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Negotiating Violence: Public Discourses about Political
Violence in Interwar Britain and Germany.

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Thesis Abstract

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Insert the abstract text here - the space will expand as you type.

This thesis analyses public discourses about political violence in interwar Britain and Germany. Much of the existing work on political violence in the aftermath of the First World War has focused on the defeated countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A comparative study on Germany and Great Britain, however, has not previously been undertaken and therefore presents a novel and ambitious addition to the field. The study's approach is based on the assumption that analysing inherently public discourses, primarily press and parliamentary language, can provide insights into both nations' identity construction, both domestically and internationally. A series of case studies from the early and late interwar period has been chosen for this purpose. In examining the discourses exhibited in reaction to these case studies, the thesis will find that the language used publicly to discuss political violence in both countries referenced a series of common themes which aided in constructing the desired national narratives and identities. In the aftermath of the experience of extreme violence during the First World War, in particular, these themes revolved around notions of civilisation, justice, law and order, and, especially in the case of the young Weimar Republic, the desire to establish membership in the international community of civilised, democratic nations. Additionally, race, class, nation, gender, and political conviction were recurring rhetorical frameworks, along which public discourses sought to categorise victims and perpetrators of violence, legitimising certain acts of political violence while delegitimising others. While the thesis presents these thematic similarities, crucial differences in the nature, intensity, and contexts of German and British public discourses on political violence were obvious, pointing towards both countries' divergent paths. The thesis' undisputed conceptual vanishing point is the rise of Nazism in Germany. Thus, by comparing German interwar discourses on political violence to British ones, the thesis retraces important watershed moments at which language contributed to shifting the boundaries of acceptable uses of violence in the name of politics. Furthermore, by its comparative approach, the thesis actively seeks to Europeanise British history more than it traditionally has been; similarly, by consciously including case studies from the colonial sphere, it seeks to integrate British and imperial histories more meaningfully.

Lay Summary

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Insert the lay summary text here - the space will expand as you type.

This thesis analyses how political violence was perceived and discussed in Britain and in Germany in the period between the two world wars. When the First World War ended in November 1918, this did not mean that there was no more violence taking place in Europe, and beyond. Germany and countries of Eastern Europe in particular, experienced a lot of political violence. Britain experienced much less violence, but it was also present to some degree, and it was especially present within the British Empire. A lot of the existing work on political violence in the aftermath of the First World War has focused on the defeated countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Britain is not often included in histories of postwar European experiences of violence. This is why the comparative perspective of this thesis, which looks at both Britain and Germany, is new and can give us new insights. The thesis specifically analyses language which was produced in public forums, mainly in parliament and in the press, in both countries respectively. This is because through public language countries tell themselves and others particular stories about who they are or want to be seen as; they construct identity and self-images through public language. The thesis looks at a number of examples of events of political violence from both countries, from the early postwar period (1919-1922), and from the early/mid-1930s; including events which took place within the borders proper of both countries, as well as looking at violence in areas which were further away. Especially for British experiences of violence in this period, it is important to combine 'British' and imperial history in this way, which is still not done very often. In its examination of the public language with which politicians and newspapers reacted to cases of political violence, this thesis finds a series of common themes, which were used in both countries to construct their national identities and tell particular stories. Among those themes, which were influenced especially by the experience of the new and extreme violence of the First World War, were ideas of what it meant to be 'civilised', of justice, law and order. For the newly founded Weimar Republic it was especially important to establish its place in the international community of civilised, democratic nations. Other themes which thread through the chapters are race, class, nation, gender, and geographical location; these were used in public language to categorise victims and perpetrators of violence and to present certain acts of political violence as legitimate and others as illegitimate. Besides similarities, though, there were also very important differences in the scale of the violence, as well as in the nature, intensity, and the contexts of the public language in Germany and Britain, which point towards both countries' different paths, especially the rise of National Socialism in Germany. By comparing how political violence was perceived and discussed in Germany in the period between the two world wars to how political violence was perceived and discussed in British public language, this thesis re-examines a series of important moments where language was used to shift the boundaries of the 'say-able' and of acceptable uses of violence in the name of politics. The comparative approach of the thesis also works to integrate British and European history more, which is unfortunately still not done very often.

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The last and greatest thanks I owe to my parents; their love, support, inspiration, and inexplicably unwavering faith in me have been my guiding light through this process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Abendausgabe</i> ('evening edition')
AB	<i>Abendblatt</i> ('evening edition')
ADRIC	Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary
AfD	<i>Alternative für Deutschland</i> ('Alternative for Germany')
BArch	<i>Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, Berlin</i>
BArch Koblenz	<i>Bundesarchiv, Koblenz</i>
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union</i> ('Christian Democratic Union')
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DAZ	<i>Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
DDP	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Partei</i> ('German Democratic Party')
DNVP	<i>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</i> ('German National People's Party')
DVP	<i>Deutsche Volkspartei</i> ('German People's Party')
DTZ	<i>Deutsche Tageszeitung</i>
DZ	<i>Deutsche Zeitung</i>
EMB	<i>Erstes Morgenblatt</i> ('first morning edition')
FZ	<i>Frankfurter Zeitung</i>
HC	House of Commons
HL	House of Lords
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> ('Communist Party of Germany')
MA	<i>Morgenausgabe</i> ('morning edition')
MA Freiburg	<i>Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau</i>
NPZ	<i>Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung</i>
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> ('National Socialist German Workers' Party')
RAF	Royal Air Force
RF	<i>Rote Fahne</i>
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i>
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> ('Social Democratic Party of Germany')

SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
USPD	<i>Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> ('Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany')
VB	<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i>
VZ	<i>Vossische Zeitung</i>
ZMB	<i>Zweites Morgenblatt</i> ('second morning edition')

INTRODUCTION

On the eleventh day of the eleventh month at 11 o'clock every year, in the United Kingdom and the countries of the Commonwealth, life stands still for two minutes as the country commemorates the end of the First World War. In Germany, in certain regions so inclined, at the very same moment enthusiastic self-proclaimed jesters hold rambunctious parties to declare the carnival season open, while those less enthusiastic about this so-called 'fifth' season most likely take no note of the day and time. This stark contrast can be ascribed to many aspects of the divergent experiences and commemorative practices of British and German history over the course of the 'short' twentieth century from 1914 to 1991 and its violent cataclysms. However, a central one of those aspects is the way the official end of the First World War was actually experienced in the two different countries. As Robert Gerwarth has put it in the subtitle of his recent book on the "vanquished" land empires of Europe, in large parts of the continent the war simply "failed to end."¹ While in victorious Britain one could, and can, commemorate the end of the war at a precise date and time, the same is less true of Germany, and much less true of Eastern Europe. Notwithstanding the armistice signed in November 1918, peace for people in many regions thus remained elusive and violence remained ever-present. Indeed, the war unleashed "seismic forces", revolutionary turmoil, and civil wars which "transformed the political landscape of much of the old continent."² Speaking to the fact that violence as a societal phenomenon can be considered a "modern obsession" of the twentieth century, Richard Bessel has investigated how changing mentalities and attitudes towards violence in Europe and North America have shaped modern history. In his observation, it was only after the end of the Second World War in 1945 that there was "a truly broad challenge to the legitimacy of violence *per se*."³ For the interwar period, however, he finds political violence a common phenomenon across large parts of Europe: a "prominent feature of German political life"; an obvious factor in Italy; especially brutal in Eastern Europe; but present also in France and indeed in Britain, though to a much lesser extent and gaining significantly less traction.⁴ Nevertheless, it has sometimes been suggested that a comparison

¹ Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London, 2016).

² Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, "Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War: An Introduction", in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p. 1.

³ Richard Bessel, *Violence: A Modern Obsession* (London, 2015), p. 11, emphasis in original.

⁴ Bessel, *Violence*, pp. 99-132, quotation on p. 101. A similar concern regarding the modern obsession with violence is voiced by Joanna Bourke in her recent work *Wounding the World: How Military Violence and War-Play Invade Our Lives* (London, 2014), in which she asks how "the militarization of society normalize[s] and morally neutralize[s] the effects of violence", p. 6.

between Britain and Germany regarding interwar political violence would largely be a nonsensical exercise, as, in the words of Adrian Gregory, “[t]o write about political violence in inter-war Britain, is in any normal terms, to discuss a striking absence.”⁵ This thesis takes issue with this assessment. It seeks to address a lacuna in the research by bringing together in a truly comparative perspective analyses of perceptions of political violence in interwar Britain and Germany. In this, the thesis hopes to chart the processes which led to the establishment and reinforcement, on the one hand, of the image of Britain as a “peaceable kingdom” while in Weimar Germany political violence not only failed to be controlled but also became increasingly defensible in public language.⁶

When this thesis began to be conceived of, in 2014-2015, it was borne out of an acute awareness of the significance of the centenary of the First World War, and its undeniably far-reaching consequences for virtually all European, as well as many non-European, nations. An interest in the effects of four years of industrialised mass killing on postwar societies and, in particular, how it shaped attitudes to political violence in its aftermath stood at the beginning of this project. In the intervening years much has changed. Our own times have witnessed an electoral shift towards more right-wing nationalist parties, a rise in populist politics, and a resurgence of political violence in democratic nations throughout the ‘West’, including Britain and Germany. The long list of Islamist and Islamophobic attacks, of anti-Semitic, racist, and homophobic hate crime and shootings, the elections of right-wing nationalist leaders across the world, whether Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, or indeed Donald Trump in the United States of America, and political assassinations, such as those of Labour MP Jo Cox in June 2016 and that of CDU politician Walter Lübcke in June 2019 by right-wing radicals,⁷ have had their undoubted effect on this project’s progress and have influenced the research questions and the writing of this thesis. A renewed interest, in the present day, in the

⁵ Adrian Gregory, “Peculiarities of the English? War, Violence and Politics: 1900-1939”, *Journal of Modern European History*, 1 (2003), p. 54.

⁶ Jon Lawrence, “Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in post-First World War Britain”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 75/3 (2003), pp. 557-589. The term is discussed further below.

⁷ A by no means exhaustive list of deadly attacks, hate crimes, and domestic terrorism over the past five years might include: the Islamist attacks on French satirical magazine “Charlie Hebdo” in January 2015; the Islamist attacks in Paris in November of the same year; the shooting at a gay club in Orlando, Florida, in June 2016; the Islamist attack on the Berlin Christmas market in December 2016; the Islamist attack on Westminster Bridge, London, in March 2017; the anti-Semitic shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in October 2018; the right-wing extremist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019; the shooting targeting Latinos in El Paso, Texas, in August 2019; the attempted attack on a synagogue, and subsequent shooting at a Turkish restaurant, in Halle (Saale), Saxony-Anhalt, on Yom Kippur in October 2019; the Islamophobic shooting at two shisha bars in Hanau, Hesse, in February 2020; on Jo Cox, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/jo-cox-obituary>; on Walter Lübcke, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-48496972> [accessed 29.04.2020].

role and significance of language as a tool for legitimising violence, has served to shift the focus of the thesis away from an interest in mainly revisiting the immediate post-1918 period one hundred years on, and towards a more acutely felt necessity to investigate the ways in which language, especially that which is produced in public forums, was used to discuss, explain, excuse, or condemn political violence at this crucial time between the two world wars. While right-wing leaders today openly declare it their goal to “push the boundaries of the say-able,”⁸ and journalists and commentators lament the increasing amounts of “hate speech” online and fear a deterioration and toxification of political discourse,⁹ it is clear that we still grapple with the question of how democratic societies can speak about, stand up to, and react appropriately to acts of political violence which threaten their principles and identities. There has therefore remained a humble hope, while undertaking this research, of the possibility of drawing conclusions from the past for the benefit of facing these challenges in the present.

Political violence in the interwar period is at once a topic which has been written about extensively, and not much at all. Specifically, texts on individual countries and their post-First World War experiences with political violence are quite numerous, while works taking a broader comparative, European or even global view are much rarer and have only recently started to emerge. The most comprehensive such work is the edited volume by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, *War in Peace* (2012).¹⁰ As in several earlier articles, the editors begin to develop a Europe-wide, and in places transnational, view of the many violent post-First World War conflicts; the book rightly contains chapters on the very violent regions of Eastern Europe, Russia, East-Central Europe, and also the Balkans, the Baltic, and Finland. Happily, however, it also includes a chapter on Britain’s culture of paramilitarism in Ireland, as well as a comparative approach to Irish and Polish nationalist paramilitary forces and the

⁸ Alexander Gauland, then leader of Germany’s right-wing *Alternative für Deutschland* party, cited in Astrid Séville, “Vom Sagbaren zum Machbaren? Rechtspopulistische Sprache und Gewalt“, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 49-50/2019, <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/301138/vom-sagbaren-zum-machbaren-rechtspopulistische-sprache-und-gewalt> [accessed 02.03.2020]. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German my own.

⁹ For example: Julya Rabinowich, “Hass im Netz“, *Zeit*, 16/2019, <https://www.zeit.de/2019/16/sprache-internet-social-media-hass-anonymitaet/komplettansicht>; “Durs Grünbein über die Verrohung der Sprache. „Das ist sprachliche Aufrüstung, die zu Gewalt führen wird““, Interview, *Deutschlandfunk*, 05.06.2018, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/durs-gruenbein-ueber-die-verrohung-der-sprache-das-ist.1270.de.html?dram:article_id=419600; Archie Bland, “How did the language of politics get so toxic?“, *Guardian*, 31.07.2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/31/how-did-the-language-of-politics-get-so-toxic?> [all accessed 30.04.2020].

¹⁰ Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

symbolic meaning of their violence.¹¹ Gerwarth and Horne argue, furthermore, for taking an even more global perspective on these conflicts in future, expanding into the colonial theatre especially in analysing British and French experiences with political violence, which of course continued, and intensified, in the post-Second World War era of decolonisation.¹² The present thesis undertakes a first step in this direction.

Another, more recent volume to bring together views from multiple European countries and explore their interwar experiences of political violence is the volume edited by Chris Millington and Kevin Passmore (2015).¹³ The special emphasis in this volume lies on political violence taking place in the democracies of Western Europe in this time period. This is a new and welcome approach, in that it readily acknowledges that political violence was not exclusively a problem of the “shatterzones”¹⁴ of Eastern and East-Central Europe, but a phenomenon warranting systematic attention, too, in countries often considered relatively free from the experience of interwar political violence, and inviting comparison between them. The volume pays attention to societies typically associated with political violence, such as Germany and Italy, but also less frequently explored countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Britain. Such a work emphasises that the mere existence of the institution of democracy was not a guarantee against political violence. The editors further remind readers, with reference to Britain and France, that “Empire cannot be bracketed as an anomaly. On the contrary, the possession of colonies blurs the distinction between the democratic West and authoritarian East.”¹⁵ This observation is, again, significant for the approach taken in this thesis. Birte Förster’s recent short investigation of the year 1919 refers to several of the case studies which this thesis, too, examines in greater detail. Among them are *Freikorps* violence in postwar German cities, as well as in the Baltic, violent labour conflicts in British cities, such as Glasgow, and the Irish War of Independence. The emergence of this kind of scholarship supports this thesis’ comparative approach and confirms it in its ambitions of integrating diverse histories into a fuller picture of postwar political violence in Europe, and its colonial spheres.¹⁶

¹¹ Anne Dolan, “The British Culture of Paramilitary Violence in the Irish War of Independence”, in Gerwarth and Horne (eds.), *War in Peace*, pp. 200-215; Julia Eichenberg, “Soldiers to Civilians, Civilians to Soldiers: Poland and Ireland after the First World War”, in Gerwarth and Horne (eds.), *War in Peace*, pp. 184-199.

¹² Gerwarth and Horne, “Paramilitarism in Europe”, p. 18.

¹³ Chris Millington and Kevin Passmore (eds.), *Political Violence and Democracy in Western Europe, 1918-1940* (Basingstoke, 2015).

¹⁴ The term “shatterzone” in this context was coined by Donald Bloxham to describe the areas of the disintegrated Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires following the end of the First World War; see Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution. A Genocide* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 81, 112, 171.

¹⁵ Kevin Passmore, “Introduction: Political Violence and Democracy in Western Europe, 1918-1940”, in Millington and Passmore (eds.), *Political Violence*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Birte Förster, *1919. Ein Kontinent erfindet sich neu* (Ditzingen, 2018).

An influential notion in trying to explain the high levels of violence experienced by some post-First World War societies has been the concept of 'brutalisation' developed by George Mosse in 1990. In his seminal work, Mosse asserted a 'brutalising' effect which the war had on the politics of the postwar period in the countries which had lost the war, and especially in Germany. In his analysis, the victorious nations, Britain and France, managed to transition from war to peace relatively seamlessly and thus kept the process of brutalisation of politics under control. Germany, on the other hand, saw a new "ruthlessness" taking shape in its politics, fuelled by the continued high visibility and respectability of the military in everyday life and by a mind-set numbed by war to accept war-like situations and violence as a means of politics.¹⁷ The theory argues that specifically the men who fought in the First World War became 'brutalised' by their experiences of extreme violence at the front and, carrying some of those violent experiences back home, were unable, to differing degrees, to leave their war experience behind and return to a peaceful civilian existence once the armistice was signed. Neither could society, especially in the defeated countries, demobilise culturally, so that, in order to "draw the sting from death in war and emphasize the meaningfulness of the fighting and sacrifice", a powerful "Myth of the War Experience" had to be constructed.¹⁸ By virtue of this persistent myth, "[t]he continuation of wartime attitudes into peace" was perpetuated; something which showed itself particularly in the apparent devaluation of human life in general.¹⁹ Mosse considers the *Freikorps* a potent symbol of this continuation of "wartime camaraderie in peacetime."²⁰

Besides being largely German-centric, Mosse's theory has, however, since come under criticism particularly for the role it ascribes to veterans in perpetuating violent attitudes. As Schumann has highlighted, more veterans actually joined pacifist organisations, or no organisations at all, than were interested in continuing a violent, quasi-wartime existence into peacetime.²¹ Benjamin Ziemann has analysed the specifically republican veterans' organisations in the Weimar Republic, such as the *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold* which at its high point in between the world wars numbered around one million members. Ángel Alcalde, in his recent book on the transnational histories of veterans and Fascism, has sought to move the debate over veterans' roles on by transcending the previously drawn lines

¹⁷ George L. Mosse, *Gefallen für das Vaterland. Nationales Heldentum und namenloses Sterben* (Stuttgart, 1993), p. 195.

¹⁸ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 6-7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168. The *Freikorps* are explored more in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis.

²¹ Dirk Schumann, "Europa, der Erste Weltkrieg und die Nachkriegszeit: Eine Kontinuität der Gewalt?", *Journal of Modern European History*, 1 (2003), p. 31.

between adherents of Mosse's brutalisation theory and those emphasising the prevalence of republican veterans' organisations.²² Furthermore, the brutalisation thesis was clearly crafted within a research context which aimed to explain the emergence of National Socialism, and sought its roots in the brutalisation of people and societies during the First World War.²³ The argument, however, does not quite stand up to scrutiny, as the violence perpetrated by potentially brutalised veterans of the First World War took place in the immediate, or short term, aftermath of the war's end, while the violence towards the end of the interwar period was in fact perpetrated by men too young to have personally fought in the war, thus making the brutalisation theory "untenable."²⁴ The fact that Britain and France, countries whose soldiers shared much the same experiences during the war, did not witness the above-cited "continuation of wartime attitudes into peace" further casts doubt on the theory. Though other scholars, most recently Jörn Leonhard, have sought the reason for the collapse of democracy in interwar Germany in the impossibly high expectations on the peace treaty of Versailles, which could but fail, Gerwarth and Horne point out that there has been no real alternative theory proposed yet specifically for the persistence, and even escalation, of violence in the immediate postwar period.²⁵ An approach as generalising as Mosse's brutalisation theory may not be suitable, but it has witnessed somewhat of a renaissance more recently, for example in the work of Mark Jones, who argues for its validity, at least to a certain extent. By using thick description in order to focus close attention on the extremes which violence and brutality during the German Revolution took, Jones explicitly wants his thesis to be read as "a rebuttal to recent criticisms of George Mosse's 'brutalization thesis'."²⁶

The present thesis is sympathetic to Jones' argument that the taboo-breaking violence of the immediate postwar years had more of a 'brutalising' effect on subsequent Weimar political culture than did soldiers' experiences of trench warfare.²⁷ It is, however, also worth noting that while Schumann and Ziemann are correct in highlighting the shortcomings of the brutalisation theory, based on the numbers of veterans who actually preferred to take on apolitical, left-

²² Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations. Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 3; Ángel Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Cambridge, 2017).

²³ Benjamin Ziemann, "Germany after the First World War – A Violent Society? Results and Implications of recent Research on Weimar Germany", *Journal of Modern European History*, 1 (2003), p. 82.

²⁴ Schumann, "Kontinuität?", pp. 31-32.

²⁵ Jörn Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden: Versailles und die Welt 1918-1923* (München, 2018); Gerwarth and Horne, "Paramilitarism in Europe", pp. 2-3.

²⁶ Mark Jones, *Violence and Politics in the German Revolution 1918-1919*, PhD thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2011, pp. 4-5. This claim is somewhat toned down in Jones' resulting monograph, which merely suggests to "carefully reassess the brutalization thesis", see Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar. Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 22.

²⁷ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, p. 22.

wing, or pacifist identities after the war, Mosse's analysis was correct for a significant minority of men who returned to Germany from the war brutalised and, crucially, disappointed and disillusioned to such a degree as to refuse to accept the outcome of the war, the new republic and to want to continue fighting, in the belief that only this could give meaning to the sacrifice and suffering experienced by those on the losing side of the war. While the experiences on the battlefield were similar for British and German soldiers, the British narrative of victory and redemption was absent in Germany, which caused the veterans' violent resentment to fall on fertile ground there. In this sense, though Mosse's theory may not amount to a brutalisation of German postwar culture as a whole, it applied to a significant enough minority of men who established right-wing extremism in interwar Germany and eventually helped pave the way to the republic's demise. The literature on the rise of National Socialism, naturally, is vast and cannot possibly be covered here, even though the thesis is related to this field of research. In its fourth chapter, in particular, the thesis examines more closely Fascist violence in Britain and Germany in the early/mid-1930s. Sven Reichardt's work on the German *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and the Italian *Squadristi* is not only an instructive example of a successful comparative piece of work, but provides much groundwork in understanding the Fascist relationship with violence and the importance of perpetrating violence for Fascist movements and identities.²⁸ Daniel Siemens' in-depth analysis of the SA covers the entirety of the organisation's history through the interwar period and, significantly, its continued role during the Third Reich; it provides further valuable understanding of the SA's structures and the fundamental importance of violence in the Nazi struggle for, and maintenance of, power and identity.²⁹

The brutalisation thesis being a case in point, Germany and Britain are often considered almost polar opposites with regards to the presence and intensity of political violence in the interwar period, and comparisons are therefore not often undertaken. Mosse argues that in the victorious nations the transition from war to peace was "relatively smooth" and therefore the process of brutalisation was largely kept under control.³⁰ However, while actual brutalisation of people and politics, if such a concept is to be believed in, was apparently less pronounced in postwar Britain than in postwar Germany, Jon Lawrence significantly points out that the *fear* of brutalisation was nevertheless present, and a very real force, in interwar British society. In fact, Lawrence argues that it was this fear of a postwar brutalisation of British society and political culture which contributed to "strengthen[ing] mythic views of Britain as a

²⁸ Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln, 2002).

²⁹ Daniel Siemens, *Stormtroopers. A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts* (New Haven and London, 2017).

³⁰ Mosse, *Soldiers*, p. 159.

uniquely peaceable kingdom.”³¹ The construction of and efforts at upholding this mythic view play a central role in this thesis’ argumentation, as speakers discussing political violence in public forums in Britain sought constantly to reinforce this image. Lawrence’s acknowledgement of the existence of postwar political violence in Britain, and in its colonial peripheries, is highly welcome and he lays important groundwork for analysing the effect of the fear of brutalisation on British postwar public life. Literature on British post- and interwar experiences of and attitudes towards political violence now generally recognises and asserts that the claim of ‘peaceableness’ must be “heavily qualified by the observation, ‘except in Ireland’”, and gives at least a token ‘nod’ to colonial violence, most often the massacre perpetrated at Amritsar in April 1919.³² However, such rather crude caveats should not be accepted as sufficient engagement with the topic. And indeed, Gregory’s subsequent coverage not only of paramilitary violence in Ireland, but also of labour unrest, demobilisation riots, and the British Union of Fascists, makes his assertion, cited above, that political violence in interwar Britain constituted a “striking absence” somewhat contradictory.

One thesis which may help explain why political violence was less prevalent on the island of Great Britain itself is the *Sozialimperialismusthese*, or ‘social imperialism’ thesis, proposed most famously by Hans-Ulrich Wehler. It conceives of imperial spaces as “spaces of evasion” (*Ausweichräume*). In the nineteenth century colonies were increasingly regarded as a necessity by European imperialists, as the conquered space would either offer opportunities to ‘export’ unwanted elements, for example criminals or religious ‘deviants’, from European societies, or provide potential for starting new lives for Europe’s masses of poor and unemployed. Furthermore, the racial solidarity experienced by European settlers, even poor working-class ones, vis-à-vis the native populations was to provide an integrating force and mitigate the on-going class struggle in industrialised European societies, instead directing attention towards a racial struggle. In this way, colonial spaces were perceived as necessary ‘valves’ through which social pressures could be alleviated.³³ Expanding this ‘valve’ theory to the practice of violence, it has been suggested that following the First World War and its brutalising effects, personal violent potentials *had* to be discharged somewhere, and thus, in the absence of colonies, postwar Germany saw high levels of internal violence while Britain was spared this experience because violence could be displaced into the colonies.³⁴ The

³¹ Lawrence, “Peaceable Kingdom”, p. 558.

³² Gregory, “Peculiarities”, p. 53.

³³ Dirk van Laak, *Über alles in der Welt: deutscher Imperialismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München, 2005), pp. 33-34.

³⁴ See Schumann, “Kontinuität der Gewalt?”, p. 41. The theory is posited as an open area of investigation by Schumann and has been questioned by Gerwarth and Horne (see Gerwarth and Horne,

expansion of the analyses of perceptions of political violence in this thesis to include the colonial sphere is therefore fundamental, in order to critically examine the narrative of Britain as a 'peaceable kingdom' in which political violence constituted a 'striking absence'. Translated onto the level of language, this thesis explores whether or how the relative lack of political violence on the main island of Britain allowed public discourse to identify violence, for the most part, with colonial contexts and draw on the language of colonialism (language related to civilisation, race, and 'the other') in casting violence as 'un-British'. Such a displacement of discourse about violence into colonial contexts was not possible in Germany. In some cases, though, similar language was used in the linguistic creation of internal others in Germany, in order to more easily commit and justify acts of violence against them.

The fact that "on the whole Britain came out well from the First World War" appears to often enough be taken as sufficient explanation for both: the divergent paths taken by Germany and Britain in the interwar years, as well as the apparent 'non-necessity' of comparing both countries' interwar experiences with political violence.³⁵ However, as the 'nods' to colonial violence and acknowledgements of 'exceptions' referred to above make clear, political violence was a factor in post-/interwar British public life, as it was in other European countries. It could be said to warrant comparative study for this reason alone. Of course the differences especially in scale and intensity, as well as location, of the violence cannot be denied; however, it is precisely the process of examining two very different experiences in a new comparative light, which allows a reiteration of how and why violence came to be an accepted and 'successful' tool of politics in Germany while it became increasingly delegitimised in British public discourse. It thus only makes sense to integrate experiences of political violence, including in the colonial sphere, into the wider characterisation of interwar Britain. In doing so, the thesis not only challenges the myth of a "peaceable kingdom" further, but it also contributes to both a more integrated treatment of strictly 'British' and 'imperial' histories, as well as to a much-needed Europeanization of traditionally exceptionalist views of British history.

Of course, some comparative works examining Germany and Britain during the First World War and in the interwar period do exist. Comparative studies of British and German military experiences and strategies during the war itself are of little direct relevance to this study, though they can help understand both countries' position at the end of the war.³⁶ Aribert

"Paramilitarism in Europe", p. 3). Chapter 3 of the thesis will touch more on the related debates surrounding a continuity theory which charts a more or less direct line from colonial violence to National Socialism.

³⁵ Gregory, "Peculiarities", p. 57.

³⁶ See for example Jan R ger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2007); Nicolas Wolz, *Das lange Warten. Kriegserfahrungen deutscher und britischer*

Reimann's discourse analysis of English and German soldiers' letters from the front, and of wartime press, is an interesting contribution particularly in its capacity as a study of language. Through the combination and juxtaposition of the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) gleaned from the personal letters, and the more elite interpretations of history offered in the press, Reimann shows how the official political, social and cultural interpretation of the war found its way into the vocabulary of private wartime correspondence. In Germany, the outcome of the war failed to confirm wartime patterns of interpretation, making the post-war discursive creation of meaning much more difficult than in England, where the flow of history, moral norms and values, and the socio-economic order appeared to have been confirmed by the outcome of the war.³⁷

Sonja Levsen's comparative work on German and British university students in the era of the First World War focusses on their ideals of masculinity. It shows how the war, and in particular its social and political consequences, led to a gradual demilitarisation of male British student identities, while the need to assign meaning to the mass death brought on by the war led German students to hold on ever stronger to ideals of sacrifice and military masculinity.³⁸ The cultural legacy of the war and British and German commemoration of it is also the subject of Stefan Goebel's monograph. It is an important contribution, not least for demonstrating that a successful, truly comparative study of interwar Britain and Germany is possible. It establishes the cultural and commemorative environment in which the interwar political violence analysed for the present study took place, and which conditioned the context into which the violence was received.³⁹ In his comparison of the post-war demobilisation experience in the cities of Munich and Manchester, Adam Seipp investigates how the wartime societal consensus which united whole nations behind the war effort could collapse so quickly at the end of the war. He argues for a "crisis of reciprocity" which meant that in Britain demobilisation proved actually very difficult because victory led to the – ultimately disappointed – expectation that the government ought to deliver on the wartime promises it had made. On the losing side, the German army essentially self-demobilised by walking out, but the challenges of transitioning from war to peace proved especially difficult to overcome due to the limited political and economic options the defeated country faced at the end of the

Seeoffiziere 1914 bis 1918 (Paderborn, 2008); Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2008).

³⁷ Aribert Reimann, *Der große Krieg der Sprachen. Untersuchungen zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland und England zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Essen, 2000), p. 284.

³⁸ Sonja Levsen, "Constructing Elite Identities: University Students, Military Masculinity and the Consequences of the Great War in Britain and Germany", *Past & Present*, 198 (2008), pp. 147-183.

³⁹ Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge, 2006).

war.⁴⁰ Seipp's conclusion that the difficulties of demobilisation increasingly blurred the boundaries between wartime and peacetime in the post-First World War context is clearly one of the assumptions underlying the present project which is interested in how supposedly demobilised societies approached and received political violence taking place after the official end of the war. The problem of soldiers unable to demobilise psychologically and societies not demobilising culturally is one of the central themes particularly of Chapter 2 of the thesis, in which postwar paramilitary formations which were often largely made up of war veterans are discussed.⁴¹

Finally, the observations made by Dirk Schumann in his chapter contribution regarding the acceptance of violence among the German bourgeoisie and the British middle classes lay valuable groundwork for this project, though the author intends the selective comparison only as a way of "accentuating the German peculiarities."⁴² Schumann points out that, in the climate of collapsing or untrustworthy state power, political violence was seen as a legitimate measure of "self-help" by the German bourgeoisie against an aggressive opponent on the Left. This was simply not the case in postwar Britain, where neither the stability of party political structures was in danger, nor was the legitimacy of the state called into question.⁴³ These assertions are of central importance to the present thesis which does not use the British counter-example only as a template against which to emphasise German particularities, but undertakes a more comprehensive comparison in which both sides inform each other. Making use of source materials from both countries, in both languages, this thesis' comparative perspective helps to discern the specificities of both objects of comparison. Charles Maier has cautioned that "not every comparison is valid; successful comparison must continue to focus on the specific differences as well as the common elements, and it must refer to real historical phenomena, not merely arbitrary definitions."⁴⁴ Political violence was indeed a real historical phenomenon in both countries (and/or their colonial spheres). The fact that this thesis'

⁴⁰ Adam R. Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace. Demobilization and the Urban Experience in Britain and Germany, 1917-1921* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2009), p. 265.

⁴¹ See also John Horne, "Kulturelle Demobilmachung 1919-1939. Ein sinnvoller historischer Begriff?", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Sonderheft*, 21 (2005), pp. 129-150.

⁴² Dirk Schumann, "Einheitssehnsucht und Gewaltakzeptanz. Politische Grundpositionen des deutschen Bürgertums nach 1918 (mit vergleichenden Überlegungen zu den britischen *middle classes*)", in Hans Mommsen (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Europäische Nachkriegsordnung: Sozialer Wandel und Formveränderung in der Politik* (Köln, 2000), p. 89.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁴ Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe. Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton, 1988), p. IX, quoted in Bernd Weisbrod, "Die Politik der Repräsentation. Das Erbe des Ersten Weltkrieges und der Formwandel der Politik in Europa", in Hans Mommsen (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Europäische Nachkriegsordnung: Sozialer Wandel und Formveränderung in der Politik* (Köln, 2000), p. 15.

comparison highlights significant differences, in societal contexts, but also in the images and language used, while also identifying some similar aspects of the discourses on political violence in Germany and Britain, does nothing to invalidate the approach but instead constitutes a central finding of the thesis.

Richard Bessel impressionistically charts the development of attitudes towards violence (not solely political violence) over the course of the twentieth century, mainly in Western Europe and North America, and shows that over the course of the century enormous social, cultural and political changes brought about great changes in attitudes towards violence. However, he also takes care to remind readers that this is “not necessarily a story of progress, of an irreversible process of the triumph of enlightenment values led by the West into peaceful uplands where the rest of the world someday may follow”, but rather that “the protective shell that ‘civilization’ provides is less solid than many would like to think.”⁴⁵ The consideration that the process of civilisation has not, and does not, necessarily continuously lead away from violence, and that twentieth-century attitudes towards violence have shifted within societies and between societies in a perhaps unprecedented way, are necessary foundations for this project and they inform its very conception. As Bessel observes, “the systematic study of violence as an analytical category has been undertaken by historians and social scientists only in the past few decades.”⁴⁶ It can be said to have begun in earnest only roughly in the late 1960s.⁴⁷ In particular, it is still most often the domain of sociologists and social or political scientists, rather than historians. However, the fundamental questions underpinning efforts to understand contemporary violence are the same as have to be asked in historical examinations of violence, as are the struggles to categorise and understand a phenomenon which exists in an ambiguous state between the destruction and the foundation of order.⁴⁸

In his extended essay *Traktat über die Gewalt* (1996) the sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky considered different forms of violent behaviours, analysing the profound human roots of violence and its cultural emergence and role in societies. He suggests that “society is a precautionary measure of mutual protection” against violence.⁴⁹ This claim begs the questions of a) how a society fulfils this role, and b) what happens if a society fails to do so. Sofsky’s own answer to the first of these questions is very clear: “Authority [*Herrschaft*, also

⁴⁵ Bessel, *Violence*, p. 280.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Peter Imbusch, “Der Gewaltbegriff”, in Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (eds.), *Internationales Handbuch der Gewaltforschung* (Wiesbaden, 2002), p. 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* The significance of order, and the centrality of government efforts to maintain it, are highlighted in Chapter 1.

⁴⁹ Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt* (Frankfurt/M, 1996), p. 10.

'rule'/sovereignty', A.K.] requires [...] violence, inwards and outwards. [...] Authority only is authority if it commands violence. It acquires recognition and legitimacy to the same degree to which it is able to guarantee order."⁵⁰ This, thus, makes the second part of the question all the more poignant. What happens when a society appears to be losing legitimacy due to an apparent inability to adequately contain violence? As the literary scholar and political writer Jan Philipp Reemtsma has suggested with reference to the recent upsurge in violent acts in Western societies, it is not so much the 'why?' behind apparently senseless acts of violence which should be scrutinised, but rather the question of how societies decide to react and show themselves capable of responding to violent outbursts in their midst and/or violent attacks upon their sovereignty.⁵¹ This is one of the main interest of the present thesis, as looking towards past eras of heightened political violence might prove instructive for the present day, too.

As this thesis is concerned with the discursive treatment of political violence, a definition of this key term is necessary. This thesis agrees with the simple definition followed by Weinbauer et al. that political violence describes "all, mostly collectively enacted forms of physical violence which were aimed at political enemies (groups, the state etc.) and/or which were in a process of communication labeled as being political."⁵² Bloxham and Gerwarth have proposed a similarly broad concept of political violence, which, beyond only applying to political actors or explicitly political causes, also "encompasses atrocities committed by the state in the form of genocide, but also of torture and extra-legal warfare; and atrocities committed by non-state actors, be they 'terrorists' or paramilitary forces vying for political influence or territorial control." Bloxham and Gerwarth include in this definition "violence in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations, violence within and outside conventional warfare, and violence committed in the name of ideological causes, both religious and secular." Their definition of political violence as "all forms of violence enacted pursuant to aims of decisive socio-political control or change" is thus not contradictory to, but complements the above-cited one by Weinbauer et al.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵¹ Andreas Lebert and Katrin Zeug, "Jan Philipp Reemtsma: 'Ich bin sehr für Rache, sie darf nur nicht sein'", *ZEIT ONLINE*, 07/06/2016, <http://www.zeit.de/zeit-wissen/2016/03/jan-philipp-reemtsma-gewalt-menschen-grenzen-waffen-krieg/komplettansicht> [accessed 08.06.2016].

⁵² Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott, Kirsten Heinsohn, "Introduction", in Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott, Kirsten Heinsohn (eds.), *Germany 1916-23. A Revolution in Context* (Bielefeld, 2015), p. 22.

⁵³ Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, "Introduction", in Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (eds.), *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 1-2. The characterization of paramilitary forces as "non-state actors" is questionable, as Gerwarth and Horne have in fact defined paramilitary violence as "practices that either expanded or replaced the activities of conventional military formations," which could occur "in the vacuum left by collapsing states," could be "deployed against the

This thesis' declared interest is in the above-mentioned process of pushing the boundaries of the "say-able" in interwar Britain and Germany. Therefore, its main research questions are why and how violence became an accepted, even attractive, option for conducting politics in interwar Germany, while in Britain, notwithstanding the violent reality of British colonial rule overseas, it became increasingly less defensible in public discourse and consciousness. The thesis' diachronic structure also allows an examination of how this changed over the course of the interwar period. More concretely, the thesis asks how language, specifically language produced in public forums, contributed to this process.

The research rests on the hypothesis that this process took place to a larger, and more impactful extent in Germany than it did in Britain where the discursive boundaries of defensible political violence were perhaps more bound up with geographical boundaries (see below on thesis structure, and see above on literature suggesting a displacement of violence into the colonial sphere) and where, thus, certain limitations regarding violence perpetrated within the British domestic sphere remained more intact than they did in Germany. The divisions in public discourse in Germany will be proved to have been much more accentuated and powerful than in British public discourse, forming a significant contributing factor to both countries' subsequent divergent histories of violence. This process will be investigated by focusing on a number of case studies, occurring at watershed moments during the early and the later interwar period. In order to answer its questions, this thesis lays its focus not so much on reconstructing precisely what happened at the selected moments of political violence, but on their reception and perception. As Paul Readman has pointed out, the traditional Rankean definition of history as "how things really were" led to a focus on "what statesmen *did* – in terms of legislation, diplomatic initiatives and so on – at the expense of what they *said*, especially in public."⁵⁴ This thesis, by contrast, is interested precisely in what was said. While the reconstruction of reality is a crucial aspect of historical research, the 'linguistic turn' in historical scholarship since about the 1970s has highlighted the significance and potential of reconstructing perceptions of reality.⁵⁵ Analysing what was said about events can reveal much

state," or could, as the state-sponsored agents of violence examined in this thesis (Chapter 2), serve "as an adjunct to state power," see Gerwarth and Horne, "Paramilitarism in Europe", p. 1.

⁵⁴ Paul Readman, "Speeches", in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources. The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History* (London and New York, 2009), p. 210, emphasis in original.

⁵⁵ See Christoph Reinfandt, "Reading texts after the linguistic turn. Approaches from literary studies and their implications", in Dobson and Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources*, pp. 37-54.

about the power of certain narratives, even if they were factually untrue. This is considered especially relevant by the present author in so far as from such perception-based narratives there eventually derives action. This thesis therefore seeks to analyse certain discourses, particularly ones taking place in public, which expose those perceptions. Utilising a poststructuralist understanding of discourse as a “constitutive [mode] of power that constructs reality in unequal ways”,⁵⁶ a (loosely defined and applied) historical discourse analysis is particularly useful for this thesis in order to highlight how the languages chosen for analysis here were employed by their speakers in order to construct identity, and thus power relations. This thesis’ approach differs from classic discourse analysis by not being a systematic and/or quantitative examination of specific, pre-determined key words (concepts, *Begriffe*), which can often lead to a bias in what words/concepts are considered important for the intended analysis.⁵⁷ Instead of focusing solely on a particular set of abstract key concepts and studying their semantic change over time, as *Begriffsgeschichte* has traditionally done,⁵⁸ this thesis takes into account whole sentences, texts, and the arguments developed therein. Thus, the thesis engages in empirical examination of speech in the press and in parliament and from there identifies which words and ideas were used, by whom, again and again to make what kinds of arguments and reinforce what kinds of notions about political violence. Crucially, the thesis is most interested in drawing conclusions from these findings about what the choice of words, and the arguments employed, reveal about the speaker’s/writer’s attitudes and the narratives they held and/or sought to propagate about themselves and others.

Mergel has stated that “discourse analysis asks about the production of societal [...] realities through ways of speaking. Discourses denote that which is talked about in a society, that which is problematised and negotiated as a theme, and which contributes to the collective production of meaning.”⁵⁹ This can of course include many different kinds of forums, mediums, and speakers. Foucault defined discourse as “institutionalised modes of speaking/writing.”⁶⁰ Therefore, this thesis has chosen to analyse discourse from two mediums, or forums, which are not only institutionalised but inherently public in nature – the press and parliament – in order to access what, in this thesis, is conceived of as ‘public language’. Indian writer and

⁵⁶ Yoosun Park, “Historical Discourse Analysis”, in Lisa M. Given (ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, 2008 [2012]), p. 394.

⁵⁷ See Willibald Steinmetz, “‘A Code of its Own’. Rhetoric and Logic of Parliamentary Debate in Modern Britain”, *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 6/1 (2002), pp. 90, 92, for an explanation of how his approach, like the present one, differs from *Begriffsgeschichte* à la Koselleck and Skinner in this regard.

⁵⁸ Mario Wimmer, “Conceptual History: *Begriffsgeschichte*”, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Oxford, 2015), p. 548.

⁵⁹ Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf, 3rd edn., 2012 [2002]), p. 24.

⁶⁰ Peter Schöttler, “Historians and Discourse Analysis”, *History Workshop Journal*, 27 (1989), p. 41.

activist Arundhati Roy, in her 2018 W.G. Sebald lecture on literary translation, has reflected eloquently on how a “country’s public language”, in her case that of India, represents “its public imagination of itself.”⁶¹ This thesis’ approach, accepting Anderson’s view of the nation as an “imagined political community,”⁶² takes inspiration from the same idea and is informed by the premise that it is through public language that societies construct an image of themselves, as much for their own people, as well as to project to the outside world. The analytical term of “public language” (or “public speech”, which is used interchangeably) is here also inspired by its use in Richard Toye and Martin Thomas’ recent *Rhetorics of Empire*.⁶³ The authors use this notion to refer to “public forms of communication with a persuasive or symbolic purpose,” and analyse a variety of public speech materials, supplemented by private sources, to examine how empire was sustained or brought down through language.⁶⁴ Applying phrasing developed for studies of (post-) colonial societies to analyses of European history can prove useful here, as it helps highlight the conscious process of constructing national identities through language, which is perhaps more readily accepted in the contexts of only recently independent postcolonial societies, but may be less readily conceded for European contexts. Despite the Foucauldian/Saidian approach which argues that discourse thus constructs social reality, which this thesis does partly rest on, it is important to remember at the same time, as Thomas and Toye point out, “that, although language certainly influences reality, it does not determine it.”⁶⁵ Not every violent act has its roots in discourse, and the capacity of discourse to create reality does not remove the responsibility for violent action from the individuals taking it. This is why analysing perceptions and reconstructing discourses is not only interesting, but highly relevant, as it shows which aspects of the narratives constructed on their basis proved especially powerful, carried over into action, and thus in turn shaped reality.

Benedict Anderson identified the newspaper, along with the novel, as the “technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.”⁶⁶ Though it may appear obvious, it is worth stating that newspapers can be an enormously useful source for historians,

⁶¹ See Arundhati Roy, “What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?”, *W.G. Sebald Lecture on Literary Translation*, commissioned by the British Centre for Literary Translation and the National Centre for Writing, delivered at the British Library, 05.06.2018, <https://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/> [accessed 30.12.2019].

⁶² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 2006 [1983]), p. 6.

⁶³ Martin Thomas and Richard Toye (eds.), *Rhetorics of empire. Languages of colonial conflict after 1900* (Manchester, 2017), terms introduced on p. 1. This thesis furthermore will use the term “public discourse” to denote the same concept.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 25, emphasis in original.

as their critical reading can offer “significant insight into how societies or cultures came to understand themselves and the world around them.”⁶⁷ They not only did, and do, this by reporting and reflecting the world and events which have happened in it, but crucially they also actively shape their readers’ understanding of and outlook on issues. Through editorial choices as to what to report on, how to do so, and by adding commentary, newspapers have the “power to shape opinions”, thus influencing society in ways which, as discussed above, can eventually transcend the realm of discourse and inform and lead to action.⁶⁸ Schumann has argued, with reference to the representation of political violence in the early Weimar press, that the high levels of violence in the immediate postwar years resulted in a reporting style marked by (over-)dramatization and extreme adherence to party-political lines, which, over time, came to corrupt the Weimar public and political sphere beyond repair.⁶⁹ The process of “filter[ing], fram[ing] and report[ing] news and analysis”, as Vella has pointed out, is “more complex and subtle in nominally democratic societies than in despotic regimes.”⁷⁰ This is a reason, among others, why the analysis in the present thesis ends in/before 1933 in the German case; with the end of democracy in Germany, no freedom of press could be assumed any longer, and an analysis as conducted for this study, especially in its comparative capacity, would be rendered senseless.

Due to the practical concerns of time and accessibility, this thesis cannot undertake a full systematic study of the presses of both countries; it instead has sought to access a reasonable cross-section of newspapers, covering the major political leanings in both countries and drawing on, particularly for the UK, both the ‘quality press’ as well as the ‘popular press’.⁷¹ Most are national publications, though occasionally local papers complement the analysis, where useful and available. In the appendix, the thesis contains a glossary of all the German and British newspapers from which articles are cited in the thesis (except where they are quoted from a work of secondary literature). The glossary gives information on place of publication, circulation figures (as far as available and for points in time as relevant as could be identified), and political leanings. A bias towards press based in London and Berlin is

⁶⁷ Stephen Vella, “Newspapers”, in Dobson and Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources*, p. 192.

⁶⁸ Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, 2009), p. 10.

⁶⁹ Dirk Schumann, “Politische Gewalt in der frühen Weimarer Republik (1919-1923) und ihre Repräsentation in der politischen Tagespresse“, in Ute Daniel, Inge Marszolek, Wolfram Pyta, Thomas Welskopp (eds.), *Politische Kultur und Medienwirklichkeiten in den 1920er Jahren* (München, 2010), pp. 279-310.

⁷⁰ Vella, “Newspapers”, p. 193.

⁷¹ On historians’ relatively recently found appreciation of the value of the popular press, see Adrian Bingham, “Reading Newspapers: Cultural Histories of the Popular Press in Modern Britain”, *History Compass*, 10/2 (2012), pp. 140-150.

almost unavoidable, if practical concerns of access are considered, as much less of the provincial press has been digitised in either country to date.⁷² However, the thesis hopes to somewhat counteract this imbalance with a relatively consistent use of at least one Scottish and a Frankfurt-based newspaper throughout, and the occasional reference to more local papers. The circulation figures give an indication of each paper's reach, though it is worth remembering that each copy sold could have been read by multiple people, for example on buses, trains, or in pubs, making its actual reach and circulation much larger. The 1920s have been identified by Bernhard Fulda as "the decade of the press." For Germany, he estimates that daily Germany newspaper circulation in the early 1930s amounted to over 20 million copies.⁷³ Interwar Britain saw the age of the press barons, when Lord Northcliffe, and after his death in 1922, his brother Lord Rothermere, Lord Beaverbrook, and the Berry brothers (later Lords Camrose and Kemsley) owned half of all national and provincial daily newspapers in the UK by the end of the 1930s, which amounted to a circulation of 13 million.⁷⁴ Bingham summarises that in the interwar period the circulation of daily newspapers in Britain doubled and that circa two-thirds of the population regularly read a paper by 1939.⁷⁵

It is imperative that newspapers' political leanings or affiliations be scrutinized and taken into account in an analysis of language used in/by the press to discuss political violence. These, of course, can be the source of strong biases in the papers' reporting and certainly in their commentary on events. Interwar Britain in fact experienced some anxiety over the closeness between the 'press barons' and government, and their resulting power in the political realm.⁷⁶ While political partisanship would constitute a grave problem if newspapers were consulted in order to try and reconstruct how events 'actually happened', the biases are less of a problem, and in fact a crucial facet of analysis for the current project and its interest in attitudes towards political violence. It should be noted that terms used in the glossary to describe newspapers' political leaning, such as 'liberal', 'conservative', 'democratic', 'nationalist', etc. are not intended to denote an explicit party affiliation or ownership unless the party is explicitly noted. Despite, or perhaps also because of, the disparate political stances of the press, it is accurate and important to recognize that newspapers play "a crucial role in

⁷² On the accessibility-driven dominance of *The Times* in British history, and the resultant biases and distortions, see Andrew Hobbs, "The Deleterious Dominance of *The Times* in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18/4 (2013), pp. 472-497.

⁷³ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford, 2009), p. 3.

⁷⁴ Aled Jones, "The British Press, 1919-1945", in Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422-1992* (Basingstoke, 1992), p. 49.

⁷⁵ Adrian Bingham, "'An Organ of Uplift?' The popular press and political culture in interwar Britain", *Journalism Studies*, 14/5 (2013), p. 651.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 652.

fostering a sense of belonging to a national political community.”⁷⁷ They provide insight into public opinion and the current conversation, though, given the biases discussed above, it should always be avoided to conflate published opinion with public opinion. Nevertheless, newspapers no doubt constitute an ideal, if complex, source base for a study interested in analysing the perception of political violence in public language and what this meant for, and said about, the respective ‘imagined community’.

The second main source base of inherently public language used for this thesis is parliamentary discourse, by which are meant the speeches made by elected representatives in the British parliament (mainly the House of Commons, though occasionally speeches made in the House of Lords are also referenced), and the German *Reichstag* (which, prior to the ratification of the Weimar constitution, was called *Nationalversammlung* (‘national assembly’)). As Readman has pointed out, historians influenced by the post-structuralist approaches of Foucault and Derrida have often tended to focus heavily on written texts, while paying much less attention to spoken texts.⁷⁸ Of course the sources studied for this thesis were actually consulted in written, and indeed digitised, form, in Hansard and *Reichstagsprotokolle*, which brings with it its own challenges and distortions. Not only is there a potential for inaccuracies in the record, but parliamentary discourse was also highly performative and consulting merely its written record risks losing such aspects as body language, tone, overlapping speech, etc.⁷⁹ Nevertheless parliamentary debate is a particularly interesting and important type of language for this thesis’ research interests because, as Steinmetz has asserted, “within the realm of politics, what can be done (*das Machbare*) is to large extent dependent on what can be said (*das Sagbare*).” For his own research, he therefore concludes that analysing shifting speech patterns and concepts in parliamentary debates was crucial to understanding how political change came about.⁸⁰ This thesis is less focused on explaining tangible political change, but, as stated above, considers analysing public speech essential for understanding the notions and narratives contained therein. So while the high degree of performativity and, of course, the overt political agendas contained in parliamentary speech need to be remembered and acknowledged, the source is still highly valuable for this thesis’ interest in attitudes.

Parliamentary discourse also stood in constant inter-textual relation with the forum of the press. Contemporaries were well aware that the “overwhelming majority of a nation knows of

⁷⁷ Helen McCarthy, “Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture between the Wars”, *The Historical Journal*, 55/1 (2012), p. 235.

⁷⁸ Readman, “Speeches”, p. 211.

⁷⁹ Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, p. 36. Readman also urges historians to be aware of possible inaccuracies in Hansard, Readman, “Speeches”, p. 214.

⁸⁰ Steinmetz, “Rhetoric and Logic”, p. 87.

parliament only that which the newspaper reports.”⁸¹ Large excerpts of parliamentary proceedings were regularly published in national newspapers, in Britain as well as in Germany and, as Mergel points out, newspapers’ reporting of parliamentary proceedings not only constituted the “main source for public discourse on parliament and parliamentarianism”, but also provided the public with important contextual information such as the “non-linguistic acts surrounding parliamentary speaking.”⁸² On the other hand, MPs, or *Abgeordnete*, were acutely aware of their public position, exposing them to intense public scrutiny, but also giving them the opportunity to use the spotlight in their favour. As Readman rightly points out, “public utterances can be committing.” It is the medium through which ideas are publicly communicated, to both political friends and foes.⁸³ With full knowledge of the wide press coverage of parliamentary proceedings, parliamentarians would thus, through bold statements, harsh accusations, sharp questions, impassioned speeches, or purposefully prosaic insistence on facts, find ways to not only represent their party’s stance on an issue and to shore up electoral support, but to raise their personal profile, draw attention to their constituency’s issues, or use their speaking time to take a more general swipe at the opposition or the government.⁸⁴ While it is relatively straightforward for historians to analyse the contents of speeches, their effect on the audience and their reception in society are much harder to assess.⁸⁵ For the present thesis, this does not pose a major problem, in so far as the main interest lies on the very fact that certain things were considered appropriate to say in public, certain acts of political violence considered possible to defend in public while others were not. Nevertheless, an analysis of public speech, in both parliament and in the press, must always consider it in its wider contexts and interdependencies. Readman further points out that the focus on only discourse sometimes leads to a lack in “proper evaluation of these discourses’ significance.”⁸⁶ It is hoped that this can be counteracted in this thesis by juxtaposing, where necessary, the analysed discourses to what historical scholarship has succeeded in establishing about the ‘actual’ events.

More conventional archival sources, such as personal papers of politicians or key journalists, could have been consulted in addition to the chosen source base for this thesis. Such kinds of sources would have added a different layer, a counterpoint and perhaps often a juxtaposition, to the fundamentally public sources consulted. This would no doubt have been

⁸¹ Berlin correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (1927), cited in Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 203.

⁸² Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, p. 36.

⁸³ Readman, “Speeches”, p. 218.

⁸⁴ See also Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 204-205.

⁸⁵ Readman, “Speeches”, p. 214.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

an interesting and worthwhile layer to add. However, it has been largely excluded for this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, 'public', for the purposes of this thesis, is understood as the opposite of language which is produced behind closed doors, in private and/or with the express purpose of being secret; 'public', in this sense, is that language which is produced in forums which are publicly accessible and open to scrutiny by the general public, while, importantly, offering the speakers/writers opportunities for using language in consciously performative ways in the knowledge that it is being heard or printed in an open, public manner. Thus, including (to a significant extent) the valuable information to be found in private papers would have confused this approach and contradicted its explicit research interest. However, it may well remain for a future study, or addition to the present one, to explore this path further. Secondly, constraints of time, access, and capacity have come into play. While increasing digitisation, especially of newspapers (especially in Britain, though German archives and databases are thankfully also developing in this direction), allows faster and easier access to these materials than ever before, it also explodes the volume of possible material to use for a project like this. Hence, boundaries had to be drawn and the conscious choice was made to focus on two main types of sources in the press and parliamentary debates. Lastly, it is worth noting that the thesis, at various points of interest, includes auto-biographical material in order to provide added layers of contemporary perception and, especially keeping time of publication in mind, in order to shed more light on the arguments made in the thesis about identity construction through language and how certain narratives rested on what individuals considered permissible or not to say about political violence.

It must be noted, as Thomas and Toye do, that public speech is more often than not the "preserve of the socially and politically privileged."⁸⁷ In numerous ways, the language analysed in this thesis consists of privileged discourses. As far as a class perspective is concerned, at the point of speaking in parliament, even the utterances of working-class Communist parliamentarians or early National Socialists, were, by virtue of being uttered in a privileged forum, privileged over the utterances made by their fellow party members, or any other ordinary citizens, not in the spotlight of a parliamentary chamber. Similarly, though newspaper reading in the interwar period became a "normal feature of working-class life,"⁸⁸ those writing in newspapers, especially broadsheets, were part of an educated, often bourgeois, class. It must furthermore be recognised that the vast majority of the speakers and writers analysed in this thesis are male. This, again, is a result of the thesis approach which is interested in public

⁸⁷ Thomas and Toye, *Rhetorics of empire*, p. 16.

⁸⁸ McCarthy, "Whose Democracy?", p. 235.

perceptions and in public language. The participants in public discourse at this point in time, in the chosen forums, were mostly men. Women's experiences and perceptions, on the other hand, were oftentimes recorded in different kinds of source materials, such as private sources or publications dedicated specifically to women's movements. The perpetrators of the political violence examined in this thesis were also quasi exclusively male. The impact of the First World War on the men who fought in it and on images of masculinity resulting from this experience played a central role in the abovementioned theory of the 'brutalising' effect of the war. Despite the chivalrous ideals of "heroic masculinity" which the soldiers of the First World War supposedly embodied, men were physically and psychologically broken by the war, and emasculated upon their return by disability, unemployment, and in the German case especially by the defeat itself, leading some (though, as critics of the brutalisation theory have pointed out, not all) of them to react the only way they had been trained in for the past four years, with violence. Female Communist fighters, in particular, became a target of reactionary hatred.⁸⁹ The postwar expansion of the zone of conflict to include civilians, including women and children, as legitimate targets was a crucial development within the postwar conduct of violence. It will be a common thread throughout the thesis.

The thesis covers a variety of geographies, including the colonial sphere. Edward Said's notion of the 'Orient' (the Middle East) as racially and civilisationally constructed as a an exotic Other in the imaginaries of the 'Occident' plays a significant role, especially in Chapter 3.⁹⁰ The use of languages and hierarchies informed by experiences in the colonial sphere to furthermore construct certain groups of people as the Other will not only be shown to have been at play in the colonial sphere, but also in domestic contexts and spheres on the periphery between the domestic and the colonial. David Cannadine, on the other hand, has proposed that an 'ornamentalist' obsession with rank and class-based hierarchical thinking in fact governed the British Empire to a greater extent than Orientalist views did, and thus even served to dissolve racial differences in certain imperial contexts.⁹¹ Either way, this thesis' shortcomings in the above ways are readily conceded. Even though the public discourse source base will occasionally be enriched by (auto-) biographical materials, which draw out more of the experiential dimensions of certain events, it cannot be denied that, given the socio-

⁸⁹ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good. Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago, 2004), pp. 3ff; Mosse, *Gefallen*, pp. 202ff.; Chapters 1 and 2 will engage with Klaus Theweleit's notion of the Communist fighters who were denounced by their enemies as rogue, animalistic *Flintenweiber* ('gun women').

⁹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979 edn.). It is of course Said's argument that this Orientalism actually "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world", reflecting more on 'us' in the Occident who imagine and construct the Orient in particular ways, p. 12.

⁹¹ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001).

cultural-political contexts, the sources and methods used supply an almost exclusively male, white, and privileged perspective. Subalterns did not speak in the same forums as the elites at this point in time. Women were only beginning to break into these forums. However, this approach and the interest in these elite discourses are driven by the underlying assumption that speakers in inherently public forums have a particular responsibility for the public discourse, participating knowingly and consciously in the construction of national, social, and political identities by way of telling themselves, each other, the nation, and the international community certain stories about their 'imagined communities'. It is precisely because of the privileged nature of these discourses that attempts, as referred to above, to "push the boundaries" of what is acceptable to say and what behaviour is defensible in public forums, make a worthwhile object of research.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Their basic structure can be described as following the idea of concentric geographic circles, which, across Chapters 1 to 3, move continuously outward, from the domestic sphere, via a more peripheral, to the colonial sphere, before, in Chapter 4, returning to the domestic sphere. While Chapters 1 to 3 cover events taking place in the early interwar period around 1919-1922, Chapter 4 moves forward some ten years to the early/mid-1930s, allowing the thesis to assess changes in the discourse over time. As much as violence as a phenomenon transcended these geographic circles, the thesis will show that language did, too. Similar themes, references, and words appeared and reappeared in reference to multiple different case studies across contexts and geographies, often cross-referencing each other. As Haupt and Kocka have pointed out, comparison necessarily "assumes to some degree a selection, abstraction, and detachment from context." However, a comparative study should strive for "as much abstraction as necessary, as much concreteness and contextuality as possible."⁹² It is hoped that the approach via a number of case studies offers this balance between abstraction and concreteness.

The thesis begins at the innermost of the concentric circles, examining reactions to political violence taking place in the domestic spheres of Britain and Germany, respectively. Two distinct types of political violence will be examined; on the one hand, violence taking place in the streets of a major city, Glasgow and Munich in 1919 respectively; and on the other hand, two high-profile political assassinations, namely those of MP and former head of the British Army, Sir Henry Wilson, and of German Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau, both in June

⁹² Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History", in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (eds.), *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York and Oxford, 2009), p. 14, 15.

1922. The scale of both types of violence differed enormously between Britain and Germany. With regards to street violence, numerous different examples could have been chosen as a German case study, from the crushing of the Spartacus uprising in Berlin in January 1919, which saw the murders of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, to the March fighting taking place there the same year, to the violent fights between militant workers' movements and government troops in the Ruhr area in 1920, to even the later *Blutmai* ('blood May') of 1929 when Berlin police shot 33 civilians in the context of banned Labour Day demonstrations. The crushing of the Munich Councils' Republic was chosen here as a slightly less frequently examined episode than the violence in Berlin is; secondly, with an eye to the relative comparability of Munich and Glasgow as both countries' 'second city' with strong regional identities; and thirdly, as taking place after key taboo-breaking violence had already taken place during the previous fighting in Berlin, making it all the more interesting to examine how a certain use of government troops against left-wing movements was already becoming normalised as a means to defend the young republic's monopoly on power. As mentioned above, Jones has even argued that the republic's birth in violence characterised its whole existence and its eventual failure. The assassinations of multiple political leaders taking place over the following years, of which Rathenau's was the most prominent one, can thus be read as another sign of a state steeped in violence and unable to rein it in. Cities functioning as incubators of radical politics sparked a fear, in both countries, of the 'lumpenproletariat' and its revolutionary potential, which in German cities proved much more real than it ever did in British cities, where the 'Battle of George Square' in Glasgow, with no deaths and 53 injured people proved a potent enough event to cause severe debate. While hundreds, and even thousands of civilians were killed in German urban contexts,⁹³ Britain had no comparable numbers. However, even much fewer dead or injured bodies could spark a much greater reaction in a British domestic context, while in Weimar Germany the 'threshold' for what violence was considered defensible or necessary to found the state's authority grew higher right from its conception in the revolutionary period of 1918-1919. On the other hand, the examination of the assassinations of Wilson and Rathenau also demonstrates the reactions to violence done to just one particular body, which was representative of state power.

Chapter 2 will move into a sphere that is here understood as 'peripheral'. It examines reactions in Britain and Germany to political violence taking place in Ireland, during the Irish War of Independence, and during the German *Freikorps*' campaign in the Baltic following the

⁹³ See Jones, *Founding Weimar*, especially for Berlin and Munich, 1918-1919; and Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933: Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War* (Oxford and New York, 2009) for detailed analyses of political violence and its victims in Saxony.

end of the First World War. Work has been undertaken comparing violent nationalist movements in Poland to the IRA in Ireland, as well as examining violence and identity among communities in Ulster and Silesia in the postwar period.⁹⁴ However, a comparison of attitudes towards paramilitary violence perpetrated in the name of the German and the British states, respectively, is lacking. Chapter 2 therefore examines how the violence unleashed by state-sponsored paramilitaries threatened both British and German efforts at constructing certain self-images. As the British government increasingly lost control over the 'Black and Tans', their reprisals and violent behaviours threatened to delegitimise the British government's claim over Ireland as well as its wider self-image and identity as a beacon of justice and civilisation in the world. Ireland's position on the periphery of the domestic sphere, but not quite as a colonial space like India or the Middle East, is key as a steppingstone between the geographic circles of this thesis, demonstrating how themes and language transcended these circles. The *Freikorps*' refusal to return from their anti-Bolshevik campaign in the Baltic not only risked the health and wellbeing of the entire German population, as a renewed blockade was threatened by the Allies, but dissociating itself from the rogue paramilitaries was a priority for the young German state in order to demonstrate its role as a reliable partner in the postwar world, who shared the values of civilised conduct.

The third chapter moves into the outermost circle, the colonial sphere, while also turning inwards to focus on the interplay of race and violence in Britain and Germany in the early interwar period. It firstly examines the policy of aerial bombing in Mandatory Iraq in the early 1920s. The Middle East has been chosen here as an example of the colonial sphere rather than the perhaps more frequently discussed example of India, even though their administrative status was not the same; however, this particular type of violence, inflicted from the air, allows for particular analyses of the significance of spatial removedness between victim and perpetrator, as well as the geographic distance between the perpetration of violence and the public sphere where it was discussed back in the metropolis. As Germany no longer held any actual colonies following the Versailles Treaty, German discourses on colonial revisionism will be analysed alongside. In a second part, the chapter will examine violence through the prism of race in contexts in which colonial sailors and soldiers found themselves in the heart of the metropolis; on the one hand, examining violence against colonial sailors and soldiers in British port cities, and on the other hand, violence perpetrated by French colonial troops of occupation

⁹⁴ Julia Eichenberg, "The Dark Side of Independence: Paramilitary Violence in Ireland and Poland after the First World War", *Contemporary European History*, 19/3 (2010), pp. 231-248; Eichenberg, "Soldiers to Civilians"; Timothy Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Violence and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010).

in the Rhineland. In both cases, the 'darkness' which now appeared at the centre of British and German society met with a threatened white identity. Fears of miscegenation, in particular, guided the hostility against the men of colour, with the nation's women discursively standing in for the threatened national body as a whole, and European 'civilisation' more widely. While similar themes occurred in both national discourses, the intensity of the hostility differed, and the extremely racialised language used to vilify French colonial soldiers undeniably fed into later National Socialist imagery and policy. The chapter thus explores how, on the one hand, geographic removedness allowed certain kinds of violence to be perpetrated in the 'Orient', which would not have been defensible in the domestic sphere, and which were heavily debated in the peripheral sphere; and, on the other hand, how racial thinking governed the reception of political violence in the domestic sphere when colonial, racial 'others' were confronted by a collective 'white' racial anxiety and fear of 'darkness'.

In the fourth and final chapter the thesis examines receptions of Fascist violence in Britain and Germany in the early/mid-1930s, respectively. By extending its view in this way, the thesis can chart the development over the course of the interwar period of how political violence was received in public discourse in both countries. For the Weimar Republic, specifically, the middle years of circa 1924 to 1929 are often considered a period of calm, when the state had established its monopoly on power and levels of political violence were lower.⁹⁵ While this might be accurate if those years are examined in isolation, the fact that the state quickly lost its monopoly on power again at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s makes this thesis' diachronic approach no less justified. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how narratives established in the early interwar period had solidified by this later point in time. While, again, some similar themes were present, the discourses, the scale and intensity of the actual violence as well as the divisiveness within the discourses was highly divergent between Britain and Germany. This points towards the way in which public discourse itself had continued to drift apart and become more fragmented and more extreme in Germany, while in the UK more consensus remained intact, crucially including a majority of conservative voices, which condemned political violence as 'un-British' and held steadfastly on to an identity which was constructed around notions of 'peaceableness', justice, law, and order. This was increasingly less the case in Germany, where elites began to actively support and/or excuse the SA's violent power propaganda, lending it decisive credibility and shifting the boundaries of permissible violence.

⁹⁵ Schumann, *Political Violence*, p. 143. Schumann explicitly adds a question mark to the title of this section of his book ("Years of Calm?") and argues that while the intensity of political violence in this period was lower and outright civil war-like violence abated, low-level violence always remained present and the development of combat leagues and violent bodies aiming at undermining the republic carried on. Ibid.

Anti-Semitism, which reappears as a theme throughout several of the, especially German, case studies, will play an unsurprisingly important role in this chapter, highlighting the ways in which Jewish identity was discursively marked out as 'other', thus facilitating the perpetration of violence against those perceived or constructed as Jewish. The Fascist challenge in Britain led to open and heated debate over the principles and limits of free speech, demonstrating that the established mechanisms of democratic debate remained intact in Britain to an extent that no longer existed in Germany's divided public discourse.

CHAPTER 1

THE ENEMY WITHIN. STREET VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS.

This chapter examines political violence taking place within the inner circle, or domestic sphere, of Britain and Germany respectively. Two distinct types of violent act have been chosen: on the one hand, the chapter will analyse public discourses on violence happening in the streets of major cities, Glasgow and Munich in 1919, respectively; and, on the other hand, it will examine the reactions to two prominent political assassinations, those of Henry Wilson and of Walther Rathenau, in June 1922, respectively. Though disparate in nature, both kinds of case study have been included in this first chapter, as they both took place in a domestic urban setting. In a peculiar sense of symmetry, the street violence occurred in both countries' 'second city', both with a strong regional identity, where troops from 'outside' were sent to quell the unrest; while the assassinations took place in both nations' capitals, at the heart of political power, committed by forces hostile to the state. By beginning this thesis with a lens focussed on the inner geographic circle, this chapter will establish the narratives, which emerged in public discourse when speaking about these instances of political violence, and which were consciously employed in order to construct certain national (self-) images and identities. In the case of discussing street violence in Glasgow and in Munich, the primary theme of the discourse was that of maintaining law and order. When strike protests in Glasgow turned riotous in January 1919, the police enforced law and order with the help of the baton, and troops were sent to the city subsequently to maintain lawful and orderly conduct. In Munich, where a radical left-wing Councils' republic had been in power for several weeks in April 1919, the Weimar government eventually used troops to reconquer the city and return it to what it considered to be a state of law and order. In both cases, the ability of the state to appear able and willing to enforce its power and control those transgressing against the rules of civilised conduct was paramount in order to portray the country, both domestically and internationally, as part of a civilised international community.

When both countries experienced high-profile assassinations, almost simultaneously in June 1922, similar narratives needed to be reinforced in public discourse, condemning the assassins as not part of the national community which prided itself on justice and democracy. Crucially, however, the threat which these acts of violence posed to both nations and their discursively constructed self-images, was of a significantly different power in both countries. Neither the Glasgow strikers' demands nor the state's overt performance of power in response

seriously upset the emerging British self-identification as a “peaceable kingdom.”¹ The assassination of Henry Wilson did not pose an existential threat to the British state either; it was received as a singular and shocking crime which only served to unite public discourse in the condemnation of the violent act. In Germany, however, the attempt to create an alternative state and government, in the shape of a Councils’ republic, in the Bavarian capital clearly posed an overt challenge to the existing regime; its use of violence appeared necessary but, as will be demonstrated, the breaking of taboos over the course of the German Revolution had devastating consequences for the republic’s subsequent relationship between violence and politics. Walther Rathenau’s assassination was essentially a symptom thereof, as it stood in a series of similar such acts of political violence committed in the early years of the Weimar Republic, which consistently failed to effectively tackle the threat posed by its numerous enemies operating clandestinely to bring about the democratic regime’s downfall.

Anti-Semitism appears as an important theme in this early chapter. The leaders of the movements which were, more or less, violently crushed by state forces in Glasgow and in Munich in 1919 were consciously marked out as Jewish and as supposedly foreign enemies of the nation, conspiring to foster Bolshevism. Walther Rathenau, too, was specifically targeted by his enemies on the extreme Right as a wealthy Jewish industrialist and ‘enemy’ of the German nation. It was in precisely this ideological environment, and in Munich specifically, where the Nazi movement originated during the early interwar years, and where anti-Semitism became the main language of the Right.² In this sense, anti-Semitism can be considered to bookend the thesis as a whole, as Chapter 4 will return to this theme to examine how it played out in Fascist acts of political violence in the early/mid-1930s.

¹ See Lawrence, “Peaceable Kingdom”.

² See Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution. Juden und Antisemiten in Hitlers München 1918 bis 1923* (Berlin, 2019)

1.1 MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER: GLASGOW AND MUNICH 1919.

The two incidents of street violence which this chapter will examine are, on the one hand, the crushing of the short-lived Bavarian Councils' Republic in Munich by government troops and government-affiliated *Freikorps* ('free corps'), at the beginning of May 1919; and, on the other hand, what has hyperbolically become known as the 'Battle of George Square', a riot between striking workers and protestors, and the police, which took place in Glasgow on 31 January 1919. Though the absolute scale of violence taking place in Munich and Glasgow is not at the centre of this comparison, an analysis of the reactions which the violence elicited produces some shared themes, as well as highlighting fundamental differences. The most central theme is the importance which both the British and the German state placed on maintaining law and order in these two respective situations. This, it will be argued, was motivated fundamentally by wartime and early postwar experiences of unrest and (potentially) revolutionary upheaval, which, significantly, took on transnational dimensions. British fears of left-wing radicalism spreading to the UK and of workers 'stabbing the country in the back' were informed by experiences and narratives developed on the continent, from Russia to revolutionary Germany. Regarding the thesis' two main source bases, it so happens that parliamentary debates yield very little relevant material for these two case studies, as both the German *Nationalversammlung* and the British House of Commons were not in session at the time of the two events. Therefore, the section will rely heavily on the analysis of a cross-section of the national press in both countries, drawing upon other additional material where available and relevant.

Glasgow, the 'second city of the Empire', and in particular the important shipbuilding and engineering works by the river Clyde, had been a hotbed of industrial unrest and strike action throughout the war years; the strike across multiple Clydeside munitions works in February 1915, for example, gave "the Clyde its popular image as a centre of militant discontent." Further unrest, especially the rent strikes and struggle over "dilution" between summer 1915 and March 1916, only cemented this image.³ Conflicts continued after the end of the First World War. Exacerbated by demobilisation, unemployment was a major concern and the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) demanded the introduction of a 40-hour working week in order to provide more jobs for the

³ Iain McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh, 1983), Part I, quotation on p. 16. "Dilution" referred to the increasing pressure during the war to admit unskilled workers to jobs of traditionally skilled craftsmen, *ibid.*, p. 6.

thousands of men returning from the battlefields.⁴ Their campaign reached its peak at the end of January 1919 and strike action by shipbuilding and engineering workers on the Clyde began on Monday 27 January. On Friday 31 January, a large demonstration was planned outside the City Chambers in Glasgow's central George Square where strikers, other demonstrators, and many onlookers, assembled to await the announcement of the government's response to the strike leaders' demand for political intervention in the industrial dispute. Contemporary reporting estimated the crowd at well over 20,000 people.⁵ Around midday, the first scuffles began to break out from among the assembled workers and some protestors attempted to stop and vandalise the trams running along the square. A force of about 140 policemen, plus six mounted police, began charging the crowd with their batons in order to disperse it, irrespective of whether they were hitting actual demonstrators or onlookers, men or women. Contemporary reports in the local press described how "the ground floor of the City Chambers became a casualty station. Men and women appeared bearing the marks of injury or complaining of having been hurt. Bruised and bleeding figures were carried in, sometimes seemingly unconscious."⁶ The Sheriff of Lanarkshire, while being pelted with stones and bottles, then stepped outside the City Chambers and read out the Riot Act, which made it a "felony for [twelve] or more people to riotously assemble and not to disperse within an hour after the reading of a proclamation commanding them so to do."⁷ However, the situation continued to deteriorate, as protestors regrouped and threw more stones and bottles, began looting shops, and built barricades on adjacent North Frederick Street. The police continued their baton charges. Two of the strike leaders, Emmanuel Shinwell and David Kirkwood, who had been inside the City Chambers to consult with the Lord Provost, were allowed to address the crowd and encouraged it to clear the square and reassemble in Glasgow Green to discuss further actions. The crowd eventually dispersed, and while some minor clashes, looting, and vandalising of shops continued throughout the rest of the day and into the night, by the next

⁴ Jenkinson has raised important points on the intersectionality of class and race in these strikes, arguing that postwar harbour rioting and labour conflict ought to be viewed together. While the STUC and the CWC demanded more jobs for demobilised soldiers, they explicitly excluded soldiers and sailors of colour from their demands, instead demonising them as a threat to the employment prospects of white British men. See Jacqueline Jenkinson, "Black Sailors on Red Clydeside: Rioting, Reactionary Trade Unionism and Conflicting Notions of 'Britishness' Following the First World War", *Twentieth Century British History*, 19/1 (2008), pp. 29-60. While the race dimension does not play a major part in the present section, its interaction with class should be recognised and Chapter 3 of the thesis will take up race riots specifically as another case study of postwar political violence.

⁵ "Glasgow Disorders", *The Scotsman*, 01.02.1919, p. 7; see also Gordon J. Barclay, "Duties in Aid of the Civil Power": The Deployment of the Army to Glasgow, 31 January to 17 February 1919", *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 38/2 (2018), p. 276.

⁶ "George Square Riots", *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, p. 5.

⁷ Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: riots, racism and resistance in imperial Britain* (Liverpool, 2009), p. 20.

morning calm prevailed in most parts of the city. However, on government orders, from the evening of 31 January onwards, and over the next few days, around 10,000 troops from various Scottish and English regiments began arriving in Glasgow in full kit and armed with machine-guns. In addition, on Monday 3 February, six tanks took up positions at strategic points throughout the city. The military, however, did not have to intervene at any point. Overall, fifty-three people were injured on 'Bloody Friday', of which thirty-four were civilians and nineteen police officers. There were no deaths.⁸

The German revolution had been notably non-violent in Bavaria. When the Bavarian free-state, a socialist republic, was established on 7 November 1918 under the leadership of Kurt Eisner, the overthrow produced a "body count of zero."⁹ Political violence, however, made its spectacular entrance when *Ministerpräsident* ('minister-president', state leader) Eisner was assassinated by the young right-wing radical nobleman Count Anton von Arco auf Valley in the middle of a Munich street on 21 February 1919. Eisner had been on his way to the Bavarian state assembly to announce his resignation following disappointing election results for his party, the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), the previous month. Following Eisner's death, Social Democrat Johannes Hoffmann became Bavarian *Ministerpräsident*, but, encouraged by news of the successful establishment of a Councils' republic in Hungary in March, the governing Independent Social Democratic Bavarian Central Council declared a Bavarian Councils' Republic on 7 April. The Hoffmann government fled to Bamberg in northern Bavaria, and when an attempted putsch ('Palm Sunday Putsch') by Hoffmann loyalists in Munich was defeated on 13 April, a second, even further left-wing Councils' Republic was established with the support of the Communist Party under the leadership of Eugen Leviné and Max Levien. The Hoffmann government-in-exile finally requested military aid from the *Reich's* Minister of Defence Gustav Noske, having previously refused the offer, in order to regain power in the Bavarian capital. Along with the government troops sent by Noske, the *Reich* and Hoffmann governments recruited volunteer fighters into so-called *Volkswehren* ('citizens' militias') and *Freikorps*.¹⁰ Overall, some 30,000-35,000 troops and volunteers began converging on Munich during the final days of April.¹¹ Their advance in and around Munich

⁸ Brief summary of events: McLean, *Red Clydeside*, pp. 124-126; casualty numbers were widely reported in the press, for example "The Strikes", *Morning Post*, 03.02.1919, p. 10; detailed run-downs of the day's events were printed by the local press, for example *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, pp. 4-5.

⁹ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, pp. 288, 322 (quotation).

¹⁰ The origin and nature of postwar German *Freikorps* and their members is explored in more detail in Chapter 2 of the thesis, as it is of more relevance to do so there.

¹¹ Allan Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria, 1918-1919: the Eisner regime and the Soviet Republic* (Princeton, 1965), p. 271-272; Wolfram Wette, *Gustav Noske. Eine politische Biographie* (Düsseldorf, 1987), p. 438; Jones, *Founding Weimar*, pp. 288-290.

was brutal. The government troops and *Freikorps* entered Munich on 1 May and the Councils' Republic was toppled after a few days of intense fighting. Munich remained under martial law until 1 August 1919.¹² An incident which attracted particular attention was the so-called *Geiselmord*, the execution by soldiers of the Councils' Republic of ten hostages, among them well-known members of Munich's bourgeoisie, mostly members of the conservative Thule society, and including one noblewoman, in a school building on 30 April, just one day before government troops entered the city. News of this act quickly reached the government troops and *Freikorps* waiting in the suburbs to take Munich, and added to the brutality of the violence they unleashed on the city's population over the following days.¹³ A week later, on 6 May, a second mass murder occurred in the city, when government troops killed twenty-one members of a Catholic journeymen's association whom they had mistaken for Communists. Because of their scale and shocking nature, both acts unsurprisingly came to dominate the public discourse about violence during the Munich Councils' Republic and its crushing.

This chapter section does not seek to compare the absolute scale of violence witnessed in Glasgow and Munich in January and May 1919, respectively. Unlike in Glasgow, on the streets of Munich the government troops with their machine-guns and artillery were put into action, and the number of fatalities after just three days exceeded 600, most of whom were civilians, with many hundreds, if not thousands, more injured.¹⁴ As has recently been argued by Jones, these few days at the end of April and the beginning of May 1919 marked "the end point of the transformation in the relationship between politics and violence during the German Revolution of 1918-19." The revolutionary period thus stands out as a watershed moment in the German history of violence, at which previously existing boundaries of violent conduct were crossed, including, as elucidated below, the officially sanctioned killing of civilians in a domestic urban context.¹⁵ The rioting taking place in Glasgow earlier that year cannot be said to have had a comparably profound impact on the "relationship between politics and violence"

¹² Wette, *Noske*, p. 442.

¹³ See for example Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in post-war Germany, 1918-1923* (New York, 1952), pp. 88-92; Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, pp. 329-331; Hagen Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik, 1918-1920* (Boppard am Rhein, 1969), pp. 98-99.

¹⁴ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, p. 287; Eliza Johnson Ablovatski, "Cleansing the red nest": Counterrevolution and White Terror in Munich and Budapest, 1919, PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2004, p. 48. Gumbel's more contemporary body count suggests at least 557 victims, including just 38 government troops killed in action, 93 red guards killed in action, as well as 42 red guards and 144 civilians summarily executed. He also cites the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* which reported 107 fallen members of the red guards as well as 184 supporters of the Councils' Republic who had been "killed in an accident" (*tödlich verunglückt*). Gumbel interprets this as most likely to mean that they had fallen victim to political murders. Emil Julius Gumbel, *Vier Jahre Politischer Mord* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 31-32.

¹⁵ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, quote on p. 288.

in Britain; but, as will be discussed below, the unrest, the police crack-down on the protestors, and the deployment of the military to the city all caused significant discussion within British public discourse and warrant inclusion in this comparative perspective examining the rhetorical responses these violent acts elicited.

A leitmotif emerging in the analysis of the public language exhibited in response to both events was an overwhelming anxiety on the part of the authorities to maintain ‘law and order’, or its German counterpart, ‘*Ruhe und Ordnung*’ (‘quiet and order’). With the Councils’ Republic in power in Munich during April 1919, especially the more conservative papers in Germany ran multiple articles reporting on the alleged “reign of violence” in Munich and the “Spartacist reign of blood” which had unleashed a “civil war in Munich.”¹⁶ In the national assembly, too, Maximilian Pfeiffer of the Catholic Centre Party, emphasised the “chaos” and “anarchy” wrought by Bolshevism and juxtaposed it with the need for the German government to restore “*Ruhe und Ordnung*” in the Bavarian capital.¹⁷ Some observers who had lived through the days of the Councils’ reign in Munich, however, did not quite share this dramatized view of conditions in the Bavarian capital. Victor Klemperer, not expecting a bloody outcome, considered the main characteristic of the Councils’ Republic to be “ridiculousness” and described the whole situation as a “pitiable affair” and a “comedic play”, while Thomas Mann was more afraid of the “cultural catastrophe” of Bolshevism than of any bodily harm that might be done to him by Communists.¹⁸ Once government troops had taken over Munich, Mann showed himself much relieved by the counter-revolutionary intervention and admired how “well disciplined” the *Freikorps* were, marching into Munich with their steel helmets. He, too, betrayed his yearning for *Ruhe und Ordnung*, referring to the troops’ marching band when asserting that “music is order.”¹⁹ Newspapers, whose distribution was once again allowed in Munich following the end of the Councils’ Republic, broadly echoed this view. The liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, condemned the Communist reign as having enabled a “terrible corruption and disintegration of all public conditions”, as well as the “abolition of the security of property”, a “creeping culture of denunciation and the persecution of and threat to personal freedom.”²⁰ It therefore welcomed the return to “*Ruhe und Ordnung*” and urged

¹⁶ “Die Gewaltherrschaft in München”, *NPZ*, 24.04.1919, MA, p. 1; “Bürgerkrieg in München. Spartakistische Blutherrschaft“, *DZ*, 19.04.1919, MA, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Verhandlungen der Verfassungsgebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung*, 34. Sitzung, 10.04.1919, p. 922.

¹⁸ Victor Klemperer, *Man möchte immer lachen und weinen in einem. Revolutionstagebuch 1919* (Berlin, 2015), p. 128; Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, ed. Peter de Mendelsohn (Frankfurt, 2003), p. 222.

¹⁹ Mann, *Tagebücher*, pp. 219, 222, 228.

²⁰ “Das Ende der Münchener Räteherrschaft“, *FZ*, 05.05.1919, MB, p. 1.

“peaceful order and sensible reconstruction.”²¹ More right-wing papers lamented, in particular, that the red guards had destroyed the “entire institutions and apparatuses of the police records department, files, forms, finger prints and residence registration forms”, as well as “all the material of the gipsy surveillance office.”²² The same paper, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, was all the more pleased to report on the reestablishment of the police security service, which would proceed against “all disruptions of *Ruhe und Ordnung*” with the “greatest sharpness.”²³

An anxiety to restore and uphold ‘law and order’ was also evident in the UK after the rioting in George Square. The strike itself, and simultaneous ones by engineering and transportation workers in, for example, London and Belfast, were called “sporadic, chaotic, unauthorised, and stupid” by the right-wing *Daily Mail*, and were seen as “jeopardising the reconstruction of our trade and industry.”²⁴ Moral condemnation of the strike leaders was particularly strong in the local press, where the consequences of the strike were most acutely felt. Papers characterised the leaders as “men who from the outset flouted law and decency, and deliberately set themselves to paralyse the orderly functionings of the community.”²⁵ The “methods of hooliganism” employed by “the Clyde strikers running amok in George Square” and creating “a scene of lawless disorder”²⁶ were juxtaposed with the military’s “display of force”, evidenced by the soldiers and tanks throughout the city, “which [had] had a sobering effect” and helped re-establish “a sense of security and confidence.”²⁷ The presence of the military in the city was recognised as an effective deterrent against further disorder and as “a pledge that the Government was prepared to fulfil its promise that law and order would be maintained and public safety guaranteed.”²⁸ Claiming that there was “no public support” for the strikers in Glasgow and their riotous behaviour, particularly more right-wing newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, evoked a “universal determination that public order shall be maintained.”²⁹ Especially the military presence in Glasgow was seen as restoring “public confidence [...] in the ability of the authorities to deal with any fresh outbreak of disorder.”³⁰ But also the conservative, local *Glasgow Herald*, which still in principle voiced support for “peaceful picketing,” reflected on what “the moral of this disgraceful episode” might be: “It surely is that the maintenance of law and order in the great community is the primary

²¹ “Das Ende der Münchener Räteregierung“, *FZ*, 04.05.1919, ZMB, p. 1.

²² “Heftige Straßenkämpfe in München. Spartakistische Bestialitäten“, *DTZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 2.

²³ “Wie München befreit wurde“, *DTZ*, 05.05.1919, AA, p. 2.

²⁴ “Trade Unionism or Anarchy“, *Daily Mail*, 01.02.1919, p. 4.

²⁵ “The Strike and its Sequel“, *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, p. 4.

²⁶ “Strike Riots in Glasgow“, *The Courier and Argus*, 01.02.1919, p. 3.

²⁷ “Military on Duty“, *The Scotsman*, 03.02.1919, p. 5.

²⁸ “The Strike Position“, *Glasgow Herald*, p. 7.

²⁹ “Trade Unionism or Anarchy“, *Daily Mail*, 01.02.1919, p. 4.

³⁰ “Tanks sent to Glasgow“, *Daily Express*, 04.02.1919, p. 1.

duty of the authorities, and the one which at all costs they must see is vigilantly and adequately discharged.”³¹

The reasons for this keenness to demonstrate authority, maintain law and order, and especially to be *seen* to be able to do so, were varied, but fear played a major part. The expectation of revolutionary upheaval, in one case, and the experience of it, in the other, shaped the responses by the British and the German authorities, respectively. During the strike week leading up to ‘Bloody Friday’ in late January 1919, the not yet disbanded British War Cabinet clearly exhibited some concern about the potential the strike might hold to foment revolutionary action and lead to violent escalation. With the Prime Minister David Lloyd George occupied at the Paris Peace Conference, Deputy Prime Minister Andrew Bonar Law chaired the meeting on 30 January and insisted that “he thought it vital [...] that there was a sufficient force in Glasgow to prevent disorder.” He was also convinced that “if the movement in Glasgow grew, it would spread all over the country.”³² The next day, 31 January, the War Cabinet met at 3 pm, while the riot in George Square was already underway. The Secretary for Scotland within Lloyd George’s Coalition government, the Liberal Robert Munro, made a point of rather dramatically characterising the events in Glasgow not just as a strike, but “a Bolshevik rising.”³³ He thus clearly exhibited the exaggerated perception of the strike’s power by some in the Cabinet, as well as consciously marking the movement out as foreign, namely Russian. However, the looming spectre of Germany, specifically, may well have also played at the forefront of British minds, as the month of January had seen the leftist Spartacist uprising in Berlin and its violent crushing by government troops. William Gallacher, one of the protagonists of the Clydeside labour movement and himself at the centre of the ‘Battle of George Square’, made this point in his 1936 memoir, referring to a newspaper article which claimed that “[t]he panic of the civic and national authorities can only be explained thus. They actually believed a Spartacus coup was planned to start in Glasgow, and they were prepared to suppress it at all costs.”³⁴ Similarly, the conservative *Aberdeen Daily Journal* also referred to the “Spartacist fomenters of chaos” in Germany, but rather than be scared, it emphasised that they had been roundly “discredited, and their leaders disposed of.” The paper considered the George Square riot the “first serious outbreak of Bolshevism, which, unfortunately, [was] disgracing Scotland,” but it lauded that it had been “met with firmness by the Government, [...]

³¹ “The Strike and its Sequel”, *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, p. 4.

³² War Cabinet [WC] 522 Conclusions, 30 January 1919, TNA (Kew), CAB 23/9/9, p. 3.

³³ War Cabinet [WC] 523 Conclusions, 31 January 1919, TNA (Kew), CAB 23/9/10, p. 2.

³⁴ [*Glasgow?*] *Herald*, 08.02.1919, cited in William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde: an autobiography* (London, 1936), p. 234. McLean also points to the synchronicity of the Spartacist uprising and the Clydeside strike, *Red Clydeside*, p. 137.

[leaving] no doubt that, as a people, we are not going to tolerate lawlessness under any guise in our midst.”³⁵

The fear of what revolutionary potential the striking workers of Clydeside might develop extended beyond just the British Isles and included overt worry from the press and politicians about the effect on the wider British Empire. *The Times* reproduced what it claimed was the “programme of revolution” of the “rebel strike leaders”, which explicitly included the aim of coordinating “all revolutionary and anarchical movements (with special attention to Ireland and India).”³⁶ McLean indeed has suggested that the government’s reaction was in part informed by their anticipation of “another Easter rising.”³⁷ Though no tanks had been used in Dublin in April 1916, the British state had ensured a strong military response to suppress the rising, including the use of heavy machine-guns, shelling the city centre with artillery, and the imposition of martial law. It has been argued that the ongoing First World War “shaped the state’s reaction to rebellion” in Ireland, and thus, perhaps, the close temporal proximity of the protests in Glasgow accounted for some of the state’s strong reaction informed by the only recently concluded war.³⁸ Secretary for War Winston Churchill, appointed only three weeks prior, on the other hand, reminded members of the War Cabinet not to take any drastic action against the strikers “until some glaring excess had been committed” by them. He thus framed and justified any potential violence by the executive in advance as a defensive act only, while also expressing a revealing expectation that the protestors were likely to commit excesses.³⁹ The involvement of the figure of Churchill in this decision-making process brought with it a particular significance, as he can be regarded as personified evidence that while 1919 may have represented a break in the relationship between violence and politics in Germany, in the UK the presence of the Army at urban scenes of rioting represented to an extent a continuation of pre-war practices. In 1910, for example, Churchill had been responsible, as Home Secretary, for dispatching troops in domestic urban contexts in order to control riots. In the Welsh mining town of Tonypandy, troops were sent to re-enforce the police after rioting took place on 8 November 1910 during the course of a strike. The use of troops to intimidate the striking miners, if not directly suppress them by military force, had made Churchill a particularly hated figure among the working class, and his role, now as Secretary for War, within a British

³⁵ ‘Glasgow Terrorism’, *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 01.02.1919, p. 4.

³⁶ “Rebel Strike Leaders. Points in Programme of Revolution”, *Times*, 01.02.1919, p. 9.

³⁷ McLean, *Red Clydeside*, p. 137.

³⁸ Niall Whelehan, “The Irish Revolution, 1912-1923”, in Alvin Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* (Oxford, 2014), p. 624. See also Fearghal McGarry, “Violence and the Easter Rising”, in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 39-57.

³⁹ War Cabinet [WC] 522 Conclusions, 30 January 1919, TNA (Kew), CAB 23/9/9, p. 5.

government which sent troops into Glasgow in January 1919 only served to heighten the animosity and enforce Churchill's negative image among this part of the population.⁴⁰

The fear of the potential of revolution can be interpreted as a symptom of what Jon Lawrence has identified as a broader "fear of brutalization" which took hold in postwar Britain. Though Britain had been victorious in war and remained relatively politically stable compared to its continental European neighbours, the discourse surrounding events like the 'Battle of George Square' was clearly characterised by a fear that the 'continental' unrest of places like Germany, Hungary, and of course Russia might migrate across the sea to sweep the United Kingdom and its Empire.⁴¹ The Lord Provost of Glasgow in fact voiced his concerns about the war's brutalising potential himself, when, speaking at a dinner for recently returned prisoners of war, he referred to the rioting in George Square and lamented that the men "should have returned just in time to experience something of the aftermath of war at home."⁴² However, in order to uphold its self-image, as described by Lawrence, of the UK as a "peaceable kingdom", it was crucially necessary to demonstrate, domestically and internationally, the state's ability to maintain law and order. The Lord Provost therefore assured his audience, and the citizenry more generally, that the city authorities would not "shirk their duty" and that "the resources of civilization were not yet exhausted."⁴³

Though some, like Churchill, warned against exaggerating the danger posed by the striking workers in Glasgow, it is important to note that the scale of the rioting, as well as the firm reaction of the police force did appear to come as a shock to the British press, even those publications generally unsympathetic to the strikers.⁴⁴ The *Glasgow Herald* gave voice to the shock by describing the day's events as "unparalleled in the civic history of the city", producing "unprecedented scenes of violence and bloodshed."⁴⁵ Some journalistic observers classed the repeated police baton charges, as well as the immediate deployment of battle-ready troops and tanks to the city, as a clear overreaction. *The Manchester Guardian*, for example, found "such lavish and pretentious display of force [...] altogether disproportionate and a trifle ludicrous."⁴⁶ Others, notably the conservative *Morning Post*, betrayed their fear of what the protest might have been and lauded the "firm action of the authorities" which had "saved

⁴⁰ Anthony Mòr O'Brien, "Churchill and the Tonypandy Riots", *Welsh History Review*, 17/1 (1994), pp. 67-99.

⁴¹ See Lawrence, "Peaceable Kingdom"; also, McLean, *Red Clydeside*, p. 137.

⁴² "In the Evening", *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, p. 5.

⁴³ "The Labour Ferment", *Times*, 01.02.1919, p. 9.

⁴⁴ War Cabinet [WC] 522 Conclusions, 30 January 1919, TNA (Kew), CAB 23/9/9, p. 4.

⁴⁵ "Glasgow Street Fighting", *Glasgow Herald*, 01.02.1919, p. 5.

⁴⁶ "A Guarded City", *Manchester Guardian*, 03.02.1919, p. 7.

Glasgow from a very disastrous Bolshevik riot.⁴⁷ Whether viewed as an overreaction or not, however, in the days following 'Bloody Friday', there was a notable emphasis on normalcy quickly returning to the streets of Glasgow. *The Scotsman* was of the opinion that "the rioting, serious as it was, found the authorities prepared", and that the police had "shown remarkable patience" and "displayed for the most part great tact in dealing with the crowds." The paper insisted that "the casualties were not numerous" and that the strikers' "[m]ethods of terrorism" had "completely failed" because the "traffic in the streets skirting the square was carried on uninterruptedly, except for about twenty minutes."⁴⁸ Two days later the paper reported that the "battle-ground at George Square" was already attracting "large crowds of sightseers", and that "[b]usiness was carried on briskly, and the tramway and other traffic proceeded without any hindrance during the day, while the football matches had their customary large crowds."⁴⁹ Evidently, it was important to demonstrate just how unperturbed the citizens of Glasgow were by the strike, the rioting, and the presence of the military, and just how successful the authorities had been at achieving their central aim of maintaining law and order.

If, given the general fear of brutalization and of 'foreign' revolutionary sentiment spreading to the UK, as well as the relative gravity of the violence of 'Bloody Friday' in a domestic British context, the (over-)reaction of the authorities was perhaps comprehensible, it nevertheless played into the hands of the labour movement. The Scottish socialist revolutionary leader John Maclean swore that Scottish workers would not let themselves be "dragooned and bludgeoned at the behest of the Chief Constable or anybody else."⁵⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, while maintaining that the "military intervention certainly [had] not terrorised either the strikers or any other citizen of Glasgow,"⁵¹ suggested that the "intervention of the troops [had] probably done more for the revolutionary agitator than two or three years' propaganda."⁵² This view was not entirely wrong, as the riot gave the would-be revolutionaries a "romantic history" to recount;⁵³ the day has since become mythologised, especially in pro-independence popular history, as a battle in which ordinary, unarmed Scottish workers fought against the overwhelming might of the British state and its military which, as the popular, and wholly non-factual, myth goes, had been sent in by the hated figure of Winston Churchill himself to crush the strike. A particular aspect of the myth focuses on the nationality of the troops sent to Glasgow. In the

⁴⁷ "The Strikes", *Morning Post*, 03.02.1919, p. 10.

⁴⁸ "Glasgow Disorders", *The Scotsman*, 01.02.1919, p. 7.

⁴⁹ "Clyde Agitators. No Renewal of Disturbances", *The Scotsman*, 03.02.1919, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Cited in "Strike Riots in Glasgow", *Manchester Guardian*, 01.02.1919, p. 7.

⁵¹ "Clyde strike to go on", *Manchester Guardian*, 07.02.1919, p. 6.

⁵² "Clyde Shipyards still idle", *Manchester Guardian*, 06.02.1919, p. 6.

⁵³ McLean, *Red Clydeside*, p. 138.

majority, they were in fact drawn from various Scottish regiments, and contemporary reports in the papers confirmed as much; subsequently, however, they have come to be painted as 'foreign', namely English, invading forces, giving the 'Battle' an additional nationalist, and even anti-colonial, significance in the more recent mythologization. The dramatic events of 31 January 1919 naturally lend themselves to storytelling, and it must be remembered that often accounts of the 'Battle of George Square' originated in the autobiographical writings of those personally involved in the strike movement, such as William Gallacher, leading trade unionist and founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, or Emanuel Shinwell, one of the strike leaders of Red Clydeside and later a Labour politician. These men wrote their memoirs many years after the fact (1936 in Gallacher's case; 1973 for Shinwell, by then a member of the House of Lords), and with a mind to portraying the events and their role in them to suit their contemporary agendas. Only more recent historiography has taken seriously the task of systematically dispelling these myths and providing a more fact-based account of the 'Battle of George Square.'⁵⁴

In Germany, the focus on restoring *Ruhe und Ordnung* can also be analysed as a function of fear, only in this case it was not just the expectation of potential revolutionary violence and left-wing radicalism, but the actual experience of it which fuelled action. It is important to view the crushing of the Bavarian Councils' Republic in the context of the wider German Revolution, the violence which had already occurred in various places throughout Germany, and how certain boundaries of what constituted legitimate uses of violence had already shifted since December 1918.⁵⁵ A key taboo-breaking moment occurred during the brutal *Märzkämpfe* ('March fighting') between Spartacists and government troops in Berlin, when Defence Minister Noske issued the *Schießbefehl*, or 'order to shoot', on 9 March 1919. In the infamous order, government soldiers, and associated *Freikorps*, were instructed to "shoot immediately any person who [was] found to be fighting, with weapon in hand, against government troops." Noske justified the order as a "deterrent" which he had only issued "in the greatest need", and, looking back, reflected that "[a]s harsh as this order was, as swiftly it proved effective."⁵⁶ The fighting between 3 and 16 March in Berlin cost an estimated 1,200 lives, among them many

⁵⁴ For a summary of the popular myths, see Barclay, "Duties", pp. 261-264; also, Gordon J. Barclay, "Churchill rolled the tanks into the crowd": mythology and reality in the military deployment to Glasgow in 1919", *Scottish Affairs*, 28/1 (2019), pp. 32-62.

⁵⁵ For various accounts of the fighting that took place in Berlin, in particular, but also elsewhere in Germany, see for example Waite, *Vanguard*, pp. 58-79; Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik*, pp. 69-90; Jones, *Founding Weimar*, pp. 27-285.

⁵⁶ Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1920), p. 109. See also *Verhandlungen*, 27. Sitzung, 13.03.1919, p. 742.

civilians, including women and children; government troops counted 75 losses.⁵⁷ It is not surprising that this taboo-breaking experience, in which German soldiers had received license to kill German civilians in an inner-German urban setting, informed how the situation in and around Munich was perceived and handled in late April and early May. As described above, the overwhelming perception, bolstered by conservative propaganda, was of the Communist reign in Munich as anarchic, lawless, and brutal; it therefore had to be brought to an end as quickly and decisively as possible. Notwithstanding the bourgeois experiences of men like Mann and Klemperer, for whom the Councils' Republic was a laughable affair, as described above, which brought certain inconveniences, such as rising food prices, closed banks, and interrupted tram lines and postal services,⁵⁸ Klemperer observed that many in Munich wished for a "Pater Noske, who may as well be called Epp," to liberate the city from Communist rule.⁵⁹ Noske himself, re-emphasising the focus on *Ruhe und Ordnung*, noted in his autobiography, "[f]or the time being, there were no Bavarian troops available to put Munich in order."⁶⁰ Therefore, troops and volunteer *Freikorps* from elsewhere in the *Reich* were brought into Bavaria. An order, vaguely reminiscent of Noske's order to shoot from March, was passed by the commanders of the government troops and *Freikorps*, von Oven and Möhl, and signed by a representative of the Hoffmann government, which placed Munich under martial law and proclaimed that "whoever confronts government troops with weapon in hand will be punished by death."⁶¹ *Ruhe und Ordnung* were thus to be established in Munich with just as much ruthlessness as it had been in Berlin two months prior. Only the Communist *Rote Fahne* newspaper, unsurprisingly, condemned what it considered the "orgies of order", and indeed the "terror" wrought on Munich by the "Noskes" and his "*Ordnungstruppen*" ('order troops').⁶² Though Klemperer bitterly regretted the fact that Munich, five or six times smaller than Greater Berlin, had had to experience just as much bloodshed,⁶³ his personal experiences of late April and early May 1919 were dominated by the above-cited practical inconveniences, which contrast starkly with the experiences of those actively involved in the fighting, who were traumatised by the brutality of the government troops' advance into the city, and who

⁵⁷ Wette, *Noske*, p. 418.

⁵⁸ Victor Klemperer, *Tagebücher 1918-1919*, ed. Walter Nowojski (Berlin, 2000), pp. 101, 103, 109, 110.

⁵⁹ Klemperer, *Lachen und weinen*, p. 156. Klemperer references Franz Ritter von Epp, a famous *Freikorps* leader.

⁶⁰ Noske, *Kiel bis Kapp*, p. 136.

⁶¹ Wette, *Noske*, p. 439-440.

⁶² "Die Noskes hausen in München", *RF*, 03.05.1919, p. 1; "Ordnungsorgien in München", *RF*, 06.05.1919, p. 1; "Terror in München", *RF*, 06.05.1919, p. 2.

⁶³ Klemperer, *Lachen und weinen*, pp. 176-7.

recounted either witnessing, or experiencing first-hand, fear, chaos, imprisonment, torture, summary justice, and executions.⁶⁴

Nadine Rossol's work on the Prussian police and the German revolution, while dealing mainly with the specific challenges posed by the revolution to the police service, further supports the view that maintaining order was a main priority for state authorities in early postwar Germany. As the revolution had brought about a "crumbling of the state's monopoly on violence", a domestic "power vacuum" needed to be filled by whoever proved best capable of forcefully demonstrating their ability to restore and maintain law and order.⁶⁵ As many of the troops and volunteers who were recruited to aid the Bavarian government to crush the Councils' Republic were not of Bavarian origin, but were drawn from various places throughout the *Reich*, there was some concern that Bavarians' age-old animosity against 'Prussians' would create tensions between locals and the government troops and *Freikorps*. Rumours sprang up that the troops were living off of the already sparse resources available to Munich's citizenry, and commander-in-chief of the *Reich* troops, General Major Möhl felt compelled to issue an official statement, dispelling the rumours and reminding the general population of Munich that they "owed the northern German troops thanks."⁶⁶ This can be viewed as an active effort on the part of the authorities to counteract inner-German divisions based on regional identity, and instead to foster more national cohesion at a point when the country needed to recover from these violent excesses.⁶⁷ Klemperer observed this uneasy coexistence, including the linguistic clash, not without some bemusement: "For the first and only time in my life [...] I saw a joyful Bavarian-Prussian fraternisation."⁶⁸

The ultimate end to which *Ruhe und Ordnung* needed to be restored was, however, not only domestic. It carried international significance as well. Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann had expressed these international ramifications bluntly during an April 1919 sitting of the National Assembly, while the Peace Conference was ongoing in Paris and the first Councils' Republic was simultaneously working to enforce its authority in Munich. After four years of "murder and destruction", he implored his fellow deputies, Germany needed

⁶⁴ Gerhard Schmolze (ed.), *Revolution und Räterepublik in München 1918/19 in Augenzeugenberichten* (Düsseldorf, 1969), pp. 369, 372, 374-5.

⁶⁵ Nadine Rossol, "Incapable of Securing Order?' The Prussian Police and the German Revolution 1918/19", in Klaus Weinhauer, Anthony McElligott, Kirsten Heinsohn (eds.), *Germany 1916-23. A Revolution in Context* (Bielefeld, 2015), pp. 59-82, quotations on p. 60.

⁶⁶ "Abschluß der Münchener Kämpfe", *DAZ*, 05.05.1919, MA, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Compare this to the way, described above, in which the nationalist myth of the 'Battle of George Square' revolves in large part around the alleged use of 'foreign' English troops to 'occupy' Scotland's biggest city.

⁶⁸ Klemperer, *Lachen und weinen*, pp. 161-2.

nothing more urgently than to prove its “honesty”, “willingness to peace” and “renunciation of violent politics.” Scheidemann therefore admonished those Germans, calling them “adventurers and phantasists,” who were continuing to wage war on their fellow countrymen as well as on the “peoples with whom we intend to sit at the negotiating table tomorrow.”⁶⁹ He thus gave voice to the German government’s pressing need to present the new state as a reliable democratic partner in the postwar order of civilised nations; an aim which crucially required the defeat of any alternative forms of government, especially of the extreme Left, as set up in the Bavarian capital, which might threaten this projected image. However, whether the manner in which “the government chose to demonstrate its will to rule with unrestrained acts of performance violence” successfully served this aim or proved in fact detrimental to it, turned out to be one of the cruxes for the eventual failure of the Weimar Republic.⁷⁰

The linguistic dehumanisation of the ‘inner enemy’, though not a new development, was a main rhetorical device to support the state’s position of authority and undermine the power of those the state was battling domestically. The dehumanisation was achieved primarily through emphasis on foreignness and through animalistic descriptions. The process was particularly prevalent in the reception of the Bavarian Councils’ Republic, its leaders, and its violent crushing by government troops and *Freikorps*.⁷¹ The murder of the ten hostages by Communists, unsurprisingly, took a central place in the reporting of the end of Munich’s Councils’ Republic. The act, both before and after being officially confirmed, was universally described with horror and condemnation, though not without some voyeuristic interest in the gruesome details of the murders. Several papers reported on the alleged mutilations, bashed-in faces, spilled guts, missing heads or limbs, and the difficulty these circumstances caused in identifying the victims.⁷² The murder of the hostages itself was consistently described as “*bestialisch*” or “*viehisches*” (‘beastly’, or ‘bestial’), while the perpetrators were called “*vertier*” (‘brutish’); furthermore, as the government troops advanced, they were said to be “cleansing” (“*säubern*”) the “nests” of Communists along the way. Such an animalistic, unhuman enemy

⁶⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 34. Sitzung, 10.04.1919, p. 914.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, p. 290.

⁷¹ Jones has analysed the process in considerable detail for the violence occurring in Berlin and in Munich in 1918-19. See in particular, *Founding Weimar*, pp. 269-278, 302-315.

⁷² “Strassenkämpfe in München“, *DAZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 1; “Die Ermordung der Münchener Geiseln“, *VZ*, 05.05.1919, AA p. 4; “Heftige Straßenkämpfe in München. Spartakistische Bestialitäten“, *DTZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 2; “Die spartakistischen Morde“, *DTZ*, 05.05.1919, pp. 2-3; “München völlig im Besitz der Regierungstruppen“, *DZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 5; “Die Ermordung der Geiseln in München“, *DZ*, 05.05.1919, MA, p. 2. Jones notes that the rumours that the bodies had been posthumously mutilated were untrue; see *Founding Weimar*, pp. 305-306.

evidently made the deployment of violence an easier option.⁷³ The government troops and the associated *Freikorps*, on the other hand, were portrayed as liberators, received enthusiastically by the joyous population of Munich. Their advancement into the city was accompanied by an emphasis on their low casualty numbers and their employment of the means of modern warfare, such as machine-guns, armoured vehicles, flamethrowers, and mortars.⁷⁴ The ‘savage’ Communists, as described above, however, were prone to running away, opportunistically swapping their red armbands for white ones, sniping at government troops, or ambushing them under cover of the night in a cowardly fashion.⁷⁵ At the same time, however, Communists were repeatedly reported to have used gas ammunition and Dum-Dum bullets.⁷⁶ These were also quintessentially modern arms; however, crucially, they were internationally outlawed and, especially after the experiences on the frontlines of the recent war, marked out as particularly vicious. The Communists’ and Bolshevism’s foreignness, more generally, were also emphasised in an effort to ‘other’ the enemy of the German government troops. During April, Maximilian Pfeiffer (Catholic Centre Party) had spoken of the situation in Bavaria as brought about by “aliens” (“*Fremdlinge*”) who had no trace of the Bavarian “character” (“*Wesen*”).⁷⁷ This view of Bolshevism was repeated later, for example in a proclamation by the Bavarian government to the Bavarian people, which declared it everybody’s duty to fight the “character alien to German-ness” (“*das deutschfremde Wesen*”) of Russian Bolshevism.⁷⁸ The circumstance that the leaders of the Councils’ Republic, Eugen Leviné and Max Levien, were Russian-born offered yet another opportunity to brand the Communist experiment in Munich as foreign, the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* for example blaming the “days of horror” on “the Russian Bolsheviks Dr. Levien and Leviné-Nissen.”⁷⁹

⁷³ See for example “Strassenkämpfe in München”, *DAZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 1; “Die Befreiung Münchens”, *DAZ*, AA, p. 1; “Die Niederlage der Kommunisten”, *DAZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 3; “Heftige Straßenkämpfe in München”, *VZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 4; “Die Erschießung der Münchener Geiseln”, *VZ*, 04.05.1919, p. 4; “Das Ende der Münchener Räteregierung”, *FZ*, 04.05.1919, ZMB, p. 1; “Bayern, Der Mord an den Geiseln”, *FZ*, 05.05.1919, AB, p. 2; “München”, *FZ*, 07.05.1919, EMB, pp. 1-2; “Heftige Straßenkämpfe in München. Spartakistische Bestialitäten”, *DTZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 2; “Die Säuberung des Münchener Augiasstalles”, *DZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 2; “München völlig im Besitz der Regierungstruppen”, *DZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 5.

⁷⁴ “Bayern, Der Mord an den Geiseln”, *FZ*, 05.05.1919, AB, p. 2; “Die Befreiung Münchens”, *DAZ*, 03.05.1919, AA, p. 1; “Die Erschießung der Münchener Geiseln”, *VZ*, 04.05.1919, p. 4.

⁷⁵ “Die Erschießung der Münchener Geiseln”, *VZ*, 04.05.1919, p. 4; “München in der Hand der Regierungstruppen”, *DTZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 2; “Die Säuberung des Münchener Augiasstalles”, *DZ*, 03.05.1919, MA, p. 2.

⁷⁶ “Die Befreiung Münchens”, *DAZ*, 03.05.1919, AA, p. 1; “München besetzt! Heftige Kämpfe”, *Vorwärts*, 02.05.1919, AA, p. 1; “Die letzten Kämpfe in München”, *Vorwärts*, 06.05.1919, MA, p. 2; “München”, *FZ*, 07.05.1919, EMB, p. 2; “München von Regierungstruppen besetzt”, *NPZ*, 02.05.1919, AA, p. 1; “München genommen!”, *DTZ*, 02.05.1919, AA, p. 3.

⁷⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 34. Sitzung, p. 922.

⁷⁸ Cited in “Der Vormarsch gegen München”, *VZ*, 29.04.1919, AA, p. 4.

⁷⁹ “Das Ende der Münchener Räteregierung”, *FZ*, 04.05.1919, ZMB, p. 1.

Furthermore, Jewishness was consciously associated with the Councils' Republic in order to heighten its foreignness. Many prominent figures within the Councils' reign, and in Eisner's government before then, were in fact Jewish, like Eisner himself, Eugen Leviné, Gustav Landauer, or Ernst Toller. Though Max Levien was not actually Jewish, both him and Leviné were purposely denounced as foreign, Russian Jews, and agents of Bolshevism. Over the course of the year 1919, Brenner has shown how parts of the local and right-wing press increasingly focused on the, real or alleged, Jewishness of left-wing leaders and of the Councils' Republic in particular, becoming increasingly aggressively and outspokenly anti-Semitic.⁸⁰ Victor Klemperer's diary, too, holds clues to this changing mood in Munich, when he recounts a visit to his colleague Jochimsen's house where Mrs Jochimsen "hysterically" defends Count Arco, the right-wing extremist who had murdered Eisner in February of 1919, as a German martyr.⁸¹

The fear of 'Russian conditions', aided by 'foreign' agents, was prominent in Germany, especially against the backdrop of the already experienced violence of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary upheaval and the quite real presence and activities of, first, the Spartacus League and then the Communist Party in Berlin and Munich.⁸² However, even though the labour conflicts in postwar Britain, with their classic socialist demands surrounding working conditions and hours, never took on the scale and violence of the much more radical civil war-like situation in postwar Germany, the fear of 'Russian conditions' was also applicable to the UK. As has already been mentioned, the strike movement in Glasgow was consciously associated with Bolshevik activity, painting it as an outside influence foreign to Britain and explicitly 'un-British'. Particularly the conservative *Morning Post* characterised Bolshevism as something "alien", leading astray working men's "good loyal English instincts."⁸³ The paper also engaged liberally in anti-Irish and anti-Scottish racism, as well as anti-Semitism, blaming the "big Sinn Fein element among the Irish workers" in Glasgow, the "wild Scots", and the "Russian Jews" for the disturbances, which they exaggerated into a potentially "very

⁸⁰ See Brenner, *Schatten*, p. 148-149 (for the deliberate misidentification of Max Levien as Jewish), and chapter 3 in general for the increasing radicalisation of anti-Semitic language in Bavaria over the course of the year 1919.

⁸¹ Klemperer, *Lachen und weinen*, p. 98.

⁸² The term 'Russian conditions' in this instance is taken from Jones, *Founding Weimar*, for example p. 230.

⁸³ "The Bolsheviks coming to town", *Morning Post*, 04.02.1919, p. 6. Note the use of "English" in this instance. How conscious the choice was, is hard to tell; however, the article also deals with the expansion of the strikes to the Underground workers in London and the use of "English" might therefore be explained by this circumstance.

disastrous Bolshevik riot.”⁸⁴ Echoing the anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism of the German ‘stab-in-the-back’ myth, and rehashing stereotypes about Jews as foreign conspirators, strike leader Emanuel Shinwell in particular was singled out by the *Morning Post* as a “Polish Jew”⁸⁵ who was representative of “your professional Hebrew revolutionary” who preyed on “a discontented people.” The paper expressed surprise, or perhaps frustration that “the British workman should allow those aliens to lead him by the nose.”⁸⁶ To prevent this ‘foreign’, specifically ‘continental’, chaos and revolutionary sentiment from spreading to either Britain or the Empire, the British state needed to be seen to be able to maintain law and order. An important aspect of maintaining law and order, and related not least linguistically, was the state’s ability to rely on its executive; the *Morning Post* therefore expressed complete confidence that, if called upon, “soldiers will obey orders.”⁸⁷ The characterisation of this executive more generally was similar to that of the government troops in Munich. Emphasis was placed on the police and the military as orderly, efficient, and possessing all means of modern, “scientific warfare”, including “shrapnel-helmet[s], [...] rifles and fixed bayonets, with many rounds of live ammunition.”⁸⁸ The professionalism and efficiency of the state executive was again juxtaposed with the demonstrators, who were frequently described as “young roughs” and “boys” who used “disgusting language”, got drunk on looted beer, and later “ran away like rabbits” when the police charged them with their batons.⁸⁹

Just as the experience of Munich’s bourgeois citizenry contrasted starkly with the experiences of those involved in the fighting itself, there was also an apparent discrepancy between, on the one hand, the violence meted out by police in George Square on 31 January 1919 which newspapers reported as unprecedented and shocking, and, on the other hand, some of the more mundane aspects of the rioting on that day, which, as indicated above, involved some young men breaking into businesses, looting beer and jewellery, and throwing nothing more dangerous than stones and bottles of sparkling water.⁹⁰ While commentators thus cast aspersions on the bravery and the virility of the male protestors, the treatment of

⁸⁴ “Glasgow Strike Riots”, *Morning Post*, 01.02.1919, p. 5; “Industrial Turmoil”, *Morning Post*, 03.02.1919, p. 7; “The Bolsheviks coming to town”, *Morning Post*, 04.02.1919, p. 6; “Standing up to it”, *Morning Post*, 06.02.1919, p. 4.

⁸⁵ “Industrial Turmoil”, *Morning Post*, 03.02.1919, p. 7.

⁸⁶ “Standing up to it”, *Morning Post*, 06.02.1919, p. 4.

⁸⁷ “Plain words to the strikers. A miscalculation of the Chances”, *Morning Post*, 04.02.1919, p. 4.

⁸⁸ “6 tanks at Glasgow”, *Daily Mail*, 05.02.1919, p. 5 (first quote); “10,000 Soldiers in Glasgow”, *The Courier and Argus*, 03.02.1919, p. 3 (subsequent quote); see also “Military Measures”, *Glasgow Herald*, 03.02.1919, p. 7.

⁸⁹ “Glasgow Outbreak. Public-House Looted for Bottles”, *Daily Mail*, 01.02.1919, p. 5.

⁹⁰ For example, “Glasgow Outbreak. Public-House Looted for Bottles”, *Daily Mail*, 01.02.1919, p. 5; “The Labour Ferment”, *Times*, 01.02.1919, p. 9; “Strike Riots in Glasgow”, *Manchester Guardian*, 01.02.1919, p. 7.

women presented an interesting gendered reading of the public discourse around the acts of political violence in both Glasgow and Munich. It constituted another category of classing people as either the 'right' or 'wrong' kind to be involved in such conflicts. There were both men and women among the assembled protestors in Glasgow's George Square, and as the police began charging the rioting crowds, they reportedly used their batons to "[hit] out at everybody who came in their way."⁹¹ Some women who were reported to have "innocently turned out to watch the procession" had children with them and "got mixed up in the melee."⁹² Women were thus characterised as passive and innocent victims of the police charges; the possibility of them being actively involved in the political demonstration taking place was not entertained. Once injured, they were described as "hysterical."⁹³ On the one hand, this long-standing trope painted the women as too weak to withstand the consequences of getting involved, or even just showing up, at the scene of political protest. On the other hand, it also helped in driving home the indiscriminate force of the police violence used against all those assembled in George Square, many of whom, men and women, were considered 'innocent' passers-by, thus undermining the authority of the police's actions.

In the reporting on the violent end of Munich's Councils' Republic the characterisation of women was twofold. As in Glasgow, they were occasionally presented as innocent victims; but the press also emphasised the fact that there were women among the Communist fighters. Given the high number of civilian victims of the fighting in Munich, it is reasonable to assume that among the civilian victims there were a number of women. However, as has been discussed above, the murder of the hostages drew the most attention in the press. Among the victims shot in the school yard was Hella Countess von Westarp, a noblewoman and the only female victim of the hostage murder. Westarp became the epitome of the 'innocent woman' killed, not by the 'white terror' of the government troops, but by the ruthless, animalistic Communists. Being the only woman among the victims, she was by definition an atypical victim, but her fate was especially picked up by newspapers who presented it as representative more generally of the innocent victims which Communist rule in Munich had allegedly demanded. Reports on the hostage murder made sure to mention that one woman was among the victims, and, speaking of "marks of a particular ordeal," intimated that she had been sexually abused.⁹⁴ Though Jones has noted that these rumours proved to be untrue, the idea dominated the discourse and added to the characterisation of the Communists as

⁹¹ "Clyde Strike Tumult", *Times*, 01.02.1919, p. 9.

⁹² "Strike Terrorism in Glasgow", *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 01.02.1919, p. 5.

⁹³ "Clyde Strike Tumult", *Times*, 01.02.1919, p. 9.

⁹⁴ "Das Ende der Münchener Räteregierung", *FZ*, 04.05.1919, ZMB, p. 1; "Die Ermordung der Münchener Geiseln", *VZ*, 05.05.1919, AA, p. 4.

predatory.⁹⁵ Westarp's status as a noblewoman made her an attractive victim to use in order to highlight Communist violence against supposedly innocent individuals; the many working class women killed over the course of the fighting in Munich remained nameless and their deaths were not constructed as a public scandal and crime. On the other hand, women who were active in fighting on the side of the Councils' Republic also themselves became part of the negative characterisation of the Communists. Bourgeois newspapers described them as "fanatical womenfolk" ("*fanatische Weiber*"), and noted with some disgust that "even hateful [*verhetzte*]" armed women [took] part in the fighting."⁹⁶ The dichotomy in the reception of women as either innocent victims or fanatical Communists echoes the theory developed by Klaus Theweleit in his influential, if unusual, psychoanalytical study of German *Freikorps* fighters. In it, Theweleit made the case that, based on their fragile masculinity, the *Freikorps* men could only perceive women as one of two distinct archetypes. One was the blood-red Communist *Flintenweib* (literally 'gun woman', somewhat akin to 'battle-axe'), who was an out-of-control Amazonian murderer, sexual predator, and fair game for the *Freikorps* fighter. The other was the white and saintly, virginal German woman, who was generally a mother, sister, nurse, or wife to the *Freikorps* men and had to be liberated by them from the Bolshevik yoke.⁹⁷ The fact that language in the press echoed these characterisations, even if only moderately, should be noted as an important aspect in the use of public language in negotiating the legitimacy or illegitimacy of certain acts of political violence at this early stage of the interwar period.

This linguistic dehumanisation of the 'inner enemy', including the linguistic treatment of women, formed an important accompanying element of the authorities' efforts to present and uphold a certain self-image, both domestically and internationally, in both Germany and the United Kingdom. Language, in the words of Alessandro Portelli, allows access to the "horizon of shared possibilities, real or imagined."⁹⁸ This horizon may be individual or, if public language is examined, it can illuminate what expectations a society had in certain circumstances, based on certain experiences, and how it chose to respond. What this exploration of public language around political violence in Munich and Glasgow in 1919 has demonstrated is how experiences and expectations of revolution reverberated and took effect inter-, as well as

⁹⁵ Jones, *Founding Weimar*, p. 306.

⁹⁶ "Die Niederlage der Kommunisten", *DAZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 3 (first quote); "München vollständig besetzt", *NPZ*, 04.05.1919, MA, p. 1 (second quote).

⁹⁷ See particularly parts of chapter one in Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien. 1. Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte. 2. Männerkörper – Zur Psychoanalyse des weißen Terrors* (Frankfurt/M, 1986), pp. 88-158. This analysis will be picked up again in Chapter 2.

⁹⁸ Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia. Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, 1997), p. 88.

trans-nationally in postwar Europe. Projecting and upholding their preferred self-image was of central importance to both the German and the British states, and maintaining law and order, or *Ruhe und Ordnung*, was a central way of doing so. In the newly founded Weimar Republic, the experience of war and then of revolutionary upheaval and violence, primarily in Berlin in December 1918, in January 1919 and again in March 1919, shaped the authorities' response to the challenge of the Councils' Republic in Munich in April and May 1919. The fear of Bolshevism taking hold in a major German city pushed the authorities to act swiftly and decisively, while the precedent set by the taboo-breaking 'order to shoot' and the linguistic dehumanisation of the Communist enemy helped drive up the number of victims. Domestically, as well as internationally, presenting the young German republic as a stable, reliable and democratic member of the community of civilised nations was paramount. Britain had not experienced a revolutionary overthrow following the end of the First World War, but the Russian, and German, spectre of upheaval and violence unleashed on the continent sparked fear in the British authorities, too, of the strike movement on the Clyde developing a power which, in reality, it never did, and of Bolshevism spreading to Britain and its Empire.⁹⁹ Riots, especially in port cities like Glasgow, which had already been a hotbed of labour unrest during the war, often involved returned servicemen and fuelled wider concerns about the 'brutalising' effect of the war on British society. This fear helps explain the (over-) reaction in Glasgow, as the image of Britain having emerged from the horrors of the war as a 'peaceable kingdom' needed to be enforced, ironically by the use of the police baton if necessary. The discrepancies, especially along class lines, between the lived experiences of those involved in violent events, those living adjacent to them, and those reporting or recording them are obvious. Political violence, thus, was a postwar phenomenon frequent in many parts of Europe, and though it manifested itself on vastly different scales, the responses to it indicate the inter- and transnational potential of the European postwar culture of protest, upheaval, and social and political change, which the governments in power perceived as enough of a threat to respond with significant force.

1.2 JUNE 1922. SUMMER OF ASSASSINATIONS.

In June 1922 high-profile assassinations shook both the German and the British capitals. First, two men associated with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) assassinated former Chief of the Imperial General Staff and serving Member of Parliament, Sir Henry Wilson, on the doorstep

⁹⁹ Note that while Britain did not experience revolutionary upheaval at the end of the war, Ireland had not only been the scene of the Easter Rising in 1916, but also saw the beginning of a violent struggle for independence in 1919. This will be the subject of Chapter 2.

of his London home on 22 June. Just two days later, on 24 June, two men associated with the right-wing underground group *Organisation Consul* assassinated the German Foreign Minister, Walther Rathenau, near his Grunewald home as he was making his way to work in an open-top car. Shocking acts of domestic terrorism such as these assassinations confronted both the British and German states with the question of how a democratic society can and should react to them. This section, therefore, will examine the public language exhibited in parliament and in the press in response to these two assassinations. Initially, what these responses reveal is unsurprising. Both crimes shocked the British and German publics, respectively, and were strongly condemned by those writing or speaking in the press and in parliament. However, the section will then examine the ways in which the two murders soon began to be used politically, by different sides, and it will argue that these discourses contributed to the further solidification of certain constructions of national identity and the consolidation of particular self-images. For the still young Weimar Republic, profoundly affected by political violence throughout its early years, the violent death of the Foreign Minister posed a serious challenge and intensified the need to reassert its democratic, republican values and identity in the face of such a counter-revolutionary attack, both to a domestic and an international audience. In this situation, the figure of the murdered Rathenau lent itself particularly well to being stylised as a martyr for the republic. Within a domestic British context, the assassination of a high-profile military leader and politician stood out as a shocking and unique exception to the otherwise non-physical carrying out of political conflicts in British politics, in which the commentators analysed here took great pride. Though it did not pose a real threat to the integrity of the British state, public discourse in Britain was nevertheless compelled to emphasise the act's 'un-British' nature and to ensure the perpetrators' categorical condemnation and their rhetorical exclusion from civilised society.

The secondary literature dedicated exclusively to these two assassinations is relatively sparse. The still most widely cited monograph on the murder of Walther Rathenau is Martin Sabrow's *Die verdrängte Verschwörung* ('The [psychologically] suppressed conspiracy').¹⁰⁰ In it, the author reconstructs in great detail and based on careful source work, the events of the assassination and its aftermath, including the public reaction to it, the hunt for the perpetrators, their trial, and their highly probable affiliation to the right-wing underground *Organisation Consul*, providing an invaluable source for understanding the event and its wider

¹⁰⁰ Martin Sabrow, *Die verdrängte Verschwörung: Der Rathenau-Mord und die deutsche Gegenrevolution* (Frankfurt/M, 1999). This is largely identical in content with his 1994 dissertation, published as Martin Sabrow, *Der Rathenau-Mord. Rekonstruktion einer Verschwörung gegen die Republik von Weimar* (München, 1994).

consequences and context. Two perceptive book chapters by Manuela Achilles explore the murder and its aftermath in the context of nationalist violence and republican identities in Weimar Germany more generally. She firstly analyses the deliberate construction of Rathenau as a martyr for the republic, in life as well as in death, and as a *lieu de mémoire* used to aid the relatively young German state in its identity construction. In a second contribution, she analyses the official commemoration of Rathenau's death in detail and identifies it as a crucial "moment of democratic invention" for the young Weimar Republic.¹⁰¹ Henry Wilson's murder is, leaving aside several non-academic biographies written by Wilson's contemporaries, the subject of only two publications: firstly, the final chapter of Keith Jeffery's biography of Wilson; and secondly, a journal article by Peter Hart, focusing in particular on the possibility of a direct link between the Irish revolutionary leader and politician, Michael Collins, and Wilson's assassins.¹⁰²

For a study interested in the rhetorical treatment of political violence, looking at the public language exhibited in response to these targeted assassinations in some further detail helps reveal another side to the topic of enquiry. It illuminates what language was used, and considered appropriate, when the perpetrators of a violent act were clearly identifiable as enemies of the state. Several other case studies considered for this thesis focus on violent acts perpetrated by (currently or formerly) state-directed or state-sponsored agents, for example paramilitaries. Their violent actions often necessitated a difficult balance to be struck within public discourse, as to how to judge them when their actions were perceived to have overstepped the lines of what was publicly defensible. Both the assassins of Henry Wilson and those of Walther Rathenau had been members of formerly state-sponsored bodies of violence who subsequently lost their state-sponsorship and then joined violent underground organisations. Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan both served in the British Army before joining the Irish nationalist cause; while the members of the right-wing underground *Organisation Consul* had previously been members of the *Reich's* armed forces and/or of certain *Freikorps* which the German government had relied on in its early months to consolidate its power against left-wing radicals, such as in the example of Munich discussed

¹⁰¹ Manuela Achilles, "Nationalist Violence and Republican Identity in Weimar Germany: The Murder of Walther Rathenau", in Christian Emden and David Midgley (eds.), *German Literature, History and the Nation. Papers from the Conference 'The Fragile Tradition', Cambridge 2002*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 305-328. Quotation in Manuela Achilles, "Reforming the Reich. Democratic Symbols and Rituals in the Weimar Republic", in Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (eds.), *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects. Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York and Oxford, 2010), p. 176.

¹⁰² Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford, 2008); Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", *Irish Historical Studies*, 28/110 (1992), pp. 150-170; later reprinted as chapter 8 in Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War, 1916-1923* (Oxford 2003).

above.¹⁰³ This background notwithstanding, these perpetrators of violence were easy to identify and condemn as enemy outsiders, as they were considered to operate outside of societal norms by having attacked individuals who were representatives of the state. Strong and outright condemnation of the assassins' acts was therefore acceptable and expected. This section will examine what other discursive treatment of the perpetrators and their actions was considered acceptable under the circumstances, but also what lines could still not be crossed or may have been contested, for example through reference to universal moral codes, certain self-images based around justice and dignity, and the need to reaffirm membership of the 'civilised' world.

Henry Wilson, born into a Protestant family in County Longford in Ireland, was a British Army officer, eventually reaching the rank of Field Marshall, who served as Sub Chief of Staff of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front, then as Corps commander, later as head of Eastern Command, and finally as the British Military Representative on the Supreme War Council during the First World War. He became Chief of the Imperial General Staff (head of the Army) in 1918 and held the position throughout the period of the Irish War of Independence from 1919-1921 (which is explored more in Chapter 2 of the thesis). It was this role of his, overseeing the British (para-)military campaign in Ireland, which made him profoundly unpopular with, and a conceivable target of, Irish nationalists. In February 1922 he was furthermore elected Unionist MP for the Northern Irish constituency of North Down. In the afternoon of 22 June 1922, when returning from the unveiling of a war memorial for fallen railway men at Liverpool Street Station earlier in the day, Wilson was shot multiple times and died on his own doorstep on Eaton Place in London. The two gunmen, Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan, both 24 years old, London-born Catholics and former members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), were apprehended after a brief chase in which two policemen and a civilian were wounded. As the news of the murder spread through London and the country more widely, Jeffery asserts that "condemnation was complete."¹⁰⁴ This was unsurprising, given the cold-blooded nature of the crime, committed in broad daylight in London's affluent Belgravia district, and given the great esteem in which the victim was held by his peers, especially for his role as a military leader in the First World War. Accordingly, words like "shocking", "horror", and "dastardly" abounded in the newspapers as well as in the parliamentary chambers. When word of Wilson's murder reached the House of Commons that

¹⁰³ Chapter 2 of the thesis further explores how members of (formerly) state-sponsored paramilitary bodies chose to speak or remain silent about their experiences.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, p. 286.

afternoon, members were visibly shaken. Speaking with palpable emotion, Leader of the Opposition, H.H. Asquith, inquired whether the news he had just received was indeed true and after the Conservative leader Austen Chamberlain confirmed the fact of the assassination, the House agreed to adjourn out of respect for the murder victim.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the House of Lords immediately agreed a Motion expressing its “detestation of the horrible crime” which passed unanimously, as the circumstances were perceived to be “altogether without precedent.”¹⁰⁶ This was of course not strictly true, neither was the exaggerated assertion made in some of the press that there had been no such assassination “for centuries.”¹⁰⁷ The last time a sitting Member of Parliament had been assassinated had been in 1812 when Prime Minister Spencer Perceval was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons.¹⁰⁸ What these horrified affirmations gave voice to, however, was the wide-spread and profound sense that this act was upsettingly un-British and uncharacteristic of British history, society, and politics. Political murders, “these hideous crimes”, were recognised as something that was happening on the disturbed European continent; however, as the then Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill claimed, there were “few things of which this country could be more proud” than the fact that there had been “hardly any political assassinations” in Britain. This was, continued Churchill, due to “very deep causes in the national character.”¹⁰⁹ This theme was picked up, for example by the left-liberal newsmagazine *The Nation*, which repeated it in its assertion that “[t]he peculiarly British horror of political assassination, which would make the ordinary Englishman shudder equally at the murder of a Die-Hard leader or a Communist leader, is [...] one of the soundest instincts in our nature.”¹¹⁰ This striking, almost oxymoronic, affirmation that the British people were opposed to all political assassination, no matter the victim’s actual politics, raises the question of how much meaningful content the phrase ‘political assassination’ actually held in the British public, as opposed to ‘ordinary’ murder. Reiterating the distinct British way of dealing with an incident such as Wilson’s murder, and drawing attention to the international reverberations of the crime, Prime Minister David Lloyd George urged the preservation of the “calm which has always characterised Britain”, and warned

¹⁰⁵ HC, 22.06.1922, vol. 155, cc. 1514-6.

¹⁰⁶ HL, 22.06.1922, vol. 50, cc. 1093, 1095.

¹⁰⁷ “The Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson”, *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic*, 24.06.1922, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁹ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1705.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, p. 286. The term ‘die-hard’ in this context refers to a group of “self-styled representatives of traditional conservatism”, who were disaffected with coalition politics and therefore made it their mission to hold the Conservative leadership to their interpretation of true conservative values, inside parliament and out. See Inbal A. Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy During the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922* (Abingdon and New York, 1999), p. xvi.

members to be more aware of how Britain was viewed abroad, where there was – according to him – a sense that if ‘England’ were to succumb to panic now, then “England is just like any other country,” rather than, as always, displaying “calm composure, judgment, [and] firmness in moments when others would have been swept away by passion.”¹¹¹

Along with outright shock and outrage, further layers soon emerged within the public language used to discuss the crime. The notion of ‘civilisation’ was once again central, in two notable facets. On the one hand, the crime contradicted basic values of civilisation; while on the other hand, the murder also presented an opportunity for Britain to demonstrate and reinforce precisely those civilizational values in its reaction to the assassination and in its treatment of the assassins. Opinion was largely unanimous in declaring that the crime had “horrified the whole civilized world” and “shocked humanity and disgraced civilisation.”¹¹² In particular, the identification of the assassins, as former IRA members, with the cause of Irish independence and the continuing violence of the nascent Irish Civil War caused some commentators in the press and in parliament to associate the recently independent south of Ireland with the ‘uncivilised’ act of brute force committed in London. The *Pall Mall Gazette* expressed hope that the “Free State” would one day “evolve into a community that will eventually rise to the ranks of civilisation.”¹¹³ Not being one to mince his words, the Scottish Unionist MP John Jameson declared that if

Ireland – that is to say, Green Ireland – [...] [had] determined not to let Ulster lead a decent life, free from murder, arson and crime, and if it [had] determined not to let Great Britain live a decent life either, but to send murderers and gunmen to commit outrages in the very heart of the Empire here in London, Ireland will have to be dealt with very drastically. It is the old problem of barbarism and civilisation existing side by side. [...] If civilisation does not conquer barbarism, barbarism will over-run civilisation. [...] That will have to cease, or the independence, what is called self-determination, of the 26 counties, will have to cease, and they will have to be re-conquered.¹¹⁴

This drastic appraisal contained as much evidence of Jameson’s condemnation of assassinations, as it allowed insight into Jameson’s understanding of the civilizational values propagated by him. While the civilisation which, in Jameson’s eyes, was epitomised in the British Empire had granted Ireland self-determination, the MP clearly betrayed his continued perception of Ireland as a colonial sphere and reserved the right of the Empire to “re-conquer”

¹¹¹ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, cc. 1803-1804.

¹¹² “The Last Post”, *Times*, 26.06.1922, p. 15; latter quote from the judge at the trial of Dunne and O’Sullivan, reported in “The Late Sir Henry Wilson”, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 26.06.1922, p. 3.

¹¹³ “After the Crime”, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24.06.1922, TNA (Kew), HO 144/3689.

¹¹⁴ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1770-1771.

the 26 southern counties if the Free State's inability to contain terrorism and civil war should render it unworthy of independence in the eyes of the former imperial rulers. Éamon de Valera, then *Teachta Dála* (TD, 'Deputy to the *Dáil*', the Irish parliament) for County Clare, however, lost no time in turning such accusations on their head. From his position as a member of the Irish parliament, he criticised "our hypocritical civilisation" which, according to him, only called for expressions of horror and condemnation when the victim of a killing was "placed in the seats of the mighty and his name known in every corner of the earth" and not when the victim was "the humble worker or peasant unknown outside his immediate neighbourhood."¹¹⁵ During the trial of the two defendants Dunne and O'Sullivan, the judge further established that their crime had transgressed certain universal mores. He refused Dunne the right to read out a prepared statement in his defence, arguing that the statement was nothing more than a "manifesto asserting a belief in the right to kill" and thus impermissible to have read out publicly in court.¹¹⁶ Seemingly underlining the fact that the entire 'civilized' world shared the horror of this assassination, newspapers faithfully reported the many letters of sympathy from international dignitaries which reached the British government, for example from France, Canada, and even the traditionally pro-Irish United States.¹¹⁷

The indignation at, and overwhelming condemnation of, the assassination of Wilson was not surprising. Where this reaction might lead, however, was a more open question. *The Manchester Guardian's* evidently quite level-headed London Correspondent analysed as early as Thursday evening that though many expected Wilson's assassination to cause a seismic shift in the government, making perhaps even a general election necessary, he did not expect the murder to change the government's Irish policy in favour of Ulster Unionism, or indeed have any "serious political consequences" at all.¹¹⁸ Though he was right in predicting that the shock of the assassination did not lead to a change in government behaviour towards the British-recognised Provisional Government of Ireland or a sudden explicitly pro-Ulster Unionist shift of policy, Wilson's murder was soon instrumentalised by forces on either side of the political spectrum to further exacerbate their divisions. As one editorial observed, "[both] in the press and outside emotions have been allowed to get out of hand, and attacks of great violence and acrimony have been made on the Premier, on Mr. Chamberlain, and especially

¹¹⁵ "Cabinet Ministers Guarded by Scotland Yard Detectives", *The Courier and Argus*, 24.06.1922, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ "Sir H. Wilson's Murder", *Times*, 19.07.1922, TNA (Kew), HO 144/3689.

¹¹⁷ "French President's Sympathy", "The News in Canada", "General Pershing Horrified", all in *Manchester Guardian*, 23.06.1922, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ "The Political Effects of the Assassination", *Manchester Guardian*, 23.06.1922, p. 8.

on [the Home Secretary, A.K.] Mr. Shortt. Attacks were of course expected. It is their extreme bitterness which surprises.”¹¹⁹

The connection of Wilson’s death with ‘Irish affairs’ was immediately obvious to all contemporaries, even if it remained unclear for a long time whether or not a conspiracy to have Wilson killed had actually existed within the IRA, and whether Dunne and O’Sullivan had been acting on direct orders from Michael Collins or had hatched their plan alone. Despite the existence of earlier IRA plans to target Wilson, Hart has presented the most conclusive evidence to date that by June 1922 no such action was officially sanctioned, and Dunne and O’Sullivan must be considered to have made the decision to assassinate Wilson on their own and without orders from the IRA.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the explicitly political nature of this murder further exacerbated the on-going conflict over how Great Britain, following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, ought to behave towards the Provisional Government in the south and the six counties to the north of the island, as the Irish Civil War began to break out in the summer of 1922. Amid the bitter debates on the future of British policy in Ireland, Wilson, the recently elected MP for North Down, was quickly turned, by some of his former colleagues in the Commons, into a martyr for the fate of Southern Unionists and Ulster Protestants. As one Conservative MP insisted, “[the] late Field-Marshal died for the freedom of his people, for the freedom of conscience, for the freedom of free expression.”¹²¹

Other MPs took it upon themselves to speak on behalf of the recently deceased and used Wilson’s memory to attack the government, proclaiming, for example, that “[in] Ireland these things have been going on every day. If Sir Henry Wilson were alive now he would say that he would be very glad to give his life in order that those deeds might be stopped. Yet it is only when a man is murdered here that the Government come down and tell us what action – as to that I am extremely doubtful – they are going to take.”¹²² In Jeffery’s analysis, Wilson’s death quickly achieved a “mythic quality.”¹²³ The ultra-conservative *Morning Post* spoke with admiration of the way that “the martyrdom of one man, a famous soldier” had drawn thousands to line the streets of London for Wilson’s funeral procession to pay their respects.¹²⁴ His ‘martyrdom’ was heightened further by the heroisation of his leadership in the First World War. Thus, *The Times* commented upon the “special poignancy” of the circumstance that when he

¹¹⁹ Editorial, *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 26.06.1922, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Hart, “Michael Collins”.

¹²¹ Boyd-Carpenter, HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1790.

¹²² F. Banbury (Conservative, City of London), HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1715.

¹²³ Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, p. 285.

¹²⁴ Cited in Keith Jeffery, “Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: Myths and the Man”, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 86/345 (2008), p. 57.

was murdered, Wilson had just returned from a commemoration of men who had fallen in the war. “Few”, the paper eulogised, “had done more to achieve the victory for which they had died.”¹²⁵ However, as Jeffery points out, critical voices existed too, which also tied Wilson’s death to Ireland, but, hyperbolising his support for Ulster Unionist politics, blamed him for having provoked his own death through an alleged “fanatical Orangeism” and “spirit of ruthless and stupid retaliation.”¹²⁶

Against the background of the volatile climate in Ireland, Wilson’s violent death sparked a vigorous political debate. There were those who placed the responsibility for this assassination on the Provisional Government and the nation of Ireland, for supposedly having harboured the ideological fanaticism which had allowed such an act that was beyond the boundaries of a common, human moral code. *The Times* made this case, for example, writing that

nothing can atone for the crime that has been committed. Whatever measures the Government and Parliament may see fit to take, the responsibility for those measures must rest solely with the Irish nation. [...] Morally she is an outlaw [...]. She is past the reach of external aid. No amount of good will, good faith, and good intentions on the part of Great Britain can be of any avail to her as long as murder is her ultimate political argument.¹²⁷

The Times thus actively positioned the government of the Irish Free State as being outside of moral law, by describing it as a moral “outlaw” from the community of civilised nations. However, more conciliatory voices conceded that some of the responsibility for the ongoing violent conflicts in Ireland, which had in this instance spilled over into the streets of London, also lay with the British government’s actions. Reminding readers of the circumstance that both assassins had served in the British Army during the First World War, Dunne with the Irish Guards and O’Sullivan with the Royal Fusiliers, having even lost a leg in France, *The Manchester Guardian* suggested that “[in] ordinary circumstances these are hardly the kind of men who would be likely to be guilty of so black a crime. But it is quite conceivable that they may have been led to it by what they regarded as intolerable wrongs committed against the section of the people to which they belonged and to the men of their own faith.”¹²⁸ Fearing rising tensions, the same paper made a particularly striking appeal to the patriotic virtue of calmness to both British and Irish politicians and ordinary people. It compared Wilson’s assassination to that of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June 1914 and recalled how the

¹²⁵ “An Abominable Crime”, *Times*, 23.06.1922, p. 17.

¹²⁶ *New Statesman*, 24.06.1922, cited in Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, pp. 289.

¹²⁷ “The Last Post”, *Times*, 26.06.1922, p. 15.

¹²⁸ “The Crime and its Origin”, *Manchester Guardian*, 24.06.1922, p. 10.

“intemperate elements in the two Imperial Powers prevailed”, leading the world into the all-too-recent horrors of the war. It warned that

even now there are not wanting, among the ‘Die-hards’ of an English party, men who would follow the Austrian and German example and visit upon the whole of a weak neighbour nation the punishment of a murderous fanatic. Nor are there wanting in Ireland ‘Die-hards’ equal in folly and inhumanity to these [...]. That is what every patriotic Englishman and every patriotic Irishman has to resist.¹²⁹

As the two perpetrators were caught very soon after the crime, their trial before the Central Criminal Court (known as the Old Bailey) could go ahead swiftly, and given the overwhelming evidence, the two defendants pleaded guilty and there was little doubt that they would receive the death penalty. It was carried out promptly on 10 August 1922, when Dunne and O’Sullivan were hanged in Wandsworth Prison. The trial illuminated another facet in which Wilson’s death was instrumentalised politically. The conservative *Morning Post* accused the Labour and Liberal-friendly press of a “whitewashing of the assassins” by continuing to call them “alleged murderers”, as the *Daily Herald* had done, and by attempting to shift the blame for the act from the murderers to the “policy of reprisals” which the British forces had engaged in during the Irish War of Independence (see Chapter 2). It used international and historic comparisons to express disgust at how the *Westminster Gazette* readily acknowledged the assassins’ political motivations rather than condemning them as ordinary criminals, which, the *Post* remarked bitterly, would be “equally valid as applied to the murderer of Abraham Lincoln or, to take the most recent case, to those of Dr. Rathenau.”¹³⁰ At the other extreme, there were those liberal voices which accused the judiciary of having become “entangled in party politics” and thus considered the trial a miscarriage of justice altogether. Referring to the judge’s (above-mentioned) decision to not allow one of the accused to read out a statement, because the judge considered it to be defending the right to kill, George Bernard Shaw argued that the running of the trial and the resulting death sentence passed on Dunne and O’Sullivan had been a “travesty of judicial procedure.”¹³¹ The proper course of justice, even if interpreted in diametrically opposed ways, was thus presented in the press as an enormously important aspect of the ‘civilisation’ that was to be defended against this murderous attack.

¹²⁹ “The Irish Debate”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27.06.1922, p. 8.

¹³⁰ “What we are coming to”, *Morning Post*, 20.07.1922, TNA (Kew), HO 144/3689.

¹³¹ “The Silencing of Sir H. Wilson’s Assassins”, *Manchester Guardian*, 08.08.1922, TNA (Kew), HO 144/3689.

Another point of contention which surfaced in the debates following Wilson's death was the accusation levelled against the government of having failed to provide appropriate protection for ministers and other public figures who were considered to be at risk of assassination by Irish gunmen for their role as outspoken supporters of Ulster. 'Die-hard' Conservative critics of the government railed against the decision to have police protection removed from potential targets, such as Wilson, taken by the government in consultation with Scotland Yard a few weeks prior, and demanded that someone ought to resign over the matter.¹³² The Home Secretary Edward Shortt, however, categorically denied that there had been any concrete evidence to suggest that "the Field-Marshal was in danger."¹³³ In this context, a particularly interesting debate arose over the question of whether police should be (or should have been) armed. The matter was repeatedly raised by 'die-hard' MPs who suggested that under the present circumstances, where attempts on certain individuals were apparently imminent, the police should be armed to be adequately equipped to handle this danger. The Home Secretary again defended the course of action taken by the government, stating the police were unarmed "by their own desire" and that they had always had the option to ask for weapons to be provided to them from their stations.¹³⁴ Even the 'die-hard' Conservative MP Archer-Shee agreed that it was usually not necessary to arm police, expressing proud hope that "it never will be [necessary] to arm the police in London, or in England generally"; however, he vehemently opposed the policy of expecting policemen to come forward and only arming them at their own request. Betraying a typically conservative notion of manliness, Archer-Shee argued that asking to be armed while carrying out their duties would make those policemen who did so "a laughing stock to others." Therefore, he continued, that decision ought to be taken out of the individual policeman's hands and made by "the superior authority."¹³⁵ This particular debate demonstrated how conservative voices could at the same time take pride in the fact that the British police did not usually need to be armed, but also categorically argue in favour of a strong approach, including arming certain policemen when it was considered necessary for the protection and defence of a "distinguished person."¹³⁶

Walther Rathenau was a German-Jewish politician and industrialist, born the heir to one of the world's leading electrical companies, AEG (*Allgemeine Electricitäts-Gesellschaft*). After the First World War, the member of the centrist *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP,

¹³² HC, 23.06.1922, vol. 155, cc.1539-1542.

¹³³ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c.1646.

¹³⁴ HC, 23.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1539.

¹³⁵ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1763.

¹³⁶ HC, 23.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1543.

‘German Democratic Party’) became Germany’s Foreign Minister in January 1922. On the morning of 24 June 1922 he was on his way from his villa in the wealthy Grunewald neighbourhood on the outskirts of Berlin to the Foreign Office in the city centre, when his assassins overtook his open-top vehicle, threw a hand-grenade in the car and shot him, before driving off. The minister was dead within minutes. News of Rathenau’s death spread fast and a nation-wide manhunt for his killers began immediately, with a 1 million *Reichsmark* reward announced for their capture or relevant information leading to their capture. When the two young men who had killed the minister, 23 year-old Erwin Kern and 26 year-old Hermann Fischer, were eventually cornered inside Burg Saaleck castle in Saxony-Anhalt on 17 July, Kern was killed in a shootout with the police after which Fischer took his own life.¹³⁷ Their associates who had been arrested in the meantime and eventually stood trial, could therefore only be charged with aiding and abetting, and as accessories to murder. Among them were the driver of the car from which Rathenau had been attacked, the 20-year old student Ernst Werner Techow, as well as a number of other men involved in the conspiracy to kill the minister. As subsequent historical research has established, Kern, Fischer, Techow, the owner of Saaleck castle, and several other conspirators were all most likely members of the so-called *Organisation Consul* (O.C.), an anti-democratic illegal underground paramilitary group, formed out of the disbanded *Freikorps*, whose express goal it was to destroy the republican form of government and fight “anything anti- and international, Jewry, Social Democracy, and radical left-wing parties.”¹³⁸

After *Reichstagspräsident* (‘president of the parliament’, equivalent roughly to Speaker of the House), Paul Löbe, broke the news of Rathenau’s violent death to the assembled members of the *Reichstag*, the tumultuous reactions immediately made it practically impossible to continue with the sitting. No adjournment out of respect for the deceased was sought, as the House of Commons had done two days previously. Instead, the day’s scheduled debate was to be used as a first opportunity for the members of parliament to honour the victim. However, it took Löbe numerous appeals to members’ manners and sense of mutual respect to allow for anyone to actually speak to the assembled. Among riotous behaviour and shouts from the Communists and Independent Social Democrats calling right-wing members, particularly Karl Helfferich of the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP, ‘German National People’s Party’), “murderers” and demanding their immediate arrest, Löbe had to remind those assembled that “physical assault” (*Tätlichkeiten*) had no place in the

¹³⁷ Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, pp. 129-130.

¹³⁸ Wolfram Selig, “Organisation Consul”, in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Band 5: Organisationen, Institutionen, Bewegungen* (München, 2008), p. 466.

Reichstag. Even after a break in proceedings, calm could still not be restored as bitter accusations continued to fly across the chamber. Members on the extreme Left accused those on the Right of having functioned as the intellectual vanguard which had inspired Rathenau's assassins with their consistently reactionary, monarchist, nationalist, and anti-Semitic rhetoric; they refused to take their seats while the DNVP was still in attendance, as this would, in their view, turn the planned memorial ceremony into a farce.¹³⁹

Much like with Wilson's death two days previously, the overwhelming reaction from the political establishment to Rathenau's murder was one of indignation and condemnation of the act. Löbe spoke of "an act of such monstrous cruelty and brutality [*Grausamkeit und Roheit* [sic!]] as to make the blood in our veins freeze." He highlighted the unity which resulted from the "grief and horror which moves us all, as well as the contempt for those wretched ones who committed this deed."¹⁴⁰ There was considerable evidence of this unity in the chamber that weekend, as Independent Social Democrat Arthur Crispian conceded that even though Rathenau had been a political opponent of the USPD, he had always done what he thought best for his country and Crispian's party held Rathenau in high esteem for it. His murderers, on the other hand, were nothing more than "cowardly beasts."¹⁴¹ Even the political Right was compelled to join the "republican litany of mourning."¹⁴² Oskar Hergt, who was given the thankless task of speaking for the DNVP during Sunday's special sitting, announced that "[the] German National People's Party is filled with deepest indignation and disgust at this wicked deed", only to be heckled by speakers on the Left who promptly denounced him as a "hypocrite!"¹⁴³

Even though the reactions to Rathenau's murder were largely characterised by condemnation, the divisions between left- and right-wing voices were more marked in Germany, and the transformation of Rathenau's tragic death into a political weapon with which to attack opponents was more immediate, and much more aggressive, than in Great Britain. Commenting on the riotous *Reichstag*, the conservative and business-friendly *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* published an exaggerated account of how "members of left-wing parties rowdily pounced on the present bourgeois [*bürgerlich*] members, and, under physical assaults and verbal abuse, forced them out of the chamber."¹⁴⁴ Though Löbe made a point of clarifying the previous day's events at Sunday's sitting, saying that there had been misunderstandings

¹³⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 234. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8033.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8034.

¹⁴¹ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8050.

¹⁴² Achilles, "Nationalist Violence", p. 319.

¹⁴³ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8049.

¹⁴⁴ "Die Reichstagssitzung abgebrochen", *DAZ*, 24.06.1922, AA, p. 1.

but certainly no physical assaults on anyone, but that the press instead had exaggerated events in their reporting, the *DAZ* still indignantly spoke of “tumultuous and highly undignified scenes.”¹⁴⁵ There was even some, perhaps justified, fear that the strong emotions aroused by the murder might actually have the potential to escalate into a civil war, as contemporary observer Victor Klemperer noted in his diary.¹⁴⁶ Crispien indeed made a relatively unveiled threat of civil war, when he said that if the government continued to prove unable to clamp down on the rampant counter-revolutionary violence, then the proletariat would eventually be forced to respond in kind.¹⁴⁷

As with Wilson in Britain, martyrdom emerged as the fate of this victim of assassination, too. Martin Sabrow has observed that the murder reverberated deep into bourgeois-conservative quarters, making the figure of Rathenau especially suited to be turned into a martyr for the republic as soon as the minister had succumbed to his injuries.¹⁴⁸ This could be observed as early as the *Reichstag*'s Saturday afternoon sitting, where Löbe declared with great pathos that following this attack on so prominent and eminent a representative of the German state, “what is at stake is the German nation, the German people, the German republic!”¹⁴⁹ Löbe then went on to make sharp accusations against the right-wing underground networks within Germany, set on undermining and destroying the republic, who protected and financed the assassins and their accomplices, as well as those who, in public forums such as the *Reichstag* and in the press, incited such acts. Pointing, he declared that “[this] chair would not be empty today [...] without the unbridled agitation against the men who are at the forefront of the government.”¹⁵⁰ Löbe's pithy remarks were greeted by spontaneous eruptions of “Long live the republic!”, initiated by Leader of the Social Democrats Otto Wels, while other left-wing members shouted “Down with the monarchists!”¹⁵¹ The next day, Wels repeated accusations of hypocrisy against the German-*völkisch* press, as well as accusations against the DNVP for not distancing itself clearly enough from *völkisch* ideologies and movements and inciting violence in their speeches.¹⁵² Chancellor Wirth appealed to all of the German people and all parties to work together to protect the republic, and resolved that the time for leniency had passed and that decisive action had to be taken following this latest attack in a series of attacks

¹⁴⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8041; “Radauszenen im Reichstag”, *DAZ*, 25.06.1922, MA, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Entry for 29 June 1922, Klemperer, *Tagebücher*, p. 62.

¹⁴⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8054.

¹⁴⁸ Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, p. 93.

¹⁴⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 234. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8034.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, pp. 8042-8043.

against the republic.¹⁵³ By the summer of 1922, the Weimar state had not only suffered one attempted coup already, in March 1920, but had also seen numerous political assassinations, such as the above-mentioned murder of Bavarian *Ministerpräsident* Kurt Eisner in February 1919; that of Finance Minister Matthias Erzberger in August 1921, also by members of the O.C.; and, just twenty days prior to the attack on Rathenau, another O.C.-led attempt on the life of Social Democratic MP and mayor of the city of Kassel, Philipp Scheidemann, who famously had declared the German Republic on 9 November 1918, making him a particularly hated target for the reactionary Right. The decisive action advocated by Wirth in the aftermath of Rathenau's death, took the shape of a special decree [*Verordnung*] for the protection of the republic. Special decrees for the protection of the republic had already been passed following Matthias Erzberger's assassination on 26 August 1921. They had given the Interior Minister the right to ban certain publications or assemblies if they incited violence against the constitution or against representatives of the republican state, as well as limiting the right to wear uniforms to members of the *Reichswehr*.¹⁵⁴ A further special decree was agreed as early as the evening of Rathenau's death, which threatened to ban associations and assemblies which were illegally combatting the republican form of government, and penalised verbal abuse of the republic and its representatives.¹⁵⁵ Though the DNVP's Oskar Hergt denied the "outrageous and unproven" accusations against his party and argued against the decrees, which he saw as unfairly targeting right-wing organisations, Minister for Justice Gustav Radbruch defended the decrees on the basis that, as he saw it, there was currently no reason whatsoever to anticipate any radical left-wing excesses.¹⁵⁶ The Catholic Centre Party's Wilhelm Marx was of the opinion that passing special measures against the anti-republican Right was simply legitimate self-defence [*Notwehr*] on the part of the state; a view shared by the prominent liberal daily *Frankfurter Zeitung*.¹⁵⁷ During the month following Rathenau's assassination, the *Reichstag* debated combining the various decrees into one law, which was eventually voted on by members and passed on 18 July 1922.¹⁵⁸ Thus Rathenau's murder significantly precipitated the passing of the "Law for the Protection of the Republic" (*Republikenschutzgesetz*), which strove to outlaw right-wing underground organisations such as the O.C.

¹⁵³ *Verhandlungen*, 234. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8034; *Verhandlungen*, 235. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8037.

¹⁵⁴ Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 235. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8037-39; Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁵⁶ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8049-8050.

¹⁵⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8046; "Die Notwehr", *FZ*, 26.06.1922, MB, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Verhandlungen*, 254. Sitzung, 18.07.1922, p. 8731.

The liberal and left-of-centre national press echoed the calls to rally in support of the republic. Naturally, the Social Democratic Party organ, the *Vorwärts*, was among the most vocal. It published an appeal to the working classes of Berlin to assemble in the *Lustgarten* park on Sunday morning to demonstrate their readiness to defend the republic, while exhorting attendees to “maintain dignity and discipline!”¹⁵⁹ Accompanied by the ubiquitous “Long live the republic!”, the paper also called Rathenau a “martyr” and pointedly observed that at the current time one had to “feel ashamed in front of the civilised world” for being the “compatriot of certain kinds of people”, taking a thinly veiled stab at the anti-republican Right.¹⁶⁰ The editor-in-chief of the liberal *Vossische Zeitung*, Georg Bernhard, appealed to all those who still valued “decency and reason” in politics, as he echoed the concern that “the republic is in danger.” He was under no illusion that this had been a political murder and took the opportunity to give voice to his dissatisfaction at the “murderous attitude which currently counts as political in Germany.”¹⁶¹ In a lengthy piece entitled “*Männer!*” [‘men’], the journalist and writer Robert Friedlaender made an impassioned appeal for the republic. He argued that Rathenau’s assassination had made it abundantly clear that now the fate of the republic and its future, indeed liberty itself, were at stake, and a decision regarding what kind of a state, one governed either by violence or by intellect, Germany wanted to be was imminent; it was a question of “to be or not to be.”¹⁶² As long as a majority of the people wanted the republic, Friedlaender argued, the state was within its right, had the obligation even, to defend itself against acts which threatened it – by any means. He therefore urged readers, and citizens, to become politicised and openly assert their support for the republic.¹⁶³

Declarations of support for the republic were, however, often accompanied by lamentations of the general deterioration and brutalisation of political discourse in Germany. Crispian, anticipating later historiography, argued that it was little wonder that the

old officer caste, who were drilled and educated in murder and pillage, who had all regard for humanity and human rights flogged out of them, [...] who cannot build lives as officers in the republic, which wants to put an end to militarism, these gentlemen now look for an alternative scope of activity. As they can no longer indulge in the mass murder of other peoples, they rage against their own compatriots [*Volksgenossen*] with their murderous activities.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ “Arbeitendes Volk Berlins!”, *Vorwärts*, 25.06.1922, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ “Eine geschichtliche Sitzung”, *Vorwärts*, 25.06.1922, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ “Wer schützt die Republik?”, *VZ*, 24.06.1922, AA, p. 1.

¹⁶² “Männer!“, *VZ*, 27.06.1922, MA, p. 2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8051.

The presence of hundreds of thousands of men, trained mainly in perpetrating violence, traumatised and potentially brutalised by their experiences in the war, who were now facing uncertain futures was thus clearly identified by Crispien as posing a problem, if not an explicit danger, for a democratic republic which consciously sought to overcome its legacy of militarism. *Reichs*-chancellor Joseph Wirth (SPD) denounced the “atmosphere of murder” in Germany, and deplored the “brutalisation of mores” [*Verwilderung der Sitten*], which had recently led to “a state of downright political brutishness” [*politische Vertiertheit*] in Germany.¹⁶⁵ Seeking to publicly identify and shame the culprits, he famously declared:

There stands the enemy [pointing right] who trickles his poison into the wounds of a people. There stands the enemy – and about this there is no doubt: This enemy stands on the Right! [Long applause in the centre and on the left, as well as in the stands].¹⁶⁶

During the memorial ceremony held in the *Reichstag* on the day of Rathenau’s burial, Tuesday 27 June, President of the *Reich*, Friedrich Ebert (SPD) reinforced the notion that the attack on Rathenau had been an “attack on the nation” and, reiterating the shared “horror and disgust” at this deed, firmly placed the perpetrators “outside the community of the German people.”¹⁶⁷ Significantly, the victim’s Jewishness was also brought up by those striving to use the figure of Rathenau to defend the republic against the right-wing attacks on it. While the murderers were placed outside the national community, the Jewish victim was firmly constructed as part of it by the voices of the centre and the left-liberal establishment. Rathenau’s fellow party member Adolf Korell denounced the “so-called idea of *völkisch* purity” to which the minister had fallen victim, and indignantly asked the assembly: “What have we come to [...] to judge the other according to which race or faith he belongs to! [...] Unless we Christians turn our backs on this counter-Christian [*widerchristlich*] position, the atmosphere in Germany will not improve.”¹⁶⁸ Wels similarly attacked the “wild agitation from those Christian worshippers of violence” [*Gewaltanbeter*], but he also betrayed a peculiar concept of Jewishness when he went on to praise Rathenau essentially as a ‘good’ Jew because he actually “was a true Christian, much more so than those can claim who, today, arm and pay the murder gangs.”¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, Rathenau’s Jewishness was, unsurprisingly, central

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8055.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8058.

¹⁶⁷ *Verhandlungen*, “Dr. Walther Rathenau zum Gedächtnis“, 27.06.1922, pp. 8103.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8105.

¹⁶⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8042. More on the significance of Rathenau’s Jewishness can be found in Achilles, „Nationalist Violence“, pp. 322-326.

to the *völkisch* and early National Socialist discourse on the minister's assassination. The NSDAP's party organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, initially displayed a notable lack of interest in the murder in the days following the attack. Only once the democratic parties' martyrisation of Rathenau in support of the republic had become increasingly apparent did the paper begin to propagate its own view of the murder victim with some force. This view centred on Rathenau's position as a rich and successful industrialist "at the helm of the biggest capitalist corporation in Germany", and thus a prime example of the capitalist exploitation of workers, while reiterating the familiar alleged connections between Rathenau's Jewishness, "international Jewish high finance", and "international Jewish Bolshevism", who together were supposedly plotting the ruination and downfall of the German people.¹⁷⁰

Turning Rathenau into a martyr for the republic was by far the most common manner in which his death was exploited for political ends, especially given the circumstance that, unlike with Matthias Erzberger's death in August 1921, Rathenau's assassination "shook society all the way up to the conservative bourgeoisie."¹⁷¹ However, of the more conservative voices, some also found a different way to politically capitalise on Rathenau's murder. The editor-in-chief of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Paul Lensch, argued that Germany could never truly calm down politically and find peace within itself as long as it was subjected to the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, in particular the heavy burden of reparations. He thus laid a significant portion of the blame for what had happened to Rathenau, and other assassination victims before him, at the feet of the Entente.¹⁷² In the *Reichstag*, the right-of-centre German People's Party (*Deutsche Volkspartei*, DVP) and the Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrum*) made the same accusations and insinuations, and the Centre Party's *Reichs*-chancellor Wirth repeated this claim explicitly, arguing that in a Germany subdued under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, democracy could not flourish and peace for Europe not be sustained.¹⁷³ The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* proudly re-printed the entirety of Wirth's speech as its opener the following day, accompanied by Lensch's editorial denouncing the Entente's "bloodsucking" policies.¹⁷⁴

Press voices even further to the political Right, however, displayed their own view of the minister's death, which was markedly different from the Centre and left-of-centre positions, and were very vocal in publicising it. While all appeared to share in the regret and

¹⁷⁰ "Der Tod des Walther Rathenau", *VB*, 28.06.1922, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷¹ Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, p. 93.

¹⁷² "Die Straße als Muster", *DAZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷³ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, pp. 8049, 8056, 8059.

¹⁷⁴ "Die Schuld der Entente", *DAZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, p. 1.

condemnation of the crime itself, and demanded a swift and thorough investigation, focus was immediately drawn away from the political Right's possible connections to the murder or its perpetrators, and cast instead onto the government's special decrees for the protection of the republic. The Right unanimously viewed the decrees as an outrageous and unconstitutional [*verfassungswidrig*] targeted attack against them, their groups, goals, and culture.¹⁷⁵ As the decrees banned the display of the German imperial colours (black, white, red) and the wearing of uniforms outside the *Reichswehr*, they prompted a curious comparison with the anti-Liberal Carlsbad decrees of 1819, in which the papers cast the government and the political Left as the new 'Metternichs'.¹⁷⁶ Legislation directed against just one political strand, as they saw it, was going to precipitate the end of the rule of law [*Rechtsstaat*].¹⁷⁷ The DNVP and the newspapers close to it repeatedly insisted that, though they had opposed Rathenau's policies, they had only ever advocated a political fight by parliamentary means, never violence, and explicitly sought to distance themselves from anti-republican underground organisations of which the *Organisation Consul* was the most prominent and powerful one.¹⁷⁸ Instead, they expressed concerns that the radical Left posed a much greater threat to the state and highlighted violent acts against German-nationalist and *völkisch* groups and individuals which had taken place sporadically in the aftermath of Rathenau's murder to support this claim and cast doubt on the assumption that Rathenau's assassins had anything to do with the political Right. The papers cautioned against drawing premature conclusions and reminded readers that it was not yet known who had actually committed the crime. Indeed, they argued, the murder actually only hurt the Right and the DNVP because of the visible fallout against them, in the shape of rhetorical opposition, emergency legislation, and acts of vandalism and physical violence. The Right thus quickly and cleverly re-cast itself as the true victim of the assassination plot.¹⁷⁹ Besides defending themselves in this manner, the voices on the Right also immediately went on the offensive, attacking those members of the *Reichstag* who had accused the DNVP of having planted the ideological seeds of this murder. They denounced the shouting of "murderer" at Helfferich, and the alleged physical assaults in the chamber, as unparliamentary and undignified, and – in direct contrast to what the *Frankfurter Zeitung* would

¹⁷⁵ For example Max Maurenbrecher, "Die Spuren schrecken!", *DZ*, 30.06.1922, MA, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ "Hurra, Reaktion von links!", *DZ*, 30.06.1922, AA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁷ "Die Aufrichtung des Partieregiments in Deutschland", *NPZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ "Eine Erklärung der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei", *DTZ*, 24.06.1922, AA, p. 2; "Die Mörder", *DTZ*, 30.06.1922, MA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁹ "Auswirkung der politischen Hetze", *DTZ*, 28.06.1922, AA, p. 1; "Linksradikale Gewalttaten", *DTZ*, 30.06.1922, MA, p. 2.

go on to praise as a “dignified day” in the German parliament – described Löbe’s and Wirth’s speeches as “monstrosities.”¹⁸⁰

What the political instrumentalisation of Rathenau’s murder demonstrates, is that the German government in the early interwar period saw a need, and tried hard, to portray itself as a legitimate member of the civilised, democratic world, as it strove for full recognition on the international stage. This concern was made explicit in the way nearly every eulogy held in the *Reichstag* for Rathenau praised his efforts to re-connect with Germany’s former enemies. In Chancellor Wirth’s eyes, the Foreign Minister had “not only fallen for his people,” like a soldier in war, but more importantly, “he fell to teach people reconciliation.” Wirth then appealed to the assembled to continue Rathenau’s work: “It is also the work of our people’s salvation, it is the work of the salvation of all of Europe.”¹⁸¹ While Marx explicitly urged the DNVP to think about how their agitation against the government and against the republic would be viewed abroad, Crispian raised the general concern that following yet another political assassination in Germany, the foreign press was no doubt wondering whether the German republic was in fact stable.¹⁸² He was not mistaken. An opinion piece in the *Observer* suggested that Rathenau’s murder had made the German government realise that “it cannot hope to be listened to abroad unless it commands authority at home.” Incidentally, the same opinion piece also expressed the hope that Wilson’s murder might cause the same realisation among the Irish Provisional Government. However, the author expressed some hope at the fact that following this latest assassination in Germany, “public opinion [...] has rallied manfully round the republican regime.”¹⁸³ It was evidently true, then, that the outside world was watching closely, and that those speaking publicly in Germany were acutely aware of this circumstance. Therefore, the rallying cry to protect the republic was not only of great importance domestically, but also internationally. The German press proudly reported the many international notes of condolence which the German government received, especially from the Entente members Great Britain and France, and which praised the murder victim as a “German patriot” and “one of the most able ministers in Europe.”¹⁸⁴

The effort to be recognised as a member of the democratic and ‘civilised’ postwar world order needed to be made in deed as much as in word. This could mean small but significant

¹⁸⁰ “Der Feind steht rechts”, *FZ*, 26.06.1922, MB, p. 1; “Ein Ausnahmegesetz gegen die nationalen Kreise. [...] Trauerkundgebung im Reichstage”, *NPZ*, 25.06.1922, MA, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ *Verhandlungen*, 234. Sitzung, 24.06.1922, p. 8035.

¹⁸² *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, pp. 8047, 8051.

¹⁸³ “Germany and the League”, *Observer*, 02.07.1922, p. 12.

¹⁸⁴ French Minister for the Liberated Regions, Louis Loucheur, quoted in “Das Ausland über die Mordtat”, *VZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, p. 2; David Lloyd George quoted in “Lloyd Georges Nachruf auf Rathenau”, *VZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, p. 2.

gestures, such as *Reichstagspräsident* Löbe's insistence that in this assembly there was "freedom of expression for everybody", when speakers on the Right were being repeatedly heckled and prevented from speaking.¹⁸⁵ It could also mean the fact that a month-long relentless manhunt for the perpetrators was undertaken nationally and the trial against the captured associates of Rathenau's assassins went ahead swiftly after their arrest. This, however, was also where the entire endeavour fell short. The assassins themselves, Kern and Fischer, could not be made to face justice and no one suffered the death penalty, as Wilson's murderers had. With the exception of Techow, who had steered the assassins' car and who was therefore accused of murder, the other twelve defendants who stood trial before the *Staatsgerichtshof*, responsible for crimes against the republic, in Leipzig in October 1922 could only be accused of failing to report a planned crime and of being accessories to the murder. Three defendants were acquitted, while the others received prison sentences varying from two months to eight years. Techow received fifteen years as an accessory to murder, but only served eight of them before being released as part of an amnesty in 1930. The defendants' membership in the conspiratorial anti-republican *Organisation Consul*, though openly, and correctly, assumed as fact by liberal and left-wing contemporaries, was never the subject of the trial and the defendants consistently denied any connections to the O.C.. At trial it could thus not be proved "that the murderers had committed their crimes on the order or in the service of a secret organisation", and the O.C. therefore evaded direct responsibility for Rathenau's murder.¹⁸⁶ This was typical of the judicial handling of political murders during the early Weimar Republic and the justice system's failure to grasp the anti-republican, right-wing extremist organisation at its roots. Though the O.C. was banned by the *Republikschutzgesetz* passed in the wake of Rathenau's murder, the organisation had no difficulty to secretly re-group as the *Bund Wiking* to carry on their anti-republican agenda.¹⁸⁷ Emil Julius Gumbel's detailed collection of figures regarding political murders and their judicial treatment, furthermore, confirmed that the justice system generally showed more leniency towards right-wing defendants than left-wing ones. Overall, he judged there to have been, in the four years preceding publication in 1922, 354 political murders committed by the Right and 22 by the Left. Of those, he considered 18 of the Left's murders to have been fully or partly "punished" [gesühnt], while of the Right's murders he judged 326 to have gone "unpunished."¹⁸⁸ He also

¹⁸⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8049.

¹⁸⁶ Quote from Gotthard Jasper, "Aus den Akten der Prozesse gegen die Erzberger-Mörder. Vorbemerkung", *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 10/4 (1962), p. 430. Trial summarised in Sabrow, *Verdrängte Verschwörung*, pp. 133-149.

¹⁸⁷ Howard Stern, "The Organisation Consul", *Journal of Modern History*, 35/1 (1963), p. 31.

¹⁸⁸ Gumbel, *Vier Jahre Politischer Mord*, p. 81.

highlighted the much lower sentences given out to right-wing perpetrators, who often were acquitted or received only short prison sentences or fines, while left-wing perpetrators received harsh prison sentences of often many years. This, in his conclusion, amounted to a “complicity of the courts.”¹⁸⁹

In considering the two virtually contemporaneous acts of political assassination in Britain and in Germany side by side, some common themes emerge. One of these was the fact that both murders brought forth an explicitly gendered way of remembering the victim. In the above-mentioned piece “*Männer!*” in the *Vossische Zeitung*, Friedlaender exhorted Rathenau for having been exactly what those on the political Right had accused the country of lacking: a real man, a truly German man, one “with the courage of his convictions, the courage to speak, and the courage to act.” He considered Rathenau a man of both intellect and of action, which was rare in Germany, a rare “political citizen.” Friedlaender praised Rathenau for having bravely faced all the accusations and threats from “desperadoes” on the anti-republican Right. He had displayed “civil courage” [*Zivilcourage*], a quality which the “Lüttwitzer”, “Pabsts”, and “Tillessens” (referring to several well-known *Freikorps* leaders, and thus implying a connection between them and Rathenau’s murderers) lacked completely. Instead, Friedlaender called the assassins “cowardly.” This exhortation of Rathenau’s many manly qualities was followed by Friedlaender’s ardent appeal for the republic, as referred to above, drawing a connection between masculine qualities and the success of the republican state.¹⁹⁰ A notable emphasis on manliness also surfaced in the reactions to Wilson’s death. The Lord Bishop of Norwich was not the only one to praise Wilson as having been “every inch a man and every inch a soldier.”¹⁹¹ As is noted by Jeffery, the reporting on the trial against Wilson’s murderers developed a peculiar obsession with the question of whether or not there was conclusive evidence that the Field Marshal had drawn his sword in an apparently masculine and valiant last effort to defend himself against his assassins’ undeniably superior firepower.¹⁹² In an extension of the image of manliness, Churchill affirmed Britain’s identity as a “manly country” which would not be perturbed or changed by assassinations and where murderers would always be made to face justice.¹⁹³ Masculinity and bravery were thus in both cases claimed

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 147-149, quote at p. 147. Though there were flaws in Gumbel’s methods, his overall judgement is still considered sound by historians, see Arthur David Brenner, *Emil J. Gumbel. Weimar German Pacifist and Professor* (Boston and Leiden, 2001), p. 73.

¹⁹⁰ VZ, 27.06.1922, MA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹¹ HL, 22.07.1922, vol. 50, c. 1095.

¹⁹² Jeffery, *Henry Wilson*, p. 285-286.

¹⁹³ HC, 26.06.1922, vol. 155, c. 1707.

for the state, which would defend itself against the cowardly assassins of its representatives in a just and manly way.

Furthermore, it is hardly surprising to find contemporaries in either country making reference to the other murder, respectively. The *DAZ*'s editor-in-chief Lensch commented that “[by] coincidence, political murder found its victims simultaneously in London and in Berlin, there General Wilson, here Minister Rathenau.” He acknowledged that “Wilson’s murder was not one link in a long chain to the same degree as Rathenau’s is, even though the Irish Question, too, has demanded many assassination victims.” However, he highlighted the “different demeanours of government and parliaments” in the two countries, admonishing the German parliamentarians for their tumultuous behaviour, and urged them to “learn” from those who had rallied in support of the republic in a calm and orderly fashion in the *Lustgarten* the previous day.¹⁹⁴ In Britain, too, reference was made to Rathenau’s murder, and some contemporary commentators proved clear-sighted enough to place Wilson’s murder in a wider, European context of political assassinations. Once again giving voice to a certain fear of brutalisation as a result of the First World War, the liberal *Saturday Review* asserted that

The murders of Sir Henry Wilson in London and of Herr Rathenau in Berlin have brought the whole of European society, with a shock, face to face with a menace which may threaten the stability of our civilization. No thoughtful observer of the means by which the necessity of ruthless slaughter was inculcated in youthful minds at our great training camps during the war, could fail to be aware that we, and other countries driven to employ similar teaching, would have to pay for it somehow when peace came. Few of us imagined that it would mean an attempt to substitute for the age-long and mitigated way of political controversy in Europe the methods of Mexico.¹⁹⁵

Listing the murders of Matthias Erzberger and Walther Rathenau, “shot under circumstances of peculiar brutality”, as well as that of the Spanish Prime Minister Eduardo Dato in Madrid just over a year previously, the magazine insisted that the “danger is greater in Europe than it is here.” Nevertheless, the *Review* showed itself concerned that “[a]ssassination, dormant since the seventeenth century, is again asserting itself as a political weapon, and the revolver makes a bid for the rule.” The magazine’s fear was especially palpable that “public conscience” in “England” might “slacken” in the same way that it supposedly already had in conflict-ridden Ireland. “A few more horrors like the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson and the exasperation of the ordinary citizen would take the form of buying a revolver himself and using it without

¹⁹⁴ “Die Straße als Muster”, *DAZ*, 26.06.1922, AA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹⁵ “The Rule of the Revolver”, *The Saturday Review*, 01.07.1922, p. 4; further discussion of the fear of brutalisation in Britain, see Lawrence, “Peaceable Kingdom”.

hesitancy.”¹⁹⁶ Hart is therefore correct to place the violent death of Wilson within the “season of assassinations all over Europe.” Though its weight as a threat to the existing regime differed to that of Rathenau’s murder in Germany, Hart observes that nationalism, Irish in the one case, German in the other, was the common motivation behind both attacks.¹⁹⁷

Just as the two assassinations shared nationalist motivations in common, the two victims shared the fate of their instrumentalisation for political ends, though with somewhat differing vehemence. The British parliament, as well as the press across the political spectrum was united in the aftermath of Wilson’s death in shock, horror, and, if not everyone shared the personal grief, in condemnation of the cold-blooded act. The murder thus served to reinforce already existing notions about British identity and its relationship to violence and civilisation. Nevertheless, the robust debates over the violence taking place in Ireland, and Britain’s responsibility for it, were reinvigorated by the murder. Questions were asked in the forums of public debate and accusations were made over who had been responsible for fostering an environment in which radical Irish nationalists would commit such a crime, as well as over the lack of adequate protection for such individuals as Wilson. However, British debates never reached the levels of toxicity and aggression evident in German public discourse following the assassination of Walther Rathenau. Notwithstanding the unanimous declarations of condemnation of the murder, at least in public, the language displayed in response to Rathenau’s death was of a more extreme nature. The political spectrum diverged further than in Britain and more virulent attacks were made; on the one hand, attacks by speakers in the centre and left of it on the anti-republican forces who were seen to have incited the crime; and on the other hand, attacks by those on the Right on the government and its emergency legislation. Perhaps as a result of this circumstance, a difference was also visible in the manner in which the respective crimes were condemned. While in British public language there were relatively frequent references to the crime’s shocking nature to all of humanity and all of the ‘civilised’ world, the prime exponent of which Britain considered itself to be, in Germany the crime was viewed more in its immediate political context and condemned as such. Rathenau’s assassination was the latest, and most prominent, part of an on-going trend, an epidemic of political murder that had been haunting the young republic for several years.¹⁹⁸ As such, it was recognised as yet another blow to the state’s integrity. While Wilson’s murder

¹⁹⁶ “The Rule of the Revolver”, *The Saturday Review*, 01.07.1922, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ Hart, “Michael Collins”, pp. 166-167.

¹⁹⁸ See Gumbel’s contemporaneous logbook of political murder in the early Weimar Republic, *Vier Jahre Politischer Mord*.

came as a shock to the British public, and constituted a tragic and outrageous incident, it stood alone and never presented the very real threat to the existing form of government which Rathenau's assassination did in Germany.¹⁹⁹ As has been argued above, in this climate it became imperative for the representatives of this German state which was under attack from within, to present the republic as a legitimate part of the democratic world, which reliably subscribed to the same civilizational values as its European partners. The failure, however, to adequately handle this, and previous, murders in court and to confront the extent of anti-republicanism within Germany head-on, was undoubtedly a symptom of the unchallenged strength of counter-revolutionary forces in interwar Germany, the deeply divided political landscape, and the comparative impotence of the Weimar state.

This chapter has examined two quite disparate kinds of political violence, which nevertheless displayed a particular kind of symmetry, with street violence in 1919 happening in each country's 'second city', both strong regional metropolises; and high-profile political assassinations happening in each nation's capital, at the centre of political power, and indeed close to the victims' bourgeois homes. Despite the disparate nature of the different case studies, they have been brought together in this chapter as acts of political violence which took place in a domestic context, within the inner geographic circle, and which seriously exercised, if not outrightly shocked, public discourse in both countries. In the discourse on political violence analysed here, one can observe strong narratives aimed at reifying certain identities and efforts at constructing, or upholding, self-images, both on a domestic stage as well as for an international audience. Most prominently, the maintenance of law and order has been shown to have played a major part in both British and German discourse as the importance was recognised of overtly performing state power. In the aftermath of the First World War for Germany, especially, the necessity to prove itself a reliable democratic partner in the international community of civilised nations played a paramount role. British discourse strove especially to identify 'Britishness' with 'peaceableness' and in opposition to any kind of political violence. While in 1919 the struggle for law and order stood at the forefront, by 1922, when two high-profile assassinations shook both publics, those discursively reified identities ought to have been better established, making it especially important to maintain the orderly, civilised image, both domestically and internationally, and to not allow these acts of political violence to unsettle them. Thus, in British public discourse, Wilson's assassins were

¹⁹⁹ The fear for the fate of the republic was, for example, voiced by Independent Social Democrat Arthur Crispian, who urged the government to do everything in their power to prevent the possibility of the monarchy ever returning to Germany. *Verhandlungen*, 236. Sitzung, 25.06.1922, p. 8053.

expressly, and paradoxically, constructed as outside of that identity. They were constructed as foreign, and even though they were English-born, they represented Irish nationalism, while their victim, who was Irish-born, represented the British state. The fact that the Irish-born war-time leader Wilson was just returning from unveiling a war memorial when he was assassinated by British-born Irish nationalists who had been British soldiers, represented the ultimate betrayal.

Though both case studies of political violence presented in this chapter posed a threat to each country's preferred narrative about national identity, respectively, the severity of the threat was markedly different. At the time of Wilson's death some concern, as cited above, was expressed in Britain of the "season of assassinations" making its way from the continent, or from Ireland, over onto British soil. However, in the murder's more medium- and long-term aftermath, it became clear that the act would remain unique and did not herald a significant destabilisation of the British state. By the time Wilson's diaries were published in 1927, all interest was once again on what they revealed about his role as a war-time leader and his, apparently often unkind, private notes on political leaders he disagreed with, especially Lloyd George.²⁰⁰ His memorial plaque, unveiled a year after his murder at the site of the Liverpool Street Station memorial he himself had unveiled the morning of his death, does not specify that Wilson was murdered. It states only that his death "occurred on Thursday 22nd June 1922 within two hours of his unveiling of the adjoining memorial." Today it is decorated in the familiar poppy wreaths, indicating again his primary memorialisation as a war-time leader.²⁰¹ The Imperial War Museum's database, however, lists the plaque under 'Terrorist Acts' and 'Ireland (1801-1923)'.²⁰² This process, in which Wilson is not primarily remembered for his murder but for his achievements as a military leader, confirms this chapter section's wider argument that by being framed as singular, the assassination ultimately reinforced already existing narratives about Britain's inherent 'peaceableness' and civilisation, and that the murder did not endanger either. Public discourse strove to divide a British 'us', defined by an ongoing commitment to the values of civilisation and justice where acts such as assassinations did not occur, from 'them', the assassins whose acts were 'uncivilised' and shocking but would not destabilise the

²⁰⁰ See for example: "An Acid Diarist", *The Scotsman*, 06.10.1927, p. 11; "An Exposure", *Manchester Guardian*, 08.10.1927, p. 12; "Mr. Lloyd George & the late Sir Henry Wilson. Many Statements in Diaries Disowned", *Manchester Guardian*, 08.10.1927, p. 13; "The Secrets of the War", *Daily Mail*, 06.10.1927, p. 10; "Rush for Wilson's Book", *Daily Mail*, 07.10.1927, p. 12. Though articles acknowledged the nature of Wilson's death, it was never at the forefront of reporting or reviews of his diaries.

²⁰¹ See photos contributed by Brian Fare and B Wood at <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/263187> [accessed 22.12.2020]; for date of monument's erection, see <https://www.londonremembers.com/memorials/sir-henry-wilson-at-liverpool-street-station> [accessed 22.12.2020].

²⁰² See <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/11788> [accessed 22.12.2020].

political status quo. The fact that Britain did not see the introduction of emergency legislature, like Germany's *Republikenschutzgesetz*, only serves to confirm this further.

The situation was markedly different with the assassination of Walther Rathenau, one in a long line of such attacks, behind which stood a deep underground network of conspirators which the Weimar state never succeeded in destroying. Two facets of the Weimar Republic's relationship between politics and violence in the early interwar years proved decisive in its downfall: the failure to control and disband extremist right-wing underground organisations, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the shift in boundaries of legitimate violence experienced during the revolutionary period, when government troops received license to shoot and kill German civilians in an inner-German urban setting. Anti-Semitism represented a third forceful aspect which came to play an increasingly prominent role as the Weimar Republic came closer to its end. In the early interwar years, there had been numerous Jews, most often intellectuals, in positions of political power, such as the Bavarian *Ministerpräsident* Eisner, one the Councils' Republic's leaders, Eugen Leviné and several of his Bavarian co-revolutionaries, and later, Walther Rathenau. All were identified, and attacked, as Jews and were constructed as foreign conspirators and agents of Russian Bolshevism by their enemies. The prominence of anti-Semitism in, especially, the German case studies examined here, foreshadowed later developments under the Nazi regime, but its results were also visibly borne out into the post-1945 world. In Britain, Jewish leaders of the interwar years lived to appear in postwar political life; Emanuel Shinwell, for example, had a political career with the Labour Party, eventually becoming Clement Attlee's Minister for Defence in 1950. In Germany, however, many of the Jewish leaders from the revolutionary period did not survive the pre-Nazi era, like Eisner and Rathenau, who were murdered by reactionaries in the early interwar years.

The next chapter will move into the second geographic circle and analyse paramilitary violence in a sphere that is more 'peripheral' than the domestic sphere examined here, but not fully colonial. The very origins of the animosity towards Wilson will be examined more closely, as Chapter 2 is concerned with public discourse on political violence during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921); it will be compared side-by-side with the German state's efforts to control the *Freikorps* sent towards the Baltic at the end of the war. The chapter will provide further opportunity to explore the efforts within both nations' public discourse to construct those self-images and narratives presented here, but it will show how these efforts at identity construction were complicated when the agents of violence were sent into those peripheral spaces by the states themselves.

CHAPTER 2

“DIE ICH RIEF, DIE GEISTER, WERD’ ICH NUN NICHT LOS.”¹ PARAMILITARY VIOLENCE IN IRELAND AND IN THE BALTIC.

This chapter moves from addressing political violence experienced at the centre of the domestic sphere, to the second of the three concentric circles which structure the thesis. Thus, the events analysed here took place in a more peripheral sphere, namely Ireland and the Baltic region. The chapter will investigate British and German public discourses in reaction to, respectively, the Irish War of Independence, or Anglo-Irish War, 1919-1921, and the *Freikorps*’ Baltic campaign in 1919. It will explore the central theme of violence functioning as a demarcator of what was considered civilised conduct or not, negotiating different and layered notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, depending on what violence was publicly justifiable in the circumstances explored in this chapter, and what was not. The chapter will support the thesis’ overall argument that the language by which political violence was publicly justified or condemned transcended the geographical circles around which the thesis is structured. The chapter will demonstrate in particular how political violence perpetrated by state-sponsored paramilitary bodies, especially when it escalated out of state control, turned into a fundamental threat to both countries’ self-perception and identity construction. These concerns became especially acute in the wider postwar political context, within which left-liberal parties, in particular, struggled to form a coherent political identity and to define their path. This was true of both the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) as well as the British Liberal Party, both of which had undergone, or underwent, painful internal splits during the war and immediate postwar years, resulting in the establishment of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) and SPD in Germany, and of an opposition part of the Liberal Party under H.H. Asquith which opposed the Coalition Liberals under Prime Minister David Lloyd George.² The splits were fuelled in part by disagreements as to what true liberal values should or could mean in the face of wartime and postwar violent conflict. This chapter’s analysis of public discourse relies mainly on press and parliamentary materials but also incorporates life-writing by the agents of violence themselves. The presence or absence of such life-writing sources reveals

¹ “Spirits that I’ve cited / My commands ignore”, key line from Goethe’s famous poem “Der Zauberlehrling” (‘The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’, 1797), Edwin Zeydel’s 1955 translation https://www.sco.org.uk/assets/000/002/332/Musical_Sorcery_Classroom_Resource_Pack_original.pdf?1560519599 [accessed 10.05.2020].

² Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy from 1848 to the present*, trans. J.A. Underwood (Leamington Spa, 1986); Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-1997*, 5th ed. (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 63-80.

the extent of the paramilitaries' ability, or lack thereof, to construct themselves as legitimate representatives of their respective societies, adding a further layer to the chapter's arguments.

As this chapter is situated in what is called here a 'peripheral' geographical sphere, it is necessary to first say a few words on this choice and what is meant by it. The extent to which the Baltic lands (comprising the modern-day countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), and the island of Ireland can be considered to have been on the periphery of the German and British states, respectively, is and has been highly contested. For the purposes of this thesis, both areas are conceived of as lying in between the domestic sphere, where, significantly, political power resides, on the one hand, and the sphere of colonial activity on the other. With regards to Ireland, in particular, a large and differentiated body of literature exists, which exhibits the often controversial debate over Ireland's position vis-à-vis Great Britain. Whether Ireland is considered to have been a British colony proves difficult to answer not only on the basis of different interpretations of historical developments and differing definitions of colonial rule, but also due to the highly contested nature of the question and its continued political implications to the present day.³ Therefore, following trends in recent literature which emphasise the need to move beyond the dichotomous question of whether Ireland was a colony or not, and instead to focus on "degrees of coloniality,"⁴ this thesis places Ireland conceptually on the periphery of the centre of British state power. This view is supported by literature which highlights precisely "Ireland's 'hybrid' position which made it an important hinge between debates on domestic politics and those on the future of the Empire."⁵ With reference to the Easter Rising of April 1916, it has been suggested that the disproportionate military response of the British state to the rebellion, which included heavy machine-guns, artillery, and martial law, was not only informed by the context of war, but also "suggestive of the colonial dimensions of Ireland's status", with McGarry asserting that it would be "difficult to envision the same tactics being so readily deployed in a British city".⁶ The themes emerging from parliamentary and press discourses on political violence during the Irish War of Independence analysed below, will elucidate and strengthen this claim further.

It can be argued that both countries experienced a moment of parallel imperial collapse after the end of the First World War; while the fight for Irish independence was only the beginning of this process for the British Empire, the collapse was absolute for the German

³ Stephen Howe, "Questioning the (bad) question: 'Was Ireland a colony?'" , *Irish Historical Studies*, 36/142 (2008), p. 138.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Stephen Howe, "Colonized and Colonizers: Ireland in the British Empire", in Alvin Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* (Oxford, 2013), p. 71.

⁶ Whelehan, "The Irish Revolution", p. 624. McGarry quoted therein.

empire. Both processes, however, were accompanied by a violent lashing out by the state against this threatening collapse. It is in this sense that Ireland and the Baltic are considered peripheral spheres in this chapter, emphatically without claiming their status or experience were identical. There is less literature, and less heated debate, on the position of the Baltic regions in relation to the German state. The area had not been part of the German empire before the First World War but had a history of ethnically German settlement and German language and culture reaching back several centuries. The area was partly conquered by German troops in 1915 and, according to Barth, was governed like an overseas colony by the German army which had utopian visions of establishing a colony in the East.⁷ In choosing to view the Baltic region as a periphery of the German lands and German state power in the era immediately following the First World War, this thesis takes its cue from Annemarie Sammartino's recent work on the "impossible border" between Germany and the East. She highlights the frequent and rapid shifts in national borders between the pre-unification period in German history (meaning pre-1871) and their status in around 1920, emphasising that an under-defined notion of 'the East', which at various points included the Baltic lands, was an important part of "utopian dreams and apocalyptic danger for the war and postwar imaginary of Germans across the political spectrum."⁸

Self-styled *Freikorps*, re-appropriating a term developed in the eighteenth century and brought to prominence during the Napoleonic wars to describe the German armed volunteers fighting French occupation,⁹ were paramilitary formations which appeared in the context of the collapsing German empire at the end of the First World War in November 1918, as the defeated imperial army fell into disarray. With parts of the old army disintegrating on their retreat, such as the remnants of the Eighth Army in the Baltic,¹⁰ and other parts mutinying and re-organizing into workers' and soldiers' councils in many places, the newly founded German republic found itself without the executive power required to consolidate its position and protect itself from what it perceived to be the most imminent threat to its existence, left-wing Spartacist revolutionaries. The *Freikorps* for the most part consisted of demobilised soldiers of the imperial army, who were soon joined by other volunteers, particularly students, who refused to accept the German defeat, did not surrender their arms and considered themselves

⁷ Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und Politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der Deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf, 2003), p. 255.

⁸ Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca, 2014 [2010]), p. 15.

⁹ Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik*, p. 22.

¹⁰ Bernhard Sauer, "Vom „Mythos eines ewigen Soldatentums“. Der Feldzug deutscher Freikorps im Baltikum im Jahre 1919", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 43/10 (1995), p. 871; Charles L. Sullivan, "German Freecorps in the Baltic, 1918-1919", *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 7/2 (1976), p. 124.

loyal to the idea of the German fatherland, rather than the new German state. Above all, however, they were loyal to their *Freikorps* leaders, and the corps thus often carried the name of the leader to whom the men had sworn “personal allegiance.”¹¹ Following a secret agreement between the Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, soon to be *Reichs*-president, and General Wilhelm Groener, the old army’s quartermaster, the new republic thus ‘hired’ the *Freikorps* to fight Communism and Bolshevism, while the army in return promised, at least nominally, to support the new state.¹² Jones importantly highlights that while ‘*Freikorps*’ was the fighters’ own chosen name, they should more accurately be thought of as government soldiers, as they would have appeared to contemporaries.¹³ One of the places where Bolshevism was to be fought, in fact the very forefront of the anti-Communist struggle, was the Baltic region, which the Red Army was conquering rapidly in late 1918 and early 1919, and so a combination of ex-soldiers still left there after the World War and new volunteers from the *Reich* hired through government and private recruitment campaigns began to fight a brutal campaign against the Bolsheviks.

It has been noted that not much attention has been paid in the literature specifically to these *Freikorps*, often referred to as *Baltikumer*, as most literature on German *Freikorps* is, perhaps understandably so, concerned with the groups active in conflicts within the borders of the *Reich* itself, rather than the embattled periphery.¹⁴ Other geographically peripheral conflicts which the *Freikorps* engaged in took place in Upper Silesia, East Prussia, and Poland. Many other *Freikorps* were engaged within the borders of the *Reich*, crushing left-wing activity such as the Spartacists’ uprising in Berlin in January 1919, or, as Chapter 1 examined, the short-lived Bavarian Councils’ Republic in April and May 1919. Once the German government realised that it had in effect given license to brutal private armies which were beyond their control, the *Freikorps* were officially disbanded in 1920 and the ‘*Freikorps* spirit’ was to be explicitly avoided in recruiting the new *Reichswehr*.¹⁵ The *Freikorps* in the Baltic were ordered to return to Germany as early as the summer of 1919; however, they refused and even preferred to join the White Russian troops under Count Bermond-Avalov fighting the Bolsheviks. When they were forced to return by complete defeat and material annihilation

¹¹ Sullivan, “Freecorps”, p. 125. Waite, author of one of the earliest post-1945 histories of the *Freikorps*, sees in this a direct precursor to the *Führerprinzip* (‘leader principle’) of the National Socialists. See Waite, *Vanguard*, pp. 50-51. The validity of drawing such direct lines from the *Freikorps* to the Nazis, however, has since been questioned, see Sauer, “Mythos”, p. 902.

¹² Waite, *Vanguard*, p. 5.

¹³ Jones, *Violence and Politics*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Sauer, “Mythos”, p. 869.

¹⁵ Matthew N. Bucholtz, *Republic of Violence: The German Army and Politics, 1918-1923*, PhD thesis, University of Calgary, 2015, p. 184.

towards the end of the year, many *Freikorps* fighters chose to 'go underground' to fight the Weimar state which they hated and which they considered an even more legitimate target now that it was perceived to have stabbed the soldiers in the back a *second* time after 1918 by refusing to continue supporting the Baltic *Freikorps* once they had disobeyed the order to retreat.¹⁶

As noted, the historiography specifically on the phenomenon of the *Freikorps* is less numerous and well-developed than the much vaster historiography on the political culture of the Weimar Republic and its endemic problems with political violence more generally, of which discussions of the *Freikorps* are of course often an important part.¹⁷ The case made in Waite's early study of the *Freikorps*, based largely on life-writing, that they were, as the title puts it with some pathos, the *Vanguard of Nazism*, is indeed too direct a line to draw. However, his emphasis on the *Freikorps* fighters' "brutality of spirit" is not misplaced.¹⁸ Theweleit's study of the *Freikorps* is situated in the field of literary studies rather than history, but equally focuses on these fighters' highly violent behaviours, psychoanalytically identifying its roots deep inside their fragile masculinities.¹⁹ Hagen Schulze's earlier (1969) study of the relationship between the *Freikorps* and the young republic, while strong on using both archival sources and life-writing, takes the somewhat surprising revisionist view that the *Freikorps* were by no means "villains", but should be credited as being existentially necessary for the early republic to consolidate its position.²⁰ Though Schulze acknowledged that the *Freikorps* did contribute to the emergence of National Socialism, he considered their fate ultimately a "tragedy", choosing to end his book on a quote asserting that "the German people need not be ashamed of them".²¹ More recently, the *Freikorps* activity in the Baltic has been effectively incorporated into wider historical examinations of the extremely violently contested Eastern border regions

¹⁶ One of the most explicit voices denouncing the state for this second 'stab in the back' was the commander of all German troops in the Baltic, Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz. See particularly the chapter entitled "Der Dolchstoß" in the 1936 edition of his memoirs, *Als Politischer General im Osten* (Leipzig, 1936).

¹⁷ To name a few older and more recent examples: Volker Berghahn, *Stahlhelm: Bund der Frontsoldaten, 1918-1935* (Düsseldorf, 1966); James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London, 1977); Bernd Weisbrod, "Gewalt in der Politik. Zur politischen Kultur in Deutschland zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen", *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 43 (1992), pp. 391-404; Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1995); Mergel, *Parlamentarische*; Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden*; Ziemann, "Germany after the First World War – A Violent Society?"; Schumann, *Political*; Jones, *Violence and Politics*; Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations*; Bucholtz, *Republic of Violence*.

¹⁸ Waite, *Vanguard*, p. 281.

¹⁹ Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*.

²⁰ Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik*, p. 326.

²¹ Michael Freund, quoted in Schulze, *Freikorps und Republik*, p. 334.

of Germany in this period, providing a more holistic and internationally integrated outlook on some of this era's violent events.²²

The other side of the comparison in the current chapter concerns British reactions to paramilitary violence in Ireland in the postwar years. The group of men commonly referred to as the 'Black and Tans', due to the mismatched police-green and army-khaki uniform they were initially issued, actually consisted of two distinct bodies of paramilitary forces recruited by the British government during the Irish War of Independence (or Anglo-Irish War) of 1919-1921, in order to assist in crushing militant Irish nationalism. Home Rule for Ireland had been a long-standing and contentious demand in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before it was put on hold at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. However, the Easter Rising in 1916 and the forceful British suppression of it, as well as the attempt by the British government in early 1918 to impose conscription in Ireland caused tensions between Irish nationalist movements and the British state to greatly heighten again. Though conscription was eventually not enforced, Ireland became increasingly ungovernable.²³ Following the nationalist party Sinn Féin's landslide victory in the general election in December 1918, the elected MPs refused to take their seats in Westminster and formed their own parliament, the revolutionary *Dáil Éireann*. Finally, with the murder of two Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) men in January 1919, a ruthless guerrilla war between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the forces representing the British government broke out.²⁴ According to David Leeson's blunt assessment, "the RIC was not up to the job."²⁵ To reinforce a basically civilian police force and equip it for counter-insurgency, the British government began from late 1919 to recruit ex-soldiers, only recently demobilised following the end of the First World War, into the body that became known as the 'Black and Tans'. From July 1920, ex-officers were also recruited into a special, heavily armed Auxiliary Division RIC (ADRIC). These paramilitary units, functioning as adjuncts to the power of the British state in Ireland, quickly gained notoriety for the ruthlessness with which they carried out their duties, and in particular for engaging in reprisals against the civilian population, such as looting, wanton destruction, the burning of towns and cities such as Balbriggan (September 1920) or Cork (December 1920), and shootings. Martial law was imposed in parts of Ireland by December 1920, through which the government

²² Sammartino, *Impossible Border*, pp. 45-70.

²³ Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 8-10.

²⁴ Townshend, *British Campaign*, pp. 14-16.

²⁵ D.M. Leeson, *The Black & Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920-1921* (Oxford, 2011), p. 4.

appeared to be sanctioning a policy of ‘official reprisals.’²⁶ The guerrilla-like conflict carried on and by July 1921 the British government was forced to agree to a truce. With the signing of a peace treaty in December 1921 Ireland was divided into the Irish Free State in the south and the six northern counties constituting Northern Ireland, which continued to be part of the United Kingdom.

The question of how such outbreaks of violence as perpetrated by the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries could happen, how such behaviour could have been tolerated for as long as it was, and whether the violence was a reflection of the bad character of the British recruits, has been a recurring topic of inquiry in the historiography of this conflict. As David Leeson, author of the most recent (and only the second) monograph specifically on the ‘Black and Tans’, argues, the accusation often levelled against the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries that they were largely made up of “jail-birds and down-and-outs” who would easily engage in any sort of ‘outrage’ for no particular reason, was not accurate.²⁷ Instead, their image as “the scum of London’s underworld” was largely a very effective Irish propaganda construct.²⁸ Diligent work carried out by Lowe using the Home Office’s Irish Constabulary records has done a lot to reveal the real composition of the force and thus help dispel myths, as well as producing very useful statistical information.²⁹ While there is a large body of literature on the War of Independence from an Irish perspective,³⁰ British historiography has engaged with the role and behaviour of its paramilitary bodies in Ireland to a much lesser extent. Their violence is often simply sidelined as an exceptional episode in the interwar history of an otherwise largely “peaceable kingdom.”³¹ Though the role this violent ‘episode’ played in British policy-making with regards to Ireland, and its effects on British self-perceptions, have been studied to some extent, they have certainly not been incorporated into broader, indeed comparative, views of interwar discursive negotiations on the legitimacy of political violence.³²

²⁶ Townshend, *British Campaign*, pp. 133ff., 149.

²⁷ Leeson, *Black & Tans*, p. 223.

²⁸ David Leeson, “The ‘scum of London’s underworld’? British Recruits for the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1920-21”, *Contemporary British History*, 17/1 (2003), p. 19.

²⁹ W.J. Lowe, “The War against the R.I.C., 1919-21”, *Éire-Ireland*, 37/3-4 (2002), pp. 79-117; W.J. Lowe, “Who were the Black-and-Tans?”, *History Ireland*, 12/3 (2004), pp. 47-51; W.J. Lowe, “Irish Constabulary Officers, 1837–1922: Profile of a Professional Elite”, *Irish Economic and Social History*, 32 (2005), pp. 19-46.

³⁰ Just two, which focus particularly on the nature of the guerrilla war, of the many works available are: Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare. The experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996); Hart, *I.R.A. at War*.

³¹ See Lawrence, “Peaceable Kingdom”.

³² David George Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British public opinion and the making of Irish policy, 1918-1922* (London, 1972); Dolan, “British Culture of Paramilitary Violence”; Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013).

An investigation of the press and parliamentary sources makes evident a large imbalance in the quantity of material available for the British and German cases, respectively. The actions of British paramilitary bodies in Ireland commanded much more attention and took up much more space within British public discourse than the *Freikorps*' activities in the Baltic did within German public discourse, especially in parliament. While this circumstance necessarily skews this chapter's analysis a little more towards the British case study, it is telling in itself and will be discussed further below. The circumstance that this imbalance of materials was reversed with regards to life-writing sources is equally telling and will also be addressed below. The discourses analysed exhibited a remarkable number of layers of arguments, images, comparisons, and parallels which were evoked by the speakers, and which to an extent were mirrored by those writing in the papers. As a central theme within the sources, violence was presented as an aberration from civilisation. Press and parliamentary sources differed, however, in how they identified this aberration from an often un- or underdefined standard of civilisation. Opposing interpretations were put forward as to who was considered civilised or uncivilised for their respective uses of violence, and who was tasked with upholding civilisation and civilised values in the interwar world, thereby creating different, but at times intersecting, layers of who was considered part of a collective 'us' and who was marked out as an other 'them'. Violence acted both as a constituting trait of the in-group, meaning that *some* violence was defensible, and even necessary, while more or less subtle lines demarcated the legitimate use of violence from the instances when it became illegitimate, and a marker of outsider status. In the British parliament, the notion of 'civilisation', or 'civilised government', was frequently invoked by MPs, but it notably meant different things to different speakers, who applied it to different, sometimes diametrically opposed, acts and actors. During a notable Commons debate on 20 October 1920, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Hamar Greenwood, denounced the violent campaign of the Irish nationalists and defended the government's resolute policy in Ireland, proudly declaring that "[t]o tolerate a campaign of murder is to abdicate the first principle of civilised government." Soon after, in the same debate, the opposition Liberal MP for Hull, Lieutenant-Commander Joseph Kenworthy effectively turned the accusation on its head, charging the British government with uncivilised conduct, following accusations of mistreatment of captured suspects by Crown forces in Ireland. Kenworthy insisted that "you do not ill-treat the vilest murderer when you capture him, if you make any sort of claim to civilised government."³³ By way of an example, this exchange, occurring well over a year into the conflict, serves to exhibit where the discursive battle lines were drawn. However, already

³³ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, cc. 953, 956.

in the earlier stages of the conflict (and indeed before the British government had begun to employ paramilitary forces in Ireland) the rhetorical conflict was characterised by the same broad lines, with speakers on one, usually the Conservative or Coalition Liberal, side emphasising what they considered the depravity of the IRA's actions and demanding better support for the Crown Forces in Ireland; while opposition speakers, mainly from the Labour camp and the Asquithian wing of the Liberal Party, regularly accused the Crown forces of antagonising the general population in Ireland and using unduly harsh and violent means against them.

The notion that violence was an aberration from civilisation was also a familiar theme in the German National Assembly (*Nationalversammlung*). Here, too, speakers differed on what they meant, however. Social Democratic Foreign Minister Hermann Müller emphasised in October 1919, without going into any specific detail, that the troops in the Baltic could hardly be called “guardians of humanity [*Menschlichkeit*],” implying their conduct was reproachful and, possibly, inhumane.³⁴ Later on in the same debate, German Nationalist People's Party (DNVP) member Gottfried Traub, misquoting Müller and misattributing the quote to Minister of Defence Gustav Noske, criticised him for having sarcastically referred to the Baltic troops as “strange guardians of civilisation.” He then went on to implore the Assembly to remember the brutal and inhumane – and thus by implication, uncivilised – conduct which these troops had faced from their Bolshevik enemies, and claimed the population of the city of Riga, which the German troops had ‘liberated’ in May 1919, were still grateful to them.³⁵ Traub, alongside other right-of-centre speakers, thus presented as ‘civilised’, and in need of defence against the Eastern depravity of the Bolsheviks, something explicitly German: a 700-year long tradition of *Deutschtum*, or Germandom, and German culture and settlement in the Baltic region as well as the ethnic Germans (*Baltendeutsche*) who still upheld it on this periphery of the German empire.³⁶ In the British parliament, similarly, frequent exhortations were made that in the fight against militant Irish nationalism something particularly *British* stood to be defended. This applied, in a very concrete sense, and in analogy to the Baltic Germans, to the Loyalist-Unionist population in Ireland, especially in the island's north, who would be left defenceless, as many argued, if Britain surrendered to the violent campaign of the IRA.³⁷

³⁴ *Verhandlungen*, 94. Sitzung, 09.10.1919, p. 2960.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2972.

³⁶ A notion repeated by several speakers in different debates: *Verhandlungen*, 46. Sitzung, 04.07.1919, p. 1298; 67. Sitzung, 26.07.1919, p. 1980; 94. Sitzung, 09.10.1919, p. 2950.

³⁷ For example: HC, 29.03.1920, vol. 127, cc. 959, 964; HC, 17.02.1921, vol. 138, cc. 241-2; HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, cc. 1369, 1388, 1439, 1451.

In a more abstract sense, however, what was seen to become endangered in the conflict in Ireland was an explicitly British set of values, steeped in democratic tradition, and the honour derived from them. Naturally, especially members of the opposition made this point very strongly. As early as May 1919, Labour MP Vernon Hartshorn expressed concern that “wherever there is any democratic opinion throughout the world, whether in our Colonies, on the Continent, or in the great free Republic of America, Ireland's wrongs are known and are execrated to the damage of the fame of this country and the Mother of Parliaments.”³⁸ It was common among MPs to express a fear over the international reputation and good name of Britain and its Empire suffering as a result of the undeniable indiscipline of Crown forces, and the policy of reprisals being carried out in Ireland. Robert Cecil, a Conservative MP who crossed the floor of the House in protest against the government’s policy in Ireland,³⁹ highlighted that “there are correspondents from French and American papers in Ireland, and these charges are being reported all over the world. It is very serious. There is the vast importance of our national reputation to be considered.”⁴⁰ Labour MP John Swan repeated the by now familiar theme, that “the policy of the British Government in Ireland [...] has brought our name into reproach throughout the civilised world.” Joseph Devlin, from the Irish Parliamentary Party, reminded specifically the English members of the House that the issue of the government’s Irish policy was “mainly [...] a question which affects England – its honour and good name. It affects the character of your Imperial prestige and pride,” as “their good name [was] being besmirched by the disgraceful acts and scandals committed by the Government of this country day by day.” In the same debate, Alexander Lyle-Samuel, a Coalition Liberal MP, powerfully expressed his opinion that the government were, by their failed policy, betraying what British soldiers had fought for in the recent war:

What is at stake in Ireland is the reputation of this country as a country that governs by civilised means. What is the foundation of civilisation? It is justice, it is truth, it is mercy, it is love. We used these words simply and naturally when we went into the War. We went into the War to secure civilisation. We asked great sacrifices that civilisation might be preserved. Here today we see the very antithesis, the very negation of civilisation in Ireland.⁴¹

³⁸ HC, 14.05.1919, vol. 115, c. 1692.

³⁹ Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (London, 1959), p. 169.

⁴⁰ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 975.

⁴¹ HC, 22.02.1921, vol. 138, cc. 843, 846, 853-854.

Indeed, what the Great War had been fought for, and the sacrifices made, were a notion often invoked by speakers. Government critics, such as Hartshorn, particularly focused on the rights of small nations to self-determination “for which we have just fought successfully through the bloodiest war the world has ever seen. We have been fostering aspirations in the Poles, the Czecho-Slovaks, and other alien races, yet it is the very aspirations we have fostered in other people which we treat with intense hostility when we find them in our Irish brethren.”⁴² That this right, for which the country had been “willing to sacrifice 800,000 sons,”⁴³ was being denied to the Irish “brethren” but granted to “other alien races” particularly highlighted what its critics perceived to be the double standards of the British government. This inconsistency was not only noted and remarked upon in Britain, however. It travelled transnationally and was, for example, readily used by members of the German National Assembly to accuse Britain of hypocrisy. Fulminating against the removal of Germany’s colonial possessions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific as a result of the Versailles Peace Treaty, Arthur von Posadowsky-Wehner (DNVP) rhetorically asked the assembly: “There is so much talk among our enemies of the right to national self-determination. Why does England [sic!] not introduce this right in Ireland? Why does it not introduce it in India? But they just juggle as they please.”⁴⁴ He had a point in so far as MPs in Westminster agreed, and warned that the British government would face the “charge of hypocrisy” from their “critics abroad.”⁴⁵ In a rousing speech, the Conservative MP Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, who consistently criticised the government for the failure of its Irish policy and advocated Dominion status for Ireland, exhorted his audience to “found our policy on the glorious tradition of this Empire, namely, on liberty and self-government,” so that “the light to which the Australians, Canadians and South Africans” had already turned their faces “with admiration and love and reverence” would shine on Ireland, too, and so that Great Britain would “shine out once more as the sanctuary of liberty, and not as the oppressor of a subject nationality.”⁴⁶

On the other hand, there were also those in parliament and in the press who staunchly expressed the view that the British government ought to follow a hard line against the IRA. The *Daily Telegraph* considered the Irish republican fighters to have positioned themselves outside of the norms of civilised warfare and, as a consequence, argued that “the officers and men of a civilised army cannot always adhere to civilised and legal rules if their opponents ignore them.” The paper even explicitly made the point that the IRA’s conduct had removed

⁴² HC, 14.05.1919, vol. 115, c. 1697.

⁴³ T.P. O’Connor (Irish Nationalist Party), HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 1020.

⁴⁴ *Verhandlungen*, 40. Sitzung, 22.06.1919, p. 1122.

⁴⁵ Hartshorn, HC, 14.05.1919, vol. 115, c. 1696.

⁴⁶ HC, 20.10.1920, vol.133, c. 1001.

their “claim to the privileges and restrictions of the Hague Convention” and argued that while “irregular reprisals [were] wrong, [...] there [was] much to be said for organized and properly controlled punitive measures.” As to what shape such measures might take, the paper straightforwardly suggested that an “adaptation of [the] system” used in “some of our Asiatic and African Dependencies” may be “feasible in rebel Ireland.”⁴⁷ Conservative MP Rupert Gwynne confidently urged the government to disregard international opinion and declared that “our Empire was not built up, and will not be maintained, by thinking, or caring, what other countries will think.”⁴⁸ The violence associated with colonial rule, however, was another aspect which German members of the National Assembly could only too easily pick up on to criticise Britain and accuse it of hypocrisy. Unsurprisingly, Posadowsky-Wehner’s attack against the British Empire also included an explicit reference to “this England, which has subjugated India for centuries, which has extracted unbelievable wealth from India”, after which he went on to directly associate British colonial rule with that of Belgium, “whose ignominious rule in the Congo still is in everyone’s memory”, a clear attempt to further denigrate the reputation of the British Empire.⁴⁹ This was not, however, just the position of one right-wing German Nationalist People’s Party representative. The Social Democratic Foreign Minister Müller showed himself to be similarly outraged by the forced removal of Germany’s colonies and specifically denied the “untenable charge that German failure in the area of colonial civilisation had been plainly shown.”⁵⁰ This utterance is particularly noteworthy as it established the practice of “colonial civilisation”, also referred to as the ‘civilising mission’, as a practice, and perhaps even a right, common to all European colonial powers. Germany had thus been excluded from the ranks of European colonial powers, no longer considered an equal. Conservative German politicians protested that “when it comes to the founding of the colonies of the German *Reich*, we as Germans have a clear and good conscience. [...] Germany acquired all its colonies in a peaceful way in accordance with international law. There is no Fashoda in German colonial history.”⁵¹

Evidently, for these German politicians, the outcome of the war was merely an excuse used by the Entente powers to acquire Germany’s former colonies. They forthrightly refused to recognise that past violent colonial policies could have anything to do with the removal of the

⁴⁷ “Restore Order First”, *Daily Telegraph*, 30.09.1920, p. 10.

⁴⁸ HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, c. 1388.

⁴⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 40. Sitzung, 22.06.1919, p. 1122.

⁵⁰ *Verhandlungen*, 64. Sitzung, 23.07.1919, p. 1854.

⁵¹ Traub (DNVP), *Verhandlungen*, 12. Sitzung, 20.02.1919, p. 206-207. He was referring to the 1898 Fashoda incident, when France and Britain found themselves in a tense territorial dispute in West Africa. It was resolved peacefully but caused a war scare in Europe.

German colonies. In this light, German *Freikorps* ambitions to conquer the Baltic regions to the East of the *Reich* could be regarded as all the more significant. By fighting against the Bolsheviks there, essentially colonial aspirations and extreme violence could be cloaked in the language of anti-Communism. When, in late 1918, the Latvian government and the Entente powers requested that the German army remain in the Baltic and send additional *Freikorps* to help fight the Red Army, a promise of future citizenship was made by the Latvian government to the prospective *Freikorps* men. An explicit promise of land for volunteer fighters was not made, but citizenship would have brought the right to settle with it. *Freikorps* recruitment posters in Germany nevertheless often proclaimed the promise of land anyway, and, as Gustav Noske noted in his memoirs, “What was not promised on the recruitment posters, the recruiting officers promised the men verbally.”⁵² Thus, many men who joined the *Freikorps*, facing uncertainty and unemployment in postwar Germany, did so with the explicit expectation of settling on fertile Baltic land to begin new lives as farmers, while defending and reinvigorating the region’s Germanic heritage, culture and *Volk*.⁵³ This was reflected in the autobiographical writing of many of the *Freikorps*, in which the prospect of settlement in the region was a recurring theme and, besides the highly ideological motive of defeating Bolshevism, a central motivation for the recruits. Ernst von Salomon, whose postwar writing on the *Freikorps*’ campaign became bestsellers in Weimar Germany, stylised the almost spiritual connection he claimed some of the men felt towards the land they were fighting on, and for:

With every breath a peculiar, tangy smell filled my lungs. Almost painfully spicy, it permeated my entire body. This haze of the Courlandish earth gave me a dull sense of what this land could offer us. My fingers clawed at the rich earth, which appeared to suck me in. We had conquered this land. Now it called on us; suddenly it had become a symbol of our obligation.⁵⁴

⁵² Noske, *Kiel bis Kapp*, p. 177.

⁵³ Sammartino, *Impossible Border*, pp. 48, 50, 54, 64.

⁵⁴ Ernst von Salomon, *Die Geächteten* (Berlin, 1930), p.75. Salomon had been too young to fight in the First World War, but threw himself into the Baltic campaign enthusiastically in an effort to undo the war’s outcome for Germany. Following the end of the campaign, he continued to follow his right-wing extremist ideology and fought the Republic by joining the underground *Organisation Consul*. His writing on the Baltic campaign, saturated with brutal anti-Bolshevik and *völkisch* descriptions of their ‘adventure’, thus were highly popular with a large anti-democratic and anti-republican readership in postwar Germany. More on the history of the publication of autobiographical writing by the *Freikorps* further below.

The *Freikorps*' motivations to set out to the East were put into words by many of the men and mainly clustered around such highly ideological motives as "to protect the border,"⁵⁵ to "serve Germany", to "fight for the liberation of Germany to our last breath,"⁵⁶ to "save the fatherland from chaos,"⁵⁷ and "to become the saviour of the fatherland out of our national upbringing, out of tradition, and duty."⁵⁸ The defence of the 700-year long history and tradition of Germandom in the Baltic region was, according to the commander of all German troops in the Baltic, Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz, a "cultural act" [*Kulturtaf*].⁵⁹ Goltz even evoked the prevention of "the downfall of the Occident [*Untergang des Abendlandes*]" as the *Freikorps*' goal, while others viewed the fight against Bolshevism in the Baltic as a fight "for the security of the homeland, nay of all of Western Europe" and for "the salvation of Christian-European culture."⁶⁰ Josef Bischoff, the commander of the *Eiserne Division* ('iron division') which fought in the Baltic, was perhaps bluntest with the title of his memoir, *Die Letzte Front* ('the last front') in expressing the firm belief that the Baltic campaign fought by the *Freikorps* was not only a 'real war' but a direct continuation of the First World War, indeed its final stage at which Germany's fate might still have been changed for the better.⁶¹

The *Freikorps*' enemies in the fight for the Germanisation of the Baltic lands were thus both the Bolsheviks, as well as Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian nationalist movements, against whom the *Freikorps* willingly perpetrated excessive acts of violence, aided by the linguistic dehumanisation of their enemies, who were consciously othered as civilisationally and racially subhuman. This was particularly prevalent in the *Freikorps*' life-writing. The Bolsheviks, as well as the native Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians, were consistently characterised through animalistic language as "beasts", and a "brutish enemy."⁶² Goltz furthermore repeatedly emphasised the geographical remoteness of Bolshevism, characterising it as an "Asiatic" ideology, which was therefore alien to Germandom and Western civilisation.⁶³ Even Biblical allegories were employed, characterising the *Freikorps*' mission as the prophesised battle against "the animal [which] had come from the Asiatic steppes, and was now devouring

⁵⁵ Salomon, *Geächteten*, p. 124.

⁵⁶ Josef Bischoff, *Die Letzte Front. Geschichte der Eisernen Division im Baltikum 1919* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 213, 235.

⁵⁷ Salomon, *Geächteten*, p. 123.

⁵⁸ Gerhard Rossbach, *Mein Weg durch die Zeit. Erinnerungen und Bekenntnisse* (Weilburg-Lahn, 1950), p. 21.

⁵⁹ Rüdiger von der Goltz, *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum* (Leipzig, 1920), pp. 184, 189.

⁶⁰ Goltz, *Meine Sendung*, p. 5; Ihno Meyer, *Das Jägerbataillon der Eisernen Division im Kampfe gegen den Bolschewismus* (Leipzig, 1920), p. 35; Walter Eberhard Freiherr von Medem, *Stürmer von Riga: Die Geschichte eines Freikorps* (Berlin, 1935), p. 6.

⁶¹ Bischoff, *Letzte Front*, pp. 246-247.

⁶² Meyer, *Jägerbataillon*, p. 8; Goltz, *Meine Sendung*, p. 278.

⁶³ Goltz, *Meine Sendung*, pp. 5, 144.

man.”⁶⁴ Once again, the central theme of violence as a demarcator of civilised behaviour can thus be identified in these materials, as the Bolsheviks and their acts were described as uncivilised and barbarous. When the Baltic *Landwehr* (‘militia’), which was not a body of German troops but did contain German volunteers, captured Riga from the Bolsheviks on 24-25 May 1919, papers repeatedly stressed the enthusiastic celebrations by the city’s population, grateful to the “heroic troops” who had liberated them from the terrible conditions which they had allegedly had to suffer under the “Bolshevik reign of terror” (*bolschewistische Schreckensherrschaft*).⁶⁵ The papers reported for example that at the last minute, before giving up the city, the Bolsheviks had shot “nine pastors and twenty women”, concluding that after months of Bolshevik rule “terror and famine in Riga exceed[ed] all imagination.”⁶⁶ Thus, the German troops in the Baltic were portrayed, in large parts, as legitimised in their defence against the “bestial” Bolshevik, and later Latvian, enemy.⁶⁷

Motivations for men to join the Black and Tans appear to have been altogether more material. Douglas Duff, the lone Black and Tan known to have penned an autobiography, published in 1934, joined a monastery after fighting in the First World War and signed up to the RIC as a Black and Tan on a whim, after deciding monastic life was not his calling after all. The title of his memoir directly expressed the fact that he considered himself a mercenary, or a “Free-companion”, and he took pride in “the old trade of the Free-companion, [...] the soldier who sells his blade to, and faithfully serves, the hirer.”⁶⁸ In describing an attack by “the ‘Shinner’”, Duff justified the Black and Tans simply ducking for cover by reminding the reader that “we were mercenary soldiers fighting for our pay, not patriots willing and anxious to die for our country.” In fact, his remarks reflected a deep sense of disillusionment with fighting for greater ideals following the perceived lack of gratitude and appreciation from the British government and society after the end of the First World War. He bitterly recalled that “most of us had been [patriots willing and anxious to die for our country] already, in a far more important scrap, and had seen exactly how much that sort of thing was worth or even appreciated by the people at home. Our job was to earn our pay by supressing armed rebellion, not to die in

⁶⁴ Cordt von Brandis, *Baltikumer. Schicksal eines Freikorps* (Berlin, 1939), p. 42.

⁶⁵ “Über die Einnahme Rigas“, *NPZ*, 25.05.1919, MA; “Rigas Befreiung von den Bolschewisten“, *NPZ*, 24.05.1919, MA.

⁶⁶ “Die Ereignisse im Baltikum“, *FZ*, 28.05.1919, ZMB; “Der Rückzug der Bolschewisten im Baltikum“, *NPZ*, 28.05.1919, MA.

⁶⁷ See for example accounts of “bestially mutilated” corpses allegedly discovered in Mitau following its liberation by German *Freikorps*. “Die bolschewistische Schreckensherrschaft in Mitau“, *NPZ*, 04.05.1919, MA. Latvians became the primary enemy once the Latvian government reneged on its original promise of citizenship, and thus opportunities for settlement, for the German *Freikorps*.

⁶⁸ Douglas Duff, *Sword for Hire: The Saga of a Modern Free-Companion* (London, 1934), p. xi.

some foolish, though maybe heroic and spectacular ‘forlorn hope’.⁶⁹ He almost sounded envious of the Irish nationalists, for “[t]hey, at least, conceived themselves to be fighting for a just cause.”⁷⁰

The consequences for the British Empire of the on-going conflict in Ireland and a feared loss of international prestige as a consequence were, as mentioned above, a frequent argument brought forward in public discourse. Especially once the government had agreed a truce in July 1921 and had entered negotiations with the leaders of the Irish nationalist movement, those opposed to the treaty negotiations, and later the Treaty which was signed on 6 December 1921, considered the government to be setting a dangerous precedent, as they appeared to be “surrender[ing] to crime.”⁷¹ In particular, they raised concerns that the IRA’s “policy of calculated and brutal arson and murder”, to which the British government were appearing to surrender, was being “watched by sinister eyes in Great Britain, in Egypt, in India, and throughout the world. Its success would mean the breakup of the Empire and our civilisation.”⁷² At the end of the First World War, the British Empire was indeed facing violent nationalist movements, rebellion, and rioting on an endemic scale, from Ireland to Egypt and India, as well as in Mesopotamia, on the Afghan frontier, and in several port cities at home.⁷³ The fear that the success of the Irish rebels in forcing the British Empire to its knees by means of a covert guerrilla war would spread and affect especially “our great interests [...] in India and in Egypt” was thus widespread.⁷⁴ In fact, for Conservative MP Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Croft it was the government’s surrender to “terrorism and assassination” which actually proved that “British civilisation ha[d] failed;” while fellow Conservative MP Colonel John Gretton found that the government bowing to its fear of the Irish guerrillas constituted an unprecedented “humiliation.”⁷⁵

The left-wing *Daily Herald*, on the other hand, considered the situation as a positive opportunity for the British government to extend to Ireland, and eventually India, similar freedoms as had recently been negotiated with the protectorate of Egypt. It called for “a recognition of the independence and full sovereign status of Ireland,’ coupled with the

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 73-74.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

⁷¹ John Butcher (Conservative), HC, 14.12.1921, vol. 149, c. 93.

⁷² Lieutenant-Colonel Martin Archer-Shee (Conservative), *ibid.*, c. 80.

⁷³ See Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (Manchester, 1984).

⁷⁴ Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill, HC, 15.12.1921, vol. 149, c. 171. Churchill’s Conservative party colleague Major Keith Fraser went as far as to suggest that all sources of rebellion against the British Empire, be they Irish, Egyptian, Indian or native to Britain, were in fact funded by “some central organisation [...] in New York” with “plenty of foreign money – money from pro-Germans”, HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, c. 1442.

⁷⁵ HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, cc. 1434, 1376.

immediate withdrawal of the army of occupation.” Demanding speedy action, as “the sands [were] running out”, the paper wondered whether, if the British government had trusted Egypt, “lying across the spinal cord of our empire”, with these privileges, “can we not extend an equal trust to Ireland on our western front?” It called on the government with hopeful urgency to “take its courage in its hands and deal with Ireland and India and Mesopotamia as it has dealt with Egypt, as South Africa was dealt with.”⁷⁶ The *Daily Mail*'s James Dunn wrote on the same theme with much more concern, calling Ireland the “keystone of the British Empire.” The author was convinced that “the solving of the Irish question [meant] the saving of the British Empire”, arguing that the question needed to be solved quickly, as “forces within and without the Empire [were] at work seeing the destruction of the glorious edifice of which we are so justly proud.” By prolonging the conflict in Ireland, the author worried that the British government would “play into the hands of these envious enemies.” However, rather than advocating a full-blown military effort on the part of the British forces to regain control over Ireland, the author wondered whether it was worth losing “an empire for the sake of an island” and seemed to argue that “an independent Ireland”, rather than being “a menace to the Empire,” would be preferable to “a conquered Ireland” which would spell “the end of Empire.”⁷⁷ The *Observer* took a somewhat more positive view of the potential which a peaceful solution of the Irish question might hold for the wider Empire. It also recognised that “Ireland [was] the key problem for the British Empire”, but, in this sense, it was convinced that “if British statesmanship can succeed here it can succeed everywhere” and that “peace in Ireland will be itself a step towards the settlement of great Imperial problems.” Reminding readers once again of the importance of British actions in Ireland for the country’s international prestige, the paper clearly stated that “by its acts in Ireland the British Government acquires its character in the eyes of the Dominions and dependencies, of the United States and of foreign countries.” It warned of “the alarming effect of the present Irish situation upon, say, Indian, American, or even European opinion.” The paper was convinced that “our political credit is lowered throughout the world by the news which is telegraphed from Ireland,” and it therefore argued that “when our political credit is at stake our existence as an Empire is at stake.” This, the paper concluded, should be reason enough for the British government to vigorously seek to achieve “peace by agreement” in Ireland.⁷⁸

Another frequently repeated theme in the public discourses analysed here was not only what the recent war had been fought for, but how it had been fought, especially by the German

⁷⁶ “Egypt and Ireland”, *Daily Herald*, 24.08.1920, TNA (Kew), WO 35/186.

⁷⁷ James Dunn, “Ireland – A Warning”, *Daily Mail*, 14.08.1920, p. 4.

⁷⁸ “Irish Peace and Empire Safety”, *Observer*, 20.03.1921, p. 12.

enemy. 'Prussianism' had become a byword for universally condemned barbarism, wanton destruction and cruelty. Opposition Liberal MP Joseph Kenworthy set the tone, asking as early as November 1919 whether the number of military and police raids carried out on private houses in Ireland was "less than the number of raids made on private houses in Belgium by the German Government."⁷⁹ Kenworthy further accused the government of following a policy of "Prussianism" for allegedly keeping men imprisoned without any charges or evidence in April 1920,⁸⁰ and Labour MP Arthur Henderson, in his opening speech to the October 1920 debate on reprisals, characterised the government's current Irish policy as "akin to the policy of frightfulness which was associated with the doings of the Germans, and the doings of him whom we described as the Hun during the War."⁸¹ In the same speech, Kenworthy appealed to his colleagues to not tolerate the government's defence of its policy of reprisals in the face of ambushes, saying that the same excuse had been used by the Germans in Belgium. With great pathos, he implored his audience: "If we do not condemn it, we shall be as guilty as the German people, and worse. [...] then Germany will have won the War. The Prussian spirit will have entered into us. [...] the 800,000, the flower of our race, who lie buried in a score of battle-fronts will really have died in vain."⁸² The theme was present in the press, too. The radical *Daily News* published a report on the situation in Ireland by Robert Lynd entitled "Prussianism in Ireland", and in a cartoon (Fig. 1), the same paper depicted a black British soldier, on whose uniform can be read the words 'Our Own Prussianism', who was simultaneously being slapped on the wrist with a feather and being handed a one-way ticket to Ireland by the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. Along with his purposely ineffective chastisement of the soldier, Lloyd George tells him "Take that! And that! You bad boy, you, for forgetting that British rule does not rest on force. And now – go to Ireland." All the while, the recently produced Amritsar Commission Report was depicted as lying in the dust between the two men.⁸³ The cartoon is multi-layered; besides its obvious condemnation as 'Prussianism' of the government's policy in Ireland and its inability or unwillingness to discipline the Crown forces who partook in illegal reprisals, it also contains reference to the exploitation, as perceived by the radical Left, by the Empire of colonial soldiers to do its 'dirty work,' though it should be noted that it is not generally recognised in the literature that colonial troops were deployed to Ireland for this purpose. However, with this racialised aspect, as well as the overt reference to the Amritsar massacre of April 1919 (discussed further in Chapter 3

⁷⁹ HC, 06.11.1919, vol. 120, c. 1655.

⁸⁰ HC, 26.04.1920, vol. 128, c. 835.

⁸¹ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 926.

⁸² *Ibid.*, c. 962.

⁸³ *Daily News*, 12.07.1920 and *Daily News*, 29.05.1920 (cartoon), TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

of the thesis), the cartoon embodies a central argument of this thesis: political violence in interwar Britain spanned all the way between the domestic, via the more peripheral, to the colonial sphere, and the language used to debate it transcended those circles, being applied cross-referentially, as in this cartoon.



Fig. 1: Cartoon from *Daily News*, 29.05.1920, in TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

While the killing of civilians, the burning of houses, and the taking of reprisals was thus characterised as a specifically 'German' kind of outrage, unworthy of the British forces who had defeated the 'Hun', there was one last line which Kenworthy was quick to remind the

House had not been crossed by the Crown forces. “There has, however, been one bright spot. There have been no sexual outrages on women. We have not followed the Germans in that respect. Thank God, English, Scottish, and Welsh soldiers have not sunk to that depth.”⁸⁴ Kenworthy thereby drew a clear line to demarcate the British forces, though guilty of many acts of indiscipline, from the particularly objectionable crime of sexual violence. This theme will have to be discussed in more detail further below. Oswald Mosley, then of the Conservative Party, however, went even further, suggesting that while the Germans in the war had at least acted according to a policy, however abject, which had been set out by their military authorities, the British in Ireland acted in a manner “more reminiscent of the pogrom of the more barbarous Slav, and it represents a far greater breakdown of law and order and justice than did the German method in Belgium.”⁸⁵ Mosley thereby established a different kind of ‘hierarchy of contemptibleness’, interwoven with ideas of race, in which the British had tumbled from their elevated position even further down past the hated Germans, and onto the same level as the leaderless perpetrators of mob violence in eastern European villages.

Those critical of the government’s Irish policy did not deny that the methods employed by the IRA in their fight against Crown forces were “breaches of universal moral law;” however, as expressed by Cecil after the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed, the government’s critics thought that by “breaking [its] own laws” the government had made things significantly worse and had “sanctioned the doctrine that murder is a legitimate political instrument.” Cecil was clear: “I believe it to be a dishonour.”⁸⁶ Referring to the recent Hunter Commission which had been set up to investigate the actions of General Dyer at Amritsar in April 1919, questions were asked in parliament whether the government would allow a similar commission to visit Ireland and undertake an impartial inquiry.⁸⁷ Such requests for an impartial inquiry into the situation in Ireland were made frequently in the House, but the government consistently refused, usually citing as an explanation that people in Ireland were too intimidated by Sinn Féin and the IRA to give “independent evidence.”⁸⁸ The shocking events of ‘Bloody Sunday’, 21 November 1920, when the IRA assassinated nine British intelligence officers in their hotel rooms in the morning, and Crown forces opened fire on the crowds at a Gaelic football match at Croke Park stadium in Dublin in the afternoon, killing fourteen spectators and injuring dozens more, prompted the Labour Party to dispatch its own commission to investigate the situation in Ireland. Its report was published in 1921 and found that the “situation in Ireland today is nothing

⁸⁴ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 965.

⁸⁵ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 1011.

⁸⁶ HC, 14.12.1921, vol. 149, cc. 69, 73.

⁸⁷ Opposition Liberal Harry Barnes, HC, 25.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 1326.

⁸⁸ Case made for example by David Lloyd George, HC, 01.11.1920, vol 134, c. 29.

short of a tragedy, whether from the point of view of the Irish people or from the standpoint of British honour and prestige.”⁸⁹

The insistence on an inquiry was indicative of a particular part of the ‘British prestige’ which was at stake in this conflict, namely the “supremacy of the law”, described as that “British possession, handed down for generations.”⁹⁰ Mosley accused the government of having “surrendered to the Sinn Feiners when it emulated their policy of assassination. [...] It has surrendered the very root principle of British justice.” Irish Nationalist MP for the Scotland division of Liverpool, T.P. O’Connor, implored the nation’s representatives to be “faithful to the almost unbroken tradition of this great free and constitutional country that law shall be supreme and the protection of the law shall follow even those charged with the most heinous crime.”⁹¹ In particular, torture was singled out as a practice utterly unworthy of a country like Britain, with its claim to civilisation and the pride it took in its history of the rule of law. Kenworthy, for example, claimed that day after day national and international newspapers carried stories alleging that captives in Ireland were “treated in a way in which men ought not to be treated by civilised captors.” Specifically, men were “being flogged to extort confession.”⁹² Accounts from members of the Crown forces active in Ireland at the time appear to support this accusation, if only by second-hand. In his diary, Private J.P. Swindlehurst levelled accusations of serious torture against the Black and Tans:

Prisoners were brought in occasionally, [...], covered in blood, minus teeth, and numerous other injuries. After a grilling in one of the upper rooms, we could hear groans and curses coming down the stairway, a dull thump indicated someone had taken a count [...] The Black and Tans have their grilling room, they are at it night and day, knocking information out of suspects and prisoners alike, and then carting them off to Mountjoy [prison, A.K.] more dead than alive.⁹³

However, not only those attacking the government invoked the notion of the supremacy of the law, but also those defending its actions. Leader of the House, Andrew Bonar Law, mocked his colleague Robert Cecil for making an “academic speech” on the supremacy of law, as if “the conditions which are prevailing in Ireland make no difference.” He asked, rhetorically, whether his “Noble Friend really [thought] that while the Civil War was going on, and they were

⁸⁹ The Labour Party, *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London, 1921), p. 1.

⁹⁰ Lord Cecil, HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, cc. 970, 975.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 1013, 1015.

⁹² *Ibid.*, c. 955.

⁹³ Swindlehurst, in William Sheehan, *British Voices: From the Irish War of Independence 1918-1921: The Words of British Servicemen who were there* (Cork, 2005), pp. 19, 26.

fighting for the ultimate aim of supremacy of the law, they were doing it in the academic way of which he spoke?" Instead, he insisted, the "essence of getting, in the long run, and permanently, the supremacy of the law is to put down disorder and murder."⁹⁴ Similarly, Hamar Greenwood condemned the provocation of the Crown forces by the IRA through their breach of civilised norms more than he did the reprisals which Crown forces took in response. Referring to the 'sacking' of Balbriggan on 20 September 1920, when, following the violent death of a constable and his brother, a number of 'Black and Tans' stationed at a near-by barracks broke out, looted several public houses, destroyed a factory and burned close to fifty other buildings before summarily executing two alleged Sinn Féiners, Greenwood admitted that the men "saw red. I admit it with regret." However, he also insisted that "I cannot condemn in the same way those policemen who lost their heads as I condemn the assassins who provoked this outrage." One particular item of weaponry, which had, according to Greenwood, recently "become the common weapon of revolting mutilation in carrying out this policy to smash the British Empire" was especially associated with the breach of civilisation, namely expanding 'dum-dum' bullets.⁹⁵ They were "condemned by every civilised race" and "contrary to the usages of all civilised warfare and the Geneva Convention."⁹⁶ In the face of such cold-blooded murder, which Greenwood refused to recognise as "a political crime," "British soldiers and British police will fire first, in the proper conduct of their difficult duty, in firing at people who are trying to ambush them and trying to annihilate them." He declared he had "the honour to support their conduct in the House" and explained that the difference lay simply in the fact that the members of the opposition "put all the emphasis on the reprisals in Ireland; I put it on the provocation."⁹⁷

Even after the truce had been agreed in summer 1921 and the government had entered negotiations, the Prime Minister himself expressed the aggressive conviction that, if need be, Britain would be ready to continue the fight. He stressed that should the treaty in any way endanger British economic or security interests, then "Britain, I feel confident, will make the necessary sacrifice, and face the necessary risks to avert such evils, and it will soon be found that the island which raised 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 men to fight for the liberties of Europe is still quite equal to defending its own safety and maintaining its own honour."⁹⁸ Others, even

⁹⁴ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 984.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. 946, 947, 937.

⁹⁶ Greenwood, *ibid.*, c. 937 (first quote), and William Davidson, HC, 01.11.1920, vol. 134, c. 23 (second quote). In fact, expanding bullets were banned by the 1899 Hague Convention, see International Committee of the Red Cross section on Customary International Humanitarian Law, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule77 [accessed 21.02.2017].

⁹⁷ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, cc. 942, 947.

⁹⁸ HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, c. 1426.

more hostile to negotiations, invoked the American Civil War and suggested that Britain ought to take inspiration from Abraham Lincoln's unwavering fight to preserve the Union.⁹⁹ Expressing his confidence in the might of the British military, and emphasising British moral superiority in this conflict, Conservative MP Samuel Hoare was not alone in asserting that:

No one can deny that had we attempted a military solution the armed forces of the Crown would have carried out the task. The Army and the Navy that beat the German Empire would certainly have been victorious. [...] The British Empire does not surrender to anyone. Our power is so strong, our might so unquestioned, that no one can say that we surrender to anybody. [...] We are making peace with Ireland, not because we have to make peace, but because we wish to make peace.¹⁰⁰

This view of course conveniently disregarded the fact that the British government had lost the support of public opinion as a result of its unsuccessful attempts at quelling revolt in Ireland and could therefore simply no longer afford to carry on this messy war which was costing British lives.¹⁰¹

The nature of the conflict in Ireland presented a constant point of contention, as was indicated by the kinds of questions and issues raised repeatedly by MPs in parliament. Criticism of the government came not only from the opposition, but also from the government's own backbenches, as well as Ulster Unionist MPs, who regularly challenged government politicians on wantonly risking and wasting the lives of British Crown forces in Ireland. They were primarily concerned with the government's failure to provide its forces with adequate protection against attacks. For example, the need for more armoured cars was brought up repeatedly by John Pennefather, Conservative MP for the Kirkdale division of Liverpool.¹⁰² There were appeals for better-suited materials to conduct an effective campaign, such as more powerful firearms, including machine-guns,¹⁰³ and, early on, the use of trained dogs for the protection of police and to trace suspects.¹⁰⁴ As early as December 1919, hand grenades had been issued to the Royal Irish Constabulary "purely for defensive purposes to safeguard the lives of the police when they are attacked, and to provide them with means of dealing with

⁹⁹ Henry Croft (Conservative), *ibid.*, c. 1441.

¹⁰⁰ HC, 14.12.1921, vol. 149, c. 9.

¹⁰¹ Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, p. 180.

¹⁰² He repeatedly asked about the provision of more armoured cars, together with "quick-firing guns", for the military in Ireland in October, November, and December 1920: HC, 28.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 1956W (quote); HC, 03.11.1920, vol. 134, c. 383W; HC, 30.11.1920, vol. 135, cc. 1097-1098; HC, 02.12.1920, vol. 135, c. 1415.

¹⁰³ HC, 28.10.1920, vol. 133, cc. 1955-1956W.

¹⁰⁴ HC, 05.08.1919, vol. 119, c. 192W; HC, 12.02.1920, vol. 125, cc. 196-197.

their armed assailants.” The Attorney-General for Ireland, Denis Henry quickly added that “there [was] no truth in the statement that the police [had] been instructed to use them against unarmed crowds.”¹⁰⁵ The provision of an appropriate legal framework, in the shape of martial law throughout all of Ireland, bringing with it the reintroduction of the death penalty in certain circumstances, was also advocated repeatedly by the more hawkish MPs in order to enable the military and police leadership to take whatever measures they saw fit to defeat the guerrilla forces of the IRA.¹⁰⁶ In particular Henry Wilson, then Chief of the General Imperial Staff, advocated for the introduction of martial law in all of Ireland and considered the introduction of it in only the most disturbed southern and south-westerly counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary in December 1920, and in Clare and Waterford in January 1921, a half-hearted and counterproductive measure. He condemned the undisciplined taking of unofficial reprisals and instead argued for the government to take a more decisive stance, bluntly declaring that “if these men [the IRA, A.K.] ought to be murdered then the government ought to murder them.”¹⁰⁷ Despite the fact that Lloyd George famously insisted that the Irish rebels were nothing but criminals and that fighting them was a “policeman’s job”, MPs’ specific and insistent questions suggest that there was a significant portion of opinion in support of putting the Crown forces on a more solid war-like footing.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, following the truce in July 1921, and in the middle of the treaty negotiations taking place in London, Henry Croft launched a vehement attack on the government and the House, who had, according to him, consistently tied the Crown forces’ hands and thereby prevented them from succeeding at their job of quelling rebellion in Ireland.¹⁰⁹

MPs’ acute awareness of having their speeches made public in the papers, as well as their often uneasy relationship with the press, was illustrated when Ulster Unionist MP for Mid-Armagh, Lieutenant-Colonel William Allen, implored his colleagues to stop making accusatory speeches against the forces of the Crown in Ireland as they would be published in the press and thus only serve to encourage the Irish nationalists.¹¹⁰ The Irish Unionist MP William Jellett, when protesting the treaty negotiations between the British government and the Irish nationalist leaders in autumn of 1921, even went as far as to accuse the “unscrupulous Press” of purposefully misleading the British public, saying “the British public have been

¹⁰⁵ HC, 04.12.1919, vol. 122, c. 611.

¹⁰⁶ HC, 01.11.1920, vol. 134, c. 24.

¹⁰⁷ Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁸ Townshend, *British Campaign*, p. 40. Lloyd George maintained this position as late as June 1921, when this quote was recorded.

¹⁰⁹ HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, c. 1435.

¹¹⁰ HC, 14.06.1921, vol. 143, cc. 357-358.

chloroformed. The truth has been suppressed.”¹¹¹ The British press was indeed acutely aware of the administration’s difficulties in controlling the situation in Ireland and, as time went on, a large swathe of press opinion grew increasingly critical. Throughout the period of the conflict, but especially at its height from late 1920 to the summer of 1921, papers carried almost daily reports of new “outrages” by the IRA and alleged reprisals by the Crown forces. Conservative and traditionally imperialist papers, like the *Morning Post*, reported more on attacks made against the Crown forces in Ireland, while more liberal and especially left-wing papers, like *The Manchester Guardian*, reported more heavily on the violent conduct of the Crown forces towards the Irish population, in particular alleged reprisals, especially as the conflict wore on.¹¹² Up until the summer of 1920, there was a certain level of understanding for the Crown forces’ difficult situation in Ireland. In some quarters there was support for a strong stance against the armed independence movement in Ireland. The *Daily Chronicle*, a pro-Lloyd George paper, argued in favour of using the military to subdue the Irish guerrillas, rather than leaving the task to underequipped police. The paper therefore heartily endorsed “using the mobile military forces which we possess [and] carrying the offensive with unrelenting energy against [the guerrillas, A.K.]. [...] It is only by such methods that armed resistance to the State should be met.”¹¹³ *The Manchester Guardian*, however, was less convinced that deploying the military was an appropriate solution. It wrote sympathetically of the “luckless boys in English and Scottish regiments who are afflicted with the joyless labours and risks of police work in Ireland” and pointed out that these “boys” were “not trained as policemen” and therefore could not be expected to deal with the task before them of maintaining civil order.¹¹⁴

According to Bennett’s analysis, by around June 1920 the majority of the British press left of *The Times* had come to oppose the government’s approach to fighting the Irish nationalists.¹¹⁵ The *Morning Post*, on the other hand, remained a notable supporter of the Crown forces, even when unauthorised, or later authorised, reprisals were proven to have taken place. In multiple articles appearing as late as April 1921, for example, the paper’s special correspondent was still primarily occupied with denouncing “Sinn Fein’s Methods” and its “Revolting Murders”, while exonerating the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary Division RIC as “not the ruthless villains [...] that the Sinn Fein propaganda represents,” emphasising that

¹¹¹ HC, 31.10.1921, vol. 147, c. 1453.

¹¹² For example, “At the Mercy of the Assassin”, *Morning Post*, 27.05.1920, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185; “Terror of the ‘Black-and-Tans’. Campaign of Vengeance and Government’s Loose Rein”, *Manchester Guardian*, 23.09.1920, p. 7.

¹¹³ “Irish Menace. Why Soldiers Must be Used”, *Daily Chronicle*, 31.05.1920, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

¹¹⁴ “Our Failure in Ireland”, *Manchester Guardian*, 29.06.1920, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

¹¹⁵ Bennett, *Black and Tans*, p. 56.

they were, on the contrary, “on reasonably good terms with the peaceful Irish” and “doing excellent work.”¹¹⁶ This did not mean the paper was not critical of the government’s policy in Ireland, however. On the contrary, it argued that the government’s strategy of trying to suppress the IRA with the RIC and paramilitary reinforcements was unsuccessful and ineffective and therefore should be abandoned. The paper seemed to suggest the government’s strategy was not tough enough, accusing the administration of surrendering to Sinn Féin and thereby furthering the cause of an Irish republic.¹¹⁷ Almost a year on, in April 1921, the *Morning Post*, while still defending reprisals in the face of provocation, called for clearer definitions of police powers (outside the martial law areas) and advocated a policy of holding an entire district in which an “outrage” against Crown Forces occurred financially responsible for its commission.¹¹⁸

The criticism in the press of the Crown forces’ conduct can be divided into two broad strands of condemnation. One of them, as discussed above, was condemnation of the Crown forces behaviour out of concern for the international reputation of Britain around the world and, in particular, how whatever happened in Ireland would affect the stability of the British Empire by potentially fuelling nascent independence movements elsewhere. The second strand of criticism, voiced most vocally by the moderate and more radical Left, was that of condemnation of the Crown forces on broadly moral and civilizational grounds. In the aftermath of the ‘sacking’ of Balbriggan by Black and Tans on 20 September 1920, *The Manchester Guardian* showed itself appalled at the “gross and scandalous excesses now almost daily committed by the agents of the law and forces of the Executive in Ireland”. It likened their methods to a series of institutions which it considered synonymous with primitive and despotic rule, such as “the Tsar’s Government”, “the Corsican vendetta or [...] the Indian [sic!] scalp-hunt.” Though the paper seemed convinced that these “crimes and outbreaks [were] certainly not approved by the Castle authorities”, it also emphasised that despite the unquestionable provocations which the Crown forces were subjected to, “reprisal in kind is not a tolerable form of action on the part of any Government calling itself civilised.”¹¹⁹ Reporting regularly from Ireland for *The Observer*, the Irish journalist and moderate nationalist politician Stephen Gwynn explicitly queried what “definition of civilisation” a government could possibly be referring to when it claimed that the police force had “restored Ireland to civilisation,” when in actual fact, Gwynn

¹¹⁶ “Ireland today. Sinn Fein’s Methods”, *Morning Post*, 06.04.1921, and “Ireland Today. The ‘Black-and-Tans’”, *Morning Post*, 08.04.1921, both in TNA (Kew), WO 35/189.

¹¹⁷ “The Surrender to Sinn Fein”, *Morning Post*, 04.05.1920, p. 7, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

¹¹⁸ “Ireland Today. The ‘Reprisals’ Question”, *Morning Post*, 12.04.1921, TNA (Kew), WO 35/189.

¹¹⁹ “The Degradation of Irish Government”, *Manchester Guardian*, 23.09.1920, p. 6.

claimed, nobody's life or property had become any safer "since the Black and Tans started."¹²⁰ In a notably entitled editorial, even *The Times*, not by any means a paper of the radical Left, found very clear language in which to condemn the recent spate of "arson and destruction" at Mallow, committed by Crown forces following a raid on military barracks on 28 September 1920. Suggesting that the reprisals were "deliberately organized", the paper called them "acts of war" against the people of Ireland. The paper made a nuanced case as to what, in their opinion, would have been within reason to do in response to the raid, which included the "arrest on suspicion of complicity [of] any townsfolk against whom a *prima facie* case could be established" and dealing summarily "with any insurgents caught in the possession of arms." The paper emphasised, however, that the soldiers were "not entitled to reduce to ruins the chief buildings of the township and to destroy the property of the inhabitants merely as an act of terrorism." Such "savagery", it continued, was a "national disgrace" and only served to sully Britain's name "throughout the Empire and throughout the world."¹²¹

One particular paper provides an interesting juxtaposition to the discourses analysed above. The *Weekly Summary*, a Dublin Castle-issued propaganda paper for the RIC and the Black and Tans, issued between August 1920 and the agreement of a truce on 11 July 1921, contained in large part curated excerpts from the British and Irish press, as well as (anonymous) opinion pieces, letters, and other short pieces. The paper thus offers insight into what the British government's representatives in Ireland considered important and appropriate to boost the Crown forces' morale at the height of the conflict. It did so by assuring new recruits that they were needed, wanted, and, as former soldiers, had the right skills for the job, as in one piece which emphasised that "They were wanted badly and the R.I.C. welcomes them. [...] They know what Danger is. They know what Fighting is. They have looked Death in the eyes before and did not flinch. They will not flinch now."¹²² The publication praised the recruits' courage,¹²³ and roundly placed the blame for reprisals, which it recognised were "wrong," on IRA provocation: "Police murder produces reprisals. Stop murdering policemen."¹²⁴ It also published long lists of attacks on the police in a recurring section entitled "Persecution of the

¹²⁰ Stephen Gwynn, "What is Civilisation?", *Observer*, 27.02.1921, p. 7.

¹²¹ "A National Disgrace", *Times*, 30.09.1920, p. 11.

¹²² "Black and Tans", *Weekly Summary*, 27.08.1920, p. 1, TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²³ Examples include: "Black and Tans' Defended" and "Courage and Patience of the Force", *Weekly Summary*, 08.10.1920, p. 1, TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²⁴ "What causes Reprisals?", *ibid.*

R.I.C.”¹²⁵ and highlighted in particular acts of IRA violence against women,¹²⁶ children,¹²⁷ old men,¹²⁸ and animals,¹²⁹ all of whom represented the most vulnerable elements of society and thus painted the IRA as particularly inhuman and cruel. Even in spring 1921, when the general opinion in the British press had decidedly turned against the government’s handling of the conflict in Ireland, and especially against the use of paramilitaries and reprisals, the *Weekly Summary* insisted that the “‘Black and Tans’ [were] Increasingly Popular”, and espoused the “Chivalry of the Crown Forces.”¹³⁰

As unsurprising as the above positions were for an outright propaganda publication, the discourses analysed here did reflect the divisions within the wider political context of the time, most notably the ongoing split of the Liberal Party, and the accompanying soul-searching over what ‘Liberalism’ meant, when part of the Liberal Party had gone into coalition with the Conservatives and a Liberal Prime Minister could appear to spearhead the increasingly escalating violence of Crown forces in Ireland. In an editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* reminded readers of instances in the past when the Liberal Party had taken a principled stand, under William Gladstone, against “[British] support of the inhuman tyranny of the Turk”, and, under Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to oppose the “‘methods of barbarism’ in South Africa” during the Boer War. Now, continued the editorial, it was again up to the Liberal Party, not under Lloyd George but the Asquithian opposition wing of it, to distinguish itself “as the leader of the fight against still worse methods of barbarism than those of South Africa – methods employed nearer home, not against an enemy, but against fellow-subjects, and relying not on organised operations of war but on licensed arson and murder by a lawless police force.”¹³¹ Reinforcing his opposition to the Coalition Liberal Party under Lloyd George, Asquith, in a speech to supporters at the National Liberal Club in November 1920, two days before ‘Bloody Sunday’, described the escalating violence in Ireland as “civil war” and emphasised that all “killing is murder, whether the victim be a constable, or a soldier, or a woman nursing her baby by the wayside.” He strongly condemned the practice of reprisals and expressed his opinion

¹²⁵ First instalment in *Weekly Summary*, 03.09.1920, p. 3, TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²⁶ “Lady Attacked by Sinn Feiners”, *Weekly Summary*, 27.08.1920, p. 4; “Revolting Outrage in Roscommon. Brutes ‘Pig-Ring’ a Woman”, *Weekly Summary*, 03.09.1920, p. 2; “Shinners’ War on Women. Woman’s Face Tarred”, *Weekly Summary*, 11.02.1921, p. 1, all in TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²⁷ “Brutal Bandits Terrify Children”, *Weekly Summary*, 10.09.1920, p. 2; “Shinners Attack a School. Women and Children Suffer”, *Weekly Summary*, 26.11.1920, p. 1, both in TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²⁸ “War on Old Men by I.R.A.”, *Weekly Summary*, 22.04.1921, p. 2, TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹²⁹ For example, a story of a number of goats which supplied milk to police barracks being hanged from a gate is reported in “Brutal Cruelty to Animals”, *Weekly Summary*, 08.10.1920, p. 4; also “War on Dumb Animals by I.R.A. Animals Shot Dead.”, *Weekly Summary*, 22.04.1921, p. 2, both in TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹³⁰ *Weekly Summary*, 01.04.1921, p. 4, TNA (Kew), CO 904/38.

¹³¹ “The Future of Liberalism”, *Manchester Guardian*, 01.12.1920, p. 8.

that the government was dealing “a blow at the very foundation on which civilized society rests when the Executive is permitted, or rather permits itself, to confound the innocent with the guilty and to strike out wildly and blindly in a frenzy of retaliation.” His condemnation was received with cheers. Asquith went on to cite several recent cases of reprisals and, in particular, the destruction of creameries in towns like Tubbercurry and elsewhere and accused the Prime Minister of wilfully misguiding the public in his speech in the Commons where he denied the evidence for these events. Asquith then addressed “the English people” directly and, holding up Britain as a bulwark of liberal values, accused the current government of an unconscionable incitement to violence:

Are we going to content ourselves with protesting (loud cries of “No”) against the misdoings of other people, while we ourselves – the pioneers of liberty, [...] laying down the principles of freedom and justice for the rest of the world – are here in Ireland doing things by the authority and with the incitement of the Executive which would take a fitting place in the blackest annals of the lowest despotisms of the European world?

Asquith ended by vowing he would continue to work to make information about the real circumstances in Ireland publicly available and opening the British people’s eyes to “the dishonour that is being done in their name.”¹³²

While Asquith’s speech was received with cheers by his supports at the National Liberal Club, several papers reporting it vehemently disagreed with its contents, illustrating that the Independent Liberals’ strong condemnation of the government’s continued support of the Crown forces was by no means representative. Commenting on the speech, the more conservative *Observer* did urge the government to “awaken thoroughly to the fact that undisciplined and promiscuous reprisals are hateful to the plain mass of the British people.” But the paper strongly condemned Asquith’s speech as unnecessarily divisive party-political rhetoric which would only result in the loss of united Ireland.¹³³ An editorial in the Unionist *Scotsman*, calling Asquith’s speech “frenzied” and “one of the least creditable incidents in his political career”, considered his point of view “deplorable”, “vicious”, and an “outrageous example of perverted judgement.” The piece alleged that there was no evidence to Asquith’s

¹³² “Killing is Murder”, *Times*, 20.11.1920, p. 12. The speech was, for example, also reported in: “Mr. Asquith’s Sweeping Irish Charges”, *Daily Express*, 20.11.1920, p. 5; “Mr. Asquith on Irish Reprisals”, *Manchester Guardian*, 20.11.1920, p. 14; “Mr. Asquith. Speech on Reprisals”, *Scotsman*, 20.11.1920, p. 9. In reporting the meeting at the National Liberal Club, the *Scotsman* had noted that there had been “unprecedented demand for seats” at the luncheon, necessitating an “overflow” room to be used to accommodate “all those who expressed their desire to be present”, see “Ex-Premier on Irish Reprisals”, *Scotsman*, 19.11.1920, p. 7.

¹³³ “Political Notes”, *Observer*, 21.11.1920, p. 12.

claim that the owners of destroyed Irish creameries were unconnected to Sinn Fein or the IRA. Instead, the paper suggested that Asquith and his supporters all too readily chose to believe “Sinn Fein inventions.” The paper specifically condemned Asquith for “blackening the name of Great Britain, without a single shred of justification.” While it is thus obvious that the strong condemnation of Crown force conduct, as articulated by the Opposition Liberals, was not necessarily representative of wider opinion in the British press, the *Scotsman’s* incensed editorial does give proof of the argument made in this chapter that preserving British prestige and upholding its self-image, domestically and internationally, was of foremost importance amid the violence taking place in Ireland.¹³⁴

One case which threw the issue of excessive use of force in Ireland into sharp relief in the summer of 1920 was the so-called Listowel ‘mutiny’ in June, which raised the question of when Crown forces were officially allowed, or expected, to fire on civilians. In this ‘mutiny’ a number of RIC constables resigned from their posts at Listowel police station in Kerry in protest after receiving new orders to shoot on sight any suspicious person who, when challenged, refused to remove their hands from their pockets immediately.¹³⁵ The content of this drastic order was substantially vouched for by a report produced by Colonel Gerald Smyth, who conveyed the order to the Listowel police, himself.¹³⁶ Allegedly, however, the order was accompanied by callous remarks from Smyth that “the more you shoot the better I will like you” and an assurance that “no policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man.”¹³⁷ Smyth categorically denied using any such words in a report he authored and which was submitted to parliament in July 1920 after Smyth had been assassinated by the IRA in Cork on 17 July 1920.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the incident, and the order which prompted the ‘mutiny’, drew significant public attention. The left-wing press used it to forcefully condemn the government’s policy in Ireland as a “new form of Dyerism”, again in reference to the April 1919 Amritsar massacre.¹³⁹ The conservative *Spectator*, on the other hand, focused its attention on Smyth’s assassination, not mentioning the ‘mutiny’ and calling the allegation that Smyth had incited

¹³⁴ “[Editorial article], *Scotsman*, 20.11.1920, p. 8.

¹³⁵ The exact number of constables who resigned is difficult to ascertain. Accounts vary between five (Bennett, *Black and Tans*, p.57) to all fourteen (Thomas Fennell, with Rosemary Fennell (ed.), *The Royal Irish Constabulary: a history and personal memoir* (Dublin, 2003), p.109).

¹³⁶ HC, 29.07.1920, vol. 132, cc. 1606-1609; see also “Col. Smyth on his speech”, *Times*, 30.07.1920, p. 14.

¹³⁷ Statement of Jeremiah Mee, Bureau of Military History, Dublin, 1950, p. 10, digitised: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0379.pdf> [accessed 30.05.2020].

¹³⁸ HC, 29.07.1920, vol. 132, cc. 1606-1609; see also “Col. Smyth on his speech”, *Times*, 30.07.1920, p. 14.

¹³⁹ “Dyerism in Ireland”, *Daily News*, 12.07.1920, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

policemen to take reprisals “without any truth.” Instead, the paper asked “how long British people [were] going to allow the horrors of the Sinn Fein conspiracy to go on without any serious attempt to protect their own friends, to punish those who are guilty of murder, and to maintain the ordinary standard of civilization in the South of Ireland?”¹⁴⁰ What the controversy over the ‘mutiny’ highlighted, was the confusion in large parts of Ireland over who was in charge of the law and what the law actually allowed for. The incident also highlighted the limits of what the British administration could successfully ask its Irish policemen to do to aid the fight against the IRA; shooting members of their own communities on very little suspicion was evidently not something the policemen, at least at Listowel, were prepared to do.

The similarities between this order and the *Schießbefehl* pronounced by German Minister of Defence Gustav Noske in the 1919 Berlin March Uprising, which ordered that anyone who was encountered carrying a weapon fighting government soldiers was to be shot on the spot, are noticeable.¹⁴¹ Both were considered, by some, a departure from previously publicly espoused values. When the Listowel incident was raised in the Commons by T.P. O’Connor in July 1920, the House was disinclined to discuss the matter in any great detail, despite the insistence of Irish Parliamentary Party MP Joseph Devlin that, due to the “intense passions” that Smyth’s alleged statements had aroused throughout the country, it should be debated in the House in order to enable “the nation [...] to form its own judgement.”¹⁴² The German National Assembly had in fact spent even less time discussing Noske’s order to shoot, despite independent Social Democrat Hugo Haase explicitly putting a question down regarding the “illegality of the Defence Minister’s order of 9 March 1919 for Berlin.” The Chief of Staff briefly replied that the directive had been lifted once order had been restored in the city; he then deflected any follow-up questions, demonstrating a great unwillingness to have the controversial order discussed at all.¹⁴³ The practice at the centre of the controversial order given to the police at Listowel, however, was defended, in principle, by Oswald Mosley, whose remarks appeared characterised by both fear and aggression amid extraordinary circumstances. Condemning deliberate reprisals, he nevertheless insisted that “in the present state of Ireland one certainly cannot deny the right to shoot a man who, when challenged, refuses to hold up his hands. Anything of that sort is perfectly legitimate. Men who are suspected of being about to attack or who are engaged in actual combat may be shot perfectly fairly and legitimately under the conditions which exist now in Ireland.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ “Topics of the Day. Anarchy in Ireland”, *The Spectator*, 24.06.1920, p. 120, TNA (Kew), WO 35/185.

¹⁴¹ Order as quoted in thesis chapter 1. Noske, *Kiel bis Kapp*, p. 109.

¹⁴² HC, 14.07.1920, vol. 131, c. 2388.

¹⁴³ *Verhandlungen*, 28. Sitzung, 25.03.1919, p. 787.

¹⁴⁴ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 1010.

It is noticeable that in the German National Assembly debates, the violence perpetrated by *Freikorps* and other German volunteer bodies in the Baltic areas was scarcely mentioned at all. Unlike their British counterparts, even opposition MPs did not frequently spend a lot of time illustrating the violent acts committed by the state-authorised forces in the East. When their actions were brought up at all, it was done using consistently vague language. Noske, in particular, was given to speaking of “*Ungehörigkeiten*”, or ‘improprieties.’¹⁴⁵ Some of the only instances when explicit descriptions of violent acts were uttered in the National Assembly were when the actions of the Bolshevik forces were mentioned. The most noteworthy instance of graphic violent language being heard in the chamber in this context was the recitation by German Nationalist Gottfried Traub of an open letter written by Major Josef Bischoff, the commander of the *Eiserne Division*. Bischoff was most staunchly opposed to Germany having signed the Versailles Peace Treaty, in which it surrendered the Baltic areas, and his division refused to return to Germany throughout the year 1919.¹⁴⁶ In his letter, Bischoff wrote: “In our ears we hear the screams of raped women, of slain children; before our eyes we see the images of bestially mutilated corpses. We could never believe that in the face of such atrocities no flame of indignation had caught the entire world.” He thus justified the violent (re-)actions of his men and warned his compatriots back home to be vigilant against left-wing agitation.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the only voice to explicitly describe acts of extreme violence (though they were his enemies’) was one of the *Baltikumer* himself, chimed with the literature produced by the Baltic fighters themselves after their return to Germany. Their life-writing abounded with graphic details of the fighting and oscillated between comparatively ‘harmless’ adrenaline-fuelled adventure stories and viscerally hate-filled manifestos of right-wing extremism.¹⁴⁸ While the German troops’ and volunteers’ “improprieties” were loosely condemned by the government, from July 1919 a much larger proportion of speaking time in parliament was devoted to condemning the troops for not following the government’s orders to return home. This was seen as a much more morally bankrupt act, as it would endanger the wellbeing of German civilians at home, who would suffer immensely if the Entente powers were to go through on their threat to re-impose a blockade on Germany if the troops continued to refuse to cooperate. As Foreign Minister Müller put it in October, when he was expressing his hope

¹⁴⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 67. Sitzung, 26.07.1919, p. 1974; 93. Sitzung, 08.10.1919, p. 2919; 112. Sitzung, 29.10.1919, p. 3548.

¹⁴⁶ Sammartino, *Impossible Border*, pp. 63-65.

¹⁴⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 94. Sitzung, 09.10.1919, p. 2973.

¹⁴⁸ While Meyer, *Jägerbataillon* and the early parts of Alexander Graf Stenbock-Fermor, *Freiwilliger Stenbock: Bericht aus dem Baltischen Befreiungskampf* (Stuttgart, 1929) are examples of the former type, Stenbock’s account soon turns more radical, and especially Manfred von Killinger, *Freikorps voran! Deutschlands Kampf um Oberschlesien 1921* (Neckarwestheim, 2015 [first published 1934]) and Salomon, *Geächteten* are examples of the latter type of autobiographical account.

that the troops would now finally follow the orders to return, “I cannot imagine that the troops would make themselves complicit in the murder of German seniors, invalids and children.”¹⁴⁹

This sentiment was also echoed to an extent in the national press. From the very beginning of the *Freikorps*' Baltic campaign, there had been consistent, if not overly much coverage of developments in the Baltic region in the press, mostly in the shape of brief reports on troops movements, battles, or territory gained or lost. At times of especially notable developments in the conflict, such as when *Freikorps* captured Riga from the Bolsheviks on 24-25 May 1919, significantly more attention was directed towards the area and more reporting emerged in the press. Overall, however, few editorials or opinion pieces were published, which discussed the campaign or specifically the violence accompanying it, in a substantial way. This was certainly in contrast to the British press' outspokenness and lively culture of debate with regards to the conflict in Ireland. Occasionally German papers published supposed exclusive eyewitness accounts from the region, often anonymous but always aligned with the paper's political leaning.¹⁵⁰ Right-wing papers, such as the *Deutsche Zeitung* or the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* reported more on the Baltic campaign than did more liberal or left-leaning papers, such as the *Vossische Zeitung* or the SPD's *Vorwärts*. The fact that liberal, republican publications showed less interest in covering events in the Baltic may have been a result of their political acceptance of the postwar borders of Germany and their recognition that the Baltic areas were not, and were not going to be, part of Germany, nor was it their conviction that a war should be fought to reconquer them. More nationalist, pan-German papers, on the other hand, refused to accept the postwar order and supported the quasi-colonial desire to conquer and (re-)germanise the Baltic lands, which may thus have been borne out in their heightened coverage of the conflict.

During the earlier stages of the *Freikorps*' Baltic campaign, during February, March, and April 1919, especially the more conservative papers often carried recruitment advertisements, urging men to join one of the numerous *Freikorps* being set up. They presented the *Freikorps* as an attractive, exciting and worthy option of carrying on the fight against Bolshevism, and to gain personal opportunities for building a new life in the Baltic. One advertisement by the *Anwerbestelle Baltenland* ('recruitment office Baltic lands') specified that it was especially keen to recruit “farmers, agricultural officers and labourers,” as well as “orderly, faithful soldiers,” offering in return “favourable settlement opportunities and good, permanent living-conditions.”¹⁵¹ Another recruitment advertisement, on the other hand, appealed to the “front

¹⁴⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 94. Sitzung, 09.10.1919, p. 2959.

¹⁵⁰ For example “Von Haus und Hof in die Fremde“, *DZ*, 21.02.1919, MA, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵¹ “Anwerbestelle Baltenland“, *NPZ*, 15.05.1919, AA.

soldiers” to take up arms again and support the “Balts” in their “undaunted” fight against the “superior number of Russian hordes of murderers and incendiaries” (“*Ueberzahl russischer Mordbrennerhorden*”). It was characterised as a patriotic German duty to participate in this “decisive battle” for “Germany.” The Baltic was regarded as the Eastern bulwark against the advance of Bolshevism, with the recruitment notice ominously warning that once the “Balts are run over, then woe betide the homeland!”¹⁵² The press approach to the violent *Freikorps* campaign in the Baltic broadly followed the same lines, never discussing, positively or negatively, the actual violence unleashed by the German fighters, while consciously dehumanising and othering the Bolshevik enemy in crude and often animalistic terms, as mentioned further above.

The dehumanising language was also, and indeed especially, applied to the women who participated in the conflict in the Baltic. As noted in Chapter 1, according to Klaus Theweleit’s analysis of their life-writing, the *Freikorps* men only recognised two main types of women. The blood-red and Communist-red *Flintenweib* on the one hand, a quickly popularised vulgar term for female Communist fighters and commissars, characterising them as out-of-control Amazonian murderers, sexual predators, and thus fair game for the *Freikorps* men; and, on the other hand, the white and saintly, virginal German woman, who could only be a mother, sister, nurse, or wife.¹⁵³ The latter were the women the *Freikorps* considered themselves to be liberating from the Bolshevik yoke in the Baltic. The *Flintenweiber* were characterised by the *Freikorps* as among the most violent fighters; they were seen as “beasts in human shape, who only wanted to see blood, who got into a blood frenzy” and killed innocent people “with a grin on their face.”¹⁵⁴ Though “satanic” and a “monster”, who had ordered everyone caught fleeing from the Bolsheviks to be beaten almost to death, one *Freikorps* man could not help but be slightly dazzled when the “Beast of Bausk, the female commissar, high on her steed, fled right through our midst.”¹⁵⁵ This language also partly made its way into the press, where reports by the German journalist Erich Köhrer were published, characterising Communist women as “female beasts” who had led the “terrible regime of horror” as “militia women” (*Miliziantinnen*).¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, a certain sexual pleasure was also often mixed in with the

¹⁵² “Anwerbestelle Baltenland”, *DZ*, 02.04.1919, MA.

¹⁵³ See particularly parts of chapter one, Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, pp. 88-158. A more recent and more differentiated analysis of the dynamics and reasons behind postwar paramilitary violence against women in Central Europe is offered in Robert Gerwarth, “Sexual and Nonsexual Violence against ‘Politicized Women’ in Central Europe after the Great War”, in Elizabeth D. Heinemann (ed.), *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones. From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2011), pp. 122-136.

¹⁵⁴ Meyer, *Jägerbataillon*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁵ Brandis, *Baltikumer*, pp. 77, 74.

¹⁵⁶ “Riga unter den Bolschewiken”, *FZ*, 08.06.1919, ZMB.

frenzy of the fight. Salomon, for example, chose to describe the pleasure he derived from shooting a machine gun in quasi-sexual terms: “I press the lever. The gun trembled between my knees like an animal. [...] Was it not that I could feel, though the jerking of the gun’s metal pieces, how the fire smashed into warm, living human bodies? Satanic lust, am I not one with the gun? Am I not machine – cold metal? In, into the jumbled crowd...”¹⁵⁷

The role of women also occasionally took a particular place in the discourse on the conflict in Ireland, however in a way which suggested that violence perpetrated against women constituted a particularly contemptible act. Accusations of having been guilty of perpetrating such contemptible violence were made both against the Irish guerrillas as well as against the government’s paramilitaries. The conservative *Morning Post* focused on what it called the “Sinn Fein War on Women”, recounting how the IRA considered any woman observed walking out with a soldier or other member of the Crown forces a traitor who would face the death penalty. Recounting one particular case, the paper alleged that a woman named Nellie Carey had been shot near Fermoy by IRA men after they had shot her soldier companion and she had knelt by his side to pray. The detail that she was allegedly shot with “a soft-nosed [bullet]”, meaning an expanding bullet, only added to the brutality and illegality of the act. Furthermore, hair-cutting was mentioned as one of the measures the IRA employed against women who they regarded as traitors.¹⁵⁸ The left-wing *Daily Herald*, on the other hand, alleged that among the “Barbarities in Ireland” committed by the Crown forces there were stories of “expectant mothers driven in their night attire into the street, young girls outraged, school children terrorised.” It based its reporting on the materials collected by the Irish Women’s delegation and “prepared under the authority of the Irish White Cross”, who had made documentary evidence of the alleged crimes available to British and Dominion politicians. The paper stressed that it did not think that the “majority of our fellow-countrymen [were] guilty,” but emphasised that “for the honour of our race it is necessary these charges should be investigated and the guilty brought to trial.” The report claimed that “the conventions of the Red Cross and its protections [...] [were] not recognised by the Crown forces in Ireland” and listed several concrete cases of violence against women including rape, attempted rape, robbing and kicking a woman to death, turning a heavily pregnant woman out of her house in the middle of the night, and mistreatment of female prisoners.¹⁵⁹

In the House of Commons, Joseph Devlin pointedly asked the government whether this was “a war against women and children” after Hamar Greenwood had had to admit that twelve-

¹⁵⁷ Salomon, *Geächteten*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁸ “Sinn Fein War on Women”, *Morning Post*, 27.04.1921, TNA (Kew), WO 35/189.

¹⁵⁹ “Barbarities in Ireland”, *Daily Herald*, 28.06.1921, TNA (Kew), WO 35/191.

year old Annie O'Neill had accidentally been killed, and another five-year old girl named Teresa Kavanagh injured, when Crown forces opened fire on a group of six young men who, despite being ordered to stop, were running away from the forces' vehicle. The loss of this "young innocent life" was "deplorable" according to Greenwood, but he refused to attach any responsibility for it to the Crown forces as long as they remained under threat of assassination from the IRA.¹⁶⁰ The common practice of cutting women's hair, familiar from the recent First World War when particularly French and Belgian women accused of associating with enemy soldiers were severely stigmatised and punished as traitors by having their heads shaved, was also levered as an accusation against the forces of the Crown.¹⁶¹ Irish Nationalist MP Jeremiah MacVeagh confronted the government with a long list of detailed allegations of Black and Tans cutting off the hair of at least eight Irish women as punishment, in addition to setting houses on fire, turning women out of their houses, and beating and shooting several other women and girls. Greenwood promised to make inquiries as to the details of these cases, but nevertheless vehemently rejected the "monstrous allegation that the forces of the Crown are making war on women and children in Ireland."¹⁶² Nevertheless, the *Daily Herald's* decisive assessment of the situation of women in the conflict was accurate. The paper criticised that while women in Ireland were "subjected to all the horrors of war, they [were] given none of the immunity or protection afforded to non-combatants."¹⁶³ This meant that the traditional lines of conflict and warfare, especially as they had most recently been experienced by millions on the Western Front, were quickly dissolving and becoming heavily blurred with each act of violence against civilians, including women and children, in Ireland.

This dissolution of lines of conflict and the resultant extreme violence was also borne out in life-writing documents. Especially within the *Freikorps'* writings, the men did not hesitate to describe the violent acts they engaged in, especially once they had been ordered, but refused, to return and had thus lost the official support of the German government, leaving the men on the backfoot militarily, desperate, and full of bitter resentment. Published in 1930, perhaps with the prospect of a new regime already looming, Salomon's bestselling narration of his *Freikorps'* 'last hurrah' as it tried to recapture the city of Mitau was particularly striking in its unabashed brutality. Bitterly disappointed by the lack of support from the German government,

¹⁶⁰ HC, 15.11.1920, vol. 134, cc. 1506, 1509.

¹⁶¹ Emmanuel Debruyne, "Intimate Relations between Occupiers and Occupied (Belgium and France)", in Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (eds.), *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* (Freie Universität Berlin, 2016-06-08), DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10919 [accessed 03.10.2019].

¹⁶² HC, 25.11.1920, vol. 135, cc. 646-649W.

¹⁶³ "Barbarities in Ireland", *Daily Herald*, 28.06.1921, TNA (Kew), WO 35/191.

full of hatred for the (winning) Bolshevik enemies and their Latvian and Estonian allies, and aggravated by the oncoming wintery conditions, Salomon described the troops snapping and falling into a frenzy of wanton destructiveness:

We fired into surprised crowds and rampaged and shot and beat and chased. We drove the Latvians like hares across the fields and set fire to every house [...]. We threw the bodies into the wells and threw hand grenades in after them. We beat to death whoever fell into our hands, we burned whatever was flammable. We saw red, we had no human feelings left in our hearts. [...] there burned our hopes, our desires, there burned the civic [*bürgerlichen*] tablets, the laws and values of the civilised world.¹⁶⁴

The stress and tension under which the fighting took place, and which resulted in such excessive acts of lashing out against a civilian population, was exacerbated by the presence of a quasi-invisible enemy in both conflicts. In a guerrilla war, such as the one fought by the IRA, which was heavily dependent on ambushes, this was of course a defining feature. Irish women, though not necessarily active fighters, were often also involved in the clandestine operations, working as messengers, hiding weapons, or sheltering IRA men on the run, thus further blurring the lines between combatants and non-combatants.¹⁶⁵ Two Black and Tans whose experiences were recorded in a volume of oral history, John Fails and Joseph Thompson, spoke of the uncertainty of identifying who or where the enemy was, especially due to the fact that the IRA were not in uniform and could easily blend into the civilian population.¹⁶⁶ It was “quite natural”, according to Thompson, that the Black and Tans thus ambushed, began replying in kind.¹⁶⁷ This led to some of the Crown forces viewing all Irish civilians as the potential “hidden plain clothes enemy.”¹⁶⁸ Bernard Montgomery, later of Alamein, revealed a rather stark attitude as, once he had begun regarding “all civilians as ‘Shinners’,” “it never bothered [him] a bit how many houses were burnt.”¹⁶⁹ Lieutenant General Arthur Percival who served in Ireland during the conflict stressed, in a lecture he gave on guerrilla warfare, that “[e]very civilian should be looked upon as a potential enemy.”¹⁷⁰ In fact, the extraordinarily stressful situation of being under constant threat of ambushes from a hidden enemy is one of the central arguments Leeson has presented as to why violence in

¹⁶⁴ Salomon, *Geächteten*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁶⁵ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 231.

¹⁶⁶ John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: an Oral History* (Belfast, 1990), pp. 103, 107.

¹⁶⁷ Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 110.

¹⁶⁸ Memoirs of Major General Douglas Wimberley, Vol. 1, PP/MCR/182, IWM, p. 146.

¹⁶⁹ Montgomery, in Sheehan, *British Voices*, p. 151.

¹⁷⁰ Percival, in Sheehan, *British Voices*, p. 141. No date given for delivery of lectures.

the Irish War of Independence could escalate to the degree that it did. The fact that the British government, anxious to uphold the pretence of a 'policeman's job', often overlooked the Crown forces' violent excesses only exacerbated the "climate of lawlessness which seems to have encouraged both political and non-political crimes."¹⁷¹ Heavy drinking among the Crown forces often added to violent behaviour, too, and for Douglas Wimberley, stationed in Queenstown (now Cobh) with his Cameron Highlanders, this "was no wonder, for when off duty there was so little for them to do, cooped up as we were in a small camp surrounded by sentries and barbed wire."¹⁷²

In the Baltic, too, the enemy was, though not a guerrilla, often hidden and operated through ambushes. In Stenbock-Fermor's first encounter with the Bolsheviks he recalled taking aim, "but on what? One can't see a single person, just the flashes of the shots." However, he denied being scared of the hidden enemy, but instead concerned that he would not be able to tell if his first shot had been on target or not. Once he had begun shooting, however, he described getting into a "proper shooting mood" and the formerly threatening circumstances became practically enjoyable. "Everyone is having loads of fun. We are lying comfortably in the snow behind trees and rocks and are firing on the invisible enemy." As the enemy retreated, Stenbock-Fermor was triumphant: "That was damned easy [...] What a lovely war! [...] Everyone is boasting about their heroic deeds."¹⁷³ Shortly afterwards, however, as he was confronted with the first casualties, fear resurfaced and he described his main source of comfort in this situation as "only the gun," which "calms me down, only the gun. Only the hard rifle butt against the cheek gives comfort. Every one of my own shots chases away the fear."¹⁷⁴ Leeson's analysis, in its general sense, of the significance of stress and constant danger from an invisible enemy as sources of violent excesses is thus likely applicable to both conflicts.

As has been mentioned before, from summer 1919 onwards, the coverage of the Baltic campaign increasingly shifted towards discussions of the troops refusing to return to Germany despite orders from Berlin and from the Entente. Like the parliamentarians, the press were largely occupied with discussing whether the troops had a right to refuse to return to Germany, given the promises of citizenship and settlement opportunities which they had been given by the Latvian government (a position espoused especially in more right-wing organs, but also recognised in more left/liberal publications); or whether they were – particularly morally – in the wrong, as their behaviour endangered the general population of Germany, given that the

¹⁷¹ Leeson, "Scum'?", p. 31.

¹⁷² Wimberley, IWM, p. 154.

¹⁷³ Stenbock-Fermor, *Freiwilliger*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Entente threatened to renew the blockade against Germany should its troops continue to remain in the Baltic. In trying to force the *Freikorps* to comply with their orders, the German government had made it clear that any German troops remaining in the Baltic against orders would lose any right to benefits back home and by November it even declared those men who remained to be deserters.¹⁷⁵ Thus, through their refusal to obey orders, the *Freikorps*, who had started out serving on the margins of the German lands, positioned themselves outside of the imagined German community. While the right-wing press remained pro-*Freikorps*, the left/liberal press eventually came to condemn the troops for disobeying orders and not returning to Germany. By potentially provoking the Entente into renewing its blockade against Germany, the *Freikorps* became a threat to the body politic, putting Germans within Germany in danger of starvation. For the SPD's *Vorwärts*, in particular, criticising the blockade of the Baltic Sea, and those who might cause its renewal through their obstinacy, made sense politically, as the government had a paramount need to appear to have the general population's best interests at heart, rather than pandering to the demands of a small rogue minority of troops who were endangering the whole body politic. To belittle and minimise the *Baltikumers'* campaign further, the *Vorwärts* disparagingly called it *Radauheldentum* ('racket heroism') and *Baltikumabenteuer* ('Baltic adventure'), implying that it was not a serious endeavour, but rather a boyish adventure, foolishly undertaken at great risk to the general population.¹⁷⁶

Towards the very end of the campaign, more explicit mention and condemnation of the *Freikorps'* specific actions could be observed. The Independent Social Democrat Luise Zietz was one of the voices who described the *Freikorps'* campaign as characterised by robbing, plundering, arson, and shooting. She disparagingly called the troops a *Soldateska* (a pejorative term for a disorderly band of soldiers), claimed that people in East and West Prussia, areas through which the *Freikorps* would need to pass on their retreat, were already shaking from fear, and, with much foresight, warned of the consequences of incorporating the returning reactionary troops into the republic's *Reichswehr*.¹⁷⁷ However, it is noteworthy that the *Vorwärts* was most vocal in condemning the *Eiserne Division* after their eventual retreat from the Baltic, in reference to violence perpetrated on actual German (namely East Prussian) soil, again suggesting that violence as employed by the *Freikorps* only became relevant and

¹⁷⁵ "Heraus aus dem Baltikum!", *Vorwärts*, 02.11.1919, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ "Radauheldentum und Baltikumabenteuer", *Vorwärts*, 02.12.1919, MA, p. 9.

¹⁷⁷ "Statt gegen die Reaktion", *Vorwärts*, 24.11.1919p. 3. The same paper later also called the *Freikorps* "*Verbrecher*" ('criminals'), "Militärischer Verbrecherschutz", *Vorwärts*, 31.12.1919, p. 1.

condemnable in public discourse once it was directed against Germans, rather than against the dehumanised Bolshevik enemy.¹⁷⁸

The comparatively little coverage of events in the Baltic might suggest something about their relative importance in the unstable and violent immediate postwar context in Germany. The fighting in the Baltic was geographically far away from the centre of German society and state power, thus posing less of an immediate risk of the violence unleashed at the periphery finding its way back to that centre. In Ireland, where British citizens were perpetrating violence against other British citizens, this circumstance can reasonably be assumed to have made the violence much more immediate, giving rise to much more scrutiny and discussion within British public discourse. What the nevertheless consistent coverage of the *Freikorps*' Baltic campaign proves, however, is that the events were not unknown, considered entirely irrelevant, or purposely ignored. Instead, the men and their campaign only began to be perceived as a problem at the centre of power once they had disobeyed the order to return to Germany. Their insubordination endangered not only Germans within Germany, who stood to suffer famine if the Entente re-blockaded the country, but also the new German republic's nascent efforts at re-establishing its international reputation as a member of the civilised nations of the world; thus the *Freikorps*, operating at the periphery, became both a literal and a conceptual danger to the body politic. As German politicians, unlike their British counterparts with regards to Ireland, did not discuss the acts of the *Baltikumer* to a meaningful degree in the public forum of parliament, it was left up to the perpetrators of violence themselves to take control of the narrative and publicise their own version of events, recounting their experiences and explaining their behaviour and motivations, which they duly did in their numerous, and bestselling, autobiographies. With their claims of upholding old codes of honour and defending Germandom, the *Freikorps*' "Baltic endeavour" became central to right-wing imagination in interwar Germany. As Barth has argued, no other episode of the German revolutionary period was cloaked in as many myths, constructed from the protagonists' life-writing, which enjoyed significant popularity in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷⁹

Time of publication is a factor worthy of particular attention when considering these examples of life-writing, or 'ego-documents'. Broadly, egodocuments can be said to cover "all texts in which an author wrote about his or her own feelings, thoughts and actions", covering, in the words of the inventor of the term 'egodocument', Jacques Presser, "those documents

¹⁷⁸ "Der alldeutsche Ueberfall", *Vorwärts*, 02.12.1919, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden*, p. 255.

in which an ego intentionally or unintentionally discloses, or hides itself.”¹⁸⁰ Michael Masuch has further emphasised that autobiographical writing, as a cultural practice, should really be considered a “public show of self-identity,” as it encompasses not simply the *re*-construction of a life story, but the conscious and deliberate construction of personal identities with all their “flexible, shifting and chameleonic character.”¹⁸¹ Thus it is paramount in the use and analysis of egodocuments to reflect on factors such as motives for writing, time of writing, and intended audiences.¹⁸² With this in mind, the radical shifts in the nature of the German state and society between the end of the First World War and the era of the Cold War can be shown to have necessitated quite different approaches to the attempt of writing the story of one’s life as a *Freikorps* fighter. A substantial amount of *Freikorps* memoirs was published during the time of the Weimar Republic. These texts in particular exhibited a vicious anger towards the Weimar state and government, which the *Freikorps* felt had ‘stabbed’ them, and the German nation, in the back, and cheated them out of land, honour, and their future.¹⁸³ After the arduous and humiliating defeat of the *Freikorps* in the Baltic, they retreated back into the borders of Germany, confident that they had “fought a just fight.”¹⁸⁴ While Meyer was an exception in urging the *Freikorps* men to now help, peacefully, to rebuild Germany,¹⁸⁵ bitterness mixed with defiant pride were more characteristic. After their return, the men felt that “this government [did] nothing for [them]”, resulting in frustration and vague threats that if “nothing is to be done, we will unfasten the cannons.”¹⁸⁶ Rudolf Mann, who had fought with Captain Ehrhardt’s *Freikorps* in various German cities and in Upper Silesia, assured himself, as much as the readers, in a hopeful tone that “there will be war again, when the time is ripe. [...] There will be war again, even if it is just against Poland.” He vowed to keep his uniform, the symbol of his honourable, if not yet successfully completed, fight: “It has splashes of blood on it, but no stains.”¹⁸⁷

An important function of the *Freikorps* writing at this time was the active effort to promptly pen the history of these events according to the *Freikorps*’ own interpretation, and thus monopolise the historicisation process. This was made particularly explicit in a letter from military author Ernst von Eisenhart-Rothe, suggesting that Franz von Epp, involved, as

¹⁸⁰ Rudolf Dekker, “Introduction”, in Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum, 2002), p. 7.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁸³ Meyer, *Jägerbataillon*, p. 52; Franz Josef Freiherr von Steinaecker, *Mit der Eisernen Division im Baltenland* (Hamburg, 1920), p. 54.

¹⁸⁴ Meyer, *Jägerbataillon*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Rudolf Mann, *Mit Ehrhardt durch Deutschland* (Berlin, 1921), p. 137.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

Chapter 1 explored, in the crushing of the Munich Councils' Republic, write a history of the German *Freikorps*, to be published by the *Deutscher National-Verlag* ('German Nationalist Publishers'). Such a work, emphasised Eisenhart-Rothe, "would have to deliver a glorification of these last remnants of the old Army."¹⁸⁸ Epp evidently accepted the request. His letter to Eisenhart-Rothe, accompanying his finished treatise on the *Freikorps*, is especially revealing, as in it Epp cautioned that any writing on this topic was currently a "delicate" matter, "because it cannot be extricated from being interlocked with the political conditions which are in force still." Therefore he had striven to, in his own words, "fashion the examination as little aggressively as possible, without abusing the historical truth, as I view it."¹⁸⁹ The multiple editions of many of the *Freikorps* memoirs, published throughout the interwar period, and print runs in the thousands speak to their popularity and wide readership, as evidently large parts of the reading public shared, or were happy to accept, the *Freikorps*' interpretations of the "historical truth."

A different picture emerged looking at the, also very numerous, *Freikorps* memoirs published during the era of the National Socialist dictatorship. To contemporary readers between 1933 and 1945, it could not but appear that the *Freikorps* had been the vanguard of the new regime. This circumstance allowed for an overwhelming language of glorification, triumphalism, and self-righteousness to fill the pages of the memoirs. The 1936 second edition of Rüdiger von der Goltz' memoir, now emphasising his role as a "political general" in the title, serves as a prime example of the shifting emphases set in relation to time and context of publication. It was considerably shorter, giving less military and political detail, in order to give a more comprehensive "clear picture of the former time."¹⁹⁰ With added chapters on "Romanticism and Leadership", and on "The Stab in the Back", the new edition presented itself fully in line with the new regime and Goltz explicitly bestowed the title of "Pioneers [*Vorkämpfer*] of the Third Reich" on the *Freikorps*.¹⁹¹ He even insisted that, as of 30 January 1933, the front soldiers of the First World War had achieved their victory after all, and ended the book by imploring readers to heed the call of the national anthem, "*Deutschland über alles*."¹⁹² Goltz added that a large part of the book was consciously "political", and that now, "after the *Machtergreifung* by Adolf Hitler", he could openly say what he previously could not.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Letter from Eisenhart-Rothe, Berlin-Lichterfelde-West, 27.10.1924, p. 2, NL Epp, N 1101/33, BArch Koblenz.

¹⁸⁹ Letter from Epp to Eisenhart-Rothe, Munich, 16.4.1925, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Goltz, *Politischer General*, p. 5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 154, 169.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Noticeably, if unsurprisingly, the memoirs published during the Nazi era exhibited more, and more explicit, anti-Semitism. Where Goltz, in 1920, identified the *Freikorps*' enemy as "Bolshevism, led by international capital," this changed in the 1936 edition to "Bolshevism, led by international Jewry."¹⁹⁴ Easily recognisable Nazi jargon was used frequently, making reference to "sub-humans" and "Jewish-Bolshevist commissars" with "bulging negro lips and devilish eyes."¹⁹⁵ Whether relevant to the events or not, the real or assumed Jewishness of the enemy was compulsively highlighted, and Jews characterised as "dirty", while the Yiddish language was rendered in mocking pseudo-phonetic script.¹⁹⁶

The memoirs of Gerhard Rossbach, too, contained anti-Semitic prejudice, such as the following instance: as a collective punishment, the population of a Baltic village was made to whip cream for the entire 1,500 troops, and Rossbach, congratulating himself on his humorous approach to martial law, described how the Jewish population of the village whipped the cream particularly assiduously, because, as opposed to fines, this punishment saved them money. "We were particularly amused by the foamy vestiges left in their beards and on their caftans," Rossbach mockingly assessed the scene.¹⁹⁷ What is remarkable about this episode, however, is that Rossbach's memoirs were published in 1950, thus highlighting the deep embeddedness of anti-Semitism within the psyche of the author. Writing *Freikorps* memoirs after the collapse of the 'Third Reich', when the association with the genocidal, totalitarian Hitler regime was no longer respectable or acceptable, posed new challenges. As a result (though partly also as a result of the natural passing of time), vastly fewer publications of this kind exist. Rossbach's memoirs, sub-headed "Memories and Avowals", were a transparent effort at redeeming himself and at writing against the judgement he could sense society passing on him. He presented himself as a reformed man and appealed to contemporary youth, in particular, to be wary of the dangers of their "own passions" and disavow "parochial nationalism and the worn phrases of class hatred"¹⁹⁸ Waldemar Pabst, leader of a notorious Berlin-based *Freikorps* in the early interwar period, on the other hand, presented himself much more confidently in an interview he gave to the news magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1962. He defiantly stood by his decision to arrest Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in January 1919 but refused to discuss whether he had ordered their summary execution. Instead, he emphasised that what really mattered about the whole affair was the necessity to stop their

¹⁹⁴ Goltz, *Meine Sendung*, p. 148; Goltz, *Politischer General*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁵ Alfred Fletcher, "Die Eroberung Tuckums", in Ernst von Salomon, *Das Buch vom Deutschen Freikorpskämpfer* (Berlin, 1938), pp. 155, 156.

¹⁹⁶ Brandis, *Baltikumer*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁷ Rossbach, *Mein Weg*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

activities. He was even confident enough to jokingly reassure the interviewer, “you know, I wasn’t quite as bloodthirsty as you think.”¹⁹⁹ However, advice given to Pabst by a lawyer prior to the interview also stressed the importance of insisting on the “contemporary circumstances,” such as the lack of a functioning police service and judicature, and the general “confusion of those times” in an effort to deflect blame.²⁰⁰

The British case presents the opposite. Very few life-writing or oral history sources exist from members of the Crown forces engaged in fighting in Ireland between 1919 and 1921, and virtually none were left behind by members of the paramilitary ‘Black and Tans’ or Auxiliary Division.²⁰¹ This is perhaps unsurprising. Although both bodies of fighters, the *Baltikumer* and the Crown forces in Ireland, were on the ‘losing side’, meaning they were forced to retreat from the disputed areas without securing them for their respective causes, the public spheres into which the men returned had established very different kinds of discourses about the two conflicts during this time. As illustrated above, the *Freikorps*’ extreme violence in the Baltic areas was hardly ever a topic of conversation in parliament, and when violence was spoken of in the context of the ongoing conflict in the East, it was most often done to condemn Bolsheviks and various different Eastern European nationalists of ‘uncivilised’ acts of violence. The Crown forces’ behaviour in Ireland, on the other hand, was a constant topic of scrutiny and contention in the British press and parliament. From around early 1920, almost daily questions were put in the Commons about the conduct of British forces in Ireland, often accompanied by harrowing accounts of the acts which the soldiers, paramilitaries, or policemen were being accused of. As Bennett has noted, by 1921 debates in the House of Commons had “fallen into a stereotyped pattern, with the recital of atrocities committed by the Crown Forces, particularly by Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries, on one side, and denunciation of the ‘murder gang’ [the IRA, A.K.] on the other.”²⁰² The country’s press, as shown above, was equally vocal about the conflict, and, the longer it carried on, a significant portion of press opinion became increasingly hostile towards the actions of government forces.

¹⁹⁹ “Ich liess Rosa Luxemburg richten“, Interview with Waldemar Pabst, *Der Spiegel*, 16, 18.04.1962, p. 40.

²⁰⁰ Letter from Winfried Martini to Pabst, Munich, 24.03.1962, pp. 1-2, NL Pabst, N 620/2, MA Freiburg.

²⁰¹ Duff’s appears to be the only known memoir by a former ‘Black and Tan’; two further ‘Black and Tan’ oral history interviews are contained in Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*; several oral history interviews with British Army members active in the conflict have been deposited with the Imperial War Museum; several more interviews and diaries by British Army members are collected in William Sheehan, *British Voices* (Cork, 2005); statements by Royal Irish Constabulary men who actively supported the fight of the Irish nationalists are among the files of the Bureau of Military History (1913-1921), Dublin, available digitally through the Irish Military Archives, Dublin, at <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921> [accessed 05.03.2020].

²⁰² Bennett, *Black and Tans*, p. 167.

Following the end of the conflict and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, it was thus neither possible, nor desirable, for the men who had fought and lost this war to defend their actions in their own, alternative accounts of events, putting themselves at risk of condemnation within a public discourse which, if not explicitly hostile, had constructed the men's conduct as a shameful blot on the British record. While in postwar Germany there existed a large enough audience eager to read the *Freikorps*' 'exciting' and violent accounts which appeared to be carrying on the unjustly lost world war, in Britain the Great War had indeed ended in November 1918, and ended in victory, producing an aversion to publicly discuss British violence and instead an emphasis on the importance of maintaining 'law and order', justice, and civilisation.

Thus, the outbreaks of violence on the Irish and Baltic periphery, respectively, carried with them a threat to the domestic political sphere. Members of the German *Freikorps*, upon their return and having been officially disbanded in the summer of 1920, often went underground and continued to fight the republic they hated as terrorists, assassinating high-profile politicians like Walther Rathenau (see Chapter 1) and attempting coups, thus quite literally endangering the very state which had sponsored their existence in the first place. In Britain, the threat which the existence of the paramilitary bodies posed to the state was less of a direct physical one, but a conceptual one, as the government increasingly lost control over their forces in Ireland. T.P. O'Connor, who as a Liverpool MP represented a large Irish constituency, vividly gave voice to this dynamic, when he accused the government of having raised a "Frankenstein" in its Irish policy.²⁰³ Kenworthy, however, also raised the spectre of the direct threat. Acknowledging that there was a "residue in every army after a war which is not really suitable for civilian life", the fear he expressed was specifically in regard to "your White Guard in Ireland", who were "allowed to exercise lynch law in Ireland." He voiced his concern when asking, "if they are allowed to shoot men out of hand on suspicion [...] what will they do in England to-morrow?"²⁰⁴ The perpetration of 'uncivilised' acts of violence by Crown forces so near the centre of British power thus intensely threatened British efforts at constructing the country as an honourable, civilised, and "peaceable kingdom", an image which, according to Lawrence, had begun to emerge forcefully after the mass experience of extreme violence during the First World War.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ HC, 05.08.1920, vol. 132, c. 2703.

²⁰⁴ HC, 20.10.1920, vol. 133, c. 964.

²⁰⁵ See Lawrence, "Peaceable Kingdom", op. cit.

What this chapter on British and German reactions to violent paramilitary conflicts in the peripheral regions of Ireland and the Baltic has shown, is that in both cases violence itself was considered, by those involved in public discourse in parliament and the press, an aberration from a civilisational standard. This standard, as well as whose violence was considered an aberration, however, varied according to the individual speakers' perceptions of in-groups and out-groups. The practice of violence demarcated the different groups and could therefore constitute both a feature of a political, cultural, social, geographical, or racial 'us', or it could be the very behaviour that was deemed deviant in the 'other'. German Defence Minister Gustav Noske's rare admission that "unfortunately improprieties by German soldiers cannot be denied" and "yes, if German soldiers are looting – with all allegiance to German blood and German flesh abroad, – improprieties and pillaging will not be covered up by the government," was rather out of character.²⁰⁶ More often than not, the notion of civilisation was invoked to denounce Germany's enemies. Traub, for example, picked out French president Georges Clemenceau's notorious comment that there were "20 million too many Germans" and called it a great dishonour that a "man of a civilised nation" would dare say such a thing.²⁰⁷ Most glaringly, of course, Bolshevik violence was marked out as an uncivilised "fight of annihilation against the last remains of Baltic Germandom." The General Commissioner for the Baltic Lands (*Generalbevollmächtigter*), August Winnig, bluntly stated that "if I am going to mourn the loss of human life there, I am first and foremost going to mourn the lives of our slain compatriots [*Volksgenossen*]."²⁰⁸ Violence by German paramilitaries therefore attracted comparatively little attention in public discourse, while Bolshevik violence was determinedly constructed as uncivilised.

While in Britain, too, the violence perpetrated by the state's enemy, the IRA, "who operate by means which would disgrace the Hottentot of the Bush," was demarcated as savage and aberrant from civilisation, there was a much stronger case made by political representatives and commentators in the national press that the British state was undermining its own claim to be the prime representative of civilisation in the world by stooping to the same low level as its enemies.²⁰⁹ This argument was made mostly from within the opposition, offering especially the Asquithian wing of opposition Liberals a daily opportunity to attack Lloyd George's government, but importantly it also came from within the governing parties themselves, indicating that the marker of national identity which was at stake here transcended party

²⁰⁶ *Verhandlungen*, 93. Sitzung, 08.10.1919, p. 2919.

²⁰⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 94. Sitzung, 09.10.1919, p. 2973.

²⁰⁸ *Verhandlungen*, 46. Sitzung, 04.07.1919, p. 1298.

²⁰⁹ George Curzon, Earl Curzon of Kedleston, HL, 02.11.1920, vol. 42, c. 165.

political considerations. It is thus no surprise that the 'Black and Tans' subsequently morphed into a byword in parliament for indiscipline and wanton destruction, as well as for failed government policies of attempted pacification. As has been noted by Dolan, in 1933 one MP used it to insult an opponent in a debate on housing, accusing him of having been associated with the Black and Tans and therefore knowing more about "burning down houses than [about] constructing them."²¹⁰ The term was also used in reference to foreign conflicts involving British forces, where the Black and Tans were invoked as a deterring lesson in how not to carry out counterinsurgency, for example in post-1945 Germany, Palestine, Cyprus, Congo, and Northern Ireland.²¹¹

More, and more consistent, coverage of events in Ireland in British public discourse as compared to coverage within Germany of the *Freikorps*' campaign in the Baltic indicates that Ireland was more present in public discourse, and therefore, perhaps, in the public consciousness of Great Britain, than events in the Baltic seem to have been in Germany. Where German papers, much like the parliamentary discourse, lacked any actual debate of the specific violence and means employed by the *Freikorps* fighters at the time of the campaign, the national discourse instead became retroactively dominated by the actors themselves and their life-writing accounts. In the British context, however, there was more news coverage and indeed more explicit and contentious debate and eventual condemnation of the government's means of fighting the Irish insurrection at the time of the conflict in Ireland itself. British public discourse notably contained strong critical voices, which explicitly articulated concerns about the consequences, both domestically and internationally, of the violence thus unleashed. There was, however, virtually no retrospective life-writing by the perpetrators of the violence. It appears that the verdict on their actions had already been spoken in public discourse within the press and parliament, removing from the agents of this violence the opportunity to come into this discourse retroactively to explain or to redeem themselves.

Both paramilitary bodies' violence endangered their countries' self-image in different ways. They highlighted the complicated relationship between violence and civilisation, which continuously posed the question within the public discourses of both nations as to when the use of violence could become a danger to a nation's desire to define itself as civilised and thus

²¹⁰ HC, 28.02.1933, vol. 275, c. 273. See also Anne Dolan, "British Culture of Paramilitary Violence", p. 201.

²¹¹ See HC, 18.07.1944, vol. 402, c. 136; HC, 31.07.1946, vol. 426, c. 1017; HC, 15.07.1957, vol. 573, c. 824; HL, 12.11.1958, vol. 212, c. 412; HC, 07.02.1963, vol. 671, c. 682; HC, 08.06.1971, vol. 818, c. 876.

what level of violence was acceptable in the defence of this civilisation. This raised questions about how representative of the nation, meaning the 'imagined community' which adheres to certain norms, these (for the most part) officially condoned agents of violence were.²¹² In the immediate postwar context, the Social Democratic government of the young German republic had to actively try to struggle its way back into the circle of civilised European nations, in order to rebuild the country's international reputation and be recognised again as a partner in the international community. Not much attention was therefore paid to the peripheral conflict in the Baltic beyond the international effort to contain Bolshevism in which the *Freikorps* were initially asked to become involved. Later, as the men disobeyed orders to return to Germany, they became a substantial threat to the German body politic by potentially provoking a renewed blockade. However, while the government condemned the troops' disobedience, the *Freikorps* themselves managed to maintain and particularly to resurrect their positive image in a new context, after the triumph of Nazism in 1933, painting themselves as its vanguard and representative of the movement's ideals. However, even before 1933, the highly divided nature of the Weimar political scene had allowed them to continue to present their activities in the Baltic in a positive manner and find enough of a willing audience for their accounts.

Notably, postwar Britain and Germany offered very different audiences for the discourses analysed here. The need to publicly justify political decisions was novel in the newly democratised Weimar Republic, which lacked significant public support and whose political sphere was and remained bitterly divided. Britain, on the other hand, had a long-established tradition of a critical public sphere in which political decisions regularly were subjected to controversial debate. In this context, the Black and Tans had been perceived to undermine British values and ideals of fairness and justice, and thus endanger a national self-image of Britain as the highest example of civilisation and a fundamentally 'peaceable kingdom'. The notable lack of life-writing by former Black and Tans indicates that they were largely considered to have exceeded the boundaries of violence acceptable by state-sponsored agents and were thus no longer considered representative of the accepted norms of society. As a result, it appears that the men chose to largely remain silent on their experiences.

However, through an analysis of the available life-writing sources, this chapter has also been able to reveal differences in the motivations for joining paramilitary bodies, with economic factors being primarily important for the Black and Tans, while the *Freikorps* were driven by a more complex mixture of pay, the promise of land, idealistic-spiritual love of the

²¹² Of course, in the case of the *Freikorps*, even this notion changed over the course of the Baltic campaign; they began the campaign as a state-sponsored body, but after disobeying the order to retreat they were no longer state-endorsed agents of violence.

fatherland, and post-war disorientation.²¹³ The levels of violence depicted in the life-writing displayed some strong discrepancies, as did the explicitness of the violence and its effects. While the British Crown forces in Ireland most often only related violence as something they were aware of but not actively involved in perpetrating themselves, the *Freikorps* frequently appeared to relish the frenzy of the fight, the adrenaline rush, the adventure, and witnessing the demise of the enemy. An aspect common to both the Anglo-Irish War and the *Freikorps'* Baltic campaign, was their spatial removedness on the periphery of the metropole. In both conflicts, more or less overt colonial aspects played into the way they were carried out and indeed the language used to discuss them. In the British case, there was an explicit fear of surrendering Ireland to the independence fighters, as it had the potential to become the first domino in a chain of global imperial collapse for the British Empire. The Baltic played a prominent part in the colonial imagination of Germans whose former overseas empire had just been dismantled and who could now only attempt to lean on areas to the East which had a long history of Germandom as potential colonial space for settlement and cultural influence. The relative spatial remove of these areas has been shown here to have been significant in facilitating the 'othering' of victims as not only geographically, but also culturally and racially removed from the perpetrators, allowing for excesses of violence much less imaginable at the centre of the metropole. This theme in particular will be explored further in Chapter 3.

²¹³ While Duff's autobiography is the only known text of its kind, available oral history interviews, as cited above, as well as an analysis of recruitment materials for the RIC point towards the same conclusions regarding motivations for joining. See for example Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*; Lowe, "Who were the Black-and-Tans?".

CHAPTER 3

THE HEART OF DARKNESS. VIOLENCE AND RACE IN THE COLONIAL SPHERE AND IN THE METROPOLE.

In Joseph Conrad's 1899 novel *The Heart of Darkness*, the European protagonist finds himself on the river Congo venturing deeper and deeper into what was considered the 'heart of darkness', areas in central Africa that had been little explored by Europeans seeking to exploit the land's riches. In Conrad's novel, the people native to the Congo riverbanks form a mysteriously omnipresent yet invisible adversary to the intruding Europeans. Nature itself appears impenetrable and hostile, and danger lurks, unseen yet constantly watching, along the river route, ready to ambush the Europeans, exposed on their boat, at any moment.¹ This nameless, disembodied enemy, working from the cover of the jungle, therefore seems to justify the use of extraordinary brutality against him, outside of the laws of warfare applicable to conflicts between 'civilised', European enemies. Conrad describes and alludes to at least some of the brutality employed in the ivory trade to extract labour out of the abused local population.² The greed and inhumanity brought to the Congo in the European pursuit of ivory of course ultimately drives the fabled ivory trader Kurtz to madness, and he finally dies spluttering his famous last words, "The horror! The horror!"³ Tied up in this short novel are many of the themes which this chapter will also be addressing and working with. In particular, the notion of an unseen, yet highly 'orientalised'⁴ and de-humanised enemy plays a significant role; as does the state of seeing or not-seeing more generally. In the heart of the Congo jungle, the danger lay in not being able to see the enemy, while he could see and ambush those exposed on the riverboat; whereas in administering Mandatory Iraq, the British used the practically 'all-seeing' capacity of aeroplanes to their advantage, soaring high above their mostly defenceless enemies on the ground. This chapter, however, also takes Conrad's title more liberally; it is concerned more generally with interactions of race and violence, both in the third, outermost circle, the colonial periphery (the 'heart of darkness', as it were), as well as examining the implications and reactions when 'darkness', in the shape of colonial soldiers or sailors, appeared in the heart of the metropole, namely during the French occupation of the Rhineland between 1919-1923, and during the so-called 'race riots' in numerous British port cities in 1919.

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and the complete Congo Diaries* (London, 2009), first published 1899, p. 46.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 51, 61.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴ Cf. Said, *Orientalism*, as discussed in Introduction.

Connected to the theme of seeing and not seeing, the imaginary plays a significant role throughout the chapter. The British imaginary of what signified 'Arabia' informed their actions there; the lost, but unceasingly imagined, German colonial possessions, mainly in East and South-West Africa and the South Pacific, shaped interwar German discourses about its past conduct and its future role, as well as attitudes towards the Allies; connected was also the non-existent but imagined German air force which took up much space in German public discourse and consciousness, and was in fact pursued clandestinely in the interwar era; imagined acts of brutal violence perpetrated by French colonial soldiers in the Rhineland made up a significant portion of the viciously racist propaganda campaign directed against the occupation. Besides the imaginary, another recurring theme of this chapter will be the victims of different kinds of violence, and considerations about who the victims were, who was talked about, and who was named and given an identity in any given circumstance. In this context, the instrumentalisation for political ends of human beings, be they the victims of aerial bombing or colonial soldiers or sailors who found themselves in the midst of European societies, constitutes another common theme. Finally, the connections and interactions between race and gender, and especially between race and sex, manifesting themselves in a profound fear of miscegenation, make up another very significant shared theme.

A series of case studies have been chosen for this chapter. Firstly, the chapter will be concerned with debates over the appropriate level and kind of violence to be used by British forces in their administration of Iraq (called 'Mesopotamia' until 1921)⁵ following the end of the First World War; aerial bombing will be a particular focus. From there, the chapter will move on to German discourses over the colonial possessions which Germany had been stripped of under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The former colonies and the insistence on Germany's status as a colonial power played an important and powerful role in German interwar society and public discourse. In its second section, the chapter will examine the interaction of race and violence in the domestic sphere. It will focus on the French occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War, which included French colonial soldiers among the occupying forces, and on the so-called 'race riots' which took place across several British port cities over the course of the year 1919 and targeted British subjects, including seamen of colour.

⁵ The region, historically known as Mesopotamia, became known as Mandatory Iraq in 1921. In common parlance, the term 'Mesopotamia' continued to be in widespread use. Here, the modern-day name 'Iraq' will be used, unless citing primary material.

3.1 LOST COLONIES, NEW MANDATES.

3.1.1 The British Mandate in Iraq.

“It’s an amazingly relentless and terrible thing, war from the air.”⁶
- Gertrude Bell

Douglas Duff, the Black and Tan introduced in Chapter 2, was one of many former Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who, upon finding himself out of a job as a result of the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in December 1921, chose to embark on yet another paramilitary assignment. After serious rioting had broken out in Jaffa in May 1921, and elsewhere in Mandatory Palestine, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, was driven to reconsider the idea of a “quasi-military defence force” for the region. Conveniently, General Tudor, who had previously created the Auxiliary Division of the RIC in Ireland, suggested to Churchill to make use of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who, by the end of 1921, were no longer needed in Ireland, to help police Palestine. Thus, members of the Black and Tans and of the Auxiliaries were actively recruited for service in Palestine and General Tudor became the commander of the new gendarmerie.⁷ In this way, the government made use of the relative abundance, in the immediate aftermath of the war, of men with military training who were willing, given the precarious economic situation and employment prospects at home, to continue their careers of violence in the postwar period. The majority of Duff’s “saga of a modern free-companion” is dedicated to relating his time spent with the British gendarmerie in Palestine. Recognising the strategic importance of the Middle East, Duff framed his reasons for joining the British gendarmerie in Palestine as the need to maintain “our Imperial prestige” and to protect Egypt and India from spreading unrest.⁸ Early on, Duff met several fellow recruits and a commander he recognised from Ireland.⁹ Their reputation, Duff noted, had preceded them, and it had in fact been spread deliberately: “the Arabs had heard about us and knew what manner of men we were; there had been a great deal of judicious propaganda from District Officers, telling them what our reputation had been in Ireland.”¹⁰

Expanding its analysis of perceptions of political violence to this third, outermost circle, the colonial sphere, is particularly important for this thesis, as it is in this geographic realm that the inclusion of Britain, or the Empire, in this comparison truly becomes justified against the

⁶ Quoted in Jafna L. Cox, “A splendid training ground: The importance to the Royal Air Force of its role in Iraq, 1919-32”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13/2 (1985), p. 168.

⁷ Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, pp. 128-129.

⁸ Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 138.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

historiographic trends of excluding British experiences from histories of European post-1918 political violence. Most of the violence pertaining to interwar Britain took place within the peripheral and colonial spheres, and while the scene of violence may not have been 'European', the perpetrators and the public discourses into which it was received, were, making their inclusion in this study imperative. It has been estimated that at the height of nineteenth-century British imperialism, between 1837 and 1901, "at least 228 known armed conflicts took place across the British Empire." Some were accompanied by extraordinary levels of violence, such as the suppression of the so-called 'Indian mutiny' of 1857, which may have caused up to 100,000 deaths.¹¹ By the post-First World War period, the use of violence to quell uprisings and maintain power in colonial spaces had thus been a long-standing feature of British colonial rule, whether in India in 1857, or in Jamaica in 1865. In 1867, Frederic Harrison, one of the members of the Jamaica Committee, which condemned the brutal reprisals, resulting in the deaths of over 400 Jamaicans, taken by Governor Eyre against the 1865 uprising at Morant Bay, presciently voiced his concern that "[w]hat is done in a colony today may be done in Ireland tomorrow, and in England hereafter."¹² This remark makes the connections between different geographic theatres of violence explicit. The recruitment of many paramilitaries previously engaged in Ireland into the British Gendarmerie in Palestine in order to assist in policing yet another hostile population for the Empire, thus embodies a mirror-inverted version of Harrison's warning and reflects the structure which this thesis also takes, moving from the domestic sphere (Chapter 1), through the peripheral (Chapter 2), to the colonial (Chapter 3).

This case study will focus on yet another example of the use of violence within the outermost circle, the colonial periphery, namely the use of air power in Mandatory Iraq. First, however, a brief excursion may help explain why this example of the use of violent action in a mandated area has been chosen. Perhaps the single most prominent and controversial case of colonial violence in the interwar era was the massacre of unarmed Indian civilians at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on 13 April 1919. Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on a large crowd of over 20,000 people, who had gathered in a large open park area surrounded by walls. After about ten minutes of firing, at least 379 people were dead

¹¹ Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (eds.), *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (Cham, 2018), pp. 5, 8.

¹² Quoted in J. Joseph Miller, "Chairing the Jamaica Committee: J.S. Mill and the Limits of Colonial Authority", in Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis (eds.), *Utilitarianism and Empire* (Lanham, MD, 2005), pp. 155-178, here p. 160.

and many hundreds more were injured.¹³ The massacre sparked a strong reaction and gained notoriety in both India and Britain, with contemporaries divided between those who condemned General Dyer for what he had done and those who defended him and his actions. Dyer's defenders agreed with his own line of defence that shooting into the crowd of people had been "[his] duty – [his] horrible, dirty duty."¹⁴ Those condemning him did so variously for tarnishing the reputation and good name of the British and their Empire in front of the entire world,¹⁵ or chose to single him and the massacre out as, in the well-known words of War Secretary Winston Churchill, "an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation."¹⁶ Recent scholarship, however, has argued that the massacre ought to be viewed no longer as standing in "sinister isolation", but rather as symptomatic of British colonial rule in India, which, in Kim Wagner's severe yet convincing analysis, had rested on "the spectacle of colonial violence" at least since the uprising of 1857.¹⁷ By characterising the events at Amritsar as standing in "singular and sinister isolation", the massacre could too easily be 'explained away' by laying all the blame on one aberrant individual and consciously constructing the action as an exception to the otherwise civilised and benevolent practice of British colonial rule in India.

The use of air power in Iraq, however, was quite different. Rather than standing in "singular and sinister isolation", as Dyer's actions at Amritsar were constructed to have been, air control was on its way to becoming official policy by about 1921, when the Cairo Conference approved a proposed air control scheme to administer Mandatory Iraq with the help of aircraft.¹⁸ Arguments can certainly be made about the qualitative differences between shooting unarmed civilians at point blank, as happened in Amritsar;¹⁹ and bombing them, their villages and livestock from the air, as in Iraq. However, it should prove interesting to investigate how bombing from the air was framed and became legitimised as official policy, as Iraq was one of

¹³ Mark Doyle, "Massacre by the Book: Amritsar and the Rules of Public-Order Policing in Britain and India", *Britain and the World*, 4/2 (2011), p. 247. Indian estimates of deaths have always been much higher, up to 1,500. A number of between 500-600 deaths appears to be plausible. See Helen Fein, *Imperial Crime and Punishment. The Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and British Judgment, 1919-1920* (Honolulu, 1977), p. 20.

¹⁴ Dyer cited in the *Daily Mail*, 04.05.1920, quoted in Derek Sayer, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919-1920", *Past & Present*, 131 (1991), p. 134.

¹⁵ Colonel Wedgewood, HC, 22.12.1919, vol. 123, cc. 1230-1233.

¹⁶ HC, 08.07.1920, vol. 131, c. 1725.

¹⁷ Kim A. Wagner, "'Calculated to strike terror': The Amritsar Massacre and the Spectacle of Colonial Violence", *Past & Present*, 233 (2016), pp. 185-225. See also most recently Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar 1919. An Empire of Fear & the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven and London, 2019).

¹⁸ David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester, 1990), pp.25-26.

¹⁹ Note that in the aftermath of the massacre, under martial law, aerial bombing was also used against rioters in some areas of the Punjab. See HC, 28.05.1919, vol. 116, cc. 1183-1184.

the first places where air power was used consistently, and – from a British perspective – successfully to quell revolt in 1920, establishing a precedent for its further use. Following the 1920 revolt, Iraq thus became the testing ground for employing air policing and air control more widely as a means to control a large area, peripheral to the Empire, at a reduced cost to the British taxpayer.²⁰

At the end of the First World War, in November 1918, British troops were deployed in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia, as well as to the British Imperial garrisons. In 1920, in addition, British troops were also part of the Army of the Rhine, were deployed to the Polish Plebiscite Area and Danzig, to France and Flanders, and to the Army of the Black Sea. Additionally, as the last chapter has illustrated, British troops were needed in Ireland, and, as chapter one has shown, they were also deployed to settle industrial unrest within Britain.²¹ Though the British Empire had thus reached its “apogee,” the War Office’s priorities, operating under the immediate impression of the most costly war in history, in human as well as in economic terms, were retrenchment, demobilisation, and decreasing the running cost of its military commitments across the world.²² The use of air power, by means of the nascent Royal Air Force, was one of the central ways which its proponents, most famously Winston Churchill, advocated as a new and economical form of controlling peripheral space in the colonies and newly acquired League of Nations Mandates, such as Palestine and Iraq.

Along the Lower Euphrates, a revolt against the British administration, protesting British taxation of the locals and the occupiers’ heavy-handed approach, broke out in early July 1920. The rebellion quickly grew, spreading towards the Upper Euphrates and the area around Baghdad, and comprising up to 131,000 armed Arab rebels and tribesmen, which the British army struggled until February 1921 to control.²³ Trying to put down the rebellion came at a large price to the British taxpayer, and cost the lives of British (and Indian) troops, both of which made the continued engagement of British and Empire forces in Iraq highly unpopular in Britain.²⁴ The press, across most of the political spectrum, brought up time and again the

²⁰ Omissi defines ‘air policing’ as “the use of aircraft to uphold the internal security of a state”, and ‘air control’ as the Air Ministry assuming “responsibility for the defence of any particular regions of the Empire”, as occurred in Palestine, Iraq, Transjordan, and Aden. ‘Air power’ covers both terms. See Omissi, *Air Power*, p. XV.

²¹ Keith Jeffery, “Sir Henry Wilson and the defence of the British Empire, 1918-22”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 5/3 (1977), p. 271.

²² Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p. 1, 11-12.

²³ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation-Building and a History Denied* (New York, 2003), pp. x, 8-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. x.

issue of the financial burden of holding and administering Iraq with British forces, often questioning whether the undertaking was worth the cost and effort. *The Times* showed little enthusiasm or optimism, complaining that “[w]e shall never be able to hold Mesopotamia with smaller forces than are now concentrated. We shall never escape an annual toll of £50,000,000 for the cost of garrisoning Mesopotamia so long as the present madness prevails. Is it worth while [sic!] to make such sacrifices for three million Arabs, who do not want us and who desire to be entrusted with the control of their own affairs?”²⁵ Before the Iraqi revolt broke out in July, the cost of maintaining British control of Iraq had already been a much debated topic in the House of Commons, and the possibility of using air power for “looking after that country” was concretely put to the Air Ministry for consideration.²⁶ In the House of Lords, the Foreign Secretary voiced similar hopes that the Royal Air Force could be used to bring down the number of Iraqi garrisons and the associated costs.²⁷ With the revolt showing no signs of abating, many papers joined the chorus deploring the government’s misguided spending priorities in Iraq, and suggesting instead that the money ought to be spent at home. The *Daily Express* lamented that while fighting the rebellion in Iraq cost the British state “fifty millions a year”, “hospitals [in Britain] are bankrupt, and railway fares are to be increased to 2d. a mile.”²⁸ Similarly, the *Daily Mail* also railed against the £50,000,000 being spent annually on maintaining “Persia” and “Mesopotamia”, emphatically arguing that “the money is wanted here.” It appeared to advocate leaving Iraq to its own devices, dismissing arguments that the region was integral to the safety of British India and emphasising the futility of “trying to force our ideas of progress upon people who do not want to know anything about such ideas.” Instead, the paper warned, the overspending in the Middle East would lead to a “financial collapse” in the UK and bring about unemployment and social and political unrest.²⁹

On the other hand, there were those voices that urged the British government to fully embrace its engagement in Iraq. As National Party (later Conservative) MP, and former World War soldier, Henry Page Croft reminded readers of the *Morning Post*, “the British Empire [had] been offered, and [had] accepted, a mandate for this territory.” Thus, he argued, the government should live up to its responsibility to administer the area appropriately.³⁰ However, ulterior motives also soon emerged in the debate. Page Croft was quick to point out that holding Iraq was not solely an act of moral responsibility in accordance with the mandate, but

²⁵ “The War in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 21.08.1920, p. 11.

²⁶ John Davidson, HC, 22.03.1920, vol. 127, c. 93.

²⁷ Earl Curzon of Kedleston, HL, 25.06.1920, vol. 40, c. 884.

²⁸ “Policy or Drift?”, *Daily Express*, 19.07.1920, p. 4.

²⁹ “The Money is Wanted here”, *Daily Mail*, 03.08.1920, p. 4.

³⁰ “Great Britain and Mesopotamia”, *Morning Post*, 28.08.1920, p. 3.

also held significant economic potential for Britain. Cotton, corn, and, above all, oil were the two main factors which drew the British, along with the French (who administered their Syrian Mandate) and the Americans into the area. Page Croft was completely open about the financial and commercial attractiveness of Iraq for the British economy. He was convinced that Middle Eastern oil, which was then believed to be “capable of supplying the total needs of the British Empire”, was worth even the “staggering” cost of maintaining Iraq with British troops: “in oil alone, if the estimates are correct, Mesopotamia should pay its way.”³¹ Oil also featured prominently in many other assessments of the situation in Iraq and Britain’s interests in the region. *The Scotsman* focussed on the American government’s eagerness to secure “their oil supply [...] before the entire known oil fields of the world are apportioned among the nations”, implying the need for Britain to take part in this apportioning game so as to not miss out.³² *The Times*, questioning again Britain’s Middle Eastern policy, insinuated that the true reason behind the government’s continued commitment of troops and money to the area was “the influence of oil.”³³ On the other hand, the *Guardian*, once again condemning the high expenditure in Iraq, questioned whether even the amount of oil which Britain stood to gain from the area could ever be worth the money spent there.³⁴ *The Times* voiced the same concern, arguing that “[a]ll the oil in Asia could not compensate us for the sacrifice we have made, the thousands of lives destroyed, and the hundreds of millions of pounds poured into that repellent region.”³⁵

In the face of this sustained, vehement criticism of the British government’s policy in the Middle East and the considerable associated costs, the RAF’s contribution to the successful quelling of the revolt late in 1920, was highly significant, as it indicated a new way forward towards administering the area at a reduced cost. Even though *The Times* complained in August 1920 that aircraft and armoured-cars were proving “entirely unable to cope with the hostile populace”, the use of aeroplanes was mentioned regularly and approvingly in newspaper reporting of developments in Iraq.³⁶ Major C.C. Turner reminded readers of the recent great success of the Royal Air Force against the leader of the Somali anti-colonial dervish movement, disparagingly nicknamed ‘Mad Mullah’ by the British, in Somaliland in

³¹ Ibid.

³² “Mesopotamia Oilfields”, *The Scotsman*, 21.10.1920, p. 7.

³³ “The Rising in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 07.08.1920, p. 11; see also “Anglo-French Oil Supplies”, *Times*, 24.07.1920, p. 11.

³⁴ “Mesopotamia”, *Manchester Guardian*, 16.07.1920, p. 6.

³⁵ “The War in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 21.08.1920, p. 11.

³⁶ “The War in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 21.08.1920, p. 11. It should be noted that newspapers based their factual reporting largely on official War Office communiqués, as information was slow to come out of Iraq.

1920, which he thought “foreshadow[ed] an aspect of future warfare.”³⁷ Britain later also successfully used air power in the defence of Aden in 1922.³⁸ In Iraq in 1920, aeroplanes were used consistently for reconnaissance, providing supplies, as well as for active fighting. The official War Office communiqués, reprinted by many major papers, spoke of planes dropping “food” and “medical supplies and money”³⁹; they lauded planes inflicting “serious losses” on the enemy, by “effectively bomb[ing] and machine-gunn[ing] the Arabs” and “punish[ing] tribesmen,”⁴⁰ as well as performing “aerial reconnaissance,”⁴¹ and undertaking rescue operations.⁴²

Quelling the 1920 Iraqi revolt can thus be described as a litmus test. Given the need, following the First World War, to reduce the running costs of Britain’s military commitments, the newly created RAF (formed only in 1918)⁴³ had to prove it was a useful branch of the armed forces worth British taxpayers’ money or otherwise face the real threat of disbandment.⁴⁴ By proving itself “capable of playing a cheap and efficient peacekeeping role in Iraq,” the RAF managed to do just that and secure its place, alongside the Army and the Navy, as a viable future branch of the armed forces.⁴⁵ Following the end of the 1920 revolt, therefore, Winston Churchill’s priority (as War and Air Secretary until February 1921, then as Colonial Secretary) was “the replacement of costly imperial troops” with the RAF’s new capacities, in order to enable Britain to maintain order in the Middle East, thus fulfilling its Mandate responsibilities, while keeping the costs lower than before.⁴⁶ By March 1922, Churchill could proudly declare that “we have been able to reduce the Estimate for future years by £1,000,000.”⁴⁷ From October 1922, when air power’s economy and utility had become increasingly apparent, the RAF took over the responsibility of enforcing order in Iraq.⁴⁸ Between 1922 and 1926, it had a presence of eight squadrons in Iraq, with the addition of four squadrons of armoured cars which were also manned by the RAF.⁴⁹ Air power, or the “doctrine

³⁷ “The New R.A.F.”, *Manchester Guardian*, 18.07.1920, p. 17.

³⁸ Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, pp. 131-132.

³⁹ “Food and Money by Air”, *Daily Mail*, 10.09.1920, p. 8.

⁴⁰ “Mesopotamia. Rebel Bands Routed”, *The Scotsman*, 16.10.1920, p. 10; “Mesopotamia. Sharp Fighting”, *The Scotsman*, 18.10.1920, p. 6; “Mesopotamia. Aeroplanes Punish Tribesmen”, *The Scotsman*, 27.08.1920, p. 5.

⁴¹ “Improvements in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 18.09.1920, p. 8.

⁴² “The Revolt in Mesopotamia”, *Times*, 01.09.1920, p. 10.

⁴³ Cox, “A splendid training ground”, p. 157.

⁴⁴ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 211.

⁴⁵ Cox, “A splendid training ground”, p. 163.

⁴⁶ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, pp. 131, 135.

⁴⁷ HC, 09.03.1922, vol.151, c. 1551.

⁴⁸ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 149.

⁴⁹ Cox, “A splendid training ground”, pp. 162, 176; James Corum, “The Myth of Air Control. Reassessing the History”, *Aerospace Power Journal*, 14/4 (2000), pp. 64-65. A squadron consisted of between 12-

of ‘control without occupation’” thus became a preferred method for controlling the mandated space until the end of the Mandate in 1932.⁵⁰

The intense focus on the financial advantages of air power not only worked towards ‘selling’ the RAF at home; it also undeniably had the effect of displacing and obscuring from the public discourse the victims of air power among the civilian Arab population. Rapid technical developments in the area of weaponry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had the effect of producing vastly differing numbers of casualties on the side of the ‘native’ enemies as compared with Western, in this case British, colonial forces. The most striking example is no doubt the use of expanding Mark IV bullets, developed from the notorious Dum-Dum bullet, at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan in 1898, where famously British casualties numbered 28 killed and 148 wounded, while an estimated 11,000 Dervishes were killed and 16,000 wounded.⁵¹ Aeroplanes constituted another area of rapid new technological development, following the Wright brothers’ first aeroplane flight in 1903. Moves towards equipping planes with machine-guns and using them to bomb into submission rebellious native populations further worked to skew casualty numbers and soon developed into a pan-European technique. Italian aeroplanes used it in Libya as early as 1911-12.⁵² During the First World War, air warfare and bombing from the air first appeared in a European theatre; however, compared to the staggering casualty numbers of the trenches, aerial bombardment did not yet have as large an impact in 1914-18 as it would come to have in subsequent conflicts.⁵³ Nevertheless, as Sven Lindqvist notes, with regards to bombing from the air while largely disregarding civilian deaths, the “principle of what was going to happen in Dresden and Tokyo at the end of the Second World War was already formulated at the beginning of the First.”⁵⁴

After the end of the First World War, bombing from the air, as employed by the RAF in the Middle East, British India, and Africa in the years after 1918, was in fact presented as a particularly ‘humane’ new form of warfare, besides being cheaper and quicker than the Army. Two arguments in particular were put forward to support this claim: the low risk to the lives of the British pilots flying the aeroplanes, as those on the ground had no way to retaliate against

16 aircraft. By 1930, the number of squadrons was reduced to four, see Priya Satia, “The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia”, *American Historical Review*, 111/1 (2006), p. 32.

⁵⁰ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 211. Also Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 136.

⁵¹ Kim A. Wagner, “Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency”, *History Workshop Journal*, January 2018, online at <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/hwj/dbx053>, p. 11 [accessed 17.01.2018].

⁵² Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing*, trans. Linda Haverty Rugg (2000; trans., New York, 2001), [np], sections 76-85.

⁵³ David Omissi, Review of: Lee Kennett, *The First Air War, 1914-1918* (New York, 1991), in *Technology and Culture*, 33/2 (1992), p. 379.

⁵⁴ Lindqvist, *History of Bombing*, section 93.

the planes overhead; and the purported 'surgical precision' of airstrikes, aimed primarily at material targets, which would keep collateral damage among the civilian population on the ground low.⁵⁵ In any case, the "air force apologists", as Omissi has called them, argued, air power's results did not rest on inflicting heavy casualties but on so-called "moral effect", which was aimed at demoralising the rebellious villagers.⁵⁶ The mere sight of aeroplanes flying overhead would be enough to achieve this effect among the native population, cowing them into immediate submission and making the use of any actual force mostly unnecessary.⁵⁷ 'Moral effect', however, could only be achieved if those on the ground had learned to fear aeroplanes and their destructive power. Actual displays of violence were therefore occasionally necessary.⁵⁸ Especially from 1924 onwards, 'moral effect' was linked above all to the goal of causing the "indefinite disruption of everyday life" for the villagers and tribespeople on the ground.⁵⁹ After the RAF's takeover of duties in Iraq in 1922, a typical punitive air strike against villages where rebels were suspected, or which were refusing to pay taxes, was initiated by dropping warning leaflets onto the villagers, who were then expected to flee their villages with the little they were able to carry and while their villages were bombed, to hold out in caves or dug-outs until their supplies were depleted and they would be forced to surrender.⁶⁰ Air Ministry records suggest that during "a single two-day operation, a squadron might drop several dozen tons of bombs and thousands of incendiaries and fire thousands of rounds of small arms ammunition."⁶¹ Tribes' livelihoods, their livestock, houses, water supply, grain and fuel stocks thus became the chief targets of air action.⁶² The RAF tacitly accepted that this form of exemplary violence, in essence a blockade by air, constituted a policy of 'frightfulness', which was considered necessary both for subduing rebellion in the area as well as for establishing the future supremacy of air power. An Air Staff memorandum from late 1922 contained a whole list of possible intended uses of aircraft in order to undermine "morale by 'making life a burden'" for those on the ground. The list ran from such forms of airborne weaponry as

delayed-action bombs, essential if villagers were to be kept out of their settlements by night, since the RAF had no night bombing capacity, through phosphorus bombs [...]; crows feet, by which 'great numbers of cattle would be lamed and great numbers of

⁵⁵ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, pp. 145, 146.

⁵⁶ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 152.

⁵⁷ For example Churchill, HC, 01.03.1921, vol. 138, c. 1670 and HC, 09.03.1922, vol. 151, c. 1543.

⁵⁸ Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p. 34.

⁵⁹ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 152.

⁶⁰ Cox, "A splendid training ground", p. 167.

⁶¹ Referenced in Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p. 32.

⁶² Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 146.

people incomed' [...]; aerial darts with whistling holes to magnify their psychological effect; 'throwdowns', or fireworks, which should 'keep the tribesmen on the jump and give them the impression that our bombing capacity is very large'; to crude oil, which could poison water supplies. Some of the methods, such as 'liquid fire', the ancestor of napalm, were abandoned as impracticable in the present state of technology.⁶³

The fact that this policy of 'frightfulness', which can rightly be called terror, was thought to force villagers into submission quicker than traditional ground warfare could, caused its proponents to argue again for the policy's 'humaneness', as it would shorten the overall length of conflicts.⁶⁴ Finally, the recognition and frequent reiteration of aeroplanes' other positive uses, for supply or rescue as mentioned above, as well as for carrying mail and passengers, enabling British political officers to be in quicker and more direct contact with the tribesmen they were supposedly administering, as well as significantly improving imperial communications, further worked to offset the potential human cost among the Arab population to the British public.⁶⁵

If Europeans were the ones piloting the planes and doing the bombing and machine-gunning from the relative safety of the air, then who the victims were, and the manifest inequality in their recognition and treatment in public discourse, was crucial. After initial reporting of high, indeed shockingly high, numbers of British Army casualties at the beginning of the Iraqi revolt in July 1920, in the following weeks and months, the War Office ensured, in its official communiqués, to continuously emphasise the low numbers of British casualties.⁶⁶ The final tally, presented to the public in October 1920, listed "416 killed or died; 1,119 wounded; 159 prisoners in Arab hands (1 of whom died in captivity); and 473 missing. The Arab losses have been considerably heavier than ours."⁶⁷ The number of deaths among the Iraqi population, unreported at the time, has since been estimated at around 8,450.⁶⁸ Those British soldiers and officers who were killed or wounded, on the other hand, were carefully counted; often individuals were named in the papers and thus given identities which the Arab

⁶³ Charles Townshend, "Civilization and 'Frightfulness': Air Control in the Middle East between the Wars", in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A. J. P. Taylor* (London, 1986), pp. 150-151.

⁶⁴ Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p.36.

⁶⁵ Churchill, HC, 14.06.1921, vol. 143, cc. 280-281.

⁶⁶ For example, "Mesopotamia Revolt Spreads. 400 British casualties.", *Times*, 20.07.1920, p. 12. Later reports on the other hand speak of insurgents being "repulsed with heavy loss, our casualties being insignificant", *Times*, 18.09.1920, p. 8; or "Our losses in this action were about 40 all told; the enemy lost far more heavily.", *The Scotsman*, 18.10.1920, p. 6.

⁶⁷ "Mesopotamia Cost", *Daily Mail*, 21.10.1920, p. 8. The same numbers were printed in several papers.

⁶⁸ Corum, "Myth of Air Control", p. 64.

victims were denied.⁶⁹ The fate of the British women and children who had joined their husbands and fathers in Mesopotamia was afforded special attention. The case of Mrs Buchanan, the widow of a British officer killed in the uprising, made for a classic human-interest story and became somewhat of a *cause célèbre*. The *Daily Mail* called her a “most British woman”, lauding her “courage worthy of her breed”, who had gone “out” to Mesopotamia to “relieve her husband’s loneliness.”⁷⁰ When he and several other men were killed in their outpost at Shahraban, Mrs Buchanan, who was reported to have been the sole survivor of the attack, was abducted by the tribesmen.⁷¹ Her 18-month old child was initially thought to have been abducted too, but was later found to be safely in England with his grandparents.⁷² Mrs Buchanan’s “terrible agony” and the “unknown terrors of [her] captivity in the desert” were cause of much concern and speculation.⁷³ Though she was eventually liberated, by this time all British women and children in the Kirkuk, Hit, and Ana areas along the Euphrates had been evacuated as a “safety precaution.”⁷⁴

The significance of who was named and counted in Iraq takes on more importance particularly when considering the subtle yet markedly different, side-by-side reporting of the unrest taking place at the same time in Ireland (see Chapter 2). While the *Daily Mirror*, for example, reported that “[o]ur aeroplanes inflicted over eighty casualties on a hostile concentration near Bakuba” in Iraq, on the same page it provided much more in-depth reporting on the situation in Belfast, detailing that “[o]ne man was killed and scores of people received injuries, fifty being admitted to hospital.”⁷⁵ The victims of rioting in Belfast were identifiably human: “one man” and “scores of people”; while Iraqis were unidentified “casualties” and part of an unhuman-appearing “hostile concentration.” The comparable lack of detail in the reporting on the Iraqi revolt was certainly partly due to the slower, more difficult access to information from the area; furthermore, Belfast was a major city within the United Kingdom, its inhabitants being British citizens and subjects of the monarch, and unrest of this scale so close to the British centre of power was understandably more immediately relevant, disconcerting, and newsworthy than events in a faraway region which Britain only administered under a League of Nations mandate. Nevertheless, in particular the differing

⁶⁹ For example, “Casualties to the 2nd Manchesters”, *The Scotsman*, 25.09.1920, p. 9; “British Officer Murdered”, *The Scotsman*, 06.09.1920, p. 5.

⁷⁰ “A Most British Woman”, *Daily Mail*, 23.08.1920, p. 4.

⁷¹ “Ominous News from Mesopotamia”, *Daily Express*, 21.08.1920, p. 1.

⁷² “Woman Captive”, *Daily Mail*, 23.08.1920, p. 5.

⁷³ “Ominous News from Mesopotamia”, *Daily Express*, 21.08.1920, p. 1.

⁷⁴ “Mrs. Buchanan Released”, *Observer*, 12.09.1920, p. 11; quote from “The Women and Children”, *Daily Express*, 24.08.1920, p. 1.

⁷⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 27.08.1920, p. 3.

treatment of the human casualties of those conflicts is but one symptom of the way in which, in Satia's analysis, the "British idea of Arabia" allowed the administrators to overcome their ethical scruples and reconcile them with the "actual violence of imperial policing in the British Middle East."⁷⁶ European cultural imaginations of 'Arabia', or the 'Orient', characterised it as a "land of mirage, myth, and imprecise borders" about which "nothing could ever really be known."⁷⁷ The lands between Euphrates and Tigris were, in the administrators' estimation, "a biblical place" whose inhabitants, distinguished as they were presumed to be by their own brand of "fatalism", simply viewed bombardment from the air as "yet another kind of visitation."⁷⁸ Douglas Duff, the 'free-companion' shipped over to Palestine from Ireland, also reproduced some of these common stereotypes. He characterised the Arab population he encountered in Palestine as "the wily Oriental", by whom he shamefully admitted to having been "hoodwinked" during his first few weeks in the Mandate.⁷⁹ He also played on the theme of religion, framing himself and his fellow recruits in terms of modern-day crusaders, "men used to fighting, with arms in our hands, [approaching] Terra Santa ['the Holy Land', A.K.] to maintain Peace and Security."⁸⁰ He also claimed his Arab opponents still fought using chain mail and sword hilts from the period of the crusades, which he called "relics" and revelled in taking from the defeated enemy.⁸¹ At the same time as harking back to the Middle Ages, however, Duff juxtaposed his implied religious crusading heritage with the actual and overwhelming superiority of the modern means of warfare used by the British gendarmerie and army in Palestine against the revolting Arabs. These means included "the bitter blast of machine-guns and rifles" and "Rolls-Royce armoured cars." The RAF's planes were another essential part of Britain's modern war machinery, and Duff comments on how his unit, fighting alongside the local Emir Abdullah, was assisted by air power in repelling Wahhabi invaders into Transjordan between 1922 and 1924.⁸² The effect of such overwhelming force on the rebels was evident and devastating: "In ten minutes hundreds had fallen."⁸³

⁷⁶ Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p. 18. Satia notes that 'Arabia' does not describe a real geographic entity; it was generally used to cover the Arabic-speaking areas of the Ottoman Empire, but variously also included Anatolia, Egypt, and Yemen. She uses the term strictly in the cultural sense of the British imaginary of 'Arabia'; the same is true for my use of the term in the following. See *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 40.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁹ Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 116.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸¹ On the significance of medievalism, medieval memory, and construction of crusading Christian soldier-martyrs in making sense of the mass death of the First World War, see Frantzen, *Bloody Good* and Goebel, *Great War and Medieval Memory*. The concept of chivalry, which Frantzen emphasises in particular, will be explored further below.

⁸² Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 138.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 139-140.

In this Orientalist evaluation of Arab society, however, life itself was thought to be of little value to those who stood to lose theirs by the bomb. As late as 1930, in his maiden speech to the House of Lords, the long-serving Chief of the Air Staff and 'Father of the RAF', Hugh Trenchard, claimed that the "natives of a lot of these tribes love fighting for fighting's sake." "They have no objection to being killed", he asserted, "if they can kill you and take your rifle." Here, again, lay the great advantage of the RAF, in Trenchard's analysis: that the "natives" were unable to retaliate against aeroplanes. Whether or not this actually meant that, following his own reasoning, the "natives" would now have objections to being killed, if the option of retaliation was taken from them, Trenchard left unanswered.⁸⁴ The notion of different standards of civilization and the low value of life, was furthermore bound up with ideas of gender. There was no point denying that women and children were occasionally the victims of bombs dropped from aeroplanes onto Iraqi villages. However, the justifications given by British officials in response to these instances are revealing. Repeatedly, they put forward the alleged low status or even insignificance of women in Arabic society in order to illustrate this society's backwardness and relativize the effects of aerial bombardment on the villagers. The era's perhaps best-known expert on the Middle East, Colonel T.E. Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia'), commented that "[Sheiks] ... do not seem to resent ... that women and children are accidentally killed by bombs." Indeed, he asserted that women and children were considered "negligible" casualties, dismissing this astounding attitude as "too oriental a mood for us to feel very clearly."⁸⁵ Philip Game, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) India, made the point that in frontier societies more generally women were regarded as "a piece of property somewhere between a rifle and a cow," meaning their deaths were not comparable to the deaths of European non-combatants. The fact that tribal women were sometimes also actively involved in the fighting further helped the Air Command to blur the lines of who constituted a legitimate target.⁸⁶ Although the interservice rivalry, with the RAF having to prove itself and justify its existence as a legitimate branch of the armed forces, was one prominent source of the Army's attacks, especially, on the dubious ethics of air power, as Satia points out, British understanding of the "moral world of Arabia as distinct from their own" cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the notion of Arabia as "a place somehow exempt from the this-worldliness that constrained human activity elsewhere" combined with contemporary racist worldviews to guide ideas about what use of force was appropriate in this 'other-worldly' sphere.⁸⁷ Importantly, the postwar world, and in particular the League of Nations' system of

⁸⁴ HL, 09.04.1930, vol. 77, c. 24.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p. 38.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 164.

⁸⁷ Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", pp. 42, 41.

Mandates, had produced, in Dodge's words, a "new category of the world's population, that of the 'semi-civilized'", who were "involved in a process of evolution" which would be furthered by the discipline dispensed by the British from the air.⁸⁸ Henry Page Croft, in the *Morning Post*, asserted forthrightly that the Arabs lacked even the most "elementary ideas of civilization" and needed to be educated on them by their British administrators.⁸⁹ As a result, bombing, "permissible only in wartime in advanced countries", "turned out to be *always* permissible in Iraq" as a policing technique for one of the "'semicivilised' areas of the world."⁹⁰

If the British understanding of Arabia itself was imaginary, to take Satia's argument further, so were the victims of British aerial bombardment in the area. They were not seen, often not properly counted (or even countable, from the air), nor were they named or given identities, as discussed above. A largely unseen "phantom enemy", producing imaginary victims, was thus easier to bomb than one who was visible and knowable. The "bliss of wilful ignorance" at the outcome on the ground therefore made air power overall more acceptable.⁹¹ The distance between the scene of the conflict itself and the metropole only added to this dynamic. In February 1923, the RAF Staff Officer Lionel Charlton came face to face with victims of a British air raid in a local hospital in Diwaniya, Iraq, and, having observed the injuries and suffering inflicted, subsequently requested to be relieved of his post "on grounds of conscience."⁹² This, however, remained the only reported case in which a member of the RAF drew such drastic conclusions as a result of the technological distance, and with it the emotional distance, between pilot and victim having been broken down, which had heretofore 'protected' the pilot from facing up to the consequences of his actions.⁹³

The employment of a new technology so "amazingly relentless and terrible,"⁹⁴ in the words of traveller, archaeologist, and administrator in the Middle East, Gertrude Bell, sparked a significant amount of controversy within British public discourse. Members of the Opposition, in particular, used their platform in the House of Commons to sharply question and criticise the government's use of air power and its policy of 'frightfulness' in Iraq. George Lansbury, future Leader of the Labour Party and decidedly on the left of his party, was one of the most

⁸⁸ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 146. Satia also notes that Derek Sayer puts forward a similar argument about the Amritsar massacre, namely that the British viewed India as a "different moral universe", in which Indians took the place of children in need of moral education, which made occasional violence against them necessary, as this was for their own good. See Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", p. 48; Sayer, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre", p. 162.

⁸⁹ "Great Britain and Mesopotamia", *Morning Post*, 28.08.1920, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Satia, "Defense of Inhumanity", pp. 36-37, emphasis in original.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹² Lindqvist, *History of Bombing*, section 112.

⁹³ Omissi, *Air Power*, pp. 175-176.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Cox, "A splendid training ground", p. 168.

outspoken critics and explicitly raised the issue of the policy's victims, denouncing what he framed as racist double standards. When the Germans had bombed London during the First World War, he argued, they were decried as "Huns" for adopting such barbaric methods. If the British government now condoned the bombing of Iraqi villages with civilians in them, the Air Ministry had become a "Department of Huns", for no one could "stand up and say that the people in those villages are of less value than the people in the East End of London." Lansbury did not mince his words as he explicitly condemned those who felt "that a coloured person is of less value than a white person", and called those responsible for the bombing policy "baby killers [...], whether you kill a black baby or a white baby."⁹⁵ The argument that the race of the potential victims of aerial bombing factored into considerations of its use can be further supported when looking at debates about its application in Ireland. While the Commander-in-Chief for Ireland, Neville Macready, advocated for air attacks when airmen could "clearly distinguish" between rebels and civilians, the Chief of the Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard, showed more caution and opposed the use of air power in Ireland as he did not think aircrews could reliably distinguish hostile from peaceful elements on the ground.⁹⁶ Thus, what was tacitly accepted in Iraq and inflicted on 'semi-civilized' Muslim Arabs, did not apply to an area inhabited by white Christian citizens of the United Kingdom, even if they, too, were in a state of rebellion.

T.E. Lawrence, the "blond bedouin" whose status and popularity as a practically legendary hero of "British imperial masculinity"⁹⁷ made him a prominent voice in the public discourse, also bitterly condemned the British methods for subduing rebellion in Iraq in 1920, including the use of bombs and aeroplanes. Writing with strong cynicism, he suggested the additional use of poison gas, as it would be even more effective at "getting the women and children" than simply bombing their villages and allow the British to "neatly" wipe out "the whole population of offending districts." He considered his suggestion "no more immoral" than what the British administration was already engaged in.⁹⁸ Poison gas was in fact considered at various points as an option for fighting rebellion in Iraq. However, as Douglas has shown, despite several erroneous claims in the literature that the British did use chemical weapons, this never actually

⁹⁵ HC, 20.03.1923, vol. 161, c. 2460.

⁹⁶ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 43.

⁹⁷ On Lawrence, see Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes. British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London and New York, 1994), quote on p. 170. As Dawson notes, a multimedia show conceived in 1919 by American Journalist Lowell Thomas on Lawrence's experiences leading Arab bedouins against the Ottomans in the First World War eventually was seen by over four million people, indicating his huge popularity. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁹⁸ "France, Britain, and the Arabs. The Beam in our own Eye", *Manchester Guardian*, 08.08.1920, p. 10.

came to pass. Though the use of tear gas and other gas shells was seriously considered, and the idea had many supporters in military circles, notably Winston Churchill, circumstances, from availability to timing to official sanction for any such action, never fully aligned to enable their use in quelling the rebellion in Iraq.⁹⁹

Other criticism centred on the purported advantages of air power, among them the argument that bombing was supposedly a particularly precise method. John Hay, Labour MP for Glasgow Cathcart, agreed with Lansbury in registering his protest against using aeroplanes “against unarmed people” in Iraq. He insisted that bombs dropped from planes were “not instruments of precision” and that the geography of Iraq, “where the features are not well marked”, made accuracy an even more elusive goal to obtain. The fact that the airmen could not “guarantee that they can strike the thing they wish to strike” was “the inhuman part of all this bombing.”¹⁰⁰ As the Air Force fell under the rivalling Air Ministry and Secretary of State for Air, Laming Worthington-Evans, Churchill’s successor as War Secretary, also showed himself decidedly sceptical whether air power would prove to be the promised ‘magic bullet’ to solve the problem of the costly administration of Iraq. He criticised the policy of punitive air strikes and argued that “[i]f the Arab population realize that the peaceful control of Mesopotamia depends on our intention of bombing women and children, I am very doubtful if we shall gain that acquiescence of the fathers and husbands of Mesopotamia as a whole to which the Secretary of State for the Colonies [Churchill] looks forward.”¹⁰¹

While Worthington-Evans’ comments above were motivated primarily by inter-branch rivalry, with the intention of casting doubt on the RAF’s value to the nation’s armed forces, other arguments revolved around British values and the notion of civilisation, echoing themes which have already played a central role in Chapter 2. Reminding Members of the House of Commons that Iraqis were “not our subjects, but our allies”, Labour MP Josiah Wedgewood condemned the use of aerial bombing “for the illegitimate purpose of cowering a civilian population”, and warned that such a policy would result in a “loss of honour.”¹⁰² Lansbury asked the government “whatever [...] those unhappy people in Mesopotamia [could] be thinking of you?” He, almost reverentially, invoked the region’s ancient history and significance as the cradle of Babylonian civilisation when he questioned the wisdom of taking the “blessings of our civilisation [...] with bomb and aeroplane” to a land which “represented a civilisation

⁹⁹ R. M. Douglas, “Did Britain Use Chemical Weapons in Mandatory Iraq?”, *Journal of Modern History*, 81/4 (2009), pp. 859-887.

¹⁰⁰ HC, 20.03.1923, vol. 161, c. 2461-2.

¹⁰¹ Townshend, “Civilization and ‘Frightfulness’”, p. 147.

¹⁰² HC, 20.03.1923, vol. 161, c. 2441.

which existed long before the civilisation for which we stand had ever been dreamt of.” Indeed, he concluded with striking frankness, “the British people ought to be ashamed of any Government or any Department” that acted in such a way.¹⁰³ Hay bluntly stated that, as a result of its Middle Eastern policy, “the moral prestige of Britain [had] fallen.”¹⁰⁴ During the First World War, British, French, and German ‘flying aces’ had been considered ‘knights of the air’, the last bastion of fighters engaged in a form of chivalric man versus man combat, which stood in stark contrast to the industrialised and anonymised dying in the trenches.¹⁰⁵ Within the colonial sphere, however, where the development of flight and aerial bombing strategies unbalanced the relationship between ‘combatants’ and allowed for a significant physical as well as emotional distance between the bomber and the unseen victims, who were often not combatants at all, but women and children uninvolved in active fighting, there was no more trace of the ‘chivalric’ tradition of the World War ‘flying aces’. Hay pointed out that there was not even any more of the “real give-and-take”, which had characterised aerial bombing during the war. While “at least the German was a man, that, if he hammered us, he himself stood up to the hammering he got from us”, the practically defenceless villagers subjected to aerial bombing in Iraq had no way of striking back at the British planes flying overhead.¹⁰⁶ Hay was especially horrified at the thought of what effect dropping bombs from aeroplanes would have on the morals and attitudes of the young British men piloting those planes. Whether their bombs struck “a cow, a baby, or a man who has refused to pay taxes”, the airmen had no way of knowing. Giving voice to more widespread fears of brutalisation, once again, he asked, “what kind of men must they turn into, after they have played fast at striking helpless things without any chance of being struck back?” He answered his question himself: “They are taught to be cowards.” With some prescience, he also asserted that “after all, murder is murder, and [...] whether those things are paid back to us or not, they will certainly be remembered against our children.”¹⁰⁷

The use of punitive air strikes to aid tax collection in Iraq from around 1921/1922 onwards became a particularly big point of controversy. Very soon after rebellion had broken out in Iraq, *The Manchester Guardian* voiced concern that “aeroplanes and tanks” were being used “for punishing the refusal to pay taxes” rather than for strictly military purposes, and admonished

¹⁰³ Ibid., c. 2461.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., c. 2463.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German aviation and the popular imagination* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1992), pp. 82-90. On the image of the ‘flying ace’, particularly in interwar Britain, see also Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London, 2000), pp. 134-136.

¹⁰⁶ HC, 20.03.1923, vol. 161, c. 2462.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., c. 2463, 2464.

that this method was “more brutal than any of the means to which the Turks had resort.”¹⁰⁸ A particularly gruesome incident took place in 1921. On that occasion eight aeroplanes attacked an encampment, causing a stampede among the tribe’s animals which led the tribespeople to “[run] into the lake making a good target for the machine guns.” This report shocked and angered the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, who wrote to the Chief of the Air Staff, Trenchard, that to “fire wilfully on women and children taking refuge in a lake is a disgraceful act.” He then made a point of explicitly reminding the High Commissioner in Mesopotamia, Sir Percy Cox, that “aerial action is a legitimate means of quelling disturbances or enforcing maintenance of order, but it should in no circumstances be employed in support of purely administrative measures such as collection of revenue.”¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the practice appears to have continued. The *Daily Mail*’s Percival Phillips published a multi-part series in 1922 which focused on this particular practice. He described the “Government by Bomb” which he said had made “tax-collection by bomb [...] almost a matter of routine for the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia.” As the Iraqi population was unwilling to submit to the authority of the British-backed government of King Feisal, “British aeroplanes [had] been used to extract over due [sic!] revenue.” In his reports, Phillips fully recognised that “of course, innocent people have been killed. That cannot be helped.” Phillips’ criticism, however, lay not so much in the apparently inevitable deaths of what he conceded were likely “innocent people”, but in the fact that, two years after the first aeroplanes were used for bombing in the region, the effect, and efficacy, was beginning to wear off. The local population had “become used to bombing, and the throb of the engine overhead does not create the panic it did two years ago.”¹¹⁰ The issue was debated in the House of Commons, too, where Liberal MP Reginald Berkeley questioned the government as to whether the RAF was or had ever been engaged in any way, including by the use of bombs, in enforcing the payment of taxes. The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, William Ormsby-Gore, responded, denying all suggestions of the RAF being used to enforce payment of taxes, or punish non-payment, by bombing or other means. He emphasised that, except for cases of “open and armed defiance” or “attacks upon the native police forces”, the RAF was tasked only with “patrol and communication.” In any case, he continued, whenever air action had been taken, “at the request of the Arab Government”, warnings had been issued, and as the “mere threat of air action” was often enough to bring about the desired result, “casualties have been few.” In fact, he concluded, harking back to the ‘noble’ goals of the Mandate idea, “air action amongst the Euphrates tribes [had] saved far

¹⁰⁸ “The Problem of Mesopotamia”, *Manchester Guardian*, 24.07.1920, p. 8. A reference to the fact that Iraq had previously been under Ottoman rule.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Cox, “A splendid training ground”, pp. 171-172.

¹¹⁰ “Government by Bomb”, *Daily Mail*, 18.11.1922, p. 8.

more human lives than it [had] destroyed by restoring order and preventing inter-tribal fighting.”¹¹¹

As Paris has argued with reference to the British “warrior nation”, over the course of the interwar period airmen became not only “heroes of modern warfare” and “ultimate technological warriors”, but also “the guardians of empire and international order.”¹¹² But bombing the native inhabitants of colonial spaces from the air also became a pan-European method of suppressing insurrection in this period. Spain and France employed it in Morocco and Syria in 1925.¹¹³ Italy later infamously bombed Ethiopia using first tear gas and then mustard gas in 1935-36.¹¹⁴ However, only when the Germans bombed a target within Europe, namely the northern Spanish town of Guernica, in 1937, did the international outcry lead to the immortalisation of the town and the victims in global collective memory. Meanwhile, none of the Libyan, Moroccan, Syrian, Indian, East African, or Arab victims of Italian, Spanish, French, or British aerial bombardment were or are remembered in a similar way within the metropole.¹¹⁵ The victims of aerial bombardment in peripheral, colonial or mandated, spaces, rather than being truly visible or experienceable, remained part of the imaginary. This made them easier to bomb; the consequences of air power on the ground, on the other hand, were not imaginary, but very real. However, within public discourse back in the metropole, what was imaginary could, *because* it was imaginary, be moulded and changed to fit particular beliefs, founded on colonial racial hierarchies, and purposes, especially the internal rivalries between the branches of the armed forces. The preceding section has reconstructed the often-passionate debates within British public language over the legitimacy of aerial bombing. Though particularly the opposition strove to somewhat reinsert the victims into the discourse, out of a mixture of genuine humanitarian concern and as a way to delegitimise government policy, the human costs of the policy of air power in the end were made secondary to the financial costs of maintaining control of the area by traditional means.

3.1.2 German Colonial Revisionism.

In her 2006 book on German colonial masculinities, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, Sandra Maß uses the triumphant return of German colonial general Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and the remainder of his German and African troops (known as askaris) to Berlin on 2 March 1919 as

¹¹¹ HC, 27.11.1922, vol. 159, cc. 273-4.

¹¹² Paris, *Warrior Nation*, p. 158.

¹¹³ Lindqvist, *History of Bombing*, sections 118-123.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, sections 148-151.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, section 160.

a moment in which interwar Germany's relationship to its colonial past and to its former colonial possessions and subjects was epitomised. As the general and his troops, who had, as the narrative went, heroically defended German East Africa until ordered to surrender by Berlin, marched through the Brandenburg Gate, they were celebrated by the assembled spectators as living symbols of Germany's status as a world power. The 'war hero' Lettow-Vorbeck and the steadfast loyalty of his askari troops were supposed to represent the success of German colonial policy and to refute the Allies' claims that Germany had been negligent in its colonial responsibilities and treated its colonial subjects badly. This carefully choreographed moment thus set the tone for German colonial revisionism throughout the interwar period.¹¹⁶

Above all, Germany's expulsion from the circle of civilised, and civilising, European colonial powers was felt to be a grave humiliation, which came in addition to the already humiliating position of having lost the war and having to submit to the other terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which of course included the payment of reparations, the loss of territories in the east and the west of Germany, a strict limit on the size of German armed forces, and a ban on pursuing a German air force, besides having to formally accept full responsibility for the war. This position of inferiority stood in stark contrast to the superiority of British imperialism at the same time when, as laid out above, the Empire had reached its formal apogee and, via the RAF, Britain could even control and administer large swathes of land increasingly cheaply from the air, in addition to its naval domination. Despite the unequivocal loss of Germany's possessions, the former colonies and German colonial ambition thus continued to play a noticeable role in public discourse. German dreams of their lost colonies manifested themselves in remarkably concrete plans for administering an imagined empire. The new German government still encompassed a dedicated colonial ministry, headed by the Catholic Centre Party's Johannes Bell. Though it was officially tasked with the winding-up and liquidation of the affairs of the no longer existent German colonies, when it was dissolved in 1920 and its tasks transferred to the Ministry for Reconstruction, they explicitly included the

¹¹⁶ Sandra Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger. Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918-1964* (Köln, Weimar and Wien, 2006), pp. 34-36. The scene is a recurring image of choice for other contributions on interwar German colonial revisionism too, further underlining its highly symbolic value and function. See Dirk van Laak, "Ist je ein Reich, das es nicht gab, so gut verwaltet worden? Der imaginäre Ausbau der imperialen Infrastruktur in Deutschland nach 1918", in Birthe Kundrus (ed.), *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2003), p. 71; Dirk van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur. Deutsche Planungen für eine Erschließung Afrikas 1880 bis 1960*, (Paderborn, 2004), p. 197; Christian Rogowski, "Heraus mit unseren Kolonien! Der Kolonialrevisionismus der Weimarer Republik und die 'Hamburger Kolonialwoche' von 1926", in Birthe Kundrus (ed.), *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2003), p. 245.

“continued development of the ceded protectorates, the progression of the colonial question in general, and the possibility of reacquisition of colonial possessions.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, a host of pro-colonial organisations sprang up, among them the *Reichsbund der Kolonialdeutschen* [‘league of colonial Germans’], the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* [‘German colonial association’], and the *Deutscher Kolonialverein* [‘German colonial society’], which, in 1922, banded together under the umbrella organisation *Koloniale Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft* (KORAG) [‘Reichs-colonial working group’].¹¹⁸ In the first half of 1919, all of these groups’ main aim was to lobby against paragraph 119 of the Treaty of Versailles, which stated that “Germany relinquishes all its rights and claims to overseas possessions in favour of the allied and associated main powers.”¹¹⁹

The voices of colonial revisionism often framed the claim that it was unjust to take away Germany’s colonies in language explicitly concerned with violence. To dispel accusations of maltreatment of colonial subjects and misadministration of the German colonies, all political voices right of the Independent Social Democrats insisted that British colonialism had been, and continued to be, just as bad as, if not significantly worse than German colonial rule had been, and that stripping Germany of its colonies was an act of cruel hypocrisy from the victors. In the National Assembly, DNVP representative Posadowsky-Wehner insisted that Germany had acquired its colonies “lawfully”, and bristled at the audacity with which “England” dared to accuse Germany of not having been able to govern its colonial subjects properly; “this England, which, for centuries, has subjugated India, which extracts immense riches from India, while the Indian population lives in terrible misery.” If all the world was currently speaking of the right to national self-determination, why then was Britain not introducing this right in India, or indeed in Ireland, he asked.¹²⁰ Similar transnationally informed arguments were put forward across the political spectrum in the press. The right-wing *Deutsche Tageszeitung* unsurprisingly took the same stance, listing “the Indians, the Egyptians and the Irish” as the first among the oppressed peoples of the world, who, the paper stated with sarcastic relish, stood as “blatant examples” of “British worthiness” and Britain’s “moral adequacy.”¹²¹ The more liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Vossische Zeitung* made similar arguments, pointing, in particular, to General Dyer’s excesses in Amritsar in April 1919 in order to discredit the British

¹¹⁷ van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur*, pp. 203-204.

¹¹⁸ van Laak, “Ist je ein Reich...?” p. 75; Rogowski, “Heraus mit unseren Kolonien!” p. 244; van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur*, p. 203.

¹¹⁹ van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur*, p. 199.

¹²⁰ *Verhandlungen*, 40. Sitzung, 22.06.1919, p. 1122.

¹²¹ “Kolonie-Würdigkeit“, *DTZ*, 27.01.1919, AA, p. 1.

colonial administration in India.¹²² The *Vossische Zeitung* also highlighted the American-Irish joint report on conditions in Ireland, published in the summer of 1919, which alleged a British “reign of terror”, including violence against civilians, women and children, and injustices endured by prisoners in Mountjoy prison.¹²³ The paper also directly accused the British of treating the native population in formerly German colonies, for example in the diamond-rich Lüderitz Bay area in South-West Africa, much worse than the Germans ever had, cheating them out of their wages and squeezing every bit of labour out of them.¹²⁴ Germany, on the other hand, had never treated ‘its’ native populations any worse than any other colonial power,¹²⁵ and in fact, the East African askari troops, who had just returned with Lettow-Vorbeck, were living proof of the good German colonial administration.¹²⁶ On 3 March 1919, the national assembly officially welcomed and thanked Lettow-Vorbeck and his German and African troops, emphasising “the rich blessing, which the civilising activity had spread” and the askaris’ thankfulness and loyalty towards the Germans.¹²⁷ The accusations of German colonial ineptitude were therefore, it was argued by the German government, a mere pretext for Britain to preserve its self-interests and gain South-West Africa for its own Empire.¹²⁸ The Allies, demanded German colonial minister Johannes Bell indignantly, should at least admit as much, rather than pretending to be guided by considerations of morality and law in their exclusion of Germany from the ranks of the “civilised peoples” [*Kulturvölker*] of the world.¹²⁹

A whole series of other recurring themes of the discourse of German colonial revisionism was summarised in a newspaper advertisement from the ‘Reichs-association of Colonial Germans’ (*Reichsverband der Kolonialdeutschen*), an organisation which succeeded, in the first half of 1919, in collecting almost four million signatures in support of their demands for colonial possessions.¹³⁰ In their advertisement they not only emphasised the “right” to colonial activity, but also the “duty” to participate in the “spread of civilisation and culture, truth and justice, and in the exploitation of the earth’s resources.” The advertisement rather ominously continued that “the violent exclusion of one people from exercising this right [would] endanger

¹²² “Ein englischer ‚Hunne““, *FZ*, 18.12.1919, EMB, np; “Englische ‚Kultur‘ in Indien“, *VZ*, 17.12.1919, AA, p. 3.

¹²³ “Ein geknechtetes Volk. Der englische Terror in Irland“, *VZ*, 03.07.1919, AA, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁴ “Englische Eingeborenen-Behandlung“, *VZ*, 20.05.1919, AA, p. 2; “Wie die Engländer die Eingeborenen in unseren Kolonien behandeln“, *DZ*, 20.05.1919, MA, np.

¹²⁵ “Um Deutschlands Kolonien“, *NPZ*, 30.01.1919, AA, np; “Englische Eingeborenenpolitik“, *NPZ*, 17.03.1919, MA, np; “Um die Kolonien“, *FZ*, 08.07.1919, EMB, np.

¹²⁶ Colonial minister Bell, *Verhandlungen*, 18. Sitzung, 01.03.1919, pp. 411-412.

¹²⁷ *Verhandlungen*, 19. Sitzung, 03.03.1919, p. 449.

¹²⁸ “Deutschlands Antwort auf das englische Kolonial-Blaubuch“, *NPZ*, 28.01.1919, MA, np.

¹²⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 18. Sitzung, 01.03.1919, p. 413.

¹³⁰ van Laak, *Über alles in der Welt*, p. 107.

world peace.”¹³¹ The *Vossische Zeitung* declared “the fate of Africa [...] a pan-European affair”, and indeed characterised the whole continent as a “natural tropical extension of Europe”, where the circle of “highly cultured peoples”, among which the paper firmly placed Germany, faced “immense tasks” in fulfilling their “duty of colonial activity.”¹³² Rather than in the “capitalist exploitation of a less gifted human race”, the nature of colonial activity thus lay in helping them achieve a “higher culture”, from which the VZ confidently derived the “natural right” (*naturrechtlicher Anspruch*) of culturally and civilisatorily advanced powers to participate in colonial activity.¹³³ The paper therefore insisted that the German government could not expect the German people to recognise a peace treaty which declared it “unworthy” and “unable” to participate in the “cultural work of the white race.” To demand its colonies back, the paper argued, was Germany’s prerogative and an existential requirement, as colonies served not only as space for surplus populations to settle, but also were economically valuable to Germany.¹³⁴ The supposed economic relevance of colonies to Germany was a prominent argument in the debate and the ‘*Reichsverband der Kolonialdeutschen*’ also included this point in its advertisement, arguing that only colonial possessions would guarantee sufficient employment and could provide all social strata with food and clothing, as well as ensuring Germany’s ability to influence the price of colonial goods on the international market.¹³⁵ Colonial minister Bell also cited the “vital necessity” of colonial possessions for Germany, not only because the “insufferable moral degradation of Germany” constituted an “inexpiable” injustice which may yet prove fatal for world peace, but also because he considered colonial imports and exports indispensable for the recovery of the war-ravaged German economy.¹³⁶ The Independent Social Democrats and the Communists were alone in upholding their opposition to all colonial activity, which they viewed as exploitative and oppressive.¹³⁷ However, as Dirk van Laak has noted, it did not matter that in reality the loss of its colonies did not markedly affect the German economy; popular and political approval of German colonial activity had never been as strong and universal as it was at the very moment when Germans were stripped of this option by the Allies.¹³⁸ The so-called ‘colonial guilt lie’, in

¹³¹ “Wir fordern Kolonialbesitz“, *NPZ*, 17.01.1919, MA, np.

¹³² “Die Kolonialfrage“, *VZ*, 28.01.1919, AA, p. 4.

¹³³ “Rechtsfrieden gegen Gewaltfrieden“, *VZ*, 28.05.1919, MA, p. 9.

¹³⁴ “Unser Recht auf Kolonien“, *VZ*, 12.06.1919, MA, p. 2.

¹³⁵ “Wir fordern Kolonialbesitz“, *NPZ*, 17.01.1919, MA, np.

¹³⁶ *Verhandlungen*, 18. Sitzung, 01.03.1919, p. 413.

¹³⁷ Henke, *Verhandlungen*, 18. Sitzung, 01.03.1919, p. 414; see also Lora Wildenthal, “Gender and Colonial Politics after the Versailles Treaty”, in Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (eds.), *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects. Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York and Oxford, 2010), p. 343.

¹³⁸ van Laak, “Ist je ein Reich...?“, pp. 72-73.

analogy to the 'war guilt lie', which alleged German colonial excesses and ineptitude, worked to "unite Germans more effectively than real existing colonialism had ever done."¹³⁹

Though the real-existing German empire ceased in 1918, the imagination of and about it certainly did not. Flying, which, as this chapter has demonstrated above, was becoming an increasingly important and popular means of transport and of warfare and in no small part supported the global pre-eminence of the British Empire, was in fact a pan-European obsession of the times.¹⁴⁰ The rapid technological advances in aviation in the years before and during the First World War had been a great point of pride and source of confidence for the young German empire.¹⁴¹ Therefore, being banned from further developing an air force under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles constituted yet another element of humiliation at the hands of the Allies for Germans. As a result, large parts of the German population developed great enthusiasm for gliding, as an alternative to motorised aviation.¹⁴² Once the ban and later the restrictions on the manufacture of German airplanes were eased, and finally lifted in 1925/1926, Germany's first semi-public airline, Luft Hansa, was established.¹⁴³ Importantly, civilian and commercial aviation thus "allowed Germany to 'think in terms of continents' once again", despite the irreversible loss of its formal empire.¹⁴⁴ Just like the thinking and imagination of Germany in global terms did not disappear after November 1918, the people who had been involved in colonial activity did not disappear the moment the German government relinquished its possessions; their energies, ambitions, and experiences were not simply 'switched off'. The afterglow of German colonialism manifested itself in the life trajectories of many individuals, who often had learned the practice of extreme violence in colonial settings, and who, once returned to Germany, joined various *Freikorps*, and later could in many cases be found in the ranks of the NSDAP. High-profile examples included Lettow-Vorbeck, the 'hero of East Africa', himself; as well as Franz Ritter von Epp, who first participated in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900-1901, before commanding a company in German South-West Africa during the 1904 genocide of the Herero. After fighting in the First World War, he founded his eponymous *Freikorps*, which, as laid out in Chapter 1, was heavily involved in the brutal suppression of the Munich Councils' Republic in late April

¹³⁹ Wildenthal, "Gender and Colonial Politics", p. 344.

¹⁴⁰ For a comparative examination of the significance of technologies like aviation and motor racing for German and British notions of modernity in the 1930s, see Bernhard Rieger, "'Fast Couples': Technology, Gender and Modernity in Britain and Germany during the Nineteen-Thirties", *Historical Research*, 76/193 (2003), pp. 364-388.

¹⁴¹ Fritzsche, *Nation of Flyers*, p. 3.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107; 134.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

and early May 1919. He joined the NSDAP in 1928, became *Reichsstatthalter* ('Imperial governor') for the Nazis in Bavaria, and was director of the Nazi Colonial Office until its dissolution in 1943.¹⁴⁵

The fact that these personal continuities exist and can be observed has been a much-debated aspect of the 'valve' theory of violence discussed in the Introduction. Such a view might suggest that following the First World War, personal violent potentials *had* to be discharged somewhere, and thus, in the absence of colonial spaces which could 'absorb' this violent potential, postwar Germany saw high levels of internal violence while Britain was spared this experience because violence could be displaced into the colonies. Much like Mosse's 'brutalization theory', the 'valve' theory remains an open and controversial area of inquiry in the history and theory of violence. It remains questionable particularly as the suggestion of a necessity for violent potential to be discharged somewhere runs the risk of evoking a sense of historical inevitability. Furthermore, it can hardly be proved or disproved empirically.¹⁴⁶ Instead, more fruitful debates have recently developed around the continuities, including but by no means limited to personal ones, between German colonial history and the history of the Holocaust.¹⁴⁷

Added to the perceived German national humiliation of having been stripped of its colonies and thus denied its membership among western civilised nations and a place as a colonial power among equals, was France's use of colonial troops in their occupation of the Rhineland, discussed below. Both together created an even stronger feeling of humiliation, indignation and anger in Germany, as the "diktat of Versailles" had seemingly turned the Germans into a colonised people themselves, who were now being ruled over by a supposedly inferior race, and thus practically expelled from the circle of white races.¹⁴⁸ In the next section, this chapter will turn to examining this particular episode, and the postwar interactions of race and violence in Germany and in Britain more generally, in more detail.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Der Holocaust als "kolonialer Genozid"? Europäische Kolonialgewalt und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungskrieg", *Geschichte & Gesellschaft*, 33/3 (2007), pp. 451-452; also Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz", *Central European History*, 42/2 (2009), p. 292.

¹⁴⁶ Schumann points this out in "Europa, der Erste Weltkrieg und die Nachkriegszeit", p. 41. It is questioned, too, in Gerwarth and Horne, "Paramilitarism in Europe", p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Research and debates are usefully summarised in Gerwarth and Malinowski, "Hannah Arendt's Ghosts", pp. 279-284. More recently Michelle Gordon, while not arguing in favour of a direct line of continuity between colonial violence and the Holocaust, has investigated violent European, in particular British, colonial practices as a highly relevant historical context for understanding Nazi violence and genocide, see Michelle Gordon, "Colonial Violence and Holocaust Studies", *Holocaust Studies*, 21/4 (2015), pp. 272-291.

¹⁴⁸ Rogowski, "Heraus mit unseren Kolonien!", p. 246.

3.2 DARKNESS COMES TO THE HEART OF THE METROPOLE.

The presence of soldiers and seamen of colour, who carried ‘darkness’ from the colonial peripheries into the heart of the German and British metropole in the early interwar era, caused intense anxieties among, and conflict with, the white populations of both countries.¹⁴⁹ This chapter section will examine two case studies; firstly, the campaign launched against the use of colonial soldiers in the French occupation of the Rhineland between circa 1919-1923, and secondly the riots against coloured seamen taking place in several British port cities in 1919. What can be described as lying at the heart of both case studies is the highly charged interaction between race, on the one hand, and sex and gender on the other. “Miscegenation fears”, as Lucy Bland has termed them, played not only a prominent role in the British ‘race riots’ of 1919, but almost wholly dominated the German propaganda campaign against French colonial occupation troops.¹⁵⁰ Women’s bodies, and in particular their reproductive capacities, were crucial and functioned as the screen (*Projektionsfläche*) on to which these fears were projected and the stage on which these conflicts were carried out. While the first section of this chapter, on aerial bombing, examined a form of violence the novelty of which lay in the physical, and ensuing emotional, disconnect between perpetrator and victim, the current two case studies are strongly characterised by their physicality, often literal, though sometimes more abstract. The violent act of postwar French occupation of the Rhineland may be regarded as a symbolic ‘rape’; this symbolic domination and penetration of the white European ‘*Volkskörper*’¹⁵¹ by the ‘darkness’ of the French colonial soldiers, however, was actualised in actual (and alleged) cases of rape perpetrated by the soldiers against German women. In the UK, the physicality consisted, on the one hand, in the – largely voluntary – interactions between white women and men of colour, which were viewed as outrageous provocations of decency; and, on the other hand, the physical violence which men of colour experienced as a result at the hands of white British civilians, (demobilised) servicemen, and police. Women were thus victimised in two different ways in the two different contexts. In the Rhineland, under French occupation, they were often the victims of literal physical violence perpetrated by occupying troops; in postwar Britain, they were victimised rhetorically for their association with black men which was seen as the root of the rising racial tensions. As the below analyses will

¹⁴⁹ Though primarily concerned with the post-1945 era, see Waters on the equation of whiteness and Britishness and the anxieties created in British society specifically by the presence of “*dark strangers*”, i.e. black migrants in Britain. Chris Waters, “‘Dark Strangers’ in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963”, *Journal of British Studies*, 36/2 (1997), pp. 207-238, my emphasis.

¹⁵⁰ Lucy Bland, “White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War”, *Gender & History*, 17/1 (2005), pp. 29-61.

¹⁵¹ This might be translated as ‘national body’, or literally ‘people’s body’; the term contains a particular emphasis on biological qualities. Later, under the Nazis, it is fundamentally defined in racial terms.

elucidate, in both cases women were instrumentalised as was politically opportune, to advance either a strong anti-French narrative, in the German case, or anti-black narratives in a strained postwar economic situation in Britain. At the same time, the men of colour were equally politically instrumentalised in both contexts to also advance specific interpretations within race and labour conflicts.

3.2.1 The French occupation of the Rhineland.

Following the conclusion of the First World War, French troops occupied the German Rhineland. Of the circa 85,000 troops, it is estimated that during the summer months of 1920 and 1921 between 25,000 and 40,000 were French colonial troops, mainly from Northern Africa, especially Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, French West Africa, mainly Senegal, as well as Madagascar; some were also from French Indochina.¹⁵² In the spring of 1920, when German troops entered the demilitarised zone on the right bank of the river Rhine, the French retaliated by extending their occupation eastwards and occupying several German cities in the Rhine-Main area, such as Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Hanau and Homburg. On 7 April, when French troops, among them colonial soldiers, had just taken up their posts on the square outside the *Hauptwache* building in the centre of Frankfurt, they clashed with a group of local onlookers; some of the Moroccan soldiers fired their machine-gun into the crowd, killing several civilians and injuring several more. Following this incident, a vicious propaganda campaign against the colonial soldiers, launched by almost all political sides under the banner ‘*Schwarze Schmach*’ [‘black shame’], reached its height, and continued throughout the years 1920-1923.¹⁵³

The German outrage at France’s use of colonial soldiers in their occupation had multiple facets. It focused on a plethora of (alleged) crimes. Under often graphic headlines such as “The black atrocities in the Saar region”, “The black regiment of horror”, “Bayonet attacks on pupils”, “The war on women and children. Orphans under the bayonet”, “From the French torture chambers”, “Girl shot ‘by mistake’”, “From the French slave colony on the Rhine”, “French soldiers as thieves and robbers”, “The punches of arbitrariness. Germans under the

¹⁵² On the varying numbers of colonial troops given in the literature, see Christian Koller, *"Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt": die Diskussion um die Verwendung von Kolonialtruppen in Europa zwischen Rassismus, Kolonial- und Militärpolitik (1914-1930)* (Stuttgart, 2001), p. 202. Koller notes that during the winter months many African troops were moved to Southern France. On the colonial troops’ origins, see Maß, *Weiße Helden, schwarze Krieger*, p. 80.

¹⁵³ Koller, *"Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt"*, pp. 207-108; Julia Roos, “Nationalism, Racism and Propaganda in Early Weimar Germany: Contradictions in the Campaign against the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’”, *German History*, 30/1 (2012), p. 49. Initial reports spoke of six killed and 35 wounded, see for example “Zusammenstöße in Frankfurt”, *DAZ*, 08.04.1920, MA, p. 1.

nigger whip”, or “New bloody deed by a Moroccan”, there were numerous reports of attacks, committed by both colonial and white French soldiers, such as armed robberies, violent stop-and-search incidents, apparently arbitrary chicanery, fines, kidnappings, or violent drunken altercations.¹⁵⁴ However, the most prominent aspect of the propaganda campaign unleashed after the Frankfurt incident focused on real and alleged acts of sexual violence against German civilians, in the vast majority women; though some reports concerned attacks against men, or children of either sex. As one of the most comprehensive works on the subject by Christian Koller has shown, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain how much truth there was to the allegations. As the German propaganda was countered by French, American, and occasionally the German opposition’s counterpropaganda, there is little possibility of retrospectively arriving at reliable numbers of crimes committed. Koller therefore concludes that attacks by French colonial soldiers were most likely largely isolated cases, rather than a systematic strategy of ‘quasi-biological warfare’ waged against the German people, as was alleged; however, Koller emphasises that a high number of unreported cases should also be assumed.¹⁵⁵ Sandra Maß seconds this view, stressing the scarcity of reliable source material on which to base estimations of crimes committed by French occupying troops (colonial and white), and by which to judge the rigour with which the French authorities actually investigated such accusations.¹⁵⁶ Members of the *Reichstag* repeatedly demanded information on specific reported cases,¹⁵⁷ and eventually, in 1921, 1922 and 1923, long lists and tables of several hundred officially confirmed cases of, variously, murder, manslaughter, rape, attempted rape, “pederasty” and “attempted pederasty”, robbery, assault, and abuse by both white and colonial French soldiers in the occupied territories were published as appendices to the *Reichstags*’ debate transcripts.¹⁵⁸ Maß, however, prudently concludes that analyses of contemporary witness accounts must take into account the tensions between taboos surrounding sexual

¹⁵⁴ Examples: “Französischer Mord an einem deutschen Offizier“ and “Die französische Gewaltherrschaft in Frankfurt“, *DTZ*, 08.04.1920, AA, p. 2; “Die Schwarzengreuel im Saargebiet“, *DTZ*, 03.05.1920, p. 2; “Das Schreckensregiment der Schwarzen“, *DTZ*, 21.05.1920, MA, p. 1; “Schwere Mißhandlungen“, “Bajonettangriff auf Schüler“, *DTZ*, 13.02.1923, MA, p. 2; “Der Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder. Waisenkinder unter den Bajonetten“, *DTZ*, 18.02.1923, p. 1; “Aus französicshen Folterkammern“, *DTZ*, 12.03.1923, AA, p. 1; “Ein Mädchen aus ‚Versehen‘ erschossen“, *DTZ*, 19.03.1923, AA, p. 1; “Aus der französischen Sklavenkolonie am Rhein“, *DZ*, 11.04.1920, MA, p. 2; “Franzosen einmarsch in Baden“, “Ein Kind erschossen!“, “Französische Soldaten als Diebe und Räuber“, *DZ*, 05.02.1923, MA, p. 1; “Die Faustschläge der Willkür. Deutsche unter der Niggerpeitsche“, *DZ*, 10.02.1923, MA, p. 2; “Neue Bluttat eines Marokkaners“, *NPZ*, 15.02.1923, MA, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Koller, *Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt*, pp. 203-205.

¹⁵⁶ Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁵⁷ For example, *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 2852-2855, Anfragen Nr. 1123-1126, 22.10.1921, p. 2719.

¹⁵⁸ *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 3166, 13.12.1921, pp. 3059-3071; *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 5494, 26.07.1922, p. 6043; *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 5448, 16.12.1922, pp. 5931-5969; *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 6403, 17.07.1923, pp. 7679-7691.

violence, on the one hand, and racist hysteria and exaggeration, on the other.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, while establishing accurate facts about crimes committed by French (colonial) soldiers against German civilians must remain a difficult endeavour, the analysis here is concerned with the German propaganda in reaction to the occupation, in particular the presence of colonial soldiers among the French troops, and the tropes, images and discourses which emerged from it.

Women were at the very centre of the storm of outrage against the colonial soldiers. The female body stood for the national body, and its rape for the violation of the German nation at large. As Chris Waters, citing Parker et al., has noted, “the trope of nation-as-woman ‘depends for its representational efficacy on a particular image of woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly, or maternal.’”¹⁶⁰ The term “*Schwarze Schmach*” itself, which, over the course of the year 1920, became quasi ubiquitous in reports on the French occupation, speaks to the way in which what was (actually and allegedly) done to German women by men of colour brought shame not only to the individual victims of attacks, but to the German nation as a whole. The political implications of this dimension of shame and humiliation will be discussed in more depth below, highlighting how the victimisation of German women, as well as the presence of the colonial soldiers themselves, were instrumentalised in public discourse in politically opportune ways. While the campaign against the French colonial soldiers was supported by a broad political spectrum, spanning from the Majority Social Democrats on the left to the extreme right in the *Nationalversammlung*, it was noticeably the more conservative, and especially German-nationalist to *völkisch* newspapers which reported the most on conditions under the French occupation in general, and the ‘black shame’ in particular. Women in this context were constructed almost exclusively as victims, whose innocence was brutalised by the men of colour, who waylaid and assaulted them, sometimes robbed them, beat up or drove off any male companion, then raped them, and in the worst cases murdered them afterwards, sometimes reportedly discarding their bodies under dunghills. The widely-reported case of 19-year old Frieda Guckes who was raped and strangled by two Moroccans in Idstein, who were soon apprehended, admitted the crime, and one of whom was convicted and executed as a result, was one of the clearly provable cases, which served to underpin the wider propaganda campaign.¹⁶¹ Social Democratic member of the national assembly Elisabeth Röhl explicitly

¹⁵⁹ Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, p. 107.

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Parker et al. (eds.), *Nationalisms and Sexuality* (New York, 1992), cited in Waters, “Dark Strangers”, p. 229.

¹⁶¹ On Frieda Guckes see: *FZ*, 14.06.1922, ZMB, p. 2; *FZ*, 15.06.1922, AB, p. 2; *FZ*, 19.06.1922, AB, p. 2; “Die schwarze Pest in Idstein”, *DZ*, 17.06.1922, AA, p. 5; “Die schwarzen Bestien”, *DZ*, 23.06.1922, AA, p. 2; “Die Sühne für die Idsteiner Mordtat”, *DZ*, 07.02.1923, MA, p. 2; “Marokkanische Soldaten als

claimed to speak for “us women, who for the most part are mothers,” when condemning the constant danger to women’s and girls’ honour under the occupation, thus reemphasizing adult women’s primary role as mothers in protecting young women’s innocence and purity from French, and black, attack.¹⁶² Notably, the discourse had no space whatsoever for the instances in which German women chose to enter a relationship with, or marry, a French colonial soldier of their own free will. This capacity for agency was completely denied to the women, whose construction as pure and innocent victims was politically necessary to discredit the colonial soldiers and the French government in general. The women who nevertheless associated with the French colonial soldiers were victimised by their own communities, being regarded as symbols of shame, “traitors”, and excluded from the national and racial collective.¹⁶³ As John Boonstra has argued, “anxiety over female sexuality” in general was strong, especially among conservatives, in early Weimar society, as women were gradually gaining more mobility and autonomy.¹⁶⁴ Maß has further emphasised that it was especially bourgeois women who became involved in the campaign against the ‘black shame’, capitalising on the “weakness” of German masculinity following the First World War, which stood in stark contrast to the threatening image of the “potent, African soldier.” The women thereby further strengthened the connection between the concept of bourgeois femininity and the representation of the nation.¹⁶⁵

Another preoccupation of the reports on the presence of French colonial soldiers in the Rhineland were notions of health and disease. The presence of French colonial soldiers in the heart of European society itself was portrayed as an epidemic and a danger to the health of the German national body (‘*Volkskörper*’), as is obvious from the use of the term “*Schwarze Pest*” (‘black plague/pestilence/scourge’) which, along with ‘black shame’ and ‘black horror’, was frequently applied to the colonial soldiers.¹⁶⁶ In a more literal sense, venereal disease

Lustmörder”, VZ, 13.06.1922, AA, p. 4; “Die Bluttat der Marokkaner in Idstein”, VZ, 14.06.1922, AA, p. 4; *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen, Nr. 4482, 14.06.1922, Anfrage Nr. 1676, p. 4909; *Verhandlungen*, 243. Sitzung, 04.07.1922, pp. 8264-8265. Other examples include: “Die sittenreinen farbigen Franzosen“, NPZ, 02.06.1920, MA, p. 1; “Wieder ein Marokkaner“, NPZ, 30.06.1920, MA, p. 1; “Aus dem besetzten Gebiet. Neue Verbrechen farbiger Soldaten“, FZ, 03.06.1920, AB, p. 2; “Eine neue Schandtat“, FZ, 18.06.1920, ZMB, p. 2; “Die Schwarze Pest in Europa“, DZ, 09.05.1920, MA, p. 3; “Die Schwarze Schmach. Ein neuer Mord- und Vergewaltigungsversuch in Zweibrücken“, DZ, 17.06.1922, AA, p. 3.

¹⁶² *Verhandlungen*, 177. Sitzung, 20.05.1920, p. 5691.

¹⁶³ Iris Wigger, *The black horror on the Rhine: intersections of race, nation, gender and class in 1920s Germany* (London, 2017), pp. 32, 308.

¹⁶⁴ John Boonstra, “Women’s Honour and the Black Shame: Coloured Frenchmen and Respectable Comportment in the Post-World War I Occupied Rhineland”, *German History*, 33/4 (2015), p. 552.

¹⁶⁵ Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, p. 320.

¹⁶⁶ Examples: “Die schwarze Pest”, NPZ, 25.05.1920, AA, p. 1, “Die Schwarze Schmach“, FZ, 16.05.1920, EMB, p. 2; *Reichstagsprotokolle*, Anlagen Nr. 4482, 14.06.1922, Anfrage Nr. 1676, p. 4909.

was central to this theme. It allegedly reached epidemic dimensions in the occupied areas, not only due to the prevalence of rape by colonial soldiers, but also as a result of the upsurge in prostitution, therefore raising the threat of the “syphilitisation of the white race.”¹⁶⁷ Notably, however, women were not generally given the blame for engaging in prostitution; as will emerge below, this was a significant aspect in how British women were apportioned blame for provoking tensions between white men and black men in British port cities. Instead, the practice of prostitution in the German occupied territories was blamed on either the economic destitution and widespread hunger caused by the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles and by the occupation itself, or on allegations that the French authorities had demanded that special brothels be established where white German women were to be made available specifically to colonial soldiers.¹⁶⁸ The violation of children was another significant aspect of the reporting which served to further heighten the outrage. Vulnerable young people, in particular, were said to become “polluted” (*‘verseucht’*), in both their bodies and their souls, with venereal disease, as a result dramatically exceeding the capacities of local hospitals.¹⁶⁹ More concretely, the 600-800 mixed-race offspring of German women and colonial soldiers, who became known by the derogatory epithet “Rhineland bastards”, were a living, breathing symbol of the ‘pollution’ of the pure (i.e. white) German *Volkskörper*. Their fate was symptomatic, as, in 1937, under the Nazi eugenics programme, they were subjected to forced sterilizations in a *völkisch* effort to undo the ‘black shame.’¹⁷⁰

Though the present thesis is focused on a specific type of public language, found in newspaper articles and parliamentary debates, the propaganda campaign more generally made heavy use of other forms of media, including caricatures, films, songs, poems, stamps, posters and plays.¹⁷¹ In these materials, an extremely racialised image of the colonial soldiers emerged, and quasi-pornographic acts of violence against women were imagined by the propagandists. Especially the African men were generally presented as barely human

¹⁶⁷ Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 316.

¹⁶⁸ “Die Schwarze Schmach”, *NPZ*, 08.06.1920, MA, p. 1; “Die Schwarze Schmach“, *DTZ*, 08.05.1920, MA, p. 2; “Die Schwarze Pest in Europa“, *DZ*, 09.05.1920, MA, p. 3; “Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet“, *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2; Interior Minister Koch in *Verhandlungen*, 139. Sitzung, 17.01.1920, p. 4469.

¹⁶⁹ Quote: “Die Kirche und die schwarze Schmach“, *NPZ*, 27.06.1920, MA; p. 1; See also: Foreign Minister Köster, *Verhandlungen*, 177. Sitzung, 20.05.1920, pp. 5693-5694; “Frauenkundgebungen gegen die schwarze Schmach“, *NPZ*, 21.05.1920, AA, p. 2; “Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet“, *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Wildenthal, “Gender and Colonial Politics”, p. 348. See also Iris Wigger, “‘Black Shame’ – the campaign against ‘racial degeneration’ and female degradation in interwar Europe”, *Race & Class*, 51/3 (2010), p. 41.

¹⁷¹ Iris Wigger, “‘Against the laws of civilisation’: Race, Gender and Nation in the International Racist Campaign Against the ‘Black Shame’”, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 46 (2002), p.117.

“primitive savages”¹⁷² and “black beasts,”¹⁷³ with grossly exaggerated ape-like features, protruding lips, long hairy arms, and seemingly superhuman strength. In particular, the colonial soldiers were attributed a dangerously uncontrollable, animal-like sex drive. Many images showed them dragging off helpless German women, while a particularly graphic medal from 1920 depicted the caricatured face of an African soldier on one side, and an enormous phallus wearing a French soldier’s helmet, with the figure of a limp German woman shackled to it, on the other.¹⁷⁴ Though the newspaper articles analysed here were generally less explicit, they occasionally alluded, in a titillating manner, to the “horrifying details” and the “abominable manner” of the reported sex crimes, without actually revealing them.¹⁷⁵ They also strongly perpetuated, in words, the image of the colonial soldiers created by the visual materials, especially the trope of black men as sexually uncontrollable; they made sure to remind readers that “the African race [was] the sexually most developed one of all,”¹⁷⁶ yet stood, culturally, on the “lowest rung”, being “governed by bestial instincts.”¹⁷⁷ Iris Wigger has argued that the obsessively imagined violence against women far exceeded the real cases, in both number and in brutality, concluding that the highly racialised and sexualised imagery of the campaign reflected back on the propagandists, who were in fact the ones symbolically sacrificing women in their “rape scenarios.”¹⁷⁸

It was not only Germans, however, who were outraged by the presence of men of colour in the midst of a European country. The discourse over the ‘black shame’ exhibited significant transnational influences. The violent incident at the Frankfurt *Hauptwache* in early April 1920 was accompanied by the publication of a piece by Labour Party member Edmund Dene Morel in the *Daily Herald* on 10 April, in which he denounced the “Black scourge in Europe” in the strongest terms and accused the French of letting loose a “sexual horror” on the Rhine.¹⁷⁹ The piece was immediately picked up and extensive excerpts re-printed in translation by several German newspapers. Especially the German-nationalist press pounced on it, as it powerfully gave voice to their own outrage at “the installation of black barbarians.” Morel based his

¹⁷² “Against the laws of civilisation”, p.120.

¹⁷³ “Die schwarzen Bestien”, *DZ*, 23.06.1922, AA, p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ Some images, caricatures, medal and stamps reprinted in Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, pp. 118, 127, 129, 130, 154, 179, 201, 205, 206; Wigger, “Against the laws of civilisation”, pp. 116, 122, 123; Iris Wigger, “The Interconnections of Discrimination”, *European Societies*, 11/4 (2009), p. 559; Wigger, “Black Shame”, p. 36.

¹⁷⁵ “Eine neue Schandtat“, *FZ*, 18.06.1920, ZMB, p. 2; “Die Schwarze Schmach“, *DTZ*, 29.05.1920, MA, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ “Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet”, *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ “Die schwarze Schmach”, *NPZ*, 08.06.1920, MA, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 308.

¹⁷⁹ Robert C. Reinders, “Racialism on the Left. E.D. Morel and the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’”, *International Review of Social History*, 13/1 (1968), p. 1.

allegations on a number of statements, supposedly in his possession, from victims, family members, doctors and lawyers regarding numerous rape cases, “some of them of a horrifying nature.” He accused the colonial soldiers of “spreading syphilis” and “murdering harmless citizens,” and, repeating the trope of the Africans’ excessive sex drive, claimed that “due to well-known physiological reasons the rape of a white woman by a negro is almost always accompanied by serious damage to her health and often has the worst consequences.”¹⁸⁰ Later that year, Morel’s piece was published as a pamphlet entitled “The Horror on the Rhine”, translated into several languages, selling over 10,000 copies in under a month, and going on to appear in eight editions by April 1921.¹⁸¹ Notably, it was Morel who first used the term “scourge” prominently, and the phrase “*Schwarze Schmach*” really only began appearing frequently in German newspapers following the publication of his condemnatory article. In the pages of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, in early June 1920, the term “*Schwarze Schmach*” began appearing without quotation marks around it for the first time, indicating the gradual consolidation of not only the term itself but also of its assumed factuality in public language, and with it perhaps in the collective German psyche.¹⁸² Spring 1920 was also when numerous other transnational actors weighed in on the issue. Various British groups, especially women’s groups, protested in London.¹⁸³ Groups from other countries, for example the Peace League of Swedish Women, also voiced their condemnation of France’s use of colonial soldiers.¹⁸⁴ There were reports of protests in the United States of America, outrage being especially prevalent among the German-American community, as well as a much-publicised appeal by the American industrialist John de Kay.¹⁸⁵ As these various groups made the campaign against the ‘black shame’ their *cause célèbre*, it further fuelled the propaganda campaign within Germany. A motion was filed, reportedly by all female representatives in the *Nationalversammlung*, in protest against the use of colonial soldiers in the Rhineland.¹⁸⁶ The

¹⁸⁰ “Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet”, *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2; “Die schwarze Pest in Europa”, *DZ*, 09.05.1920, MA, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 48; Reinders, “Racialism on the Left”, p. 5.

¹⁸² “Gegen die schwarze Schmach”, *FZ*, 04.06.1920, EMB, p. 1.

¹⁸³ “Englische Frauen gegen die schwarzen Franzosen”, *DTZ*, 20.04.1920, AA, p. 1; “Protest gegen die Verwendung farbiger Truppen”, *FZ*, 20.04.1920, AB, p. 1; “Gegen die Verwendung farbiger Truppen”, *FZ*, 30.04.1920, AB, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ “Frauenkundgebungen gegen die schwarze Schmach”, *NPZ*, 21.05.1920, AA, p. 2; “Schweden gegen die schwarze Schmach”, *DTZ*, 14.05.1920, MA, p. 2; “Die schwarze Schmach”, *DTZ*, 17.05.1920, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ “Die farbigen Truppen im besetzten Gebiet”, *FZ*, 19.05.1920, AB, p. 1; “Gegen die schwarze Schmach”, *FZ*, 04.06.1920, EMB, p. 1; “Die schwarzen Franzosen in Deutschland”, *DTZ*, 26.04.1920, AA, p. 3; “Gegen die Verwendung schwarzer Franzosen”, *DZ*, 11.05.1920, MA, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ “Die Verwendung farbiger Franzosen”, *FZ*, 18.05.1920, ZMB, p. 1.

Protestant Church of Germany, again with women's church groups at the helm, also joined in the chorus of outrage and condemnation; as did German university students.¹⁸⁷

The sociologist Iris Wigger, who has conducted one of the most thorough investigations of the 'black shame', has analysed the propaganda campaign as the powerful nexus of the four central themes of race, nation, gender, and class. Referring to Ann McClintock's work, demonstrating how women and their bodies have been constructed as "boundary markers' to mark different social boundaries", Wigger has argued that German women and their bodies functioned as "gatekeepers' of the nation", marking the racial boundaries between 'black' and 'white' which came under threat with the arrival of colonial soldiers in the heart of the European metropole.¹⁸⁸ As Lora Wildenthal has stressed, the rape of German women by soldiers of colour "symbolized not only defeat at the hands of the uncivilized, but also the weakness of German men, especially those who were in charge of the new Weimar Republic." While "interracial desire [...] had been admitted and sometimes even praised before the First World War", Wildenthal argues that in the new, postwar situation of German defeat, humiliation, and powerlessness, it was "denied and reinterpreted as rape."¹⁸⁹ The second major theme to emerge from the public language around the 'black shame' was therefore heavily concerned with notions of civilisation, culture, and the humiliation associated with being occupied by France's colonial soldiers. Morel's piece characterised the presence of the African and Asian men in Germany as nothing less than the "barbarian embodiment of a barbarian policy."¹⁹⁰ Those writing in the national press, as well as those speaking in the German parliament, generally agreed that the French administration had very consciously made its decision to deploy troops of colour in their occupation of the German Rhineland, knowing full well the shocking and humiliating impact this would have on the population. As has already been discussed, the colonial soldiers were, even where they were not dehumanised completely, considered as lacking any meaningful culture and to exist on a very low level of civilisation. As Interior Minister Koch emphasised, no one could hold it against a German man if he resented any atrocity committed against him "doubly, if it was committed by a member of a people who culturally stand far below us." This was a "*Schmach* ('dishonour') greater than any other" for a highly cultured people.¹⁹¹ Even in more 'charitable' perspectives, for example that of German

¹⁸⁷ "Die schwarze Schmach", *NPZ*, 28.05.1920, AA, p. 1; "Gegen die 'schwarze Schmach'", *DTZ*, 28.05.1920, AA, p. 3; "Die Kirche und die schwarze Schmach", *NPZ*, 27.06.1920, p. 1; "Die deutsche Studentenschaft gegen die schwarze Schmach", *NPZ*, 03.06.1920, MA, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁸ Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 128; idem., "Against the laws of civilisation", p. 124.

¹⁸⁹ Wildenthal, "Gender and Colonial Politics", p. 348.

¹⁹⁰ "Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet", *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Verhandlungen*, 28. Sitzung, 06.11.1920, p. 1043.

Democratic Party (DDP) representative Adolf Korell, the “poor humans” from Asia and Africa were by no means “animals”, but they were “people of a lesser civilisation, which ought to be gradually developed further through the influences of Christianity and European culture.”¹⁹² The idea that such people could be put in charge of a white European population, especially a *Kulturnation* (‘cultural nation’/‘nation of culture’) like Germany, was anathema to this view. When French troops occupied Frankfurt in April 1920, what attracted particular ire, all the way down from German Chancellor Hermann Müller, was the fact that “Senegal-negroes” were now (allegedly) quartered in the city’s university and were “guarding the Goethe-house.”¹⁹³ The nineteenth-century writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a Frankfurt native, epitomised (and still epitomises) like perhaps no other, German culture and the nation’s self-image as the ‘nation of poets and thinkers’; Müller therefore considered this deliberate action by the French particularly loathsome.

The shame brought on German women who were raped by colonial soldiers was transferred, as elucidated above, and thus brought onto the entire German nation as it was being dominated by a supposedly racially inferior enemy army. Yet, “the military rape of Germany” was not just an act of humiliation against Germany, but was seen by many as a “sin against Europe”, or variously a “crime against Europe,” as well as both an “outrage against the German and the French people.”¹⁹⁴ The use of colonial troops, which, according to Foreign Minister Köster, had already been “a dangerous experiment” during the war, in peacetime was an “offence against all of Europe”, a “spiritual crime”, a “danger for national hygiene”, and in fact constituted the “ruthless continuation of war by any means, in the middle of peacetime.”¹⁹⁵ Outraged German representatives therefore actively called for France to be excluded from the circle of civilised European nations henceforth. The Catholic Centre Party’s Johannes Bell appealed “to the world’s conscience, [...] the entire civilised world” to no longer tolerate that such a state of affairs should be allowed to pertain in a “cultured country” (*Kulturlande*) like Germany. By sending troops of colour to occupy a “thousand year old nation of culture” and thereby disregarding any sense of shared European (meaning white) solidarity and culture, France had “forfeited” any right to accuse other countries.¹⁹⁶ The German-nationalist *Deutsche Tageszeitung* chose to appeal especially to the United States, with its strict segregation laws

¹⁹² *Verhandlungen*, 204. Sitzung, 06.04.1922, p. 6944.

¹⁹³ *Verhandlungen*, 159. Sitzung, 12.04.1920, p. 5048; see also “Die Senegalneger im Goethehaus”, *DTZ*, 23.04.1920, AA, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Chancellor Heinrich Müller, *Verhandlungen*, 159. Sitzung, 12.04.1920, pp. 5051-5052; “Das Verbrechen an Europa”, *FZ*, 21.05.1920, p. 1.

¹⁹⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 177. Sitzung, 20.05.1920, pp. 5692-5693.

¹⁹⁶ *Verhandlungen*, 28. Sitzung, 06.11.1920, p. 1022.

and established practice of swiftly punishing, often by lynching, any black person who overstepped their mark, to join in the German condemnation of France, and to not allow the alleged “unspeakable black mass atrocities” to continue.¹⁹⁷ Bell’s Centre Party colleague Georg Schreiber noted that “the menace” which the “uncultured illiteracy [and] uncurbed instincts” of the colonial troops posed to the “highly-cultured people on the Rhine” ought to be understandable not only to London and Washington, but also to Robert Cecil in South Africa.¹⁹⁸ By 1923, with France’s renewed occupation of the Ruhr area, German protest and outrage was no longer predominantly directed at the presence of colonial soldiers in this industrial heartland, but all French soldiers in general had become “beasts.”¹⁹⁹ Though the dehumanising and racialised language persisted, it was now used to characterise white men and their behaviour as occupiers, as well as black men. Especially the National Socialist press made use of this trope, denouncing French soldiers as “white niggers” and casting their occupation as “white negro rule.”²⁰⁰ Shifting the focus away from exclusively colonial soldiers, the alleged rapes and sexual assaults against German women and girls associated with the ‘black shame’ were now transferred and re-cast, by the more extreme Right at least, as a “white shame.”²⁰¹ The French had thus apparently stooped to the level of barbarism usually associated with colonised peoples and were hardly worthy of inclusion in the circle of civilised European nations any more.

The power differential between the armed soldiers of occupation now put in charge of the German civilians only added to the feelings of powerlessness, defeat and humiliation; it appears that German civilians hardly ever dared to respond with violence against the French troops. However, bound up with the indignation and humiliation experienced as a result of the occupation were various, more or less veiled, threats. One was a general concern, though it was sometimes articulated almost with a hint of *Schadenfreude* in Germany, that the experience of acting as an occupying force within Europe and of exerting power over white European civilians, especially over women, would lead the colonial subjects to “lose faith in white superiority and the associated respect for white rule.”²⁰² The German student body, writing in protest against the colonial soldiers, predicted that “the half-wild negro peoples, used as police dogs against highly cultured European peoples, will one day rebel against their

¹⁹⁷ “Die Schwarzengreuel im besetzten Gebiet”, *DTZ*, 15.04.1920, AA, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Verhandlungen*, 34. Sitzung, 24.11.1920, p. 1222.

¹⁹⁹ “Wieder ein Mord. Französische Bestien.“, *NPZ*, 07.03.1923, MA, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ “Die weißen Nigger an der Ruhr!“, *VB*, 20.02.1923, p. 2; “Die weißen Neger an der Ruhr“, *VB*, 21.02.1923, p. 1; “Weiße Negerherrschaft“, *VB*, 23.02.1923, p. 1.

²⁰¹ “Die weiße Schmach“, *DZ*, 17.02.1923, AA, p. 1.

²⁰² Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 313.

current tamers with the contempt for the white race now acquired.”²⁰³ The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, apparently sensing the future conflicts of decolonisation, speculated that this loss of “respect for the white skin,” brought about by the “short-sighted English and French hatred of the German people”, might have “terrible consequences” in Africa and Asia, as the French government would have to face up to the fact that its actions had undermined “Europe’s prestige” and France’s own “predominance in the world.”²⁰⁴ A second veiled threat, articulated by the Chancellor Hermann Müller, as he spoke under the impression of the recent putsch attempt by Kapp and Lüttwitz in March 1920, was that France’s newest expansion of its occupation into the Rhine-Main area and its overtly antagonising use of colonial soldiers would lead to a resurgence of German nationalism and possibly further coup attempts, which would endanger not only the stability of the new German republic, but also peace in Europe.²⁰⁵

As the previous chapters of this thesis have stressed already, the German administration in the early interwar years had to make it one of its priorities to project an image of Germany to the world which would undo the image created during wartime and present the young republic as a reliable and committed partner in a democratic, and civilised, world. In this context, the focus, especially of the “official” propaganda campaign, on internationally discrediting France’s policy of occupation and the Treaty of Versailles, and encouraging other nations to join in the German protest, therefore made political sense.²⁰⁶ Christian Koller has distinguished between an “official” propaganda campaign, run or at least supported, though often clandestinely, by the German Interior and Foreign Ministries, and an “unofficial” propaganda campaign, organised privately by non-governmental organisations, such as women’s groups, churches, students or similar. While it was especially the unofficial campaign which perpetuated the strongest and most graphic racist tropes and fully dehumanised the colonial soldiers, the official propaganda campaign was focused more on the political aspect of turning the world against France.²⁰⁷ The presence of French colonial soldiers in the occupied areas was a circumstance which could be richly exploited to this end; while the plight of the German women under the occupation, both real and imagined, could also be used for political gain by the propaganda campaign. As late as 1924, the *Deutscher Notbund gegen die schwarze Schmach und die Bedrückung der besetzten Gebiete* (‘German emergency

²⁰³ “Die deutsche Studentenschaft gegen die schwarze Schmach“, *NPZ*, 03.06.1920, MA, pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁴ “Das Verbrechen an Europa“, *FZ*, 21.05.1920, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ *Verhandlungen*, 159. Sitzung, 12.04.1920, p. 5053.

²⁰⁶ As Wigger has pointed out, the early historiography on the ‘black shame’, dating from the 1970s, focused on this aspect; see Wigger, *Black horror on the Rhine*, p. 13. See also Keith L. Nelson, “The ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’: Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 42/4 (1970), pp. 606-627.

²⁰⁷ Koller, “*Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt*“, pp. 220ff., 239f.

league against the Black Shame and the suppression in the occupied areas') denounced the circumstance that even though France had withdrawn the "full-blood negroes" from the Rhineland, thousands of other "coloureds of equal nature" remained in Germany, continually endangering the honour of German women and the German nation. The league also took pride in advertising the fact that, sparing neither effort nor money, it had, since 1920, "enlightened" large parts of the world about the "humiliation" of Germany at the hands of the French, which "the world must tolerate no longer."²⁰⁸ This is not to say that the use of dark-skinned colonial soldiers to occupy a nation in the heart of Europe was not genuinely shocking and humiliating to contemporaries. However, alternative reactions to the situation were, though much rarer, also in evidence. Rather than lashing out via violent and extremely racialised language and imagery, more left-leaning papers, such as the Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, focused somewhat more on the general humiliation and violent act of French occupation itself, and reported less specifically on the presence, or (alleged) crimes, of colonial soldiers.²⁰⁹ The Communist *Rote Fahne* condemned the "agitating" propaganda campaign other papers ran against the 'black shame', and saw the colonial soldiers as "unfortunate victims of imperialism."²¹⁰ Similarly, Independent Social Democratic representative Luise Zietz condemned the racial hatred which the campaign against the 'black shame' was stoking, blaming militarism more widely for its brutalising effects everywhere. She provoked the assembly by reminding its members of the less than honourable actions of German soldiers, for example towards Chinese women before the First World War, as well as in France and Belgium during the war. She also gave expression to the hypocrisy of European civilising missions, by pointing out that it had of course been Europeans who had carried all the 'benefits' of their civilisation, from "firewater, [to] syphilis and capitalist exploitation" into the wider world over the past centuries.²¹¹ However, with such voices much in the minority, the discourse was heavily dominated by the racist propaganda campaign against the colonial soldiers, which aimed at discrediting France internationally and projecting Germany as a violated beacon of racial purity, culture and civilisation.

²⁰⁸ Letter from chairman of the league to Munich publisher Andreas Stenzer, 29.11.1924, with further information on the league's activities attached. NL Epp, N 1101/43b, BArch Koblenz.

²⁰⁹ "Ein Dokument der Schmach. Frankreichs Diktatur auf dem rechten Rheinufer", *Vorwärts*, 08.04.1920, AA, p. 2.

²¹⁰ "Die Schwarzen", *RF*, 11.06.1920, p. 3.

²¹¹ *Verhandlungen*, 177. Sitzung, 20.05.1920, pp. 5693, 5695.

3.2.2 The 'race riots' in British port cities in 1919.

After the end of the First World War, a number of British colonial seamen found themselves in British port cities across the country, where they became the victims of violence at the hands of white British rioters on multiple occasions during the year 1919. Riots took place in Glasgow in January, in South Shields in February, in Salford and London in April; London experienced rioting in May, June and August. The month of June saw the peak of the clashes, with riots taking place in Hull, Liverpool, Cardiff, Newport and Barry.²¹² Aside from the considerable damage done to property, dozens of people were injured, and at least 250 arrested. In total, five men died as a result of the rioting, one in Liverpool, three in Cardiff, and one in Barry; of the victims, three were white men and two were men of colour. Despite what this ratio of white to non-white fatalities might suggest, it was specifically the men of colour who were targeted by white violence, while the white victims died in a more accidental manner or as a result of the victimised men of colour defending themselves against their attackers.²¹³ In referring to the men of colour involved in the unrest, newspapers variously used the words 'coloured' and 'black'; these covered a broad spectrum of individuals, as, though it was often men from the West Indies who were targeted in the riots, the "coloured men" living in British port cities and caught up in the unrest also included West Africans, Egyptians, other 'Arabs', Somalis, "Hindoos", and Chinese immigrants.²¹⁴ It is worth noting here that different people of colour were 'ranked' along a racial hierarchy by contemporaries, implying levels of 'culture' and 'civilisation', with Asians and Arabs generally considered higher up the hierarchy than the "barbaric" tribes of Black Africa.²¹⁵ This was the case in Germany, too, where, when a brigade of Senegalese soldiers was removed from the Rhineland and transferred to quell rebellion in Syria, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* commented on how the French were seemingly making a habit out of using a "lower" standing people to fight a "higher standing culture." The paper, however, also was deeply indignant that the Senegalese soldiers were being replaced by North Africans in the Rhineland; though it acknowledged that "the North Africans stand on a slightly higher

²¹² Jacqueline Jenkinson, "The 1919 riots", in Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Racial Violence in Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (revised ed., London and New York, 1996), p. 94.

²¹³ Numbers of victims summarised from Jenkinson, "The 1919 riots", pp. 92-111, and Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Most of these listed in Report by Cardiff Police Chief Constable David Williams to Director of Intelligence, 09.10.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352, [digitised: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.movinghere.org.uk/search/catalogue.asp?sequence=14&resourcetypeID=2&recordID=64162> [accessed 30.05.2020]]. On racist perceptions of Chinese immigrants, specifically, as a culturally incompatible threat to interwar Britain, see Sascha Auberbach, *Race, law, and 'the Chinese puzzle' in imperial Britain* (New York and Basingstoke, 2009).

²¹⁵ Quote by Gold Coast lawyer Joseph Renner Maxwell in Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 30.

level than the negroes,” its ultimate assessment was: “from the frying pan into the fire.”²¹⁶ On the other hand, not everyone agreed on the specific hierarchy of races. The writer and traveller Mary Kingsley considered “the true negro [...] by far the better man than the Asiatic”, mainly due to his ascribed sense for logic, practicality, and property, rather than being much concerned with religion and spirituality.²¹⁷ Paul Rich therefore has emphasised the “lack of clarity and consistency in the thinking at this time over race [...] in Britain.”²¹⁸ Because the terms ‘black’ and ‘coloured’ described people from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, Laura Tabili has noted that “‘Black’ was a political label rather than a physical description: the boundary between Black and white was not drawn on the basis of physical appearance, but on relations of power.”²¹⁹ She therefore opts to use the capitalised ‘Black’ to refer to all of the various groups of people of colour then living in Britain and involved in the unrest of 1919. Henceforth, this chapter will follow this convention.

The public language under investigation here exhibited two major themes in relation to the conflicts between white Britons and people of colour in Britain in 1919; both themes also constitute the major directions of the relevant historiography. They are race and class, or, more precisely, a discourse over miscegenation fears, on the one hand, and a discourse embedded in the labour conflicts of the economically strained postwar period, on the other. The latter theme has been the focus especially of Jacqueline Jenkinson’s work on the riots, in which she emphasised above all the impact of economic concerns, more so than race, as a factor in the riots. Several factors combined. Firstly the competition in the merchant shipping industry; secondly the mass demobilisation of (mostly white) servicemen following the end of the First World War, who were now demanding jobs back in the cities; and thirdly the presence of large numbers of Black workers and sailors, who had been hired during the war for munitions and other industries, to serve in the army and navy, and to sail in the merchant navy, to make up for the shortage of domestic British workers and sailors called up to serve in the war. Together, these factors created a situation in many British port cities in which Black and white men were competing for jobs, with employers hiring Black sailors to undercut white British sailors’ rates of pay.²²⁰ Jenkinson has also embedded this argument in the environment

²¹⁶ “Das Ende der ‚schwarzen Schmach‘, FZ, 31.05.1920, AB, pp. 1-2.

²¹⁷ Rich, *Race and Empire*, p. 32.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²¹⁹ Laura Tabili, *“We ask for British justice”: workers and racial difference in late imperial Britain* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1994), p. 9.

²²⁰ May and Cohen have estimated that in Liverpool alone, the demobilisation of the Black war-time workforce brought the Black population of the city up to 5,000. Roy May and Robin Cohen, “The Interaction between Race and Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919”, *Race & Class*, 16/2 (1974), p. 118; Jenkinson, “The 1919 riots”, pp. 92-93.

of the labour conflict on 'Red Clydeside', specifically, where a riot involving Black sailors occurred a mere week before the wider unrest of the 'Battle of George Square', as discussed in Chapter 1. In this case, the origin of the riot at the Mercantile Marine Offices appeared particularly directly related to hiring practices. However, contemporary reports contradicted each other. Some alleged that Black men were being given preference over white men in signing on to the crew of a ship in Glasgow harbour, sparking resentment among the white men and triggering conflict between the two groups.²²¹ Elsewhere, the opposite was reported, alleging that "preference [was] being given to British [i.e. white, A.K.] seamen over coloured seamen", locating the source of resentment and aggression among the Black sailors rather than the white men.²²² The Clyde Workers' Committee's 40-hour week campaign was driven specifically by fears over white unemployment in the wake of demobilisation and seamen's unions thus specifically sought to limit the use of Black and Chinese sailors, Emmanuel Shinwell having made a "hostile speech" on the morning of the riot, further underlining the significance of economic concerns in the conflict.²²³ The argument that Black men were taking jobs which white men thought should have been theirs upon their return from the war, was repeated time and again over the course of the year's riots.²²⁴ In Liverpool, where especially sugar refineries and oil cake mills became flash points of conflict, one such firm was reported to have "discharged all coloured men, as the white men refused to work with them."²²⁵

It is important to note that the Black men, with some exceptions such as Chinese immigrants, were to a large extent British subjects, drawn to the opportunities of the metropole from various corners of the Empire.²²⁶ Though these men were a "section of Britain's global workforce", they were actively "kept structurally separate to ensure their enhanced exploitability" on the postwar job market.²²⁷ As Bill Schwarz has argued for the post-Second

²²¹ "Fierce Race Riot in Glasgow", *The Evening Telegraph and Post* (Dundee), 24.01.1919, p. 5.

²²² *Glasgow Herald*, 24.01.1919, cited in Jenkinson, "The 1919 riots", p. 95; also reported in "Sequel to Riot at Broomielaw", *The Courier and Argus* (Dundee), 25.01.1919, p. 4.

²²³ Jenkinson, "Black Sailors on Red Clydeside", p.59; Neil Evans, "Across the universe: Racial violence and the post-war crisis in imperial Britain, 1919-25", *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 13/2-3 (1994), p. 67.

²²⁴ Examples: "Fatal race Riots", *Daily Express*, 13.06.1919, p. 1; "Licensed Riot", *Daily Express*, 14.06.1919, p. 4; "The Liverpool Riots", *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1919, p. 4.

²²⁵ "Racial Riots at Liverpool", *Morning Post*, 12.06.1919, p. 10.

²²⁶ Before 1948, all people born within the British Empire, except in British protectorates, were considered British subjects, see Mark Pearsall, "British nationality: subject or citizen?", lecture delivered at the National Archives, 14.04.2014, online at <https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/british-nationality-subject-citizen/> [accessed 29.05.2020]. The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914 had established that "any person born within His Majesty's dominions and allegiance" was a "natural-born British subject", see British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, online at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/17/enacted> [accessed 29.05.2020].

²²⁷ Tabili, "We ask for British justice", p. 183.

World War period, the Black subjects coming to the UK were located “in British civilization, [but] found themselves simultaneously dislocated from its privileges.”²²⁸ Therefore, the Black workers’ struggle for equal treatment as citizens took on a deeper significance, transcending purely economic aspects and entering the realm of individual and collective identities. As Tabili has put it, their “demand for British justice embodied a claim to British nationality.”²²⁹ Thus more differentiated arguments have to be made, in addition to the economic motivation, in order to analyse the violence faced by Black inhabitants of British port cities in the postwar period. In her more recent monograph, Jenkinson has accordingly examined not only the explanatory potential of the pressured postwar economic situation, but also considered aspects of port city life more generally, theories of crowd behaviour, “contested understandings of national identity and ‘Britishness’”, and the “influence of racist thought within sections of British society.”²³⁰ It is the latter two aspects on which the chapter will primarily focus in the following.

Parliament remained noticeably silent on the events. Besides comments from Independent Labour MP for Govan (Glasgow) Neil Maclean, remarking how the lower wages paid by shipping companies to Asian sailors as compared to white British sailors were causing understandable resentment on the Clyde, the riots of the spring and summer of 1919 were not discussed by parliamentarians.²³¹ This has led Michael Rowe to speculatively conclude that “elected politicians do not seem to have been particularly exercised by the disorders.”²³² In stark contrast to this attitude, the contemporary press reported on the riots often and extensively. It was most concerned with the race of the colonial sailors and reporting was characterised to a large extent by, more or less explicitly articulated, fears of miscegenation. The Black men themselves were often characterised in dehumanising and racialised terms. One newspaper quoted a detective as saying that the “coloured men [were] becoming pests.”²³³ Another police officer, however, employed the wide-spread racist trope of infantilization, saying that “most of [the Black men] are only big children who when they get money like to make a show.”²³⁴ The Glasgow *Evening Times*’ “Hal o’ the Wynd” opinion column used racist language too, with the added feature of a crude phonetic rendering of a West

²²⁸ Bill Schwarz, “‘Claudia Jones and the West Indian Gazette’: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-colonial Britain”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 14/3 (2003), p. 267.

²²⁹ Tabili, “*We ask for British justice*”, p. 180.

²³⁰ Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 1.

²³¹ HC, 13.02.1919, vol. 112, cols. 393-394.

²³² Michael Rowe, “Sex, ‘race’ and riot in Liverpool, 1919”, *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 19/2 (2000), p. 67.

²³³ *Eastern Post and City Chronicle*, 13.09.1919, p. 5, cited in Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 150.

²³⁴ “The Racial Trouble in Liverpool”, *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1919, p. 5.

Indian, or West African or possibly Indian, accent. It referred to the Black men in Britain as “Sambo”, a stereotypical name for African-Americans and a slur used for people of mixed African, Native American, and/or Indian descent, who, prior to the current unrest, had generally been regarded as a harmless “amoosin’ cuss” by the white British population.²³⁵ More hostile racist language was used in a piece which the *Evening Times* reproduced from *The Manchester Guardian*, in which it characterised the usually “quiet, apparently inoffensive nigger” as “a demon when armed with a revolver or razor.”²³⁶

The language used by the newspapers can give an indication of the perceived severity of the situation and the power dynamics involved. As Rowe has pointed out, the ubiquitous term “race riot” was in reality a misnomer, as “racist riots” would have been more accurate. However, Rowe rightly observes that the term “race riot” removed any attachment of blame which the term “racist” might have carried, even if this choice was less a deliberate one by newspaper editors than arising out of a real contemporary understanding of the differences and potentials for conflict between the races.²³⁷ While the vast majority of reports spoke of “rioting” or “riots”, there was also some use of “disturbances”, “trouble”, and “street fight”, the latter terms perhaps implying a little less severity than the former.²³⁸ The *Daily Mail*, however, in one instance spoke of “guerrilla warfare” when reporting on events in Cardiff in June, raising a far more menacing spectre than a more ordinary-sounding “street fight” might conjure up.²³⁹ On the other hand, when the Black sailor Charles Wotten (or Wootton) drowned in a Liverpool dock after being chased by a white mob, one headline ran: “Negro Lynched in Liverpool Riot.” It thus placed this death in a row with the kind of racial violence familiar from the United States, clearly aware of the power dynamics of the situation and thus rhetorically distributing the roles of victim and perpetrators accordingly.²⁴⁰ Reports actually remained unclear on whether Wotten had jumped into the water in a desperate attempt to save himself, or whether he had been thrown in and left to die, to calls from the crowd to “let him drown.” Based on the lack of

²³⁵ *Evening Times*, 18.06.1919, p. 2, cited in Jenkinson, “Black Sailors on Red Clydeside”, p. 51.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Rowe, “Sex, ‘race’ and riot”, p. 67.

²³⁸ Examples: “Serious Disturbance in Glasgow”, *The Scotsman*, 24.01.1919, p. 4; “The Colour Trouble in Liverpool. An Early Morning Fight.”, *Manchester Guardian*, 10.06.1919, p. 8; “Coloured Men in London Street Fight. Attention to Waitress.”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17.04.1919, p. 9.

²³⁹ “Black Men and White Girls.”, *Daily Mail*, 13.06.1919, p. 3. The paper did not delve into who it thought represented the guerrilla fighters in this situation, and who the power fighting to get a hold of them.

²⁴⁰ *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 07.06.1919, p. 6.

clear evidence as to how exactly Wotten had ended up in the water at the Queen's Dock, no verdict of murder was returned.²⁴¹

The types of attacks and weapons employed by the Black and white rioters, and by the police, also allow some estimation of the perceived level of threat and seriousness of the unrest. The police, in some cases with the aid of mounted police, had at its disposal only their batons to disperse the angry crowds and restore order, which appeared to be largely successful, though sometimes only after a significant time.²⁴² The white rioters were most often reported to be using their feet and fists, occasionally bricks, bottles, chair legs, stones, sticks, and in one case a frying pan, as weapons to get out their aggressions in face-to-face confrontations.²⁴³ But their superiority in numbers meant that situations of white mobs chasing and beating up Black men, white crowds attacking boarding-houses for Black men, wrecking them, throwing out furniture, and setting fire to them, were the more frequent forms which the white violence took.²⁴⁴ The Black men involved in the rioting, however, were reported to be remarkably well armed, and not in the least hesitant to defend themselves. One report claimed that the "Negroes are nearly all armed and fire on the slightest provocation", while another one listed the Black men's weapons of choice as "revolvers, pokers, and sticks."²⁴⁵ References to knives, and in particular razors and slashing were particularly frequent. In Cardiff, a young white man named Harold Smart had his throat slashed, apparently by a Black man, and died in hospital, while numerous reports contained reference to the use of razors as weapons and cuts being inflicted on white rioters and police officers. By way of an explanation for the prevalence of the weaponization of razors by the Black men, the *Daily Express* quoted one "Ali", once again crudely rendering his accent phonetically: "no barber'll shave dis cullud man!" Thanks to racial prejudice, therefore, Ali and men like him had to carry their own razors, which, the paper however implied, only made for a convenient excuse to be in possession of "so deadly a weapon."²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ "The Racial Riots in Liverpool. A Menacing Situation.", *Manchester Guardian*, 11.06.1919, p. 7; shouts from the crowd were reported in, for example, "Liverpool 'Colour' Riots", *Morning Post*, 11.06.1919, p. 4.

²⁴² Example: "The Colour Trouble at Cardiff. Baton Charge by the Police.", *Manchester Guardian*, 16.06.1919, p. 9;

²⁴³ Examples: "Black Men and White Girls.", *Daily Mail*, 13.06.1919, p. 3; "Race Rioting at Cardiff. Wild Early Morning Scenes.", *Times*, 13.06.1919, p. 9.

²⁴⁴ Examples: "Serious Disturbance in Glasgow", *The Scotsman*, 24.01.1919, p. 4; "The Racial Riots in Liverpool. A Menacing Situation.", *Manchester Guardian*, 11.06.1919, p. 7; "The Liverpool Riots", *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1919, p. 4; "Race Rioting at Cardiff. Wild Early Morning Scenes.", *Times*, 13.06.1919, p. 9; "Black Men and White Girls.", *Daily Mail*, 13.06.1919, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ "Ostentatious Negroes. Causes of Cardiff Riots.", *Daily Mail*, 14.06.1919, p. 3; "Rioting at Newport", *Morning Post*, 09.06.1919, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ Examples: "Serious Racial Riots at Cardiff. Three Whites Killed. Negroes Attack with Razors.", *Manchester Guardian*, 13.06.1919, p. 7; "Black and White at Liverpool. Sunday Night Outbreak", *Times*,

The menacing aspect of the presence of Black men in British cities, however, apparently lay not necessarily just in their capacity for physical violence, but first and foremost in their interest in white women and the resultant interracial sexual relations. As former colonial governor Ralph Williams laid out in stark terms in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, “intimate associations between black or coloured men and white women” were, to contemporaries, “a thing of horror.” The emphasis lay on what was implied to be a natural aversion against racial mixing: “It is an instinctive certainty that sexual relations between white women and coloured men revolt our very nature.”²⁴⁷ It is notable that this apparently ‘natural’ aversion only seemed to apply to relations between Black men and white women, while relations between white men and women of colour, which occurred in colonial settings as well as occasionally in the metropole, were not subject to the same scrutiny or condemnation.²⁴⁸ As Tabili has stressed, with the arrival of large numbers of British colonial subjects (and other people of colour) in the metropole, “imperial racial categories and racial subordination were reconstituted on British soil.”²⁴⁹ “Imperial manhood”, which relied on the successful subordination of women, children, the natural world, and colonised people, was a constituting part of British imperial power and identity, which was threatened by the transgressive interracial relationships between Black men and white women.²⁵⁰ Noticeably, in contrast to the situation in the Rhineland described above, the press discourse was not primarily characterised by allegations of rape or sexual assaults by Black men against white women, in which women were solely constructed as victims. Instead, white women were apportioned a large amount of the blame for the rising tensions, which they were seen to be provoking by associating with Black men. This was true both in cases of mutual relationships, as well as with regards to prostitution. Thus, *The Times*, for example, commented that “the intermarriage of black men and white women, not to mention other relationships, has excited much feeling.”²⁵¹ Insinuating prostitution, and with clear class-based judgement, many reports blamed the unrest on the association with Black men of women who they characterised as being “of a low type.”²⁵² “Ostentatious negroes” who had “grown more arrogant of late”, as they were enjoying spending the money they made on their jobs (which, in many people’s opinions, as laid out above, they should not have had in

10.06.1919, p. 9; “Race Rioting at Cardiff. Wild Early Morning Scenes.”, *Times*, 13.06.1919, p. 9; quotes: “Negroes hide in Police Cells”, *Daily Express*, 12.06.1919, p. 1.

²⁴⁷ “The Colour Riots”, *Times*, 14.06.1919, p. 8.

²⁴⁸ Rowe, “Sex, ‘race’ and riot”, p. 59. Tabili has pointed out that in a sexist omission, Black women did not feature in the postwar debates about race in Britain, nor have they featured in the subsequent historiography in a meaningful measure; see Tabili, “*We ask for British justice*”, p. 145.

²⁴⁹ Tabili, “*We ask for British justice*”, p. 1.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 156.

²⁵¹ “Black and White at Liverpool”, *Times*, 10.06.1919, p. 9.

²⁵² “Fatal Race Riots”, *Daily Express*, 13.06.1919, p. 1.

the first place), were attracting the “class of women who infest seaports.”²⁵³ These “loose women” who had been given license to “solicit the black men,” thus sparking resentment among white men, were seen as a main cause of the unrest.²⁵⁴

The victimisation of women extended far beyond those engaged in prostitution, however, and featured in all the centres of rioting. In Liverpool, which saw some of the largest-scale rioting in June, violence first broke out when a number of Black men apparently attacked some Scandinavian sailors; the Black men, being British subjects, resented that shipping companies were hiring (white) foreigners in their stead. However, newspapers immediately drew on the theme of interracial relationships as they explained that “the strife is the outcome of the negroes’ familiarity with white women, which in some cases has been legalised by marriage”, as well as pointing to the employment issue, positing that white men felt Black men were taking their jobs.²⁵⁵ In Cardiff, which also experienced severe rioting in June, it was reported that “the white population was inflamed” because a “negro was seen walking down the Bute-street arm-in-arm with a white girl.” An apparently “prominent citizen”, speaking to the newspaper reporter, was confident as to who was responsible, explaining that ““some of the white women are not free of blame. They fraternise with the negroes, and give them encouragement.””²⁵⁶ Not only did this “prominent citizen” lay at least a significant portion of the blame for the unrest at the feet of white women, he also employed language from a war context, identifying the Black men – British subjects in many cases, who had just fought for the Empire in the First World War – as an enemy with whom the women were “fraternis[ing]”; an image and a choice of language familiar to contemporaries from the recent context of the First World War, when, particularly in France and Belgium, women who had associated with enemy soldiers were severely stigmatised and punished as traitors, for example by having their heads shaved, after the end of the war.²⁵⁷ In what appeared as almost a strange show of masculine solidarity, one piece first blamed the Black men, saying that the “negroes would not have been touched but for their relations with white women. This has caused the entire trouble,” only to then go on to contend that “of course, the white woman is equally to blame, but somehow it is the black man that suffers.”²⁵⁸ Another piece also showed a sort of sympathy for the male victims at the expense of the white women leading them into trouble; the piece recognised the injustice of

²⁵³ “Ostentatious Negroes. Causes of Cardiff Riots.”, *Daily Mail*, 14.06.1919, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ “Serious Racial Riots at Cardiff”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13.06.1919, p. 7.

²⁵⁵ “Negroes hide in Police Cells”, *Daily Express*, 12.06.1919, p. 1.

²⁵⁶ “Fatal Race Riots”, *Daily Express*, 13.06.1919, p. 1. Reported similarly in “Serious Racial Riots at Cardiff”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13.06.1919, p. 7.

²⁵⁷ Debruyne, “Intimate Relations between Occupiers and Occupied (Belgium and France)”

²⁵⁸ “The Racial Trouble in Liverpool”, *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1919, p. 5.

“these insane riots – in which men whom we brought over to fight for us are killed for a race prejudice excited by the folly of certain women” and, echoing Williams’ vocabulary, suggested that “a campaign of education should reveal to white women the well-founded horror in which their intimacy with blacks is held.”²⁵⁹ It was not only men, however, who participated in the victimisation of the women who associated with Black men. In Cardiff, when a house where Black men were living was set fire to, a “young white woman was rescued from the premises, and the police, who escorted her away, had some difficulty in protecting her from other white women.”²⁶⁰ While the report made no comment as to why the “young white woman” was at the attacked premises, it is clear that her fellow white women, sure of their own moral righteousness, did not need confirmation and jumped to the conclusion that the woman was in fact “fraternising” with the Black men, bringing shame on white British womanhood, outraging contemporary morals and provoking the anger of white men. At a court session dealing with charges arising from the riots in Newport, one of the accused, a white woman, was reported to have shouted at one of the victims, a white wife of a Black man, the extremely violent threat of “You ought to be burnt, because you are a black man’s wife.”²⁶¹

Much of the activities of white women to which their fellow white Britons objected so much may have in fact been based in rumour. When unrest broke out at an Arab-run coffee shop on Cable Street in London’s East End in June of the year, it was reported that the riot had arisen “on a report being spread that some white girls had been seen to enter the house.” No indication was provided in the report as to whether any white girls had actually been at the scene at all, however the rumour had proved potent enough so that “soon a crowd of 3,000 people assembled, and the place was attacked.”²⁶² Even when a riot was said to have occurred because of “a black man accosting a white girl”, the headline redistributed the blame and ran: “Girl causes a riot.”²⁶³ The agency, opinions, or feelings of the women who associated with the Black men were generally not taken into account. The East End riots in April also took their origin at a café, or restaurant, “frequented by coloured seamen,” where “a couple of English girls were employed.” Though it was reported that “these girls were often the subject of insulting remarks”, the “girls” own views of these remarks, and whether insulting remarks from “coloured seamen” were any more objectionable to them than receiving them from white customers, never featured in the reporting. Instead, the riot was said to have occurred because

²⁵⁹ “Licensed Riot”, *Daily Express*, 14.06.1919, p. 4.

²⁶⁰ “Race Rioting at Cardiff”, *Times*, 13.06.1919, p. 9.

²⁶¹ “Black and White Riots. Police Court Charges.”, *Times*, 17.06.1919, p. 9.

²⁶² “East End Colour Riot.”, *Daily Mail*, 16.06.1919, p. 3. On the power of rumours in volatile violent environments, see also Jones, *Founding Weimar*.

²⁶³ *Daily Express*, 09.06.1919, p. 6.

“white men resent[ed] the attention paid by coloured men to waitresses.”²⁶⁴ Thus white men’s sensibilities stood at the centre of the discourse, while the opinions and feelings of the white women themselves were relegated to the discursive side-lines. As Jenkinson has noted, only a small number of women chose to speak up and defend their choices against the critics, such as one who wrote a letter to the *Glasgow Evening Times* in response to the ‘Hal o’ the Wynd’ column, commenting that she was very happy with her decision to marry a Black sailor.²⁶⁵ The previously mentioned Ralph Williams, who had served as the governor of the Windward Islands and for several years administered the Government of Bechuanaland (modern-day Botswana), also sought the cause of the riots among “white women of a certain temperament” who were “encouraging [the Black men’s] attentions, and allowing themselves to be taken as paramours, or sometimes wives.” Tellingly he concluded, “what blame to the coloured men if they take advantage of it? And what blame, too, to those white men who, seeing these conditions and loathing them, resort to violence?”²⁶⁶ The only party left to blame, then, were women, their actions evidently proving so outrageous, unacceptable and threatening to “imperial manhood” that they justified violent retaliation in order to restore imperial power and colonial race and gender norms which were in danger of becoming unbalanced in the multiracial milieu of postwar British port cities.

Intimately linked with conceptions of the imperial self were contestations over Britishness more broadly, as well as more specific rights associated with this identity, to which the Black men arriving in the metropole, as far as they came from within the British empire, lay their own claim. In opposition to the situation in the Rhineland discussed above, where the French colonial soldiers were part of a foreign army of occupation and wielded power over the German civilian population who dared not lash out against them, the Black men in Britain were not in a position of power in relation to the white British population around them. Despite many of the Black men being British subjects, they were a disadvantaged minority, the victims of prejudice, and of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of the white majority. The “Society of People of African Origin” therefore held a protest meeting in Hyde Park following the height of the riots in June 1919. In a resolution moved by the society’s president, Eldred Taylor, members condemned recent events, which had seen “manifestations of race hatred, [...] resulting in the ill-treatment, punishment, and death of negroes.” The resolution demanded that “adequate protection should be granted us as British subjects.” The Society’s general

²⁶⁴ “Coloured Men in London Street Fight. Attention to Waitress.”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17.04.1919, p. 9 and “Barrage of Bottles. Scenes at an East-End Riot.”, *Observer*, 20.04.1919, p. 6.

²⁶⁵ 21.06.1919, p. 2, cited in Jenkinson, “Black Sailors on Red Clydeside”, p. 52.

²⁶⁶ “The Colour Riots”, *Times*, 14.06.1919, p. 8.

secretary, F.E.M. Hercules, further emphasised the society members' claim to a British identity by insisting that branding all Black Britons as morally dubious on the basis of the actions of only a few was "unfair and un-English."²⁶⁷ The ultra-patriotic *John Bull* was in fact willing to lend support to the Black men's argument and published a letter from a "group representing more than 130 black sailors" in which the men protested the 'colour bar' on British ships in Glasgow. The letter repeated that the "coloured seamen" were "Britishborn subjects" who had "defied the Hun and his devilries for the sake of Britain." The fact that many of them were now unemployed and destitute was an outrage to them. Yet, in a turn of argument which no doubt pleased the editors and readers of *John Bull*, the letter also emphasised that the Black men were "modest enough to say – 'first place for white Britishers; after that coloured Britishers'", identifying as the real villains in the story the "Norwegians, Swedes and Spaniards" who the Black men had to watch the shipping companies hire instead of them.²⁶⁸ Thus some Black men in Liverpool reportedly actively claimed and exhibited their British identity by wearing their war medals, demonstrating their loyalty and service to Britain.²⁶⁹ This observation stood in stark contrast to the involvement of dissatisfied demobilised white soldiers in the riots, as for example in Newport, where one of the white men charged with rioting and assaults on the police was reported to have been "wearing the Mons ribbon."²⁷⁰

Voices from the Dominions weighed in on the tensions in the "Mother Country", too, with one Australian correspondent in the *Morning Post* expressing hope that the "one benefit in the troubles which the Mother Country has at present with a small negro population" would be that Britain would now better understand the "'White Australia'" policy and "Canada's objection to unrestricted Asiatic immigration." The correspondent considered it "a fact – an unfortunate fact, perhaps, but still a fact – that the coloured races and our white race cannot live together on terms of equal freedom." At the centre of the issue he unequivocally placed "the sex question." If "full privileges as 'as man and a brother'" were to be extended to "other racial types" then interracial relationships would have to be accepted as the logical outcome; "that path", however, "leads to racial degradation" and "all the instincts of our white race refuse that." Therefore, a "negro problem in [the British man's] home will convince him, far more quickly than any abstract argument" of the need for segregationist, or apartheid-style policies which would keep "race equality" at bay.²⁷¹ The United States' approach to race relations was also put into contrast with the ongoing conflicts in Britain and the prominence of interracial

²⁶⁷ "Recent Race Riots. Negro Protest in Hyde Park.", *Morning Post*, 16.06.1919, p. 6.

²⁶⁸ *John Bull*, 29.03.1919, p. 7, cited in Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 193.

²⁶⁹ Rowe, "Sex, 'race' and riot", p. 66.

²⁷⁰ "Girl causes a riot.", *Daily Express*, 09.06.1919, p. 6.

²⁷¹ "The Negro Riots. A Lesson for England.", *Morning Post*, 13.06.1919. p. 12.

relationships. *The Times* thus reported that “American naval officers stationed at the American naval base at Cardiff have often expressed their disgust at the laxity of the British law in this connexion.”²⁷²

It had been a political choice by the British government to increase the “importation of black labour” as a “war emergency” measure, and political solutions to the arising tensions had to be sought.²⁷³ In Liverpool, in the immediate term, between 700 and 1,000 Black inhabitants of the city, including families, were, “at their own request”, offered protection from the angry white mob by being housed in the Bridewell, the city’s central prison, for a few days.²⁷⁴ This was evidently not a permanent solution, however. To account for the slightly longer term, to avoid further rioting, one option being considered was removing the Black men to an internment camp, especially as the military was seen as having some responsibility for the large number of British colonial subjects now finding themselves in British port cities, having recruited them during the war.²⁷⁵ This approach made clear the perception that the ‘problem’ were the Black men and the solution was their removal from where their presence would provoke white Britons. The next policy solution to be devised by the government made this attitude and belief in the separation of the races even more obvious. It was a proposed repatriation scheme, encouraging Black men to return to their ‘home’ countries, or indeed anywhere in the “colonial periphery, regardless of whence they came,” further underlining that the British government’s priority was to remove these men from the metropole.²⁷⁶ The repatriation scheme did not prove particularly successful. Although apparently some five hundred Black men had initially expressed a willingness to return to their home countries, or another colonial destination, the steamer *Batanga* left Liverpool on 18 June 1919 with only forty-three West Africans on board. Everyone else had decided against the journey, citing a variety of reasons, from too short a notice, to outstanding payments for their war service, to a lack of guarantees from the government to provide them with a sum of money upon arrival at their destination to ensure that they would not be left destitute.²⁷⁷

As the repatriation scheme already begins to illustrate, the riots of 1919 had reverberations not only within Britain, but also in its colonies, metropole and periphery being intimately linked

²⁷² “Race Riots at Cardiff”, *Times*, 13.06.1919, p. 9.

²⁷³ “The Liverpool Riots”, *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1919, p. 4.

²⁷⁴ “Negroes hide in Police Cells”, *Daily Express*, 12.06.1919, p. 1; “The Racial Riots in Liverpool”, *The Scotsman*, 12.06.1919, p. 6.

²⁷⁵ “Negroes hide in Police Cells”; *Daily Express*, 12.06.1919, p. 1; “The Racial Riots in Liverpool”, *The Scotsman*, 12.06.1919, p. 6; “The Racial Riots. Quieter Day in Liverpool.”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13.06.1919, p. 8.

²⁷⁶ Rowe, “Sex, ‘race’ and riot”, p. 68.

²⁷⁷ “Coloured Workers. Question of Repatriation.”, *Morning Post*, 19.06.1919, p. 5.

in what Tabili has termed a “continuing dialectic” between their societies and cultures.²⁷⁸ The fact that events in the metropole would be noticed and judged throughout the Empire was an important concern for contemporaries, who were continuously aware of how important colonial perceptions of the ‘Mother Country’ were for the maintenance of British imperial prestige and power. Exuding the paternalism of Kipling’s ‘White Man’s Burden’, the Reverend George Mitchell, Chaplain to Seamen, wrote in a letter to the *Daily Express* that “for good or bad, these dark sons of the West Indies are members of the British Empire, and to foster an antipathy towards them will not tend to cement the bonds of Empire.”²⁷⁹ Similar concerns were voiced by Williams, who wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* in which he expressed his worry that “every ‘coloured newspaper’ in the West Indies, on the west coast of Africa, and in every land where colour predominates, [was] seething with journalistic indignation at what they deem to be the ill-treatment of their brethren who have come over to aid us in the war.”²⁸⁰ With an awareness of nascent and potentially growing anti-colonial movements in the periphery, the Liverpool *Daily Post* warned of “infinite possibilities of mischief if any idea gained ground in India and Africa that the isolated conduct of riotous mobs represented the prevailing British attitude towards the black members of the Empire who are in our midst.”²⁸¹ Given that a large number of the Black men involved in the unrest were of Caribbean origin, news of the riots echoed the most round the West Indies. As a letter from the Director of Intelligence emphasised, “the alleged stories of negro atrocities in South Wales [were] a matter which was agitating the Government of Trinidad.”²⁸² In an effort to alleviate this agitation, a staff member in the Colonial Office received reports from the Hull and South Shields Police Chief Constables with the comment that the Colonial Office ought to “now consider the question of sending T’dad [Trinidad] & leewards suitable extracts from the reports, by way of refutation of the alleged illtreatment [sic!] of coloured men in this country.”²⁸³ The police reports thus generally emphasised that there was no evidence “of West Indians either collectively or individually being outrageously attacked.” They also reiterated that it was the Black men who made use of the more dangerous weapons, such as firearms, knives and razors, as discussed above, while the white rioters only used their fists or threw stones. The Cardiff Chief Constable’s report also took particular care to expose as false an especially gruesome and distressing

²⁷⁸ Tabili, “*We ask for British justice*”, p. 3.

²⁷⁹ “Racial Riots”, *Daily Express*, 17.06.1919, p. 4.

²⁸⁰ “The Colour Riots”, *Times*, 14.06.1919, p. 8.

²⁸¹ 11.06.1919, cited in Evans, “Across the universe”, p. 76.

²⁸² From Director of Intelligence to Thornton [?], 13.10.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352.

²⁸³ Quote by R.J.H.[?], 12.12.1919. Reports to Director of Intelligence from Chief Constable’s Office, Hull, 25.11.1919; and from William Scott, Chief Constable South Shields, 17.11.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352.

rumour that one Black man had been killed in the rioting and his head subsequently been abused as a football by the white aggressors; this evidently was not true, proving once again the agitating potential of rumours in volatile violent situations.²⁸⁴ The Chief Constable of Newport sent the Director of Intelligence a letter to the same effect, in order to dispel the concerns of a Barbadian newspaper that the riots constituted “colour feuds.” The police chief argued that “racial feeling” never played an overly important part in the unrest; instead, he considered the rioting to have been “an opportunity for sheer hooliganism and disorder on the part of an undesirable section of the residents of this town.” He also quickly provided further details on who he considered to make up this “undesirable section”, adding that “it is noticeable that the majority of white persons charged in connection with the disturbances is Irish.”²⁸⁵ The convenient argument, which deflected the need to actually address the underlying social and economic grievances motivating many rioters, that “hooligan elements” or “roughs” had simply exploited an already charged atmosphere was also made in Liverpool and London, and the Liverpool Assistant Head Constable reported to the Director of Intelligence that “the attacks on the negroes were only made by the irresponsible element of the population many of whom were arrested, and have been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.”²⁸⁶ Jenkinson has analysed the treatment in the courts of the Black and white people who were arrested and has concluded that the judiciary’s approach was inconsistent. While some Black and Arab defendants were released or found not guilty on lack of evidence, others received heavier sentences than white defendants did for comparable offences, and occasionally magistrates appeared to show a degree of sympathy for the actions of the white rioters.²⁸⁷

Analyses of the 1919 ‘race’ riots have largely revolved around resolving whether they were in fact primarily motivated by racial prejudice, or whether broader social and economic concerns played the more important role. As Jenkinson has put it, the “sex issue [i.e. the rejection of interracial relationships] was simply the leading manifestation of a more general white dissatisfaction.”²⁸⁸ She has maintained, also in her later, more comprehensive work, that viewing the riots primarily through the prism of ‘race relations’ is a fallacy and that they need to be considered within broader postwar circumstances, making a class analysis more

²⁸⁴ Report by Cardiff Chief Constable David Williams to Director of Intelligence, 09.10.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352.

²⁸⁵ Letter from Chief Constable of Newport Chas Gower to Director of Intelligence, 07.10.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352.

²⁸⁶ Letter, with report, to Director of Intelligence from Liverpool Assistant Head Constable L. Everett, 13.11.1919, TNA (Kew), CO 318/352; see also May and Cohen, “The Interaction between Race and Colonialism”, p. 115 and Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, pp. 124-125.

²⁸⁷ Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 131.

²⁸⁸ Jenkinson, “The 1919 riots”, p. 110.

compelling than an analysis centring race as an explanatory factor.²⁸⁹ This may be convincing in order to explain the riots themselves, but given this thesis' approach and its interest in analysing the public language which accompanied the rioting of 1919, it is undeniable that race and in particular the unease about racial mixing were central to contemporaries. As has been shown above, the presence of Black seamen in British port cities was exploited within the context of ongoing labour conflicts, by blaming the men of colour for perpetual unemployment among white sailors and workers. However, an emotionally even more highly charged matter was the association of white women with Black men. The white women were thus also instrumentalised in this conflict, by being apportioned a significant amount of blame for outraging contemporary morals, provoking white men, and inciting conflict. Interracial relationships threatened the hegemony of "imperial manhood" (Tabili) which relied on dominating women, children, the natural world, and colonised peoples. In this way, especially, the conflicts between white Britons and Black inhabitants of British cities raised complicated questions about who had a right to lay claim to a British identity. As Bill Schwarz has pointed out, "arguably the culture of insular England was formed as much by its overseas possessions as by the island territory; and [...] white English ethnicity is, despite all protestations to the contrary, a hybrid."²⁹⁰ The Government's efforts to implement a 'repatriation' scheme, however, were proof of the perception of the Black men as the 'problem' and the desire to keep the races physically separate, despite the fact that many of the Black men affected were British subjects with the right to move freely within the Empire. Rhetorical efforts to downplay the aggression of white rioters and blame a small "hooligan element" further aimed at preserving the prestige and power of Britain and its Empire, assuaging fears and discontent in the colonial periphery and pre-empting growing anti-colonial sentiments. The presence of thousands of people of colour in the metropole therefore unsettled what were considered basic tenets of British colonialism and the 'success' of the British Empire. Who could belong within the 'inner circle' was a contested issue, and it was contested violently in the case of the 1919 riots.

While in Conrad's novel 'darkness' outwardly referred to the unknown, mysterious, potentially dangerous, unexplored regions of central Africa, in a metaphorical way it comes to refer to the darkness which takes hold of European hearts as they become capable of unleashing extreme violence in spaces where racial hierarchies govern actions and the rules

²⁸⁹ Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, p. 27.

²⁹⁰ Bill Schwarz, "Black Metropolis, White England", in Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds.), *Modern times: reflections on a century of English modernity* (London and New York, 1996), p. 190.

of civilised conduct cease to apply. If one is to consider once again Frederick Harrison's quote from 1867, which appeared at the beginning of this chapter, his concern that measures of extraordinary violence employed in the colonial sphere might find their way back, via Ireland, onto (specifically) English soil, with incalculable consequences for domestic peace and the rule of law in Britain, appears prescient. It seemingly anticipates arguments made in the early-to mid-twentieth century, first by decolonisation activists and writers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon, and later by Hannah Arendt in her magisterial *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) regarding certain "boomerang effects" by which the experiences and norms established in colonial settings had palpable effects on the "behavior of European peoples."²⁹¹ Among those experiences, the most significant, according to Arendt, was the profound realisation that "peoples could be converted into races and [that] simply by taking the initiative in this process, one might push one's own people into the position of the master race."²⁹² As Gerwarth and Malinowski emphasise, it still remains an open question "where the boomerang originated and where it landed." In particular, the relationship, an indirect one as Arendt stated, between the colour-based racism of colonialism and the Nazis' anti-Semitism directed against a fully assimilated, white European 'inner enemy', who was nevertheless constructed in racial terms by the regime, remains to be examined further.²⁹³

Language, no doubt one of the constituent parts of the 'boomerang', transcended the various geographic circles in which political violence manifested itself in the postwar era, reverberating dialectically between metropole and periphery. The race riots of 1919, for example, have so far largely been analysed by writers in black and immigration history.²⁹⁴ Despite the much more wide-spread prevalence of unrest during that year, including but by no means limited to dissatisfied demobilised soldiers burning down Luton town hall in July, it has been less common to incorporate such events into broader histories of postwar political violence, within Britain itself, within the Empire, as well as in a comparative European context, as this thesis does.²⁹⁵ In examining events of political violence across geographic theatres, as well as from within two different national contexts side-by-side, certain commonalities emerge, while acute differences equally come into focus.

²⁹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1976 [1951]), p. 206. On the pre-Arendtian history of the 'boomerang argument', see summary in Gerwarth and Malinowski, "Hannah Arendt's Ghosts", pp. 280-281.

²⁹² Arendt, *Origins*, p. 206.

²⁹³ Gerwarth and Malinowski, "Hannah Arendt's Ghosts", p. 296.

²⁹⁴ Jenkinson, "Black Sailors on Red Clydeside", p. 31.

²⁹⁵ Evans, "Across the universe", pp. 62, 69. Evans is one of the few to list unrest in India (Amritsar), Egypt, Iraq, and Ireland when setting the imperial context to the race riots in British port cities in 1919.

With the first case study of this chapter, British air control in Mandatory Iraq, the categories of space, time, and visibility take an especially important place, as does the emerging industrialisation, or rationalisation, of killing. The highly modern method of air control, with its anonymous, quasi invisible, victims on the ground and the apparent omnipotence of the pilots overhead, stood in stark contrast to previous methods of combat, in which killing had had to be done largely by hand, face-to-face, and physical and emotional contact between combatants, who were more evenly matched, had been unavoidable. In terms of topography, too, air control increased the distance, not only between victim and perpetrator, but also between the scene of combat – in a faraway Iraqi desert – and the reading public back in the metropole. The distance was both physical as well as psychological, allowing for a very particular discourse to take hold, driven, in the case of air control in Iraq, by primarily financial considerations, making fighting, indeed wounding and killing, a more rationalised, industrialised process. The term ‘control’ itself, despite consisting, by the government’s own admission, basically of institutionalised terror, suggested a basically administrative process, with little emotional investment. This was significantly not the case in the German case studies considered here. The discourses over ‘lost’ colonial possessions, and, even more so, over the perceived injustice of a French occupation which involved colonial soldiers were highly emotionally charged, making use of profoundly emotional language and images, laden with pathos, ideology and arousing the passions of Germans in opposition to the occupation.

This heated discourse stood in marked contrast to the ‘cold’ administrative and economic considerations driving the move towards air control in Iraq. The air control method, with the distance and the imbalance it created between victims and perpetrators, came with profound implications, too, for both the identities of the victims and those of the perpetrators. Targeting defenceless people from the air was seen by some as a cowardly tactic, with concerns raised for how it would affect the morals of those doing the bombing. The victims, on the other hand, experienced an anonymisation in this process, as their number, let alone their individual identities, were obliterated alongside their bodies and not recorded by the bombers. The opposite process could be observed with regards to the German victims of attacks by French colonial soldiers in the Rhineland. The perpetrators were highly visible, standing out not only as foreign soldiers, but especially due to the colour of their skin; the propaganda materials against them were often highly visual, purposely drawing on stark and explicit imagery to vilify the men. The German women, and men, who were assaulted, beaten, and raped were identified and given names, wherever possible, as is evident from the long lists and tables published in the *Reichstag*’s appendices enumerating case after case of such alleged crimes. It is notable, however, that the identities of the victims provided often featured only the first

name and the initial of the last name, an indication of the shame and stigma associated with, in particular, sexual violence. Nevertheless, unlike the Arab victims of British aerial bombing, the German civilians victimised by French soldiers were named and counted, as this served an express political purpose. The long lists of names and, more or less detailed, accounts of the attacks were used in the public arena to further protest and discredit the French occupation, the Treaty of Versailles more generally, and the old enemy France as a whole.

Physicality has been another aspect which ties the analyses of this chapter's case studies together. Where the method of aerial bombing physically decoupled the violence inflicted from its perpetrators, and thus rendered it more abstract, the two case studies of section 3.2 have been characterised by an extreme physicality and corporality. The occupation of the Rhineland, a violent penetration of national autonomy by enemy forces, was actualised in literal rape, women's bodies standing in, discursively, for the nation as a whole, their bodily autonomy being violated by force. While the experience of war on its own territory, occupation and violence inside its borders was not unfamiliar in the German context, such experiences had been largely absent from British history for many centuries. Violence was something that was exported, via British imperialism, into other people's homes, on the colonial periphery, rather than being experienced to the same extent in the metropole. However, with the arrival of several thousand people of colour from the 'dark' periphery in the beating heart of the Empire, an acute anxiety set in over the prospect, and the reality, of interracial physical relationships which would unbalance in particular masculine imperial power structures. The fact that the physical violence which several British port cities experienced in 1919 was perhaps driven more by social and economic dissatisfaction than simply by racial prejudice cannot hide the fact that when frustrations surfaced and manifested themselves physically, they did so along racial lines.

Where public language in Britain was largely in agreement over the dangers, undesirability and provocative nature of interracial relationships, the discourse over aerial bombing and the implementation of air control was characterised by much more controversial debate, ambivalence, diverging opinion, and criticism. Criticism intensified in particular once the Labour government took office in 1924, when air policing methods came under somewhat more scrutiny.²⁹⁶ The fact that air control continued nevertheless and the voices of those criticising it on moral grounds were not successful in effecting a policy change is perhaps testament to the primacy of the economic argument, underpinned by strong perceptions of racial differences between white European culture and civilisation, and the 'half-civilised'

²⁹⁶ Omissi, *Air Power*, p. 174.

worlds of the 'Arabs' or 'Orientals'. This case study is important to the present thesis as a means of rebuffing arguments that political violence was absent in interwar Britain; while most of it may have taken place in the colonial sphere, it still held significant implications for the domestic sphere. As with the case study of Ireland examined in Chapter 2, it once again sparked debates over notions of 'civilised' uses of violence and particularly 'British' values, from economic efficiency, to technological invention, to medieval notions of chivalry. Importantly, as this chapter has shown, critical voices within those debates can be reconstructed from the record; this was less true in German public discourse, the increasingly extreme divisions of which this thesis explores further in its next chapter.

Tabili has suggested that what was in evidence in interwar debates over the place of people of colour in British society, and, by implication, the value of their lives, were "the contradictions in twentieth-century imperialism itself: the intensified tension between maintaining the subordination and stratification that made imperialism profitable and the political necessity of a liberal and progressive public face."²⁹⁷ The necessity of maintaining a certain public face applied to Germany at this point in time, too, as this thesis has continued to argue throughout. As a priority, the government of the young German republic had to seek to present the country as having been chastened after the excesses of the war, ready to be a reliable, democratic member of the civilised family of nations. However, debate, ambivalence, and criticism of the dominant public discourse with regards to both colonial revisionism as well as the role of French colonial soldiers in the Rhineland was much less in evidence in Germany than the debates examined in the British contexts above. With the notable exception of the Independent Social Democrats and the Communists, all political voices in parliament and in the press were vehemently in favour of demanding the revision of the removal of Germany's colonies. Those voices also vilified, even more virulently, the colonial soldiers of the French occupation. In reaction to real acts of violence committed by some of the soldiers of occupation, both white and of other ethnicities, the public discourse experienced a rhetorical backlash of extremely racialised language, tropes and images created to dehumanise in particular the men of colour and therewith delegitimise French policy more generally. The discourses established at that point subsequently became increasingly radicalised, taking on enormous momentum with the emergence of National Socialism. As the case of the forcibly sterilised 'Rhineland bastards' shows symptomatically, extreme violence was preceded by extreme propaganda.

²⁹⁷ Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925", *Journal of British Studies*, 33/1 (1994), p. 96.

In the final chapter, the thesis will move forward some ten years, zooming in on the 'inner circle' once again, where it will examine reactions to fascist violence in both early 1930s German and mid-1930s British public language.

CHAPTER 4

REACTING TO FASCIST VIOLENCE IN GERMANY AND BRITAIN IN THE EARLY/MID-1930s.

This chapter examines perceptions of Fascist violence in German and British public discourse in the early/mid-1930s. Thus, the chapter returns to the inner geographic circle, but moves forward circa ten years. For Germany, two case studies prior to the Nazi takeover of power have been chosen, as neither the press nor the political and public sphere more generally could be considered to be free after January 1933. The first case study examines anti-Semitic rioting accompanied by assaults on the general public by the Nazi stormtroopers on Berlin's *Kurfürstendamm* boulevard in September 1931, while the second one concerns the brutal murder of Konrad Pietrzuch, a Polish Communist sympathiser and unemployed labourer, by SA men in the small Upper Silesian village of Potempa in August 1932. The case study chosen for Britain occurred in June 1934, at the highpoint of popularity for Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF), when Blackshirt stewards at a riotous public meeting at London's Olympia hall ejected interrupters by considerable force, causing many injuries and prompting public outrage.

In examining the public language exhibited in reaction to these specific instances of Fascist violence, this chapter will, even more so than the preceding ones, throw into sharp relief the differences between German and British experiences and receptions of this kind of violence in the early/mid-1930s. It is worth emphasising at the very outset the stark discrepancies in the scale of violence experienced in early-1930s Germany and mid-1930s Britain as a result of Fascist and anti-Fascist clashes. As Thurlow has observed, "there was not one proven fatality from political violence, neither fascist nor anti-fascist, in Britain in the 1930s; there was no British Horst Wessel nor any anti-fascist martyr."¹ This chapter will thus highlight the chasm between different European experiences of violence in interwar Europe, which became most acutely evident as Fascism reared its head across the continent. However unsuited to comparison the scale of Nazi violence and British Fascist violence might seem, the comparison is undertaken in this chapter as a way of casting a satellite ten years into the future from where the other three chapters have been situated, and to thus give an impression of the stark drift apart in what was considered appropriate or defensible conduct in British and German public discourse by this later point in time. Where the thesis' earlier chapters found common themes between both countries' response to political violence, such as concern over

¹ Richard C. Thurlow, "The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back: Public Order, Civil Liberties and the Battle of Cable Street", *Jewish Culture and History*, 1/2 (1998), p. 76. More on Wessel's significance further below.

international reputation, fears of 'foreign' ideologies, and a commitment (in public language, at least) to democratic values and common standards of civilised conduct, this final, 'satellite' chapter demonstrates how these discourses had shifted apart in significant ways by the 1930s. While British public discourse held onto many of the tropes developed in the early interwar years about British peaceableness and aversion to 'continental-style' violent politics, German public discourse failed to roundly condemn Nazi conduct, with the Right publicly defending and praising it without fear of consequences.

Furthermore, by examining reactions to BUF violence side-by-side with Nazi violence, the pronounced difference in relative threat potential these two movements held for Britain and Germany, respectively, becomes particularly obvious. While Mosley's Blackshirt movement asked some significant questions of the established political system in Britain, it never actually posed a significant threat. National Socialism, however, will be shown to already have reached a level of 'success' and relative acceptance within public discourse that threatened societal cohesion and the democratic foundation which the republic was supposed to stand on. It quickly brought down the shaky republican government in Germany, in no small part due to the growing public justification, toleration and even acceptance of Nazi violence by the established powers and old elites. The stormtroopers' use of violence to demonstrate power and underscore their commitment to the movement, in both public spaces and marginal areas of the country, will be shown to have elicited mixed responses. Though the open anti-Semitism of the *Kurfürstendamm* riots, and especially the brutality of Pietrzuch's murder, drew severe criticism from a lot of commentators from the political centre and of course the Left, it was significant that the perpetrators received support from members of the old elites, such as the nobility, and the leaders of the Nazi movement felt secure enough in their position to openly declare their solidarity with the perpetrators, indicating a critical shift in what could be publicly defended by the leaders of a growing political movement without endangering their electoral following. Mosley, too, of course attempted to defend his men's actions and deflect blame onto the Communists, but the British Fascists came under strong criticism from the centre, the Left, and even most Conservative voices. While anti-Semitism was not yet high on the BUF's agenda, this chapter will argue that the BUF's display of violent behaviour at Olympia did more to prompt debates about British ways of conducting politics, the nature of free speech, and notions of British 'immunity' to the wave of authoritarianism sweeping the continent, than holding any real potential for Fascist success in Britain.

4.1 VIOLENCE AS THE STURMABTEILUNG'S POWER PROPAGANDA.

The *Sturmabteilung* (SA, 'stormtroopers') began as a stewarding body for the newly founded NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, 'National Socialist German Workers' Party') in the early 1920s, with many early recruits coming out of the postwar *Freikorps*. It functioned as the party's paramilitary organisation and a "violent social movement", fighting out its battles, mostly against Communists, on the streets or during political brawls, through the 1920s and early 1930s.² Sven Reichardt, taking a praxeological approach to comparing the SA and its Italian forerunners, the *Squadristi*, has extensively analysed and highlighted the social and political role of violence for the SA. He has illustrated how the SA used violence effectively as a language, one of action rather than of words, to intimidate and demonstrate their power and superiority over political rivals as well as over the political establishment. In this sense, violence was central to the Nazi propaganda of power.³ This section will be examining two rather different incidents of violence committed by the SA in the years preceding the Nazi takeover of power in January 1933. One incident took place in a deliberately public setting, on Berlin's *Kurfürstendamm* boulevard, when an estimated 500 SA men began assembling there and engaged in violent anti-Semitic rioting on the evening of 12 September 1931, the day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The rioting SA men chanted offensive slogans and, though no fatalities occurred, they assaulted many members of the public, in some cases inflicting injuries serious enough to warrant hospitalisation, and caused significant material damage to local businesses.⁴ The rioting and the subsequent trials attracted much press attention. This incident will be considered here alongside another instance of SA violence which also attracted much public attention, but one which, in contrast to the *Kurfürstendamm* riots, took place in a much more covert manner, in a peripheral space, targeting one specific individual. In the early hours of 10 August 1932, in the small Upper Silesian village of Potempa, the 35-year old agricultural labourer Konrad Pietrzuch was brutally murdered by local members of the SA. Pietrzuch, a Communist Party (KPD) sympathiser of Polish ethnicity, was ordered out of his bed by six SA men who had forced their way into his home. They severely beat and trampled on him, causing fatal injuries, before finally firing a shot at him, all in front of his brother and elderly mother. Nine members of the SA were quickly

² On the SA see: older works such as Conan Fischer, *Stormtroopers: a social, economic and ideological analysis, 1929-35* (London, 1983); Peter Longerich, *Die braunen Bataillone. Geschichte der SA* (München, 1989); and more recently Daniel Siemens, *Stormtroopers. A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts* (New Haven and London, 2017), quote on e-book p. 22.

³ Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristum und in der deutschen SA* (Köln, 2002), pp. 93-140.

⁴ Dirk Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt: Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 1999), pp. 211-221.

arrested and put before a special court in the nearby town of Beuthen, where they were tried under new anti-terrorism legislation. A verdict of five death penalties, one prison sentence of two years, and three acquittals was returned after three days.⁵

These two events have been selected for examination in this chapter because though they were both atypical in some ways, they were also significant landmarks and indicative of future events. The Potempa murder is often considered a turning point in the history of Nazi violence in the late Weimar Republic. Daniel Siemens, for example, uses the incident to open his recent study of the Stormtroopers, framing it as a particularly heinous example of the escalating violence which, despite government attempts to regain control, soon led to the collapse of the republican state.⁶ Significantly, following the announcement of the court sentence, the leader of the National Socialists, Adolf Hitler, sent a telegram expressing solidarity with the convicted men. The murder was an early example of the Nazi capacity for exercising extreme physical violence against their political opponents. Given the shocking brutality of the crime, readily acknowledged and condemned in the democratic press, Hitler's public expression of solidarity represented the crossing of a new line, where the public defence of convicted murderers no longer posed a risk to the public image of the movement, but rather counted as a shrewd move to garner and sustain support from its base. The convicted men were promptly set free in March 1933, when the Nazis had gained power.⁷

Most SA violence prior to the Nazi takeover of power was directed against the 'class enemy', taking the shape of violent street clashes between the SA and Communists and/or members of the Social Democratic *Reichsbanner*; in Richard Bessel's words, the violence was primarily directed "against the organisations of the working class."⁸ Therefore, the *Kurfürstendamm* riots can be considered unusual for the time, in that they were explicitly anti-Semitic rather than embedded in the virulent Left-Right conflict of the late Weimar years. As will be examined below, the riots, which received wide coverage in the press, were indeed understood as anti-Semitic by contemporaries, making it particularly relevant to examine their reception and treatment in public discourse, as the riots were symptomatic of the institutionalised anti-Semitism which was to follow under the Nazi regime. Furthermore, the section will examine how the particularly public location of the rioting on *Kurfürstendamm* was

⁵ Richard Bessel, "The Potempa Murder", *Central European History*, 10/3 (1977), pp. 241-254.

⁶ Siemens, *Stormtroopers*, e-book pp. 11-15.

⁷ Bessel, "Potempa Murder", p. 252.

⁸ Richard Bessel, *Political violence and the rise of Nazism: the storm troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934* (New Haven, 1984), p. 76.

of special concern to the democratic press, who, continuing a theme found throughout this thesis, expressed worry over Germany's reputation abroad.

This chapter section will draw primarily on material from the contemporary press. This is mainly due to the lack of normal parliamentary proceedings in Germany at the time. By the early 1930s, representative democracy had already ceased to function effectively. The country had been governed by 'presidential cabinets' (*Präsidiakabinette*) since March 1930, as identifying majorities capable of forming a government became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, and presidential rule by emergency decree increased. This circumstance contributed to the hollowing out of Weimar democracy, removing opportunity for conflicts to be carried out verbally in a parliamentary setting, and instead pushing more political conflict out of parliament and onto the streets. The volatile nature of successive presidential cabinets meant several elections were held in the years between 1930 and 1933, and parliament was out of session for much of the time period considered here. There were no sessions between 26 March 1931 and 13 October 1931, the time covering the *Kurfürstendamm* riots, and when parliament reconvened in October, the riots evidently did not prove significant enough to enter debate. The agenda was dominated by economic concerns, dictated by the devastating economic and financial crisis which had the country in its grip. When violent political action did become a topic of debate, as stressed earlier, the main area of attention were conflicts between Left and Right, not anti-Semitic violence. Similarly, parliament was out of session when Konrad Pietrzuch was murdered in Potempa, and of the three sessions held in the latter part of 1932, the trial of Pietrzuch's murderers was alluded to just once, following yet another election, in the context of heated debates over whether the new emergency anti-terrorism legislation was being applied fairly or unfairly to left- and right-wing perpetrators of political violence.⁹

It has been noted that since about 1923 Nazi Party strategy and propaganda, particularly in the later Weimar years, did not, until their actual takeover of power, focus very heavily or explicitly on anti-Semitism. Instead, the party focused its propaganda efforts on anti-Marxist messages, resulting in much violence between Nazis and Communists. At the same time, however, the party emphasised its own 'socialism' by employing anti-materialist rhetoric, which was bound up with the anti-Semitic stereotype of 'the Jewish capitalist'.¹⁰ In this context, the location as well as the date of the riot on 12 September 1931, the Jewish New Year, was

⁹ *Verhandlungen*, 3. Sitzung, 09.12.1932, pp. 97-106.

¹⁰ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, pp. 631-643.

particularly significant. The *Kurfürstendamm*, situated at the heart of Berlin's bourgeois Charlottenburg district, stood for everything which the Nazis purported to oppose. The boulevard represented the obscene flaunting of wealth amid the plight wrought on ordinary people by the world economic crisis. The avenue was lined with shops, cafés, theatres and cinemas, representing both the fast-paced, superficial amusement culture of Weimar as well as its intellectual, left-leaning, cosmopolitan intelligentsia. It was furthermore seen as a centre of vice, populated by 'degenerate' political, artistic, and sexual subcultures. The smashing of the shop windows, demolition of the interior (including the firing of two shots which fortunately hit nothing more serious than the cake stand), and the general assault on the patrons of the café Reimann on *Kurfürstendamm* was thus not only a random act of wanton destruction, but a highly symbolic act.¹¹ This was because the café, a popular meeting place for Berlin's artists and intellectuals, among whom were many Jews, was particularly representative of the area and its inhabitants. The neighbourhood around *Kurfürstendamm* was indeed home to a comparatively large percentage of Jewish inhabitants, an estimated 25 %, most of whom were well-to-do doctors, lawyers, or of similar highly-educated professions.¹² Many members of the community were just leaving the synagogue on adjacent Fasanenstraße after the Rosh Hashanah evening service, when the increasingly large numbers of SA units who had been congregating on *Kurfürstendamm* began insulting and physically assaulting them, chasing them down the street in groups and beating up them as well as other passers-by as they went along. The boulevard, a place of "imagined Jewish omnipotence", therefore did not coincidentally become the scene of an SA demonstration of power.¹³ Berlin itself was central to the NSDAP's strategy to gain control; the party's *Gauleiter* ('district leader') for Berlin, Joseph Goebbels, had written that the "the decision in this battle [for power, A.K.] will not happen somewhere in the *Reich*, neither in Munich nor in central Germany or in the Ruhr area, but solely in Berlin."¹⁴ Controlling symbolically important spaces in the capital, like the *Kurfürstendamm*, was a crucial tactic in this endeavour and, as Dirk Walter has emphasised, the purpose of the riot in September 1931 was to demonstrate to Berlin's Jewish citizens that their presence in this public space was unwanted and would from now on be accompanied by risks to their personal safety.¹⁵

¹¹ Destruction summarised for example in "Brutale Ausschreitungen in Berlin", *FZ*, 14.09.1931, MB, p. 2; „Ausschreitungen am Kurfürstendamm“, *VZ*, 13.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

¹² Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, pp. 639-640.

¹³ Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, p. 219.

¹⁴ Cited in Bernhard Sauer, "Goebbels „Rabauken“. Zur Geschichte der SA in Berlin-Brandenburg" in Uwe Schaper (ed.), *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin* (Berlin, 2006), p. 107.

¹⁵ Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, p. 221.

The anti-Semitic nature of the rioting was acknowledged with indignation by media of all political leanings, except of course the Nazi press. While all other media tended to refer to the events in geographical terms, as *Kurfürstendamm-Krawall* or “riots at the *Kurfürstendamm*”, the Nazi Party’s *Völkischer Beobachter* conspicuously used the term “*Judenkrawall*” (‘Jew riot’).¹⁶ The Nazis themselves therefore consciously and explicitly made the unrest about Jews, but semantically shifted the blame onto the Jewish victims; the term ‘Jew riots’ seemed to linguistically imply that Jews were somehow active in, and thereby responsible for, the unrest and destruction. More liberal and left-wing publications, on the other hand, consciously described the events as a “Nazi riot”, a “pogrom” or “pogrom-like” (*pogromartig*), leaving no doubt as to who they saw as the instigators of the unrest and who the intended victims were.¹⁷ Carl von Ossietzky, then the editor-in-chief of the left-wing weekly *Die Weltbühne*, referred to the rioters with disdain as “pack” (*Rotte*), “groups of rowdies”, and “national hooligans”; other papers, too, called them “national-socialist rowdies” or “swastika rowdies”.¹⁸ The *Berliner Tageblatt* even called them “terrorists”, while elsewhere the scenes of destruction were, somewhat hyperbolically, described as a “war zone” (*Kriegsschauplatz*).¹⁹ In light of reports and witness statements that the rioting by the groups of SA men had been accompanied by shouts of “Judah, die!” (*Juda verrecke!*) and “Germany, awake!” (*Deutschland erwache!*), the thrust of the violence seemed clear.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Nazi press insisted on their version of events, portraying what had taken place on *Kurfürstendamm* as a demonstration by ordinary unemployed Germans, some of whom had begun physically taking out their frustration on the “dolled-up *Kurfürstendamm* holiday audience” (*das feiertäglich aufgeputzte Kurfürstendamm-Publikum*). The paper did not know what all the fuss was about, given that, as far as they knew, no person was hurt very badly, let alone killed.²¹ The Nazi tactic was to play down the scale of events. Roland Freisler, later Hitler’s Justice Minister and President of the Nazi ‘People’s Court’, represented the defendants in court at the second trial, later in the year, and on that occasion dismissively conceded that there had certainly been “a few slaps in the face”,

¹⁶ For example “Kurfürstendamm-Krawalle vor Gericht”, *VZ*, 18.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch; „Der ‚Judenkrawall‘ am Kurfürstendamm“, *VB*, 24.09.1931, *ibid.*; the term also appears in *VB*, 25.09.1931 and 29.09.1931, *ibid.*

¹⁷ “Nazi-Krawalle im Westen”, *Vorwärts*, 13.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch; “Der Judenpogrom war organisiert“, *Vorwärts*, 19.09.1931, *ibid.*; “Goebbels kommandierte den Pogrom“, *Die Welt am Montag*, 14.09.1931, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Carl v. Ossietzky, “Pogrom und Polizei“, *Die Weltbühne*, 27, 2nd vol. (1931), p. 453; “Brutale Ausschreitungen in Berlin“, *FZ*, 14.09.1931, MB, p. 2; “Nazi-Krawalle im Westen“, *Vorwärts*, 13.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

¹⁹ “Die Terroristen vom Kurfürstendamm“, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 20.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch; “Goebbels kommandierte den Pogrom“, *Die Welt am Montag*, 14.09.1931, *ibid.*

²⁰ “Nazi-Krawalle im Westen“, *Vorwärts*, 13.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

²¹ [No title], *Der Angriff*, 14.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

but, he argued, “it was quite justified if one or two Semites had received slaps on *Kurfürstendamm*: When the working man sees the satisfied ones (*die Satten*) there it may well happen that he confronts them with a fist to show them: there is still hunger in Germany.”²² Through the use of the passive voice, the Nazi press also consciously obscured agency, speaking only of the fact that “certainly, there was unrest at the *Kurfürstendamm*, a number of people were injured and a coffee house took a toll in the process.”²³ Who was responsible for those slaps and the wrecking of businesses was left unsaid in this instance. Instead, the Nazi tactic was to shift the blame and draw attention to acts of left-wing violence and, while exaggerating their scale, complain about unequal treatment:

When, a few days ago, as a result of Jewish provocation, a few hundred National Socialists were demonstrating on Berlin’s *Kurfürstendamm* and a few Jews were beaten up, three days later 70 National Socialists stood before the summary court and were given prison sentences of several months. Of the 5,000 red sub-humans who cowardly and treacherously beat up, and in some cases permanently crippled, a total of 800 National Socialists, not one has been convicted to this day.²⁴

Notwithstanding the general recognition across the political spectrum, save for the extreme right, that the riots had been directed against Jews, there was also a peculiar outrage or unease in the reports of the events and in the witness statements at the fact that non-Jewish passers-by had been victimised in the course of the rioting. The reporting always spoke of Jewish or “Jewish-looking” people being attacked, and often made a point of informing readers whether a given victim or witness giving evidence in court actually was Jewish or not. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* reported the case of a “young man, who is not a Jew and only became caught up in the storming of the patisserie Reimann by coincidence”, as if any of the Jewish patrons of the café had been there not by coincidence, and who “because of his slightly Jewish appearance was beaten so heavily by the National Socialists that he had to be taken to a doctor with bleeding headwounds and a nervous shock.”²⁵ The Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, especially active in reporting the events, in particular stressed that the roll-call of witnesses at the trial held shortly following the riots contained “surprisingly few Jewish names” and that

²² “Verteidigungsplädoyers im Helldorf-Prozeß”, *DAZ*, 07.11.1931, R1501/126181, BArch; “6 Monate Gefängnis!”, *Der Angriff*, 09.11.1931, *ibid.*

²³ “Drakonische Strafen”, *DTZ*, quoted in “Die Schreckensurteile im Kurfürstendamm-Prozeß”, *VB*, 25.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

²⁴ [No title], *VB*, 20./21.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch. The paper here refers to the (exaggerated) numbers of victims of clashes between Communists and Nazis which had been taking place in many places throughout Germany with growing intensity since 1929.

²⁵ “Brutale Ausschreitungen in Berlin”, *FZ*, 14.09.1931, MB, p. 2.

“one did not even need to be a Jew to come away with a beating and most severe injuries.”²⁶ The Nazis’ inability to ‘correctly’ identify their intended Jewish victims appeared to add to the perceived despicability of their actions. Some non-Jewish passers-by initially felt unthreatened by the arising trouble, suggesting a pronounced divide in the way Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of the city generally experienced anti-Semitism. The *Vorwärts* reported the statement of the tradesman Nickels, who, clearly aware of who the intended victims of the rioting were, felt himself to be “out of any danger. He [was] not a Jew after all.” However, while he was still contemplating this circumstance, he “already had received a blow to the face.”²⁷ Another victim, however, testified that “I knew what was going on and that there would be beatings. Though I am not a Jew, I may be taken for one from my appearance. Therefore, I preferred to keep quiet.”²⁸

In addition, what appeared to exacerbate the objectionable character of the SA’s rioting to contemporaries, was that among the victims there were not only “many non-Jews, who are German citizens, but also foreigners, such as Romanians, Armenians, etc.”²⁹ The *Vorwärts* deplored one case in particular in which an Egyptian student called “Ramann” had been punched in the face as he was leaving a vegetarian restaurant on *Kurfürstendamm*; the German passer-by who rushed to help the student was then also beaten. “That was how the man from Egypt was taught the culture of the swastika,” the paper concluded with consternation.³⁰ Implicit in this incident, and made explicit in many other reactions to the riots, was a concern for Germany’s international reputation and that of its capital, Berlin, in particular. This was for example evident in the title the *Vorwärts* chose for its article containing the story of the unfortunate Egyptian student, *Die deutsche Kulturschande*, ‘the German cultural disgrace’. The words of the prosecutor’s closing statement also gave voice to this concern for Germany’s status as a member of the civilised world which the SA’s open display of violence was seen to be threatening; the prosecutor condemned the accused as cowards, for ganging up on old men, and emphasised that Germany’s reputation as a “cultured state” (*Kulturstaat*) had been severely damaged by the rioting.³¹

Ossietzky in fact criticised Germany’s newspapers for holding back initially on reporting the full scale and true nature of the anti-Semitic ‘pogrom’ out of an overprotective concern for

²⁶ “Die Opfer der Meute”, *Vorwärts*, 19.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

²⁷ “Die deutsche Kulturschande”, *Vorwärts*, 20.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

²⁸ “Die Opfer der Meute”, *Vorwärts*, 19.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Die deutsche Kulturschande”, *Vorwärts*, 20.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

³¹ Quotation from „Staatsanwalt beantragt Zuchthaus“, *VZ*, 23.09.1931; see also “Zuchthaus-Anträge im Kurfürstendamm-Prozeß“, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 23.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

Berlin's reputation.³² He also questioned the efficiency of the police, accusing them of having ignored prior warnings, not responding quickly enough, and not being nearly as well organised as the SA rioters. Whenever left-wing unrest occurred, he observed, the police were much quicker to act and more forceful in their actions. Though the police eventually succeeded in dispersing the crowds and quickly arrested several dozens of suspects, Ossietzky was not alone in doubting that the police force had done all it could to contain the riot and protect Berlin's citizens, thus further endangering the city's international prestige. The *Welt am Montag* thought that the police had "intervened much too late", while the *Vossische Zeitung* prominently asked: "Where was the police?"³³ In a piece also concerned with the riot's reputational damage, the *Vorwärts* noted that while several other violent clashes in recent news had perhaps somewhat obscured the *Kurfürstendamm* riots in domestic reporting, the unrest in the German capital had – "unfortunately!" – not escaped international attention. The paper especially pointed out the bitter irony which they saw between the Nazis' purported fight for the "interests of the German people", and how their actions, namely engaging in pogroms and "Jew baiting" (*Judenhetze*), actually did most severe damage to those interests. In fact, taking the argument further, and exposing its own anti-Semitic tendencies, the article argued that, more than "Jewry" itself, the real victim of the Nazi pogroms was the reputation of the German people. The reason was that there was "no sympathy anywhere in the civilised world" for this kind of anti-Semitism, which, the paper added, only reminded the world of czarist Russia and its ignoble history of pogroms. Worse still, the article continued, was the anti-Semites' tendency to not even distinguish between actual Jews and non-Jews, and to treat anyone who looked somewhat foreign as if they were a Jew.³⁴ This had even led to foreign diplomats inquiring whether Germany would be safe for them. The piece concluded that no reasonable person could be made to believe that it would do the country any good if "sympathy for Germany was beaten out of those people." Thus, if the Nazis actually cared about Germany as much they professed, they should be the ones putting a stop to anti-Semitic pogroms, "not for the Jews' sake, but for Germany's sake!"³⁵ The clear priority which, for the paper, Germany's international reputation held over the victimisation of Jewish members of the public

³² Carl v. Ossietzky, "Pogrom und Polizei", *Die Weltbühne*, 27, 2nd vol. (1931), p. 453.

³³ Ibid.; "Goebbels kommandierte den Pogrom", *Die Welt am Montag*, 14.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch; "Wo war die Polizei?", *VZ*, 14.09.1931, *ibid.*

³⁴ While of course the literature on the Nazi use of racist pseudo-science to justify their anti-Semitic agenda is numerous, Cohen gives an illuminating account of how racial differences were purposely ascribed to assimilated British Jews precisely to be able to distinguish them from other Britons when their increasing social advancement out of their poor East End quarters made them less recognizable as 'other'; see Deborah Cohen, "Who was who? Race and Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Britain", *Journal of British Studies*, 41/4 (2002), pp. 460-483.

³⁵ "Hepp! Hepp!", *Vorwärts*, 15.09.1931, p. 2.

can be viewed either as a symptom of negligent ignorance towards the real suffering experienced by Jewish citizens, or as a more sinister anti-Semitic tendency to victim-blame and view Jews as separate from the 'German people'.

It seems very plausible that the riots drew comparatively much attention in the press due to their prominent location on the famed bohemian entertainment strip of one of the cultural centres of interwar Europe. About forty people were arrested immediately after the riot, and thirty-three, almost all of them members of various Berlin SA units, were tried in a summary court (*Schnellgericht*). While numerous defendants claimed to have been at the scene of the riot by pure coincidence, for "a stroll" (*Bummel*) amid the hustle and bustle of the big city, others testified that they had been ordered by their SA leaders to come to *Kurfürstendamm*.³⁶ The nationalist-conservative *Kreuz-Zeitung* sought to make it out as if it had merely been misguided youths, who, "out of an immature appetite for a racket" (*unreife Radaulust*), had protested against the inequalities of the times, which were particularly stark in Berlin's bourgeois west. While the paper stressed that "we in no way approve of these means", it was clear that it considered the economic plight a mitigating circumstance.³⁷ After only a week and a half, the court returned its verdicts. While six people were acquitted, the remaining defendants were handed comparatively harsh prison sentences of at least one year, ranging up to a year and nine months, for breaches of the public peace, of varying degrees of severity, sometimes in conjunction with incitement to class hatred.³⁸ In the opinion of the right-wing press, the sentences were entirely disproportionate, but the prominent nature of the riots might again serve to explain to some extent the judiciary's initial resolve to be seen to be handling such events forcefully. However, the legal aftermath of the riot continued to draw sustained interest in the press, perhaps not least out of a sensationalist interest in one of the other main defendants, the nobleman and local SA leader, Count (*Graf*) Wolf-Heinrich von Helldorf.³⁹ To him, as to many other members of the German nobility who had lost their status and in many cases their wealth, too, following the end of the First World War, joining the SA constituted a useful career move to claim a position of power and status once again.⁴⁰ Following the riot on

³⁶ "Pogromisten vor Gericht", *Vorwärts*, 18.09.1931, pp. 1-2.

³⁷ "Gefängnisstrafen für die Ausschreitungen am Kurfürstendamm", *Kreuz-Zeitung*, 23.09.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

³⁸ Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, pp. 212-213.

³⁹ On the somewhat puzzling biography of Count Helldorf, who, although initially an enthusiastic Nazi, came to be part of the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler in July 1944, see Ted Harrison, "Alter Kämpfer' im Widerstand. Graf Helldorf, die NS-Bewegung und die Opposition gegen Hitler", *Vierteljahreshfte für Zeitgeschichte*, 45 (1997), pp. 385-423.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the nobility's reasons for joining the SA, see Stephan Malinowski and Sven Reichardt, "Die Reihen fest geschlossen? Adelige im Führungskorps der SA bis 1934", in Eckart Conze and Monika Wienfort (eds.), *Adel und Moderne. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich im 19. Und 20.*

Kurfürstendamm, Helldorf had initially made a clandestine escape to Munich, only to return and hand himself over to the Berlin prosecutors on 21 September. Helldorf and his SA adjutant Karl Ernst were then tried as instigators of the unrest in a separate trial in October, alongside several further rioters who had been arrested in the meantime. Witnesses judged the riot to have been well organised in advance and reported having seen Helldorf and Ernst driving slowly up and down *Kurfürstendamm* in an open-top car while the riot was taking place, giving directions and encouragement to the rioting men as they passed them. During this second trial, the Nazi defence changed tack, arguing that there had been Communist and Social Democratic *agents provocateurs* on *Kurfürstendamm* who had provoked the SA men to react, and who had in fact been the ones shouting anti-Semitic slogans in order to tarnish the SA.⁴¹ Helldorf and his lawyers argued that the SA leader had been there in order to calm down the men and encourage them to disperse. The court, however, was not convinced and sentenced the count and his adjutant to six months prison and a 100 *Reichsmark* fine for breach of the public peace and using insulting language. Appeal proceedings began in January 1932, with Joseph Goebbels himself appearing as a witness for the defence and Roland Freisler as one of Helldorf's lawyers. With such high-profile involvement from the Nazi Party, the defence succeeded in getting the sentences reduced significantly, so that in February 1932 Helldorf and Ernst were acquitted of instigating the unrest and causing a breach of the public peace, and instead walked away with only the 100 *Reichsmark* fine for using insulting language, having called a man either "*Bankjude*" or "*Bandjude*".⁴²

The involvement in the riot of Count Helldorf, and his fate in its aftermath, were important as an indication of shifting allegiances. It was significant that a prominent member of the country's old aristocratic elite not only condoned, but actively encouraged and even participated in National Socialist anti-Semitic violence. Such behaviour on the count's part lent the Nazis credibility as well as some of the nobleman's 'glamour'. Helldorf was a useful man for the Nazi movement to have on their side. Influential conservative politicians during the final years of the Weimar Republic, such as Alfred Hugenberg and Kurt von Schleicher, took Helldorf seriously because of his aristocratic background. At the same time, he was not above

Jahrhundert (Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2004), pp. 119-150. On the relationship between the German nobility and National Socialism more generally, see Stephan Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer. Sozialer Niedergang und politische Radikalisierung im deutschen Adel zwischen Kaiserreich und NS-Staat*. (Berlin, 2003).

⁴¹ "Der erste Verhandlungstag", *Der Angriff*, 27.10.1931, R1501/126181, BArch.

⁴² Harrison, "Alter Kämpfer", pp. 391-393; Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, pp. 214-217. According to Harrison, the insulting word was "*Bankjude*" ('bank Jew'); whereas Walter has the word as "*Bandjude*": 'a Jew who trades in *Bänder* ('ribbons')', a demeaning historical term for (Jewish) haberdashery hawkers, see *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch*, <https://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~cd2/drw/e/ba/ndju/bandjude.htm> [accessed 27.01.2020].

‘getting his hands dirty’ by being an active member of the Stormtroopers. For his efforts, having proved himself to the leadership, Helldorf was in fact promoted just three days after the riot from his previous position as leader of the *Standarte 2* of the SA and was made chief of the Berlin SA by Röhm.⁴³ This, as well as the fact that he managed to come away from his involvement in the *Kurfürstendamm* riots almost unscathed, with a very minor punishment compared to many of the other defendants, was no doubt a sign of the changing times in which members of the old elite recognised the opportunities to be gained from lending their prestige to the new regime looming on the horizon.

By contemporary standards, the violence perpetrated on the *Kurfürstendamm* that evening was relatively tame. It was not the typical anti-left SA violence of the day, which was usually more brutal and made use of weapons, including firearms. Though the police confiscated some knives, knuckle-dusters, and even a few guns from the arrested, no weapons were used in the riot; the SA men mainly used their fists, or threw objects, and injuries were comparatively minor as a result.⁴⁴ This approach may have been indicative of the presence of certain lines that were yet to be crossed: using weapons against Jewish members of the public (or those perceived as such) out in the open, in a purposely public space in which brutal violence was not expected to take place, would not yet be widely condoned. Using weapons in street battles with the Left, however, was much more common at the same point in time. As Reichardt has observed, anti-Semitism did not yet make for an attractive theme for the Nazis’ election campaigns between 1930 and 1932.⁴⁵ In this sense, however, the *Kurfürstendamm* riot was a sign of things to come, with its ‘pogrom-like’ targeting of specifically Jewish people, which at the same time was gaining active support from members of the old elites, like Count Helldorf.

The brutal murder of Konrad Pietrzuch⁴⁶ in his house in the Upper Silesian village of Potempa in August 1932 came during a time which has been noted as a peak period in SA violence. The lifting of a ban on the storm trooper organization in June of the same year led to a rapid increase in the number of victims of Nazi violence. While the first three months of 1932 saw thirty-one people killed in political clashes, that number grew to 155 deaths by the end of August. Violence spiked in particular just before the *Reichstags* elections on 31 July. With eighty-six people killed in July alone and 1,125 people injured between mid-June and mid-

⁴³ Harrison, “Alter Kämpfer“, p. 391.

⁴⁴ Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, p. 212.

⁴⁵ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, p. 632.

⁴⁶ Alternative spellings given in contemporary sources were Pietczuch or Pietzuch.

July, it was the bloodiest period of the Weimar Republic.⁴⁷ While the Communists' preferred tactic was to interrupt meetings, the Nazis primarily engaged in street battles.⁴⁸ Konrad Pietrzuch's murder, however, was a different kind of violent act. It was part of a wave of "terroristic" violence which, under the notoriously brutal SA leader Edmund Heines, swept through all of Silesia in early August. The SA torched Jewish businesses, bombed Communist meeting places, shot policemen, and beat Communists and Social Democrats to death.⁴⁹ The unemployed 35-year old agricultural labourer Pietrzuch personified an 'ideal' enemy for the local SA in several ways. He was Polish and had supported Polish insurgents in the area in the aftermath of the First World War, he was a known sympathiser with the Communist Party, and one of the men accused of instigating his murder, Paul Lachmann, bore a personal grudge against him, because Pietrzuch knew that Lachmann had been illegally poaching. The two men had previously come to blows in Lachmann's tavern.⁵⁰ On the evening of 9 August 1932, six SA men made their way to Potempa and, after drinking heavily in Paul Lachmann's tavern and being outfitted with some extra guns, undertook to attack local Communists. They first tried the house of another known Communist sympathiser, but when his wife grew suspicious of the men demanding to see her husband, the group left and instead decided on the Pietrzuch cottage, where Konrad shared just one room with his brother Alfons and their elderly mother. When they arrived a short while after midnight on 10 August, the intruders ordered Konrad out of the bed and severely beat and kicked him. His brother was also knocked unconscious, while their mother looked on. When the heavily bleeding Konrad took refuge in a small adjacent closet, one of the SA men fired a shot into the dark closet which hit Pietrzuch's arm. Pietrzuch, however, was already dying of his previous injuries. Once the shot had been fired, the SA men left.

As the summer of 1932 was, as mentioned above, one marked by a spike in political violence in Germany more generally, Pietrzuch's murder in a provincial village initially only warranted a small note in the national press. Between 19 and 22 August, however, the trial of the nine men involved took place before a special court in the nearby town of Beuthen. It brought to light the details of the murder and attracted a significant amount of national attention, particularly because it was the first case tried before one of the special courts

⁴⁷ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, pp. 59-60. On the peak of SA violence, see also Daniel Schmidt, "Soldaten der Bewegung". Gewaltpraxis und Gewaltkult in der SA während der nationalsozialistischen „Kampfzeit“, in Jan Schedler and Alexander Häusler (eds.), *Autonome Nationalisten. Neonazismus in Bewegung* (Wiesbaden, 2011), p. 263.

⁴⁸ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁹ Schmidt, "Soldaten der Bewegung", p. 267.

⁵⁰ Bessel, "Potempa Murder", pp. 245-246.

established as part of new anti-terrorism legislation, prompted by the escalating levels of violence, which had come into effect on 10 August. When the court, making use of the harsher penalties which the new anti-terrorism measures allowed for, sentenced five of the defendants to death, gave out a two-year prison sentence to another one of the defendants, and acquitted the remaining three, the ruling caused immediate outrage inside the courtroom, where local SA leaders were present and immediately started shouting slogans, and outside. The unrest quickly spilled out into the streets of Beuthen, where it continued for several days, as SA men wrecked Jewish-owned businesses as well as the headquarters of the Social Democratic *Volksblatt* and other papers.⁵¹ The Nazi leadership made a point of publicly displaying its solidarity with the accused. The SA leader Röhm, as well as Roland Freisler, travelled to Beuthen to visit the condemned men in prison and to express solidarity with them. Hitler himself sent a telegram of solidarity with the condemned murderers, in which he assured his “comrades” that he felt united with them in “boundless loyalty” and that their liberty was now a “question of our honour” while the “fight against a government under which such a thing is possible [was] our duty.”⁵² Hermann Göring considered the sentence “the most egregious blood verdict that had ever been passed since the days of darkest tyranny” and also sent his expression of solidarity by telegram, assuring the convicted men of his full support and that of all “14 million National Socialist voters.”⁵³

In reporting the trial in Beuthen, liberal and left-wing newspapers stressed the sheer brutality of the murder with noticeable abhorrence. The evidence given by the coroner at the trial was widely reported, as it contained the details of how Pietrzuch had been killed. Overall, the victim’s bruised and bloodied body bore twenty-nine separate wounds. The shot through his right arm had not been fatal; instead, the injuries already inflicted on Pietrzuch by beating and kicking would have been enough to kill him. His neck showed marks of strangulation as well as being trampled on, his larynx was squashed, and his carotid artery was completely ruptured, leading the coroner to conclude that the cause of death was suffocation due to blood filling his windpipe.⁵⁴ The papers also emphasised the ignominy of the attack by recounting the evidence given in court by Konrad’s brother Alfons, who had survived, and their mother, Marie Pietrzuch, who was only able to testify “under great agitation.”⁵⁵ The Communist press

⁵¹ “Der Spruch von Beuthen: 5 Todesurteile!“, *NPZ*, 24.08.1932, p. 2.

⁵² “Der Freibrief“, *FZ*, 24.08.1932, p. 1.

⁵³ “Der Kampf um das Beuthener Urteil“, *NPZ*, 25.08.1932, p. 3.

⁵⁴ For example “Der Potempa Mord“, *FZ*, 16.08.1932, p. 2; “Der Mord an Pietrzuch“, *FZ*, 21.08.1932, *ZMB*, p. 2; “Die Mordnacht von Potempa“, *Der Abend*, 20.08.1932, p. 2; “Mit Petroleum übergießen und anzünden...“, *RF*, 21.08.1932, p. 2; also summarised in Bessel, “Potempa Murder“, p. 248.

⁵⁵ Quote from “Die Mordnacht von Potempa“, *Der Abend*, 20.08.1932, p. 2.

predictably pounced on the murder of Pietrzuch, whom the *Rote Fahne* consciously claimed as one of “our comrades.” They emphasised in even more extreme language the brutality of the crime in order to stoke anti-Nazi sentiments, also citing the coroner’s findings and Alfons’ and Mrs Pietrzuch’s testimonies at length, and using animalistic language to describe the accused and their crime. They called the SA men “beasts”, “butchers” (*Schlächter*), a “brutish gang” (*vertierte Bande*), “assassins” (*Meuchelmörder*), and described their deed as “cold-blooded murder”, having “butchered” Pietrzuch in a “bestial manner” (*bestialische Weise*) and with “bestly brutality” (*viehische Brutalität*). Referring to Hitler’s declaration of solidarity with the murderers, the paper judged that with “this greeting address to the brutish murderers of workers [*vertierte Arbeitermörder*] of Potempa, Hitler had ripped off his and his party’s mask.” One piece, in which the paper envisioned how things would be different if the Communists were in power, ended with the unmistakable threat that the “brown plague spot will be cauterised in a Germany of the councils.”⁵⁶ The violence inflicted on Konrad may be described as “autotelic” violence, as opposed to “locative” and “raptive” violence. While the latter violence is used in order to own another body, and locative violence is employed to (re-)move another body, with the “autotelic” kind, which strikes us as particularly despicable and “senseless”, violence is not a means to an end, but the end itself; it has as its very point the purposeful destruction of the body, such as happens in cases of torture, mutilation, or excessive brutality.⁵⁷ Pietrzuch’s murder bears resemblance to such an act. While his Communist and insurgent ties might have characterised him as an ‘enemy’ in the sense of an equal opponent, with at least some power, who the SA might seek to defeat in a fight, the “autotelic” nature of his violent death, outnumbered, ambushed, and fatally maltreated in the middle of the night in his own bedroom, marked him as a defenceless victim who had posed no danger whatsoever to his attackers in the moment of the attack. The purposeful and malicious destruction of his defenceless body through excessive violence was therefore all the more disturbing to observers.

Right-wing, nationalist papers, like the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* and the *Deutsche Zeitung*, did not cite the coroner’s report or Alfons’ or Mrs Pietrzuch’s evidence, not wanting to draw attention to the gruesome details of the crime. Unlike with the *Kurfürstendamm* riots, there was no scope for the violent acts to be played down, so keeping silent about them was the

⁵⁶ “Bestien! Bestien!”, *RF*, 12.08.1932, p. 2; “Erst Schnaps, dann Mord!“, *RF*, 20.08.1932, pp. 1-2; “Mit Petroleum übergießen und anzünden...‘ Wie die Schlächter von Beuthen mordeten“, *RF*, 21.08.1932, p. 2; “Hitlers ‚unbegrenzte Treue‘ zu den Meuchelmördern“, *RF*, 24.08.1932, p. 1; “Schlächter von Potempa. Wenn wir Gericht halten...“, *RF*, 24.08.1932, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷ Jan Philipp Reemtsma, *Vertrauen und Gewalt. Versuch über eine Besondere Konstellation der Moderne* (Hamburg, 2013), pp. 116-124.

better option. Instead, the Nazis put out their own view, according to which the perpetrators had acted in “latent self-defence” (*latente Notwehr*) against rampant left-wing aggression in the area. The SA men’s defence lawyer argued that the local SA units were feeling threatened and had repeatedly been the victims of violent Communist attacks, because of which “latent self-defence”, which had been applied in a recent trial against National Socialists in nearby Gleiwitz, should also apply in the Potempa case to lessen the sentences.⁵⁸ At the same time, the right-wing press did its best to generally tarnish the character of the victim, describing him as a drunkard and aggressive troublemaker, whom Lachmann had had to throw out of his tavern on multiple occasions, and as a dangerous and unpatriotic traitor who was far from innocent. They emphasised his being Polish, as well as, allegedly, a former insurgent, and implied he might be a Communist and/or Polish agent.⁵⁹ The liberal *Vossische Zeitung* poignantly commented on the anti-Polish rhetoric of the Right and observed that two of the SA defendants bore the distinctly Polish-sounding names “Kottisch” and “Wolnitza”. Thus, to try and distinguish between “noble Germanic humans” (*germanische Edelmenschen*) and “Polish *Untermenschen*” was particularly nonsensical in an area like Upper Silesia, where “German and Polish blood were inextricably mixed.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, the *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote up special ‘human interest’ stories about the plight of the wives and children of the condemned men in order to elicit sympathy and garner support for their cause. A first-hand report from Potempa, including interviews with locals, about how generally well-liked the convicted Paul Lachmann was, was also printed in the paper.⁶¹ Several conservative organisations voiced their public support for the convicted men, calling for a re-trial or their amnesty; among them were the *Stahlhelm* (the right-wing paramilitary ‘League of Front Soldiers’), the *Bund-Königin-Luise* (the *Stahlhelm*’s sister organisation for conservative, monarchist women, whose patron was Crown Prince Wilhelm’s wife, Cecilie), the *Reichsverband der Baltikumskämpfer* (the Reich’s league of Baltic fighters (cf. Chapter 2)), the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft katholischer Deutscher* (the ‘working group of Catholic Germans’), and the *Deutschbanner Schwarz-weiß-rot* (a league of Kaiser-supporting monarchists).⁶²

⁵⁸ “Der Sondergerichtsprozeß in Beuthen”, *DTZ*, 20.08.1932, p. 2.

⁵⁹ “Kommunist und ehemaliger Insurgent. Der rote Terror in Potempa.”, *DZ*, 20.08.1932, MA, p. 3; “Gegen fünf Nationalsozialisten Todesstrafe beantragt”, *DZ*, 22.08.1932, AA, p. 1; “Die Hintergründe: Roter Terror. Pietrzuchs Insurgenten-Rolle. Der Verteidiger gegen Anwendung der Terrorverordnung”, *DZ*, 23.08.1932, MA, p. 2; “Neun S.A.-Männer vor dem Sondergericht”, *VB*, 21./22.08.1932, p. 2; “Das war der ‚arme‘ Pietrzuch. Wegen dieses Subjektes sollen 5 Deutsche dem Henker ausgeliefert werden.”, *VB*, 28./29.08.1932, p. 1.

⁶⁰ “Wer ist schuld?”, *VZ*, 25.08.1932, MA, p. 3.

⁶¹ “So denken die Frauen unserer verurteilten Kameraden”, *VB*, 25.08.1932, pp. 1-2; “Besuch in Potempa”, *VB*, 30.08.1932, Erstes Beiblatt.

⁶² “Stahlhelm und Königin-Luise-Bund für Begnadigung”, *NPZ*, 26.08.1932, p. 1; “Gegen parlamentarische Untersuchung in Beuthen”, *NPZ*, 27.08.1932, p. 2; “Neue Kundgebungen in

The horror with which left-wing and liberal papers reported the gruesome attack clearly highlighted the lines which, within a large part of public discourse, were not yet crossable. The SA, however, had already crossed them, indicating the climate of escalating political violence towards the end of the Weimar Republic. Left-wing and liberal discourse, therefore, was even more shocked at the open support and show of solidarity which the convicted men received from the Nazi Party leadership, who evidently considered it politically acceptable or even opportune to defend them despite, or perhaps because of, the indisputable crime they had committed. By consciously re-printing the coroner's report of the injuries Pietrzuch had sustained side-by-side with Hitler's telegram of solidarity with the convicted SA men, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* emphasised the significance of the display of solidarity from the Nazi leadership. "Who", the paper questioned,

among the entire German public will understand that the leader of a large political movement would dare, unhesitatingly, to declare the killers honourable? Who could understand that a movement which makes claims to shape the future of Germany, would put itself on one level with creatures who must have renounced all human dignity in such a terrible manner?⁶³

Likewise, the *Vossische Zeitung* perceptively commented on a piece written by Goebbels, entitled "It is the Jews' fault", in which he railed against the Beuthen verdict and placed the blame for this supposed miscarriage of justice at the feet of "intellectual Jews, [...] pimps and [...] red murderers", ending on what the *VZ* considered an unmistakable call to murder. As long as such language from the "dangerous demagogue" Goebbels could go unpunished, argued the liberal paper, Germany would never see peace, as no anti-terrorism laws would be able to prevent some "faithful reader" from one day putting into action what Goebbels had "diabolically" insinuated.⁶⁴ By their open display of solidarity with the murderers, the Nazi Party, until then trying to convince the public of their "legal intentions", had definitively shown their true colours and Hitler had made abundantly clear what he stood for and what means he was willing to employ and condone in his relentless pursuit of power.⁶⁵

Aside from displays of shock at the sheer brutality of the act, the press discourse was dominated by the question whether the men should be tried, and punished, under the new

Beuthen", *DZ*, 25.08.1932, MA, p. 1; "Der Justizminister gegen die Tätigkeit des Landtagsausschusses in Beuthen", *DZ*, 26.08.1932, AA, p. 1.

⁶³ "Der Freibrief", *FZ*, 24.08.1932, p. 1.

⁶⁴ "Wer ist schuld?", *VZ*, 25.08.1932, MA, p. 3.

⁶⁵ "Eure Freiheit, unsere Ehre", *FZ*, 25.08.1932, ZMB, p. 1.

anti-terrorism laws. In an attempt to stop the wave of escalating political violence during the summer of 1932, the German government had introduced new, so-called anti-terrorism laws, which provided for special courts (such as the one in Beuthen) and allowed for harsher penalties, including the death penalty, to be applied. The new laws came into effect at midnight on 10 August, just an hour and a half before the SA men in Potempa fatally maltreated Konrad Pietrzuch. This coincidence of timing gave rise to much debate in the press as to whether it was appropriate to apply the new laws, given that the crime had only been committed so shortly after they had come into effect, with the liberal *Vossische Zeitung* wondering when the government intended to intervene “if not in this case?”⁶⁶ Defending itself in this debate, the German government made a declaration, to be published by all newspapers, in which it insisted that “from the moment in which this decree came into effect, it has to be applied equally to anyone who violates law and justice, regardless of party or person.” The government showed confidence, threatening that “if necessary, the *Reich* government will employ all of the state’s means of power to ensure impartially the application of the laws, and it will not tolerate any party revolting against its rulings.” The public’s passions, it continued, would be better directed against “the originators of the bloody events” rather than against the government which “had to resort to such harsh measures in the collective interest.”⁶⁷ Coincidentally, another trial was taking place simultaneously in the Silesian town of Brieg. On trial were a number of Social Democratic *Reichsbanner* members for the killing of two SA men in the course of clashes between *Reichsbanner* and SA men in the town of Ohlau on 10 July 1932. Compared to the men on trial in Beuthen, the *Reichsbanner* men received much lower sentences, prison sentences of varying length and no death sentences. Significantly, the crimes on trial in Brieg had taken place prior to the introduction of the anti-terrorism laws which had been in effect, if only for a couple of hours, when the SA men beat Konrad Pietrzuch to death in Potempa. Therefore, the divergent degrees of the penalties were lawful, particularly when taking into account, too, that in Ohlau the clashes between Left and Right had involved hundreds of people and no individuals could be proved to have killed the two SA men, while what had taken place in Potempa was clearly a targeted, premeditated attack.⁶⁸ However, the simultaneity of both trials and their divergent verdicts intensified the debates as to whether it was fair to apply the new, harsher laws to the SA men, and the circumstance offered the right-

⁶⁶ “Die fünf Todesurteile”, *FZ*, 23.08.1932, ZMB, p. 2; “Begnadigung oder Zuchthaus?“, *FZ*, 24.08.1932, AB and EMB, p. 1; “Ein Fanal“, *VZ*, 23.08.1932, AA, pp. 1-2; quotation from “Reichsregierung zu Beuthen. Für die Grundsätze des Rechtsstaates“, *VZ*, 24.08.1932, MA, p. 1.

⁶⁷ “Antwort an Hitler. Eine Kundgebung der Reichsregierung“, *FZ*, 24.08.1932, ZMB, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Schumann, *Political Violence*, pp. 290, 302.

wing press an ideal juxtaposition to highlight left-wing political violence and rail against the alleged bias of the courts against the National Socialists.⁶⁹

Despite the gruesome nature of the crime and the far-right affiliation of its perpetrators, the Social Democratic *Vorwärts* and the outspokenly liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* maintained their opposition to the death penalty on principle. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that the government would not lose any authority if it decided to take into account the close temporal proximity of the murder to when the anti-terrorism laws had come into effect, thus preventing the executions from actually going ahead. However, the paper insisted that instead, the government had to force the Nazi press to acknowledge and report accurately the nature of the murder and what their readers' comrades had done; naively, it seems, the liberal paper hoped that being confronted with the truth would have an effect on the faithful readers of the *Völkischer Beobachter* or *Angriff*.⁷⁰ The *Vorwärts* insisted that if mercy was shown to the convicted men now, it would practically render useless the emergency anti-terrorism laws that had just come into effect. Out of overt self-interest, the paper stressed that what must under no circumstances happen, was that the laws be followed against left-wing aggressors, while their right-wing counterpart might get away with lesser punishment. So while they remained opposed to the death penalty on principle, they demanded, in retrospect also naively, that perpetrators of violence from the Left and the Right be treated equally in the execution of the law.⁷¹ The paper also commented on the glaring disrespect which the accused men flaunted inside the courtroom, laughing and chatting to each other and other SA men in the audience, demonstrating intentional indifference to their crime. It was as if, the *Vorwärts* ominously speculated, "the accused had received the assurances of their leaders that with the Nazi takeover of power, they would soon be given back their freedom."⁷² This was exactly what happened. The National Socialist campaign proved successful first when their sentences were commuted to lifelong prison in September 1932, indicating the government's inability (or unwillingness) to withstand Nazi pressure. However, the men remained in prison for a total of only about seven months and on 18 March 1933 were promptly released by Prussian *Reich-*

⁶⁹ Bessel, "Potempa Murder", pp. 250-251; "Viehische Bluttaten des Reichsbanners", *VB*, 15.08.1932, p. 1; "Todesurteile gegen S.A.-Männer, aber 500 rote Mörder gehen mit geringen Freiheitsstrafen aus. Das sind die 'Urteile' gegen rote Verbrecher", *VB*, 25.08.1932, p. 3; "Das sind 'Urteile' gegen rote Mörder", *VB*, 27.08.1932, p. 3; "Potempa und Ohlau. Die Blutschuld der Linkspresse", *DZ*, 23.08.1932, *MA*, p. 1.

⁷⁰ "Eure Freiheit, unsere Ehre", *FZ*, 25.08.1932, *ZMB*, p. 1.

⁷¹ "Fünf Todesurteile in Beuthen", *Vorwärts*, 23.08.1932, p. 1.

⁷² "Systematische Mordhetze", *Vorwärts*, 21.08.1932, p. 2.

commissar von Papen, who declared them the “innocent sentenced victims of Potempa” (“*unschuldig verurteilten Opfer von Potempa*”).⁷³

Von Papen’s remarkable reversal of the roles of victim and perpetrator in the Potempa case was indicative of a development which had already begun in the Beuthen courtroom. In his final speech for the defence, the SA lawyer Walter Luetgebrune made reference to the SA leader Horst Wessel, who had been shot on his doorstep in Berlin by a Communist on 14 January 1930 and died of his injuries on 23 February. He had immediately been elevated to the position of national hero and Christ-like martyr for the Nazi cause by Goebbels.⁷⁴ In an apparent attempt to relativize the severity of Pietrzuch’s murder, Luetgebrune said he did not wish it upon the prosecutor to have had to witness “how Horst Wessel had been tortured to death.” The events of the night of 10 August, he continued, were merely a defensive reaction to Communist threats.⁷⁵ By bringing up Wessel, Luetgebrune therefore not only tried to justify his defendants’ actions, but also insinuated that, should the maximum sentence under the new anti-terrorism laws be carried out, the convicted men would join Wessel as martyrs for the National Socialist cause. Hitler, in an appeal published in the party newspaper, indicated the same when he referred to the “over three hundred party members massacred, often literally butchered, [whom] we count as dead martyrs.” He exhorted his comrades to make it their prime cause to fight for the freedom of the five men sentenced to death in Beuthen, lest they join the ranks of Wessel and the alleged 300 other martyrs.⁷⁶ Some among the more moderate press picked up on the Nazi efforts to instrumentalise the condemned men in this way. The *Vossische Zeitung* commented that “perhaps tomorrow we shall see the five killers turned into national martyrs, and that the death penalty will instead be demanded for the judges who dispensed justice in accordance with the law.” The paper harshly condemned the defence’s attempts at framing the crime as an act of “national self-defence” (*Staatsnotwehr*) against a dangerous Polish insurgent, and instead reminded readers that personal motives, and a large amount of alcohol, had been instrumental in this unleashing of “brute instincts” which had “run riot in a bestial manner against a defenceless man.” The fact that the Nazi press was now trying to turn this act into a “national martyrdom” was a blatantly political tactic, rather than in

⁷³ Bessel, “Potempa Murder”, p. 252 (Bessel’s translation); also Schmidt, “Soldaten der Bewegung”, pp. 268-269.

⁷⁴ On Wessel, see especially Daniel Siemens, *The making of a Nazi hero: the murder and myth of Horst Wessel*, transl. David Burnett (London, 2013); on martyrs within the SA see Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, pp. 548-560.

⁷⁵ “Die Plädoyers der Verteidiger“, *FZ*, 23.08.1932, ZMB, p. 2.

⁷⁶ “Ein Aufruf des Führers“, *VB*, 24.08.1932, p. 1.

any way a question of the law, the paper concluded.⁷⁷ The warnings, however, did not prevent the men, who were released shortly after the Nazi takeover of power, from somehow succeeding in becoming quasi 'living martyrs' for the movement.

As with the rioting on *Kurfürstendamm* the previous September, the murder of Konrad Pietrzuch and the trial of the SA men accused of it caused some anxiety within German public discourse over how the country would be viewed abroad. Though the crime had taken place far away from the very public spectacle on Berlin's main boulevard, its nature and the added arguments concerning the trial made it come under extra scrutiny. The concern was palpable that the wave of violence spreading through Germany, of which the murder in Potempa was just one particularly gruesome 'highlight', would reflect badly on the country and its international standing. In its withering comments on Hitler's public declaration of solidarity with the murderers, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stated plainly that "a declaration of honour for these murderers is a punch in Germany's face", meaning that Hitler was doing a great disservice to the country as a whole by suggesting there was anything honourable about the crime or the perpetrators.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, excerpts from the foreign press were reprinted as proof of the way in which the Potempa case was making waves abroad. The *Vossische Zeitung* cited both the *Morning Post* and *The Times* of London. The former called the "murder committed in cold blood" a "violation of the basic tenets of human propriety and civilisation", which any candidate for political power ought to have renounced vehemently. The fact that Hitler had instead "celebrated this murder as an act of virtue and patriotism", the *Morning Post* was cited further, was enough to "show the level to which political life in Germany had sunk." *The Times* acknowledged that the German government had handled the "hysterical outbreaks of the National Socialists with dignity", but also added that "nothing since the war had done as much damage to Germany's name as the frightening prevalence of the most brutal political crimes." It added that neither the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty nor the desperate economic situation in Germany could excuse this.⁷⁹ On the Right, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, referring to the British press in general, noted that "the dramatic aggravation of the situation within German domestic politics is being followed in England [sic!] with the greatest eagerness." It was assumed that what was on the line was nothing less than the "existence of the Papen government", and that, should the death sentences be carried out, it was expected that Hitler would succumb to pressure from the Stormtroopers and, following Mussolini's example, would

⁷⁷ "Die Wahrheit über Beuthen. Das Verbrechen von Potempa wie es wirklich war.", VZ, 24.08.1932, AA, p. 1.

⁷⁸ "Der Freibrief", FZ, 24.08.1932, p. 1.

⁷⁹ "London über Beuthen", VZ, 25.08.1932, AA, p. 2.

initiate a “march on Berlin.” The *Evening Standard* was therefore cited as suggesting that Papen, short of pardoning the men, commute the death penalties into prison sentences, if he was going to preserve his government and its ability to keep order and guarantee justice. The *DTZ* consciously pointed out that the *Evening Standard* considered part of the reason for the especially fierce political fight in Silesia to be the region’s rendering apart under the Treaty of Versailles. The French *Paris midi* thought that “decapitating” the five SA men would be a demonstration of strength from the German government, but it doubted that it would come to that, anticipating instead the success of the Nazis’ intimidation tactics. The case was noted even beyond Europe, as the *DTZ* also reported that the leader of “the German-American National Socialists” had sent a telegram to *Reichs*-President Hindenburg, in which some 5,000 American party members protested against the Beuthen verdict.⁸⁰ It was thus not only clear that the murder of an unemployed worker in a Silesian village carried a significance far beyond the region, and even the country, but also that the sceptical views from abroad, doubting the assertiveness of the German government in the face of the growing Nazi movement and judging the German political climate harshly, reverberated back into German public discourse, sparking worry about the country’s international role and reputation.

Both the rioting at *Kurfürstendamm* in September 1931 and the murder of Konrad Pietrzuch in August 1932, though very different in their nature, serve to exemplify the continual escalation of violence by the National Socialists during the final years of the Weimar Republic. At the same time, while both acts were instructive of the methods which the SA were now willing to employ, and which the Nazi leadership was willing to publicly defend, the reactions to both events indicated certain boundaries which were still in existence and which could not yet be crossed according to more mainstream public discourse. Excessive brutality, “autotelic” violence which seemingly relished the excess, against an unsuspecting, unarmed common worker remained indefensible in public discourse away from the extreme Right, as did attacks on unsuspecting members of the public on Berlin’s prime boulevard. In the latter case, in particular, location played an important role. As with the geographic circles which form the basic structure of this thesis, violence taking place at the centre of a society made a particular impact on public discourse, while the geographic periphery constituted a different kind of space. That which took place hidden away, at the margins, far from the centres of power, for example in a small Silesian village in a long-disputed border region, in the middle of the night, was shocking in its brutality, but not surprising in the fact that it was happening at all. Silesia

⁸⁰ “Beunruhigung in England. Beuthen und das Ausland.“, *DTZ*, 25.08.1932, p. 1.

had been experiencing a high level of violence throughout the summer of 1932, violence had come to be expected there. While street clashes between the SA and Communists were also common in areas like Berlin, Hamburg, and the industrial centres to the East and West of the country in the later Weimar years, the attacks on *Kurfürstendamm* constituted an unexpected form of violence. As emphasised above, the openly anti-Semitic nature of the violence indicated a new level of confidence within the SA to carry their ideology forcefully into the streets. People out to worship, to celebrate the Jewish New Year, or to enjoy themselves among the entertainment options on offer on the busiest and most famous boulevard of Germany's capital city, did not expect to be suddenly assaulted in broad daylight. They were not political fighters; nor did non-Jewish passers-by, once they realised the nature of the attacks, expect to be victimised despite not being Jewish; when they were attacked anyway, it only added to the public outrage. The riots therefore shocked those who became caught up in them, as well as those observing the very public spectacle domestically and from abroad. In this way, both examples of Nazi violence examined here highlight a shift that had taken place, in both actions and language, which resulted in a stark discrepancy between the more moderate mainstream public discourse in the late Weimar Republic, and the radically different discourse already embraced by the National Socialists, whose leadership had no problem publicly defending these acts.

With the SA, the Nazis had developed a radically new relationship with and use of violence. Reichardt has analysed violence as a central concept of the Nazi movement, according to which participating in violent acts was part of the culture and worked as a social glue among the SA. Committing violent acts together as a group, whether just nine, as in Potempa, or several hundred, as on *Kurfürstendamm*, united its members, as no individual bore the full responsibility for the group's actions, yet every member of the group was implicated, creating a powerful bond.⁸¹ A willingness to use violence functioned as an "internal factor of prestige" among the members of the SA, earning those men the most prestige from their peers who were willing to commit the most and/or the most egregious acts of violence.⁸² In addition to being a tool of propaganda to demonstrate their power, violence allowed the Nazis to create a positive self-image. With violence as their *raison d'être*, and the attractive manly camaraderie of the SA offering an alternative cause and home to restless young men, the movement appeared new, dynamic and actually willing to take action, while established organisations of the Right, such as the *Stahlhelm*, were dominated by an older generation and

⁸¹ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, p. 138.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 710.

seemed old-fashioned and sluggish with their traditional marches, uniforms and flags, shying away from the final commitment to bringing down the republican system through actions.⁸³ The triumph of the Nazi cult of violence was finally achieved in June 1934, with the 'Night of the Long Knives', when the SA itself became its victim and its leader, Ernst Röhm, and several dozen others were murdered on Hitler's orders. The purge also counted noblemen, like former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher, and 'apolitical' women, such as Schleicher's wife, among its victims. However, even this extraordinary circumstance did not deter members of the old elites sympathetic to the movement from continuing to lend public support to the Nazis and thus continue the discursive erosion of the boundaries of violence.

4.2 "A PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR BLOUSES!"⁸⁴: DEBATING BRITISH FASCIST VIOLENCE IN 1934.

Former Conservative, independent, and Labour Party MP Oswald Mosley, disillusioned with his old parties and having failed to make a success of his short-lived 'New Party', founded the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in October 1932.⁸⁵ Like their Italian counterparts, from which the BUF took inspiration and with whom it had close links,⁸⁶ Mosley's men and women adopted a uniform of black shirts, earning them the descriptive moniker 'Blackshirts'. As has been noted, anti-Semitism was not initially a prominent part of the BUF's agenda. Instead, Mosley had taken inspiration from Mussolini's *fasci* and strove for a "fascist revolution" in Britain, which would result in the establishment of a Corporate State which would manage industry; thereby the party especially sought to attract those disillusioned by the National Government.⁸⁷ By Martin Pugh's estimation, the BUF enjoyed the apex of its popularity between January and June 1934, largely thanks to its public endorsement by the Rothermere press, who most famously owned the *Daily Mail*.⁸⁸ In the evening of 7 June 1934, the BUF held a very large meeting at London's Olympia exhibition hall, which was attended by up to 15,000 people.⁸⁹ It

⁸³ For more on masculinity and camaraderie among the SA, see *ibid.*, pp. 661-679, 421, 432-435.

⁸⁴ "Freedom and Order: A Plague on Both your Blouses!", *Guardian*, 17.06.1934, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Besides the BUF, there were several other, smaller and shorter-lived, Fascist, anti-Semitic, white supremacist, and/or ultra-nationalist organisations in interwar Britain, such as the 'British Fascisti', the 'Imperial Fascist League', the 'National Socialist League', the 'National Socialist Workers Movement', the 'Britons Society', or the 'Nordic League'. They are discussed alongside the BUF in Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985* (Oxford and New York, 1987).

⁸⁶ On these relationships, see Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting fascism: Italian fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2003)

⁸⁷ Thurlow, "Straw that Broke the Camel's Back", pp. 79-80.

⁸⁸ Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!': Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2006), p. 3.

⁸⁹ As Lawrence has noted, Fascist claims that this was the largest political meeting in British history were in fact false. See Jon Lawrence, "Fascist Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Inter-War Britain: The Olympia debate revisited", *Historical Research*, 76/192 (2003), p. 238.

had been well-publicised beforehand, and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and other left-wing opponents of the Fascists were also in attendance with the aim of disrupting Mosley's speech. Interrupters and hecklers began doing just that as soon as Mosley started speaking. Despite being amplified through twenty-four loudspeakers, Mosley chose to stop speaking at every interruption and had the hall spotlights trained on the hecklers. Shouting matches, brawls, and struggles between pro- and anti-Fascist attendees broke out in several parts of the large hall and Fascist stewards proceeded to forcibly remove the interrupters, handling them roughly enough to inflict numerous injuries in the process. Outside the venue, fighting continued and police, who did not intervene inside the hall, tried to restore order, which they only achieved near midnight. No fatalities occurred, but many injuries were sustained, and over a dozen people had to be taken to receive hospital treatment.⁹⁰ The Liberal MP Isaac Foot, who brought up the Olympia meeting as the topic of a lengthy debate in the House of Commons, described the violence-stained events of 7 June as having "very much stirred the public mind."⁹¹ This was certainly the case and as a result the Olympia meeting has been regarded as pivotal to the question of how or whether the violence accompanying the meeting changed public perception and attitudes towards the Fascists. This is precisely why this case study has been chosen for this chapter, even though anti-Semitism, which only emerged as a main focus of the BUF later in 1934, did not yet play a significant role in the discourse.⁹² It is not the purpose of this chapter section to explore the history of British Fascism more generally; rather, it uses this specific instance of political violence connected to the Fascist movement as a case study, embedded in the broader context of Fascism in Britain in the 1930s, to investigate attitudes within British public language towards political violence and highlight how the Fascists' use of violence proved a divisive feature.

The main, and most recent, historiographical debate between Martin Pugh and Jon Lawrence regarding the events at Olympia already points towards its particular significance within the history of British Fascism, as the incident touched on deeply rooted facets of British society and politics. The historiographical debate has revolved around whether or not Fascist violence, especially as displayed at the Olympia meeting in June 1934, had a positive, negative, or any effect at all on how Mosley and the BUF were viewed, and whether it contributed to the movement's eventual failure. While orthodox accounts considered Olympia

⁹⁰ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, pp. 101-102. More on numbers and nature of injuries further below.

⁹¹ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1914.

⁹² On the emergence of anti-Semitism on the BUF's agenda post-1934, see Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'*, pp. 219-220. On the Jewish community's experience of British Fascism and their reactions, see Elaine R. Smith, "But What Did They Do? Contemporary Jewish Responses to Cable Street", *Jewish Culture and History*, 1/2 (1998), pp. 48-55.

as a “watershed”, in the aftermath of which the BUF began losing the propaganda war,⁹³ Pugh’s revisionist account has argued that the effect of Fascist violence, as displayed at the Olympia meeting, on popular perceptions of the BUF had been overstated in the past and that in reality there was more widespread sympathy for the Fascists, especially among Tory politicians and conservative newspaper editors, than had hitherto been realised, or admitted.⁹⁴ Jon Lawrence’s post-revisionist response to Pugh has argued that the violence which occurred at the Olympia meeting did in fact have a negative effect on the BUF’s popularity and respectability, amounting to a “propaganda disaster of the first order” for the Fascists, and counting significantly towards the movement’s eventual failure. Indeed, the party never won a parliamentary seat. Lawrence’s argument, however, is that the real issue which the debate over the Olympia meeting brought forward, went further. The public debate, he argues, was less concerned with the nature of Fascism as such, and more generally explored what constituted “‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ behaviour within democratic politics.”⁹⁵

Though Pugh has written a response to Lawrence’s criticism, doubling down on his own argument that Fascism continued to enjoy more widespread popularity post-Olympia than is generally recognised in the historiography,⁹⁶ Janet Dack, who has undertaken an extensive analysis of the reception in the national press of Mosley and his Fascists, finds Lawrence’s reading of the sources, in particular of the conservative press, more convincing than Pugh’s.⁹⁷ The existing recent literature on this topic, from Pugh to Lawrence to Dack, has made wide use of the available source materials, including press and parliamentary discourses, which this thesis focuses on. The designated literature has naturally used these materials more extensively than could be achieved in this limited chapter section. Therefore, while going back into the original source material directly relating to the Olympia meeting, the chapter section will also be making use of the already available analyses and materials regarding the BUF and its popularity more generally. The riotous meeting at Olympia captured significant attention in parliament. On 11 June questions were put to the Home Secretary demanding the clarification of rumours and the confirmation of the known facts regarding the Olympia meeting. Then, with rumours of new legislation already on the way, on 14 June a long debate

⁹³ Summarised in Lawrence, “Fascist Violence”, pp. 238-267, p. 239.

⁹⁴ Martin Pugh, “The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate”, *The Historical Journal*, 41/2 (1998), pp. 529-542.

⁹⁵ Lawrence, “Fascist Violence”, pp. 238-267, first quote on p. 266, second quote on p. 239.

⁹⁶ Martin Pugh, “The National Government, the British Union of Fascists and the Olympia debate”, *Historical Research*, 78/200 (2005), pp. 253-262.

⁹⁷ Janet Dack, “‘It certainly isn’t cricket!’ – Media Responses to Mosley and the BUF”, in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds.), *Varieties of anti-fascism: Britain in the inter-war period* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 140-161.

took place in the Commons in which MPs' varying views of the meeting and interpretations of the gravity of the disturbances emerged. In particular, MPs' speeches revolved around issues of law and order, the role of the police, the importance of free speech in democratic societies, and whether or how much of a danger Fascism posed to it, as well as the widespread perception of the Fascist movement and ideology as 'foreign', with developments on the European continent serving as a warning to Britain. The national press found itself debating similar issues, and the newspaper-reading public clearly felt strongly on these matters, as was evidenced by the "very large correspondence on the subject" which *The Times*, among others, reported receiving.⁹⁸

An issue which has been recurrent throughout this thesis and which greatly exercised Members of Parliament was the central problem of maintaining law and order and whose role this was. As Home Secretary John Gilmour informed the House, it was not the duty of the Metropolitan Police, though 760 men were primed and ready outside the Olympia venue on 7 June, to enter the hall to restore order or act as stewards unless called on by the organisers of the meeting to do so. He continued to explain to the House that "the British Union of Fascists informed the Commissioner that the Fascists did not require the assistance of the police inside the building and at no stage was any request made for police to enter the building."⁹⁹ Thus, he argued, the police were not to blame for the escalation inside the hall. However, he stressed that "the function of the Government is to preserve law and order" and "the duty of the police is to keep order." Therefore, he suggested that "it may be necessary to arm the executive authorities with further powers for the purpose of preserving public order."¹⁰⁰ For procedural reasons, MPs were not allowed to explicitly discuss possible new legislation during the 14 June debate, however, it was frequently alluded to. Isaac Foot posed the question whether the stewarding at political meetings ought not to be done by the police, rather than leaving this important duty to the organisers of the event, especially where "disorder may be apprehended."¹⁰¹ Conservative MP Terence O'Connor was also of the opinion that the existing laws regarding the orderly conduct of political meetings "should be strengthened, the penalties increased." Notably, however, his proposal was in particular referring to those who organised interruptions at meetings, interfering with the speakers' right to free speech, a fundamental

⁹⁸ *Times*, 12.06.1934, p. 15. Letters from readers, notably ones which agreed with the newspapers' own editorial stance, were for example also extensively printed in the *Morning Post* ("More Letters from Readers. Blame Placed on Communists.", 12.06.1934, p. 8 and "Further Letters from Readers. Fascist Actions Defended.", 13.06.1934, p. 16), as well as the *Daily Herald* ("M.P.s to ask about 'Blackshirt Brutality'", 09.06.1934, p. 3).

⁹⁹ HC, 11.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1344.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, cc. 1345, 1347.

¹⁰¹ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1924.

right, the importance of which reappeared throughout the debate.¹⁰² Conservative MP Arthur Dixey also urged that “it would be in the interest of the Government to bring forward some legislation which would give some sort of adequate protection,” but added that new legislation was needed “not merely to deal with this Fascist question, but to deal with the whole question of keeping decent order at public meetings.”¹⁰³ His assertion that he supported “fair play for every party” was read by his colleagues as tacit support for Mosley.¹⁰⁴ David Logan, a Labour Party MP, on the other hand, did not think new legislation was necessary, as he insisted that both the Fascists and the Communists could, and should, be legislated against by the government under existing sedition laws.¹⁰⁵ Foot, too, thought that new legislation was not quite necessary, especially if it were to be introduced “in the way of panic or under the influence of fear.” He did, however, think that it was in a way fortunate that the events at Olympia had “revealed our danger”, “like a flash of lightning that has lit up the political landscape.”¹⁰⁶

The crucial argument which speakers returned to time and again was the assertion that the state must not tolerate any other person or body taking the law into their own hands. Mosley’s movement and its actions at Olympia thus further fuelled existing concerns over the emergence of ‘private armies’ in the country which might endanger the state’s monopoly on power. Liberal Clement Attlee pointed to various pieces of evidence from which he discerned that Mosley was in the process of establishing a form of armed force for himself, which was “something quite new.” Among the evidence he listed “the use of resounding military titles, the drilling, the organisation, the barracks, the uniform, the gangs who live in barracks under Sir Oswald Mosley’s control and are sent from meeting to meeting at Sir Oswald Mosley’s expense”, as well as “the use of armoured cars” and “talk of forming aeroplane squadrons.”¹⁰⁷ Attlee considered raising such a “semi-militarist force” “a very dangerous thing”, identifying the “central danger in the present situation” to be “the claim of a man like Mosley that he is entitled to keep order himself.” Attlee stated categorically that “that is not his prerogative.”¹⁰⁸ The Independent Labour Party’s James Maxton agreed, arguing that Mosley’s “desire at the moment is to show that he can maintain law and order better, more effectively, more efficiently, and do the strong man better than the people who have been publicly appointed to do that

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, c. 1959.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, c. 2031.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 2024.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. 2024-2025.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. 1926-1927.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, c. 1930.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, cc. 1932, 1933.

job.”¹⁰⁹ This had been the strategy of Fascist ascension in Italy and Germany, where the state’s monopoly on power, and its capacity to maintain public order, had been deliberately undermined. William Thorne (Lab) therefore urged that the “Government should not allow any military force to be formed outside the forces of the Crown.”¹¹⁰ Foot pointed out that Olympia was not an isolated event. Drawing attention to other, though much smaller-scale, recent interruptions of Communist meetings and clashes between the attendees and Fascists, he lamented a “return to violent ways of thinking”, which was causing some “public apprehension.” He especially warned against the emergence of private armies in this climate, which, with reference to experiences on the European continent, he considered “a menace to liberty”, functioning as “the bodyguards of dictatorship.”¹¹¹ He also drew on very recent Anglo-Irish history to caution his contemporaries to not let violence breed more violence, reminding them that “if we look to Ireland we see what was the inter-connection between reprisal and reprisal only a few years ago.”¹¹²

The wearing of uniforms presented a particular point of contention in this discussion of ‘private armies’. In reference to a previous meeting, in Bristol, which had also got rowdy, Foot cited the Home Secretary who had at the time admitted that “this disorder was largely due to the adoption of semi-military evolutions by the Fascists, their marching in formation and their general behaviour, which was regarded by the crowd as provocative.”¹¹³ Conservative MP Vyvyan Adams voiced a similar notion when he, trying very hard to not break the ban on explicitly discussing possible new legislation, emphasised that “I feel in my own heart that the real centre of this problem, and its real solution, lies in dealing with political uniforms.”¹¹⁴ The Scottish Unionist William Anstruther-Gray even went so far as to blame those choosing to wear uniforms for their own misfortune. Citing the case of one Fascist who had written to *The Times* recounting how, after the meeting at Olympia, he “was pursued by a mob and violently assaulted,” Anstruther-Gray simply stated “that it was his own fault. He was to blame for wearing a provocative uniform.” He added that “I think that that sort of thing is inevitable if people will persist in the wearing of black shirts.”¹¹⁵ As has been pointed out in the existing literature, even though the Metropolitan Police Commissioner himself, Hugh Trenchard (who had previously founded the RAF, as discussed in Chapter 3), was especially keen on

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 1990.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, c. 1949.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, c. 1920.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, c. 1923. Cf. Chapter 2.

¹¹³ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1925.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 1998.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 2005.

outlawing paramilitary organisations and banning the wearing of uniforms,¹¹⁶ new legislation to address the rising levels of public unrest specifically involving Mosley's Fascists was not in fact passed in the aftermath of the Olympia meeting. It was not until two years later, when the 'Battle of Cable Street' in London's East End on 4 October 1936, involving at least 1,900 Fascist marchers, some 100,000 counter-demonstrators, and the Metropolitan Police, had endangered public peace on a whole different scale, that the Public Order Act was passed. In it, among other things, the wearing of political uniforms was banned, indicating the central importance of the issue in the effort to render extremist political movements less compelling and effective, and instead cement the state's monopoly on power as well as displaying the symbols thereof.¹¹⁷ Pugh, however, has pointed out that despite the debates following Olympia, and even though a ban on political uniforms had been discussed as early as April 1934, the Public Order Act was only passed two years later, in 1936. This to him indicates a "lack of urgency on the part of the government", which Pugh in turn takes as further evidence for his argument that the BUF enjoyed much more tacit support among Tories than historiography has generally been prepared to admit.¹¹⁸

The concern for maintaining law and order was closely bound up with even more fundamental questions about the situation of free speech, the nature of British democracy, and the public's right to participate in the democratic process. From its formation in late 1932, the BUF's efforts at disrupting Communist Party meetings and processions, as well as their attacks on rival Fascist groups, had led to a marked increase in political violence across Britain, but especially in London's East End. On the other hand, the Communist Party organised anti-Fascist campaigns, again especially among the Jewish community in the East End, which proved equally, if not more, disruptive.¹¹⁹ The escalation of the Olympia meeting brought to the fore pre-existing anxieties about the state of free speech in Britain in many contemporaries, though they had diametrically opposed opinions about who was endangering

¹¹⁶ Thurlow, "Straw that Broke the Camel's Back", p. 84.

¹¹⁷ The Public Order Act furthermore outlawed paramilitary groups, curtailed the right to march, and allowed for tougher controls of public processions, as well as banning offensive weapons at public meetings, and making it an offence "to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with the intent to provoke a breach of peace", thus generally strengthening police powers to regulate public meetings and prevent disorder; see Richard Thurlow, "Blaming the Blackshirts: the authorities and the anti-Jewish disturbances in the 1930s", in Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Racial Violence in Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (revised edition, London and New York, 1996), pp. 124-126.

¹¹⁸ Pugh, "The British Union of Fascists", p. 539; Pugh, "The National Government", p. 258.

¹¹⁹ Thurlow, "Straw that Broke the Camel's Back", p. 77; see also Thurlow, "Blaming the Blackshirts", pp. 112-130. Cullen's careful analysis of police, Special Branch and MI5 files has led him to determine that the Fascists were in fact more often the victims of political violence than its instigator, see Stephen M. Cullen, "Political Violence: The Case of the British Union of Fascists", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28/2 (1993), pp. 245-267.

it and who was upholding it. The Fascists themselves, as well as their supporters and sympathisers in the press and in parliament, argued that the BUF was valiantly upholding the fundamental right to free speech against the Communists whose tactic of interrupting political meetings was endangering free speech in Britain. Mosley took the (alleged) provocations and violence from Communist interrupters at Olympia as proof for the necessity of a “Blackshirt Defence Force to secure the right of free speech in this country.”¹²⁰ Both the *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Post* made reference to the quintessentially British notion of ‘fair play’ in their arguments that Communist interruptions were destroying political culture and discourse in Britain, indeed wrecking “this country and every Institution in it,” while Mosley stood for “‘law, order, free speech, and English methods’.” According to the *Mail*, at Olympia the “right to free speech [had been] at stake” and thanks to the intervention by the Fascist stewards it had been “firmly upheld.”¹²¹ The *Morning Post*, too, invoked fair play. It complained of the fact that “for some years in many constituencies Socialist or Communist gangs have made free speech and public meeting almost impossible.” Therefore, if what the paper presented as the facts of the Olympia meeting, which it based on Mosley’s own account, were correct, “we suggest that, in this case at least, the Fascists are the defenders rather than the assailants of these rights of free speech and public meeting on which democracy rests.” The *Post* emphasised that it had no sympathy for dictatorships, but preferred “our traditional Government of King, Lords and Commons.” For this reason, it hoped that the “English liking for fair play” would prevail in the government consultations about what ought to be done to keep public order, rather than resulting in the, in the paper’s eyes unfair, suppression of only the Fascists.¹²² In the Commons, Conservative MP Tom Howard put forward the argument that it was because “we”, meaning Conservatives, but presumably also Liberals and Labour politicians, had not opposed and handled Communist interruptions at their meetings as forcefully as the Blackshirts were dealing with them, that the Fascist movement had gained popular support. “People are going into it because they resent the methods adopted by the other side,” he reasoned, adding that people were “following him [Mosley, A.K.] because he is appealing to their sense of fair play and the right of free speech” by (literally) cracking down on Communist interrupters.¹²³ Fellow Conservative MP Michael Beaumont, who openly called himself an “anti-Democrat”, also argued that it was because of the Communists attempting to break up meetings all over the country that the Fascists were gaining support; however, he opposed any government moves to proscribe the Fascist movement as he thought it would only drive up recruitment into the

¹²⁰ Quoted in “Blackshirt Leader’s Call to Sacrifice and Endeavour”, *Daily Mail*, 08.06.1934, p. 14.

¹²¹ “Fair Play, Please!”, *Daily Mail*, 14.06.1934, p. 12.

¹²² “Free Speech and Fair Play”, *Morning Post*, 15.06.1934, p. 12.

¹²³ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, cc. 2015, 2018.

BUF.¹²⁴ Earl Winterton (Con) saw a “menace to free speech”, but argued that it had “existed for a long time” and was a result of the fact that “we tolerate things – interruptions, abuse, insults and physical threats in a way that they are not tolerated, for instance, in the United States of America or Canada.” Nevertheless, he thought that the threat of Fascism was being “altogether exaggerated.”¹²⁵

On the other hand, there were those contemporary voices who argued that it was Mosley’s Fascist movement which was endangering free speech in Britain. Clement Attlee disdainfully remarked about Mosley that “he preserves free speech just as long as it suits him.”¹²⁶ The *Daily Herald* reminded readers that “turbulence” and interruptions had occurred at political meetings of any party, and in principle there was nothing wrong with this, as “generally British people concede to others the liberty of utterance which they claim for themselves.” This equilibrium, however, rested on the basis that stewards at political meetings usually used only “the minimum force in silencing or ejecting brawlers.” The fact that Mosley’s Blackshirt stewards had failed to do so would, argued the paper, eventually harm their own cause. Conservative Terence O’Connor identified free speech as “an essential bulwark of democracy” and insisted that “we cannot permit any self-appointed protector of free speech.”¹²⁷ He had attended the meeting at Olympia, which he likened to a “Russian pogrom”, and was left in no doubt that “the object of the meeting was to demonstrate the value of the Fascist defence force in securing free speech.”¹²⁸ He held up the example of democracies which were “going down like nine-pins all over Europe, largely because the right of free expression of opinion has been denied to democracy.” “If we are to see democracy survive” in Britain, he insisted that the House ought to consider all options, “by administration and by legislation”, to “preserve that right.”¹²⁹ By O’Connor’s own admission, this emphatic attitude towards the dangers posed by Mosley and Fascist movements in general had earned him the characterisation as a “Conservative softy and sentimentalist” by the Rothermere press.¹³⁰

A large number of contemporary observers, certainly not sympathetic to the Fascists, however, took the Olympia events as an opportunity to condemn both Communist and Fascist violence and interruptions as impermissible dangers to free speech and liberty. The *Guardian* piece which gives this chapter section its title did so humorously by wishing “a plague on both

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, cc. 1940-1941.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 1985.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 1929.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, c. 1959.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, cc. 1954, 1956.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 1960.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, c. 1956.

your blouses!” It insisted that liberty was the “essence of our British life” and “Englishmen [would] not be bludgeoned or kicked out of it,” neither by men in red shirts nor by ones in black shirts. An infringement of this fundamental liberty would put the country on the “slippery slope that leads downwards to civil war and faction tyranny.”¹³¹ Liberal MP Kingsley Griffith took a similarly admonitory stance towards the interplay between Communists and Fascists in British political culture. He argued that “two rather unconstitutional bodies in the political field are a great deal more than twice as bad as one such body. One unconstitutional body may succeed in making a riot. Two can make something much more like a civil war.”¹³² Conservative Geoffrey Lloyd thought that Olympia had been “the culmination of these two movements,” meaning the disruptive involvement of both the Communists as well as the Fascists in British politics. He appealed to his colleagues that “we all agree that we want to maintain the rule of law. [...] We all agree that we want to maintain free speech.” Therefore, he put forward the suggestion of having police present from the start at any meeting where disorder was anticipated; this, he argued, “would have the effect of restraining both the Communists and the Fascists.”¹³³ Fellow Conservative Maurice Petherick stressed that, in his opinion, “every political party, however subversive they may be, have a perfect right to express their views, impartially, as long as they do not preach actual sedition; they should have as far as possible complete freedom of speech.” He was unimpressed with the fact that there were “in the House of Commons at the present time hon. Members who are defending the Fascists on the ground that they are the only people who care to promote freedom of speech.” The reason, in his analysis, was not so much that “they are so very keen on freedom of speech, but because they really and thoroughly dislike the Communists.” He himself, he insisted, disliked “both extremes” and considered it appropriate, when disorder was provoked and broke out, that the police should “deal with them as they would with two rival gangs of racecourse rowdies.”¹³⁴ What these debates came down to, as Lawrence has pointed out, was a basic concern over the appropriate form of public participation in the democratic process and the place of force in it. As Lawrence has argued, the division between contemporary commentators on the events at Olympia was less about their pro- or anti-Fascist convictions; as the *Guardian* observed at the time, “it was a relief to many who were watching closely the Tory reactions to the Olympia affair to find that so few showed Fascist sympathies.”¹³⁵ Instead, Lawrence has identified the issue at the heart of the Olympia debate as the controversial attempt to determine where to

¹³¹ “Freedom and Order: A Plague on Both your Blouses!”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17.06.1934, p. 16.

¹³² HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1963.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, cc. 1936-1937.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 2021.

¹³⁵ “Tories and fascism”, *Manchester Guardian*, 16.06.1934, p. 12.

“draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate forms of opposition at public meetings.” In other words, Olympia prompted questions, recurrent throughout the modern period, about whether the right to free speech should be regarded as “absolute,” or whether the public had a “right to voice reasoned objections without being subject to violent ejection” and what the role of the state’s executive forces was in guaranteeing either.¹³⁶

In a reversal of the worry identifiable in German public discourse over how the country would be viewed abroad and how its rising tide of political violence was endangering its international reputation, British public discourse was consumed with fear of ‘continental’ conditions developing in the UK. Proving the worries of the German press correct, Germany, but also Italy, were held up as warning examples of places where “terrorism [was] running from one end of the country to another.”¹³⁷ Foot did not mince his words when he warned that developments “abroad” had shown just “how soon barbarism can break down the dykes of civilisation” and that the way Hitler had “taken over Hindenburg” had resulted in a “state of affairs in Germany which most people would regard as an affront to the spirit of man.”¹³⁸ In the *Observer*’s estimation what had occurred on 7 June corresponded to “Hitlerism at Olympia”, as witnesses were reporting “a Nazi brutality of physical violence.”¹³⁹ The CPGB’s *Daily Worker* thought Mosley’s spectacle at Olympia to have been “in true Goebbels’ style”, while the *Guardian* attested that Mosley had “nothing of theatricalism to learn from either Hitler or Mussolini.”¹⁴⁰ The *Observer*’s German correspondent noted the much more sinister fact that “misgivings which Nazis have hitherto expressed as to Sir Oswald’s apparently open attitude to the Jewish question seem now to have been set at rest, and increased interest is being taken in his movement here.”¹⁴¹ Attlee shared Foot’s concerns, arguing that Mosley’s methods were “utterly foreign to this country”, identifying them as “really the Italian method. It is the method of the gang.” The prospect of the state potentially losing its monopoly on power to the “method of the gang”, going down the path of “many countries abroad” where “democracy [had] failed [...] simply because they [had] forgotten their common citizenship in their extreme partisanship”, was perceived as profoundly un-British.¹⁴² William Thorne (Lab) reminded the House that a “potential dictator” was in need of a “private army”, and that that was “just what

¹³⁶ Lawrence, “Fascist Violence”, pp. 251-252.

¹³⁷ Harold Hales (Con), HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 2034.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 1920.

¹³⁹ “The World: Week by Week”, *Observer*, 10.06.1934, p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ “Great Anti-Fascist Victory at Olympia”, *Daily Worker*, 09.06.1934, p. 3; “Chase in the Roof”, *Manchester Guardian*, 08.06.1934, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ “Nazi Approval of Blackshirts”, *Observer*, 10.06.1934, p. 18.

¹⁴² HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1929.

happened in Italy.”¹⁴³ Mosley had indeed apparently visited Mussolini in Rome in 1932 to learn more about the “forms and methods of organisation adopted in Italy’.”¹⁴⁴ Britain, therefore, would be well advised to stay vigilant, as both Labour and Conservative Members warned: Harold Hales (Con) “fear[ed] for the future of this country” if “we are to have a repetition of what is happening on the Continent to-day”; while David Logan (Lab) urged the government to act decisively against both the “Fascist and Communist movements”, because he worried that “if we do not govern them, we shall be governed.”¹⁴⁵

Continuing his warning of both extreme left and right-wing movements, Logan exhorted his colleagues that “we must see that there is no further contamination.”¹⁴⁶ His choice of words contained a telling notion that Fascism (and Communism) could spread from the continent to Britain like a disease or epidemic. Many, however, had a curious sense that there was something inherently British which would make the inhabitants of the country immune to this disease. The above-cited “Nazi brutality”, the *Observer* continued, was something “the British people abhor.” The paper confidently asserted that “Britain is not Germany or Italy. There is something in the stomach of this people which he [Mosley, A.K.] and his know nothing of.”¹⁴⁷ Citing one of the most stereotypical national attributes, Colonial Secretary Philip Cunliffe-Lister thought it impossible for a dictatorship to ever take hold in “England” because “the whole idea of such a movement is so alien to our character and our common sense.”¹⁴⁸ With some condescension, as well as confidence, Maurice Petherick (Con) showed himself certain that “if this faction is handled in a proper way, as the Communists have been handled, the good sense of the British public will lead them to realise that there is really nothing in these Continental and new-fangled notions.”¹⁴⁹ Not without considerable pathos, several speakers invoked Britain’s democratic tradition as both legacy and as mandate, while eyeing developments on the European continent with great concern. Terence O’Connor called the country “one of the essential bulwarks of democracy” and urged his fellow lawmakers to “be vigilant” and “take in time the steps necessary to maintain our position as the greatest

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, c. 1949.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Claudia Baldoli, *Italian Fascism in Britain. The Fasci Italiani all’Estero, the Italian Communities, and Fascist Sympathisers during Grandi Era (1932-1939)*, PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 2002, p. 55. On connections between Mosley and Mussolini, and British and Italian Fascists, as well as German National Socialists, see all of chapter 2 of her thesis. [I cite Baldoli’s thesis, which is available digitally, as I have not been able to gain access to her monograph under current lockdown conditions.]

¹⁴⁵ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 2025.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ “The World: Week by Week”, *Observer*, 10.06.1934, p. 16.

¹⁴⁸ “Ministers’ Views on Dictators”, *Observer*, 10.06.1934, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 2021.

democratic country in the world.”¹⁵⁰ Vyvyan Adams (Con) took his cue from “the last line of the chorus of ‘Rule Britannia’”, arguing that “freedom” was the “quality which we in this country find justifies us more than any other in loving our country”, because it “in fact, in deed and in sentiment really exists here.” But, he asked, could this freedom exist “under any dictatorship?”¹⁵¹ William Ormsby-Gore (Con) invoked even older history, when he warned of the “foreign fashions of Blackshirts and Redshirts”, calling them “dangerous nonsense”, and asserted that neither “Sir Stafford Cripps or Mosley, or any other ballyhoo who comes along” should be permitted to undo “what it took all our people, all the fighting of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights and the abolition of slavery, centuries to win.”¹⁵² Attlee took a similar line and called the country “the oldest child of liberty in the world” which must not “succumb to the forces which have prevailed among some of her younger sisters on the Continent.” Instead, Britain was the country which “sets an example to the rest of the world in the way it conducts its political controversies” and, revealing a sense that extremist ideologies had muddled the international order, Attlee asserted that Britain’s role should be to “lead the world back to sanity.”¹⁵³

It is worth noting that, though it occurred a few weeks later, at the end of the month, June 1934 of course saw the purges of the ‘Night of the Long Knives’ in Germany, exposing beyond any doubt the ruthlessness and brutality of the Nazi regime. In the heated public debate in the aftermath of Olympia, the transnational awareness of this climate of political violence dominating much of continental Europe could only serve to further enforce the link between Fascism and violence in British perception.¹⁵⁴ The place of violence, therefore, both in British Fascism as well as in British politics more generally, emerged as another central topic of the debate prompted by the events at Olympia. The violence displayed by the Fascist stewards at the meeting was generally condemned in the House and in the press as disproportionate by all but the most partisan, right-wing and Fascist voices. The Conservative and Scottish Unionist MPs Terence O’Connor, William Anstruther-Gray, and Henry Scrymgeour-Wedderburn wrote to the editor of *The Times*, calling what they had witnessed from the Blackshirts at the Olympia meeting “wholly unnecessary violence.” They highlighted the fact that “men and women were knocked down, and, after they had been knocked down, were still assaulted and kicked on the floor.” Apparently, the display of violence was severe enough that

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, c. 1960.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, c. 1998. The chorus of ‘Rule Britannia’ of course ends on the assertion that “Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.”

¹⁵² “Ministers and Blackshirts”, *Manchester Guardian*, 11.06.1934, p. 9.

¹⁵³ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, cc. 1929, 1935.

¹⁵⁴ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, p. 103.

the three writers of the letter said they would be surprised “if there were no fatal injuries.”¹⁵⁵ Another eyewitness, Conservative MP Geoffrey Lloyd, characterised the behaviour of the Fascists as “calculated to exaggerate the effect of the most trivial interruptions and to provide an apparent excuse for the violence of the Blackshirts.”¹⁵⁶ Another indignant author of a letter to the editor called the Fascists’ behaviour “deliberately provocative” and “the most unnecessarily violent and disgusting thing I have ever witnessed.”¹⁵⁷

It was generally agreed that a certain amount of interruptions and heckling at political meetings was commonplace. Attlee, who called the behaviour of the Fascists at Olympia “unjustifiable brutality”, reminded the House that “in times past there has been political violence” and he was certainly not going to suggest that “this country has always been free from political violence.” However, he emphasised that “until very recently political violence was a thing of the past” and he evidently hoped it would stay that way.¹⁵⁸ Terence O’Connor called the “ordinary straightforward heckler” the “salt of every political meeting” without whom “politics would not be worth while”, and Lieutenant-Colonel Evelyn Powell (Con) even claimed that “we welcome the heckler and are friendly with him. He makes our meetings more interesting.”¹⁵⁹ Geoffrey Lloyd agreed that “in English politics a certain amount of good-humoured heckling and rough interruptions are traditional,” the general consensus being that such incidents ought to be handled by the speaker with equally good-humoured aplomb.¹⁶⁰ What had occurred at Olympia, however, was perceived to have been excessive. Lloyd had been “appalled by the brutal conduct of the Fascists last night,” who he thought had “behaved like cads and bullies.”¹⁶¹ Lawrence, tracing the role of violence in British politics back through the Victorian and Edwardian periods, has argued that while in those earlier eras there had been a “widespread acceptance of force within popular politics,” attitudes towards political violence had “changed decisively in the aftermath of the First World War.” Under the impression of the mass violence of the war years, and many of the developments examined in this thesis, including postwar riots in Britain, the conflict in Ireland, colonial violence, and the violent revolutionary upheaval on the European continent, Lawrence has argued that Britain experienced a fear of brutalisation, which caused “politicians of all parties” to want to “reconstruct Britain as a ‘peaceable kingdom’.” He emphasises, however, that while attitudes

¹⁵⁵ “Blackshirt Tactics”, *Times*, 08.06.1934, p. 14.

¹⁵⁶ “Outside Olympia”, *Times*, 09.06.1934, p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ K.I. Hancock, letter to editor, *Times*, 12.06.1934, p. 15.

¹⁵⁸ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, cc. 1927-1928.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. 1957, 2026.

¹⁶⁰ “Outside Olympia”, *Times*, 09.06.1934, p. 11. The role of humour is discussed in more detail further below.

¹⁶¹ “Conservative M.P.s Protests”, *Manchester Guardian*, 09.06.1934, p. 13.

changed, behaviour did not, causing the tensions as traced in the discourses analysed here.¹⁶² Pugh has criticised this argument, arguing that Lawrence overlooked the fact that there were many on the political Right who took the Fascist movement seriously as early as the 1920s as a force which might be able to stop Bolshevism on the continent and confidently oppose the Left in Britain, which the incumbent Tory government was failing to do in their opinion, and who were therefore prepared to defend the BUF's use of violence by reference to pre-war practices of force within politics.¹⁶³

Whether or not a fundamental shift in attitudes towards the place of violence within British politics had occurred as a result of the First World War is certainly debatable. It seems accurate, however, to argue that, whether in response to the War or more in an effort at delineation towards other countries, in interwar Britain violence as a political means came generally to be regarded as a 'continental' defect and fundamentally 'un-British'. The *Guardian's* London correspondent thought that some of the "blind and insatiate brutality" of "the fascists and Nazi mentality and methods" had been "allowed to be seen on Thursday, and it has seriously shocked public opinion."¹⁶⁴ Geoffrey Lloyd expressed the perceived foreignness of political violence in Britain when he stated that it had been "a deeply shocking scene for an Englishman to see in London," adding in the House that what he had witnessed at Olympia had "made my blood boil as an Englishman and a Tory."¹⁶⁵ Fellow Conservative MP John Davidson called the "brute force" displayed at Olympia "quite foreign to the British character" and asserted that it had "made every one of my friends – men and women – ashamed that the people who perpetrated these deeds were Britons." The fact that "they were only copying other countries, where liberty is dead" was not an excuse for him; "we are not going to stand for that in this country."¹⁶⁶ The *Chicago Tribune's* London correspondent deemed the entire Olympia meeting a "fiasco", seeing as "the papers are filled with protests against the brutality with which the interrupters were manhandled." Significantly, he added, "the fact that most of the interrupters were Communists had not made a bit of difference to the conservative Englishman's love of fairplay. He supports the Communists' right to interrupt a speaker as much as that of anyone of any other political faith."¹⁶⁷ Lloyd condemned the "disgraceful brutality" of the BUF stewards, but in the same breath highlighted that

¹⁶² Lawrence, "Fascist Violence", pp. 240-244.

¹⁶³ Pugh, "The National Government", pp. 254-255.

¹⁶⁴ "The Blackshirts' Harvest After Olympia", *Manchester Guardian*, 11.06.1934, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ "Outside Olympia", *Times*, 09.06.1934, p. 11; HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1936.

¹⁶⁶ "Home Secretary's Warning to Blackshirts", *Manchester Guardian*, 12.06.1934, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ "Triumph or Fiasco", *Morning Post*, 11.06.1934, p. 6.

Communists had also been engaged in “a substantial amount of outrage.”¹⁶⁸ Foot urged his colleagues that “if we are going to put an end to this growing violence, we must be prepared to condemn the violence of our friends as well as the violence of our enemies.”¹⁶⁹ Therefore, while on this occasion Fascists had been the ones to overstep the line and were attracting public criticism as a result, both Liberal and Conservative MPs acknowledged that violence in politics was generally not acceptable in British political culture, lending credence to at least part of Lawrence’s argument.

The Fascists of course justified their violence by reference to provocations from the Communists, whom they accused of organised interruptions (with some justification, seeing as the *Daily Worker* published a map with instructions of how to get to London’s Olympia in their 7 June edition).¹⁷⁰ With considerable exaggeration, however, particularly considering the deadly violence between Left and Right which had taken place in Germany just a few years prior, the *Blackshirt* spoke of the “Red Terror” of the British Communists, which had supposedly been successfully “smashed” at Olympia.¹⁷¹ Several letters written to the editor of the conservative *Morning Post* agreed with the view that Communists had provoked the escalation of violence, one reader calling their behaviour “unsporting and thoroughly un-British;” another one was certain that the Communists had been “out for hooliganism and rioting, and it is on them that the vitriol of public opinion should be poured. They were the originators of the trouble, and were asking for all they got.”¹⁷² The BUF’s supporters at the *Daily Mail* evidently took considerable pride in the efficiency of the Fascist stewards and openly described the injuries inflicted when the stewards “would be upon them [the interrupters, A.K.] in an instant, punching, pulling and pushing with such vigour that after a very few moments of interruption the struggling rowdies would find themselves outside with black eyes and bruised bodies.”¹⁷³ The paper, however, also claimed that “Blackshirts suffered three times as many casualties as the Reds”, which they took as proof that the “Reds were the aggressors, and that they were handled with all possible restraint.”¹⁷⁴ This claim, however, is contradicted by the evidence presented in the House of Commons by Home Secretary John Gilmour who had figures collated of victims who had received treatment at various London hospitals in the aftermath of the Olympia meeting. According to these, 14 people had been

¹⁶⁸ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1937.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 1918.

¹⁷⁰ “How to get to Olympia”, *Daily Worker*, 07.06.1934, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ “Reason’s Triumph. Red Terror Smashed at Britain’s Biggest Meeting”, *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 3.

¹⁷² “More Letters from Readers. Blame Placed on Communists”, *Morning Post*, 12.06.1923, p. 8.

¹⁷³ “Reds’ Futile Protests”, *Daily Mail*, 08.06.1934, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ “Fair Play, Please!”, *Daily Mail*, 14.06.1934, p. 12.

injured severely enough to require hospital treatment. Only one of them, a woman, was reported to have been wearing a Fascist Blackshirt uniform, though Gilmour admitted that in collecting these figures he had not been interested in whether the injured were Communists or Fascists. None of the injuries recorded was found to be consistent with the use of razors as weapons; the numerous head injuries, black eyes, bruises, cuts, abdominal injuries and suspected fractures were largely attributed to fist blows and kicks, though it was thought “possible that some of the injuries treated might have been caused by the use of knuckledusters.”¹⁷⁵

As far as the use of weapons inside Olympia was concerned, contradictory claims were made. While most reports agreed that chairs had been smashed in the fight, and some claimed that shoes, and in one case a fire-extinguisher, had been used as weapons, the more partisan publications of both political camps accused the other of using more serious weapons.¹⁷⁶ The Communists claimed that Fascists had slashed interrupters and had been fitted out with knuckledusters;¹⁷⁷ Mosley not only claimed to have seen “that favourite weapon of Red hooligans, the razor” in action at Olympia, but also “knuckle-dusters covered with spikes, stockings filled with broken glass [...], iron spikes and bludgeons.”¹⁷⁸ Given such a potent list of alleged weapons, the recorded injuries of Fascists should have been much more numerous and severe than the available figures suggested. If the Communist allegations were correct though, it ought to have been the other way round, an aspect Mosley himself addressed in a speech at the *English Review* Luncheon Club, when he provocatively asked “Where are the bodies?”¹⁷⁹ There was some evidence that more people were treated for injuries than the number presented by Gilmour in the House, as various papers published eyewitness reports from doctors who had been in attendance at Olympia and recalled treating a number of injuries on the spot, rather than referring the victims to hospital. One reported that doctors doing voluntary work had treated circa 70 patients for bleeding head wounds, lacerations, and a “number of more or less serious injuries.” “None of the people treated”, however, had been “wearing the Fascist uniform.”¹⁸⁰ Another medical volunteer manning a First Aid post, on the other hand, claimed to have treated a young man in Blackshirt uniform who he even doubted

¹⁷⁵ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, cc. 1970-1971.

¹⁷⁶ For example, “Blackshirts’ Biggest Night”, *Daily Mirror*, 08.06.1934, p. 3; “Wild Scenes at London Fascist Meeting”, *Daily Telegraph*, 08.06.1934, p. 15; fire-extinguisher mentioned in “The Injured at Olympia. A Doctor’s Testimony”, *Manchester Guardian*, 09.06.1934, p. 16.

¹⁷⁷ “Fascists Beat Up Women”, *Daily Worker*, 08.06.1934, p. 1; “Great Anti-Fascist Victory at Olympia. [...] Knuckle-Duster Thugs Fought Back”, *Daily Worker*, 09.06.1934, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ “The Leader’s Broadcast. Spirited Defence of the Blackshirts”, *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ “Where are the Bodies?”, *Times*, 16.06.1934, p. 21.

¹⁸⁰ “The Injured at Olympia. A Doctor’s Testimony”, *Guardian*, 09.06.1934, p. 16; “Brutal Fascists at Olympia”, *Morning Post*, 09.06.1934, p. 12.

would survive the night due to his abdominal injuries.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, Mosley's claim that eleven Blackshirts had had to be hospitalised with stomach injuries and razor slashes, to which the *Morning Post* purposely added "injuries below the belt", while their opponents had "produced only one man in hospital" was evidently untrue, going by all available evidence.¹⁸²

The fact that Mosley made such an effort to deflect blame for inflicting serious injuries away from his organisation was indicative of the BUF's approach to violence. Even though the *Daily Worker* claimed that "Mosley's fascist thugs are in every respect of the same brand as Hitler's Storm Troops", this assertion does not hold true when their differing ethos of violence is considered.¹⁸³ Though Lawrence has emphasised that violence did have an important role to play in the "ethos of the movement", he has also stressed that for the British Fascists violence was a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. It was considered a "necessary evil", needed to ensure the Fascists could hold their meetings without interruptions, rather than being the movement's *raison d'être*.¹⁸⁴ To this end, the BUF's director of propaganda, Bill Risdon, for example published advice on stewarding "with a view to the maintenance of good order", which meant avoiding a "scrap."¹⁸⁵ In a radio speech broadcast on the BBC a few days after Olympia, Mosley also put forward the narrative of defensive violence, claiming that in "not one single case have Blackshirts ever attacked their opponents' meetings", and assuring listeners that "I can promise you that we, at least, will continue to preserve law and order."¹⁸⁶ Contemporary observers sympathetic to the Fascists concurred that at Olympia the "Blackshirts acted purely in self-defence" and that they had been "simply defending the established British right of free speech."¹⁸⁷ However, making it unmistakably clear that violence had its place in the Fascist movement, Mosley ominously added that "when we are attacked, we hit back and we hit hard: and so would any Briton worthy of the name."¹⁸⁸ This framing by Mosley of violence as a defensive, if regrettably necessary, means contrasted starkly with the gratuitous use of violence in the Nazi movement, for whose members, as discussed above, violence was fundamental to their collective and individual, especially masculine, identity formation. Reichardt has identified three main purposes of violence in the German and Italian Fascist movements. They were the paralysation of the political enemy, the strengthening of

¹⁸¹ "Blackshirts Injured", *Morning Post*, 11.06.1934, p. 6.

¹⁸² "Where are the Bodies?", *Times*, 16.06.1934, p. 21; "Free Speech and Fair Play", *Morning Post*, 15.06.1934, p. 12.

¹⁸³ "London's Smashing Reply to the Fascists", *Daily Worker*, 09.06.1934, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ Lawrence, "Fascist Violence", pp. 254-256.

¹⁸⁵ "Problems of Indoor Meetings", *Blackshirt*, 02.02.1934, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ "The Leader's Broadcast", *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 5.

¹⁸⁷ Florence Charlton, Letter to editor, *Morning Post*, 12.06.1934, p. 16; "Mr. Ward Price Exposes Communists", *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ "The Leader's Broadcast", *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 5.

the inner cohesion of the Fascist units thanks to the collective experience of the fight, and the public demonstration of Fascist power and order.¹⁸⁹ These do not easily map onto the British Fascists. Though Mosley had emphasised that “this age is dynamic” while “the pre-war age was static,”¹⁹⁰ for the British Fascists this dynamism of the new age, of which Fascism, with its prioritisation of action, was a representative ideology, did not necessarily include ‘purification’ through the perpetration of violence.¹⁹¹ If the purposeful glorification of the fight and of violent self-expression and action is considered a central tenet of continental Fascist movements, then, British Fascism was almost oxymoronic, due to Mosley’s outward insistence on violence as primarily a defensive recourse and the BUF’s purported aversion to gratuitous violence. Even at the famed ‘Battle of Cable Street’ on 4 October 1936, when the BUF’s intention of marching through London’s East End constituted a clear and deliberate provocation of the working-class and Jewish neighbourhood, the vast majority of the fighting actually took place between the police and the large numbers of anti-Fascist demonstrators.¹⁹² Evidently, at this point in time, especially against the backdrop of violent Fascist regimes on the continent, a British Fascist movement had to carefully toe the line of publicly expressing regret at and reluctance to use violence, even if its actions contradicted its words.

The discussions of the violence which occurred at Olympia also carried noticeable gendered dimensions. The presence of both men and women among the general audience at Olympia, as well as among the Blackshirts, including their stewards, and also among the number of injured and arrested as a result of the riotous meeting, was generally noted in the press.¹⁹³ Some reports seemed to suggest that the women’s presence almost worked to heighten the confusion and chaotic atmosphere in the hall, as the *Daily Telegraph* for example asserted that “one of the most effective interrupters was a woman who screamed shrilly at the top of her voice.”¹⁹⁴ As the meeting grew more riotous and fighting broke out, it was reported that a “number of elderly women became frightened and left.”¹⁹⁵ However, other female members of the audience, “of bold spirit”, seemed to view the scenes unfolding before them as more of an amusing spectacle, deciding to stand “on their chairs watching the fighting

¹⁸⁹ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, p. 135.

¹⁹⁰ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), p. 137.

¹⁹¹ Lawrence, “Fascist Violence”, p. 255.

¹⁹² Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts!*, p. 227.

¹⁹³ For example, “Sir O. Mosley at Olympia”, *Times*, 08.06.1943, p. 14; “Baton Charges in London Riots”, *Daily Express*, 08.06.1934, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ “Wild Scenes at London Fascist meeting”, *Daily Telegraph*, 08.06.1934, p. 15. Several other references to screaming women for example in “Chase in the Roof”, *Manchester Guardian*, 08.06.1934, p. 6; “Baton Charges in London Riots”, *Daily Express*, 08.06.1934, p. 1; “Blackshirt Battle”, *Morning Post*, 08.06.1934, p. 13.

¹⁹⁵ “Blackshirt Battle”, *Morning Post*, 08.06.1934, p. 13.

through opera glasses and laughing with excitement.”¹⁹⁶ Of central importance in the public discussions over the violence that had occurred at Olympia was the treatment of women in this context. In an effort to discredit their political opponents, the partisan press of both the Left and the Right respectively accused the other side of violently attacking women. The BUF’s *Blackshirt* printed an account according to which Blackshirt men and women had been brutally kicked in the stomach and slashed with razors by Communist interrupters; an eyewitness quoted in the CPGB’s *Daily Worker* recounted largely identical assaults, with the roles of victim and perpetrators reversed.¹⁹⁷ One assault reported in the left-wing *Daily Herald*, by all accounts exaggerated, as the incident was referenced nowhere else, had overt sexual connotations, with a woman as the victim, but women also as stereotyped fury-like perpetrators of the attack. The paper recounted how the woman, who had screamed at the sight of a man being kicked and beaten while lying on the floor, was “thrown to the women Black-shirts, who hit her and clawed at her as she sagged limply on the ground. They picked her up and, with her clothes apparently torn from her, naked from the hips, they carried her screaming through the audience.”¹⁹⁸ Self-righteous outrage at the gendered violence occasionally became bound up with racism, too, as in one eye-witness’ account, who wrote to the *Daily Herald* emphatically stating that “if the way I saw some women being handled means being British, then I would sooner be a Negro.”¹⁹⁹ This element, unsurprisingly, was strong among the Fascists, too, who, as Julie Gottlieb has shown, on the one hand strove to harness women’s racist and anti-Semitic “fanaticism” to further the movement and, on the other, used women as a “veneer of decency” for an ideology which “promised to protect female virtue from alien interference.”²⁰⁰

Far from being only presented as victims of violence, however, the female Blackshirt stewards, in particular, appeared empowered by their use of martial arts in the execution of their stewarding duties. The woman who the *Daily Telegraph* had called “one of the most effective interrupters” due to her piercing shrieks, was promptly “dealt with by a member of Fascist ‘ju-jitsu’ [sic!] girls who have been specially trained for throwing out women interrupters.”²⁰¹ The ancient Japanese technique which the female Blackshirts used to eject

¹⁹⁶ “Baton Charges in London Riots”, *Daily Express*, 08.06.1934, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ “Reason’s Triumph. Red Terror Smashed at Britain’s Biggest Meeting”, *Blackshirt*, 15.06.1934, p. 3; “Fascists Beat Up Women”, *Daily Worker*, 08.06.1934, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ “M.P. to ask about ‘Blackshirt Brutality’”, *Daily Herald*, 09.06.1934, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ “Nine Black-Shirts to Beat Up One Girl”, *Daily Herald*, 11.06.1934, p. 9.

²⁰⁰ Julie Gottlieb, “Women and Fascism in the East End”, *Jewish Culture and History*, 1/2 (1998), pp. 31, 32.

²⁰¹ “Wild Scenes at London Fascist meeting”, *Daily Telegraph*, 08.06.1934, p. 15. Also mentioned in “Sir O. Mosley at Olympia”, *Times*, 08.06.1934, p. 14; Letter to editor, *Times*, 11.06.1934, p. 8.

female interrupters had become popular among British women early in the century as a means of self-defence, but gained special notoriety as the suffragettes' adopted method of defending themselves against police assaults.²⁰² The fact that the Blackshirts had specifically seconded female stewards to deal with female interrupters at Olympia was noted in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, co-signed by senior British Army officer and hero of the 1920 Mesopotamian campaign Aylmer Haldane, as being a particularly noteworthy "action of thoughtful courtesy on the part of the Blackshirts."²⁰³ This apparent expression of confidence in the Fascists' moral decency and gentlemanliness contrasted with other, less generous assessments. Conservative MP Oliver Locker-Lampson told the House that he had "often dealt with Communists at meetings" of his and that he had always "got rid of them in what is called a gentlemanly fashion." One of the Communists had apparently even written to him "applauding me for the delicate manner in which he was conducted out of one of my meetings."²⁰⁴ The implication was clear; Locker-Lampson did not think the Fascists' method of dealing with interrupters at Olympia had been particularly "gentlemanly." While the BUF-supporting *Daily Mail* expressed satisfaction at the efficient manliness of the Blackshirt stewards, likening the "sturdy squad of blackshirted figures" to a "first-class Rugby football team", the *Guardian* was much more biting when characterising the Fascist cult of masculinity as "silly showmanship, lime-lit powwows and posturings."²⁰⁵ The ultimate blow, however, was dealt to Fascist masculinity by insinuating cowardice. The non-Fascist press showed itself very unimpressed by the fact that Fascists outnumbered neutral and hostile audience members by a large number and that, in ejecting them, the stewards were always reported to 'gang up' on individual interrupters. One eyewitness described how an interrupter was "being chased down the corridor by a horde of Blackshirts" while Geoffrey Lloyd claimed that he had seen "case after case of single interrupters being attacked by ten or twenty Fascists. Again and again as five or six Fascists carried out an interrupter by arms and legs several other Blackshirts were engaged in hitting and kicking his helpless body."²⁰⁶ A different report spoke of "eight girl Blackshirts" who "pounced on" a young woman who had shouted something and, "screaming as much as the girl they were ejecting, whirled out of the building."²⁰⁷ Fascist cowardice was

²⁰² Mike Callan, Conor Heffernan and Amanda Spenn, "Women's Jūjutsu and Judo in the Early Twentieth Century: The Cases of Phoebe Roberts, Edith Garrud, and Sarah Mayer", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 35/6 (2018), pp. 530-553.

²⁰³ *Times*, 09.06.1934, p. 15.

²⁰⁴ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1994.

²⁰⁵ "Reds' Futile Protests", *Daily Mail*, 08.06.1934, p. 13; "Miscellany: A London Particular", *Manchester Guardian*, 09.06.1934, p. 11.

²⁰⁶ "Dr. Sheppard & the Violence", *Daily Telegraph*, 11.06.1934, p. 13; "Conservative M.P.s Protests", *Guardian*, 09.06.1934, p. 13.

²⁰⁷ "Baton Charges in London Riots", *Daily Express*, 08.06.1934, p. 1.

thus not necessarily only a masculine shortcoming. Interestingly, one particularly ‘cowardly’ accusation was, once again, flung both ways. The *Daily Worker* had claimed that Mosley had opened his speech at Olympia with a conscious provocation, saying that Communist men “were hiding behind women’s skirts.”²⁰⁸ Four days later, however, the same paper turned the story on its head and claimed that at another Fascist meeting, this one in Southampton, the “male brand of Fascist thug kept away, preferring to hide behind the skirts of the women.”²⁰⁹ Evidently, the mere suggestion of such cowardice in Mosley’s speech had been egregious enough to require the Communists to reassert their manliness by denigrating Fascist masculinity.

While Olympia thus undeniably prompted serious debate over the danger of escalating violence creeping into political culture, at the same time, the chaotic events that had taken place only caused some contemporaries to take Fascism less seriously. An eyewitness who had attended the meeting out of curiosity to find out “what Fascism [had] to offer” was left deeply unimpressed by the “display of un-English theatricalism” and “schoolboy hooliganism.” He disparagingly compared the atmosphere to the “concerted shouting such as one has become accustomed to associate with American University football matches” and concluded that this display had “finally killed our readiness to believe in Fascism as a force worthy of serious consideration.”²¹⁰ Conservative MP Frederick Macquisten also voiced his disdain for not so much the events themselves, as for the fact that the House spent several hours debating their significance. Dismissing some of the evidence, and downplaying the level of violence meted out at Olympia, he declared “all this talk about weapons is bosh. Nobody has any weapons, neither the Communists or anybody else. I do not believe there has been any serious use of weapons.” Instead, he argued the people outraged at what had happened just did “not know what it is to be in a real scrap.” He admitted that “being hit in the face and that sort of thing” was “no doubt [...] very painful”, but the lack of “broken bones” as a result of the altercations led him to consider it to have been no more than “a kind of juvenile scuffle” that had “been given a preposterous amount of importance.” He wondered aloud: “What is the good of treating that gentleman [Mosley, A.K.] so very seriously?”²¹¹

This dichotomy seemed to be characteristic of the discourse sparked by the events at Olympia, which is reflected in the historiographical debate sketched out above, as well as its shortcomings. Pugh and Lawrence have extensively argued about whether or not the violence

²⁰⁸ “Great Anti-Fascist Victory at Olympia”, *Daily Worker*, 09.06.1934, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ “Fascists Hide Behind Skirts”, *Daily Worker*, 13.06.1934, p. 1.

²¹⁰ T.S. Singleton-Fleming, Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 09.06.1934, p. 15.

²¹¹ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 2036.

displayed by the Fascists at Olympia turned public opinion, politicians and the press against Mosley and his movement, or whether, as Pugh has insisted, there remained more public opinion, especially among Conservative politicians, sympathetic to Fascism. While the violent nature of the Olympia meeting certainly proved a divisive issue, the split may not just have occurred along pro- or anti-Fascist lines, but, as has been discussed in this chapter, along the line of whether or not observers took Fascism in Britain seriously as a threat to free speech, democracy and political culture, or whether they chose to downplay its significance, opting instead to trust the 'inherent' British 'immunity' to extremist ideologies from the continent. Fundamentally, then, this was an argument over British exceptionalism and, as this thesis as a whole seeks to explore, the public discourse over Fascist violence at Olympia proved a potent point of crystallisation for the differing opinions as to whether, or to what extent, Britain's experience of political violence in the interwar period differed significantly from that of its continental neighbours.

Though perhaps initially seemingly unrelated, or even inappropriate, a theme which appeared surprisingly frequently in public debate about British Fascism was that of humour. Humour has been described by Martina Kessel as "an important means to negotiate identity and belonging" and a "cultural practice that both organized social order and revealed shared assumptions about society and politics."²¹² Thus, humour actually fits well with the debates over an inherent British immunity to Fascism. Humour was invoked in two related ways: on the one hand, the BUF were perceived to be lacking a sense of humour, while on the other hand, it has been argued that Fascism was an "irresistible target for the British sense of humour" which was thus in part responsible for the failure of the movement in Britain. Gottlieb has explored this theme and confirms that "BUF propaganda was strikingly lacking of self-irony or the ability to laugh at itself"; no doubt a fatal shortcoming for any political movement hoping to achieve popularity with the British people. The overly serious staging of Fascist meetings and marches, complete with Fascist regalia, national symbols, and an attempted imitation of the Italian and German cults of the leader, as well as the violent "aestheticization of male brutality", "failed to sell in the British marketplace." At the same time, precisely due to this pronounced lack of self-irony, Gottlieb asserts that "the movement was easily undermined by humour." Lady Astor, speaking in 1936, gave voice to this notion when she described Fascism as "farcical" and asserted that, should it ever come to power in Britain, "we

²¹² Martina Kessel, "Introduction. Landscapes of Humour: The History and Politics of the Comical in the Twentieth Century", in Martina Kessel and Patrick Merziger (eds.), *The Politics of Humour. Laughter, Inclusion, and Exclusion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto, 2012), p. 3.

should all die laughing.”²¹³ As these examples show, not everyone shared the concerns, laid out above, about the Fascist threat and what consequences an increasingly disorderly and violent culture of political meetings would have on free speech and democracy in Britain.

In the Commons debate of 14 June, MPs too made reference to humour and whether or how it related to Fascism in Britain. O’Connor argued that a certain amount of heckling was normal and healthy at a political meeting, and it was proof of the quality of a speaker if he (it usually was a ‘he’) showed himself able to handle the interruption when faced with such a test of his “wit and humour.” These qualities, by implication, Mosley was thought to be lacking; instead of demonstrating his “wit and humour” in dealing with interrupters at Olympia, Mosley had immediately stopped speaking every time he was interrupted, powerful electric amplification notwithstanding, and had his stewards deal with the interrupters with what many perceived to have been excessive force.²¹⁴ Macquisten (Con) echoed this sentiment. By recounting how he himself used to deal with Communist interrupters at his own meetings, namely by making a joke at the interrupters’ expense, he claimed that “Mosley [...] was born without any sense of humour; otherwise he would be able to laugh at himself and not take himself so seriously.”²¹⁵ However, the Fascist leader was not the only victim of this harsh judgement of Macquisten’s. Foot, the Liberal MP who had brought the debate before the House, and Vyvyan Adams, who seconded Foot’s concerns about the conduct of the Fascists at Olympia, came in for the same criticism, being accused by Macquisten of “not being endowed with a proper sense of humour.” “If they were,” he continued, evidently not sharing in the outrage stirred in many contemporaries by the events, “they would laugh at the whole business; it is ridiculous.”²¹⁶

Whether one actually believes that the British Fascists’ alleged lack of a sense of humour and their resulting susceptibility to ridicule actually brought about, or at least contributed to, the movement’s demise, it is clear that there existed among contemporaries a strong feeling that there was something about Fascism – that continental ideology – which was antithetical to ‘Britishness’, of which a good sense of humour was, and is, considered such a quintessential trait. Prior to their ascension to power, the Nazis were of course also subjected to ridicule at the hands of left-wing Weimar intellectuals and writers, for examples in Kurt Tuckolsky’s weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne*. However, it has been argued that on the whole,

²¹³ Julie V. Gottlieb, “Britain’s New Fascist Men: The Aestheticization of Brutality in British Fascist Propaganda”, in Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan (eds.), *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London, and New York, 2004), pp. 93, 98.

²¹⁴ HC, 14.06.1934, vol. 290, c. 1957.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 2037.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 2035.

Germans in the later Weimar years exhibited a pronounced preference for “seemingly unpolitical, cheerful entertainment”, pushing liberal and democratic voices to the margins in favour of “humorous presentations that were at best paternalistic, at worst outright anti-democratic.”²¹⁷ Thus, the National Socialists gained enough support from people who took them seriously to reap political success.²¹⁸ Liberal MP Kingsley Griffith reminded the House of this circumstance, urging a little less complacency and a little less proud confidence in British immunity to Fascism on his colleagues’ part. “It is not so long ago”, he warned, “since Hitler was almost a figure of fun in Germany, and his party an unconsidered party.”²¹⁹ With the benefit of hindsight, and especially as compared to their contemporaries in Italy and Germany, the British Fascists are relatively easily dismissed as a comical attempt at imitating the continental original, never standing much chance of success. On the other hand, a debate about whether, if only Germans had developed a sense of humour in time, the crimes of the Nazi regime might have been prevented, seems wholly inappropriate. As the discourses analysed in the above section have illuminated, however, British Fascism was not so easily dismissed by all contemporaries in the public discourse, and certainly not by members of the Jewish community, whom the BUF targeted increasingly openly after 1934. Many took the threats to democracy, to the rule of law, and to public order and safety seriously enough to protest the BUF’s behaviour, to passionately debate the issues, propose new laws, and to organise mass counterdemonstrations, most famously in London’s East End in October 1936.

It is noteworthy that, though the shockingly violent character of the Olympia meeting was what prompted the intensive public debates in its aftermath, the violence itself was but one of many aspects which emerged during those debates. A salient factor in this was that contemporary political priorities significantly informed attitudes to the British Union of Fascists. The National Government of the time, consisting of members of all major political parties, came in for criticism from their backbenches, who blamed some of the success of Mosley’s Fascists on the failures of the current government, which had left the electorate disappointed and searching for alternatives. Macquisten voiced this criticism most directly, arguing that Mosley was “stealing a great deal of the thunder of the Conservative party by declaring that he is going to do all the things they said they would do but have not done yet. That is very

²¹⁷ Kessel, “Landscapes of Humour”, p. 6.

²¹⁸ On humour in Nazi Germany, including the regime’s distaste for satire, which had been such a defining feature of Weimar culture, see Patrick Merziger, “Humour in Nazi Germany: Resistance and Propaganda? The Popular Desire for an All-Embracing Laughter”, *International Review of Social History*, 52/15 (2007), pp. 275-290.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 1964.

awkward for the Conservative party.”²²⁰ Pugh furthermore has argued that Conservatives, in particular, feared the electoral threat of the BUF, if it decided to run candidates against them and split the anti-Labour vote.²²¹ It was thus in the interest of the government to vehemently oppose the BUF regardless of whether or not they actually agreed or disagreed with what the movement stood for and how it pursued its goals.

The public debate provoked by the Olympia meeting went deeper than the concerns of everyday politics, however. It in fact served as a gateway to discussions of the very essence of values such as liberty and democracy, which were consciously constructed as British and explicitly in opposition to the failure of free and democratic societies on the European continent. At the very bottom of these debates lay the question of free speech, which the violent escalation of the Olympia meeting, as the culmination of the contemporary climate of political conflict between the extremes and the established parties, posed with increasing urgency. As has been explored above, public discourse was split between those who regarded the right to free speech as absolute, including Fascists’ right to say whatever they wished, short of sedition, without any limitations; while on the other hand, those more worried by the violent side of Fascist politics argued for new and stronger legislation which would empower the executive to prevent such escalations in future and reinforce the state’s monopoly on power. Nevertheless, all but the most openly partisan right-wing supporters condemned the degree of violence employed by the Fascist stewards at Olympia. The debates of democratic values and how to preserve them when Fascists were attempting to unsettle the political status quo, were set in motion by the basic fact that an escalation of this scale and a display of this level of force, in an extremely public setting in the heart of London, attended by a number of Members of Parliament, was highly unusual for Britain at the time and carried enormous potential to shock contemporary British public discourse. The arguments over how to deal with such an escalation were often tied to appeals to the typical ‘British’ ways of dealing with interrupters, by wit rather than violence, as well as being infused with a strong confidence that British political culture was inherently ‘immune’ to the authoritarian tendencies witnessed on the continent. From this strong sense of British exceptionalism, which, it has been argued here, stood at the heart of the Olympia debate, derived a sense that Britain’s role in the world was as a beacon of liberty and democracy, guiding the aberrant continental dictatorships back to the light.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, cc. 2036-2037.

²²¹ Pugh, “The British Union of Fascists”, pp. 533-534.

This chapter has examined reactions to instances of Fascist violence in Germany and in Britain in the early/mid-1930s. As indicated at the outset, it highlights, more than previous chapters of the thesis, the divergent trajectories of British and German experiences of and reactions to political violence by this point in time. Though perhaps a relatively minor aspect, the dimension of humour, discussed above, in reactions to the BUF is, in itself, an indicator of a clear and significant difference. The fact that humorous treatment of a Fascist movement was at all conceivable in Britain certainly distinguished how serious of a threat the BUF's violence was perceived to be by contemporaries compared to how much of a challenge to the foundations of German democratic republicanism Nazism's politics of violence posed. The SA's violent power propaganda was too widespread and too brutal to 'laugh off'. Regarded purely in terms of severity, the violence inflicted at Olympia might be considered comparable to the injuries inflicted on the *Kurfürstendamm*. It is surely telling, however, that, in their respective domestic contexts, the former prompted a very different kind of debate than the latter. What attracted most attention about the *Kurfürstendamm* rioting was the trial that followed, perhaps not least out of a sensationalist interest in well-known defendants like Count Helldorf. The kind of violence used by the SA, in itself, was not notable; rioting resulting in relatively minor injuries and no fatalities at all was far from the most pressing escalation of violence facing the German state in the early 1930s. Parliament was not in session at the time of the riot, but once the *Reichstag* reconvened, the event did not warrant any debate. However, while the severity of the attacks itself was not novel in the contemporary German context, their location and who they were directed against, in ideological as well as in real terms, did cause outrage within media discourse away from the right-wing fringe. As has been emphasised, the prominent location on Berlin's famed bourgeois-bohemian *Kurfürstendamm* boulevard was surprising and unsettling; contemporaries were far more used to clashes between Nazis and Communists, which would often deliberately take place in working-class neighbourhoods. Given the unexpected location, the riot therefore carried potential to shock and outrage the German public. The riot's openly anti-Semitic nature was undeniable, to an extent even by the SA's legal defence, but, though it was a sign of things to come, in this instance it worked to further outrage and shock mainstream opinion, as anti-Semitism was not yet as powerful and attractive a theme for the NSDAP to campaign on as it was to become. The fact that non-Jewish passers-by, both Germans and foreigners, were also attacked by the rioting SA men further reinforced the condemnation, especially with concerns over how such acts would endanger Germany's international reputation.

At the BUF's Olympia meeting, the level of injuries sustained was largely comparable to those inflicted on the *Kurfürstendamm*: fists were the main weapons, and headwounds, cuts

and bruises were the main results; no deaths occurred. However, an outbreak of violence on this scale proved much more unsettling in the contemporary British context, where no political movement(s) were engaged in a sustained politics of violence the way the National Socialists, and, until their defeat, the Communists, had been in Germany a few years prior. As the above chapter has examined, the violent nature of the BUF's stewarding at the meeting led to fundamental questions about the nature of British democracy being asked. While the historiography has focused on whether or not the display of violence in June 1934 caused a widespread loss of support for the British Fascists, the present analysis has been more interested in the kinds of debates which were prompted by the Olympia incident. These revolved around foundational elements of a democratic society, such as the nature and potential limits of free speech, as well as the role and responsibilities of the state executive in maintaining public order; as well as what differentiated British politics and society from the increasing number of authoritarian regimes on the European continent. In 1934 the question whether the public's right to unlimited free speech or its right to safety at political meetings were more important was still left somewhat unresolved. Only with the passing of the Public Order Act in 1936, following the mass public disorder at the 'Battle of Cable Street', did the executive gain significantly increased powers. Throughout this period, the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini were held up in public discourse as warnings of the dangers of Fascism, tying the argument closely to supposedly inherently and uniquely British characteristics like common sense and a dislike for fascistic methods, which were hoped to inoculate the country against those foreign ideologies.

At Potempa, a significant line was crossed as to what violence the SA were not only willing to use, but, more significantly, what kinds of violence the Nazi leadership was willing to publicly defend and associate itself with. The autotelic brutality of Konrad Pietrzuch's murder was shocking to contemporaries, as this kind of violence directed against one defenceless individual differed notably from the more familiar street battles or brawls at political meetings which the SA was frequently engaged in with Communists. The fact that the National Socialist leadership, all the way up to Hitler himself, publicly and emphatically expressed their solidarity with the murderers, found ways to defend their actions, and even turned the narrative upside down and eventually succeeded at turning the convicted men into (living) martyrs, was an unmistakable sign of the toleration and indeed celebration of the politics of violence espoused by the Nazi regime. Importantly, this growing toleration of the SA's highly violent methods also increasingly applied to the old elites and the nobility. The case of Count Helldorf's active participation in organising the *Kurfürstendamm* riots has already been highlighted as an important example of old elites' involvement with and support for the movement and its

stormtroopers. Hitler's declaration of solidarity with the Potempa murderers, furthermore, put no dent in Crown Prince Wilhelm's well-documented public support of the Nazi movement, further indicating the shift of old elites' sympathies towards the National Socialists.²²²

Such a kind of violent politics, and much less its public espousal, was not conceivable in a contemporary British context. Examining the reaction within British public discourse to the violence surrounding British Fascism side-by-side with the reactions to Nazi violence in Germany in the early 1930s is perhaps the most challenging of the case studies chosen for this comparative thesis project, as by this point both countries' experiences with political violence were perceived as utterly divergent, with an openly brutal Fascist regime grasping for power in Germany while British public discourse espoused a strong sense of exceptionalism and held steadfastly on to the image of a 'peaceable kingdom'. Nevertheless, however unintuitive, a comparison between the two countries yields insights into both contexts. Where the previous chapters have pointed towards unexpected shared aspects of both countries' experiences with political violence in the interwar period, such as racial dimensions, controversial paramilitary bodies, anxieties over preserving order, the state monopoly on power, and international prestige, this fourth chapter does more to contrast the two, emphasising the differing trajectories taken. The growing public toleration and even justification of the SA's violent power propaganda by not only the National Socialists themselves, but by established powers and old elites led to violent methods such as examined in this chapter becoming both more commonplace and more defensible in public discourse. A critical shift was occurring in both the kind of violence that was employed as part of Nazi politics, as well as what was becoming publicly defensible without endangering the Nazi party's chances in the political arena. In Britain, mechanisms of discursively and symbolically containing violence and delegitimising the BUF's use of force remained intact; significantly, unlike in Germany, elite voices, including conservative ones, in their vast majority participated in this containment. The fact that at this point in time an event of, relatively speaking, minor political violence such as the Olympia meeting served to alienate a large part of the British public from the Fascist cause (as Lawrence has argued somewhat more convincingly than Pugh has argued against it) and prompted earnest debates over fundamental aspects of British democracy and freedom, must be regarded as an obvious difference between the two countries whose reactions to political violence have been examined over the course of this thesis.

²²² Stephan Malinowski, *Gutachten zum politischen Verhalten des ehemaligen Kronprinzen (Wilhelm Prinz von Preußen, 1882-1951)*, expert opinion, 2014, p. 82, accessible at www.hohenzollern.lol [accessed 15.11.2019].

CONCLUSION

The First World War, in the words of Jürgen Osterhammel, “disenchanted the West and placed a question mark over its claim to rule over, or at least to act as a civilizing guardian for, the rest of humanity.”¹ Nevertheless, after the end of the war, countries of the ‘West’ continued, in both domestic and colonial contexts, to forcefully lay claim to the values of civilisation which, on the one hand, had to be defended *against* acts of ‘uncivilised’ violence, while on the other, they occasionally had to be defended *by* violent means which had to be constructed as legitimate. This thesis has investigated the discursive efforts in Britain and Germany to inhabit the idea of civilisation, in which violence has been shown to have acted as a key demarcator between ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’, between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The rhetorical construction of British identity as ‘peaceable’, of Britain as a people and a nation opposed to violence as a means of politics, became ‘real’ in interwar Britain, not in actual fact, as is obvious when examining peripheral and colonial spaces in particular, but by being repeated often enough in public discourse to become a powerful narrative which convinced at least the elite participants in those discourses enough to delegitimise violence and talk it, especially domestically, largely out of existence. This was not the case in Weimar Germany, where from its inception in defeat and revolutionary violence, public discourse was too harshly divided politically for a strong, convincing narrative of ‘peaceable’ politics to be successful. This was despite the best efforts of many dedicated defenders of the democratic values of the Republic who spoke passionately against political violence. Thus, eventually an opposite discourse which actively embraced and praised violence as a means of politics, led by the anti-republican Right in parliament and in the press and extending to *Freikorps*, underground organisations, large parts of the *Reichswehr*, and later of course the NSDAP and the SA, proved too strong in the discursive fight over the legitimacy of political violence.

This thesis has examined these processes via a series of case studies. As much as violence as a phenomenon transcended the geographic circles which this thesis is constructed around, as much did language do the same, too. Fundamentally, public speech about political violence played an important role in both country’s efforts at identity construction. Germany emerged from the First World War with what has been described as a “culture of defeat,”² everything the German people had known and held dear was broken down or discredited by the outcome of the war, causing a catastrophic defeat and destruction of its pre-war identity.

¹ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 2014), p. 907.

² See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Kultur der Niederlage: Der Amerikanische Süden 1865, Frankreich 1871, Deutschland 1918* (Berlin, 2001).

Therefore, this thesis has argued, the government of the new German republic and those within public discourse supportive of the new state put great rhetorical efforts into establishing postwar Germany as a reliable partner of the international community of democratic, 'civilised', European nations. The fractured political identities in post-/interwar Germany, however, never truly allowed this intended narrative to succeed and become a strong point of national identification in Weimar Germany. Britain, on the other hand, had experienced a stabilisation of its values and a confirmation of its system and identity by emerging from the First World War victorious. With reference to France, in particular, Horne has suggested that, in analogy to the German 'culture of defeat', the Allied victors of the war developed a "culture of victory" which was characterised by efforts at "reconciling a positive outcome to the war with the human price paid."³ As part of this 'culture of victory' this thesis has emphasised how postwar British public discourse was governed by a "fear of brutalisation,"⁴ especially under the impression of the violent realities witnessed on the European continent and the menace of Bolshevism. As a result, those reacting to political violence in British public discourse took great care to characterise it as an 'un-British' method, emphasising the importance of values which were instead constructed as British, such as justice, law, order, and high international prestige as the prime proponent of civilised humanity. This notion of civilisation was, however, to be defended against racial, or politically extremist, Others who might upset those values and the carefully observed class and gender hierarchies which went along with them.

In its first chapter, the thesis has examined political violence taking place in the domestic spheres of Britain and Germany respectively. The chapter crucially highlighted the early breaking of taboos of violence in the German domestic context. In its effort to establish its undisputed authority, the new German government sponsored brutal, and ideologically often undemocratic, *Freikorps* and gave them license to shoot at German civilians to fight off the challenge from the extreme Left. In Britain, on the other hand, a fear, even if disproportionate to the actual danger, of a 'continental' Bolshevik threat caused a strong symbolic reaction against left-wing challenges to 'law and order'. The dimension of political violence in interwar Britain and Germany, especially in the domestic spheres, differed vastly; while hundreds, and even thousands of civilians were killed in German urban contexts,⁵ Britain had no comparable numbers of deaths, or even of serious injuries. However, significantly, this thesis has examined how even much fewer dead or injured bodies could spark a much greater reaction

³ John Horne, "The Living", in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Vol. 3: Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 613.

⁴ Cf. Lawrence, "Peaceable Kingdom", my emphasis.

⁵ See Jones, *Founding Weimar*, especially for Berlin and Munich, 1918-1919; and Schumann, *Political Violence* for detailed analyses of political violence and its victims in Saxony.

in a British domestic context, while in Weimar Germany the 'threshold' for outrage at violence grew higher and higher, right from the republic's conception in the revolutionary period of 1918-1919. The thesis has furthermore contended that this 'threshold' for condemning acts of violence changed across the thesis' geographic circles. Most, and the most severe, of the violence examined with regards to Britain occurred not at the centre, like in Germany, but in peripheral and colonial spaces. It undoubtedly made a difference to the perceptions and constructions of legitimacy of such violence whether one witnessed one's own neighbour sustain injuries from a police baton, or whether one read in the paper of the aerial bombing of unfamiliar, unknown, and unseen Iraqi tribes, with no reliable casualty numbers accompanying the report either. On the other hand, the thesis has also explored how violence done to just one 'special' body at the centre of the metropolis, a prominent body representative of the state, such as that of Henry Wilson or Walther Rathenau, could take on enormous significance and spark strong reactions.

The effort at constructing national identities and the role which reactions to political violence played in this was a particularly prevalent feature explored in Chapter 2. The violence unleashed by state-sponsored paramilitary bodies in the peripheral spaces of Ireland and the Baltic eventually threatened the self-images of Britain and Germany in powerful ways. In an exhibition of the transnational use of language, the accusation that the Black and Tans were behaving like, or worse than, the German 'Huns' had during the war, became the ultimate means of delegitimising their use in Ireland and attacking the government who increasingly lost control over the paramilitary body. The *Freikorps*' refusal to return from their anti-Bolshevik campaign in the Baltic caused more upset to the German government than did their extreme violence; the defiance of orders risked the health and wellbeing of the entire population, as a renewed blockade was at stake. Thus, dissociating itself from the rogue paramilitaries was a priority for the young German state in order to demonstrate its role as a reliable partner to the Allied nations, who shared in their values and understandings of civilised conduct.

While Germans had become synonymous with barbarism as a result of the war, German politicians and journalists were quick, in turn, to accuse Britain of hypocrisy over its violent actions in various colonial settings. Chapter 3 has examined perceptions of political violence through the prism of race within the outermost circle, the colonial sphere, as well as in situations when colonial bodies came back into the metropolis. The geographic removedness of areas like Iraq and Orientalist constructions of civilisation allowed certain kinds of violence to be perpetrated and constructed as legitimate, and even as highly civilised, like aerial bombing, which would have been unthinkable to commit in the domestic sphere against a

'civilised', white population. Nevertheless, the fact that there remained contestation within public discourse over the policy of aerial bombing was testament to the fundamental difference between Britain and Germany, where politics and discourse suffered from much more extreme, and eventually unbridgeable, divisions. When 'darkness' came to the centre, in the shape of colonial soldiers and sailors in British port cities, and French colonial troops of occupation in the Rhineland, it was met with hostility and violence by a threatened white identity. The chapter has explored the collective racial anxiety for the national body, for which white women in particular stood in and whose violation became symbolic of the violation of white European nations, culture, and indeed civilisation, by those constructed as lesser. In Germany, the extremely racialised language used to vilify French colonial soldiers fed into later National Socialist imagery and policy.

The thesis ends with an examination of receptions of Fascist violence in Britain and Germany, respectively. Extending its view as far as the early/mid-1930s has allowed the thesis to chart how public discourses on political violence had changed over the course of the interwar period. The chapter demonstrated how narratives established in 1919 and the early 1920s had become strengthened by this later point. Public discourse itself had continued to drift apart and become more fragmented and extreme in Germany, while in the UK there remained a stronger consensus that political violence was not part of Britain's 'peaceable' identity and instead emphasis was placed once again on law and order. The fact that the Fascist challenge led to open and heated debate over the principles and limits of free speech suggested, on the one hand, that the phenomenon of British Fascism was not entirely laughable, but, on the other hand, only served to exhibit that the established mechanisms of democratic debate remained intact in Britain to an extent that was long gone in Germany's public discourse. Targeted anti-Semitic violence came to the fore in this chapter, but as a theme in framing violent attacks it had been prominent, too, in the assassination of Walther Rathenau and in how the leaders of the Munich Councils' Republic were delegitimised. Crucially, following the breaking of taboos of violence early on in the Weimar Republic, by the early 1930s elites began aligning themselves with the Nazis' brand of violence, lending it credibility and shifting significantly what was regarded as permissible.

Some of the personal continuities which have weaved their way through a number of the case studies examined in this thesis are worth pointing out again in these concluding reflections. In Germany, there were many men among them, trained in violence as their trade, for whom the cataclysm of the First World War left a void of meaning which they chose to fill by continuing their 'careers of violence', searching for redemption. Franz Ritter von Epp's

'career of violence', already sketched out in Chapter 3, stretched from directing pre-war colonial genocide in modern-day Namibia, via the battlefields of the First World War, to commanding his eponymous *Freikorps* in 1919, and ended as director of the Nazi Colonial Office. Josef Bischoff, introduced in Chapter 2, had also participated in the genocidal fighting in 'German South West Africa', achieved the rank of major during the First World War, and after the war commanded the *Eiserne Division* in the Baltic, staunchly refusing to return to Germany.⁶ Chapter 2 also introduced Ernst von Salomon, who was only sixteen years old at the end of the war and thus too young to have actively participated in the fighting. However, like many of his generation, he enthusiastically threw himself into the *Freikorps*' Baltic campaign and his writings on his and his comrades' experiences became highly successful in Weimar Germany. He continued to be published until the 1970s. Following his Baltic 'adventure', Salomon joined the right-wing extremist underground *Organisation Consul* and in 1922 received a five-year prison sentence for aiding and abetting the murder of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau (cf. Chapter 1).⁷ Wilhelm Reinhard, a veteran of the First World War and subsequently commander of an eponymous *Freikorps*, was asked by the German government to assist in quelling the Spartacus uprising in January and to take part in the 'March fighting' in Berlin in 1919. In response to the request for troops he replied simply, "the best assistance is the bullet. You should shoot."⁸ As early as 1919, he clearly expressed no qualms about shooting German civilians in the German capital, indicating that critical taboos of violence were already being broken. His 'career of violence' continued in the NSDAP and eventually led him to the rank of *SS-Obergruppenführer*.

British 'careers of violence' have also threaded their way through the preceding chapters. From common fighters, like Douglas Duff who, as a "free-companion", chose to hire out his "sword" to the highest bidder,⁹ to men who rose up to be organisers of violence at a higher level, like Henry Wilson, Winston Churchill, H.H. Tudor, who created the ADRIC (Chapter 2) before commanding the British Gendarmerie in Palestine, or Hugh Trenchard, who founded the RAF and later became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Their use of violence was officially condoned and organised. Against the redemptive backdrop of victory in the war, and under the influence of a postwar fear of brutalisation, violence was done in the name of preserving law and order, to defend justice, civilisation and 'British values'. On the one hand, British violence often took place away from the metropole, on its periphery, and against people

⁶ Förster, *1919*, p. 141.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸ Memoirs, NL Wilhelm Reinhard, N 691/14, MA Freiburg, p. 48.

⁹ Cf. Duff, *Sword for Hire*

who were constructed as 'other', making it more easily defensible in public discourse. On the other hand, it was also continually subject to critical debate within that domestic public discourse. Both circumstances, the rhetorical construction of violence as a sensible, if regrettable, means for ensuring stability, whether in Glasgow, Dublin, or Baghdad, as well as its continued critical examination within public discourse, were important in explaining Britain's lack of the extreme escalations of violence witnessed in Germany. However, significantly, this kind of British violence did not experience the caesura of 1945. It carried on in the conflicts of decolonisation.

It is necessary to openly acknowledge this thesis' 'vanishing point'. The historical reality, which is not part of the thesis as such, but which informs its research interest, is of course the failure of Germany's first republic, the rise of National Socialism, the collapse of civilisation under the 'Third Reich' and the genocide of Europe's Jews. This thesis also considers itself to be contributing in its own way to the manifold attempts at explaining this. By its comparative approach, it can help show how disparate experiences of/with political violence could be in interwar Europe. Research with a close focus on just German history might lead, and of course has led in the past, to conclusions of a German '*Sonderweg*', making this amount of political violence and its normalisation appear inevitable. Exclusive study of British, especially domestic British history, on the other hand, might lead to assertions that interwar Britain was indeed a 'peaceable kingdom' in which political violence was a "striking absence."¹⁰ In comparing the two, diverse experiences can be discerned, which highlight the varied possibilities, opportunities, imaginations, and choices faced by contemporaries. Yet, having acknowledged both, the ways in which this comparative approach works to highlight the specificities of each country's path, as well as reminding us that those paths were not inevitable, this thesis also shows the fundamentally common European experience of political violence in the interwar period. Even if the dimensions differed significantly, the experience and perpetration of political violence can be regarded as a trait or process integrative to European identity in the interwar era.¹¹ It was especially recurrent as a means of demarcating civilisation and defining varying notions of civilised conduct and identity in the face of 'barbarous', 'uncivilised', often colonial, Others, but also to strive towards defining national identities and values domestically. This thesis has shown that this process of negotiating the boundaries of legitimacy took place differently in British and German public discourse, even if

¹⁰ Gregory, "Peculiarities", p. 54.

¹¹ This notion is here inspired by Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Europeanization through Violence? War Experiences and the Making of Modern Europe", in Martin Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel (eds.), *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century. Historical Approaches* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 189-209.

often similar themes occurred, as political violence played different roles in the rhetorical identity construction in either country. In Britain, the continuous, unresolved tension between self-constructions as a 'peaceable kingdom' and the violent reality, especially in peripheral and colonial spaces, was expressed vividly in public discourse where the efforts at constructing Britishness were carried out and debated. In Germany, if one follows Jones' argumentation, a postwar brutalisation had taken place when the state had used extraordinary violence to found its authority, permitting German soldiers to kill German civilians, women and children, in an inner-German urban context. Therefore, this tension, which in Britain was negotiated in public discourse with a certain consensus on boundaries remaining intact, was heightened in German public discourse, which was much more harshly divided into extremes, with consensus increasingly slipping away. Where British public language successfully if robustly debated the legitimate and illegitimate uses of political violence, in Germany both the sphere of public discourse as well as the people perpetrating or experiencing it, soon began to get used to violence as a means of politics, the state consistently failing to control it, with the challenge to those committing acts of political violence less unified.

The urge to not become used to political violence as something 'normal' continues in the present. As was acknowledged early on, this thesis has been shaped conceptually by its contemporary context. The past several years have seen a proliferation of opinions, put forward by journalists and historians alike, about whether we are currently 're-living' the 1930s, whether fascism is making a global return, about the dangers of twenty-first century populism and illiberalism, and what the similarities and the crucial differences are between then and now.¹² The (short-lived) election of a new liberal minister-president in the German state of Thuringia, elected with the help of votes from the right-wing *Alternative für Deutschland* party in early 2020, caused an uproar, forcing the resignation of the 1-day minister-president, and led to much debate as to whether Germany was witnessing the re-emergence of 'Weimar conditions', which would threaten its foundations and give way to *völkisch* ideologies. Commentators have been undecided on these questions, some emphasising similarities, danger, and the worries of especially Germany's Jewish community, others emphasising

¹² Paul Mason, "Are we living through another 1930s?", *Guardian*, 01.08.2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/01/are-we-living-through-another-1930s-paul-mason>; Andrew Gawthorpe, "Is this fascism? No. Could it become fascism? Yes", *Guardian*, 31.07.2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/31/is-this-fascism-no-could-it-become-fascism-yes>; Francis Beckett, "Britain can be as prone to fascism as any other nation", *Spectator*, 11.04.2020, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/britain-can-be-as-prone-to-fascism-as-any-other-nation>; Mark Mazower, "Fascism revisited? A warning about the rise of populism", *Financial Times*, 11.04.2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/6d57a338-3be9-11e8-bcc8-cebcb81f1f90>; Christopher R. Browning, "The Suffocation of Democracy", *The New York Review of Books*, 25.08.2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/10/25/suffocation-of-democracy/> [all accessed 11.05.2020].

differences between then and now and arguing in favour of confronting current threats to democracy in their own right rather than as a re-hashing of interwar history.¹³ Regardless of their differences in opinion, these debates highlight the continued, or rather renewed, interest in political violence as a phenomenon not exclusive to a bygone era, its danger in the contemporary political context, as well as the centrality of language, especially public language, in its propagation, in its justification, in trying to “push the boundaries,”¹⁴ as well as in the efforts to confront and fight these trends.¹⁵ In this area there lie obvious opportunities for further research into the role and power of language in promoting, and in opposing, political violence, bound unreservedly to concerns of the present and with potential applications in education, media practices, or informed policy making.

This thesis has worked to integrate a variety of historiographies which are often kept separate and thus wishes to contribute to more multi-faceted study of interwar histories of political violence, more in line with the complex realities of how violence and public language actually interacted and transcended geography. The thesis has examined British and Irish history in a more cohesive manner in Chapter 2, it has contributed to studying domestic British and imperial histories more holistically in Chapter 3, and it has especially sought to integrate British and wider European history, which are most often treated separately due to the divergent dimensions of political violence experienced in Britain and on the continent. The thesis is neither solely a study of interwar Britain, nor of interwar Germany. Instead, it has successfully demonstrated that comparative histories of Britain and Germany in the interwar period, even with a focus on political violence, are both possible and can contribute to a better understanding of both. Especially the interest in perception and language, rather than analysis of the acts of violence themselves, has enabled this kind of comparative work. While many of the case studies chosen for this thesis are well-studied individually, the unique manner in which they have been brought together here, across traditional historiographic boundaries and in a bi-national comparison, has worked to highlight some common themes in the discourses examined (not only between Germany and Britain, but also between different case studies from the same country). By examining these disparate case studies in one thesis, the study

¹³ “Historiker: Völkische Inhalte heute nicht mehrheitsfähig. Wolfram Pyta im Gespräch mit Bettina Köster”, Deutschlandfunk, 06.02.2020, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/vergleiche-mit-weimarer-republik-historiker-voelkische.1148.de.html?dram:article_id=469734; “Das erinnert verdächtig an Weimarer Verhältnisse”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 06.02.2020, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/michael-brenner-thueringen-afd-fdp-antisemitismus-1.4787085> [all accessed 11.05.2020].

¹⁴ As quoted and discussed in Introduction, Alexander Gauland, then leader of Germany’s right-wing *Alternative für Deutschland* party, cited in Séville, “Vom Sagbaren zum Machbaren?”.

¹⁵ Yuliya Komska, “In search of an anti-fascist language”, *Boston Review*, 17.05.2019, <http://bostonreview.net/politics/yuliya-komska-search-anti-fascist-language> [accessed 11.05.2020].

counteracts historiographic exceptionalism, most deliberately through the Europeanisation of British historiography. The myth of the “peaceable kingdom” has been clearly identified as just that, a myth which does not stand up when the broader imperial context is considered, as this thesis argues it should. Nevertheless, differences in the nature of the discourses examined have been highlighted and acknowledged throughout as pivotal to explaining the familiar divergences in political violence and political culture which ultimately characterised interwar Britain and Germany. The foil of British public language served to underscore the extreme divisions which characterised German reception of political violence.

By choosing to reject traditional historiographical boundaries between studying political violence in these two countries, this work has pointed towards the direction which much research in future will no doubt take and which this thesis is most closely related to: conducting more comparative, and transnational, studies, integrating diverse European, and even global, experiences into more complex stories of political violence in the aftermath of the First World War, consciously including imperial dimensions, and acknowledging the interactions and reverberations between centre and periphery which applied not only to the practice of political violence but also, crucially, to the language used to speak about it. Of course, this research could in future be expanded to include different kinds of sources which will help reconstruct different voices, experiences, and opinions, to examine perceptions of and attitudes towards political violence in other forums, such as in more private spheres, in cultural spheres, or to examine political language which was explicitly *not* public, but rather kept secret. With a view to the later, post-1945 era, this thesis’ approach may be adapted to the history of decolonisation. These often very violent processes could be examined with similar methods to study how attitudes towards political violence changed after the Second World War and/or during various conflicts of decolonisation and how those conducting public discourses dealt rhetorically with violence as part of (post-)colonial identity construction. Changed international and legal frameworks post-1945 could make for particularly interesting contexts in which the role of violence and its rhetorical justifications had to exist and be re-examined.¹⁶ More generally, the area of language and conflict studies, which straddles the disciplines of history, linguistics, and other social sciences, constitutes a promising emergent field for future interdisciplinary research to which this thesis considers itself related.¹⁷

¹⁶ One example of research in this area is Dirk Moses, “The Language of Transgression before and after the Holocaust”, lecture delivered at the Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 18.04.2017, <https://ies.berkeley.edu/blog/language-transgression-and-after-holocaust> [accessed 13.05.2020].

¹⁷ See for example Michael Kelly, Hilary Footitt, Myriam Salama-Carr (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Languages and Conflict* (London, 2019).

One epitomising image on which this thesis might end would be the year 1938, when violent politics had long carried the day in Germany but were still met by, in retrospect naïve, efforts at appeasement by a British government which continued to believe in negotiation and consensus-building. The developments charted in this thesis point towards this moment. The thesis could, however, also, and perhaps more strikingly, end on the image of SS leader Heinrich Himmler's speech at Posen (Poznań) on 4 October 1943. In the speech, Himmler chose to address his audience of SS group leaders "in all openness" about the "extermination of the Jews." Yet, he was quick to qualify this by stressing that his openness in speaking of the ongoing extermination was only "in private" (*unter uns*) and that in fact, "we will never speak about it in public." He described the genocide as a "glorious chapter [*Ruhmesblatt*] never written and never to be written."¹⁸ This thesis has explored how boundaries of the 'say-able' were negotiated and pushed, and how language was used to condemn or justify certain acts of political violence in public. These processes went further in the extremely divided public discourse of interwar Germany than they did in Britain, where mechanisms, crucially including conservative voices, for the rhetorical and symbolic containment of violence remained much more intact. Nevertheless, even in 1943, amid a war of extermination of unprecedented brutality, there remained among the perpetrators a sense that some things were not, and would never be, 'say-able' in public. The dissolution of the boundaries of violence and of how violence could be spoken of publicly, which this thesis has examined over the interwar period, undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the acts Himmler referred to could be committed at all. Yet the observation that some discursive boundaries remained in place even at the moment of the twentieth century's most radical perpetration of violence, serves as a stark reminder that though discourse can influence reality, "it does not determine it."¹⁹ Though publicly the discursive veneer of civilisation may be left intact, actions often have transgressed it.

¹⁸ "Rede des Reichsführers SS bei der SS-Gruppenführertagung in Posen am 4. Oktober 1943", online at https://www.1000dokumente.de/pdf/dok_0008_pos_de.pdf, p. 25 [accessed 13.05.2020].

¹⁹ Thomas and Toye (eds.), *Rhetorics of empire*, p. 12.

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APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF NEWSPAPERS¹

German newspapers:

Title	Place of publication	Circulation numbers	Political leaning
<i>Der Abend</i>	Berlin	90,000 (1929) ²	Social Democratic (evening edition of <i>Vorwärts</i>) (SPD)
<i>Der Angriff</i>	Berlin	100,000 (1932) ³	National Socialist (NSDAP)
<i>Berliner Tageblatt</i>	Berlin	160-170,000 (1919) ⁴	Democratic
<i>Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	Berlin	21,000 (1920), 63,000 (1931) ⁵	Pro-business, liberal-conservative, after 1920 increasingly nationalist-conservative
<i>Deutsche Tageszeitung</i>	Berlin	65,000+ (1920),	German-nationalist (close to DNVP)

¹ The information contained in this appendix on place of publication, circulation numbers and political leaning has been collated from: The British Newspaper Archive online, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> [accessed 19.12.2020]; Jeremy Black, *The English Press. A history* (London, 2019); David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts, 1900-2000*, 8th ed. (Basingstoke, 2000); Viscount Camrose (William Berry), *British Newspapers and their Controllers* (London, 1947); Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure and Adrian Smith (eds.), *Northcliffe's Legacy. Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1986-1996* (Basingstoke, 2000); Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422-1992* (Basingstoke, 1992); Historic Newspapers, <https://www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/blog/the-times-newspaper-history/> [accessed 19.12.2020]; Andrew Hobbs, "The Deleterious Dominance of *The Times* in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18/4 (2013), pp. 472-497; Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/frm/hlp> [accessed 20.12.2020]; Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Volume Two: The Twentieth Century* (London, 1984); Lebensgeschichten.net, project by Arbeitskreis NS-Gedenkstätte NRW, online, <http://www.lebensgeschichten.net/> [accessed 20.12.2020]; Gary Love, "The Periodical Press and the Intellectual Culture of Conservatism in Interwar Britain", *The Historical Journal*, 57/4 (2014), pp. 1027-1056; J.M. McEwen, "Lloyd George's Acquisition of the Daily Chronicle in 1918", *Journal of British Studies*, 22/1 (1982), pp. 127-144; Barbara Wildenhahn, *Feuilleton zwischen den Kriegen. Die Form der Kritik und ihre Theorie* (Munich, 2009). Unfortunately, despite all best efforts, it has not been possible to ascertain all relevant data in every instance. Circulation numbers, in particular, have been difficult to obtain from reliable sources accessible at this time.

² Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0020> [accessed 20.12.2020].

³ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0050> [accessed 20.12.2020].

⁴ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0250> [accessed 20.12.2020].

⁵ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0370> [accessed 20.12.2020].

		25,000 (1929) ⁶	
<i>Deutsche Zeitung</i>	Berlin	35,000 (1920) ⁷	German-nationalist/pan-German right-wing (increasingly radical, <i>völkisch</i>), anti-Semitic
<i>Frankfurter Zeitung</i>	Frankfurt am Main	84,056 (1919), 55,00 (1932) ⁸	Independent, liberal
<i>Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung</i>	Berlin	7,000 (1924) ⁹	Reactionary, Catholic, conservative, nationalist
<i>Rote Fahne</i>	Berlin	25,000 (1920), 130,000 (1932) ¹⁰	Communist (KPD)
<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i>	Munich	110-120,000 (1933) ¹¹	National Socialist (NSDAP)
<i>Vorwärts</i>	Berlin	300,000 (1920), 76,000 (1930-31) ¹²	Social Democratic (SPD)
<i>Vossische Zeitung</i>	Berlin	80,000 (1918) ¹³	Liberal, democratic, close to DDP
<i>Die Welt am Montag</i>	Berlin	--	Left-liberal, close to SPD
<i>Die Weltbühne</i>	Berlin	12,600 (1925) ¹⁴	Democratic left

⁶ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0410> [accessed 20.12.2020].

⁷ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0450> [accessed 20.12.2020].

⁸ Wildenhahn, *Feuilleton*, p. 118.

⁹ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/0870> [accessed 20.12.2020].

¹⁰ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/1030> [accessed 20.12.2020].

¹¹ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/1190> [accessed 20.12.2020].

¹² Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/1230> [accessed 20.12.2020].

¹³ Institut für vergleichende Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften online, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cgi-bin/cmc/bz/auf/1240> [accessed 20.12.2020].

¹⁴ Christian Zentner (ed.), *Das große Lexikon des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1985), p. 631, cited on <http://www.lebensgeschichten.net/selcont3.asp?typ=L&value=737> [accessed 20.12.2020].

British newspapers:

Title	Place of publication	Circulation numbers	Political leaning
<i>Aberdeen Daily Journal</i>	Aberdeen	58,794 (1947) ¹	Conservative
<i>Blackshirt</i>	London	--	Fascist (BUF)
<i>Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic</i>	Cheltenham	--	--
<i>The Courier and Argus</i>	Dundee	-- ²	Independent
<i>Daily Chronicle</i>	London	800,000 (1915) ³	Liberal (owned by Lloyd George's Liberal fund from 1918 until merger with <i>Daily News</i> into <i>News Chronicle</i>)
<i>Daily Express</i>	London	517,465 (1920), ⁴ 1.69 million (1930) ⁵	Conservative
<i>Daily Herald</i>	London	2 million+ (1930s) ⁶	Left (Labour)
<i>Daily Mail</i>	London	1.77 million (1933) ⁷	Right-wing conservative
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	London	1.2. million (1914) ⁸	Independent/conservative
<i>Daily News</i>	London	1.3 million (1939), as <i>News Chronicle</i> ⁹	Liberal
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	London	84,000 (1928) ¹⁰	Conservative
<i>Daily Worker</i>	London	90-100,000 (1941) ¹¹	Communist (CPGB)

¹ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 135.

² The paper did not issue a "circulation certificate" (in 1947, at least), Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 136.

³ McEwen, "Lloyd George's Acquisition", p. 129.

⁴ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 39.

⁵ Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, p. 183.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 40.

⁸ Aled Jones, "The British Press, 1919-1945", in Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, p. 47.

⁹ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 75.

¹⁰ Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, p. 188.

¹¹ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 77.

<i>Derby Daily Telegraph</i>	Derby	68,000+ (1947) ¹²	--
<i>Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette</i>	Exeter	--	Conservative
<i>The Evening Telegraph and Post</i>	Dundee	-- ¹³	Independent
<i>Glasgow Herald</i>	Glasgow	52,000 (1902) ¹⁴	Conservative
<i>The Manchester Guardian</i>	Manchester	42,000 (1902) ¹⁵	Liberal
<i>Morning Post</i>	London	100,000 (1937) ¹⁶	Right-wing conservative
<i>Observer</i>	London	200,000 (1915) ¹⁷	Independent conservative
<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>	London	-- ¹⁸	Conservative
<i>The Saturday Review</i>	London	20,000 (1933-6) ¹⁹	Liberal (until 1924, then shift to Right)
<i>The Scotsman</i>	Edinburgh	-- ²⁰	Unionist
<i>The Spectator</i>	London	22,500 (1936) ²¹	Conservative
<i>The Times</i>	London	113,000 (1921) ²²	Conservative

¹² Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 106.

¹³ The paper did not issue a "circulation certificate" (in 1947, at least), Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 136.

¹⁴ Hobbs, "Deleterious Dominance", p. 475; 91,317 (1947), Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 139.

¹⁵ Hobbs, "Deleterious Dominance", p. 475.

¹⁶ Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, p. 444.

¹⁸ Camrose doubted "whether [the paper] had a genuine sale of 30,000 in 1914.", *British Newspapers*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Love, "Periodical Press", p.1032.

²⁰ The paper "issues no sales certificate" (in 1947), Camrose, *British Newspapers*, p. 137.

²¹ Love, "Periodical Press", p. 1032.

²² Historic Newspapers, <https://www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/blog/the-times-newspaper-history/> [accessed 19.12.2020].