonplace luxuries they acquired, be they from

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[390] Ibid.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.
[393] Ibid.
[394] Ibid.
[395] van Emden and Humphries, *Veterans*, 129. Littlefair served with the 1/8th Durham Light Infantry.

parcels from home, or purchased at a local canteen, as they "were good like that."[396] Still mourning the death of his pal all those years later, Littlefair recalled how he never took anything from the body to remember his friend by, and how "That was me pal gone [*sic*] and I was too full to speak to anybody after that."[397] In fact, Littlefair claimed that he kept his distance for the duration of his service, as he "never palled up with anybody else, not after you got that feeling."[398]

Britain's longest surviving Tommy, Harry Patch, expressed similar sentiments, regarding both the camaraderie developed at the front around gift exchange, as well as the overwhelming sense of loss when one had a friend killed. Recalling his "terrible reaction" to the death of three of his Lewis Gun team, Patch noted how "it was like losing a part of my life."[399] Patch remembered how he had "taken an absolute liking to the men in the team," in fact one "could almost say love."[400] Elaborating, he noted "I mean these boys were with you night and day, you shared everything with them and you talked about everything."[401] "If you had anything pinched you could talk to them," Patch recalled, "and if you had anything scrounged, you always shared it with them."[402]

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[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.
[399] Ibid, 146.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid.

Conclusion: A Difference between Comradeship and Friendship, and the Place of Everyday Stimulants in the Negotiation of Social Relationships

Describing the fundamental traits of combat during the First World War, veteran Captain Adolf von Schell argued that modern war was not fought by masses, but actually by small teams and individuals.[403] This is not what typically comes to mind when one thinks of the combat experience of the First World War, especially on the Western Front. However, there is much to this perspective, as specialization in the industrialized work of warfare became an increasing characteristic of the conflict. One merely needs to think of the artillery units, machine gun teams, Stormtroop teams, or nightly patrols to see the credence in this perspective. Under these circumstances, the primary group became all the more important as this regulated much of the daily life of the soldier during the war. Not only did these men fight together, but they cooked together, commiserated together, confided in one another, shared with one another, and died together. It was in this atmosphere that the shared consumption patterns of the front were replicated and fostered.

Gary Sheffield has noted that, "Social relationships between soldiers lay at the core of British combat motivation in the Great War."[404] As evidenced by the work of Alexander Watson and others, the same logic can be applied to the German armies. S.L.A. Marshall observed the power inspired of small group dynamics and how it can prompt action in battle: "three or four men who hailed from the same small unit, and

[403] Captain Adolf von Schell, *Battle Leadership*, (Fort Benning, GA: The Benning Herald, 1933).
[404] Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 146.

knew one another, would stand and fight, if welcomed into a new command."[405] "Within the group increments the men were still fighting alongside old friends," he noted, "and though they were now joined to a new parent body, they were under the same compulsion to keep face and share in the common defense."[406]

Some scholars, such as Benjamin Ziemann, have argued that because of the high and frequent casualty rate, soldiers were often prohibited from forming relationships with any semblance of deep meaning with their compatriots at the fronts.[407] In rebuttal to such claims, Robert Nelson has noted that friendship could and indeed did "develop from the more abstract concept of comradeship."[408] Sarah Cole argues that, "male friendship provided the stable anchoring point for a world in crisis."[409] Yet her observations provide us with a more nuanced view of war's impact on friendship and comradeship than its stabilizing factor. Fundamentally, she correctly points out, "…the war destroyed friendship."[410] This occurred both in the obvious sense of battlefield casualties, but also by way of the perpetual movement of men (as a military resource). Under these conditions, one of the great ironies of the war, she argues, is that "war creates friendship—indeed places it at the center of human existence—only to destroy it."[411]

The interrelated concepts of comradeship and friendship are a dominant theme in Frederic Manning's classic *Her Privates We*. As Cole points out, in Manning's view

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[405] S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Under Fire: The Problem of Battle Command.* Kindle Edition. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 151.
[406] Ibid.
[407] Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany: 1914-1923.* (New York, NY: Berg, 2007), 113.
[408] Nelson. *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World* War, 98.
[409] Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War*, 140.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid, 149.

"voluntary choice remains the defining feature of friendship."[412] On the other hand, comradeship is far more fluid, even volatile, as one "is attached to the endless substitution of one man for another."[413] This, she contends, is a result of the individual loss of power brought about by the realities of war. So then, how does one reconcile the "personal intimacy and the reproducibility of comradeship," which she highlights at being the center of Manning's masterwork?

As Manning's novel suggests, soldiers needed a way to *mediate* their relationships. Contrary to the arguments posited by Santanu Das, Cole herself argues that, "Far from being a site of great intimacy, the war fostered distance and self-protectiveness."[414] Under the circumstances, perhaps comradeship itself was and is only a survival mechanism employed by soldiers to endure. In both cases, the use of creature comforts, which served as efficient symbols as well as stimulants, were vital in maintaining this dialectically dependent yet concurrently distancing human relationship.

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[412] Ibid, 145.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid, 149.

Chapter III:
The Social Contract of Stimulants: Official Provisioning and Inter-rank Exchange of Creature Comforts

"With the morning came the silence that is proverbial before the storm. Hardly were we out of our waterproof sheets before the ever-present Mr. Findley was among us, passing out good cheer and chocolate. He knew from experience that after such a night none of us could stomach the usual bully beef and biscuit."[415] This snippet, taken from Robert Douglas Pinkerton's 1918 publication *Ladies from Hell*, is not part of the popular conception of the foodstuffs that were part and parcel of the combat experience that soldiers endured during World War I, nor the care and concern offered to the rank-and-file by the officer corps. Despite the "lions led by donkeys" caricatures depicted in a host of representations, ranging from Alan Clark's *The Donkey's* to countless cinematic interpretations, recent scholarship has shown that the command cadre at each level of the military hierarchy were not the aloof bunch of buffoons so commonly imagined. This body of work has demonstrated that the wide majority of officers believed that it was their responsibility, if not outright duty to ensure the men under their care were properly tended for.

The theoretical sketches of S.L.A. Marshall on leadership and combat motivation provide us with an excellent point of departure to interpret such a seemingly unimportant episode. As Marshall attests, "On the field of fire it is the touch of human nature which gives men courage and enables them to make proper use of their weapons."[416] "One file, patting another on the back," Marshall elaborated, "may turn a mouse into a lion; an unexpected GI can of chocolate, brought forward in a decisive moment, may rally a

[415] Robert Douglas Pinkerton, *Ladies From Hell*, (New York: The Century Co., 1918), 64.
[416] Marshall, *Men Under Fire*, 41.

stricken battalion."[417] "By the same token," Marshall duly noted, "it is the loss of this touch which freezes men and impairs all action. Deprive it of this vitalizing spark and no man would go forward against the enemy."[418]

Not all agree completely with this assertion. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) B.P. McCoy, who served with the United States Marine Corps during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, has recently argued that the provision of creature comforts is merely an *Ersatz* for proper leadership, and as such, a secondary way for a leader to demonstrate the deferential agreement and care for one's men.[419] According to LTC McCoy, habituated discipline itself is the best way to militate against any feelings of fear and anxiety one may experience during war. Elaborating on this point, he explains how "discipline is reinforced habit designed to produce a specific character, or pattern of behavior, that is strong enough to override creature comforts, personal wants, and lapses in fortitude."[420] "First-rate training, dedicated leadership, and a sense of belonging to a tight unit are true troop welfare," he maintains, and "[o]nly when the latter is missing does the former [creature comforts, etc.] take on importance."[421]

What LTC McCoy underestimates, while both Pinkerton and Marshall insinuate, is the symbolic value imbued in creature comforts, and as such, the role they play in habitualization, fostering trust and camaraderie amongst peers, and communicating the deferential agreement in leadership processes. Even the most highly skilled units used these products as a way to communicate various emotions at each level of command. In

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[417] Ibid.
[418] Ibid.
[419] McCoy, *The Passion of Command*, Loc. 836 of 1862.
[420] Ibid, Loc. 814 of 1862.
[421] Ibid.

addition to the debate over what the proper role of creature comforts is in fostering inter-rank relations, these handful of observations and theoretical perspectives raise the question of what exactly is considered a comfort versus what is considered to be a necessity.

Under the circumstances of battle and attritional war, what role did everyday stimulants play in mediating relationships between the rank-and-file and the high command during World War I? This chapter will explore the social contract that existed between the military hierarchy and the soldiers, and the role of everyday stimulants in the negotiation and mediation of this relationship. Both the debates surrounding and the actual provisioning of everyday stimulants indicate that commanders in positions of authority, at a bare minimum, attempted to symbolically communicate that they were cognizant of the soldiers' sacrifices, and were largely willing to adhere as best they could with the resources that were available to their end of the social contract between the individual and collective rankers, and the military and the state. One can use the concept of the "deferential agreement" articulated by Gary Sheffield to look at inter-rank relations in both the British and German armies, and how creature comforts were routinely employed as symbols that reflected this negotiated relationship.

Communicating the Deferential Agreement: Differing Perspectives

One of the ongoing debates regarding the ability of the European armies to care for and look after the rank-and-file has centered on the rations and supplemental foodstuffs provided. The collective scholarship by and large couches the role that the military hierarchy played in providing essentials and comforts in a dichotomous manner.

There are those that claim that, especially in the case of the British Army, soldiers were not only well supplied and cared for, but in fact they had never before been provided with so much. To bolster these claims, many opt to focus on how these predominantly working class soldiers tended to actually fare better in the military than in they had in civilian life. On the other side of the table are those who criticize the British command for providing unpalatable, if not unhealthy rations. This is to say nothing of the variable quantity of comforts available.

The latter stance can arguably be seen as an offshoot of Alan Clark's provocative, if not wholly short-sided, "lions led by donkeys" argument. In this instance, the British high command, to make no mention of the War Office itself, is portrayed as a distant and callous cadre that was far keener on sending thousands of men to their deaths rather than look after their well-being. In response to these allegations, particularly British scholars within the revisionist school of thought have sought to demonstrate how the high command in fact cared for their subordinates throughout the army, and notably in the BEF. One aspect of this rehabilitation has been portrayed in the ability to provide the basic sustenance needs of their subordinates, with most pointing to how military authorities were able to meet the caloric needs of the rank-and-file.[422]

Some recent groundbreaking studies have begun to call into question this line of thinking. Rachel Duffet, for instance, has argued that while providing sufficient calories was important, this bare requisite is by no means an indicator of successful ration management. Referencing the pervasiveness of complaints about official rations in soldiers' letters and diaries, Duffet claims that British soldiers used these complaints as a

[422] See for example Charles Messenger's tome *Call-to-Arms: The British Army 1914-18*, (London: Cassell, 2005).

way to criticize both the leadership and army way of life. She also notes how the food found in military rations was fundamentally foreign to Britons in uniform, and as such, played an adverse psychological role on individual morale. This is not to mention the digestive problems that these rations caused, with constipation being one common problem throughout the ranks.[423]

Although speaking of specifically of the British experience on the Western Front, Duffet's observations could be equally can be applied to the stodgy German command, especially following the promotion of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and the subsequent complete mobilization of all requisite foodstuffs for the sole benefit and use of the army. The purpose, in light of chronic food shortages, was to ensure that the army could continue to fight. Nonetheless, we can see comparable critiques over the quality of the foodstuffs provided as a present feature in German accounts. One such complaint levied in a letter home noted, "Where we are now, the food is so bad, that a dog also wouldn't eat it. We had sausage yesterday that no dog would eat (*gefressen*)."[424] While analysis of the German effort is not nearly as complimentary as the British, it is indisputable that the German economy was geared towards providing for the soldier, much to the sacrifice of all else. Despite the threat that military surveillance posed, soldiers did not shy away from levying such complaints. In fact, this soldier letter referenced was taken directly from one such surveillance report.

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[423] Rachel Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012; and "A War Unimagined: Food and the rank and file soldier of the First World War," *British Popular Culture and the Great War,* edited by Jessica Meyer, 47-70, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008). What Duffet fails to note in this regard is that this, at least in contemporary U.S. military rations (MREs), is one of the multiple purposes behind how field rations are designed. Thanks to Major Jason Warren (U.S. Army) for these insights.
[424] BA-KA, RH/61/1035, Reports of the Feldpostüberwachung.

Alexander Watson provides us with a useful, nuanced interpretation of the availability and quality of the food available to the rank and file of both the BEF and Imperial German forces. According to Watson, "Hunger was a less serious problem in the front line itself, as combatants were better fed than rear troops and were allocated extra rations when a major action was expected."[425] But Watson is quick to concede the effects of food on morale in this "war of endurance," noting that "the fact that food often reached the front cold and was bland in character, particularly in the German army during the second half of the war, did prove to be a major source of demoralization."[426]

The limits to this either-or approach is that by choosing sides over whether the militaries provided or did not provide adequate or palatable foodstuffs to those in the ranks, much of the nuance that existed within this relationship is lost. This is especially the case for the British army. As we will see, there were those that argued for both increased and better provisions within official military supplies. Additionally, individual commanders would routinely take the lead in petitioning for donated extras from the home-front, especially in the case of the German armies.

While there are recognizable limits within the dichotomy in the existing historiography, there are several theoretical insights that are of incredible value to interpreting the official supply of military provisions of comforts during the war. One such lens is Gary Sheffield's "deferential agreement." What Sheffield fundamentally presents is a more articulated interpretation of soldier-officer relations; specifically the unspoken social contract that existed between the rank-and-file and their superior officers

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[425] Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20.
[426] Ibid.

and the military hierarchy. Sheffield argues that the relationship between officers and the "rankers" of the British army "was a reciprocal one," in that the subordinate "gave deference in exchange for the officer's paternalism."[427] This deeply rooted cultural tendency was exhibited in multiple ways, including the provisioning of creature comforts. According to Sheffield, this relationship reflected the norms and mores of British society, not least the ethos of the Public School System. This "bureaucracy of paternalism," he demonstrates, was repeatedly and routinely taught and proliferated within the command structure of the British army, so that anybody on either side of this dialectical relationship learned their expected societal roles, such as the "ever-present Mr. Findley."[428]

Despite popular belief, Sheffield notes that there were occasions when "officers would forgo their own comforts to give their men luxuries."[429] Sheffield gives a couple salient examples of this paternalistic behavior, noting how it was congruous with "the prewar convention that officers should place their men's comfort above their own."[430] Citing a diary entry from August 1914, Sheffield recounts how "a private noted in his diary his gratitude to his paternal CO who provided soft drinks at the end of a long route march."[431] Apparently the habit stuck, as Sheffield reports that, "in 1918 we find the same soldier, now a company commander, distributing to his men cigarettes which had been delivered up by the padre."[432] Nonetheless, the symbolic value that this seemingly trivial exchange is largely omitted. Indeed, "Officers' regard for their men's welfare went beyond attending to their creature comforts," however this practice was a time-

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[427] Gary Sheffield, *Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War,* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 178.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid, 82.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Ibid.

effective way to symbolically communicate their care, genuine or otherwise, for those in their unit(s).[433]

David Englander also highlights the importance that these products could serve in fostering inter-rank relationships. Englander echoes Sheffield, noting how "[s]enior officers… took steps to project themselves and their ideas more effectively to the rank and file."[434] This manifested itself in a multitude of ways. One germane example Englander provides is the case of General "Dicky" Fanshawe, who "was known affectionately as 'the Chocolate Soldier' because of his distribution of slabs of chocolate to front-line troops during inspections."[435] Englander also mentions how Bernard Montgomery was prone to comparable symbolic practices during the Second World War. What each of these examples suggests is that leaders concurrently learned how to lead, and in the process learned the mores and socially accepted behavior soldiers expected of them.

Scholars of the BEF have long recognized the role of the British Public School System in influencing the relationship between those in command and their subordinates. The late Sir John Keegan elaborated on the benevolent, paternalistic role that professional and later amateur officers played in the day-to-day operations of the BEF. This continuity was so fluid, according to Keegan, that many amateur officers, "Simply by being themselves... provided their untrained soldiers both with an environment and a type of leadership almost identical to those found in a regular, peacetime regiment."[436] Incorporating the same cultural framework that they learned during their Public School

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[433] Ibid, 83.
[434] Englander, "Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918," 129.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 224-225.

days, these men would organize and participate in games, competitions and other entertainments to occupy their subordinates during downtime. Part and parcel of this process of looking after one's men, Keegan points out, included seeing to the rankers overall well-being. This most certainly included the provisioning of foodstuffs and *Genussmittel.*

Lieutenant Colonel McCoy, while critical of the role of creature comforts in fostering the deferential agreement, has offered some pertinent points one should consider when discussing leadership and the complexities of officer-man relations. He asserts that fundamentally "…command in combat requires love."[437] Elaborating, he notes that "A commander must genuinely love his men and win their affections in return, and, when the time comes, he must use that love to cause his men to willingly risk and even sacrifice their lives to accomplish the mission."[438] For McCoy, this "passion" is "the moral imperative of leadership," because "the leader is entrusted with the lives of his men and accepts unlimited liability for their welfare."[439] What is more, he maintains, "the most important battle a commander must win is for the hearts and minds of his men."[440] It is because of the life and death nature of battle that rankers "must know that their welfare is paramount to [the commander], that their lives are as dear to you as your own."[441]

This then raises the question: How does a commander communicate to his subordinates that he cares for them? Lieutenant Colonel McCoy provides us with what

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[437] McCoy, *The Passion of Command*, Loc. 363 of 1862.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid, Loc. 1124 of 1862.
[441] Ibid.

he views to be the answer. Fundamentally, he notes, the leader must be genuine. Insincerity and hypocrisy, he rightly observes, is in most cases worse than no care at all. Additionally, a leader should have "force of personality, mentoring and coaching skills, social energy, and finally, the virtue of shame."[442] He also highlights the importance of sharing and interacting with one's subordinates: "Simply sharing a meal with the men, cleaning your weapon with them, taking part in physical exercise and labor, [each] reduce the barriers between the men and their commander."[443] If this is done, LTC McCoy maintains, rankers "will bear any hardship willingly."[444] What is more, he observes, soldiers "will seek only to make their leaders proud and acquit themselves honorably."[445] What results, he suggests, "is the essence of cohesion."[446] Yet, I would argue, this "love" that LTC McCoy speaks of can, is, and has been communicated through the symbolic exchange and provision of stimulant comforts.

Although soldiers would often criticize the efforts of their respective high commands to tend to their sustenance needs and general comfort, this does not mean that *no* effort was taken at each level of command to ensure the well being of the troops in the field. The rotation schedule between the various trench lines is but one manifestation of this. Regarding the topic at hand, militaries had long recognized the importance of providing stimulants as means to both increase efficiency from their men and meet their dietary comfort. Additionally, official ration efforts and supplemental provisions through military run canteens also illustrate that military planners recognized the importance of these goods to soldier morale. The catch of course, was if the provisioning of such

[442] Ibid, 1184 of 1862.
[443] Ibid, 1307 of 1862.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.

products could be done in an efficient manner that did not impede the transport and supply of other requisite military *matériel*. Although Lord Kitchener famously barked that he did not want soldiers to treat the war as a picnic, efforts were made to tend to the soldiers' general well being, which included the routine provisioning of everyday stimulants. In the process, the various commands would call upon both governmental and philanthropic programmes to help augment standard rations.

Fulfilling the Social Contract: Official Military Supplies

As Martin van Creveld has observed, the first duty of "command must [be to] arrange and coordinate everything an army needs to exist," including its food supply.[447] But does an army need consumable creature comforts? Indeed, what this includes and if it should be included has long since been a topic of debate in military commands and continues to be so. In addition to the perspectives presented above, the debate over what constitutes unnecessary enjoyments to requisite comforts remains a persistent debate in Western militaries, as evidenced by General Stanley McChrystal's banning of pizza and burger joints at the U.S. military base in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2010.[448]

The primary means by which soldiers obtain many everyday stimulants was through the daily official rations. Although ration quantities could vary because of a variety of circumstances, the average intended ration provided by the German and British armies are important to consider for multiple reasons. On the one hand, it demonstrates what was considered fundamental to individual sustenance. Additionally, this will

[447] van Creveld, *Command in War*, 6.
[448] Jon Boone, "US commander in Afghanistan bans burger and pizza bars at Kandahar base," *The Guardian*, 25 March 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/25/us-commander-afghanistan-bans-burger-pizza> Accessed, 31 August 2014.

provide us with a prime point of departure for analyzing any supplementary provisions that the official militaries made.

The soldiers of the Imperial German armies were intended to receive daily caloric intake for of 4,038 calories. Although, as Gordon Corrigan attests, despite how "hard they tried, [the German military] rarely managed to provide the laid-down ration once the blockade by the Royal Navy began to take effect."[449] There is no underestimating the effects of the blockade on the distribution of foodstuffs to the German lines. In any case, there were some standards that we can use as a starting point for our purposes here. Ian Drury notes that ideally German soldiers received primarily 750 grams of bread, or 400 grams of egg biscuit or 500 grams of so-called 'field biscuit.'[450] In addition to this, German soldiers were to be provided with either 375 grams of fresh meat or 200 grams of preserved meat, and 125-250 grams of vegetables or 1,500 grams of potatoes or 60 grams of dried vegetables.[451]

The above was the best-case scenario for Germany's rank and file on the Western Front. Corroborating Corrigan's observations, Drury notes that this standard was seldom met as a result of the Blockade, and subsequent adjustments to the daily allotments were made as the war dragged on. Compounding matters for those soldiers in the front-most firing lines was the fact that the standard ration could be irregularly distributed. Consequently, soldiers often found themselves eating from the so-called iron ration. From these, soldiers were expected to get by on 250 grams of biscuit, 200 grams of

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[449] Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock*, (London: Cassell, 2003), 99.
[450] Ian Drury, "German Stormtrooper," in *War on the Western Front: In the Trenches of World War I*, Gary Sheffield, ed., (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 10-53, 42.
[451] Ibid.

preserved meat or bacon, and 150 grams of preserved vegetables.[452] Sugar was not supplied in any shape or form, let alone any other edible 'treat' that broke the monotony of the standard issue grub.

Ian Drury has summarized the general effects of the British Blockade on the German Army official ration. "The meat ration was gradually reduced, falling to 350g at the end of 1915," he writes, "and to 288g by mid-1916, when one meatless day a week was introduced."[453] Meat allocations diminished even further in October 1916 when the ration was reduced again, this time to a paltry 250 grams.[454] Compounding matters, Drury notes, "Portions of preserved meat," available in iron rations "were cut to 150g."[455] The effects of the food shortages behind the lines was equally appalling as "[s]oldiers not actually in the front line had only 200g of meat from June 1916" onward.[456] In reference to the civilian front, Roger Chickering asserts that nobody in Germany died as a direct result of starvation during the war, but people definitely suffered from undernourishment and malnutrition.[457] The same arguably held true amongst the countless soldiers in the German army, especially those deployed in other theaters than the Western Front.

Similar to their British counterparts, German soldiers were ostensibly supplied with an array of everyday stimulants, including caffeinated beverages, alcoholic drinks, and tobacco goods. According to Ian Drury, German soldiers were to be given 25 grams

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[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid.
[457] Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

of coffee or three grams of tea to drink, as well as 20 grams of sugar and 25 grams of salt for seasoning.[458] Additionally, "Company commanders could order a daily ration of half a litre of beer, quarter of a litre of wine, or 125 ml of brandy, rum or arrack."[459] This was complemented with an average ration of either two cigars or cigarettes, or thirty grams of pipe tobacco daily.[460] Even the iron rations provided 25 grams of coffee, however with no sugar.[461] Under this schema, basic stimulants were deemed necessary to soldier welfare.

Gordon Corrigan notes that on the whole, the British army attempted to provide its soldiers with 4,193 calories per day.[462] This British diet was to be supplied from a steady supply of foods that centered around eighteen ounces of fresh or frozen meat and eighteen ounces of bread.[463] When British Tommies were stationed at the front line trench, on an offensive, or the like, preserved foods became the staple. These so-called 'iron rations' consisted of sixteen ounces of preserved meat, such as the much-lamented 'bully beef' or 'Manacochie stew.'[464] In addition, soldiers were provided twelve ounces of biscuit, which supplied over a whopping one-third of the determined daily caloric intake![465]

The daily diet of the average British ranker also included a variety of other deemed staples, mostly justified for their caloric contribution. Typically, three ounces of

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[458] Drury, "German Stormtrooper," 42.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.
[461] Ibid.
[462] Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock,* 96.
[463] Ibid, 97.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.

cheese was supplied, which provided soldiers with an additional 352 calories.[466] Depending on a soldier's location and availability, either fresh or preserved vegetables were served as well. In addition, members of the BEF were supplied with 0.63 ounces of tea and twelve ounces of condensed milk.[467] This was supplemented with four ounces of jam, which provided 296 calories to the infantryman's diet, as well as three ounces of sugar, which granted another 335.[468] As Gordon Corrigan so points out, "while hardly haute cuisine, this was a far better diet than many had been accustomed to at home."[469]

British soldiers were also freely supplied with tobacco goods, which were both "widely available" and "frequent."[470] Members of the British forces were also able to obtain alcohol through a variety of means. Generally speaking, "Rum was a ration item; that is," Gordon Corrigan notes, "there was an entitlement of one modest tot of rum per man per day, provided that the commanding officer considered the weather to be 'inclement'—which he usually did, regardless of the temperature."[471]

There were practical purposes that justified why soldiers received the rations that they did. As Rachel Duffet has noted, the primary purpose of army rations was to net efficiency, and this can be said for both the British and Germans. Two field tests conducted by the British Army prior to the outbreak of the war demonstrate the importance of how getting the most efficient use out of the soldiers played in military thinking just prior to Word War I. In one of the field tests, it was argued that, "The tea

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[466] Ibid, 96.
[467] Ibid, 97.
[468] Ibid. Corrigan also notes how rice and oatmeal were provided, supplying 34 and 102 calories per day per soldier.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid, 99.
[471] Ibid, 99.

and salt cannot be interfered with. The sugar and jam certainly cannot be lessened and are besides extremely valuable sources of energy."[472] The other field test similarly noted that, "The reason for the inclusion of the coffee, milk, and sugar blocks is that it is felt very necessary to supply the ration some issue that will provide an easily prepared hot drink, with not only a stimulant but also a nutritive value."[473] Under the strains of military life, any added "energy" was a way to not only appease to soldiers' tastes but also simultaneously combat fatigue and inefficiency.

British Army cookbooks also provide invaluable insight into how everyday stimulants could be incorporated into daily rations, and the perceived benefits for doing so. In a seemingly mundane example for a sugar water concoction, the recipe calls, "To a pint of cold spring water add an ounce of lump sugar and a tablespoonful of orange or lemon juice; mix."[474] That sounds simple enough. Describing the purported benefits that such a drink could have, the basic instructions concluded, "This is a very refreshing drink in summer, and is, besides, perfectly harmless."[475] One must wonder: "perfectly harmless" in comparison to what? In reality, one does not need to strain too hard to understand why such a concoction would be appealing, especially when compared to the "refreshments" available at local estaminets or cafes.

British army cookbooks also indicate that there was at least a veneer of care for soldiers' palates, as demonstrated in some of the suggestions field cooks *could* make to

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[472] "Report on Two Experimental Marches carried out for the Purpose of deciding a scale of Field Service Rations," (London: Harrison and Sons, 1913).
[473] Ibid.
[474] *Manual of Military Cooking and Dietary*, (London: HMSO, 1918), 103.
[475] Ibid.

improve the taste of mass rations. One telling example can be seen in a recipe for the always appetite inducing gruel, found in the pages of the 1910 and 1918 reprint of the *Manual of Military Cooking*. It instructs the cook to "Take one teaspoonful of oatmeal and mix with a wineglassful of water, and having poured this into a stewpan [*sic*] containing a pint of boiling water, stir the gruel on the fire, to boil ten minutes."[476] After that, the cook is instructed to "pour it into a basin, add salt and butter, or if more agreeable, rum, brandy, or wine and sugar."[477]

One might be equally surprised to find a recipe for sugar pancakes in the same booklet. This recipe instructed cooks to first "Put the pan on the fire with a tablespoonful of dripping, let it melt, pour off all that is not wanted."[478] The next step was to pour three tablespoons of a batter that consisted of a mixture of four broken eggs, four "small tablespoonfuls of flour, 2 teaspoonfuls of sugar, a little salt," all beaten together while "mixing by degrees half a pint of milk a little more or less depending on the size of the eggs and the quality of the flour."[479] The recipe instructs that the result should "form a rather thick batter," and suggests that, "a little ginger, cinnamon, or any other flavour can be added if preferred."[480] In case one was short on eggs, which was a distinct possibility, "2 eggs only may be used, but in this case use a little more flour and milk."[481] "When set and one side brownish," cooks were to then "lay hold of the pan at the extremity of the handle, give it a sudden but slight jerk upward," which would turn the

[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid.
[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.

cake onto its other side. When finished, the cake was to be topped "up with sifted sugar over," and "serve[d] with lemon."[482] To add variety, the recipe suggested that, "chopped apples may be added to the batter," and that "currants and sultanas can be mixed with it."[483] Just how often these types of dishes or modified ones were served is hard to gauge.

One of the most commonly known luxuries given to British soldiers was the much-debated tot of rum. Thomas Gay of the BEF speculated the reasoning behind being served this creature comfort prior to going over the top on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. "We'd had a tot of rum that morning, on 1st July, to liven us up," he recalled.[484] Explaining the supposed reasoning behind the practice, Gay claimed that the lieutenants would "give you a good old dose, knowing what you had to do, because a man with his booze, he don't care what he does, it makes you feel like you could fight anything."[485] Regarding the symbolic value of the rum ration, Denis Winter noted that the daily tot "showed the army's intimate concern with individual welfare, mediating between its own more obscure demands and their [the soldiers'] necessity."[486]

Of course the British rum ration came under much scrutiny, and such debates were present early in the conflict. A Quartermaster Director's Meeting and Daily Report from early October 1914 provides some insight into these debates: "Q.M.C. said there had been protests raised from various quarters, including the Archbishop of Canterbury,

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[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.
[484] van Emden and Humphries, *Veterans*, 88. Gay served with the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Winter, *Death's Men*, 103.

against the issue of Rum to the troops."[487] The report then goes on to know how General Robertson reportedly immediately responded to such complaints by acknowledging that, "the Rum was only issued on the advice of the Medical authorities; but during the hard fighting and wet weather, it had been found absolutely necessary to make out a daily issue."[488]

One of the main arguments used to advocate for the rum ration, and the availability of other alcoholic drinks and cigarettes as well, was that the soldiers at the front were facing imminent death. Recognizing this fact, Norman Collins recalled how prior to the attack on Beumont Hamel during the Battle of the Somme, his batman had come to see him "and asked if I could provide him with means of buying a small bottle of whiskey."[489] It was "quite illegal of course, but I gave him the money to do it," Collins explained.[490] Justifying why he chose to break military law, Collins claimed, "He would be going over the top with me and he was likely to be killed, as I thought I would be."[491]

Officially Augmenting Supplies: Military Canteens and Casinos

The other main official sources soldiers could receive creature comforts was through military run canteens and casinos. As with most aspects of soldiering, there were specific facilities for officers and others for the rank and file. Sir Arthur Rucker praised the quality of one officers canteen in a letter home composed in late August 1916.

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[487] The National Archives of Great Britain (TNO), War Office (WO) 107/21. "50th Meeting of Q.M.G'S. Directors, 8 August 1914."
[488] Ibid.
[489] van Emden and Humphries, *Veterans*, 101. Collins served as a Lieutenant with the 1/4th Seaforth Highlanders.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.

"There is a very excellent Canteen here," he wrote, "where one can get everything from Puttees to chocolate + baccy [*sic*] so at present I shouldn't have to worry you much."[492]

Ostensibly these facilities carried everything soldiers may need or want to augment their own supplies. The diary of A.R. Peters provides a sample list of the goods one could find, as well as their price as of early October 1915. Regarding everyday stimulants, a soldier of the BEF deployed along the Western Front could, at least in theory, purchase a packet of biscuits (cookies) for one shilling, cocoa for eleven shillings, assorted chocolates for nine shillings, Fry's brand chocolate for one-and-a-half shillings.[493] There were some items that were advertised as being sold at the canteen, but were often scarce and did not necessarily arrive when ordered, Peters noted.[494] These included lemonade powder for one-and-a-half shillings, sherbet for half a shilling, golden syrup for six-and-a-half shillings, and Roundtree's Gums, which sold for a fifth of a Pound.[495] Additionally, luxury foodstuffs beyond our everyday stimulants were also often in short supply, including tins of fruit, Chutney, and other coveted items like potted meats, sausages, and tomatoes.[496] Miscellaneous sundry items were also advertised as being available for purchase, such as toothpaste, boot polish, toilet soap, Vasoline, and candles.[497] Unfortunately for Peters, and presumably the majority of his immediate comrades, "the only thing <u>available</u> was a tin of <u>Sardines</u>."[498]

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[492] IWM, 01/5/1, Sir Arthur Rucker Papers.
[493] IWM, 88/52/1, A.R. Peters Papers.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Ibid.
[498] Ibid. Underlined in original text.

As we see above, soldiers could be quite critical of what was actually available at the military run canteens, never mind the price these items were sold for. Another source of much complaint were the long queue times soldiers had to endure. In a letter to his father sent from the Gallipoli theatre in late October 1915, but that could easily come from any sector of the numerous fronts at any given time, 2nd Lt Stanley Cooke lamented, "The canteen is a failure to all except lucky ones who can afford 3 or more hours in a queue waiting to be served, + then as likely as not everything is sold out when one's turn comes."[499] As we will see in later chapters, this grievance mirrors those levied against the YMCA, or any other charitable organization for that matter, for similar shortcomings.[500]

The documentary evidence available suggests that there were those within the British command that were aware of these shortages and who were endeavoring to remedy the situation. This evidence also illustrates the increased centralization of resources that occurred during the war, and the provision of creature comforts was not excluded. Referencing historical precedent, one contemporary observer noted that "In South Africa, 17 years ago, and more lately, in France, and especially in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, experience has shown how necessary it is that the Field Service Rations should be supplemented and varied by the purchases men make in a canteen."[501] However, the author goes to attest how "in every campaign a Field Force Canteen system has had to be improvised, often after much delay, during which period the mens' [*sic*] health has

[499] IWM, 05/7/2 and Con Shelf, 2nd Lt. S. Cooke Papers.
[500] Ibid.
[501] TNA, WO 32/5500. "Proposal by Army Canteen Committee for the Formation of an Official Organization to Operate Army Canteens," circa 13 October 1916.

suffered to a greater or less extent."[502] To prevent such problems in the event of future wars, it was argued that, "the mobilization of Canteens for an Army in the Field should be not less rapid than the mobilization of the Army itself."[503]

Army Council Instruction Number 967 issued in 1916 proposed increased governmental centralization and control, echoing what Frank Trentmann and other scholars have observed occurring on the home-front. This order followed a field test from mid-May 1916 in which "543 samples of goods actually on sale in the Institutes" determined that "348 were passed as satisfactory and 195, or over 35 per cent., [*sic*] were deemed unsuitable for sale in Canteens, or were considered to be retailed at unreasonable prices."[504] The issue of excessive profits and adequate quality was a persistent concern during the war: "Stated in general terms the Council's hopes are that large profits shall not be allowed to accumulate but that your Board shall be able to arrange both <u>prices</u> and <u>quality</u> so that the soldier shall receive at the time the <u>best value</u> for his purchases."[505]

The Fourth Report of the Executive Committee (for work done since 28 July 1916) claimed that some 1,436 samples were taken, "of which 233 were found not to be up to standard, or goods contrary to regulations."[506] In addition, among these samples it was found that "There were 65 cases of overcharges."[507] Statistically, the sample showed "a percentage of goods not up to standard of 16.13" percent.[508] While this reduction undoubtedly was a positive sign, the report raised concerns about diluted beer being

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[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.
[505] TNA, WO 32/5499. "Letter to the Chairman, Board of Control Regimental Institutes," September 1915. Underlines in original.
[506] TNA, WO 32/5500. Army Canteen Committee, "Fourth Report of Executive Committee," circa August 1916.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Ibid.

served to the soldiers. In fact, it was "believed that this trouble has reached an acute stage mainly on account of the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy employees for serving in beer bars," even "though the contractors themselves generally are endeavouring to abate the source of complaint."[509]

This specific report is instructive in other regards, as it provides quantitative insight into what types of soldiers' complaints were received. Out of 530 complaints levied against the Expeditionary Force Canteen system, 160 were for inferior quality, 35 were for watered-down beer, 21 for "scales out of order," 72 for untidiness, and 45 for "goods condemned."[510] However, by far the largest number of complaints was about overcharges, which received 197 formal complaints, equating to some thirty-seven percent of all formal complaints submitted.[511] This is not to mention the less formal critiques and criticisms we see in soldiers' letters and diaries, like those scribbled by men like A.R. Peters.

While commonly associated with contemporary wars (at least here in the United States), contractors were hired during the First World War to help the militaries provide necessary supplies and comforts to the soldiers in the field. The BEF Army Service Command (ASC) Supply Reserve Depot ledger dated 21 August 1917 provides both a snapshot of the supplies recently obtained, as well as the scale of operations needed to care for the men off at the front. For instance, Cadbury Brothers, Ltd. was contracted to provide 280,000 pounds of biscuits, at a rate of 40,000 pounds weekly by 1917.[512] Of course Cadbury was not the sole provider of this staple comfort. Charnley's Biscuit

[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid.
[511] Ibid.
[512] TNA, WO 161/11. "Report showing the progress made during the Week ended 9th August 1917 towards the completion of Contracts entered into for Supplies, etc. for the above Force (Expeditionary)."

Company was contracted to supply 500,000 pounds of biscuits at a rate of 59,740 pounds weekly.[513] The ledger lists eight companies in total, with nine contracts, pledging to supply over 5.2 million pounds of biscuits.[514]

There are other illustrative statistics that illustrate the massive quantities of product that needed to be routinely mobilized for soldier consumption. For the date of 21 August 1917, the BEF ASC Supply Reserve Depot had been authorized to hold in reserve 28,000,000 pounds of biscuits, over 5.6 million pounds of jam, over 5.6 million pounds of sugar, and 1,173,000 pounds of tea.[515] These requisites were reportedly needed to supply two million men for fifteen days.[516] What was deemed necessary and what were actually available in reserve, however, could be two different matters entirely.[517] For this date, ASC personnel reported that there were only 12.9 million pounds of biscuits in reserve, a discrepancy of over 15 million deemed necessary.[518] Conversely, the ASC reported a surplus of over 2.5 million pounds of jam, 8.39 million pounds of sugar, and a 1.68 million pound surplus of tea for the same date.[519]

Another ASC storage depot comparably illustrates the scale of operations conducted by the British Army to provide soldiers access to everyday stimulants. As of midnight on 11 November 1918, the Millwall Depot (ASC) reported that it had the following stocks of commonplace luxuries amongst its supplies: 3,732,770 crates of biscuits (with a weight of fifty pounds each), an additional 731,820 crates of biscuits stored in sixty pound containers, 877,450 cases of jam (fifty pounds per container), an

[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid.

additional 1.2 million crates of jam (stored in 72 and 75 pound containers), and 4,189,675 crates of jam stored in sixty pound containers.[520] There were also 561,617 chests of tea and 791,280 pounds of sugar stored at this depot. In reserve there were reportedly an additional 21,880 chests of tea, 131,280 pounds of sugar, 700,000 cases of biscuits and 175,000 crates of jam.[521]

The purpose of highlighting the work of the British EF Canteens is not to get bogged down in the minutiae of the day to day operations, contractor negotiations, and the like, but to demonstrate how the British Army made concerted attempts to provide comforts to the soldiers through the multiple interrelated avenues of ration supply, canteens, and providing logistical support for shipments of parcels. Additionally, the surviving documentation suggests that efforts were routinely made to reevaluate and improve upon these efforts over the course of the war, and remedy any shortcomings in the unprecedented logistical undertaking.

The efforts of the British Army to provide comforts to soldiers deployed to the other theaters of operations around the globe perhaps better underscore the vast efforts that were undertaken to provide for the rank-and-file in the field. In Mesopotamia, for example, the limited number of supplies had to be shipped in over vast distances by sea. Once on land, two of the main problems that impacted the British Army's logistics included the summer heat and topographical influences on the lines-of-communications, which included river transport and the limited—if not outright nonexistent—road

[520] TNA, WO 161/11. "Supply Reserve Depot Report for 11 November 1918."
[521] Ibid.

network (never mind the petrol shortages).[522] Reports often note how rain could quickly turn roads and paths into "quagmire."[523]

While admittedly biased, British Quartermaster General (QMG) reports highlight the increased importance of EF Canteens in such remote locations: "The E.F.C. were practically a necessity of life in Mesopotamia and it is difficult to image how the Force could have done without them."[524] These facilities, it was recognized, "brought some of the comforts of civilization into remote corners of Mesopotamia."[525] Reports also claim that "In the life of the troops at such a place the opening of an E.F. Canteen in their midst was a great and much longed for event."[526]

Despite the best efforts to ensure the well being of those British troops deployed beyond Western Europe, there were moments of tension and debate. In a letter from P.C. Scott addressed to the high command dated 11 January 1916, he argued: "This Army is under abnormal conditions, and nothing adds more to one's trials and temper than the remark often heard 'We always did so and so in France'!!!"[527] Scott argued, "Macedonia is not France, and Salonika does not compare with the combined advantages of Havre, Boulogne, Calais, with their short sea distance from the fount of all good things."[528]

As would be expected, there were debates over how many and which luxury items were considered essential to the maintenance of morale amongst the British forces. In December 1914, there was a request from Third Army Corps (BEF) to General Headquarters (GHQ) for increased variety in the jam provided, and perhaps more

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[522] TNA, WO 161/17. "Some General Notes on R.A.S.C. Work in Mesopotamia, 1916-1919."
[523] Ibid.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid.
[527] TNA, WO 161/20. "Letter from P.C. Scott," 11 January 1916.
[528] Ibid

interestingly, "It has been suggested from time to time that the men should get ½ oz [*sic*] of sweets twice a week, and I know how much such an issue would be appreciated; Peppermint Bullseyes are what are most sought after and the men cannot purchase them locally."[529] This small request demonstrates that those in positions of authority in the field attempted to see to the increased wellbeing of those under their command, and were upholding their end of the social contract of the deferential agreement behind the scenes.

These requests were, however, met with some hostility from those back in GHQ. "We have recently had several demands for additions to or changes in the daily rations," one letter commented, noting how "You will be interested perhaps to know what some of the recommendations have been."[530] The requests, as noted above, ranged from a variety of meats, to "treacle, and last but not least, peppermint bullseyes."[531] The letter-writer then lambasted how "The bullseyes constituted the last straw, and I prepared a rather acrimonious reply."[532] The author then upheld the perceived superiority of British army rations to those of any other European belligerent, noting how there was already plenty of variety in said rations, and "discouraged the idea that luxuries are necessaries" before proclaiming "that the main object in view is the destruction of the enemy's armies."[533] The author then castigated how "the attainment of the above object would not be materially expedited or rendered more easy [*sic*] by the issue of peppermint bullseyes, or by the substitution of marmalade for plum jam."[534]

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[529] TNA, WO 107/13. "Extract from a Memorandum No. 3/AC/Q.1914," 13 December 1914.
[530] TNA, WO 107/13. "Letter to Cowans," 16 December 1914.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Ibid.
[534] Ibid.

The rant over the provisioning of extra comforts did not end there. The author confessed that while "the above is not intended to be private," he would "prefer it should not be quoted officially."[535] However, he soon turned back to criticizing the desires and requests: "You might, however, keep private the conclusion I draw from such demands, which is that the state of mind gradually growing in the army seems to be much more concerned with luxury and personal comfort than with killing the enemy…"[536] The author continued, "The absurd demands which have recently poured in—including officers' mess carts for all units… are becoming intolerable."[537]

Despite the debates that took place over what constituted luxury items, and if or how they should be supplied to soldiers, some of our everyday stimulants had already made the societal switch from luxury to staple necessity. For example, in the British Army both tea and sugar had become by this point to be considered as indispensable, as five-eights of an ounce of tea with two ounces of sugar were included in the so-called iron ration.[538] In fact, these two items were typically categorically classified as "groceries" on ASC ledgers.[539]

Another major debate that occurred within the British Quartermaster Corps centered on what to do with canteen profits. Virtually all authorities within the British High Command agreed that the profits should go to directly benefit the soldiers themselves. What this meant, however, as well as when, was what was open to considerable debate. Some maintained that any funds should go to the immediate benefit of the soldier. This was the point raised in one communiqué from December 1915: "This

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[535] Ibid.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Ibid.
[538] TNA, WO 161/10.
[539] Ibid.

money has come from the pockets of the soldiers of an Army raised 'for the period of the War.' The vast majority of those who survive through it will not continue in it and a large number of men will not survive."[540] Proponents of immediate benefits argued that any "proposal to devote so large a percentage to purposes of a 'hereafter' character means that a bare ¼ is to be devoted to purposes which [*sic*] will immediately add to what comfort and enjoyment is possible for the men in the field who have made the fund."[541] Specific immediate benefits, it was presented, could include: "newspapers at the front—tobacco in Hospitals—Improvement of comfort and games in Institutes—initial grants if required to units at the front for regimental Institutes…"[542]

As would be expected, there were those who argued that the profits "should be devoted to purposes which are calculated to be of permanent benefit to the troops," instead of those "miscellaneous objects of a temporary character."[543] In light of such considerations, one proposal desired "to set aside at least 75% of the Fund to be devoted to purposes of a permanent nature."[544] This could potentially include "the training of disabled soldiers, and the endowment of hospital wards for the reception of disabled and incurable cases."[545]

So what do these numbers and haranguing over profits all mean? Primarily this demonstrates that there was at least a modicum of interest in ensuring the comfort of the men deployed around the globe, despite what critics have insisted ever since. The scale of these operations, coupled by limited resources in time and manpower guaranteed that

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[540] TNA, WO 32/5499. "Minute Sheet No. 27 AB," 7 December 1915.
[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid.
[543] TNA, WO 32/5499. "Letter from the Secretary. Board of Control of Regimental Institutes to the Secretary of the War Office," 3 November 1915. Underlining found in original text.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid. Underlining found in original text.

mistakes were made. What is more, these efforts were either praised or criticized following the individualistic whims of a given soldier's circumstance. Nonetheless, the mere existence of these communiqués demonstrate that British military authorities took an active interest in not only supplying the officer corps and rank-and-file with creature comforts, but also how they sought to improve these processes during the course of the war.

In addition to the comforts provided, it should be noted that the fundamental purpose of the British Army Canteens was envisaged to make these facilities "so comfortable and home-like that the soldier prefers to spend his time [and incidentally his money] therein and not to go elsewhere for recreation."[546] Brigadier General Long echoed these sentiments, noting "I am directed to request that as this Institution is being run entirely and solely for the benefit of the soldier, and any profits that may be derived therefrom [*sic*] will be devoted to the benefit of the soldier or his dependents, you will kindly give all possible facilities and help to this Institution in their endeavours to assist and ameliorate the condition of the soldier on active service."[547] Logistically this meant that "As far as possible the canteen [is] to be given facilities for getting goods forward whenever it is deemed desirable in the general interests of the troops and when it does not interfere with the military needs of the situation."[548]

The German armies also ran *Kantine* and *Kasinos* for their soldiers. While finding comparable debates to the British ones outlined above may prove impossible to find because of the piecemeal nature of the sources, this does not mean that we cannot

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[546] TNA, WO 32/5500. "Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Canteen System at Home," Undated, circa August 1916.
[547] TNA, WO 32/5087. "Letter to the Inspector-General, Lines of Communication, E.F.," 14 February 1915.
[548] Ibid.

evaluate the efforts of the German military hierarchy to provide for the soldiers' wellbeing based upon what is available. Such efforts can be seen in the town of Douchy, which reportedly provided German soldiers access to a range of comforts and activities. According to Ernst Jünger, the town "had many innocent recreations to offer us," as "There were numerous canteens well provided with eatables and drinks."[549] Additionally, the town had "a reading-room, a café, and later even a cinema in a large barn most skillfully converted."[550] "The officers had a splendidly-equipped casino and skittle-alley in the vicarage garden," he noted, and many times "companies held festive evenings at which officers and men vied with each other in drinking in the good old German style."[551] Jünger observed that interactions with locals in this village were indeed rare, and when they occurred they could be quite hostile. As such, this would suggest that the military authorities provided the vast majority of these comforts.

In addition to these official means of supply, officers in the German armies would also solicit for both charitable donations and their equitable distribution. Although the role of voluntary action and philanthropies in providing soldiers with creature comforts is the focus of a future chapter, the fact that individual commanders would petition on the behalf of those under their command warrants some attention here. In a letter sent by Freiherr von Seckendorff to the Quartermaster General in March 1915, he reported how a delivery of *Liebesgaben* parcels were "destined for the IV Army from the delivery points for the XII. A[rmee]Korps Dresden, the XIX A[rmee] K[orps] Leipzig and the III

[549] Jünger, *Storm of Steel,* 32.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Ibid.

A[rmee] K[orps] Brandenburg and Frankfurt (a/O[der]).”[552] However, there were allegedly problems with the shipments as they had received “[f]rom the delivery point in Dresden… only two shipments,” which included “2 cases of cigarettes, 39 cases of newspaper, and books of low value” and “from Leipzig only one shipment (40 cases of various care packages).”[553] Compounding matters, he reported, “Leipzig sent a larger portion of shipments that are only for Saxon troops.”[554]

“On the other hand,” von Seckendorff noted, “The care packages from Brandenburg and Frankfurt an der Oder were all without restrictions to distribute to all the troops of the 4th Army.”[555] Additionally, “[a]ll other care packages were sent for individual troops.”[556] Consequently, “a very uneven distribution of the care packages has come about.”[557] Fully cognizant of the effect that inequitable distribution could have on individual and collective morale, von Seckendorff “requested that a strong pressure be exerted on the home authorities,” to help ensure that all German soldiers, whether Saxon or not, could receive extra supplies of comforts from the home front.[558] This brief request is illustrative in several regards. It primarily suggests that those in command recognized the value of everyday stimulants to individual and collective morale. Additionally, it symbolizes that there were those who took efforts, no matter how marginal and ineffective they may have ultimately been, to ensure that all soldiers could benefit from such programmes.

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[552] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. “Liebesgaben.” Nr. 0464.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid.

Demonstrating that there were those in the German high command who cared for their Jewish-German rankers, some battalion canteens even attempted to provide meals according to halachic law for the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays. Steven Schouten has recently illustrated how such meals, and the *Genussmittel* that were part and parcel of these traditions, were vitally important in providing this group of minority soldiers with a symbolic thread of continuity from their civilian lives. As Schouten has noted, these meals not only helped these men practice their religious customs and halachic law, but also helped to foster "an atmosphere of homeliness as well."[559]

As we can see, comparable to the efforts undertaken by the command cadres in the British army to look after the well being of their soldiers, German officers and NCOs appear to have worked under a similar set of cultural understandings that characterize Gary Sheffield's deferential agreement. What is more, this argument can be applied more broadly within the larger context of how the German armies conducted themselves during the war. For instance, Alexander Watson argues that it was primarily the leadership of the junior officer corps that led the surrender of German units in 1918 rather than what Wilhelm Deist has characterized as a covert strike. If one extends Watson's claims to include the paradigm elaborated by Sheffield, one could argue that this was arguably the junior officers attempting to provide the best possible care for their men under what were becoming insurmountable odds. Coupled with the fact that the British (and Allies at large for that matter) conveyed that they would properly quarter any who chose to surrender,

[559] Steven Schouten, "Fighting a Kosher War: German Jews and Kashrut in the First World War," in *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe*, (Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate, 2011), 46.

this became a viable alternative to what was becoming an increasingly futile expenditure of effort.

Fostering the Social Contract: Individual Acts of the Deferential Agreement at the Fronts

In addition to the collective efforts the military hierarchies made to provide soldiers with culturally expected comforts, there are countless examples of individual interactions that centered on the exchange of everyday stimulants between officers and their subordinates that reflected the deferential agreement. This phenomenon is demonstrated in the anthology of letters composed by Mildred Aldrich, who fought in the Battle of the Marne in the late summer of 1914. These letters, dated from 3 June through 8 September were published in 1915 and provide the reader with a glimpse of the deferential agreement from the officer's perspective in the BEF.

In one letter, Aldrich describes the effect of not only food but also cigarettes on the morale and fighting capacity of his subordinates. According to Aldrich, he allegedly "knew little about military discipline—less about the rules of active service; so I had no idea that I was letting these hungry men—and evidently hunger laughs at laws—break all the regulations of the army."[560] Aldrich elaborated, further setting the stage, "Their guns were lying about in any old place; their kits were on the ground; their belts were unbuckled. Suddenly the captain rode up the road and looked over the hedge at the scene."[561] Showing no signs of panic or fear of punishment, the young commander claimed that, "The men were sitting on the benches, on the ground, anywhere, and were all smoking my best

[560] Mildred Aldrich, *A Hilltop on the Marne: Being Letters Written June 3- September 8, 1914*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915), 105-106.
[561] Ibid.

Egyptian cigarettes, and I was running round as happy as a queen, seeing them so contented and comfortable."[562]

While this brief excerpt from the long opening campaign on the Marne may seem inconsequential, it reveals much about the construct of the deferential agreement. Echoing the insights provided by Gary Sheffield, Corrigan observes that while "service in the trenches was by no means a sinecure, the welfare of the troops was always a foremost consideration in the mind of the commanders."[563] Under the conditions imposed by war, the individual negotiation of this relationship could directly affect morale, either for the better or worse depending upon an officer's success, as well as the perceptions of the co-combatants. It is clear from this snapshot that Aldrich did, at least in how he saw himself, show compassion towards his men.

In an example from the rankers' perspective, taken from the memoirs of artilleryman Harry Gore, one can see how everyday stimulants both provided a medium for inter-rank interactions, as well as how they could also be used to manipulate one's body. Gore recalled how during one night while deployed near Ypres he and his comrades "were pulled out and relieved. In the meantime the Royal Engineers had laid a white tape from the front line to guide us and as we'd had a fine spell the ground was firm and it was easy going."[564] Gore explained how "The tape had been laid right through to Divisional Headquarters and after reporting there we marched on to our transport lines at Dickebusch, arriving there just at dawn on Friday 29th September, earlier than the cooks

[562] Ibid.
[563] Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock*, 98.
[564] IWM, 01/36/1, H. Gore Papers.

expected us."[565] Unfortunately for Gore and his tired and hungry comrades, the cooks "were not quite ready for us with a meal and tea so the Quartermaster lined us up for a drop of rum."[566] Regarding his tot, he quipped: "Well he must have mistaken me for someone else in the half light [*sic*] and the result was I had far more than my share, so a lovely dawn was turned into a glorious one."[567] In quintessential Tommy wit, the tale turned macabre: "I was not quite drunk all the same because we had orders to get our guns and equipment packed up in our limber, because the transport were [*sic*] moving up."[568] "Our driver was surprised to see us," he explained, "as he had heard that the whole Platoon were casualties and I think that he thought we were ghosts, but I informed him we were full of spirits anyway."[569]

Gore's tale did not end there. He continued, noting how "On returning to our 'bivvies' built up with empty ammunition boxes and covered with ground sheets the cooks were ready for us and after the meal I rolled myself up in blankets provided and then it happened as I had to get up quickly and was as sick as I possibly could be into the nearest shell hole."[570] Reflecting on the benefit of throwing up, he noted that "I think I must have brought up all the rottenness and smells that I had got into my system, and it made me feel ill but afterwards I realised it saved me from the after effects of a gas."[571] Not only did the larger than normal shot of rum help Gore cleanse his system, so to

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[565] Ibid.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Ibid.
[571] Ibid.

speak, but the commanding officer also demonstrated his side of the deferential agreement through supplying a little extra, thereby looking after the well-being of his subordinate.

Harry Gore's memoirs provide another relevant snapshot into how these products could be used to communicate the social contract of the deferential agreement. Recalling while he was still in Ypres in April of 1918, Gore penned, "About the first week end in April it being Easter time we were relieved from the line and on coming out I fell into a deep shell hole of water, mis-stepping on the duck boards."[572] He recorded how his fall was worse than normally would have been, because he "was carrying the Lewis Gun spare parts, the bag being slung over my shoulders I went in fairly deeply (the bag being heavy) when pulled back out onto the duck boards the chap who pulled me out asked me if I was wet."[573] Apparently, "That was the last straw as water was pouring off me. I just let him know what I thought of things generally in good British Soldiers Esperanto and let myself go."[574] Gore remembered how this outburst had taken his comrade by surprise "because as he said the next morning he had known me for some time and had never known me use strong language before."[575] Gore then noted how "the Platoon Officer came along to see if I was OK [*sic*] and had everything secure, he then informed us that when we arrived at the end of the track there would be hot tea or us prepared by the cooks and told me to come and see him with my mug half full and he said, 'This is an

[572] Ibid.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Ibid.

order.'"[576] Gore, figuring that orders were orders, "did so and he filled the mug up with whiskey to the envy of the rest of the gun team."[577]

A footnote in the memoir explains why Gore would receive such special treatment, noting that it was likely "that the shell hole was highly polluted and contained corpses," which "may explain the consideration shown."[578] Once again, Gore was provided alcohol as a means to stimulate better health in the face of mass pollution. Furthermore, his commanding officer yet again demonstrated he was more than willing to hold up his end of the deferential agreement and tend to the care of his subordinates.

J.A. Johnston recounted one comparable instance where he and his comrades shared both cigarettes and a flask during the heat of battle, sometime in November 1916. "What cigarettes I had in my haversack I shared out with the others and there was nothing to do then but obey orders and 'hand on,'" he recalled.[579] Johnston remembered how "the time passed slowly," however their "Officer had given us each a drink from his flask."[580] As Johnston noted, the officer "left it behind when he went to get the other teams into their positions, so we emptied it for him."[581] "I will not say definitely what it contained, but it was very good," Johnston proclaimed.[582] Following being wounded and assisted back into the trench, Johnston reported to the aforementioned officer, and apparently "had sufficient sense of humour left to tell him that we had emptied the flask for him!"[583]

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[576] Ibid.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid.
[579] IWM, 02/29/1, J.A. Johnston Papers.
[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Ibid.

While not overtly observed within this construct, there were German senior and junior officers who also practiced a form of the deferential agreement with their subordinates. An extreme form of this can be seen in the aforementioned conduct of the German junior officer corps towards the end of the war. But this tendency to look after one's men had more innocuous elements as well, such as the occasional sharing of a drink, the doling out of cigarettes, and the like.

Ludwig Elsner described for loved ones back at home in Germany how he would use everyday stimulants to try and quell the nerves of his men by sharing the *Liebesgaben* he received from his family. In the process, he demonstrated how he was attempting to fulfill his obligation, under the auspices of the deferential agreement, to care for his subordinates. In a letter dated 12 January 1916 while stationed in Treskowring he conveyed to his family some of his reactions after a harrowing firefight. "Although I was feeling pretty shaky I managed to light a cigarette with apparent nonchalance," he wrote, "and puffed away as if nothing on earth mattered beyond the inexpressibly exquisite enjoyment afforded by that cigarette."[584] "Also, with ostentatiously amiable ceremoniousness," he claimed to have "produced the box of chocolate-tablets you sent me: all in order to try and steady the trembling men, which I succeeded in doing to a certain extent."[585]

In a letter home from late January 1915, Victor Strauss explained to his parents how he and his brother Walther were sometimes invited by their superior commander to

[584] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 354-355.
[585] Ibid.

join him for a drink. While bivouacked in Repky that month, one evening they were invited by their lieutenant along with a sergeant to be his guests, where he gave them warm grog and cigars. According to Victor, the occasion was "greatly jolly."[586] Apparently they had a bit too much fun, as the next day Walther allegedly had "a murderous hangover." Indeed, he recounted, they had "caught it fine."[587]

Dr. Leopold von Pezold likewise took note of the exchanges of everyday stimulants that could take place between officers and subordinates. Discussing one time when he traveled to the rear health depot in Montmédy to replenish his medical supplies, he "spoke with Staff Doctor Neter to see if he could loan me Acetylene Lamps for my field hospital."[588] While there, Dr. von Pezold also spoke "with Major Baron Fritz von Gemmingen, who gave me cigars, matches and chewing tobacco for my men."[589] For "both men," von Pezold maintained, "the giving was a joy," suggesting the value of gift giving as an intimate element to the deferential agreement.[590]

The memoirs of Alfred Bauer provide us with a salient example of these exchanges from a German ranker's perspective. Recalling one instance while deployed in Belgium and temporarily stationed near Mass Bridge there was a suburb close by. "In a tobacco shop," he remembered, his commander "Major Heegewaldt bought similar

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[586] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss. Both brothers volunteered to fight with the Feldartillerie-Regiment 13 in August 1914. Following five months training they were deployed to the Eastern Front in northern Poland. At the end of 1915 their unit was redeployed to the Western Front. By the end of summer 1917, Victor had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant of the reserves, and earned the Iron Cross Second Class for his actions on 30 March 1918.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/032 75, Nachlass von Pezold. During the war Dr. von Pezold served as the chief doctor of Feldlazaretts 7 (XII. Armeekorps), and after Christmas 1916 he served as the divisional doctor of the 242. Infanteriedivision for the remainder of the conflict.
[589] Ibid.
[590] Ibid.

short tobacco pipes and distributed them amongst the teams."[591] Noting the relative availability of such comforts he noted, "Cigars had already become somewhat rare, but one could on the whole get loose tobacco and cigarettes."[592] However, this was not the type of tobacco they had grown accustomed to but rather "was the hard Belgian cigarettes with very dark tobacco without a mouthpiece."[593] Nonetheless, he recalled having "smoked it," as "it was after all somewhat of a relief."[594]

Violating the Contract: The Limits of Official Supplies and Breakdowns in the Deferential Agreement

Despite the best intentions of quartermasters, cooks, and anyone else associated with assembling soldiers' meals and tending to their welfare, there were indeed those instances that left much to be desired. The diaries and letters of soldiers of the BEF, as Rachel Duffet has analyzed, are replete with complaints about the quality, never mind the quantity of rations. In one criticism that could easily have found its way inter her analysis, J.W. Lewis lamented to his diary on 13 October 1916 how he "Must once again complain (to myself) about the quality of food we are having issued to us."[595] "We have not tasted bread or fresh meat for nearly a month," he moaned, noting how the monotonous "Bully Beef and biscuits are our daily ration."[596] Contemplating his dietary

[591] BA-KA, MSg 2/14532, Nachlass Alfred Bauer.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Ibid.
[595] IWM, 01/48/1, J.W. Lewis Papers.
[596] Ibid.

predicament, he mused, "I've heard somewhere, from someone, that a change is as good as a rest! If the diet was changed here, I think everyone's jaws would benefit by the 'rest'!"[597]

Critiques of army rations were a pervasive theme in Lewis's writings. In another witty example from 18 December 1916, he quipped, "Today we dined 'A La Wagon.' Our meal consisted of 3 courses–Bully, Rice (Boiled), and Tea, also boiled."[598] "This 'dinner' brought visions to my mind of the meals I once had," he continued, "that were worthy of the name Dinners. The 'inner man' shouts 'Roll on Peace'!"[599] From Lewis's view, not much changed in this regard, as three months later, in late February 1917 he penned, "For lack of something better to record, I will give our menu for the last three months—A loaf of Bread between six men a day, Bully Stew for dinner, and a bit of Butter or Jam for Tea. Verily the 'Inner man' cries 'Roll on Duration!'"[600]

For Lewis, even the prospect of receiving pay prompted sarcasm and animosity. In mid-April 1918 he confided in his diary how he and his comrades were "informed today that no more pay will be issued until the advance ceases. As we are in a veritable wilderness of mud—it will be no hardship foregoing our salaries?"[601] "We are still on 'Iron Rations,'" he groused, "a fact to which my gums give full testimony, being as tender as a piece of raw meat."[602] As noted in previous chapters, the ritualized habituation of grousing in the British forces has been interpreted as a way soldiers were able to endure. In fact, this trait has become a caricature in itself, as evidenced in countless popular media

[597] Ibid.
[598] Ibid.
[599] Ibid.
[600] Ibid.
[601] Ibid.
[602] Ibid.

depictions. No matter how good spirited the tone, the fact remains that from winter 1917 through spring 1918, the British (like all combatant armies, say minus the Americans) experienced a fundamental crisis in morale. Although the British army did not break, it appears as though these men were certainly pushed to the brink. Feelings over the quality of food and comforts, a symbol of the social contract between the men and the army and the social capital that they army and the state held, could affect the ability to continue to endure.

Another problem that all combatant armies undoubtedly faced was in the transport of hot rations and drinks up the line. Harold Mayhall, who served with the Durham Light Infantry on the Western Front with the BEF during the war elaborated on the problems surrounding obtaining British tea rations. "Oh, that's a sore point: rations were very poor," Mayhall recalled.[603] "You'd try to brew tea and you couldn't, it was always cold and probably the water was all tasted of petrol because it came up in petrol tins—which were never cleaned out properly—and the tea was half petrol and cold," Mayhall explained.[604]

Such observations were fairly common. J.A. Johnston recounted in his memoirs how "The orderlies' duties lay in carrying up 'dixies' full of tea at breakfast and tea times," however, even "At dinner time the same 'dixie' was used for carrying the stew."[605] The unsurprising result, "of course," especially when one considers the problems associated with cleaning and disinfecting dishware, "the tea sometimes tasted of

[603] IWM, *Voices of the First World War*, Podcast 20: "Trench Life."
[604] Ibid.
[605] IWM, 02/29/1, J.A. Johnson Papers.

stew—but what did that matter."[606] "As I pointed out to a complaining gunner, it was not everyone that had meat with their tea," Johnston joked![607]

George Harbottle, who also served with the BEF, recalled how the shortage in overall water supplies prompted soldiers to resort to other uses for what was supplied. Regarding how he and his mates responded to these limits, Harbottle recounted how "occasionally you would get a petrol can of water."[608] "The water had a pretty smelly taste about it and often the shell-hole water was better than that," he continued.[609] "We generally managed to shave with a safety razor and often enough if you'd had some tea and there were the dregs of the tea was [*sic*] about all you had to—the warmest water you could get to use for lather," Harbottle confessed.[610]

Some fronts were more prone to chronic shortages than others. In the German case, the soldiers deployed to the Eastern Front typically received far less than their counterparts that were deployed to Belgium and France. Letters and diaries of soldiers provide an excellent glimpse of just how varied rations could be. Writing home in February, 1915, Victor Strauss described for his parents how "Every four days we get two loaves of bread, unfortunately they are so small, that they are only sufficient for me for two days."[611] Continuing, he explained how he and his brothers-in-arms got "every four days rum or cognac, cigars, cigarettes, snuff tobacco, loose tobacco, etc. but of course

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[606] Ibid.
[607] Ibid.
[608] IWM, *Voices of the First World War*, Podcast 20: "Trench Life."
[609] Ibid.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.

everything is not enough."[612] Echoing this sentiment in a letter home from 10 February 1915, Walther Strauss lamented how since the beginning of their service that "often we have... suffered from hunger."[613] "One gets little bread," he explained, "and many days only black coffee without sugar."[614]

The observations penned by Wilhelm Schulin in his diary echoes these sentiments, illustrating just how limited rations could become as soldiers traveled farther away from Germany. For instance, on 11 August 1914 he wrote how that day his unit set off for Russia. While encamped in Rickschenhausen they had "received coffee at 7:30 in the evening. In Neudittendorf we ate at night: Schweinfurth we were provided with meat, sauerkraut, potatoes and tea—good."[615] Yet, by 14 August when in Brasnitz, they were being "[q]uartered for the night in the barracks, [with] butter, coffee, water."[616] When his "lead column" left the following morning, "cigarettes [were] rationed out, [along with] white bread."[617] One can only speculate if the cigarettes were part of what were originally scheduled to be rationed, or if they were given out with the goal of helping the soldiers to suppress their appetites. Perhaps it was a combination of both.

Ration quantities, never mind quality, could ostensibly be greatly improved for those who were in reserve. In one such example, the Strauss brothers explained to their parents how during the Kaiser's birthday their section was able to cook their own food

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[612] Ibid.
[613] Ibid.
[614] Ibid.
[615] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/040, Nr. 15, Nachlass Schulin. Schulin served with both the Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 121 and Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 120 during the war, being deployed to both the Eastern and Western Fronts before being discharged on 26 November 1918.
[616] Ibid.
[617] Ibid.

and their coffee. What is more, they rejoiced over how everyone "daily got a giant portion of meat and all three to four days schnapps; here and there beer as well."[618] The brothers were also pleased to report that they had "received all week long two cigars, cigarettes and tobacco, plus *Liebesgaben.*"[619] This came as a pleasant change; especially considering that ration distribution at the front could be sporadic at times to say the least, especially along the Eastern Front. Just a mere few days before, the brothers complained how they had to either eat solely iron rations with nothing to drink, or only subsist for a majority of their day on their coffee rations, of which they "drank a lot of, [but] without sugar," all while waiting for their "luck to also come back, and with it their smoked meat."[620] Unsurprisingly, everyday stimulants were no real alternative to actual proper meals. While the lack of these goods at the front could equally dampen morale, they were no *Ersatz* for sustenance and fulfilling caloric needs.

Theft could be a major problem in obstructing equitable distribution and availability of both everyday stimulants and other foodstuffs. In a letter dated 25 May 1916, Frank Haylett described one such instance when he had been recently working in the camp stores. "We were suffering from a severe attack of Cigaretteitis + ChocolateBiscuititis, [*sic*]" he quipped, "caused through over indulgence in these articles to which <u>some</u> of the fatigue men helped themselves when no one was looking."[621] The

[618] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[619] Ibid.
[620] Ibid.
[621] IWM, 02/35/1, F.A. Haylett Papers.

problem allegedly persisted, as it was "The same on Tuesday, when things got worse—especially for the Biscuits."[622]

Some sub-organizations within the military hierarchy gained a reputation for cheating the system and quickly became targets of soldiers' scorn. Frederick Francis recounted how the Royal Army Medical Corps were particularly prone to nicking items from wounded soldiers. "The RAMC had a reputation for pinching anything they could," explained Francis some eighty years after the war.[623] Detailing his own experience after being wounded in action, Francis recalled how "they were going around assessing who wouldn't live, 'He won't live long...and he won't live long,'" all the while "nicking our things."[624] In fact, the RAMC allegedly earned the snide moniker "Rob all my comrades," amongst the men because of such actions, imagined, perpetrated or otherwise.[625]

The impact of battle could also hinder what creature comforts were available to soldiers. Recalling how the German Spring Offensives in 1918 affected the supplies of the BEF canteens, J.C. Dunn noted how the Germans had captured local military canteens, along with local YMCA and Church Army facilities and supplies. According to Dunn, this prompted all "the devils" to put the prices up further."[626] The resulting prices were allegedly set so high that "many articles [were] cheaper in French shops."[627] Dunn even alleged how "Ten days after this the Canteen was recouping itself with a

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[622] Ibid. Underline in orginal text.
[623] van Emden and Humphries, *Veterans*, 86. Francis served with the 11th Border Regiment during the war.
[624] Ibid.
[625] Ibid.
[626] J.C. Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew: A Chronicle of Service in France and Belgium*, (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 1988), 470.
[627] Ibid.

vengeance."[628] "Under the guise of 'giving a preference to the troops in front,'" Dunn protested, "its lorries were coming up as far as the Transport lines; for biscuits that had been priced at 4.75 francs 6.15 was charged, and so on."[629]

While the complaints amongst the soldiers of the BEF were arguably warranted, one cannot deny that they had access to far more than their German counterparts. In a passing reference made at the end of the previous example, J.C. Dunn noted how "Later on it was learned that the large stocks of eatables captured in the Canteens were a great factor in demoralizing the German Army..."[630] Stories and anecdotes abound about how the German army became drunk on the masses of wine found in the cellars of the vacated French cottages that fateful spring. While this was certainly the case in some instances, as will be highlighted later, the capture of Allied stores could possibly be a greater cause—both materially and symbolically.

There were also those cases where individual relations between the rank-and-file and their commanding officers could and did become quite strained. Additionally, under some circumstances everyday stimulants could play a detrimental role in these relationships. Lance Corporal Joe Armstrong of the BEF recalled one episode in 1914 where a good number of his mates had eaten their emergency rations prior to going into reserve without having been instructed to do so. Partaking of emergency rations without being ordered to do so by one's ranking officer was a punishable offense. Unfortunately for Armstrong and his comrades, the company commander ordered a full kit inspection

[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid.

once they were in reserve. Since the sizable majority had broken into their emergency wares, a group punishment was administered. Armstrong recalled how the company commander "turned to the Regimental Sergeant Major Thompson and ordered him to bring two earthenware jars, each containing two gallons of rum."[631] According to Armstrong, just recently "the nights had been getting cold and he'd started putting rum in the early morning tea."[632] For the foreseeable future, Armstrong and his mates were forced to forgo this warming luxury, because the sergeant-major was "ordered... to take the cork out and pour out the four gallons onto the ground."[633] "He should have been shot," Armstrong fumed.[634] Apparently some of the company turned their plight into verse, placing a sign outside of Thompson's dugout that read: "This place marks the spot, where many a young soldier lost his tot, it was poured out in damn dirty fashion, because he had eaten his emergency rations."[635]

Complaints of inequitable distribution were all the more detrimental to morale in the Germany army, which saw its supplies of foodstuffs and comforts dwindle dramatically over the course of the conflict. Speaking against the supposed spirit of national unity that Kaiser Wilhelm had so proudly proclaimed in the late summer of 1914, Alfred Vaeth penned: "We true patriots, who in peace-time derided Jingoism—the so-called 'Hurrah Patriotism'... hoped that this community of sacrifice, this facing of a death

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[631] van Emden, *Britain's Last Tommies*, 64.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Ibid.
[634] Ibid.
[635] Ibid.

common to all, would bring about an end of all class-distinctions."[636] Unfortunately, Vaeth reported that, "This is not the case."[637] "You do not believe it," he rhetorically asked?[638] "I will give you an example," he answered, "in the trench three privates are fighting over a loaf; inside the dug-out the officers have more wine than they can drink. It makes one's hearts bleed."[639] Vaeth then went on to chastise, "But of that concern for the well-being of the soldier of which you read so much in the newspapers, we see but little."[640]

We will examine how contentious the perceived inequitable distribution of parcels and *Liebesgaben* could be in later chapters. It is important at this point, however, to note how divisive an issue this could be between the ranks, and understandably so. In a letter that echoes these themes, Johannes Haas noted in late January 1916 while deployed in Champagne that, "A man called Reinhold in my section had a letter from his wife saying that she had pawned all the furniture except the indispensable beds."[641] One could presume this was done in order to be able to buy food. Clearly growing increasingly agitated over the issue, Haas snapped, "the Lieutenants wonder that the men don't want to go on fighting. The 'Champagne and Wine Johnnies' are enjoying themselves while *we* are dying in filth, and celebrating Christmas with a spoonful and a half of 'plum and apple' and fourteen pieces of sugar."[642]

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[636] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 166.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Ibid, 205.
[642] Ibid.

Conclusions:

There are myriad social implications that accompany the provisioning of everyday stimulants to soldiers. On the one hand, the provision of rations and additional comforts could reinforce not just the military hierarchy, but also class lines, especially in the early years of the conflict. One could also interpret the use and distribution of everyday stimulants as a way to manipulate or even coerce men into doing the bidding of the leadership cadre. Indeed, this has been done countless times in history. For instance, in the nineteenth century Theodore Aschenbrandt conducted experiments on the use of cocaine in the Bavarian ranks in the pursuit of increasing individual and collective endurance amongst soldiers.[643] Bomber crews reportedly used amphetamines during World War II to help them stay awake during the long and treacherous raids. Even the seemingly innocuous tot of rum can be interpreted in such a way. But in the former two instances these items were employed merely for their stimulant effects, in that they were used solely for the physiological reaction and not so much for any individual enjoyment of the product. While there are multiple possible detriments that the supply of stimulants can cause, the provision of the vast majority of everyday stimulants by the British and German armies during World War I were largely used to communicate the unspoken social contract of the deferential agreement. In the end, it was the British and not the Germans who could maintain all aspects of this accord.

[643] Theodore Aschenbrandt, *Die phsyiologische Wirkung und Bedeutung des Cocain*, (1883).

Chapter IV
Posts of Love: The Exchange of Creature Comforts between the Home Front and the Front Lines

"It was delightful to see the men all standing together while the names were read out and the parcels handed out over their heads," Karl Aldag recounted to his loved ones back in Germany, describing the ritualized distribution of parcels amongst his comrades.[644] Alluding to the bliss and naïveté of both their youth and the pre-war period, Aldag proclaimed how "They were all real 'Christmas children' as they knelt before the packages and burrowed into them—by a manger in a cow-house, as on the first 'Holy Night."[645] The young soldier continued his remarkable Christmas story, relating for his family back home in Germany how that "evening we had our real Christmas celebration."[646] Playing the novelist, he painted the setting for his readers, "There were two big trees, standing all lit up on big tables."[647] Celebrating the once mundane, Aldag proclaimed, "We got everything we could possibly wish for: knitted comforts, tobacco, cake, sausages—all *Liebesgaben*—What Germany has done for us!"[648] The story then draws to a close, with the coming of "the Colonel and the Divisional Chaplain… [and] the Bible story of Christmas was read and the dear old hymns were sung."[649] Clearly this break from the dreariness of war, centered around the provision of consumable stimulants, in the setting of a central holiday gave Aldag and his fellow soldiers a much needed respite and helped to boost morale.

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[644] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 34.
[645] Ibid.
[646] Ibid.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Ibid.
[649] Ibid.

The German word *Liebesgaben* strikes at the central meaning in the experience of gift exchange between the home front and the soldiers deployed around the globe during the First World War. Literally translated as "love gift" in English, this concept suggests the symbolic bond inherent in the gift giving process. The Grimm Brother's Dictionary notes that the term means gift of love, or also a gift of sympathetic people towards the charitable giving for the needy.[650] In the case of gifts sent from loved ones and acquaintances to the soldiers at the front, this duality in definition is fitting.

Gifts of creature comforts sent from home were vitally important to soldiers at the front for a multitude of reasons. In addition to the physiological benefits that these products provided, as well as how they helped soldiers augment those supplies acquired at or near the front, these products communicated a variety of messages. On the one hand, gifts of home-baked cakes, chocolates, cigarettes, and the like demonstrated to soldiers that their loved ones and acquaintances back home had not forgotten them. Additionally, the appearance of goods like these in parcels sent to the front could also symbolize to soldiers the relative sacrifices that family members were willing to make on their behalf, by foregoing some extra goody, or even financial resources. What is more, the receipt of these treats represented a thread of continuity with soldiers' previous civilian lives. The shipment of creature comforts could likewise demonstrate to soldiers that their loved ones' lives and comfort had not been too adversely affected by the encroachment of the war and its influence on the global economy at large. While scholars

[650] *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm,* <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GL05549> Accessed 1 August 2014.

of the First World War have acknowledged some of these trends, it has often been in passing and not the focus of more detailed analysis.

Considering the multitude of symbolism inherent in the exchange and receipt of *Liebesgaben*, it is important to bear in mind the previously delineated theoretical insights presented by the field of social anthropology. Additionally, as we saw in the previous chapter with the continuously negotiated relationship between soldiers and those in command, it is also essential to consider the pervasive discourse of collective sacrifice, and how this helped soldiers interpret how the unspoken social contract between them and the home-front was being met through the supply of creature comforts. In this vein, soldiers often times expected their loved ones and acquaintances to send them parcels of creature comforts in exchange for the sacrifices they were making at the fronts on a daily basis.

Threads of Continuity: Symbols of Sacrifice, Symbols of Love, and Enduring the Hardships of War

John Horne notes that the "mass short-service armies" that went to war in August 1914 "were civilian forces in which the relations between men and the intimate home front of family, friends and locality remained powerful."[651] Elaborating on this, he explains that this relationship was fundamentally "sustained by unprecedented letter-writing and home leave."[652] This trend was so eloquently demonstrated by Martha Hanna in her analysis of the wartime correspondence between Paul and Marie Pireaud.[653] But letters were not the only way soldiers were able to maintain contact with family and

[651] Horne, *State, Society, and Mobilization*, 11.
[652] Ibid.
[653] Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

friends back home, and in the process endure the hardship of separation. Equally as important was the fact that such bonds were "reinforced by the influence of civilian culture."[654] We have seen in previous chapters how the soldiers at the front replicated civilian consumer culture, and buttressing these trends was the shipment of *Liebesgaben* parcels.

As Charles Messenger astutely points out, "Mail, leave and food were the main factors which influenced the morale of the British soldier of 1914-18."[655] Gary Sheffield has also noted the symbolic importance of parcels and mail: "the horizon of the Infantryman in the Great War was small, but his philosophy was straightforward," in that he believed that "the war had to be fought, and if mail, food and cigarettes were available, the war was going well."[656] In describing the German experience, Brigitte Hamann has noted that field parcels and *Liebesgaben* were elementally the only remaining connection between the fronts.[657] Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich have recently proposed that the meaning of mail cannot be overestimated, as they were first and foremost a "sign of life."[658]

Another element to consider is the symbolism in the ritual behind getting a parcel. It typically began with the calling out of names from the mail truck, the individual receiving their wrapped gift, tearing the package open, surveying the contents, the rise of any feelings of elation or disappointment, and finally the consumption and sharing of

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[654] Horne, *State, Society, and Mobilization*, 11.
[655] Messenger, *Call-to-Arms*, 436.
[656] Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 116.
[657] Brigitte Hamann, *Der Erste Weltkrieg: Wahrheit und Lüge in Bildern und Texten.* (München: Piper Verlag, 2009), 92.
[658] Hirschfeld and Krumeich, *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 139.

what was inside. Such practices often mirrored patterns from civilian life. For some, this ritual echoed Christmastime and the exchanging of gifts.

Soldiers in both the British and German ranks recognized these motifs. J.R. Skirth, who served with the BEF, insinuated the symbolic importance that was inherent in receiving *Liebesgaben*. "Ella did become flesh and blood to me with every letter or parcel which reached me in those dark days," he professed, questioning, "How the leads of the Field Post Office overcame all the difficulties and obstacles they had to contend with I shall never know."[659] "I remember the arrival of parcels in particular," he noted, "but I can't ever recall a letter asking if I had received one she'd sent."[660] Sadly, for Skirth and his comrades, by this point "[t]here were only two of our little band to share her cakes now."[661]

Dr. Kurt Schmidt, who served with the German forces, likewise pontificated over the meaning of *Liebesgaben* in his diary. "What did the mail bring us," he rhetorically asked, noting how he and his fellow comrades were "all are in anticipation of parcels."[662] "[A]lthough we exactly know that none can reach us," he continued, he recognized how through such gifts "It is the home that will be answered in us."[663] Even when parcels could not reach the front, the thought of them conjured up images of home and how it was symbolically represented in small items like the everyday stimulants that were often sent.

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[659] IWM, 99/53/1, J.R. Skirth Papers. Emphasis in original. Skirth served as an NCO with the 239th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery during the war.
[660] Ibid.
[661] Ibid.
[662] BA-KA, MSg 2/5605, Nachlass Kurt Schmidt.
[663] Ibid.

Fundamentally, the receiving a parcel of creature comforts helped to break the monotony of the war. Indeed, such views were reflected in the letters of the soldiers themselves. Norman Tennant of the BEF perhaps best summarized the value of parcels of commonplace luxuries and everyday stimulants: "What magnificent morale-boosters these surprise packets were! One in particular I remember was a huge fruit cake soldered up in a specially made tin container."[664] J.A. Johnston likewise praised such gifts in his memoirs, especially in light of the less than agreeable official rations. He recalled how in late November 1915 while in the front trenches, "waist deep in water," the "rations fell off as regards quantity and we had to be content many days with bully beef and biscuits as the only items on the menu."[665] The weather, which included "Heavy rains aided by melting snow and ice had made the roads very bad."[666] As such, ration parties could not reach the front lines. "When one has had bully beef and biscuits for breakfast, dinner, and tea for a few days," Johnston mused, "it can be imagined that the arrival of a mail and possibly a parcel or two of some nice things to eat, was an occasion for rejoicing."[667]

These care packages unsurprisingly proved to be of vital importance in helping soldiers break the monotony of industrialized army rations. Lance Corporal Edmund Tompkins' letters home to his mother comparably provides insight into this aspect of the soldier's experience at the front during the First World War. In early July 1916 he described for his dear mother one of his first exposures to the infamous Maconachi Stew.

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[664] IWM, 04/30/1, N. Tennant Papers. Tennant served with the 11th Howitzer Battery, 49th West Riding Division during the war.
[665] IWM, 02/29/1, J.A. Johnston Papers.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Ibid.

"Have just had my dinner, a very sumptuous [*sic*] repast off a tin of 'Maconachi,'" he described, noting how it was "a sort of mixture of a tin of bully beef and vegetables not too bad you know, but a sort of thing you can get tired of very easily."[668] By early October the novelty had clearly run its course. Upon receipt of a parcel of homemade cakes, he responded jubilantly: "The cake was indeed a treat and such a welcome change, as, altho' [*sic*] we get a fair amount of food now, there is not much variety especially for tea."[669] In late March 1917 upon receiving another cake from home after a hiatus of shipments, he explained how "The cake is quite as good as ever, in fact it seems to taste better than usual, perhaps that is because I have not tasted any lately. My thoughts were with you all day yesterday and I feel sure that yours were with me."[670]

There were multiple ways to express one's feelings over what they received from home. Indeed, some soldiers chose not to elaborate on the contents of the parcels, let alone how it made them feel. This can be seen in the instance of A.R. Peters, who was stationed in the Gallipoli theater of operations in the fall of 1915. In his diary he simply noted how from mid-October through mid-November he had received five parcels over a span of about a month, with the last two coming on the 10th and 11th respectively.[671] Judging by his diary entries, Peters was a man who took effort to chronicle—at least at a cursory level—the more mundane elements of soldiering. This ranged from the list of items advertised to be sold at the army canteen, average meals he received while at the

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[668] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers. Tompkins served with the 2/8th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment during the war.
[669] Ibid.
[670] Ibid.
[671] IWM, 88/52/1, A.R. Peters Papers.

front and while in hospital, and this short receiving inventory. Considering that the availability of goods and everyday stimulants could vary, these undoubtedly were warmly received by this man of few words.

If gift parcels containing creature comforts were welcomed by the soldiers deployed to the Western Front, they were a godsend to those deployed in the other theaters of operations. In a letter written to his father from early October 1915 while stationed at the Gallipoli front, Second Lieutenant Stanley Cooke noted how he had recently received a much welcome gift and letter in the mail. "Needless to say they were all extremely welcome," he reported, and "the parcel arrived in splendid condition."[672] "The acid drops were in a very melted condition," he noted, however they "went down alright."[673] Additionally, "the tobacco you sent was very mouldy on arrival" and as a result was "useless."[674] Despite the problems in shipment, Cooke noted how he was typically "never short of tobacco + cigs, so it might have been worse."[675] In addition to the excellent chocolate, Cooke conveyed how he "was altogether pleased with the parcel."[676] "You have no idea how a parcel is welcomed hear [sic]," he professed, as "in fact all the mail is."[677] Adding to the value of such gifts, he noted that he and his "chums share [our] parcels together so we do fairly well as regards bits of extras."[678]

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[672] IWM, 05/7/2 and Con Shelf, 2nd Lt. S. Cooke Papers.
[673] Ibid.
[674] Ibid.
[675] Ibid.
[676] Ibid.
[677] Ibid.
[678] Ibid.

Receiving gifts from home was welcomed regardless of what uniform one wore. Writing shortly after the German army captured the French city of Lille in October 1914, Herbert Sulzbach described of how the first arrival of parcels from home lifted the spirits of the tired soldiers who had just endured the trying conditions of street-fighting. "14 October was a day of rejoicing," Sulzbach proclaimed, "since we received our first mail—no fewer than thirty letters for me, and lovely parcels of things to eat as well."[679] He further elaborated on the joy that soldiers took from receiving parcels brimming with *Genussmittel* in a diary entry from November 1914: "Really marvelous food parcels come up in the mail, and the whole battery enjoy them."[680] Echoing themes presented in previous chapters, Sulzbach concurrently noted here how soldiers welcomed the break that the parcels represented, as well as the fact that most were prone to sharing their gifts with their fellow comrades.

Soldiers' diaries, letters and memoirs are replete with not only references to consuming and sharing creature comforts, but also receiving them from family and friends back home. In a letter to his parents written 30 April 1915, Hermann Rehfuß thanked his parents for sending him some of his military effects, and took the opportunity to acknowledge a little packet he received from his grandmother. "Grandma has again sent two lovely little packets," Rehfuß reported, noting how there was "one with sweets and the other with tobacco, notably cigars; especially the latter made me very happy."[681] The letters of the Strauss brothers who served with the Württemburger units provide similar

[679] Sulzbach, *With the German Guns*, 36.
[680] Ibid, 41.
[681] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/206, Nr. 13, Nachlass Rehfuß.

examples. In one such letter, dated 28 September 1915, Victor reported to his parents, "Noodles, butter, and cigars from September 7 and 28 received, likewise those that produced. For everything many thanks. The goods came to us just at the right moment…"[682]

In his diary entry dated 15 April 1916, Wilhelm Schulin wrote how he "Received three parcels, and Easter greeting from my loving wife, eggs baked as the Easter Bunny, chocolate-bunny."[683] He also recorded how he "Received a parcel from Johan Seiler," an acquaintance from Scheppach, with a "letter enclosed."[684] "Thank God for the foodstuffs and Easter greetings," he penned.[685] The rest of his day, according to what he scribbled in his diary, was fairly nondescript: "Midday, carry sandbags and cement until 11:45."[686] It was Palm Sunday.

Fritz Fehrle recalled how the receipt of parcels, especially when coupled with other comforts at the front, could come as a welcome relief following something as basic, yet tiring, as a route march. "Evening finally, after we passed Malaucourt-Avocourt," Fehrle recorded, as his unit was "ordered for the time to stay in reserve Bivouacs."[687] "In this march it was generally a tremendous job to march in formation as a company," he elaborated, which was a result of the fact that "by the third day one no longer had really warm meals."[688] "The day before one had the same inconceivable narrow trenches (without refuge)," he noted, and "the second day before passed the night in the forest, and

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[682] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[683] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/040, Nr. 15, Nachlass Schulin.
[684] Ibid.
[685] Ibid.
[686] Ibid.
[687] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/322, Nr. 5, Nachlass Fehrle.
[688] Ibid.

each time barely a few hours."[689] "In bivouac," however, "one recovers very quickly, especially since one finally gets mail in their hands."[690] In this particular instance for Fehrle "it was very plentiful: Five parcels, five letters, two postcards in one fell swoop."[691] In addition to the much-anticipated goodies from home, Fehrle and his comrades also received five bottles of sparkling wine to be shared amongst the eight of them.[692]

The sheer quantity of *Liebesgaben* sent by all combatant nations during the war is quite staggering, and the fact that the vast majority of these parcels found their way to their intended recipients is a logistical feat in itself. Referring specifically to the BEF—but could just as well be summarizing for all nations—Charles Messenger notes that organizing and distributing the massive numbers of daily "Parcels were always the main headache."[693] This trend was only exacerbated over the course of the war, as these were sent all over the globe to the multiple theaters of operations. In fact, Messenger notes, by "April 1917 the number being handled per day rose to 125,000, placing heavy strains on sea and land transport."[694] Despite such burdens on the already overtaxed lines of communications, parcels were still sent to the British front at a rate of nearly 55,000 as late as June 1918.[695]

One feature that made the German exchange of gifts of *Genussmittel* unique from their British counterparts is the fact that German soldiers sent an incredible amount of

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[689] Ibid.
[690] Ibid.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Ibid.
[693] Messenger, *Call-to-Arms*, 439.
[694] Ibid.
[695] Ibid.

these goods from the battlefront to their loved ones back home, whereas British soldiers typically did not. The main reason for this is linked to the fact that the armies of Imperial Germany tended to have far better access to creature comforts than their friends and family did back home, especially when deployed to the Western Front. This was the combined result of several interrelated factors. Especially later in the war under the command economy imposed by the military command of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, Germany's foodstuffs and *Genussmittel* production and distribution was prioritized towards tending to the relative wellbeing and comfort of the soldiers above those at home.

Despite such seemingly good intentions, this programme exacerbated shortages felt across the home-front wrought by the British blockade. Consequently, as Roger Chickering has illustrated, out of the close to 30 billion *Liebesgaben* packages sent back and forth between the fronts during the war, some "7,000,000 of them went homeward every day."[696] What is more, Chickering observes, "The situation bred its ironies. During their offensives of early 1918, German soldiers raided allied supply depots and dispatched much of the bounty eastward, as *Liebesgaben* for the beleaguered home-front."[697] Additionally, the love gifts received from philanthropic donations, the subject of our next chapter, could likewise be sent back to loved ones at home. In such instances, those back home were seen as the ones in true need. Under the circumstances of totalizing war, perceived inequalities in distribution and access to foodstuffs could further

[696] Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 100.
[697] Ibid, 101.

reinforce tensions amongst the rank-and-file and their officers, as well any regional or class based animosities.

One example of this phenomenon can be seen in an excerpt from Herbert Sulzbach's published diary. For the entry dated 1 August 1917, Sulzbach confessed to his journal the role that cigarettes held in bolstering soldier morale, and how these products could be used to foster home-front/ front line relations. He began his account, attempting to demonstrate the triviality of the occurrence by "mention[ing] a small, apparently unimportant event which nevertheless brings out the character and attitude of our good-hearted soldiers."[698] After being placed on inspection duty, Sulzbach described how "An order came out that mail going home was to be checked, and while I was doing this, I noticed that one gunner was sending 50 cigars to his father."[699] Sulzbach noted the value of tobacco goods to the average soldier, claiming "cigars and cigarettes are what our men long for most, but nevertheless this splendid chap had saved 50 and was sending them home to his father because the old man couldn't get any at home."[700] In light of this act of sacrifice, Sulzbach returned the favor, as he "was so much moved by this that" he "bought this kindly man 30 cigars from the canteen" himself.[701]

There is far more at work in this seemingly innocuous exchange of comforts than the good-natured gift giving performed by both men. Fundamentally Sulzbach's benevolent actions were rooted in the act of military observation and surveillance, as it was only through sifting through outgoing mail that he learned of this soldier's sacrifice.

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[698] Sulzbach, *With the German Guns*, 124.
[699] Ibid.
[700] Ibid.
[701] Ibid.

This in turn led to Sulzbach taking the liberty to replace the cigars. While one may assume the cigars were appreciated, this gift quite possibly could never be returned in kind to Sulzbach. This could have potentially placed the anonymous soldier in the awkward position of acting grateful while suppressing any feelings of anxiety about receiving such a gift. The dual effects of feeling observed and receiving a gift that could never be paid back could have led to a strained relationship between the two men. Unfortunately we do not have the reaction of this soldier. Even if Sulzbach were to have described it, chances are either the response supplied by the soldier or the diary entry itself would have been censored in some fashion.

This scene reveals more about the complex dynamics inherent in how soldiers mediated their relationships. Even the act of sending cigars home can be viewed as an act of censoring. As such, this individual also probably recognized on a basic level that his father had some series of expectations of what the war was like. Yes, obtaining tobacco products and other trivial novelties did become increasingly difficult to acquire at the home front in Germany as the war progressed, but sending cigars could have provided this soldier with more than simply being able to let his father know that he was thinking of him. However, this small token could also have mediated against what the soldier would have to divulge in written language. In addition to letting the father know that he was being properly taken care of by the German authorities, this gift also could have served as a way of communicating as little as possible about the experience of war.

While German soldiers often sent massive quantities of foodstuffs and *Genussmittel* home in individual attempts to help their loved-ones militate against the

deleterious effects of the British Blockade and Germany's war economy, British soldiers felt little need to do the same. The main reason for this was that despite price increases and some relative shortages, these paled in comparison to the burdens the German home-front had to endure, despite the efforts of Germany's counter-blockade. One letter sent home by E.E. Tompkins while in hospital in Rouen around Christmas 1916 alludes to the sentiments many Tommies undoubtedly felt. Tompkins explained to his loved ones how he was "enclosing a sort of Xmas card which we all had given us at dinner time on Xmas day," as "It may interest you as a souvenir."[702] He then apologized as he "was sorry to not send you and the girls something for Christmas," the reason being that "there is only a canteen here and I am afraid tins of pineapple chunks, etc., would not be exactly suitable to send to you."[703] To make up for what he deemed to be an inadequate gift, he explained how he "may have a chance of going down to Rouen soon and will have a look round for some little memento of the place."[704]

A letter sent by Herbert Hemmens of the Coldstream Regiment of Footguards to his sister in July 1918 further underscores the dynamics of gift exchange between the British front lines and those back at home, and the roles that each played in this process. Writing on the occasion of his sister's birthday, Bert (as he was known) penned, "First of all I want to wish you many, many happy returns of the day; I suppose this will reach

[702] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers.
[703] Ibid.
[704] Ibid.

you sometime near the 8th."[705] Addressing the difficulty for him to get what he felt would be an appropriate present, he claimed, "It is impossible for me to get you anything in the way of a present but I am sending you a 10 /- [*sic*] note and I want you to get something that you would like with it."[706] Burt's birthday greeting then quickly turned to the form of a thank you note: "Thank you ever so much for the two parcels which you and mother sent for my birthday, they were only 4 days coming, both of them arriving in perfect condition on Friday, and I really dont [*sic*] know what to say about the contents everything was just lovely the eggs were all quite good and the cake was'nt [*sic*] broken a bit."[707] Hemmens then explained how those were not the only parcels he had recently received as he just "had a parcel from George on Sat [*sic*], he sent me some handkerchiefs + quite a lot of chocolate + biscuits, so you see we have been having quite a high time lately."[708]

This simple letter is instructive in several regards. The first point is that it demonstrates the multiple sources that members of the BEF potentially had in receiving gifts from home, be they directly from their immediate family, or from other relatives, friends or acquaintances. Secondly, and this is what differs from most German cases, is how members of the BEF generally abstained from sending commonplace luxuries and other comparable gift items procurable at the front back to the home Isles. They, as this letter points to, would send either money or some other trinkets acquired from the front

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[705] IWM, 02/40/1, H.W. Hemmens Papers. Hemmens served with the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards (2nd Guards Brigade, Guards Division) from June 1916 through the fall of 1918 when he was killed in action.
[706] Ibid.
[707] Ibid.
[708] Ibid.

or in some nearby town or village. This is due to the fact that, although the British did face tough economic times during the war, especially in 1917, this still paled in comparison to what the German home-front had to endure. What is more, as these sources suggest, there were clearly defined roles in this relationship: the soldiers received gifts, while the home front sent them. Finally, in addition to acknowledging receipt of comforts sent from home, Hemmens of course alluded to sharing his bounty with his mates at the front, a pervasive trend amongst all soldiers.

Send Me Gifts! Soldiers Expectations of Personal Sacrifice from Family and Friends

The civilian soldiers who fought in the First World War also held expectations that their loved ones would help them endure the hardships of military life and war by sending, amongst other things, creature comforts. Under these circumstances, soldiers viewed these little symbols as a small consolation in view of the continual sacrifices they had to endure. In a letter home from the end of January 1915 while still deployed in Poland, Walther Strauss complained to his parents back home in Germany how he and his brother were "just two weeks [since leaving] home without having received a line" from them.[709] The complaint continued: "the others receive every second or third night (when the mail comes) a heap of letters and parcels and we have nothing."[710] Walther lamented how it seemed to take "three weeks before we hear or receive anything from home."[711]

[709] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[710] Ibid.
[711] Ibid.

For Walther, this was especially problematic because "the tinned meat or the soup that one gets daily, I can't eat."[712] "Alone on bread and coffee I nourish myself," he explained, "and on the supplies I get from home."[713] "Here and there we grab cheese and schnapps, bacon," his plea continued, "but so little that one can barely taste it, and rarely are we given something other than the routine coffee."[714] According to Walther, the "best thing about our meals is the stove and the roof of our hut."[715] He explained how he would "often make" himself "cocoa, tea," and when one could "butter, eggs, [and] milk."[716] Walther later went on to specifically request: "Yes! Fennel oil and the like, also one candle in every parcel, cigarettes, tobacco and papers, etc. are most sincerely welcome."[717] Additionally, he requested, "chocolate, hard sausage, butter, cheese are desired in order to make possible the sustentation and maintenance of the warriors."[718]

Waiting for a response from home, let alone waiting for the much desired parcels that often contained moral boosting *Genussmittel*, could be frustrating for soldiers regardless of which side of the front they were on. This was clearly the case with the Strauss brothers, and Walther in particular. Eventually, Walter and Victor's patience was rewarded. On 9 February 1915, they penned a joint letter stating that, "yesterday evening we finally received your letters from 31 January and 1 February. We were really happy to finally hear from home."[719] According to the brothers, this was all the more

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[712] Ibid.
[713] Ibid.
[714] Ibid.
[715] Ibid.
[716] Ibid.
[717] Ibid.
[718] Ibid.
[719] Ibid.

important because of the lengths that they had to go to in "*ungemütlich*" conditions just to write a letter.[720] At that point, the parcels had not yet come, but the duo appeared to have renewed faith in their arrival, noting how "they will certainly come soon."[721] Their hopes were not tested much further as the next day Victor reported to his mother that they had "just this minute received their parcels, numbered 2, 3, 8, 9, 19, and we are very pleased about it."[722] Allegedly they were not going to write to their father while he was on business in Prague, as the postal service would take too long to get such a note to him. However, Victor penned how they were "looking forward to the salami and cigars," that he was going to send.[723]

Walther's personal letter home following the receipt of these parcels provides further insight into not only what the brothers received, but also illustrates first hand how the reception of such gifts could differ amongst individuals. "You cannot think of the joy, and especially the reassurance, that is seen in the letter, that all is well," Walther wrote.[724] He also relayed how they had received their parcels as well, at long last, which included both *Lebkuchen* and a bottle of cognac. Providing insight into the logistical differences between the sending of letters versus *Liebesgaben* parcels to the front, Walther explained how it seemed to "take eight days to get a letter if all goes well."[725] To that end, he noted, "packages seem to take longer."[726] Recognizing the efforts taken by their family, Walther

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[720] Ibid.
[721] Ibid.
[722] Ibid.
[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Ibid.
[726] Ibid.

proclaimed that he and his brother "thank you a thousand times."[727] Reiterating how these shipments played such a vital role in augmenting daily supplies at the German front, Walther noted, "If you only knew how one looks on the march, and is otherwise reliant upon shipments from home, then you could realize how one gets such joy from them."[728]

Walther Strauss's requests for goodies from home are instructive in several regards. The petitions themselves and the way in which they are presented suggest that there is an aura of expectation on the part of Walther. When he perceived that these expectations were not equivalent to his reality, his letters took on a more somber tone. The elation espoused once he finally did receive both letters and parcels, the former being a symbol in some instances that the latter should be on their way, demonstrates a renewed sense of hope in his family in that they not only recognized the sacrifice that he and his brother were making, perceivably on their behalf, but also that their family had not been too adversely affected by the impact of the war on the larger economy.

What types of consumable creature comforts were requested were often dictated by what one had grown accustomed to prior to the war as a civilian. Sir Arthur Rucker's letters are filled with requests for creature comforts, and often they were for brand name products. Fortnum & Masons products were especially welcomed by the British officer, as noted in several letters such as the following passage from a note dated 28 April 1917. "A glorious parcel arrived last night from Fortnum & Masons," Rucker reported, noting

[727] Ibid.
[728] Ibid.

how "It is just the sort of parcel I want + could well do with a weekly one."[729] This sentiment was echoed in a letter dated 4 May 1917: "Many thanks for your two letters which reached me last night, also for the Fortnum & Mason parcel which needless to say was a God-send [*sic*]."[730]

After returning to active service following being injured on the front, Rucker resumed his requests for treats from home in a letter from April 1917. Once again he asked for specific brands of products, and also discussed how certain items were more desired than others due to the inability to acquire them at the front. After acknowledging a recently received pair of socks (undoubtedly most welcome for those at the rain-soaked front), he noted how "A regular parcel from Fortnum + Mason would now be very welcome" as it was once again "much harder to get stuff."[731] He went on to provide his mother with a brief grocery list, stating how tins of fruit (which were of course sweetened with sugar), tins of game and fish, as well as vegetables (which could also be extremely difficult to procure) "would be nice."[732] He then went on to tell his dear mother how "Sweets are not wanted now. In fact everything is just the reverse as it was before!"[733] This just goes to illustrate how fluid the needs and wants of soldiers at the front could be, dictated by what they could acquire from the military, from locals, and from each other.

A letter sent home by E.E. Tompkins postmarked 2 July 1916 illustrates that, while soldiers appreciated store bought cakes, they typically preferred those items that

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[729] IWM, 01/5/1, Sir Arthur Rucker Papers.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Ibid.
[732] Ibid.
[733] Ibid.

were homemade. The letter details his baptism of fire and the routine of trench life, and describes how he and his comrades could typically expect to only catch an hour of sleep here and there. Tompkins also reported how they tended to "get a fair amount of food but it is very rough and ready, especially in the trenches."[734] "I often long for one of your cakes, but I expect I shall have to wait a bit before I get a taste of one," he lamented, and to hold him over in the interim "I buy a good bit of bread when we are out."[735]

In a series of letters a few months later, from September 1916, Tompkins elucidates on this preference, telling his mother how a "parcel which Ruth sent arrived in good condition. The cake and sardines are excellent, the cake being the best I ever tasted, that is for a bought cake. I could mention another kind which is even nicer."[736] Just a few weeks later Tompkins' wait finally came to an end. "My dearest Mother, I am pleased to say that I received your letter of the 28th and also the parcel to-day [*sic*]," he wrote.[737] "I am sure you will be glad to know that the cake was in perfect condition," an elated Tompkins continued, "just as though it had just come out of the oven in [*sic*] fact it was not long before I sampled it."[738] "It was the same old flavour as ever," Tompkins proclaimed, "and was even nicer than usual or seemed so at any rate."[739]

Some soldiers would request for money so they could procure whatever commonplace luxury they may desire themselves. In one such case, Private Len Payne of the BEF wrote to his parents how he would "write again soon," however, in the meantime

[734] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Ibid. Emphasis in original text.
[737] Ibid.
[738] Ibid.
[739] Ibid.

he suggested that they could "send money if you like I will treat myself to a bottle of Champayne [*sic*] for my good luck wishing I was at home for you to share it."[740] Payne felt he could take it upon himself to obtain an ideal comfort, although if it was the champagne or not one could never be certain.

There were instances where soldiers felt the need to instruct their loved ones on what to send them, and how to send it. The letters of Frank Haylett suggests that he felt perfectly comfortable requesting that his wife send him goodies from home, even when he was still training in England at Salisbury Camp. Haylett, who served as a quartermaster with the Royal Flying Corps, and clearly not wanting to feel left, out asked in letter home "Do write me when you can—the other fellows get letters every post + parcels galore—should much appreciate some of those little Vista cakes or anything in that line."[741] In a letter dated 14 February 1915, just four days after the one quoted, Haylett again implored his wife to send more letters and parcels from home.[742] The soldier wanted to be reassured that he had not been forgotten, and the routine of sending letters and parcels symbolized this in soldiers' minds. Additionally, one could interpret that Haylett wanted to be socially accepted by both having parcels and the ability to share their contents with his fellow comrades.

The packaging that the gifts of stimulant comforts came in could be another topic of great concern for soldiers. The effect that proper packing had on ensuring that any gift sent from home would arrive in one piece clearly made an impression on E.E. Tompkins.

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[740] IWM, 03/29/1, L. Payne Papers. Payne served with the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers (3rd Brigade, 1st Division, later with the 48th Brigade, 16th Division).
[741] IWM, 02/35/1, F.A. Haylett Papers.
[742] Ibid.

In a letter dated 23 March 1917, he explained to his "dearest Mother" how he was "sure" that she would "be pleased to know that I received the cake yesterday, so you certainly did judge the time for sending it off well."[743] The treat "was in as perfect condition as when it came out of the oven," reported Tompkins, "which was thanks to your good packing, no doubt."[744] He then noted how he considered himself to "have always been lucky with my parcels as I never had one come in a damaged condition yet.[745] You ought to see the condition some parcels arrive in, it really is a shame, but is mainly owing to the packing."[746] Tompkins, however, would fall victim to poor packing a couple of months later in May 1917. He explained to his mum how "Aunt Kate's parcel arrived the same day as yours and contained cocoa, milk, sardines, toffee, tongue and some fresh eggs of which 3 out of the 6 were smashed, two were cracked and only one undamaged."[747] "It was rather a pity to send them like that," he explained, "because parcels do get such a banging about."[748]

In his book *Lady's from Hell*, published in 1918 on the heels of the United States' entry into the conflict, Robert Pinkerton instructed American readers on what he believed to be ideal gifts for soldiers. He preached to the U.S. readership, "Let me beseech you never to send a man in the fighting line a case of jam, or even a jar of jam. Jam and mud are synonymous terms in the minds of fighting men."[749] "They are fed up on jam. What

[743] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Ibid.
[746] Ibid.
[747] Ibid.
[748] Ibid.
[749] Pinkerton, *Ladies From Hell*, 123.

they want is some of this ready-prepared cocoa or chocolate to which one need only add hot water," Pinkerton advocated on behalf of his Doughboy brethren.[750] While secondary items, Pinkerton nonetheless suggested that, "Butter is at a premium. Cheese, likewise, is a luxury."[751] Promptly returning to sugar-based delicacies, Pinkerton unrelentingly implored, "Sweet biscuits, hard enough to stand the rough journey, are rare and welcome delicacies."[752] Pinkerton pressed his petition for gifts further, noting that, "Helmets, trench mirrors, and similar personal accessories are always received with open arms."[753] In the process, Pinkerton linked material necessities of the front with what were presented as urgently needed consumable stimulants, which the author suggests played an equally central role in the maintenance of the war effort.

Pinkerton's appeals to the American public did not end there. Speaking more generally about the importance of gift parcels and their impact on morale, he insisted, "The arrival of any packet from home is an event of importance, so don't forget the boys who you know, when they are on the firing line."[754] Speaking with the authority granted from the experience of enduring four years of war, Pinkerton analogized, "The receipt of a letter means as much to them as a trip to the theater does to you. A package full of delicacies—well, do you remember what a package from home meant to you when you were away at school?"[755] "Multiply that keen joy ten-fold, add to it the urgent *need* for all such things," Pinkerton professed, "and you will have a vague conception of the good

[750] Ibid.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Ibid.
[753] Ibid.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Ibid.

that you are doing when you send one of your boys in khaki a little package bearing the brief but welcome sign, 'Made in the U.S.A.'"[756]

One of the problems with historicizing soldiers' receptions towards acquiring and receiving commonplace luxuries and everyday stimulants lies in how a given individuals needs and wants could rapidly change at the front due to a host of reasons. This tendency is reflected heavily in the letters that were sent home to family members, friends, and acquaintances. Under the conditions imposed by war, soldiers' requests could alternate between requests for certain items at one time, then shortly thereafter be followed by simple omissions or even requests to halt any further shipments until called upon again. In one salient example, Victor Strauss explained to his parents that while deployed on the Eastern Front in late January 1915 how they could recently in the town of Lowicz obtain a beer for seventy Pfennig a liter.[757] But according to Victor, that was unfortunately the only consumable comfort one could obtain. In light of such relative depravity, he exhibited no qualms for requesting for some other *Genussmittel* from home: "Consequently, you must indeed send something: cigars and, once more cigars and cigarettes."[758]

Holidays and other special occasions were times that typically saw an influx of comforts sent off to the fronts. In response to the sheer amount of goodies received while at the front during Christmas 1914 Herbert Sulzbach quipped: "The next few days before Christmas bring us more mail and such a lot of food parcels that we can't possibly eat

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[756] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[757] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[758] Ibid.

everything. People at home must think we're about to die of starvation."[759] However, the holiday season could be a time of reinforced sorrow and disappointment, as countless diaries, letters and memoirs make clear. For example, Christian Brautlecht recalled how "To-day, as I begin my letter, it doesn't look at all Christmasy with us."[760] He went on to explain how "Everyone in the trench is in very low spirits because there has been no post, and the clouds in the sky have mingled their moisture with the clay of our trench so that we are filthy from top to toe."[761]

Changes in battlefield conditions could make the reception of gifts from home a detriment to morale, especially if one had to leave them behind in haste because of an emergency. One such scenario is depicted in a letter written by Martin Müller, a law student from Leipzig. The young Müller began his holiday tragedy: "Yesterday—Christmas Eve—gave us a deep insight into the misery brought about by war, though we only viewed it from a distance."[762] The German soldier continued, describing the routine of the front: "On the 23rd we had Brigade Exercise near St. Erme, from 7-9.30. Then followed an inspection of the Army Reserve Corps there, by the General in Command, till 12, with its accompanying thorough cleansing of the 'corpus', brushing of the moustache, sewing on of buttons and darning of holes in one's trousers."[763]

It seemed however, that for the young lad and his comrades their luck was soon to change. In a fit of excitement Müller's prose quickened, "After that, a banquet. I,

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[759] Sulzbach, *With the German Guns*, 44.
[760] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 192.
[761] Ibid.
[762] Ibid, 210.
[763] Ibid.

determined to go a regular bust, selected roast-goose. Real, genuine roast-goose! Topping! Then I expended two of the little Mocca-bags [*sic*] in order to enjoy really home-like 'coffee and cakes.'"[764] Caught up in the moment, he confessed, "After that I meant to write a letter of thanks to you, and then we were going to a Christmas service, followed by the Company festivities in the Convent cellar. Oh, we were all looking forward to it like children."[765] Müller's luck was about to change yet again. "But it was not to be! A man suddenly rushed in with the cry: 'Alarm!'"[766]

In this instance, the nuisance of war permanently interrupted the celebration for Martin Müller and his fellow compatriots. The "alarm" turned out to be a real warning of attack and the unit was ordered to retreat and redeploy in another sector of the front. Unsurprisingly the soldiers were quite disgruntled. Not only was their break from the work of industrial war interrupted, but to add further insult to injury, all of them had to abandon their Christmas treasures as they hastily retreated.[767] One can only infer how this episode had a sharp effect on morale, at least for the short term. Couple this with the decrease in supplies and rations as the year progressed, and one can extrapolate the ramifications of such a travesty.

The exchange of *Liebesgaben* could cause anxiety and tension on other levels. Soldiers were often times quite cognizant of the financial and material sacrifices that loved ones endured to send these treats to the front. One example of this is evidenced in the letter sent by J.G. McDonaugh to his wife previously discussed in chapter two. To

[764] Ibid.
[765] Ibid.
[766] Ibid.
[767] Ibid, 210-214.

reiterate, McDonaugh asked his wife to not send cakes so frequently as his mate Bill could not equally contribute to their ritual of exchange. Equally as important, if one will recall, was the amount of money that his wife would have to sacrifice in order to send him such comforts.[768]

Comparable financial concerns were reflected in other soldiers' letters. In April 1917 Sir Arthur Rucker pleaded with his mother to pay for his Fortnum and Masons shipments directly from his personal checking account. In the same note from late that month he requested for "a little more baccy [*sic*]," and asked that his mother "please have another pound sent to me out of band."[769] Recognizing the expense, he noted how he "must be running up a considerable debt with you."[770] To absolve himself, he asked his mum to "please recoup yourself by a cheque" from his accounts back home.[771]

Beyond the Home: Gifts from Friends, Acquaintances, and the Workplace

Family acquaintances and friends were another key source of extra creature comforts, as these individuals would also send gift parcels to those soldiers off at war. Corporal J. Jacobs of the BEF wrote to his acquaintance Lady Hood in late July 1915 to thank her for a gift of fags that he had recently received. "I have received a box of 50 cigarettes," Jacobs penned, "which, according to what my mother states, I believe came from you, for which I tender many thanks."[772] He then took the opportunity to discuss

[768] IWM, 67/111/1, J.G. McDonaugh Papers.
[769] IWM, 01/5/1, Sir Arthur Rucker Papers.
[770] Ibid.
[771] Ibid.
[772] IWM, P371, J. Jacobs Papers.

some of his general experiences in the trenches before concluding and "thanking you once again for you little present."[773]

A Tommy identified only as Noval appears to have had a comparable benefactor. In one letter he wrote to his friend/acquaintance Mrs. Anderson of Surrey in late November 1916, he described his current location's "only fault" as being "that there are no canteens here or Y.M.'s [YMCAs]."[774] A consequence of the lack of these facilities, he surmised, was "as you may guess the Frence [*sic*] people take advantage of the fact + know how to charge for their goods."[775] Not wanting to pay the exorbitant prices resulting from what could be easily deemed as a seller's market, he asked, "Do mind me asking you to send me a few English fags. 'Players' in preference?"[776] What is more, he added, "One cannot purchase an Eng: fag [*sic*] for love or money + the French fags which are the only you can get are, commonly speaking 'rotten.'"[777] The ritualized gift exchange between the two had already been established, which he alluded to when noting how he was "delighted to receive your kind parcel which, as per usual is a beauty."[778] His accolades did not end there, as he confessed the gift's value: "Your's [*sic*] is the only one I've had for over a month + I expect it has traveled half France."[779] Despite what this might imply, Young Noval was not solely reliant upon Mrs. Anderson's kindness and

[773] Ibid.
[774] IWM, 94/10/1, Mrs. A. Anderson Papers.
[775] Ibid.
[776] Ibid.
[777] Ibid.
[778] Ibid.
[779] Ibid.

generosity, as he at that moment "ha[d] two on the way from home but have not recd [*sic*] them yet."[780]

Mrs. Anderson continued to periodically correspond with and send Noval gifts over the course of his military service. In a letter penned nearly a year later, the young Tommy wrote to his pal, "Very many thanks for your letter for the 5th which I recd [*sic*] a few days ago + by way of acknowledgement sent Sadie a P.C. which I trust she has received."[781] "Today I recd [*sic*] your parcel of sponge, cake, fags + apples," Noval continued, "for which I must thank you very much."[782] Clearly grateful for the small tokens, he elaborated "Tis [*sic*] very good of you to keep sending me parcels my dear Mrs A. + I'm sure that the people at home appreciate your kindness as well as myself + Im [*sic*] very sorry indeed that the last one you sent me went astray."[783]

In a letter dated 17 February 1915, Victor Strauss wrote home explaining how he had just finally received a Christmas parcel from three family acquaintances. "Yesterday I received a *Liebesgabe* from Mrs. Treibe with a very nice poem," Victor explained, noting how it was "a Christmas parcel that contained chocolate, nuts, handkerchief, a pair of warm socks, ginger bread, cigars, paper for letter writing, soap, etc."[784] Succinctly describing his feelings upon receipt of the parcel, he penned, "It made me very happy, and I will, when I have time, write Mrs. Triebe."[785] Then Victor went on to describe how he had yet to thank two other family friends for their generous gifts: "For the Fleischer's

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[780] Ibid.
[781] Ibid.
[782] Ibid.
[783] Ibid.
[784] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[785] Ibid.

package and Mr. Marx's schnapps, I haven't yet thanked them, but soon I'll have the time to reply."[786]

In addition to family friends and acquaintances, some companies and employers would send gifts of creature comforts to those that had left for war. For example, the Cadbury Chocolate Factory in Bournville, just outside of Birmingham, would send twice a year to its permanent employees that were off at the fronts one pound of chocolate. Over the course of the war, Cadbury sent its employees in total some 20,000 parcels, of which 8,000 contained chocolate along with books.[787]

It is perhaps easy to expect a company that produces a commonplace luxury and everyday stimulant to send its employees some of their product as a sign of appreciation of their sacrifice and to communicate to them that they have not been forgotten. However, what about other firms? G&E Hindle, is one such firm that appeared to follow suit, as in 1917 they sent its employees gifts of cigarettes. Fortunately, some of the thank you notes sent in return have survived, and provide excellent insight into the reception of these gifts. Additionally, these gifts help illustrate the global scale of the war, as some of these parcels traveled as far as Egypt and even India.

Many of these thank you cards are simply one-note responses. One succinctly reads, "Dear Sir. I received your parcel with many thanks Jan 28th and I remain your Obedient Servant Dr [driver] Baldwin," while another merely stated, ""Sir Just [*sic*] a line to let you know I received your parcel alright and I thank you very much Your [*sic*] truly

[786] Ibid.
[787] IWM, Misc. 22, Item 388, Cadbury Magazine (circa postwar).

A. Astley."[788] A note from a Private Thornton elaborated a bit on this tone: "Dear Messrs, Hindle, I received the tobacco and cigaretts [*sic*] you kindly sent me, and I most heartly [*sic*] thank you for them, Wishing You The Compliments From Pte. J. Thornton."[789]

There were also notes from soldiers that went into more detail. These provide us not only with insight into how grateful these men were for the gift, but also how they augmented any supplies they could possibly obtain near the front. A letter sent from a corporal deployed to Egypt extolled how he had the "very great pleasure in thanking you for the parcel of Cigarettes + Tobacco Which I have received to day [*sic*] 18/1/17."[790] The junior officer from the 1/4 East Lancanshire Regiment went on to praise the gift as being "just the thing I wanted Cigs + Tobacco as we are on a place where they are very bad to get hold of."[791] "As you will perhaps know that the Desert is a very desolate place to be in," he continued, "thanking you once again for your kind gifts. As I can assure you I shall enjoy myself now with a good smoke."[792]

Another detailed thank you note describes the quantity of cigarettes that G&E Hindle sent to their employees then serving abroad. Private Harrison wrote a bit more than "a line to Thank [*sic*] you for the Grand Parcel" he had received that morning.[793] After acknowledging that the comforts were received in "good condition" he reiterated

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[788] IWM, Misc. 207, Item 3004, Thank You Letters and Postcards from Enlisted Employees of G&E Hindle, Ltd.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid.
[793] Ibid.

how it contained specifically "2 Box's [*sic*] fags and 6 Packets of Tobacco," before proclaiming how he was "Glad to say I am in good Health [*sic*]."[794]

Other notes provide insight into the symbolic value that these seemingly trivial gifts could have. Regarding his package of cigarettes, Private Hughes, who happened to be stationed in India at the time, wrote "Your welcome parcel to hand containing cig's [*sic*] and tobacco for which I wish to thank you, for your very kind remembrance of me."[795] Hughes continued, "I can assure you I enjoyed them very much, and found them quite a change from what you get out here."[796]

Some of the thank you notes illustrate that these gifts, as often was the case, were typically shared with the recipients' comrades. In one such note, J. Murray penned, "Dear sirs just a few lines to let you know that I have just received your parcel of cigarettes and Tobacco [*sic*] with thanks."[797] "They have come at the right moment for we have just about smoked up," Murray continued, noting how they could "now continue the smoking."[798] "We are resting here after doing some very stiff marches," he continued. Then Murray went on to comment, "I dare say you will have read about us chasing the Turks out of El Arish," noting how he and his comrades were "all sorry we could not get to have at them as that was left to the Cavalry but I think it will be our turn

[794] Ibid.
[795] Ibid.
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid.
[798] Ibid.

next."[799] In closing, he wrote, "Allow me to thank you once more for your splendid parcel."[800]

There are still other letters that echo this tone. One, sent from Private J. Milligan while he was deployed to Egypt reads, "Your gift of tobacca [*sic*] + cigs acknowledged with many thanks and best wishes for the New Year."[801] Noting how the gift was communally shared, he wrote, "Your gift is gladly appreciated by me, and my pall's [*sic*], and we all smoke your health sirs and are hoping to see peace and victory for the Allies, in good old 1917."[802] Apologizing for his tardiness in thanks, Milligan closed, "Please excuse delay as I did not receive your parcel till the 27th of Jan."[803] A letter from Private Harrison dated New Year's Eve 1916 makes comparable references to sharing his gift amongst his comrades. "I got your Parsel [*sic*] allright [*sic*] which I thank you very much indeed," he wrote.[804] Following the introductory acknowledgement and thanks, Harrison explained how he "gave my palls [*sic*] a bit of toback [*sic*] and we sat down and made our selves [*sic*] very comfortable."[805]

One short letter of receipt and thanks raises more questions than it could possibly ever answer. In the card, dated 20 March 1917, D.E. Price wrote a remarkably brief note: "Sirs, I beg to acknowledge receipt of your splendid parcel of Tobacco + Cigarettes for which many thanks. Yours Sincerely DE Price for Pte T Cowell (Since <u>deceased</u>)."[806]

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[799] Ibid.
[800] Ibid.
[801] Ibid.
[802] Ibid.
[803] Ibid.
[804] Ibid.
[805] Ibid.
[806] Ibid. Emphasis in the original text.

One is left to wonder if Price took the gift from the parcel cart after Cowell had already died. However, Cowell could have possibly shared his gift prior to his passing. Markings from the post office stamp show that the card was sent from a Field Ambulance unit, but unfortunately the ink is blurry on either side, so as to make ascertaining which one not entirely possible. As such, perhaps this was another instance of the RAMC living up to its reputation and Rob[bing] All My Comrades. We know that the division of parcels, let alone outright looting, from those who were killed (and even those packages that were ultimately presumed to be lost somewhere in transit) was a common feature within the consumption experience of the war.

One question that arises from this letter collection, mostly dated around the turn of the year 1917, is why did G&E Hindle choose to send their employees cigarettes versus any other commonplace luxury or everyday stimulant? As previously noted, cigarette manufacturers had long advertised their wares as the ideal gift. However, one should not overlook the minimal cost of these products, as cigarettes were undoubtedly a cost effective and efficient way to communicate to that the men that they were not forgotten. As we have seen, this is a theme that is noted in several of the thank you notes sent back by the recipients to the firm. Additionally, these products had gained a reputation as being a panacea for nerves. We can only speculate why the executives of G&E Hindle would have sent these specific gifts to their employees. Perhaps they believed in the notion of civic sacrifice, and wanted to contribute in this way. It is even possible that these men genuinely thought they were doing their employees a service on multiple levels.

G&E Hindle and Cadbury were by no means the only firms to send their employees in uniform gifts of stimulants. For instance, in a letter penned by Len Payne of the 7th Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers sent to his sister Ida in August 1916, he wrote how "it is kind of the Boss at the Co-op to give you the cigs for me and horace [*sic*] tell him I will pay for a pint for him when I get back alright."[807] As we can see, the gifted stimulant was one that could be easily reciprocated, and which Len intended to repay in equal if not greater value in the future. Indeed, the rounds can and do get ever larger!

The fluidity in soldiers' wants and needs were also reflected in the requests for creature comforts submitted to friends, acquaintances, and even employers. For example, in a postcard from around Christmastime 1916, a soldier only identified as Robert wrote to his employer G&E Hindle, "just a few lines hoping theses [*sic*] four lines will find you in the best of health as it leaves me at present + thanking you very much for sending me the cigarettes + tobacco + it was very kind of you to send them."[808] Robert went on to request, on behalf of his seemingly less fortunate comrades, how he would "rather you send them to our Arthur + Jack as they dont [*sic*] get many."[809]

Giving Gifts/ Bestowing Symbols: A Snapshot from the Home Front

One of the limits of privileging soldiers' accounts in analyzing the role of the everyday stimulants in mediating relationships during war is that it overshadows the

[807] IWM, 03/29/1, L. Payne Papers.
[808] IWM, Misc. 207, Item 3004, Thank You Letters and Postcards from Enlisted Employees of G&E Hindle Ltd.
[809] Ibid.

symbolic role that these products played for the non-combatant civilians. It should come as no surprise that the specific gifts that were so often given likewise reflected and communicated ideals and aspirations from civilian society. Chocolate is but one example of this. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has noted that during the nineteenth century the sweetened comfort was typically given as a gift to women and children.[810] The latter group is of central importance to our study, as chocolates (and other sweets) were often given as gifts from families (more often than not included in care packages assembled by mothers) to their "boys" at the front. Chocolate had come to be viewed as something that "innocents" consumed, and by giving these treats to loved ones at the front, it can be argued that this symbol served as not only a reminder of home, but also a symbol of an age of innocence now lost. The relative youth of those that served certainly reinforced this trend; whether it was contemporaneously recognized or not is another matter. Beyond cigarettes, chocolates and other sweetened treats were by far the most common stimulant semi-luxury items sent to soldiers at the fronts. Reinforcing this notion, particularly for the British forces, was the serving of chocolate products at philanthropic canteens. Although this is our topic in the next chapter, the YMCA once again comes immediately to mind here. The innocence, and by extension purity, symbolized by chocolate and the refined sugar it contained made it an ideal symbolic substitute for alcohol for the temperance organization to distribute.

The exchange of creature comforts between the home front and the soldiers off at war also provides valuable insights into the ritual of gift exchange. In a relevant recent

[810] Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 93.

study, economist Joel Waldfogel asserts that the recipient alone can assign the economic value of gift. According to Waldfogel, if the receiver does not hold the same value of what was actually paid for a gift that they have received, the act of gift giving negatively impacts the economy at large.[811] While this is a provocative interpretation of the gift giving process, there are clearly limits to this view. Fundamentally, this perspective does not account for the value that a giver may place on a given item. Additionally, any underlying tension or friction between the giver and the receiver are equally obscured. If one will recall, Mauss pointed out that one could just as well choose to reject the gift, thus rejecting the relationship and/or bond symbolized by said gift.

The gift exchange between Vera Brittain and her brother off at the front provides insight into this dynamic. Brittain, recalling a gift she sent to her brother Edward for Christmas just prior to his death, hoped, "he had only just received the box of cigarettes and the collars and braces I gave him for Christmas and I feel glad that he did get them because he must have thought of me then."[812] Sadly, Edward was killed in combat, and all Brittain could do was speculate about Edward being reminded of her act of kindness before his death. Additionally, the thought and emotions inherent in the act of giving this parcel of comforts was in turn being used by Brittain to ease the pain and suffering she felt from losing her brother.

At the beginning of March 1916, Mary Martin wrote a comparable note in her diary. Mary herself was an Irish, wealthy widow of Roman Catholic faith living in the

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[811] Joel Waldfogel, *Scroogenomics: Why You Shouldn't Buy Presents for the Holidays*, Kindle Edition. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). It is interesting to note that Waldfogel is critical of the gift exchange paradigm that Mauss established.
[812] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth.* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1933), 252.

Dublin suburb of Monkstown. She began the diary at the beginning of the year upon hearing that her son Charlie had gone missing while deployed on the Salonika front. The document itself is written like a long letter to her son, with the hopes that he would one day return home and be able to read it. In one particular entry, Mary began by commenting on the wicked late winter weather, noting how "March [was] coming like a lion torrents of rain which with the melted snow means floods everywhere."[813] She explained how this delayed her errands "till after lunch" when she made the arduous trek to "the Church & Brown's at Kingstown."[814] The purpose of this trip was to purchase some "cigarettes to enclose in a parcel which I hope will reach you."[815]

At first glance, these excerpts appear to merely illustrate the process of exchange between the home front and the front lines. But there is more to be gleaned from Brittain's and Martin's seemingly straightforward desires. Indeed, readers are given insight into some of the items that were sent to soldiers, which were typically quite mundane. In addition to the symbolism soldiers heaped on gifts of creature comforts, these examples also provide shed light into what these rituals meant to the givers themselves. It has been speculated that one of the underlying reasons Mary Martin kept this journal was that both the act of writing and the artifact itself provided a glimmer of hope that her son would return home one day.[816] This same logic of enduring hope can be applied to her braving the elements to send a care package to her son, despite the fact that

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[813] Mary Martin, "A Family at War: The Diary of Mary Martin; 1 January-25 May 1916," Entry for 1 March 1916, <http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/site/index.xml> Accessed 15 July 2014.
[814] Ibid.
[815] Ibid.
[816] Ibid.

she knew that he was missing and may never receive the gift. Although any relative sacrifice in monies spent on the *Liebesgaben* may be perceived an economic "waste," the symbolism bound in this emotional gesture clearly outweighed any potential financial burdens. The same can be said of Vera Brittain's actions. In these examples, the complete gift value for the giver can be seen, demonstrating the emotional and psychological value bound within the gift exchange ritual. Even when the probability existed that the gifts would never be received, participating in the gift giving ritual provided hope that their loved ones were still out there, which in turn helped them to endure the strains of war at home.[817]

Conclusion:

In both the British and German armies, gifts of *Liebesgaben* were a key way by which soldiers could obtain extra creature comforts. As has been highlighted above, these gifts served as reminders of home, and in the process communicated to soldiers that they and their daily sacrifices were not forgotten. The symbolic value of the everyday stimulants sent to those at the fronts once again illustrates the communicative value that these products played in soldiers' daily lives. Through these symbolic sacrifices, civilians back home attempted to fulfill their end of the social contract by helping their boys endure. As such, the exchange of these comforts helped to provide soldiers with the psychological and emotional stabilization that was needed to endure the hardships of

[817] One could surmise that comparable sources exist that detail this point of view from the German home-front. This is indeed one area for potential future research.

daily life at the front, as well as the strain of being separated from their families and friends back home.

Chapter V:
Envisioning Comfort: Charitable Provisions of Everyday Stimulants to the Fronts.

Describing a Christmastime celebration near the front lines in 1914, Herman Rehfuß began his daily diary entry: "Our lieutenant was promoted… finally! Our battery commander received at the same time the Iron Cross Second Class."[818] "We have ourselves a room designated as a Casino," and as a result of the multiple reasons to celebrate "tonight we inaugurated it with guests."[819] Rehfuß then detailed a "flawless meal ready with wine, beer, schnapps and tea."[820] "It was all good," he continued, "…very *gemütlich* and was strongly praised."[821]

The fete, according to the German, "lasted until one in the morning."[822] The celebrations were reportedly extended the next evening, as they "had for the units a beautiful celebration and gift exchange in the Church."[823] "The priest held a nice sermon," Rehfuß noted, recounting how "Briefly in the front of the hall of the church the priest had a little chat. It was something light; he had also shared much extra schnapps."[824] Explaining how he and his fellow comrades got their bounty of creature comforts, he wrote, "The Red Cross had everything possible donated. Shirts, etc., tobacco pipes, etc., sweets, baked goods and the like."[825] "Everyone got something," Rehfuß continued,

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[818] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/206, Nr. 15, Nachlass Rehfuß.
[819] Ibid.
[820] Ibid.
[821] Ibid.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Ibid.

describing how he "had the church cutely decorated and set up three Christmas trees."[826] But not all could attend the rounds of celebrations, as "Unfortunately the first crew in the battery was required to stay outside, where there was at least the heated dugout, in case the French wanted to foul up our celebration."[827]

When the armies of Europe went to war in the late summer of 1914, nationally and locally based philanthropies and voluntary aid organizations were quick to provide any assistance they could to the soldiers heading off to the various fronts. Much like the militaries themselves, these efforts reflected the societal trends and mores of the nations they represented. Likewise, these groups were keen to tap into the rhetoric of sacrifice as they mobilized their resources to aid the boys off at the front. By utilizing this pervasive discourse, philanthropic programmes sought to encourage not only donations, but also individuals to volunteer to serve at distribution centers like the numerous canteens and mobile huts at the fronts. Under the circumstances imposed by limited resources, these groups were equally dependent upon encouraged self-mobilization. In the process, these organizations concurrently created a venue for citizens who did not join the ranks to contribute in some way to the national war effort.

One primary area that charitable organizations helped support the war effort was through the collection and distribution of creature comforts. This chapter will compare the simultaneous efforts from Britain and Germany, highlighting examples from the multitude of ways that each nation sent these products to the front: national (YMCA and

[826] Ibid.
[827] Ibid.

Red Cross), localized (Dresden War Association) and commercial (British Tobacco Fund). It will also explore some of the motivations behind doing so. In each instance, civilian volunteers often had distinct agendas and motivations behind either the act of volunteering or in supplying the specific types of stimulants that were chosen to provide. An equally important element to consider is soldiers' receptions to these activities, which indeed did vary depending upon the circumstances and subtleties of the providing organizations. In addition to the products themselves, the facilities in which these creature comforts were served is also important to consider because they provided soldiers with a setting to both take a break from the strains of war and mediate their relationships. In each case, the mode of mediation was conducted through the stimulant itself. Finally, this chapter aims to shed light on the scope of these operations.

Discourses of Sacrifice: Appeals of Voluntary Aid Organizations

One of the growing topical trends in the study of the First World War has included the analysis on the role of philanthropic and voluntary aid organizations in providing soldiers with comforts at the front. At the center of this debate, at least in the British case, is the contention over whether or not voluntary action decreased or increased during the war. According to the recent monograph by Peter Grant, voluntary action actually expanded over the course of the war to unprecedented levels in response to what was perceived as a national emergency.[828] In order to achieve this, voluntary aid organizations and individuals alike, in both Britain and Germany, were required to appeal

[828] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War*.

to the masses in order to procure the needed donations. These calls for sacrifice were published in a wide array of newspapers and pamphlets, as well as plastered on placards that were posted around cities and towns in each of the warring nations.

One such example from the German case can be seen in a plea made by the Zittauer Task Force for the Collection of *Liebesgaben* for the Zittauer Soldiers in the Field. It merits briefly reiterating the duality in the meaning of this word, in that it both suggests a "love gift," but also a donation for those in need. In this instance, the soldiers off at the various fronts were posited as being in need. This advertisement gave a "heartfelt plea" for the continued provision of both *Genussmittel* and sundry items to the brave local troops.[829] Recognizing that the community had been already called upon many times before, locals were nonetheless urged to once again rise to the occasion and make the small sacrifice by donating to the collection that was to be sent to the front for Pfingsten, 1915.[830] Tapping into both the discourse of sacrifice and religious sentimentality, the announcement professed that "a happy giver has God's love!" and "Our good Zittauer soldiers are worthy of this [donation]."[831] The communal goal was "to thank" the soldiers for their selfless deeds "through this act."[832]

In addition to the newspaper ads, some individuals took it upon themselves to write and publish manifestos delineating why one should send *Liebesgaben* to the front. Dr. Hermann Stadlinger wrote one such tract, published in 1916, which targeted both the

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[829] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 184.
[830] Ibid.
[831] Ibid.
[832] Ibid.

general public and *Genussmittel* producers alike. In the opening pages Dr. Stadlinger professed the symbolic importance of such work: "Every parcel, every letter from home is like a warm hand, which reaches out to the soldiers: We are thinking of you!"[833] He continued to build his case, noting how "the glorious German military success, won through enormous sacrifice in flesh and blood, through depravation and strain, have enflamed the benevolence" of the German people.[834]

Under the circumstances of war, Dr. Stadlinger observed that, "it is the unprecedented generosity of the German people that is the foundation of a previously unknown arm of commercial life."[835] "Millions" have been spent, he noted, "which, converted daily in the *Liebesgaben* market, become in this manner a blessing for our courageous soldiers, who are also the savior of many…" businesses.[836] Considering the daily sacrifices that each soldier made, Dr. Stadlinger implored, "The sentence 'the best is good enough for our soldiers' should serve to each guiding star that ever has to do with *Liebesgaben*!"[837] Reiterating his point, Dr. Stadlinger offered a "General principle for purchasing: Think, that for the soldiers the best is good enough. Do not buy anything you would despise…"[838] For producers, he urged, "Be fair and grant really better products at an adequate sale price."[839] "So-called 'cheap' products, whose intrinsic value is not good, are the most expensive," he proclaimed![840] "The soldier is no pack animal,"

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[833] Ibid, Dr. Hermann Stadlinger, *Wie kaufe ich Liebesgaben?* circa 1916.
[834] Ibid.
[835] Ibid.
[836] Ibid.
[837] Ibid.
[838] Ibid.
[839] Ibid.
[840] Ibid.

Dr. Stadlinger continued, and as such, "consider purchase weight and volume of the *Liebesgabe*!"[841]

Within his *Liebesgaben* guidebook, Dr. Stadlinger also provided Germans with suggestions for specific gifts to send to the brave soldiers in the field who were sacrificing so much for their safety, security, and in some cases economic prosperity. These ranged from all sorts of caffeinated and alcoholic drinks, to other invaluable comforts. In particular, the donation of sugar-based goods was also recommended. "There are still people who consider the enjoyment of sugar as a 'treat,'" Dr. Stadlinger noted, however "its outstanding nutritional value, its property to provide the body warmth and strength, has been long proven and is for example known by every old *Jäger*."[842] Because of sugar's dual enjoyment and energy values, he argued that Germans should "send the soldiers such 'warmth and brawn contributors' in large quantities, be they in the form of candies and sugar cubes, either as bonbons, mints and sugar-containing foods such as chocolate!"[843] Regarding chocolate in particular, he noted, "what is accumulated in nutritional value in good chocolate demands no justification."[844] "Therefore send our warriors in the field as much chocolate as possible," Dr. Stadlinger encouraged, "best in the form of small bars or slices ('croquettes')!"[845]

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[841] Ibid.
[842] Ibid.
[843] Ibid.
[844] Ibid.
[845] Ibid.

In addition to sugar-based goods, donations of tobacco products were particularly encouraged, as "among *Genussmittel*, tobacco plays a main role in the field."[846] However, he warned that, "to send inferior goods to the field is the same as sending an insult to our courageous warriors."[847] Dr. Stadlinger claimed that Germans could in many instances still obtain some relatively inexpensive tobacco products for those willing to sacrifice themselves on behalf of the German nation. Additionally, he maintained that the best way to protect oneself and soldiers at the front from inferior tobacco goods was to buy through trusted companies.

In Germany, one source for donations came from collection tins through which anyone could deposit unwrapped cigarettes and cigars to be sent *en masse* to the front. With messages like "Please! Cigars and Cigarettes for our courageous soldiers," such devices echoed motifs of patriotic self-sacrifice, urging those at the home-front to spare a couple of smokes in light of the greater sacrifice that was being made by the soldiers at the front.[848] The contents of these tins bolstered the supply of the psychoactive luxury amongst the rank-and-file, and presumably the officer corps as well. However, it should be noted that these tins served an additional social-anthropological role. On the one hand, these gifts of tobacco products, much like *Liebesgaben* in general, symbolized to those in the armed forces that the Fatherland had not forgotten about those away at war. However, the seeming anonymity of this mode of donation could allow Germans, with ever decreasing resources, to contribute a couple of cigarettes to the larger fund while mitigating against any self-imposed feelings of embarrassment for giving too small of a

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[846] Ibid.
[847] Ibid.
[848] "Zigarren und Zigaretten für unsere tapfern Soldaten," Kasten für Rachwarenspenden. On display at the Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr, Dresden. Photograph by the author, spring 2012.

gift, even though a small quantity might be all that they could personally sacrifice at that time (Image 7).

There were other symbolic gestures that were performed to illicit donations on behalf of the soldiers off at war. In his recent monograph, Peter Grant summarizes the role of children in inspiring voluntary action. In two specific examples, he describes the exploits of Amy Foster, who came to be known as 'Hieland Lassie,' and Jennie Jackson, who was the famous 'Little Kitchener.' Foster donned Highlander garb in order to foster donations for soldiers' comforts, while the young Jackson wore a mock British military uniform in order to collect funds to "help to provide cigarettes and comforts for the soldiers."[849] Each gimmick, Grant notes, was remarkably successful at drumming up donations through such powerful symbolic motifs.

[849] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War*, 43-46.

Putting Discourse into Action: Voluntary Aid Organizations and the Provisioning of Creature Comforts

There were a multitude of voluntary aid organizations and charitable schemes that came to the assistance of soldiers on both sides of the battlefield during the war, and provided not least of all, everyday stimulants. Perhaps one of the most famous British charity schemes for soldiers during the war was the Princess Mary Box, which were sent to British soldiers away at the front in celebration of Christmas, 1914. The contents of each tin included two cards. One was a postcard with the picture of King George and Queen Mary, with the note: "With our best wishes for Christmas 1914. May God protect you and bring you home safe."[850] The other was a greeting card that read, "With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Victorious New Year from the Princess Mary and Friends at Home."[851] Accompanying the notes were two small packets, one containing loose tobacco, and the other with 20 pre-rolled cigarettes.[852] Indian troops, deployed in defense of the Empire, received tins filled with candy and spices or some with a combination of these alongside some cigarettes. The quantity of boxes shipped overseas is quite telling, as amongst the British, Colonial, and Indian forces over 425,000 of these care packages were shipped in celebration Christmas Day 1914.[853] The scheme was so successful in fact, that it raised over £162,000, thus allowing for the expansion of

[850] IWM, 90/7/1, T.E. King Papers.
[851] Ibid.
[852] Ibid.
[853] IWM, "Princess Mary Gift Fund 1914 Box, Class A smokers." <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30081969> Accessed 3 October 2012.

the programme to eventually provide "every Sailor afloat and every Soldier at the front" with a Christmas gift, which at the time totaled some 2,6200,000 service personnel.[854]

One of the most visibly active philanthropies that augmented the official British war effort was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Reflecting the teetotaler trend that had emerged during the Victorian era, the YMCA sought to provide Tommy with what were deemed to be more wholesome comforts, in the hope of persuading soldiers to abstain from consuming alcohol and all of its concomitant perilous trappings. Official records of the YMCA claimed that the work they did towards gathering individual pledges eschewing drinking, the measuring stick of their programme, had been a smashing success. Despite the official rhetoric and self-congratulatory tone present in much of the organizational records of the YMCA, the Christian philanthropy did play a vital role in sustaining morale within the BEF.

On the whole, the YMCA provided soldiers with nicotine, caffeine, and sugar. The price the YMCA charged for their wares could and did vary based on location. Packets of biscuits would run between 2 or 5 shillings, depending upon the size and quantity, and Woodbines cigarettes would often sell for 1 shilling.[855] Mugs of tea, coffee, or cocoa would typically set a soldier back about a penny per serving.[856]

In addition to the canteens, huts, and reading rooms that the YMCA typically ran, some volunteers manned smaller refreshment facilities that could be found as far up the line as the communications trench. The comforts served from these facilities were often

[854] Ibid.
[855] University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections (UOB), E.W. Hornung Papers, MS 127/A/7.
[856] Ibid.

provided to soldiers free of charge. E.W. Hornung, brother-in-law of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, volunteered with one of these units near the Western Front, and his accounts of his experience provide us with insight into what these facilities consisted of and how they were operated. He described the facility as being little more than a "shed" that resembled "a mere lean-to against the side of a sunken road," which had "a little oil stove."[857] Hornung also noted how he and his fellow volunteers had "a good coal fire for the boiler, but it cannot be lit by day on account of showing smoke!"[858] He also recorded the building expectation amongst those he would serve: "The water is even now on the boil, and the two great urns stand ready on a shelf just inside the door; outside are to be heard the steps and voices of men waiting until we open our free canteen."[859]

Volunteering with one of these shanties near the front lines made a remarkable impression upon Hornung. Describing his experiences, he penned, "Certainly the most wonderful of Christmas Days for me, so far, and it is 4.30 now, or nearly."[860] Hornung and his compatriots were apparently quite busy as "All last evening we served out cocoa, biscuits, cake and cigarettes to units and driblets of muddy men."[861] "So Christmas came in, and then I wished them the old wishes and got such hearty responses and so much simple fun out of it all," he reported, noting how he would pause for the time being with the goal of recreating the scene "into an article, so no more about them now."[862]

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[857] Ibid.
[858] Ibid.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Ibid.
[861] Ibid.
[862] Ibid.

The huts, canteens and other facilities that the YMCA sponsored provided soldiers of the BEF with a setting that could be more than just a place to obtain a hot cup of tea and a biscuit, enjoy mild entertainments, or to hear lectures on religious or secular themes. Some of these facilities provided soldiers with the equally important opportunity to spend some much needed time alone. In early 1918, E.W. Hornung was given the opportunity to open a library and reading room for soldiers in the town of Arras.

At the center of his operations was the selling of small creature comforts. This was not initially guaranteed, as Hornung allegedly "had to urge YM planners to allow him to serve small refreshments such as tea, etc., biscuits and cigarettes as can be consumed on the premises."[863] The idea was that "nothing to be bought" was to be "taken away, but everything in kind that man can get in a club smoking-room."[864] According to Hornung, "It was at first proposed to do without any kind of a canteen; but I was all against driving a keen reader elsewhere for his tea, and held out for light refreshments after four and cigarettes all the time."[865] Noting the central value of providing such common luxuries on site, Hornung penned, "If we don't do that... we court a frost; we don't want men to come in to read and write, and get to feel that they have to turn out and go elsewhere when they are hungry and thirsty."[866] Ultimately, Hornung's arguments proved persuasive and he was allowed to sell these items when the reading room opened on 20 February 1918.

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[863] Ibid.
[864] Ibid.
[865] E.W. Hornung, *Notes of a Camp Follower on the Western Front,* (London: Contable & Company, 1919), 141.
[866] Ibid.

The primary goal for Hornung in this endeavor was to create for soldiers an "atmosphere in which they can forget, and yet go back to the forgotten thing with new heart and rest."[867] As suggested above, it was designed to imitate familiar civilian counterparts. According to Hornung, soldiers continued to come by the facility while it was being upgraded to a reading room thinking it was a canteen and undoubtedly left disappointed. And when the facility finally opened, Hornung and his small staff (consisting of a local French woman and another YMCA volunteer) were not greeted with the long queue that he had hoped for. Instead, soldiers slowly trickled in from the two o'clock hour on, "blow[ing] in, one or two at a time, like leaves."[868] In his memoir *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front*, published in 1919, Hornung made the allusion on several occasions that opening the facility was "really very like producing a play."[869] The first day, he confessed, "really *was* rather like a first night; but there was this intimidating difference, that whereas the worst play in the world draws at least one good house, we were by no means certain of that measure of success."[870] Despite the slow start, Hornung later noted that men seeking the relative quiet and shelter of the reading room, with all of its consumable accoutrements, proved increasingly popular.

Frederic Manning in his novel *Her Privates We* also alludes to a desire by the rank and file to, from time to time, escape the crowded and boisterous nature of the local estaminets, let alone the war itself. In one episode late in the novel, the story's protagonist Bourne and his comrade Mr. Finch begin their evening at a local estaminet,

[867] Ibid.
[868] Ibid.
[869] Ibid.
[870] Ibid.

sharing a bottle of wine. After they finished up there, and "On their way back to billets they turned into the YMCA to get some cocoa," as the duo "did not feel like drinking bad wine or beer in a crowded and noisy estaminet, and argued that in any case they would have a rum ration that night."[871] Unfortunately they found the YMCA hut to be "as noisy and as crowded as the estaminet; and there was a good deal of clowning."[872]

What entries like these suggests is that YMCA facilities like reading rooms, in which soldiers could purchase small stimulants like cigarettes, tea, and cakes provided soldiers with an opportunity to not only take a break from the work of war, but also the chance to spend some invaluable seconds alone. For much of army life, especially when deployed, individual soldiers were constantly surrounded by and under the surveillance of other people. Even if one did manage to get along with everybody in one's unit, platoon, brigade, regiment, or battalion, the momentary respite to bury oneself into a book or escape into letter writing must have been welcome to soldiers from all walks of life, regardless of what uniform they wore.

In the case presented above, Hornung recognized from the start that he needed to provide some sort of common luxury to entice the men to stay and fully relax, thus suggesting the central role that these products served in not only providing soldiers a break from the routine of military life, but also their symbolic value in replicating existing forms of consumer culture from England found in upper class cafes. Although everyday stimulants were provided, these facilities took on additional moral value by providing a

[871] Manning, *Her Privates We*, 207.
[872] Ibid.

setting that did not center on the consumption of alcohol. Therefore, reading rooms like Hornung's provided a counterpoint to the British pub, and in the process reflected the civilian teetotaler movement of the period. Additionally, while undoubtedly many men took the opportunity for some alone time that the facility offered, Hornung's later descriptions suggest that some would also choose to use the reading room as a place to gather and commiserate.

Much like their British counterparts, German citizens were eager to meet the call to help those at the front endure. The quantities of everyday stimulants sent as *Liebesgaben* donations by national organizations like the German Red Cross, and local state organizations like the Dresden War Association were astounding. The packing lists detailing the quantities sent by the German Red Cross to the XII (Saxon) Armeekorps from the beginning of the war through 23 October 1914 provides a sample of the sheer volume of luxury comforts that were sent to the soldiers at the front. During this period some 2,000 cases were shipped, and interspersed amongst these were 342,237 cigars, 667,271 cigarettes, a combined 5,286 pounds of chocolate, cocoa, tea, coffee and sugar, as well as 6,255 bottles of wine, cognac and other spirits.[873]

One individual case sent by the Dresden War Association on 29 September 1914 provides a brief snapshot into how these items could be packaged and sent to the soldiers. Case number 1239 included: one case of chocolate, ten bars of chocolate, one baggie of chocolate, three canisters of chocolate, sixteen packets of chocolate, two packets of cocoa,

[873] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 184.

two canisters of cocoa, one case of tea, six packets of tea, two packages of cookies, two canisters of zwieback, four canisters of condensed milk, one baggie of peppermint tablets, two canisters of seltzer tablets, two canisters of sugar, one packet of soup cubes, five canisters of vegetable preserves, 23 soup cubes, and 46 baggies of *Pfeffernüsse*.[874]

From 23 October through the end of 1914, an additional 1,569 cases were shipped.[875] The *Genussmittel* sent included another 273,202 cigars, over 2.8 million cigarettes, 2,425 combined pounds of tea, coffee and chocolate products, not to mention 3,984 bottles of wine, rum, cognac and the like.[876] Additionally, from August 1914 until the year's end, 5413.25 pounds of tobacco, 11,117 packets of cookies, and 884 packets of Pfefferkuchen were sent via other *Liebesgaben* programmes to the XII Armeekorps.[877] Donations of *Liebesgaben* obtained locally and nationally continued to be shipped in varying volume to soldiers at the front for the duration of the of the war.

The Dresden War Association collected and sent *Liebesgaben* to the front for multiple occasions. In celebration of the Saxon King's birthday (Königsgeburtstagsspende) in 1917, the charity was able to provide *Genussmittel* and other sundry comforts to the following troop deployments of the XII Armeekorps: Leib-Grenadier-Regiment 100, Grenadier Regiment 101, Infantry Regiments 177 and 192, Schützenregiment 108, 2 Royal Saxon Jägerbattalion 13 (with 1st and 2nd Bicycle Companies), 1 Royal Saxon Field Artillery Regiment 12, Field Artillery Regiment 48, 2

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[874] Ibid.
[875] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 463.
[876] Ibid.
[877] Ibid.

Royal Saxon Foot Artillery Regiment 19, and the Royal Saxon Riding Guards (Gardereiter) Regiment.[878] The total headcount of these formations included 650 officers and 24,000 rankers.[879]

As a result of the organization's efforts, these soldiers of the XII Armeekorps received 1,000 slabs of chocolate, 3,000 bon-bons, 120 bottles of white wine, 120 half bottles of white wine, 198 bottles of red wine, 45 large bottles of *Kornbranntwein*, and 600 packets of lemonade powder.[880] Such numbers are instructive as they provide concrete examples of the types and quantity of goods being sent to the various fronts, and perhaps more importantly, who was receiving them. Additionally, one can compare these numbers with those that were sent in 1914 and see how the economic strains imposed by both the Blockade and Germany's command economy could affect charitable donations.

Localized state organizations, such as the Dresden War Association, worked tirelessly towards raising and distributing comforts for soldiers from anonymous donors. Carsten Schmidt has recently argued that before the era of the welfare state, localized organizations often led in providing the citizenry of the *Kaiserreich* with such services, and this trend was continued during the war.[881] This further helps to explain why some regions in Germany appear to have been better able to care for and equip their soldiers, let alone their civilian populations, than others. As the evidence suggests, the former kingdom of Saxony seems to have proved quite capable of providing luxuries to their

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[878] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 185.
[879] Ibid.
[880] Ibid.
[881] Carsten Schmidt, *Zwischen Burgfrieden und Klassenkampf: Sozialpolitik und Kriegsgesellschaft in Dresden 1914-1918*. (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2007).

soldiers at the front. Unfortunately for those serving in other units in the German armies, this ability was not uniform across national lines. What is more, localized philanthropies could be potentially be more flexible in gathering donations and distributing these goods, largely unhindered by cumbersome national bureaucracies and the need to distribute their procured wares across a national scale; a fact all the more important in the face of waning supplies.

The Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins was another major organization that collected and distributed gifts of *Genussmittel* and other comforts to the German soldiers. Through the work of localized branches, this organization was able to collect and distribute *Liebesgaben* for those troops who were deployed, those injured and recovering in hospital, prisoners-of-war in enemy territory, and those who were in transport to and from the various fronts. In addition to these efforts, this philanthropy also provided support to war widows and orphans, and, as in the case of the Bonn branch, even sent *Liebesgaben* to civilian prisoners overseas for Christmas and on the occasion of the Empress's birthday.[882]

Some sample numbers illustrate just how widespread the efforts of the Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins were. The East-Prussian town of Braunsberg, for instance, before Christmas 1914 procured 1,000 *Liebesgaben* packets, and increased this donation the following year to 1,200 for those troops recovering in local field hospitals and 1,869 packets to the soldiers serving with the 20. Armeekorps.[883] Over the same

[882] *Handbuch des Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins*, (Berlin: C. Sehmanns Verlag, 1917), 1394.
[883] Ibid, 13.

period, the branch in the borough of Berlin-Lichtenberg sent 2,850 Christmas packets to the field.[884] The borough of Berlin-Reinickendorf collected for Christmas 1914 and 1915 roughly 3,500 Christmas packets.[885] From 1914-1916, the northernmost German town of Flensburg provided *Liebesgaben* valued at 3,000 Marks, while Pinneburg sent 2,000 Marks worth of comforts to the field.[886]

The Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins also operated refreshment stands across Germany, and near the transport depots and fronts. For instance, East Prussia alone established and ran some seventy-three refreshment stands, which had roughly 500,000 Marks in operating expenses.[887] From the outbreak of hostilities through September 1916, the small East-Prussian town of Mehlsack claimed that, "day and night the society women were busy with the feeding of the troops" at the local train station, providing cigars, cigarettes, wine and lemonade at a total of 1,300 Marks, and miscellaneous *Genussmittel* for a total of 6,609 Marks.[888] The facilities run by society volunteers from around the town of Luchen provided bread, eggs, sausages, cigars, as well as alcohol free beverages for those soldiers in transport.[889]

One element of the German war experience that made it distinctly unique from the British counterparts was the fact that entire units could be and were shuttled back and forth across Germany to the two main fronts. As such, locally run facilities provided volunteers with a means to contribute to the war effort without necessarily having to

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[884] Ibid, 279.
[885] Ibid, 292.
[886] Ibid. 806 and 857.
[887] Ibid, 9.
[888] Ibid, 14-15.
[889] Ibid. 333.

leave their hometowns, all while providing German soldiers with a taste of home no matter how quick and fleeting it may have been. Because of this relative convenience, many German cities and towns near major rail hubs ran such facilities. For example, Frankfurt am Main had three refreshment stands at their train stations, while Koblenz and Marburg had one a piece at their main train stations.[890] The branch in the city of Köln established facilities both in their own local train stations, and also just over the border in Charleroi (Belgium), Valenciennes (France), and Douai (France).[891]

Many cities collected *Genussmittel* and other comforts, which were distributed to soldiers in a variety of ways. The border town and major rail hub of Metz provides a sample of how this could occur. For instance, the town had a refreshment stand that conducted roughly 1,600 Marks worth of business.[892] Additionally, in the first year of the war the total *Liebesgaben* collection was worth a total around 729,600 Marks, of which 325,600 Marks went to the soldier's hospital in the city, and 404,360 Marks worth of goods went directly to the soldiers in the field.[893] An additional 173,200 Marks worth of *Genussmittel* and foodstuffs were also reportedly raised and distributed.[894]

Local voluntary aid organizations also established refreshment stands at the front for soldiers to augment their supplies. For example, facilities provided by the Dresden War Association were initially set up in major cities near rail hubs beyond Germany's eastern borders, such as in Lodz and Lowicz, however the German armies soon moved

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[890] Ibid, 1276, 1320, and 1259.
[891] Ibid, 1396.
[892] Ibid, 1637.
[893] Ibid.
[894] Ibid.

too far beyond these locations to fully utilize them.[895] As such, these efforts were reorganized in November 1915 and the new facilities were opened closer to the front in order to better facilitate soldiers' access and convenience.[896] Although the specific locations of these *Erfrischungsstellen* were not disclosed, they nonetheless provide a snapshot of how extensive the operation was. Serving coffee, tea, and soup, location "L," doled out 63,000 servings to soldiers that December, increasing to 72,000 servings in January and to 73,000 in February.[897] Location "N" underwent rapid growth, expanding from 6,000 portions served in December 1915 to 44,000 portions served by January 1916.[898] Total servings provided by all of the refreshment stands during this period totaled 309,900.[899]

There were many instances when voluntary aid organizations would work in concert with one another to help provide creature comforts to the soldiers of the Imperial German armies. For example, ten members of the Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins, Hamburg worked under the supervision of three nurses of the Red Cross in operating three refreshment stands for soldiers on the Eastern Front in Brest-Litowsk, Biala and Kobryn.[900] Together, they provided the soldiers who came through the train stations between September 1914 and 15 May 1916 466,000 cigars, 228,000 cigarettes, as well as piles of tobacco, pipes, harmonicas, matches, chocolate, and the like.[901] During the same

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[895] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 185.
[896] Ibid.
[897] Ibid.
[898] Ibid.
[899] Ibid.
[900] *Handbuch des Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins*, 1605.
[901] Ibid.

period, the wounded recovering in the Hamburg Military Hospital received some 1.86 million cigars, 1.82 million cigarettes, over forty thousand packets of tobacco, twelve-thousand plus bottles of wine, as well as "large piles" of cocoa, chocolate, cookies.[902]

The Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins (VFV) branch from Madgeburg and vicinity had a comparable working relationship with the German Red Cross and its regional affiliates. For instance, these charities worked together in running a refreshment stand at the Magdeburg main train station, two at the freight train station, and four at the Eastern Front.[903] Additionally, these groups also worked together through the Mobilization Committee to collect *Liebesgaben* for the soldiers serving abroad.[904] Branches in Braunschweig and Gotha had comparable relationships with the Red Cross in garnering donations for *Liebesgaben*.[905] The VFV branch of the city of Essen did this as well, not to mention working with the *Kriegsliebesdienst* from the City of Essen.[906]

Thanks to the available sources, we can get a sense of the impact that the economic strains brought about by the war placed on the efforts of charitable organizations in Germany as the war dragged on. The economic and material impact of the British Blockade undoubtedly exacerbated many of these shortages. For instance, the East Prussian branch of the Vaterländischen Frauen-Vereins, while proud of their contribution of seventy-three refreshment stands, notes that some of these were forced to close by 1916. The reasons for this were not given, however one can corroborate these

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[902] Ibid.
[903] Ibid, 680.
[904] Ibid.
[905] Ibid, 1484 and 1542.
[906] Ibid, 1347.

closings with other decreases in charitable contributions within other branches of this organization, and others. For example, in 1914 the branch for the borough of Berlin-Wilmersdorf reported that they had raised roughly 80,000 Marks worth of *Liebesgaben* to send to the front-line soldiers.[907] Yet, by the same time the following year that amount had decreased to around 30,000 Marks.[908] The donations obtained from the branch in Magdeburg-Cracau paints a similar story. In 1914 members of the VFV collected 446 *Liebesgaben* packets, whereas in 1915 that quantity had diminished by nearly half to 240.[909]

The direct impact of battle itself could also influence what voluntary aid organizations could do and distribute. Although the YMCA and other Allied philanthropic facilities that were scattered both along the Western Front and across other theaters of operations were almost constantly under threat of attack, when the German high command launched its last gambit to win the war in the west in March 1918 these facilities and the volunteers that ran them found themselves caught in the maelstrom. As a general rule, all facilities were ordered to be evacuated. Additionally, all wares were to be either rushed away from the front or destroyed in order to prevent them from falling into German hands. Amidst the chaos of withdrawing troops, locals turned refugees, and philanthropic volunteers' evacuation efforts quickly became strained.

E.W. Hornung, who had just recently opened his aforementioned YMCA reading room in Arras recounted when the evacuation order came down that "all civilians, who

[907] Ibid, 292.
[908] Ibid, 292.
[909] Ibid, 681.

had been allowed back into the town during the recent months of quietude, were to evacuate by three or half-past."[910] Shortly after lunch Hornung was notified by multiple representatives of the British command that he was to not only evacuate his library, but turn it over to the military authorities to use as a command post. Nonetheless, Hornung noted, "As the afternoon advanced a few men came in to read, even to exchange books, even with the little gifts of books which many had been bringing daily for some time."[911] "I said that I could not give out any more," he claimed, as "we were probably closing down for a day or two, but I had tea made and provided all comers with tea and biscuits free of charge."[912] Apparently, Hornung's reading room "was the only hut open at all that day" as "[t]he others had been closed by military order." Nonetheless, near the end of the day Hornung "had very sadly to close my Rest Hut down at about 6.30."[913]

In a letter dated 26 March 1918, Barclay Baron penned a note to his mother that evoked far more panic and concern. "Excuse handwriting: I am sitting up in bed (it is late) close to the boiler in the kitchen," he scribbled, "Three of us are sleeping here now for the cover is good. The rest of the Family (a dozen or so) I sent out of the town several nights ago to one of our huts about a couple of miles out."[914] "They were shelled out of that this afternoon," Baron reported, and "I gave orders for them to move to

[910] UOB, E.W. Hornung Papers, MS 127/A/7
[911] Ibid.
[912] Ibid.
[913] Ibid.
[914] IWM, P44, Barclay Baron Papers.

another camp two miles further back still. Meanwhile the faithful remnants have elected to stay with me here—and I couldn't want better companions."[915]

Barclay Baron continued to describe the scene: "So far only two places of mine have been badly hit. One—my newest + biggest—is untenable. The fine new cinema hut was hit by an 8" shell + one end smashed: the roof + wall are riddled with literally hundreds of shrapnell bullets."[916] "Next day the billiard hut was hit direct and absolutely spread over the camp in small pieces," he wrote, noting how "the table itself was hardly to be found at all. Workers had very narrow escapes but only one* [*sic*] won't pretend that I am not having a very anxious time."[917] "All my places are under fire—some heavily at times," he noted, as "H.Q. itself has ceased to be a health resort: at the moment we are being shelled and may expect a restless night."[918]

The effect of seeing how the British had access to such a large surplus of everyday stimulants, never mind basic foodstuffs, proved to be disastrous for German morale. For one, this discredited Imperial propaganda that had proclaimed the success of the U-Boat campaign. The supplies found in BEF and voluntary aid canteens and comparable facilities helped to stymie the German advance, as soldiers who had seen limited quantities, or were even denied outright these onetime common luxuries stopped to enjoy the fruits of their labor. This, of course, further helped to symbolically underscore the overwhelming fatigue that plagued the German army not only during the Spring Offensives, but that came as a direct result of this war of attrition.

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[915] Ibid.
[916] Ibid.
[917] Ibid. Emphasis in original document.
[918] Ibid.

Measurements of Success: Soldiers' Receptions to Philanthropic Efforts

When discussing the role that voluntary aid organizations played in contributing creature comforts to the soldiers at the fronts, it is equally important to consider how the soldiers and officers who received them judged these efforts. Many within the British High Command and War Office recognized the value that individual acts of voluntary action could have on supplementing soldiers' supplies. We can see a brief example of this, and the concerns over the prospects it raised in a War Office letter penned by J.S. Cowans in October 1914. "About 10,000 tins of coffee and milk were sent by Baron A. de Rothschild," Cowans reported.[919] Allegedly, "Lord K.," despite his aversion to making the war a picnic "is very anxious to have some acknowledgment as to whether the men liked it, as a nice letter from you or someone to this effect will enable us to get many other similar gifts from him!"[920] As the note suggests, there was clearly a sense of urgency here, as those amongst the top brass appear to have recognized how the Army was equally reliant upon individual acts of sacrifice from all segments of society. Cowans, however, then raises further concerns over the dispatch and delivery of such a gift: "(please, private), not to say from others, as everyone is doubtful whether things ever arrives so given."[921]

Despite the inherent risk and danger that civilian volunteers faced while deployed in combat zones, the British commanders more often than not welcomed the services provided by these organizations. On the one hand, volunteers helped to augment rations and other supplies typically provided by the army. Additionally, and this is especially

[919] TNA, WO 107/13. Letter from J.S. Cowans to Maxwell, 12 October 1914.
[920] Ibid.
[921] Ibid. Emphasis in original document.

the case with the YMCA, the alcohol free facilities and products served provided an alternative to local estaminets and seedier facilities. While the YMCA couched its programme as one of being morally preferable and providing a more Christian alternative, commanders astutely recognized that this could limit the abuses of alcohol, thus militating against drunkenness and any potentially disorderly conduct. This was particularly important when soldiers were in the rear areas in rest, when the soldiers ostensibly had more time available to seek out such entertainments. As such, these facilities undoubtedly helped commanders maintain some semblance of sobriety amongst their subordinates.

General Sir Evelyn Wood complimented the philanthropy's programme to provide alternative, and what were deemed to be more morally acceptable venues for soldiers to both unwind and acquire commonplace luxuries. "It must in itself be a great gain in every point of view if the men can be kept away from the public houses," Wood proclaimed, "which have up to the present time formed nearly the only places where men in camp in their leisure time can sit down to smoke."[922] In this brief example we can see the primacy that keeping Tommy sober played in the psyche of the British command.

Sir John French echoed these sentiments, and praised the YMCA's general ability in providing soldiers with another avenue to escape the war, however momentarily. "The problem of dealing with the conditions at such a time and under existing circumstances at the Rest Camps," French explained, "has always been a most difficult one, but the

[922] UOB, Papers of the Young Men's Christian Association, YMCA/K/5/1.

erection of huts by the YMCA has made this far easier."[923] "The extra comfort thereby afforded to the men," French continued, "and the opportunities for reading and writing have been of incalculable service…"[924] Moving beyond the moral alternative argument, French recognized that these venues provided soldiers with opportunities to get away to read and write, which often occurred when one was simultaneously consuming an array of their favorite everyday stimulants.

Speaking more generally about the role the YMCA played in bolstering morale amongst British soldiers, F.M. Lord Allenby extolled, "No one has more reason than I to be grateful to the YMCA for its work in connection with the Army."[925] "Throughout the campaign its workers have followed closely the fighting line," he continued, "and their labours have done much to keep up the morale, mental and physical efficiency of my troops…"[926] General Sir William Robinson was equally complimentary of the Red Triangle following the war, proclaiming that it was "a duty as well as a pleasure to testify to the splendid work done by the YMCA throughout the War."[927] "Both in France and England your Recreation Huts have largely contributed to the comfort and well-being of the troops," Robinson continued, "and in many other directions the activities of the Association have been no less beneficial..."[928]

As we can see, the commanders of the British army clearly recognized that the YMCA's presence helped to lessen the burden that the British army faced in supplying

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[923] Ibid.
[924] Ibid.
[925] Ibid.
[926] Ibid.
[927] Ibid.
[928] Ibid.

these goods and providing a setting where those in the ranks could momentarily escape the war; both of which were acknowledged to be beneficial to morale. However, perhaps the most insightful praise for the YMCA's work came not from within Britain's command cadre, but rather from the head of Britain's transatlantic ally. General John Pershing, commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Force, astutely recognized the daunting task the YMCA had in providing consumable comforts. Pershing began his praise, "On behalf of the American Expeditionary Forces I desire to express to you and to your fellow workers my appreciation and thanks for the splendid services which the YMCA has performed for the American Army in Europe."[929] "When the first contingents began arriving," he continued, "the YMCA began that work for the American soldiers which [*sic*] has ever kept pace with the growth of the American Expeditionary Forces."[930] Noting how widespread the Red Triangle's presence was across the Western Front, Pershing noted, "All divisions and most of the smaller organizations have enjoyed its benefits and services."[931] Detailing the array of benefits the YMCA provided Entente soldiers, he wrote, "Besides maintaining the usual recreation huts, it has conducted canteens where the men could purchase small supplies, and, in addition the YMCA has constantly distributed, without charge, tobacco, hot drinks and the like at the front."[932]

Pershing's detailed accolades did not end there. "Another service of great value has been the creation of and the work of leave areas, where the problem of giving the men

[929] Ibid.
[930] Ibid.
[931] Ibid.
[932] Ibid.

occasional respites from the routine of army life has been solved," he proclaimed.[933] Recognizing how the YMCA could be a victim of its own success, Pershing surmised how "This spirit of willingness [to serve the soldiers] has resulted in the Army's taking for granted much of your Society's ability to accomplish results, and sometimes expecting more than was reasonably allowable under the circumstances."[934]

Although the alleged purpose of these facilities was to provide an interdenominational refuge where soldiers could obtain commonplace luxuries without the temptations that accompanied the pubs and *estaminets,* soldiers often pursued their own goals and interests, using these facilities primarily to meet their consumption needs. Reflecting on this reality, much of the commentary composed by the rank-and-file praised the YMCA for allowing them to largely achieve these ends. In one letter, published and undoubtedly disseminated by the YMCA, an anonymous soldier stationed in France in February 1917 noted: "The only chance we have to get any luxuries is when we get back away from the firing line at the YMCA, and I can tell you that the YMCA out here has done a tremendous lot of good."[935] According to this soldier, "the first thing we look for when we are on the line of march, [*sic*] is to find a YMCA and then we know we can get a nice cup of tea and a piece of cake."[936] "[W]ithout those places out here things would go very hard for the Tommies," he confessed, as he and his comrades could "always get rest and comfort there, and when we come away from the firing line we want it too."[937]

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[933] Ibid.
[934] Ibid.
[935] UOB, YMCA/K/5/2.
[936] Ibid.
[937] Ibid.

Another anonymous soldier deployed to the Western Front in October 1917 echoed these sentiments. "The YMCA Canteen is a great help," he wrote, claiming how "The little goodies; in the form of milk, chocolate, cigarettes, etc. are a boon to us all."[938] The letter continued, "I read an article in one of our daily papers on the good work of the YMCA, and I must concur in full with that article."[939] "The work done by the Association out here is simply splendid," the soldier extolled, "and the never failing politeness of the workers, their genuine desire to keep us bright merits our warmest thanks."[940]

The YMCA was also keen to report on soldiers' praise for their facilities in the other theaters of operations. Due to logistical issues, never mind the completely alien nature of these fronts, the work of the YMCA was arguably held in much higher esteem in these foreign locales. In one anonymous letter, a soldier deployed to Mesopotamia penned, "I now take the advantage of writing you, not for begging purposes or any such idea to ask in that respect."[941] Instead, he claimed that he wanted "to say that, although here in such a country miles away from anywhere, or any signs of civilization, that we find such comfort and peace at the Huts, or I should say Tents, of the institution of the YMCA. I and all my comrades here agree with me."[942] A soldier stationed in Egypt, writing in June 1917, succinctly echoed these themes in his letter to the main YMCA headquarters in Britain. "Our life here is incredibly hard," he wrote, "so hard that you

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[938] Ibid.
[939] Ibid.
[940] Ibid.
[941] Ibid.
[942] Ibid. Emphasis in the original text.

can have no conception of it."[943] However, "whenever we see a YMCA Hut," he proclaimed, "it always proves to be a little spot of Heaven in a World which—is otherwise Hell."[944]

In a letter to his wife and daughter, Frank Haylett comparably praised the Red Triangle. While assigned to the Royal Flying Corps as a Quartermaster at Larkhill, Salisbury Plain, he noted in early 1916, "[W]onderful places these YMCAs are. I hardly know what an ordinary Tommy on a shilling a day, with sixpence a day allowance for wife, would do without them."[945] Describing the jolly atmosphere of these facilities, he explained how one could often "hear the boys sing + play like professionals—sometimes—not always!"[946] Summarizing the typical experience, he penned, "Good cheer all round—billiards + other games are played + everything so very cheap."[947] While not in the same situation as his comrades in Mesopotamia or Egypt, Haylett nonetheless mused, "It is a wonderful work—right away in this desert land, miles from everywhere too!"[948]

Soldiers similarly jotted notes of praise for the YMCA in their personal diaries, many of which were intended to be used to help them pass the time, as an outlet to cope with their experiences, to share and remember, but not to necessarily publish for widespread distribution. For example, in an entry dated 11 March 1916, J.C. Tait quickly scribbled about how the town of Longeré was "a town with many cafés and

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[943] Ibid.
[944] Ibid.
[945] IWM, 02/35/1, F.A. Haylett Papers.
[946] Ibid.
[947] Ibid.
[948] Ibid.

everything the soldiers need can be obtained, but at an enormous price."[949] Fortunately for Tait and his mates, "The YMCA ha[d] once more added to its laurels in this place where one of their welcome huts has been erected. They sell everything very cheaply."[950]

Tait's universal praise for the YMCAs work did not end there. After his unit was transferred to a rest camp in Betroncourt in the Somme sector of the Western Front in April 1916, he complained to his diary how their "camp consists of low huts, which are very damp—very little straw is obtainable. What hovels they are! The place is drafty in fact quite a gale blows through consequently we are as cold as ice."[951] He ultimately concluded that, "Bertroncourt is a miserable spot [but] what can we expect two miles behind the firing line?"[952] However, not all was without hope, as within this gloomy setting there were "one or two cafés still in working order, but the most appreciated spot is the YMCA."[953]

Thank you letters provide excellent insights that illustrate the effects that philanthropic efforts could have on soldier morale. In mid-December 1914, Lieutenant General Kolch sent one such letter of thanks to the mayor of Dresden "in the name of the subordinates" to thank him for both a recent letter "the *Liebesgaben* and additional packages."[954] Elaborating on the value that such gifts held amongst those in the ranks, Kolch noted how they "will bring a special pleasure to those standing in the fields of East

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[949] IWM, P 315, J.C. Tait Papers.
[950] Ibid.
[951] Ibid.
[952] Ibid.
[953] Ibid.
[954] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 185.

Prussia, to know that not only those in their immediate homeland, but also those in the interior of the Fatherland are thinking of them, and that they are trying to create a Christmas joy by sending them gifts."[955]

A comparable proclamation of thanks for the *Liebesgaben* sent to the troops of the XII Armeekorps began: "I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks from all of us for the Christmas packages that have arrived and are still arriving."[956] The voluntary actions of the Dresden War Association, it was reported, sent the men of the XII Armeekorps "so many gifts and supplies of all sorts that there won't be a single troop who will celebrate Christmas without a Christmas gift."[957] Recognizing the sacrifices made on their behalf, the note continued:

> The enthusiasm for self-sacrifice of not only the *Residenzstadt*, but of all other cities of our Fatherland have been in a brilliant way supported by the planning of our clubs to distribute, prepare, and put together the gifts. We are so grateful for every donation—even the smallest ware! You can rest assured that everything that has been sent to us will be most useful to our troops. During our Christmas festivities, we will think of those back at home who, rich or poor, were so generous in trying to support their soldiers in their activities and attempt to rouse a festive mood. Our Christmas mood will be full of pride because we know we are not here alone, nor forgotten standing next to the enemy. Instead we will remember that our entire fatherland is thinking of us and lives with us. And this spirit that comes from the donations from home is the best Christmas gift for us all.[958]

A thank you note sent by Lieutenant General and Divisional Commander von Tettenhorn likewise recognized the sacrifices made by the people of Saxony on behalf of his troops. "With these gifts," von Tettenhorn noted, "they show how much care, compassion, willingness to sacrifice those have at home for our troops near the

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[955] Ibid.
[956] Ibid.
[957] Ibid.
[958] Ibid.

enemy."[959] "When we are able to have a happy and homey Christmas celebration," he continued, "it will be to the thanks of these packages."[960] In closing, von Tettenhorn reiterated, "I speak for my troops when I send my most sincere thanks for all the effort and work, and I want to extend this thanks to all those who have donated.[961]

In another comparable note, dated 22 May 1917, a commander from the XII. Saxons wrote in order to "express cordial thanks on behalf of our officers and men of the Dresden Regulars to the war organization of the Dresden Association for the *Liebesgaben* to be delivered on the occasion of the king's birthday."[962] "The gifts," the letter continued, "will arouse special joy to those in the field, since the shipment of such is increasingly difficult, as acquisition no longer occurs in the same quantity as before."[963] The Saxon commander also noted how "The parcels will in any case beautifully accentuate in a thank-worthy manner to the birthday celebration of his majesty the king of the Dresden Regulars, and be for the beneficiaries a dear symbol of their home city's remembrance."[964]

Echoing the symbolic value that such a gift could hold, an announcement from the Dresden War Association regarding the shipment proclaimed: "With a considerable *Liebesgaben* shipment, the Dresden War Association has intended for the officers and men of the Dresden Regulars a special surprise."[965] That surprise, the announcement professed, contained "In more than 100 large cases... the investment of over 30,000

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[959] Ibid.
[960] Ibid.
[961] Ibid.
[962] Ibid.
[963] Ibid.
[964] Ibid.
[965] Ibid.

Deutschmarks in the form of large heaps of cigars and cigarettes… a potpourri of useful commodities, causing a special joy for around 25,000 Saxon warriors on the occasion of the birthday of his majesty the king."[966] Anticipating how the soldiers would warmly welcome the gift, the announcement continued, "These thank-worthy parcels will be by considered by the beneficiaries a dear symbol of their home city's remembrance."[967]

In a thank you letter dated 2 December 1914 from Freiherr von Oldershaulen, commander of the 6. Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 105 'König Wilhelm II v. Württemberg,' noted how his unit received a large quantity of *Liebesgaben* collected from the city of Dresden. "Through this I have been able to permanently supply all of my brave soldiers with warm skivvies and allocate to them cigars, chocolate and the like in abundant piles," he proclaimed.[968] "Through this," he continued, "the regiment's difficult service in the bitter cold and rain in the immediate proximity of the enemy was greatly eased."[969] "Unfortunately it is not possible for the regiment to thank the numerous donors and collectors individually," he continued.[970] "I would, therefore, be very grateful if the City Council of Dresden wanted to officially give my thanks publicly in the office gazette."[971]

The symbolic benefits inherent in these parcels were a theme present in many of the letters sent home by soldiers at the front. For example, in a letter dated 18 February 1915, Walther Strauss recounted for his loved ones back home of how that day they had finally received their Christmas parcels collected by German philanthropies back home.

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[966] Ibid.
[967] Ibid.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Ibid.
[971] Ibid.

"Fat Tuesday was a beautiful day," Walther proclaimed.[972] "Early morning we marched out; in fact we had transport business to attend to," he explained.[973] That "business" was at long last seeing to "the Christmas parcels, which were only now redirected to the respective units from France."[974] "Just as well," Walther continued, "the Christmas *Liebesgaben* were loaded and stacked by us in a Church (in Lowicz)."[975] "Then we had the parcels unloaded in cases," he noted.[976]

According to Walther, that, "Tuesday evening was a late Christmas Eve, full of good things and thankful emotions for the civilians back home."[977] He reported how the parcels were distributed amongst the men, noting how "every pair received a large and a small parcel, the contents of which were shared."[978] "The parcels came from Nordhausen," Walther explained, "and contained the addresses of the senders: Mrs. Dr. Rochsheimer, chocolate, *Peitschenstecken,* fine cigars, cigarettes, tobacco, socks, handkerchiefs, *Kopfschützer*, stomach warmers, etc. etc. etc."[979] The *Liebesgaben* were augmented by the delivery of "the cigarettes collected by the *Commis*, tobacco and schnapps." To top things off, "the dinner was good," Walther exclaimed.[980]

While many soldiers clearly appreciated how charitable organizations helped them to augment their individual and collective supplies, this does not mean that all were in universal agreement. In fact, some soldiers felt no qualms about expressing their

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[972] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[973] Ibid.
[974] Ibid.
[975] Ibid.
[976] Ibid.
[977] Ibid.
[978] Ibid.
[979] Ibid.
[980] Ibid.

displeasure with the products or services distributed by these organizations. In one such instance, J. Jessie Millar Wilson, who volunteered with the YMCA on the Western Front, recalled how "On one occasion, a man from the Isolation Camp… complained to me that their tea was undrinkable, being thick with grease."[981]

Quality of the goods served notwithstanding, one of the chief sources of complaint amongst soldiers was the cost of the comforts being sold. In the case of the British army, the prices that everyday stimulants were sold for at YMCA and Church Army canteens and huts often exceeded those that were charged at Army E.F. canteens. J.C. Dunn elaborated on this frustration amongst soldiers in *The War the Infantry Knew*. In the entry for 6 August 1916, Dunn recorded that: "We sell 'Gaspers' at 30 centimes, taking the full trading profit; the Expeditionary Force Canteen charge is half a franc, and the Church Army Huts one franc, for the same packet; their prices up here for other articles are likewise extortionate."[982] Jock McLeod echoed these sentiments in a letter he sent to Miss Meg Semple in April 1916. "Re your remarks [about] the Y.M.C.A. in France," he wrote, "I do know they charge more for stuff than anybody else out there—ask any Tommy who's been!"[983] Elaborating further, he claimed that, "The Salvation Army is the best," whereas, "the boys are always 'grousing' about the Y.M.C.A. prices."[984]

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[981] IWM, 02/26/1, J.M. Wilson Papers.
[982] Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew*, 249.
[983] IWM, 96/50/2, Miss M. Semple Papers. Emphasis in original document.
[984] Ibid.

Comforts at a Cost: Corporate Donations, Marketing Schemes, and Ulterior Motives

One of the common debates associated with the war are contentions over war profiteering. These tend to focus primarily on armaments and munitions manufacturers, but scholars have also shed light on to the debates over profits in the realm of food production.[985] Often overlooked, however, is the fact that there were many companies who were also quite keen to make a profit from the gifting phenomenon. Harrods of London was one such company that created ready-made gift baskets to be sent to the front, and as we have seen, Fortnum & Masons made comparable gifts of *Genussmittel*. However, as Rachel Duffet suggests, "parcels marketed by shops were accorded a lower status than those individually packed by loved one, which were '… the most powerful emblem of sentiment and affection.'"[986] The primary reason for this, she claims is that "the commercial products were impersonal and did not convey the same sense of care that was evidenced in a personal gift."[987]

Tobacco manufacturers, with arguably the most to financially gain, unsurprisingly took an active role in providing soldiers access to their products. Similar to philanthropic pleas, tobacco firms tapped into the discourse of patriotic self-sacrifice to peddle their wares. In Britain, for example, the tobacco company Martin's, Ltd. founded the succinctly named Tobacco Fund; a marketing ploy driven with the goal of boosting cigarette sales while masquerading as a charity with the soldiers' best interests in mind. Potential donators were urged by seemingly innocuous cartoons on sponsorship cards that

[985] See by way of example Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany: 1914-1923*. (New York, NY: Berg, 2007).
[986] Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting*, 61.
[987] Ibid.

showed Tommy, loaded down with equipment, fag in hand, proclaiming, "More 'Baccy' Better Fighting Quicker Peace."[988] Another cartoon used to illicit purchases depicts Tommy taking a break from the work of war enjoying a smoke. The bottom caption reads: "Are We Downhearted?" implying that as long as the BEF was armed with cigarettes as well as ammunition, then the answer would be a resounding no (Image 8).[989]

Tobacco producers also ran advertisements in the commercial press to prompt Britons at the home-front to buy these goods for the troops away at war. An advertisement for Martin's, Ltd. in the 17 March 1916 printing of *The Times* shows Tommy calmly relaxing and enjoying his smoke, proclaiming to readers that "a smoke is meat and drink to us out here."[990] The text then suggests to readers that they can help to fill this need: "Smokes—an ample supply sent out regularly every week. THAT'S what

988 IWM, Misc 36, Item 675. "Messages from the Organizers of the Tobacco Fund." Emphasis in original.
989 Ibid.
990 Martins, Ltd., "A smoke is meat and drink to use here," *The Times,* Friday, 17 March 1916.

the boys at-the-Front want."[991] The instructions on how to sponsor a shipment to a Tommy in need then follows, instructing readers to "write for a copy of Martin's Free War Booklet," which apparently would tell how one could "send **more smokes for less money** to men at-the-Front."[992] By sending soldiers cigarettes directly through Martin's, the ad illustrated that would be donors could readily afford to purchase enough to provide one's "friend at-the-Front 70 cigarettes," enough for "10 every day for a week."[993]

One such duo that actively participated in Martin's, Ltd cigarette gift program was Mrs. and Miss C.L. Skeat of Croydon. Thank you notes penned by soldiers on the same stationary provided by the Martin's, Ltd. scheme provide insight into the workings of this advertising campaign, which certainly contributed the expansion of cigarette consumption amongst young adult males. In this case, it appears that the Skeats did not have a personal connection to those whom they sponsored. In one quick response, Private McDermott praised, "Many thanks for your gift of tobaccos [and] fags which is a great comfort to us in the trenches."[994] A comparable note from P. Monaghan of C Company of the Lancashire Fusiliers following the receipt of similar gifts of tobacco echoed such sentiments: "Please allow me to express my appreciation of your kindness in contributing towards our supply of cigarettes etc. which we received at a most opportune moment, as I + most of my comrades was at the time short of 'smokes,' + I can assure you that your parcel was more than welcome."[995]

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[991] Ibid.
[992] Ibid. Bold in original text.
[993] Ibid.
[994] IWM, Misc. 6, Item 104, Mrs. and Miss C.L. Skeat Papers
[995] Ibid.

The ulterior motives of the tobacco industry are an easy straw man to target, especially with the hindsight that scientific study has since brought. Although both the donors and the soldiers that received these parcels were playing into the marketing ploys of companies like Martin's, Ltd., such items nonetheless held symbolic value and could be used to communicate various emotions. These feelings were exemplified in many a thank you note, such as the one scribbled on a Martin's postcard by Lp. Crocker: "Many thanks for your cigarettes [and] tobacco that we had today. I can assure you that such a small gift as yours is well appreciated by us out here. I am very glad to think we are not forgotten by the people at home."[996] Private Jollery, who served with the 2nd Lancaster Fusiliers, jotted down a comparable thank you note: "I received your welcome gift of Cigarettes [and] Tobacco which I think was very kind of you to think bout us Lads in the trenches and I thank you from the Bottom [*sic*] of my heart for sending such comforts."[997]

German tobacco manufacturers were also active in supplying their wares to those at the front. In early 1917, for instance, it was reported that the A.M. Eckstein and Sons Cigarette Manufacturers gave an "extraordinarily rich donation" to the Dresden War Association for the soldiers perceived benefit.[998] The F.H. Gossmann Cigarette Factory in Hamburg was a routine contributor to Red Cross donation efforts.[999] Much has been claimed about war profiteering in the arms and munitions industries, however, often

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[996] Ibid. Emphasis in original document.
[997] Ibid.
[998] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 463.
[999] Staatsarchiv-Hamburg, Handackte des Johannes Landmann.

overlooked is how other industries could profit during the war. In this regard, tobacco manufacturers peddling inexpensive cigarettes must likewise be considered. This is not to mention the lifetime profits these companies made in the postwar period off of their recently addicted market base.

The Problems of Equitable Distribution and How Philanthropic Donations Could Adversely Affect Morale

Although the *Liebesgaben* collected by local philanthropic and voluntary aid organizations was sent with the intention of bolstering spirits, the quantities made available to the officer corps versus the rank and file could just as easily exacerbate tensions, thus undermining morale. This is due in large part to what was perceived to be an inequitable distribution of resources. Samples from the quantities supplied to these group shows that those in the rank and file by and large had a fair gripe. For instance, the collection of *Liebesgaben* for Christmas 1916 for the Saxon XII. Armeekorps provided 200,000 cigars and 400,000 cigarettes for the men in the ranks.[1000] The officers, on the other hand, received 20,000 cigars and 40,000 cigarettes.[1001] It is important to note here the relative difference between what the rank-and-file received versus their commanding officers. The 200,000 cigars and 400,000 cigarettes were to be shared amongst 54,000 men, whereas the totals given to the officers were only to be divided among 1,000 individuals.[1002] Consequently, each ranker received on average 3.7 cigars and 7.4

[1000] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Dresden, 11348-Stellvertretendes Generalkommando des XII. Armeekorps. "Liebesgaben." Nr. 185.
[1001] Ibid.
[1002] Ibid.

cigarettes each, while the officers were given 10 cigars and 40 cigarettes on average each.[1003]

Even the threat posed by letter surveillance did not thwart soldiers from openly expressing their grievances about what they believed to be inequitable distribution practices. One such letter that was intercepted by German surveillance lambasted his officers' unfair sharing of recently received wine. "At midday every man received through the hand of *Liebesgaben* a bar of chocolate, 10 cigarettes and 5 cigars, and also everyone got from the loving hand a half bottle of wine," he wrote.[1004] Initially, this sounds reasonable if not extraordinary, however the anonymous author's tone quickly shifts: "and so quickly the evening passed, so that the Company Commander of our Lancers at 10:40 [pm] expelled us to bed, during [which time] he himself with the NCOs until half four enjoyed the delectable wine."[1005] "They had soon equally drunk how much the whole company could together," the angered soldier noted, "thus [one] can see the camaraderie that exists amongst the officers. First for the Officers, and what remains, for the Lancers."[1006]

Discrepancies in comforts received between officers and rankers, as well as within the rank and file itself, was not the only way in which morale could be adversely affected by the receipt of charitable *Liebesgaben*. Situational changes on the battlefield could be equally as demoralizing, especially around any holidays when soldiers had set their hopes upon prospects of receiving gifts, from anonymous givers as well as loved ones, from the

[1003] Ibid.
[1004] BA-KA, RH/61/1035, Reports of the Feldpostüberwachung.
[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Ibid.

home-front. This is not to mention the differences between quantities received that were contingent upon resources available based on location. Just because Saxons and Bavarians had access to these goods does not mean the same held true for soldiers from Prussia or other parts of the German Reich. Additionally, differences between goods available to the rural areas versus the urban ones could be equally divisive.[1007]

Conclusion: Individual Acts of Sacrifice and Charity

In each instance, voluntary aid organizations and the soldiers who depended upon them were reliant upon individuals to sacrifice their resources for the benefit of the troops in the field. Mrs. Anderson, whose relationship with young Noval discussed in the previous chapter, is one example of this, as she was evidently quite active in supplying a host of comforts to British soldiers off at the front. Her letter collection at the Imperial War Museum in London is filled with letters mostly from soldiers thanking her for socks she had sent. Many of these were presumably sent via the 'Gift to the Troops at the Front From the Queen and the Women of the Empire' scheme. Within this collection there is a letter from this philanthropy from a Inobel Gottelme, stating how she had been "commanded by the Queen to thank you for your very kind gift of Socks + Comforts [penciled in the standard card form] and for which I enclose a formal receipt."[1008]

The motivations behind Mrs. Anderson's donations are not entirely clear, but we do know that her own son, Private James Anderson, was killed in combat while scouting

[1007] For more on this, see for example Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany, 1914-1923*, (New York: Berg. 2007); and Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg: Ein Historisches Lesebuch*. (Essen: Klartext, 2008).
[1008] IWM, 94/10/1, Mrs. A. Anderson Papers.

in No-Man's Land in March, 1917. Judging from the date of Noval's first letter, this was not the sole influence behind her inclination towards gift giving to those at the front, but one could infer that it probably helped to reinforce this behavior, as the loss of a loved one at the front did for others like E.W. Hornung. Such possible motives for volunteerism, however, have come under scrutiny. Arthur Marwick posited philanthropy, in particular volunteering at a canteen, as being "a genteel leisure activity," which only "increased as the war progressed."[1009]

Regardless of individual predispositions and motivations, the roles played by philanthropic and voluntary aid organizations in providing creature comforts to the British and German armies has been a subject that has often received cursory attention. Indeed, the unprecedented scale of charitable work done on behalf of the soldiers was a central means by which soldiers were able to augment their supplies of everyday stimulants. While many of these schemes sold their wares in order to help augment overhead costs, there were many other instances where soldiers' sacrifices were repaid by the generous gifts of strangers. Although one could easily scrutinize the intent of many organizations, such as the YMCA, the ability of these organizations to mobilize creature comforts for the soldiers at the front was remarkable. As such, this evolved as another facet of the economic war of attrition that Britain and Germany were locked in for over four years. And as reflected in most realms of economic and resource procurement, British charitable action ultimately proved to be able to endure a bit longer than their Central European counterparts.

[1009] Arthur Marwick. *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965), 147.

Chapter VI:
Finding Comforts: Local Interactions and the Place of Everyday Stimulants

On 3 April 1916, J.W. Lewis of the BEF penned in his personal diary how he and a handful of his mates had ventured "into Bethune" with the purpose of obtaining a quick bite to eat, a coffee, and some much deserved respite from the war.[1010] "Mustering what French we knew, which wasn't much," he recorded, the small band of Tommies "managed to convey to the 'Proprietress' of an 'Estaminet' [*sic*] that we wanted something to eat."[1011] Apparently successful, Lewis and his comrades were served "'Chips and Eggs,' Bread and Butter, and Coffee," all of which he viewed as "quite an unusual combination," yet found it to be "very nice," say for the "the completion of the Coffee which was atrocious."[1012]

When it came time to pay the bill, linguistic and cultural differences on both sides of the social exchange once again stymied progress. "For 20 minutes we endeavoured to come to an understanding," Lewis explained, but upon "failing to do so, Bert tendered his 5 Franc note," which was seen as "such a simple way out of our difficulty."[1013] "The good lady having obtained satisfaction, danced attendance on us with true French effusiveness," Lewis continued, "but, [*sic*] having had enough of a rather embarrassing situation we didn't delay our departure."[1014]

Such interactions of linguistic and cultural confusion were a common feature near the battlefronts and in those regions under military occupation, and were practiced and performed countless times each day from 1914-1918. What this scene, and others like it

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[1010] IWM, 01/48/1, J.W. Lewis Papers.
[1011] Ibid.
[1012] Ibid.
[1013] Ibid.
[1014] Ibid.

illustrate is the existence of a multitude of social interactions that intersected simultaneously over basic consumption routines and rituals. However, these interactions amongst peers and with local civilian populations in these fundamentally foreign locales were conducted in settings imposed by the stresses and constraints of war.

The focus of this final chapter is two-fold: The first premise centers on how soldiers used the cafés, restaurants, estaminets, and mobile convenience shops supplied by local civilians to mediate their experiences with the war itself and with their military peers and superiors by procuring everyday stimulants. The second focus is on the negotiation of relationships with those local civilians that were conducted primarily over the attempted and actualized acquisition of these very products.

In addition to the insights provided by the field of social anthropology that have been central to this study, this chapter employs some of the meta-theory delineated by scholars of travel writing as a means for interpreting the social intercourse that occurred between soldiers and foreign, local civilians. Under many circumstances, the main point of interaction, or contact zone, for these disparate groups was through the medium of either food or creature comforts, or a combination of both. Describing such modes of exchange, soldiers often referred back to familiar civilian products and consumption rituals, at times suggesting or specifically noting feelings of superiority in comparison to the local. Equally important to consider is the fact that during these processes of mutual exchange, both sides were pursuing their own interests. Although it is beyond the scope of both this chapter, and that of my larger work, to explore how this interaction shaped individual identities on both sides of the exchange, it will be highlighted how certain predispositions and identities carried by the soldiers themselves could and did affect

social exchange. Finally, it should be noted that this chapter is not about the battlefield tourism that evolved both during and after the war.

What makes these routine interactions particularly unique is the fact that they took place in an environment that was characterized and punctuated by extreme violence. While both British and German soldiers elementally sought to procure the same items and reconstruct virtually identical civilian social routines, the basic setting for each was fundamentally different for both. Indeed, soldiers from each army had to attempt to replicate familiar consumption practices in a foreign land. However, this is where experiential commonalties diverge. The British were more often than not at least nominally viewed as allies, helping to repel the hostile invader, with the purpose of being in a given country for the short-term. This was specifically the case on the Western Front. On the other hand, German soldiers, regardless of where they were deployed to, were participants in an occupation that was characterized by both violence and perpetual surveillance.

In Search of Escape: Obtaining Consumable Comforts in Nearby Villages and Cities

One of the main reasons British and German soldiers sauntered into civilian areas was to find temporary escape from the war. As such, estaminets, cafés, and other comparable facilities near the front lines provided soldiers with an important venue for not only procuring additional foodstuffs and everyday stimulants, but also supplied them with a much needed space to escape, however momentarily it may have been, the trials of mechanized combat. Additionally, these spaces provided soldiers with an important venue to foster relationships with their peers. Under the circumstances, these local

businesses became popular hangouts for soldiers on both sides of the line to mediate their experiences with the multiple facets of war, despite the fact that they were still in relative danger.

One succinct example that summarizes what one could often find in one of these facilities can be seen in a letter Bert Hemmens wrote to his sister and brother-in-law. He described how he and his mates "had a most lovely month at the farm, grand weather all the time, and we were able to go out in the village evenings and have some good times."[1015] He went on to explain how "There was one quite decent cottage where Sid + I used to go + get two fried eggs + chipped potatoes with a glass of coffee each for 3 francs (that is 2/6) the two."[1016] In this quick letter, Hemmens was able to convey to the central importance of the estaminet to the average soldier. On the one hand, he was able to take what one could gather as being a much-needed break, both from the strain of the front lines and the foodstuffs that were standard fare. Additionally, Hemmens had the opportunity to foster his relationship with his pal Sid, who is mentioned in multiple comparable letters home.

Opportunities for potential respite and recuperation could be found in cities and villages alike. As Thomas Weber has recently noted in his analysis of the List Regiment, the occupied French city of Lille quickly became a central hub for German soldiers, especially Bavarians, to unwind from the strains of combat.[1017] Herbert Sulzbach was with the German forces that seized and initially occupied the city in October 1914. On

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[1015] IWM, 02/40/1, H.W. Hemmens Papers.
[1016] Ibid.
[1017] Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, The Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War*, Kindle Edition, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

his first experience gallivanting around the town, he noted: "17 October. We are allowed out into the town for the first time. We ate at a restaurant on the Grande Place. The city is swarming with German military."[1018] Sulzbach then recounted how he "met several school-friends, one keeps on finding it strange to meet people one knows in the middle of a war as though one were in the Goethestrasse at Frankfurt."[1019]

The escape from the battlefields often proved therapeutic for soldiers. Describing his leave from early December 1914, Sulzbach proclaimed how he was able to "leave to spend a day in Lille with two friends. Can you people at home imagine how we felt to get out of the mud of battle into a town actually inhabited by civilians and looking almost like peacetime?"[1020] In case his readers did not fully comprehend what this meant for soldiers like him, he opted to elaborate: "Shops, restaurants, cafés, civilians and military in clean clothes. We gorge ourselves at the Café Mert, but at the same time we can't avoid seeing how wretched and impoverished many French civilians look and how grieved they must be feeling."[1021] The respite did not end there, as "On the way back we also sat in a bar at Lomme, where we met several chaps from the 107th."[1022] "Tomorrow they have to go back and lie in a trench," but for the time being, Sulzbach explained, "here they forget the situation and also the fact that tomorrow they may be dead."[1023]

What Lille was for the Germans, Ypres provided for the Tommies of the BEF. John Keegan has noted how the now infamous Belgian town "became during the war

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[1018] Sulzbach, *With the German Guns*, 36.
[1019] Ibid.
[1020] Ibid, 41.
[1021] Ibid.
[1022] Ibid.
[1023] Ibid.

almost the corner of a native field."[1024] This trend, he asserted, has remained largely so till this day due in part to physical relics such as "its British church, English-speaking pubs ('Bass on draft'), English school for the children of the Commonwealth War Graves' gardeners and plethora of county regimental memorials."[1025] In fact, Keegan asserted, much of "Flanders had become a sort of home for the B.E.F."[1026] This, Keegan noted, was rooted in the services local towns and villages provided the soldiers while on leave, including "roofs, straw, beer, *pommes frites*, [and] fields for football."[1027]

Cities and towns near the battlefronts or major military transport hubs in the other theaters of operations unsurprisingly played comparable roles as their Western Front counterparts. Lieutenant Colonel Wollaston recorded in his diary about how "Two Officers managed to get away for Dental Treatment and are believed to have enjoyed to the utmost the delights of Salonika."[1028] The city was quickly earning quite the reputation amongst soldiers as a place for tomfoolery and ill repute: "On May 5th a Zeppelin was brought down at Salonika, this town is now reported to be a second Cairo, if all the tales of dancies and orgies are true."[1029] As this brief statement suggests, Salonika and Cairo were regarded amongst the men as quite the party towns, much like Ypres and Lille had become on the Western Front.

According to Wollaston, the city of Alexandria had likewise gained a reputation for similar pursuits. Wollaston penned his "First Impressions" of the city in his diary,

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[1024] Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 209.
[1025] Ibid.
[1026] Ibid.
[1027] Ibid.
[1028] IWM, 03/29/1, LTC Wollaston Papers.
[1029] Ibid.

proclaiming it to be "Heaven, absolute Heaven."[1030] "The fact of living in an hotel, and having ones meals off a tablecloth and having food which is not Government rations is bliss," Wollaston explained, "pure and unadulterated."[1031] Aside from the break from industrialized Army rations that renewed exposure to urban life provided, Wollaston also attributed the splendid atmosphere to "[t]he fact also of seeing people in clothes other than khaki or the French grey."[1032] What also impressed Wollaston was "the women in their very short skirts (the writer having at last seen these frocks can now die happy) and being able to order a taxi makes one forget that a war is actually going on at all."[1033] The end of the passage simply states: "Written after a good dinner and an evening out," leaving the reader with the opportunity to imagine what this entailed.[1034]

Villages on the outskirts of major towns and cities, all within short distance of the battlefronts, could just as easily provide soldiers with a setting to either blow off some steam, celebrate birthdays or other occasions, or both. A.E. Ellis recounted how for his twenty-third birthday in September 1918, he and several of his compatriots went to a local estaminet to celebrate the occasion while stationed back at Boyeffles (near Lens). Reflecting on the soiree the next day, he jotted in his diary "What a life. I feel a bit better now than I did this morning. The birthday party was a little too hectic."[1035] "We set off to the nearest estaminet (being the only local place of amusement) about 6 pm," he

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[1030] Ibid.
[1031] Ibid.
[1032] Ibid.
[1033] Ibid.
[1034] Ibid.
[1035] IWM, 88/18/1, A.E. Ellis Papers. Ellis served as a signaler with B Battery, 106th Brigade RFA (24th Division) during the war.

confessed, "our numbers being added to by sundry gunners + drivers + other spare parts."[1036] The celebration evidently began with a bang, as "Excitement was caused early in the evening by the sudden collapse of the lady of the house."[1037] "Thinking she had been seized with a serious illness and failing to understand the voluble gesticulation of her husband," Ellis continued, "we rushed to her and it was only after several minutes of unsuccessful attempts to bring her relief that the sad + bitter truth dawned on us, that her condition was due to overindulgence in the matter of cognac, vin blanc or other kindred spirits."[1038]

The festivities did not end there as the jolly group's "evening then proceeded with song + story intermixed with a brief but glorious attempt on the part of Bomb'r [*sic*] 'Tommy' Atkins who had just returned from a gas course, to lecture us on the subject."[1039] "Unfortunately for Tommy," Ellis noted, "he had chosen to stand on a table to deliver his ration + some unkind person upset the table complete with Tommy at the most exciting part, + he came to a merciful (for us) end," thus meeting a comparable demise as the hostess![1040]

Ellis' recollections of the shenanigans beyond that point were allegedly a bit hazy, as he penned that, "I regret to say I cannot record anything further of the proceedings after about 8.30 on when the fun was fast + furious."[1041] According to his diary, Ellis's "next memory is of waking up on my bed in the early morning completely dressed in

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[1036] Ibid.
[1037] Ibid.
[1038] Ibid.
[1039] Ibid.
[1040] Ibid.
[1041] Ibid.

bandolier + spurs but with my hat off + frozen with the cold."[1042] Moments later, he purportedly "collected my scattered sences [*sic*] sufficiently to get my boots + putties off + had just rolled into my blankets to try + get some life back into my chilled frame when the rude voice of the 'Spot' Ursell N.C.O of the Guard shouted in my ear to show a leg! So to early stables."[1043] The day's work was undoubtedly trying for the unabashedly hung-over soldier. "I do not know if I did anything to the horses in the way of grooming + I did not care," Ellis confessed, as he "felt too ill + breakfast was not to be mentioned. However, we have got through the day somehow without trouble chiefly I think because my Subsection Sergeant is well disposed to me."[1044] Fortunately for Ellis, it seems as though he was not the only one in such a wretched state, as "The only consolation I have is that some of the others are as bad."[1045] One comrade was apparently so drunk that he "was found in a puddle in the pouring rain in the middle of the road doing a glorified breast stroke + saying he had only another few yards to go + he would be at the end of the backs! And he cannot swim a stroke!"[1046]

In addition to fixed facilities, there were instances when French locals would take small carts full of commonplace luxuries to sell to soldiers at the front. Norman Tennant of the BEF noted how he and his unit "moved away to rejoin our Division which was in a quiet sector of the line near Fleubaix."[1047] "For some reason," Tennant explained, "this part of the front remained comparatively peaceful up to the German offensive in 1918

[1042] Ibid.
[1043] Ibid.
[1044] Ibid.
[1045] Ibid.
[1046] Ibid.
[1047] IWM, 04/30/1, N. Tennant Papers.

and divisions which had received a grueling in the more murderous areas were sent here to recuperate."[1048] "Our new position at La Croix Marechal," Tennant continued, "was in an orchard bordering one of the many minor roads which formed quite a network in this district."[1049] "On the roadside stood several cottages still occupied" by locals, he observed, "and it was characteristic of this region that French civilians were allowed to come round with little handcarts selling fruit and chocolate."[1050] What is more, Tennant elaborated, "One could buy coffee at any cottage as the coffee pot was always simmering on the flat flue of the stove which often stood out in the centre of the room."[1051] However the quality of the product served could be hit or miss: "In one place we were given eggs which had been boiled in the coffee," after which Tennant and his mates decided it was best to not "go there for coffee any more."[1052]

H.L. Chase of the BEF recorded comparable scenes of exchange near the front. "Had a trip 'up the line' to the advanced dressing station we had taken over," he wrote.[1053] "'Some place'—one casualty in 7 days," he elaborated, suggesting the relative calm of this presumably "cushy" sector.[1054] In fact, things were allegedly so relaxed that it was "Reported that there are cafés in 'No-Man's Land' and that they have policemen in the trenches to stop civilians from selling chocolate etc [*sic*]," Chase continued![1055] "I

[1048] Ibid.
[1049] Ibid.
[1050] Ibid.
[1051] Ibid.
[1052] Ibid.
[1053] IWM, 06/54/1, H.L. Chase Papers.
[1054] Ibid.
[1055] Ibid.

sympathize with the division we are relieving as they are supposed to be going down there," he sarcastically quipped.[1056]

On the one hand, estaminets, cafés, and other civilian run establishments provided soldiers with many of the settings needed to foster and mediate relationships. Equally as important in making these local venues a valuable reprieve for soldiers is that they could also provide a setting that reminded them of home and of peacetime. Bert Hemmens of the BEF described how he and one of his comrades would visit Army canteens to buy goods they might not be able to obtain at from the locals, and then go to a nearby café to enjoy these goodies with a warm drink. "The other afternoon Sid + I went to a village near here and had quite an interesting time," he wrote.[1057] "We went to a canteen and bought chocolate etc [*sic*] and adjoining it is a farm house occupied by an old woman who sold coffee and it was simply lovely," he noted, "made with all milk and plenty of sugar in it, it reminded us of old time."[1058] In this instance, the acquisition of creature comforts from multiple sources coupled with the setting that the local cafe created helped Hemmens recall what were fond memories while he and his mate Sid took a break from the work of war.[1059]

Although estaminets, much like the YMCA huts and military casinos and canteens, often provided soldiers with a sheltered area to spend some alone time to read, write, and think, all while enjoying creature comforts, such visits did not necessarily always equate to the total privacy that many soldiers longed for. E.E. Tompkins alluded

[1056] Ibid.
[1057] IWM, 02/40/1, H.W. Hemmens Papers.
[1058] Ibid.
[1059] Ibid.

to this fact in a letter home to his mum in early October 1916. Tompkins explained how "Just at present we are living rather better than we do when with the battalion and being on our own we are able to get more variety than is usually the case."[1060] His letter meanders from subject to subject, discussing some mushrooms he had found nearby, their purported dangers, and so on. He then apologized for what he perceived to be "rather a disconnected letter."[1061] Tompkins blamed this on the fact that he was "having constant interruptions as" he was "writing in the kitchen of the estaminet where I am billeted and on one side there is a French girl writing <u>and also talking</u> [*sic*]."[1062] Compounding matters, Tompkins confessed that he was also under surveillance from "a Frenchman writing to his brother who is a prisoner of war in Germany and who has that little trait, which Dad used to tell us about in the way of looking over what you are writing very strongly developed."[1063] As such, the privacy and peace that Tompkins has so eagerly waited for was shattered.

Tompkins could be quite critical of his surroundings, as well as his access to foodstuffs and creature comforts. This is reflected in a letter home on 8 October 1916, where he noted how despite being near an estaminet and "altho' [*sic*] we get a fair amount of food now, there is not much variety especially for tea."[1064] Under the circumstances, he reported that he was quite thankful for the recently received cake his mother had shipped to him from home, which undoubtedly helped to break the monotony.

[1060] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers.
[1061] Ibid.
[1062] Ibid. Underlining in the original text.
[1063] Ibid.
[1064] Ibid.

This brings us to a crucial point regarding estaminets and the stimulants and foodstuffs available at them. While these facilities could and often times did provide soldiers with an opportunity to escape the routine of combat rations (be they tinned or prepared behind the lines en masse) the supplies that the locals had at their disposal, as alluded to in Tompkins' letter home, could be equally as limited, many times dictated on what was actually available to the locals at any given time. Consequently, even dining or imbibing at one of these facilities could turn monotonous just as easily.

Finding Comfort: Scrounging and Looting Local Supplies

One of the oft-recognized ways that soldiers augmented their supplies of creature comforts was through local pillaging or raiding, especially those stores of luxuries left by civilians frantically fleeing the combat zones. In a letter dated 25 February 1915 sent from the Eastern Front, Victor Strauss described for his younger brother Egon how one would typically use all sources of *Genussmittel* in concert with one another.[1065] In the note, Victor acknowledged receipt of a recent delivery of six parcels and a letter. He then noted how it was the Saxon King's birthday, and as a result, Strauss and his comrades had a rest day and "received that evening a keg of beer" and "their Second Section received 50 liters."[1066] Victor then went on to explain how these supplies could be augmented by locally acquired goods abandoned by locals as they fled the battle zones: "Nearly every evening we go to a abandoned house that was once inhabited by Poles... and intensively

[1065] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[1066] Ibid.

occupy ourselves with emptying the *Fresskisten.*"[1067] "The bottles of wine are drunk and they tasted really quite great," Victor proclaimed.[1068]

E.E. Tompkins of the BEF similarly recounted for his loved ones back home how he and his comrades would take the opportunity to "scrounge" for goods that was afforded to them when locals abandoned their homes and belongings. "We make use of all sorts of things [that] once belonged to the French inhabitants," he professed, "for instance, a lot of the fellows have found beds which they are very glad to make use of and such things as washbowls, plates, candlesticks, etc. we have seen enough to stock several shops."[1069] Even large-scale appliances that were found were put to use by the soldiers as they attempted to better their situation. "In the cellar of one ruined house was a discovered a brand new stove in a crate," Tompkins wrote, "just as it had come from the maker and also a wardrobe full of sheets and blankets."[1070] This practice unsurprisingly extended well beyond housewares. Tompkins explained how despite the fact that "A lot of the houses which have been blown up are really fine places... In the majority of cases the cellars are in pretty good condition, which is lucky for us."[1071]

Some of the treasures found, however, could pose a threat to the safety and well being of the soldiers. In one such instance, Private Frederick Dixon of the BEF recalled, "The lads found some wine in the cellar under the house," near where they were currently being billeted. "It was full of bottles," Dixon noted, and "we tried first one then another

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[1067] Ibid.
[1068] Ibid.
[1069] IWM, 06/31/1, E.E. Tompkins Papers.
[1070] Ibid.
[1071] Ibid.

and soon we were hopelessly drunk."[1072] According to Dixon, he "did not drink much, so kept all right," however, "some of the lads tried everything including something that turned out to be mentholated spirits and that finished things completely."[1073] By this point, the group had "spoilt" their recently enjoyed Christmas dinner, and "Several of the lads were very ill and two of them died," the end result being that their "little celebration eventually became a funeral party."[1074]

Although the conflict on the Western Front remained largely static from late 1914 through the German Spring Offensives in 1918, drastic advances and retreats at the front created an atmosphere that was rife for scrounging, looting, and outright theft. Bert Hemmens described this phenomenon in late October 1918 after being transferred out of the main line. "We are in very posh billets now," he penned, "since old Jerry has been retiring so fast he has left most of the houses..."[1075] The previous German occupying forces had apparently "taken most of the civilians with him so all their houses + furniture are all in good condition." Nonetheless, Hemmens claimed that there was "plenty of vegetables + fuel here and we dont [*sic*] half have some meals."[1076] However, in light of their bounty, Hemmens seemed a bit remorseful, claiming that it seemed to be "Jolly rough luck on the porr Froggies' [*sic*] though to have to leave all their belongings because it all gets spoilt very soon when we take over."[1077]

[1072] van Emden, *Britain's Last Tommies*, 75.
[1073] Ibid.
[1074] Ibid.
[1075] IWM, 02/40/1, H.W. Hemmens Papers.
[1076] Ibid.
[1077] Ibid.

Soldiers' Travels: The Contact Zone of Foreign Battlefields and Areas of Occupation

Before we venture too far into the realm of soldiers' interactions with foreign locals, we should take a brief moment to examine what exactly constitutes travel and travel writing. Paul Fussell argued that at its core, "travel is work."[1078] Returning to the word's etymology, he noted that, "a traveler is one who suffers travail, a word deriving in its turn from Latin *tripalium*, a torture instrument consisting of three stakes designed to rack the body."[1079] Fussell highlighted that the impetus behind journeying has evolved over the centuries, from exploration (Renaissance) to travel (nineteenth century bourgeois) to tourism (twentieth century proletarian), however many of the elements of strain encountered during the act of traveling remain.[1080] Indeed, soldiers' travels do not fall into any of these neat categories, however elements of tourism are displayed in varying degree, such as when one was behind the main lines. Additionally, the means by which soldiers often traveled were travailing to say the least.

The war simultaneously created the opportunity for soldiers' travel, via military service, while officially restricting travel in most other instances. However, soldier travel was not the byproduct of some inner *Wanderlust*; this was forced travel imposed by the military hierarchy for the perceived defense of the nation. In the case of the British, Paul Fussell has noted that, "The main travelers were the hapless soldiery shipped to France and Belgium and Italy and Mesopotamia."[1081] Indeed, the Defense of the Realm Acts of

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[1078] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1980), 39.
[1079] Ibid.
[1080] Ibid, 38.
[1081] Ibid, 9.

1914 and 1915 "effectively restricted private travel abroad."[1082] The same can be said of Germany, as soldiers certainly dominated domestic and international travel during the war years. One of the consequences of such restrictions was the introduction of the passport for the bulk of Europe, minus Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire. "As a fixture of the European scene since 1915," Fussell wrote, "the passport now seems so natural that one forgets the shock and scandal it once occasioned."[1083] In the context of war, one could argue that the passport was implemented as a form to maintain a semblance of surveillance over domestic civilian populations.

When one thinks of travel writing, the experiences of soldiers likewise do not typically come to mind. Yet, Susan L. Roberson has acknowledged that travel is more than merely "models of pleasure and escape."[1084] Another key concept within the genre of travel studies is the idea of identity formation. Tim Youngs has noted that the genre "throws light on how we define ourselves and on how we identify others."[1085] Elaborating further, Youngs observes that travel writing's "construction of our sense of 'me' and 'you,' 'us' and 'them,' operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics."[1086] According to Youngs, the "sense of displacement," elicit in any travel writing "is one of the ways in which modern travel authors characterize themselves as individuals who are not at home in their current setting or, indeed, in the places they have left behind."[1087] Under the circumstances imposed by the act of journeying, a given traveler's "identity is predicated on their lack

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[1082] Ibid.
[1083] Ibid, 25.
[1084] Susan L. Roberson, *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*, (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), xiii.
[1085] Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.
[1086] Ibid.
[1087] Ibid, 78.

of affiliation or on multiple affiliations."[1088] This idea can be applied to the phenomenon that is foreign military service, as certain culturally rooted predispositions were reinforced during times of interaction. What is more, soldiers' writings about interactions with locals are replete with subtle reflections about identity, whether they intended to delineate them or not.

Mary Louise Pratt, in her seminal study on travel and the process of transculturation that occurs during moments of interaction, used what she labeled the 'contact zone' to describe this locus of this exchange. She defines the contact zone as being the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."[1089] Elaborating further, she describes this region of interaction as being "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."[1090] Pratt provides the examples of colonialism and slavery, however one could just as well extend this to include military occupations and those civilian experiences near battlefields, foreign transportation hubs, and the like.

The static nature of the Western Front provided a unique setting of dual occupation in Belgium and Northern France. In this environment, soldiers often routinely interacted with locals in a variety of settings that centered on the exchange of creature comforts. In these moments of exchange, these contact zones provided opportunities for not only the acquisition of comforts and socialization with comrades. These venues

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[1088] Ibid.
[1089] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Second Edition, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 7.
[1090] Ibid, 8.

proved to be some of the most dominant contact zones where British and German soldiers both formed or reaffirmed their prejudices about the foreign other. Additionally, and this is notably the case with the Germans, these settings provided soldiers with individual opportunities for combating local perceptions—imagined and actualized—that resulted from Germany's violent occupation policies.

Dr. Leopold von Pezold, a medic with the German forces, described in detail some of his interactions with the locals that recently fell under German occupation while deployed in Belgium. In one story, he recounted the beginning of inoculating the local population. "Primarily the little children would be inoculated," von Pezold explained, followed by "the young girls, and lastly the women and elderly."[1091] "The children afterwards gathered around me and received chocolate," von Pezold recorded, as he "read to them [Stephen-Jean-Marie] Pichon's speech, and said to them that they remember for life that they had been vaccinated by a wild animal."[1092] According to von Pezold, the girls "laughed boisterously and said that Pichon was an old liar."[1093] "I would have liked to have seen the face of old honest Pichon if had witnessed this scene," the doctor mused.[1094] "Then I asked the girls whether they still wanted to come into the den of a wild animal," for further conviviality, "And they came in noisy gaiety, inspected my room and my paintings from youth, smoked cigarettes and were shown photos of the area."[1095]

[1091] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/032 75, Nachlass von Pezold.
[1092] Ibid.
[1093] Ibid.
[1094] Ibid.
[1095] Ibid.

This seemingly innocuous episode illustrates how soldiers would employ everyday stimulants as a way to communicate one's intentions. In this instance, these luxuries were used in concert with the paternalistic service provided, with the goal of winning over "hearts and minds," to borrow a relevant phrase from current Counter Insurgency (COIN) nomenclature. These themes were echoed in Herbert Sulzbach's diary. For the German artilleryman, fostering positive interactions with locals was one direct way that German soldiers could sow the seeds of peace and reconciliation. "You have the feeling that every individual can contribute towards getting rid of the seeds of hatred," Sulzbach opined, "and that every single chap who comes into contact with French civilians has got a real job to do for his country by behaving decently and in this way providing an antidote to the poison."[1096]

Sulzbach provided readers with an example of how he perceived such reconciliation could be brought about. While deployed in Les Petites Armoises in April 1915, he wrote of how "The evenings are very pleasant with a few of my mates and the old people, Madame Louise, Appoline and young Valentine."[1097] "The civilians always give us wine with out meals (every Frenchman's got Bordeaux in his cellar, even the poorest peasant farmers, like people at Frankfurt with their apple wine)," Sulzbach explained, and in exchange "we keep them supplied with food and give them what we can."[1098] For Sulzbach, and presumably many of his comrades, these were "A few quiet,

[1096] Sulzbach, *With the German Guns*, 56.
[1097] Ibid.
[1098] Ibid.

really charming days."[1099] Once again, we can see how German soldiers attempted to employ the communicative value that small gifts of luxuries and foodstuffs could hold in their attempts to foster positive relationships in light of the misdeeds of the occupational regime.

One thing about the relations between soldiers and the local populations near the war zones is how these interactions could serve as a much needed respite from the constant interaction with a given soldier's comrades. Ernst Jünger describes one such episode from when he was deployed in occupied Belgium. Jünger recounted how the local population, a mix of "half Flemish and half Walloon, was very friendly towards us."[1100] He reminisced about the "many talks with the owner of an estaminet, a keen socialist and freethinker."[1101] That spring, Jünger was "invited to celebrate Easter Sunday with him, and even refused payment for what I drank."[1102] Highlighting the benefit of these exchanges, Jünger remarked "such encounters are almost unbelievably welcome and beneficial after the rough companionship of the ranks."[1103] While Jünger did value the comradeship of the front, like all men he undoubtedly welcomed the change. Once again, the social interaction centered on the consumption of everyday stimulants. Furthermore, we see here the gift giving cycle at play, as Jünger was allegedly not permitted by the estaminet owner to pay for his drinks.

[1099] Ibid.
[1100] Jünger. *Storm of Steel*, 16
[1101] Ibid.
[1102] Ibid.
[1103] Ibid.

Ernst Jünger recorded examples of how interactions between German and locals near the occupied zones of the Western Front could vary. In one such instance, Jünger recounted positive social exchanges with the locals while he was deployed in Cambrai. "My billet was extremely comfortable," he noted, and "was in the house of a jeweler named Plancot-Bourlon, and he and his wife were both very friendly."[1104] According to Jünger, the duo "seldom allowed my mid-day meal to pass without sending me up something good from their table."[1105] In the evenings all three reportedly "drank tea together, played cards, and talked."[1106] Often times, the conversation would turn serious: "One of the questions we most often discussed, naturally enough, was the very difficult one, why there had to be wars."[1107]

However, not all towns and villages were populated by civilians who were as welcoming. Jünger recalled that while in the town of Douchy he and his comrades "only came in contact with the natives when we took our clothes to be washed or bought eggs and butter."[1108] Under these circumstances "Intimate relations were very rare," as "Love had not place in this stark and devastating machinery."[1109] However, there were some interactions in this town, although they were far from positive. According to Jünger, two local French boys often eagerly followed his Hannoverian unit around, in some cases much to their own personal detriment as "some of the more thoughtless of the men used

[1104] Ibid, 162.
[1105] Ibid.
[1106] Ibid.
[1107] Ibid.
[1108] Ibid, 34.
[1109] Ibid.

to take [the boys] with them into the canteen for the amusement of teaching them to drink."[1110]

In each instance, we unfortunately do not have the response of the local Belgian and French civilians and how they interpreted their experience with the occupying German forces within this contact zone of consumerist exchange. It is quite possible that they only willingly engaged in these social transactions as a mode of self-interest and survival. However, this is partly the point. Civilians near the war zones, like the soldiers themselves, actively engaged in patterns of exchange and consumption to mediate their relationships with the occupiers and the war itself. In some cases, this equated to outright survival, in others it served as a way to profit off of the war, the soldiers themselves, or to receive retribution for lost property. One could even argue that these individual acts of agency could undermine those efforts undertaken by the soldiers to manipulate the locals into acquiescing to their demands.

As can be imagined, soldiers' interactions with the local populations caught—or who voluntarily remained—in the war and occupied zones could be riddled with an array of cultural confusion and missteps lost in translation. Corporal Ernest Doran recalled how in 1915 he and some of his comrades while in France had asked a local peasant woman "if she could make us a cup of tea," noting how "she was quite amenable."[1111] "We all got our tea ration together," Doran recounted, "and got a dixie, which was roughly a foot in length, and gave it to her with all our accumulated tea in the bottom, and off she

[1110] Ibid.
[1111] IWM, *Voices of the First World War*, Podcast 20: "Trench Life."

went."[1112] When the Frenchwoman returned, the eager Tommies were in for quite the shock as "She brought it back and handed it to us and she'd put the whole lot in cold water."[1113] "She'd never made tea before in her life," Doran explained, "this country woman; they only drank coffee in the countryside."[1114]

Necessity more often than not won out and prompted countless interactions in all combat zones on a daily basis. Detailing when he and his mates got over their apprehension over interacting with French local near Auxi-le-Château, J.A. Johnston of the BEF recalled how they had finally "got over any diffidence in mixing with civilians by this time and just popped into shops and bought anything we required."[1115] One of the major changes he remembered was that they were able to interact "without having to hold a mass meeting outside to settle who was to be spokesman as we had done during our first few days in the town."[1116] "We knew some of the people to speak to and, as they obviously too an interest in us," he recalled, "we had soon established friendly relations with those round us."[1117]

The relationship between Johnston, his comrades, and the French locals steadily improved over the course of their stay near the village. However, as with much in military life, those times soon ended and they were ordered to pack up and leave for another sector of the front. "Although the news that we were leaving was not

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[1112] Ibid.
[1113] Ibid.
[1114] Ibid.
[1115] IWM, 02/29/1, J.A. Johnston Papers.
[1116] Ibid.
[1117] Ibid.

unexpected," Johnston recounted, "it gave us all, I think, a nasty turn."[1118] The chief reason for this, he explained, was rooted in a general feeling that they "had slipped back so easily into the soldier-cum-civilian sort of life the past few weeks that the prospect of returning to the trenches and the constant strain of life there was not relished by us."[1119] "A very good concert that same evening helped to dispel our gloom a little," Johnston recalled, "and the following day were so busy until tea time that we had no time to think of leave taking."[1120]

While the thought of leaving the comforts available away from the trenches was frustrating, such feelings were clearly exacerbated by the thoughts of leaving new acquaintances and budding relationships with the local populace. "In the evening," Johnston noted, "a few of us went to the shop and bought a box of chocolates for our little friend, Marie, and slipped into the house to say goodbye."[1121] According to Johnston the young child had already been put to bed, and they found the mother writing to her husband who was deployed to Verdun. "In halting French," Johnston "explained the reason for our call and, handing over the chocolates, we started to beat a hasty retreat."[1122] However, they apparently did not get too far, as "the woman, with tears in her eyes, insisted on our remaining until she brought Marie."[1123] "It was a very sleepy

[1118] Ibid.
[1119] Ibid.
[1120] Ibid.
[1121] Ibid.
[1122] Ibid.
[1123] Ibid.

Marie who kissed us all goodbye," Johnston reminisced, "and her mother said she would of a certainty write and tell her husband of our goodness."[1124]

The farewells did not end there. "Blushing furiously, and all feeling like schoolboys caught in the act," Johnston's tale continued, "we dived [*sic*] across the road in the Café Artésien and, while some had a drink and a gossip, B…… [*sic*] and I talked with 'mine host,' himself an 1870 veteran of the cavalry."[1125] "He brought a bottle of fine Benedictine, a great honour," Johnston claimed, "and pledged us in a generous glassful."[1126] Johnston remembered how the two "finished the bottle between us and then it was time to go so, with a shake of the hand, we said 'Au revoir' and left for our billet."[1127] "Many of our friends were waiting at their doors to say goodbye as we passed," he recalled.[1128]

In nearly every segment of Johnston's farewell to the French locals, some form of everyday stimulant was employed as a communicative medium. In the case with Marie, chocolates were gifted, an innocent present for a child symbolizing both the immediacy of the farewell as well as the paternalism inherent in this relationship. With his veteran host, a bottle of fine wine was shared between the men, a symbol of masculine solidarity and mutual comradeship. Not only had Johnson and his countrymen received a respite from the strains of war, as he notes, they were almost lulled back into a semblance of civilian existence. Additionally, they had fostered what he perceived to be many positive local

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[1124] Ibid.
[1125] Ibid.
[1126] Ibid.
[1127] Ibid.
[1128] Ibid.

relationships, the vast majority of which would not have occurred without the need or desire for everyday stimulants.

Norman Tennant of the BEF recounted, in a far more succinct tale, how fostering good relations with the locals could help soldiers obtain creature comforts. "The different subsections were billeted in scattered farms and cottages several kilos [sic] from Arneke," Tennant began. Allegedly, his comrade "Ray discovered a gift for winning the hearts of French & [*sic*] Flemish people wherever we went."[1129] The result of this was that he was able to "gain for his close friends many additional comforts in the way of chairs & coffee in the warm kitchens & occasionally beds & anniversary meals & parties."[1130] Once again, we can see how creature comforts could be used to mediate relationships and forge bonds on multiple levels, and simultaneously at that.

Not all interactions were as positive as the scenes above depict. Denis Winter has noted that there was a difference between how the regulars and the volunteers (and later conscripts) of the BEF treated and viewed the French and Belgian civilians near the front. To the regulars and Old Contemptables, "all foreigners were 'niggers.'"[1131] Some even observed that, "they had their own dirty language with the manners, habits and morals of tame monkeys.""[1132] While not going to the extreme levels presented by Winter, Bert Hemmens nonetheless referred to the French peasantry he encountered "a dirty lot really."[1133] Espousing British superiority over the heathens they were helping to liberate, he mused, they "are'nt [sic] English in any way," as "up here in the north of the

[1129] IWM, 04/30/1, N. Tennant Papers.
[1130] Ibid.
[1131] Winter. *Death's Men*, 143.
[1132] Ibid.
[1133] IWM, 02/40/1, H.W. Hemmens Papers.

country… the people seem to take things as they come—rough + ready style."[1134] Even the land itself was seen as being deplorable, so much so that Hemmens found it surprising to "think the Frenchies [*sic*] would have the courage to stay here."[1135]

One point of contention centered over what types of comforts soldiers could obtain from locals. In the case of the BEF, many Tommies found that they could barely stomach the French style of brewing, never mind what was sold in France to appeal to British tastes. An entry from J.W. Wood's diary from November 1915 provides an example of this. He described the taste of the "So called Stout Anglaise" as being "like drinking a decotion [*sic*] of Treacle + Stout Vinegar."[1136] The French style brew was apparently little better. "While speaking of Good things for a thirst I may as well mention the Beire [*sic*] Francisa [*sic*]," Wood mockingly penned.[1137] "It reached the counter from the Barrel with a light foam on but when you put your Penny down to pay for the half Pint the foam had Completely Gone [sic]," reported Wood.[1138] Aside from consisting mostly of frothy head, apparently it was also low in alcohol content; a double insult. "Woe betide the one who managed about 4 Glasses of it," Wood continued, "not from the Point of being Intoxicated, but as soon as you got nicely bodily warm in bed you found out that you had forgotten some thing in the yard and had to tare [*sic*] away quick as, or have a wetting."[1139] This allegedly happened "not once but several times, it [h]as a

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[1134] Ibid.
[1135] Ibid.
[1136] IWM, 04/19/1, J.W. Wood Papers. Wood served as an NCO with the BEF on the Western Front during the war.
[1137] Ibid.
[1138] Ibid.
[1139] Ibid.

pecular [*sic*] way of flushing the Kidneys just as you get in Bed."[1140] "Many is the unhealthy prayer I have heard breathed against French Beere [*sic*] after lights out," Wood concluded.[1141]

A. Edwards provided another opinion of the beer available in France in a letter written to his brother Will in late July 1915. After thanking him for the parcel that he had just received, he talked about being recently transferred to the village of Vermelles, describing how the town had been recently decimated as a result of close, house-to-house, combat. Despite this, there still was "one Family left in this Village."[1142] "They sell bread, beer" for "1d a glass or basin or Flower Vase in fact anything they can find," Edwards continued.[1143] To give his brother Will what he figured would be an accurate comparison, making the foreign somewhat familiar, Edwards described the beer served as being "just like our pale herb beer."[1144] Although British soldiers often criticized the quality of the beer available in France, the wine was another matter entirely. Not accustomed to drinking the French national beverage, British soldiers were prone to guzzling wine in the same manner that they did with their beer back in Blighty. The results of such drinking parties, as we have seen, could be quite disastrous.

Some soldiers kept their commentary on their interactions with locals remarkably terse. Nonetheless, these brief descriptions provide valuable insight into the complexity that local exchange wrought. For example, upon hearing the news that the British Army

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[1140] Ibid.
[1141] Ibid.
[1142] IWM, 85/15/1, A. Edwards Papers. Edwards served with the 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (1st Division) during the war.
[1143] Ibid.
[1144] Ibid.

Service Corps had recently opened a canteen nearby, J.C. Tait quipped, "The ASC open[ed] a canteen, the best thing the army has so far done for us as we have been swindled wholesale by these natives."[1145] Beyond the frustration that radiates from this passage, one may find it striking that he chose to refer to locals as "natives." While this might very well mean nothing, it could be equally derogatory and suggest a certain aura of superiority that Tait perceived he held over the local populations near the front.

Local Interactions in those Theaters Beyond the Western Front:

In an undated letter from Walther Strauss to his little brother Egon sent back home sometime in February 1915, he gave an overall description of soldiering on the Eastern Front. Of particular interest here are the descriptions of the rations they were provided, and how soldiers would augment their supplies from the local populations. "Here the weather is extremely unhealthy," Walther explained, and "One also suffers most of the time from diarrhea because of the water [supplies]."[1146] According to Walther, the water "cannot just be boiled, because the coffee and food are prepared in the giant pots with inadequate heat."[1147] To feed the soldiers, Walther explained how "The German army administration has bought the entire wheat supply here."[1148] Walther suggested that, although the local Polish population had to exchange their base commodities at the fixed prices dictated by military authorities, "they surely have earned a lot of money."[1149]

[1145] IWM, P 315, J.C. Tait Papers.
[1146] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[1147] Ibid.
[1148] Ibid.
[1149] Ibid.

"They also make a lot of money off of the soldiers," he continued.[1150] This was because one "can obtain goods of any kind," he explained. "On the street in Lowicz," Walther elaborated, "the Jewish boys and girls stand around freezing, and pace 50 meters near to the horse, so one will buy bread, sweets and cigarettes."[1151] Explaining what made Lowicz such a prime market, Walther observed, was the fact that this was the location for "the Staff, the hospital, meeting places (casinos), the large central military train stations, depots, officer halls, magazines, etc."[1152]

Walther likewise recounted to his parents how he, his brother Victor, and their fellow comrades would buy *Genussmittel* from locals while stationed at the Eastern Front. Judging from the context, their parents had informed their sons in a previous letter that an acquaintance of theirs coincidently worked at a hospital in the town of Lowicz where the brothers happened to be currently deployed.[1153] Walther wrote how when they had to go and load their supplies from the train station, they passed by the very same hospital. He then noted how they typically "have to always wait until the station ha[s] loaded all 36 of their transport vehicles."[1154] During this waiting period, they would often go down to the "Jewish shops" and procure, albeit at an expensive price, white bread, cigarettes, sausages, lemons, and the like.[1155] Walther then explained how "the Jewish kids speak very good German and "*springen uns nach*" with cigarettes that come from Germany."[1156]

[1150] Ibid.
[1151] Ibid.
[1152] Ibid.
[1153] Ibid.
[1154] Ibid.
[1155] Ibid.
[1156] Ibid.

In another episode from 1915, Victor Strauss explained how he and his comrades would give their sausage and bread rations to the "poor people, who were hugely grateful, because they had nothing to bite and to nibble."[1157] Around the Kaiser's birthday in 1915, the brothers noted how they had received so much, "everything so abundantly" that many of his comrades had chosen to give some of their commonplace luxuries to the local Polish inhabitants which had lost virtually everything they had, food and consumable comforts included.[1158] "We gave them cigars," Victor wrote, noting how "The people are kind."[1159] He then went on to describe the front as "a barren recess, let me tell you."[1160]

Hans Stegemann echoed these sentiments in a letter home from November 1915 while deployed on the Eastern Front detailing his experiences obtaining billets for he and his men. Recounting the scene, he wrote, "We all take refuge in a Pange family. We greet them and ingratiate ourselves with an initial present of rum, which is drunk, with smacking lips and great satisfaction, out of a broken glass."[1161] The exchange of goods for services did not end there, as "After that we give a cigar to the Panje, who is in a great fuss because some of our chaps have removed part of his roof saying it was their bed."[1162] Fortunately, Stegemann noted, "The cigar pacifies him."[1163] This exchange and haggling nonetheless continued as "After the usual assurance that they have nothing in the house–

[1157] Ibid.
[1158] Ibid.
[1159] Ibid.
[1160] Ibid.
[1161] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 249.
[1162] Ibid.
[1163] Ibid.

everything 'sabrali'–the Madja produces a samovar of excellent tea."[1164] Despite the much welcome warm, caffeinated beverage, "There is not much to eat. We have to make the best of what we have left."[1165] Summing up the situation, he wrote, "'Laboriously the squirrel seeks its food.'"[1166]

German-Jewish soldiers who fought in service of the Kaiser could find both familiarity and solace with Jewish families that happened to be living in the vicinity of the combat zones. As Steven Schouten has recently noted, "In the East, where Germans fought against the Russians, German Jewish soldiers often encountered local East European Jews, many of whom offered these soldiers opportunities to keep kosher."[1167] This hospitality, Schouten argues, was rooted in the backlash against the increasingly anti-Semetic tendencies of the Imperial Russian state.[1168] As such, he elaborates, "*Ostjuden* were frequently positive about the more liberal German state and invited German Jewish soldiers to share kosher meals in their homes."[1169] Schouten explains that such invitations reflected *tzedakah*, a form of Jewish charity that harkened back to "longstanding Jewish traditions."[1170] German Jewish soldiers would also actively seek out Eastern European Jewish families to share kosher meals with. What is more, Schouten points out, Jewish Germans would attempt the same when deployed to the

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[1164] Ibid.
[1165] Ibid.
[1166] Ibid.
[1167] Schouten, "Fighting a Kosher War," 50.
[1168] Ibid.
[1169] Ibid.
[1170] Ibid.

Western Front, especially in the area of Alsace "where a considerable number of traditional Jews lived."[1171]

Obtaining extra supplies from local sources could not always be relied upon. Hermann Götte, while deployed to the Eastern Front in November 1914, generalized this trend in his memoirs. "We ride from one place to another," he recalled.[1172] "The provisions are already long since come," he noted, the result being that "Horse and rider are hungry."[1173] He proclaimed that, "The devil has lured us into a miserable area," the setting of which was marked by "Hunger, cold, thirst, everywhere we go, the Russians have either destroyed everything or taken it with them."[1174]

Not all interactions with locals were necessarily positive, let alone peaceful. In his memoirs Paul Wittenburg detailed how interactions and exchanges with locals could just as easily turn violent. Recalling his service for the Imperial German Army on the Eastern Front, he described one particular episode, where a "A Jew came into the village where we were stationed... with a small *Panjewagen* and two shaggy little horses to sell us some goods."[1175] According to Wittenburg, the man "had mostly chocolate, cookies, and schnapps" to sell.[1176] He recalled, however, how his fellow "soldiers came, but not to buy his goods, but instead plundered his cart."[1177] The poor man's "wagon was tipped over, and he thought one would help him pick it back up," Wittenburg remembered.

[1171] Ibid.
[1172] BA-KA, PH/11/II, Nachlass Götte. Götte served as Gefreiter with the 1. Eskadon Hus. Regiments Nr. 16 and the 3. MGK des Füs. Regiments Nr. 86 during the war.
[1173] Ibid.
[1174] Ibid.
[1175] BA-KA, MSg 2/2640, Nachlass Wittenburg.
[1176] Ibid.
[1177] Ibid.

"German soldier, good soldier," the local cried, but he then allegedly realized that any "helpers" would merely want to loot his goods, so he changed his mind.[1178] "German soldier, robber and band of murders," the man shouted.[1179] "It was of no use," Wittenburg lamented, "His goods, mostly schnapps, went without payment."[1180] "I didn't take part," Wittenburg confessed, "but we were a few days *Marschungsfählig* because some were drunk beyond their senses."[1181]

Paul Wittenburg recalled of another occasion that proved shocking to his sensibilities. "In Calvaria we were transported by train to Eydkunen," he noted, and "[f]rom there we marched to Mariampol."[1182] Wittemburg's unit was delayed en route and "had to hold up for a day because the road was impassable and first had to be made traversable by building a log causeway."[1183] In the meantime, they "made our station in a village, where also the Dragoons stayed."[1184] Taking stock of his surroundings, Wittenburg recorded how "The people of the border district consisted largely of Jews, which kept small shops and tea rooms."[1185] According to the surprised German, "They offered their daughters for a cheap price."[1186] "Come in, pay me a Rubel, make a *Schweinerei* the whole night with my daughter," he recalled the fathers saying.[1187] "I was

[1178] Ibid.
[1179] Ibid.
[1180] Ibid.
[1181] Ibid.
[1182] Ibid.
[1183] Ibid.
[1184] Ibid.
[1185] Ibid.
[1186] Ibid.
[1187] Ibid.

pretty shocked that a father could offer his own daughter for such a thing," he concluded.[1188]

The forced interaction that the war caused could often instigate the tendency amongst soldiers to judge the local populations; both for their way of life and for conditions wrought by the war that were beyond their control. For example, in a letter home to his parents written in early January 1915, Ernst Schallert described one such Jewish settlement near the Eastern Front. He began his description noting how German like the landscape was, but his tone quickly changed to one of derision when he spoke of the town of Hotwina Brzesco in Galicia. "But the inhabitants! The houses," Schallert proclaimed![1189] "Nothing but wooden hovels in which people and animals live all together with the lice and fleas."[1190] "The Jews," Schallert continued, "who still go about here in their peculiar costume and with long beards, are distinguished from the real natives by being slightly more human."[1191] Turning to describe the trade some of the locals allegedly engaged in, he noted: "For the rest, their one idea is to get money out of our soldiers, who have come to protect them as long as there is any to be got."[1192]

The accounts of British soldiers who were deployed in those theaters other than the Western Front present comparable observations and suggestions of cultural, if not racial superiority. This potential conflict that one could find in the contact zone of commercial exchange was depicted in a letter penned by Lieutenant Stanley Cooke. While

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[1188] Ibid.
[1189] Witkop and Weed, *German Students' War Letters*, 101.
[1190] Ibid.
[1191] Ibid.
[1192] Ibid, 101-102.

en route to the front in Mesopotamia, Cooke explained to his father the behavior that local peddlers would engage in, and the consequences when things did not go as they had planned. Cooke recounted how he and his comrades would "get great amusement from the native boats which crowd round the boat selling fruit, tobacco etc, & the banter & bargaining is funny to listen to."[1193] "The natives are great hustlers," he continued, "but if they don't act squarely, showers of water, melon rinds, orange peel etc. etc. [*sic*] descend upon them in showers so they find it to their own benefit to be straight."[1194]

Soldiers, regardless of which theater they were deployed to, had to maintain a steady guard when dealing with local haggler's and merchants. While not specifically referring to the stimulants under consideration, an entry penned by LTC Wollaston demonstrates the common perception that foreign locals would use any means necessary to make a buck. "The following little incident has just come to light," Wollaston confided to his diary, explaining how the episode "illustrates the cleverness of the Egyptian beggar over the British subaltern in his moments of abstraction."[1195] He then went on to explain how two officers while taking leave in Alexandria, "when coming out of some place of amusement were accosted by a Gyppy [*sic*] saying 'Me hungry, me good watch to sell.'"[1196] After considerable haggling, Wollaston noted how the watch was sold to everyone's agreement for one quid.[1197] However, everything was not all as it seemed with the watch. Apparently soon after the two soldiers returned to their hotel for the evening,

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[1193] IWM, 05/7/2, 2nd Lt. S. Cooke Papers.
[1194] Ibid.
[1195] IWM, 03/29/1, LTC Wollaston Papers.
[1196] Ibid.
[1197] Ibid.

the duo realized that they had bought a cheap knock-off that was worth considerably less than what they had paid. Concluding the entry, Wollaston surmised that, "No doubt this is only one of many cases in which the unwary Subaltern has succumbed to the clever wiles of the Gyppy [*sic*]."[1198]

This episode is illustrative for a couple of reasons. First, Wollaston recounted how the two soldiers had encountered the would-be merchant after they had "come out of some place of amusement." Undoubtedly one or several of our commonplace luxuries were consumed either there or at some point prior that evening. One could infer that some type of alcohol or other depressant narcotic was consumed, which could very well have impeded the better judgment of these men. Another point one can infer from this episode is how the watch could be switched with any other product, including our stimulants. As noted above, stories abound of soldiers kvetching about watered down beer and spirits, let alone how locals modified other products in order to turn a profit.

Conclusions:

In a letter home dated 6 October 1915 while deployed near Sauville on the Western Front, Victor Strauss proclaimed to his parents that they, after being transferred from the Eastern Front to the West, "currently have a life that one could not at all have in Russia." Elaborating on such feelings a few weeks later, Victor's brother Walther noted how they "were recently in Cambrai," where they could allegedly get "enough beer and

[1198] Ibid.

warm sausages to give a bellyache."[1199] The treats did not stop there as he reported how "This Sunday evening roast, beer, and creme salad."[1200] As a result, Walther proclaimed that, "We gloriously live in joy!"[1201] In another letter that month, Walther reported how he allegedly had obtained "an enduring family connection that helped me [once] again today" to a spread of "vin-blanc, cakes, raspberry liqueur, and convivial conversation" with some French locals.[1202]

As evidenced above, some theaters of operation offered soldiers with better opportunities to obtain creature comforts. This was certainly the case for those Germans who were transferred from the Eastern to Western Front. In any case, a majority of the interactions between soldiers and local civilians centered on the procurement and exchange of either foodstuffs or everyday stimulants. In the process, these men received both a break from war and a setting to mediate their relationships with their fellow comrades. During the process of social exchange, soldiers often brought with them preconceived notions of their superiority over civilian locals. These feelings were later recorded in the diaries, letters, and memoirs following the contact zone of social exchanges that involved creature comforts. Despite potential social *faux pas* or outright hostility, soldiers and civilians used the supplies and means available to them to endure the hardships wrought by war.

[1199] Hauptstaatsarchiv-Stuttgart, M 660/325, Nr. 1, Nachlass Victor and Walther Strauss.
[1200] Ibid.
[1201] Ibid.
[1202] Ibid.

Conclusions:

In the last episode of the popular British comedy *Blackadder Goes Forth*, which satirizes the combat experience of the BEF on the Western Front, Edmund Blackadder (played by Rowan Atkinson) attempts to play "mad" in order to get invalided back to Blighty. While waiting to see if his scheme will bear the positive result he desires, Blackadder asks Private Baldrick (played by Tony Robinson) to fix them some coffee. "And try to make it taste slightly less like mud this time," Blackadder snipped. "Not easy, I'm afraid, Captain," Baldrich replied. "Why is this," Blackadder quizzed. "'cause it is mud," Baldrich explained, "We ran out of coffee thirteen months ago." "So every time I've drunk your coffee since, I have in fact been drinking hot mud…" the bewildered captain asked, only to have Baldrich interrupt, "With sugar." "Which of course makes all the difference," Blackadder mocked. "Well, it would do if we had any sugar," Baldrich explained, "but, unfortunately, we ran out New Year's Eve 1915, since when I've been using sugar substitute." Unable to resist, Blackadder asks, "Which is…?" "Dandruff," Baldrich replies.[1203]

The absurd war caricatures and clichés are almost too numerous to count in the British satire. Beyond playing "mad" in order to escape a "mad" war, there are several salient symbols that are of direct relevance here. The purported shortages depicted in this scene (and later in the episode) turn the tables on the *Ersatz* reality of the war. While the supply of rations and creature comforts to the soldiers of the British army could be monotonous, there were never the widespread chronic shortages that are presented in jest. Such shortages, however, was the growing reality for the German army over the course of

[1203] *Blackadder Goes Forth*, Episode 6, "Goodbyeee!" and <http://www.reocities.com/CollegePark/4825/blackwords.html#P4E6>, Accessed 30 August 2014.

the war, thanks no less to the effects of Britain's crippling blockade. Perhaps grousing, even all these years later, still helps one to cope with the wounds of what has come to be considered an absurd, mad, tragedy.

Yet, if the war was really that absurd, or mad, or whatever disparaging adjective one wants to hurl, then why did the men on both sides largely choose to endure? This is a remarkably complex question with comparably complex answers. This project has aimed to contribute to this conversation, and shed light on the nuances in which everyday stimulants helped British and German soldiers endure the hardships of industrialized combat. What I have argued is that these soldiers used consumable creature comfort stimulants to mediate their experiences and their myriad relationships during the war. These men from both combatant nations turned to familiar social techniques and devices to achieve these aims, and replicated these practices at the multiple theaters of operations around the globe. The result was that these men learned how to cope with the stresses of war, and due to their ability to negotiate their relationships, proved remarkably resilient in the face of imminent death for over four years.

The Symbolism of Shortages: How (the lack of) Everyday Stimulants Contributed to the Collapse of the German Armies

One question that warrants at least a modicum of consideration before we close is how did the ritualized exchange and consumption of everyday stimulants contribute to Great Britain's victory over Germany during the war. Another, perhaps more accurate way to pose this question would be: What role did the availability of everyday stimulants play in the collapse of the German army in 1918? A possibly glib answer lies in the fact that Britain had continual access to such luxuries (both at home and at the battlefronts),

whereas German access to such products (never mind sustenance foodstuffs) decreased exponentially as the war dragged on. However, this only explains a portion of the problem.

Recently, Peter Grant has tried to explain how British voluntary action helped to achieve national victory over Germany. He argues that fundamentally the British government had greater social capital than its principal adversary.[1204] Chiefly citing the work of political scientist Robert Putnam, Grant asserts that Britons had more trust in their state as a result of the networked associations and the ability of the entire nation to provide for the wellbeing of soldiers and citizens alike.[1205] He argues that this was evident in the voluntary action (both philanthropic and mutual aid) Britons exercised during the war, which was replicated in the provision of many of the consumable comforts that have been the lens of this study.

Such arguments can be taken further, and placed in dialogue with the insights provided by social anthropology that have been so central to this analysis. As we have seen, soldiers on both sides of the battlefield practiced comparable habitual daily rituals of consumption, and used similar—if not the same—products in the process. It is true that there were nuances between the armies in regards as to what products were consumed and when. However, one can just a well observe comparable nuances in consumption within the armies themselves. The shared fundamental similarities shed light on the symbolic value that creature comforts held and help to explain why German soldiers became increasingly demoralized when they encountered and captured large stockpiles of these products during their rapid tactical advances during the spring of

[1204] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War*, 172-179.
[1205] Ibid.

1918. This symbolism runs much deeper than the mere absence of these comforts in the German supplies, however. The mass availability of these goods amongst the Allied positions communicated to German soldiers that their adversaries were far better equipped, and by extension better cared for than they were. Elementally this demonstrated that the British authorities could uphold their end of the social contract, whereas the German government could not. Consequently, this further undermined the social capital that the Kaiser and military hierarchy wielded; discrediting the misnomers and lies disseminated in official propaganda in the process.

As is commonly known, all belligerents faced crises in morale during the winter of 1917/18. "The British army," David Englander observes, "like others, became deeply depressed during 1917-18."[1206] Under the circumstances, he notes, the "Traditional methods of morale management seemed to operate with diminishing efficiency."[1207] As David Stevenson has noted, the onslaught of the German spring offensives in hindsight helped Britain to win the war, as it helped to galvanize the British while exhausting the Germans.

David Stevenson has couched Operation Michael, and the other German offensives in 1918, as a gambit akin to the Schlieffen Plan, with goal of achieving battlefield victory prior to full American mobilization, pitting German numerical superiority (in terms of troops) versus Anglo-Franco economic and logistical superiority. Compounding matters was the fact that German logistics had weakened far beyond what was needed for the campaign. However, he argues that German morale was high,

[1206] Englander, "Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918," 141.
[1207] Ibid.

although fragile and volatile prior to the launch of the Michael Offensive. As the offensives wore on, morale decreased precipitously in the months that followed.[1208]

The war diary of Kurt Krantz provides a snapshot of the frenetic pace of the offensive. Discussing the events of 1 April 1918, he described how "Since yesterday afternoon until 4 o'clock this afternoon we've been on the go non-stop without rest and without meals."[1209] "I have been riding a horse in the mud and rain," he noted, feeling "so tired that I could fall asleep right now and fall out of my saddle."[1210] Further bogging down the advance was the fact that "[t]he large roads are congested and hard to get through," which resulted in their vehicles getting stuck.[1211] "All around us are signs of struggle," he observed, as "[t]he fields haven't been cleared since the offensive began."[1212]

Regarding the spring 1918 offensives, Holger Herwig has noted, "The German Army had given its all for *Michael*. Skeletal divisions manned by badly clothed and undernourished soldiers and powered by emaciated horses had driven the best-equipped and best-fed armies of Britain and the Empire, France, and the United States back to the very gates of Paris."[1213] However, they quickly reached their culminating point. Herwig highlights the significance when the German forces often "halted to sack rich Allied food and clothing depots," noting how this "speaks volumes for their physical state of being."[1214]

[1208] David Stevenson, *With our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 278-292.
[1209] BA-KA, MSg 2/10544, Nachlass Kurt Krantz.
[1210] Ibid.
[1211] Ibid.
[1212] Ibid.
[1213] Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*, (London: Arnold, 1997), 418.
[1214] Ibid.

Martin van Creveld elaborates on the why the German advances stalled. "Drunk with fatigue—the Germans, unlike the British, did not relieve their leading divisions by allowing a second wave to pass through them, it being assumed that such a procedure would cause the attack to lose momentum and coherence," van Creveld explains.[1215] Compounding matters, and relevant to our discussion here, was the fact that many German soldiers were "unable to resist the temptation of looting the rich British stores that were now falling into their hands, the attacking troops were slipping out of control and were no longer responding to orders."[1216]

Paul Wittemburg, who deployed to both the Eastern and Western Fronts during the war, referenced the effects that coming across British supplies had on his unit. "If my memory serves me correctly, we didn't start shooting," Wittemburg recalled, "but we took part in the 'conquest' of an English supply depot."[1217] "We couldn't believe our eyes at all of the glories we could see," the veteran continued, noting how he and his comrades had found "[l]arge metal canisters with wonderful lard, cigarettes and chocolate in every quantity."[1218] According to Wittemburg, it was "Only then could we really see the differences between us and the English," as the Germans' "cupboards have long since been bare."[1219] Returning to the horrors of the war, he noted how they "also came upon the spot where we saw machine guns and dead soldiers," as well as a knocked out artillery piece and "horses with their distended bellies were still there, tied up to the draw

[1215] van Creveld, *Command in War*, 181.
[1216] Ibid.
[1217] BA-KA, MSg 2/2460, Nachlass Wittenburg.
[1218] Ibid.
[1219] Ibid. Wittemburg used the idiomatic expression "Bei uns war ja Schmalhans schon lange Küchenmeister" to describe the material depravity the Germans faced in comparison to their British counterparts.

bar."[1220] "We didn't stay there long," Wittemburg recalled, as they "were pulled out and came to a rest position" shortly thereafter.[1221]

Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison highlight the comparative material disadvantages the German armies found themselves in that fateful spring, as "they were badly clothed and undernourished even before they began their advance; the abundance of supplies they found in the Allied trenches that caused many to turn away from the attack to eat and drink their advantages away."[1222] While the popularly held claims of a bacchian orgy of food and drink may be an overstatement, the fact remains that the German armies were grossly undersupplied by 1918, and the material shortcomings were incredibly apparent. Compounding these widespread material deficiencies that the German armies faced was the fact that in June of that year the Spanish Flu debilitated some 500,000 soldiers.[1223] Symptoms were undoubtedly exacerbated by nutritional deprivation, as well as from the habituated routine of smoking cigarettes.

S.L.A. Marshall aptly observed that, "An army is still a crowd, though a highly organized one."[1224] As such, he noted, during "times of great stress it is subject to the same laws which govern crowds and it is only the presence of strong control which keeps it from acting like a mob."[1225] Marshall reiterated this point, noting that although "an army is a collection of individuals, it is also a crowd and under pressure it tends to revert to crowd form."[1226] "When other men flee," Marshall explained, "the social pressure is

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[1220] Ibid.
[1221] Ibid.
[1222] Broadberry and Harrision, *Economics of World War* I, Loc. 482 of 7625.
[1223] Hamann, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, 312.
[1224] Marshall, *Men Under Fire*, 148.
[1225] Ibid.
[1226] Ibid, 149.

lifted and the average soldier will respond as if he had been given a release from duty, for he knows that his personal failure is made inconspicuous by the general dissolution."[1227]

One cannot underestimate the value of information in battle, whether it was gained by orders from above, or obtained from material evidence found during a raid. As S.L.A. Marshall has noted, "Information is the soul of morale in combat and the balancing force in successful tactics."[1228] While he was referring to battlefield conditions, this logic can be extended to other areas of a soldier's experience. Considering the symbolic value inherent in consumable creature comforts and their consumption patterns, the receipt of creature comforts at the front (either from home, from the military, or some other source) communicated to soldiers that the war was going relatively well.[1229] In the case of the German soldier in 1918, he learned that he had been lied to, and that the war was not going nearly as well as it was being propagated. As a result of these conditions, the soldiers of the German armies gained a good deal of information, much of it negative, from what they found on their advance. One could only think that if the Allies could provide comforts for their soldiers, what else were they still capable of providing.

As Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison illustrate "GDPs limited the volume of weapons, machinery, fuel, and rations that could be made available to arm and feed the soldiers and sailors on the fighting front."[1230] As such, the greater the resources "and GDP of a country, the easier it would be for that country to overwhelm the armed forces

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[1227] Ibid, 150.
[1228] Ibid, 92.
[1229] Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 116.
[1230] Broadberry and Harrison, *The Economics of World War I*, Loc. 343 of 7625.

of an adversary."[1231] In a war of attrition, they point out, "resources counted for almost everything."[1232] William Philpott has echoed these claims, noting how economic and material might translate to success on the battlefield. "Strategic attrition," Philpott observes, "involved mobilizing and deploying an empire's resources to best engage the enemy on the battlefield."[1233] Under these economic realities, the French and British in particular had a greater capacity for overcoming tactical mistakes and operational blunders than their German counterpart. One could argue that Germany ultimately lost the war due to the culmination of economic, political, domestic, and military factors, of which the fundamental collapse of morale both at home and at the front were merely an interwoven component within each. All sides had finite resources, and fundamentally Germany began the war without the combined economic and military means to defeat both Russia and France, especially once Britain entered the conflict on 4 August. This reality of attritional war was cemented when the United States entered the fight in 1917.

One of the hypotheses to come out of the study of the German army's collapse in the fall of 1918 is Wilhelm Deist's thesis that the German army underwent a covert strike during the fall of 1918. This thesis has recently been critiqued in the work of Alexander Watson, amongst others. This scholarship argues that the root of the mass surrenders were far more nuanced, and in many instances led by the junior officers, rather than by those in the ranks. But the bottom line is this: the Imperial German State had lost all social capital and credibility through its inability to uphold its end of the social contract. Describing the centrality of this trust during the war, John Horne notes, "Political

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[1231] Ibid.
[1232] Ibid, Loc. 332 of 7625
[1233] William Philpott, *War of Attrition: Fighting the First World War.* (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2014), 10.

legitimacy remained central to the process of mobilization."[1234] At the same time, he notes, any mobilization "needed a degree of popular consent which was intimately related to the internal cohesion and legitimacy of the states and nations involved."[1235] The failure to maintain this was one of, if not *the* central reason why the German armies quit in the field in the fall of 1918. While the contribution of the symbolic role of everyday stimulants in this process should not be overstated, it nonetheless played a role in German capitulation.

Changes in Consumption Habits and Societal Implications

The widespread use of everyday stimulants during the First World War had numerous societal repercussions following the conflict. Arguably the most striking alteration in European male consumption patterns coming out of the war was the widespread expansion of cigarette smoking. One of the oft-overlooked tragedies of the war is how this dramatic increase in tobacco consumption ultimately shortened the lives of countless veterans who survived the horrors of combat, only to later die horrendous deaths facilitated by the carcinogens in cigarettes. Cigarettes, because of their palatability, allow for inhalation and by extension, deeper levels of poisoning the lung tissue. Robert Proctor has recently detailed the evolution of scientific testing on the dangers of tobacco products, especially the carcinogenic potency of nicotine and tar in the years following the war. It is now virtually common knowledge that cancer and other diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and emphysema, stemming from

[1234] John Horne, *State, Society, and Mobilization*, 7.
[1235] Ibid, 16.

prolonged and continuous cigarette smoking take many years to manifest. As such, when scientists in Germany, Argentina, and Britain began examining to see if there was a corollary between cigarette consumption and lung cancer, it was in the early 1930s, when many of the surviving members of the Generation of 1914 were on the cusp of entering middle age.

One key example that Proctor cites in the discovery of the link between cigarette smoking and lung disease is the work of Hans Reiter, head of the Reich Health Office. Reiter had been investigating the increase in lung disease amongst middle-age males, and in his research he found that among cigarette smokers the "damage to the respiratory system was also common, resulting in chronic lung catarrh but also asthma and emphysema."[1236] These life-shortening diseases, he observed in 1941, were "found disproportionately among 'inhalers' in their forties and fifties."[1237] Basic math points to the conclusion that those suffering most from these ailments were of age to have fought in Kaiser Wilhelm's armies, and as such could have easily been supplied with the "little white slaver" virtually nonstop from 1914 through 1918. Buttressing his findings further, Reiter "cited the work of American biostatistician Raymond Pearl, who in 1938 had shown that smokers even in their thirties and forties had morality rates twice as high as nonsmokers."[1238]

The impact of smoking on those who died during the influenza pandemic has been much harder to corroborate. A main reason for this was the lack of immediate scientific study and understanding in 1918-1919 on how specifically cigarette consumption affects

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[1236] Proctor, *Golden Holocaust*, 160-162.
[1237] Ibid.
[1238] Ibid.

lung tissue. Additionally, one needs to concurrently account for how trench warfare, and all of its trappings, contributed to lung disorders following the war. Nonetheless, it has long since been recognized that smokers "have been more likely than non-smokers to die during previous influenza epidemics."[1239] A 2008 study has provided further scientific reasoning as to exactly why cigarette smokers are more seriously sickened by viral infections, especially those that afflict the lungs. According to Jack A. Elias, M.D. and Min-Jong Kang M.D., smokers' immune systems actually "overreact" to fighting respiratory infections off.[1240] They found that while the infection is eventually cleared from the host's body, the resulting "exaggerated inflammation caused increased levels of [lung] tissue damage."[1241] Summarizing these findings in layman's terms, Dr. Elias noted, "It's like smokers are using the equivalent of a sledge hammer, rather than a fly swatter, to get rid of a fly."[1242]

While never on par with their British counterparts, many German soldiers increased their sugar intake as a result of the war because of their increased access to Belgian chocolates and other sweets. Like tobacco usage, sugar consumption has come under increased scrutiny in recent years. Groundbreaking scientific studies have recently demonstrated how sugar is reportedly eight times more addictive than cocaine.[1243] *Fed Up*, a new documentary detailing sugar addiction and the obesity epidemic in the United

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[1239] Yale University, "Why Cigarette Smoke Makes Flu, Other Viral Infections Worse," ScienceDaily. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/07/080724175857.htm> Accessed February 18, 2014.
[1240] Ibid.
[1241] Ibid.
[1242] Ibid.
[1243] *CBS This Morning,* "Sugar: Is it as addictive as cocaine?," interview with Dr. Mark Hyman, 24 February 2014. <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/sugar-is-it-as-addictive-as-cocaine/> Accessed 30 August 2014.

States has illustrated that some eighty percent of foodstuffs available for purchase contain added sugar. In fact, the film argues that many companies are responding in the same way to the negative health allegations as their counterparts in the tobacco industry did over thirty years ago. Similar complaints and criticisms about the ubiquity of sugar in everyday food items could just as easily be raised in the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent in Germany.[1244] As we have seen, patterns of sugar consumption were both reinforced and expanded during the war, thanks to its dual ability to make foodstuffs and stimulants more palatable while providing extra caloric value.

Sydney Mintz has traced the origins of mass sugar consumption and its relationship to fast food to World War II. He contends that as a result of the American GI's rations, and the speed that it represented and entailed, this prompted the T.V. dinner revolution. I would argue that the roots of this phenomenon actually go back to the First World War, when millions of men were introduced to comparable consumption habits. In Irmgard Keun's 1932 novel *The Artificial Silk Girl*, there is a scene when the story's protagonist orders fast food from a sort of vending machine in Berlin, and proclaimed how that was "American." However, Americans did not necessarily hold a monopoly on either speed or mass consumption. As such, one could argue that these habits were prompted either directly or indirectly by those consumption patterns practiced and habituated during the war.

The interactions that centered on the sharing and consumption of creature comforts can also be linked to relative improvements in class relations in the post-war era.

[1244] Stephanie Soechtig, *Fed Up*, 2014.

Extrapolating on the implications of officer-ranker relations in the British armies, John Keegan suggested how through the "process of discovery, both of each other and of the military life, many of the amateur officers were to conceive an affection and concern for the disadvantaged which would eventually fuel that transformation of middle-class attitudes to the poor which has been the most important social trend in twentieth-century Britain."[1245] Recently, Peter Grant has made comparable claims as they pertain to the role of philanthropic work and voluntary action in Britain. In each instance, everyday stimulants were employed in the mediation of these relationships on varying levels.

Another example of the changes in consumption of *Genussmittel* can be seen in beer. In the case of Germany, beer is similar to bread in that it was (at least at one time) considered central to the national diet. However, the national drink was ultimately categorized by the Imperial government as a luxury good, and therefore, not essential to daily sustenance. As a result of this categorization, brewers across the central European nation found their access to necessary raw agricultural materials increasingly limited. Beer production, similarly to sugar production, saw a catastrophic decline in production in the *Kaiserreich* during the war. In 1913, the German empire produced a total of 34,213,000 hectoliters of the staple beverage, however by 1917 production had decreased by over two-thirds to 10,422,000 hectoliters.[1246] This decrease was the cumulative result of many convergent factors. For instance, as part of the efforts to conserve barley, the production

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[1245] Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 225.

[1246] Leo Grebler and Wilhelm Winkler, *The Cost of the World War to Germany and to Austria-Hungary*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Division of Economics and History, 1940), 50.

of beer began to be rationed, and thusly reduced in March 1915 to sixty percent of the volume produced in 1912-13.[1247] This quantity was reduced yet again at the end of the year to a paltry twenty-five percent of the pre-war standard.[1248] The Schultheiss brewery in Berlin provides an excellent microstudy of the impact of these events. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Schultheiss was in fact the largest producer of beer per volume sold in the world. Compounded by the effects of the Second World War and the Iron Curtain, this is no longer the case. In fact, the same fate befell a good number of local German breweries, with many forced to close up shop permanently.[1249]

Beer (and alcohol) consumption was also radically impacted by the war in Britain as well. As Arthur Marwick points out, "the First World War brought about a salutary change in one of the most important social habits of the people of Britain."[1250] Part of this was the combined result of the teetotal movement and the military necessity of limiting drunkenness, which culminated in the restrictions on consumption, pub operating hours, and the like delineated in the Defense of the Realm Acts. Additionally, Britain also faced shortages in the grains needed for both brewing and fodder, and as a result, the brewing declined during the war.[1251]

Implications for Future Wars:

The use of everyday stimulants amongst those in the military by no means ended following the Armistice and subsequent peace treaties. While soldiers had consumed

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[1247] Ibid.
[1248] Ibid.
[1249] Ibid, 26.
[1250] Marwick, *The Deluge*, 147.
[1251] Ibid, 68.

these goods during previous conflicts (the use of chicory coffee during the U.S. Civil War once again comes to mind), the sheer scale of men and product needed made the First World War a unique experience in itself. While there is a certain short sidedness that comes from couching World War I as merely the precursor to World War II, the technological and logistical advances made during 1914-18 and beyond led directly to expanding the scale of total war in the mid-twentieth century. Nutritional "advances" likewise played a role. What is more, the expectations amongst soldiers that they would receive stimulants was cemented during the 1914-18 conflict, so much so that they have been increasingly included in Western combat rations ever since.

The subsequent use of stimulants was manifest in multiple ways. Max Hastings has noted how tail gunners flying on bombing raids into Germany during World War II would take caffeine pills to help them endure the strain of the eight to ten hour flight all of whom were separated from their comrades crammed in like sardines at the front of their Lancasters.[1252] Additionally, the rations these men would take up included both chocolate and tea, both of which were undoubtedly laced with sugar. Smoking too, depending upon the captain, would at times be permitted during sorties. This is not to mention the reported used of amphetamines by Allied crewmembers that used the narcotic to ward off fatigue "and enhance performance."[1253]

During World War II, voluntary aid organizations once again came to the assistance of the soldiers who went off to fight. As in 1914, with the declaration of war

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[1252] Max Hastings, *Bomber Command*. (New York, NY: Zenith Press, 2012).
[1253] State of Vermont Department of Health, "A Brief History of Methamphetamine-Methanphetamine Prevention in Vermont." <http://healthvermont.gov/adap/meth/brief_history.aspx> Accessed 30 August 2014.

on Germany in September 1939, the YMCA once again followed the British Army to the European Continent. Instead of stationary huts, the YMCA implemented mobile 'Tea Cars' that could serve His Majesty's forces in France. They were even present as the British evacuated at Dunkirk, only halting service when the orders came from high command to abandon everything. Tea Cars were also a feature at the home-front, serving refreshments to citizen and fire crews alike in cities like Coventry, heavily damaged during the Blitz. These mobile units were once again deployed to the Continent following the British Army at Normandy, soon after the capture of Sword and Juno beaches in the early summer of 1944. Additionally, the YMCA opened centers around the globe where Britain's forces were deployed, including Iceland, the Middle East, North Africa, and Sicily.[1254] By war's end, there were around 500 of these vehicles in operation.[1255]

With the outbreak of war, the Army Council in Britain suggested the formation of an all encompassing umbrella organization to better coordinate the global support British philanthropic groups provided the armed forces. Over the course of the conflict, the member organizations of what became the Council of Voluntary Welfare Work (CVWW) deployed some 2,000 mobile facilities, as well as 5,000 stationary canteens, hostels, and the like for soldiers' comfort(s).[1256] Each of the member organizations was permitted to run their operations autonomously. The CVWW had come to view itself "not as

[1254] UAB, YMCA/M/8, *The First 100 Years: 1844-1944. The Story of the YMCA*. (1944). The text does not say if the YMCA was present in the Pacific Theatre of Operations.
[1255] UAB, YMCA/M/6-7, *Working with the Forces in Germany.*
[1256] UAB, YMCA/M/8. *The Council of Voluntary Welfare Work.*

supplementary but as complimentary to the official welfare provision made for HM Forces by the Ministry of Defence, and to the facilities provided by NAAFI."[1257]

The presence of the YMCA did not end with the secession of hostilities. As the British Army's role shifted to one of an occupying force, so to did the YMCA's strategy of supply. The mobile Tea Cars evolved into more permanent centers across the British Sector, one of the most famous being 'The Windmill', located at Route 2 at Beckum. Additionally, as soldiers married with families were increasingly stationed in Germany during the 1960s and 70s, canteens, cafeterias, and similar facilities were supplied to meet the expanding needs and desires of those serving abroad.[1258] Into the 1990s, the YMCA continued its mission, supplying NATO servicemen with comparable creature comforts in civil war ravaged Yugoslavia.[1259] Varying little from its goals during the 1914-18 war, the YMCA was there "To provide support and advice to the military communities where we operate, using self-financing trading operations as primary points of contract."[1260]

The routinized use of everyday stimulants during World War I had implications for the German armies who went to war twenty years later. For example, chocolate was distributed to members of the 12th Waffen-SS Division *Hitlerjugend*. However, these stimulant comforts were given in lieu of cigarettes, which were doled out to the other units. The average age of this elite fighting group was between 18 and 19 years of age, and it was thought by many Nazi officials that these young fighters were too young to smoke. Hitler's personal ideas on health and hygiene aside, the provisioning of chocolate

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[1257] Ibid.
[1258] UAB, YMCA/M/6-7, *Working with the Forces in Germany.*
[1259] UAB, YMCA/M/8. *The Council of Voluntary Welfare Work.*
[1260] Ibid.

reflected previous trends from the First World War to provide these innocents with symbolic gifts that were perceivably more suitable for boys.

The debate over creature comforts still echoes in our time, with Brigadier General Stanley McChrystal famously banning the sale of "junk food" at the U.S. air base in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2010.[1261] Channeling Lord Kitchener from nearly one hundred years earlier, one announcement read: "This is a war zone—not an amusement park."[1262] What is more, recent debates about the use of tobacco products in the military, notably on U.S. military installations, has again brought the debate over what stimulants should be provided to soldiers again to the fore.[1263] The key difference here is that now the debate centers on the health of the soldier, not their potential moral depravity.

Potential Avenues for Further Research:

The focus of this study has been on how combat soldiers' endurance, and how they used everyday stimulants to mediate their relationships, both with the war and with other humans in the multitude of social settings found during war. As a result, several interrelated topics fell by the wayside for the time being, yet this does not diminish the importance or potential implications they may have for this story. In due time, one or all of these may warrant future research. One of these topics is the global economic and agricultural repercussions that the need for these products caused. The realm of global

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[1261] Jon Boone, "US commander in Afghanistan bans burger and pizza bars at Kandahar base," *The Guardian*, 25 March 2010. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/25/us-commander-afghanistan-bans-burger-pizza>
[1262] Ibid.
[1263] Karen Towers, "Navy moves to ban tobacco sales on bases, ships," *Navy Times*, 28 March 2014. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/03/28/navy-eliminates-tobacco-sales/7036733/>

sugar production, especially in the circum-Caribbean, comes immediately to mind. For example, the rush to fill the void in the global sugar market caused a massive boom-and-bust cycle in many sugar-producing countries known as the "Dance of the Millions." Monocultural economies dependent solely upon sugar production collapsed as a result, never mind the ecological damage caused by over-planting and harvesting sugar cane. This is but one example of such global implications. Fortunately, it does not appear that we will have to wait too much longer for this void to be filled, as scholarship is currently underway which should prove to bolster our collective understanding of this global, totalizing conflict.

By favoring combat soldiers' voices in this project, others were muted or silenced along the way. One area in particular is the role of women in the war, and how they interpreted the use of everyday stimulants. On a related note, the topic of sex has been completely omitted in this study. Additionally, the voices of prisoners-of-war have been purposely left out for the time being.

One last topic that was intentionally skirted was the use and abuse of hard drugs during the war. Morphine surely comes to mind, and there are certainly countless examples that one could study, including those found in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Cocaine use and abuse amongst soldiers is another avenue for further research. During the war dentists were making the switch from using cocaine as a local anesthetic to novocain. In addition to this, cocaine was purportedly used to stimulant soldiers into action much in the way the Theodore Aschenbrandt had envisioned in the nineteenth century.

Although the topic of Conny Braam's novel *The Cocaine Salesman,* how widespread the use of this stimulant actually was still merits further investigation. We do know that there was indeed a tabloid brand of cocaine pills called "Forced March," which was in production from roughly 1897 through 1907. Manufactured by Burroughs, Wellcome, and Company, the compound mixture of kola nut and coca leaf purportedly allayed fatigue, thirst and hunger. Savery and Moore produced a comparable product, which was instructed to be taken "as a restorant." One such package of these "Medicated Gelatine Lamels" was on display at the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society in their exhibit "Drugs for Pleasure, Drugs for Pain" that ran from March 2011 through February 2012. In fact, the package on display allegedly belonged to a member of the Glamorgan Yeomanry who served in Egypt and Palestine (1916-17) and France (1917-19).

As with using everyday stimulants as a lens to analyze how soldiers endured the war, there are multiple ways the topics delineated above intersect with one another as a result of this analytical perspective. One example of this can be seen in how hard drug usage during the war overlaps with topics of sexual relations. In Britain, by way of brief example, the London police noted concern over the alleged drugging of soldiers on leave with cocaine by local prostitutes.[1264] This, and other related topics merit additional attention.

[1264] See for example documents in TNA Home Office (HO) 45/1672/342587, amongst others.

Enduring War

Reflecting upon the value of ritualized social exchange, Ernst Jünger recalled how "These drink-offerings on the morrow of well-fought fights count among an old soldier's happiest memories."[1265] "And though ten out of twelve had fallen," he continued, "still the last two, as sure as death, were to be found on the first evening of rest over the bottle, drinking a silent health to their dead companions, talking and laughing over all they had been through."[1266] "For dangers past—and old soldier's laugh. For those to come—a full glass, though death and the devil grin there, as long as the wine was good. Such has ever been the custom of war," he observed.[1267]

Jünger elaborated further on the role that such exchanges had both on memory and endurance:

> "The war left one with two memories, as I am sure every outspoken soldier of it will agree, that were always recurring: one, when one was faced with the worst moments it had to offer; the other, when the bottle went round as madly and merrily as ever it did in times of peace. It was only because these black and red threads were interlaced in fairly equal proportions that the experiences of war were not intolerable."[1268]

Simply put, Joanna Burke has provocatively argued that soldiers enjoy war for the act of state sanctioned killing itself. This is not the place to critique what is certainly a short-sided argument. Perhaps more telling about why men embrace the experience of war is the camaraderie described by Jünger above. Recently, Sebastian Junger has observed that soldiers want to return to battle because they miss the small unit care and social rituals that one is provided in the military, and which can be so conspicuously

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[1265] Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 140.
[1266] Ibid.
[1267] Ibid.
[1268] Ibid, 113.

absent from civilian society.[1269] This might also help to explain the appeal of seemingly silly social rituals like buying "rounds" at a pub. In each case, the individual can be made to feel like they belong. Where these worlds intersect alludes to the importance of using stimulants as a lens to study soldiers' endurance and relationships; it speaks to the multitude of ways humans routinely and simultaneously attempt to be included and distance themselves in the social arena of daily life. Under the self-imposed strains of modern society, these mirrored practices should not be all that surprising.

[1269] Sebastian Junger, "Why Veterans Miss War." <http://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_junger_why_veterans_miss_war> Accessed 1 September 2014.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

Ph.D.	The Pennsylvania State University, Department of History, 2014
MA	California State University, Northridge, Department of History, 2008
BA	California State University, Northridge, Department of History, 2005

Awards and Fellowships

2014	Kevin J. Carroll Prize for the Best Graduate Student Paper in Military History. Presented by the Society for Military History and Cantigny First Division Foundation. Missouri Valley History Conference.
2013-2014	Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Post-Graduate Fellowship
2011-2012	United States Army Center for Military History Dissertation Research Fellowship.
2011	Edwin Erle Sparks Fellowship in the Humanities (College Level Dissertation Research Award). The Pennsylvania State University.
2010-2011	General and Mrs. Matthew B. Ridgway Research Grant. U.S. Army Military Institute, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.
2010	Russell F. Weigley Graduate Student Travel Grant. Society for Military History.

Select Conference Presentations

Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, NE. "The Fog of War: The Impact and Legacy of Tobacco Consumption during the First World War." March 2014.

German Studies Association, Denver, CO. "German Soldiers and *Genussmittel* on the Not So Quiet Eastern Front." Research presented as part of the special seminar "Not So Quiet on the Eastern Front: New Directions in World War I Studies." October 2013.

Society for Military History, New Orleans, LA. "Posts of Love: The Significance of British and German Philanthropic Donations of Commonplace Luxuries to the Front Lines During World War I." March 2013.

British Commission for Military History New Research in Military History: A Conference for Postgraduate and Early-career Historians, Kings College, London. "With Good Cheer and Chocolate: The Role of Everyday Stimulants Amongst Soldiers During the Great War." November 2011.

Society for Military History, Lexington, VA. "Sweetness and War: An Introductory Examination of the Role of Sugar During the First World War." May 2010.