

THE RISE OF THE INFORMATION STATE: DOMESTIC SURVEILLANCE IN FRANCE
AND BRITAIN DURING WORLD WAR I

by
Gary Edward Girod

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of History Department
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in History

Chair of Committee: Sarah Fishman, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Alexey Golubev, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Nancy Young, Ph.D.

Committee Member: David Vincent, Ph.D.

University of Houston
December 2021

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“Of all the problems which Governments had to handle during the Great War, the most delicate and probably the most perilous were those arising on the home front.”

-David Lloyd George

“The government’s mission is to ensure that good citizens are calm and bad ones are not.”

-Georges Clemenceau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was only possible due to the scholarly, financial and personal support of a host of colleagues, benefactors, friends and family. I want to offer my thanks to all involved.

Dr. Sarah Fishman was a wonderful advisor and mentor who took a much-appreciated active hand in my scholarly development. Dr.s Alexey Golubev, Nancy Beck Young and David Vincent, who formed the other members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Leandra Zarnow for professional assistance and advice. Dr.s Tara Sewell-Lasseter, Quentin Adams and Darah Vann Orr for their input during the various stages of the dissertation.

Archivists and librarians are the oft-unsung heroes of historical research. This dissertation owes its existence to the many helpful people I encountered at *La Service Historique de la Défense*, *Les Archives Nationales*, the *Paris Police Préfecture*, *La Bibliothèque National de la France*, the London National Archives, the Warwick Modern Records Centre, the Birmingham Working-Class Movement Library, the People's History Museum in Manchester, The University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde. Finally, services from the University of Houston and Interlibrary Loan were crucial for research.

My thanks go to the University of Houston Department of History for the Murray Miller travel grant which facilitated my research across Britain and France.

My gratitude to my family and friends for their moral support in this long endeavor.

ABSTRACT

Domestic surveillance is a fixture of modern states, though the centralized accumulation of mass data has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Britain and France's surveillance of their citizen population before the 20th century usually fell to the local authorities, due to slow communication and transportation networks inhibiting the central state's ability to act quickly. World War I brought with it the necessity and popular justification for the massive expansion and centralization of the state's modern intelligence-gathering services, the MI5 in Britain and the Deuxième Bureau in France. The experiences and precedents these agencies set during World War I laid the foundation for contemporary intelligence-gathering in these countries. As the world grows increasingly interested in mass domestic surveillance due to the controversial revelations of Edward Snowden, WikiLeaks, widespread fear of a lack of privacy, and increased accusations that modern governments are moving rapidly towards Orwellianism, we must understand the origins of modern mass surveillance practices.

This dissertation compares the rise of the domestic surveillance state in Britain and France during World War I and its relation to the citizenry of each nation. It examines both the agents of state power and the objects of surveillance and punishment to create a complete picture of the power and presence of these information agencies, uncovering the origins of an essential structure within Western nations. This study addresses the remarkable popular interest in a topic that so far has little scholarly work. Most histories of domestic intelligence-gathering are largely broad overviews, confined to singular countries, from roughly the turn of the 20th century to the end of the Cold War. By focusing on the foundational period of Western domestic surveillance, this study illuminates how modern Western intelligence agencies developed the practical, legal and moral arsenal to spy on their own citizenry.

INTRODUCTION

This study began with a simple question: ‘When did the ‘information state’ first emerge?’ To contemporary citizens of developed nations, the specter of a near-omniscient domestic information-gathering apparatus is a tacitly accepted part of daily life. Whether it is the American National Security Agency, the British Government Communications Headquarters, or any number of agencies in France, Germany, Russia, China and around the globe, most citizens realize that their activity could be constantly monitored. Modern governments can and do access closed circuit television, phone calls, texts, the internet, virtually any electronic device more complicated than a toaster for a variety of purposes.

Public knowledge of this incredible modern information state spiked around 2013 after the Wikileaks scandal and Edward Snowden’s controversial whistleblowing efforts. However, the digital information-collecting processes began much earlier, at their latest in 2001 after the 9/11 terror attacks.¹ The information age has inaugurated a new era of mass communication and with it, automated mass surveillance. While numerous new methods of mass information gathering have been invented and implemented since 2001, the modern process of developed democracies collecting massive amounts of data on civilians began during World War I.

Before the nineteenth century governments were relatively small and relied on localities to enforce national decrees and monitor their own people. The expansion of European nationalism that began with the French Revolution gave precedence to national identity and authority, which consolidated moral, legal, political and economic power into a central state. Meanwhile the advent and proliferation of railroads, telegraph lines, telephones, cars and other

¹ Katharine L. Wong, "The NSA Terrorist Surveillance Program," *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 43, no. 2 (June 2007) 517.

nineteenth and twentieth century inventions permitted centralized states to extend their influence into every corner of the nation, with more power and speed than prior technology allowed. Before the Age of Revolutions, states' spying activities were largely directed towards foreigners, powerful individuals and ethno-religious minorities. A key turning point, the revolution that began in 1789 France, raised fears across the continent, refocused states' attention from foreign spies, power-hungry nobles, dissenting religious groups and Jews to the 'masses' as the seemingly greatest threat to political stability. By the twentieth century total war led the overwhelming majority of citizens to accept prohibitions on potentially subversive conduct that might hinder the war effort. Finally, by 1914 many states had come to consider that the greatest danger did not come from small cabals of powerful aristocrats or minorities, but the working-class who might be infected with anarchism and socialism. The belief that the greatest danger the state faced, outside of foreign military invasion, were the masses of radicalized citizens led states to prioritize mass social control during World War I, necessitating the creation of national domestic surveillance organizations.

Between the French Revolution and World War I, the British and French governments developed two distinct types of organizations: intelligence agencies and police. Intelligence agencies primarily engaged in counter-espionage: monitoring potentially dangerous foreigners. Meanwhile, police prevented and investigated crimes. Originally, intelligence agencies countered threats by foreign spies while police dealt with domestic issues. Yet, intelligence agencies and police regularly collaborated as the former shared information with affiliated police organizations who used it to preempt subversive activity. During WWI, government leaders and intelligence agencies came to view foreign espionage as only one threat to the war effort. With total war, civilians at home also posed a potentially serious threat. These organizations, focusing

on civilians, engaged in domestic surveillance, the mass collection and processing of information on a nation's civilian population. In the process, domestic surveillance and policing became inseparable activities conducted by the two-interconnected branches of the government.

This study takes as its focus Britain and France, long dominant powers in Europe with large colonial empires where they spread their institutions and practices for social control. Britain and France were democratic countries with near-universal male suffrage, yet, during the course of the war, they developed domestic intelligence agencies that rivalled their autocratic counterparts in Germany. I argue that these two countries' long historical interrelationship led them to form similar domestic surveillance institutions and practices. For centuries the antagonistic relationship between France and Britain served as one of, if not the most important instigator of the institutional development of social policing.

This dissertation examines dissident activities and government responses in localities across each country with particular attention to London, Glasgow and Paris. As the capitals and largest cities of their respective nations, London and Paris housed their governments and national organizations. The Paris region also developed more industry before 1914 than any other major city in France, becoming a powerbase for workers' movements. Conversely, Britain's industrial heart was its second-most populous city of Glasgow. The Scottish metropolis dominated heavy metals industries and was a hotbed for radical workers' movements.

The French Revolution and the development of domestic surveillance in Britain & France

The domestic surveillance agencies and practices Britain and France mobilized during World War I grew out of centuries of development as these two nations responded to various threats. Louis XVI inherited in 1774 a large bureaucracy whose royal agents surveilled the aristocracy. For centuries French monarchs had developed a centralized state to combat their oft-rebellious nobility until Louis XIV subdued them and consolidated power in the monarchy. As the threat of noble rebellion declined a new group of educated bureaucrats emerged that would contest political power. When the political-economic crisis of 1788 arrived this middle-class already held many positions of power. Its members, with the experience needed to run the government, had adopted Enlightenment-era ideas for how to reinvent the state. Finally, technology and infrastructure allowed the middle-class to create local, regional and national networks for coordinated action.

In spite of Enlightenment rhetoric, the revolutionary National Assembly and its successors retained the practices of the *Ancien Régime* against anti-revolutionary threats. Already in 1789, the Assembly increased the number of police spies in Paris and adopted many of the *Ancien Régime*'s heavy-handed repressive tactics. Later that year the National Assembly allowed local *commandants de la place*, who controlled communes, to arrest, expel people from town, control prisons and do whatever was necessary to maintain public order.² The Revolution brought down the old political order without greatly altering the bureaucratic apparatus or the functions of domestic intelligence-gathering. The only major change the Revolutionary governments developed was to shift domestic surveillance from the aristocrats to the broader

² Howard G. Brown. *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 200.

public. The antiquated agencies and practices that failed to safeguard the *Ancien Régime* likewise failed to protect the Revolutionary governments when Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in November 1799.

Napoleon recognized his regime needed a powerful, competent and responsive police force to suppress would-be revolutionaries and initiated a massive overhaul of this system. Within three months of seizing power, Napoleon centralized police forces with “the law of 28 pluviôse, year 8 (February 17, 1800) [which] established prefectoral supervision of local policing.”³ The central state established a hierarchical system and mechanisms for regular contact and supervision of localities. Napoleon’s meritocratic system meant that local police could ascend the ranks. Rather than alienating rural police he incorporated them into his system of surveillance and control. Furthermore, Napoleon understood that the stability of his regime depended on controlling Paris. For this he had Minister of Police Joseph Fouché refashion the Paris police force into a well-ordered bureaucracy that monitored Parisians’ views of the state. Uniformed police possessed a mandate to counter false rumors and had remarkable powers to suppress what the state deemed disinformation.⁴

Police under Napoleon served the same function as they had under the *Ancien Régime*, namely to secure the government’s power, updated with Enlightenment-era rationalism. The Emperor’s government demanded regular crime statistics from the Paris police and the gendarmerie to monitor discontent and rebellious activity.⁵ Under Napoleon, city and rural police reported monthly on public opinion.⁶ All of these reforms meant the First French Empire had an

³ John Merriman, *Police Stories: Building the French State, 1815-1851* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

⁴ Clive Emsley “Introduction: Political Police and the European Nation-State in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Mark Mazower (Oxford: Bergman Books, 1997), 5-6.

⁵ Clive Emsley, *Crime, Police, & Penal Policy: European Experiences 1750-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 118.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

organized, responsive police force firmly controlled by the central state. Following Napoleon's defeat, the Restoration monarchy maintained his police reforms.

Britain watched the Revolution in France with revulsion and fear. Most Britons were accustomed to low-key policing, particularly in England, where many people shared a belief in a semi-mythical English constitution and the natural rights of Englishmen.⁷ However, even as the majority of Britons expressed opposition to French-style policing, political leaders modeled British police forces after their continental counterparts. In March 1792 the French Revolutionary government sent spies into Britain to watch the *émigrés* and stir up revolution. In response the British government developed a prototype of a metropolitan police force based on the Paris police to counter a French-style mass uprising. That June, Parliament passed the Middlesex Justices Act which created seven police offices within London, each of which had a force of six constables and three magistrates to counter the Jacobin clubs within the city.⁸

While London police practices resembled those of their Parisian counterparts, such as regular surveillance of suspicious individuals, their attention focused on foreigners, not British subjects. Lawmakers used this important distinction to justify the expansion of police forces and powers over the next century. Over that time British police learned how to spy, infiltrate and punish subversive groups, skills which they later used against their own citizens. When Parliament authorized large-scale domestic surveillance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries British police almost immediately resembled their French counterparts, conducting regular surveillance of notable dissidents and even infiltration of their groups.

⁷ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750-1900* (Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman Group, 1987) 171-172.

⁸ Elizabeth Sparrow, *Secret Service: British Agents in France 1792-1815* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 1999) XI, 5-6, 7.

In 1829 Home Secretary Robert Peel created a new police force within London to replace the semi-professional constabularies. Dubbed ‘Peelites,’ the 3,000-strong full-time police were professionally trained, wore standardized uniforms and undertook regular patrols. Unlike constables, who mediated conflict and investigated crimes, Peelites aimed to prevent crime through patrols and investigations of suspect persons. They also published crime statistics like their French counterparts.⁹ Ironically, British policymakers used statistics to monitor police effectiveness and justify the expansion of law enforcement offices to a public that still feared French-style authoritarianism.

By the late 1820s both France and Britain had professionally trained, full-time police in their capitals and, to a lesser extent, the nation at large. These bodies regularly collected crime statistics, leading to a revolution in information-gathering and changing the relation of the individual to the state. The proliferation of crime statistics increased fears of moral decay, leading to an increase in police budgets, staff and powers.¹⁰ Additionally, regular statistical collection coincided with industrialization and urbanization. Just as sensational urban crime reports began appearing in popular newspapers, rural people in large numbers moved into over-congested cities, often becoming part of an urban underclass. Many elites agreed with social theorist Thomas Malthus that populations in cities expanded too quickly. They feared that without adequate infrastructure and resources society was decaying.¹¹

Starting in the late 1820s the French and British states engaged in unprecedented mass data collection as they sought to know and control their populations. According to Clive Emsley, France’s Criminal Justice Administration had a “momentous impact on European justice.”

⁹ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750-1900*, 171, 180, 187, 189.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹¹ Clive Emsley. *Crime, Police, & Penal Policy: European Experiences 1750-1940*, 158-159.

Gathering statistics with the intent of shaping policy, the accounts “gave details of defendants charged with crimes by age and sex (from 1826), it listed their civil status (from 1828), place of birth, residence, and level of education; their occupation according to a nine-class division (from 1829), whether their residence was urban or rural (from 1830); whether they were wage-earners, self-employed, or unemployed (from 1831).”¹² Meanwhile the British government focusing on general knowledge rather than crime, compiled a number of economic surveys. Parliament passed the Registration Act of 1836 which centralized information-gathering on births and deaths.¹³

Over the 1830s-1840s the middle-class increased its economic and political power in both Britain and France. The July Revolution 1830 in France brought Louis-Philippe, the ‘Bourgeois King,’ to power alongside a government that favored the middle-class. In 1832 the British Parliament passed the first Reform Act which expanded suffrage to the gentry. The inclusion of the upper middle-class in the political arena and polite society changed elite perceptions of the public. Respectability increasingly derived from economic well-being rather than noble birth. Many commoners acquired political power, wealth and intermarried with the aristocratic class, which was ultimately eliminated in France in 1848.¹⁴ Even as elites accepted the middle-class entry into political power they feared the rising number of poor workers in the expanding cities.

In one sign of the rising concern about the growing number of urban poor, France’s Academy of Moral and Political Sciences launched a competition for an essay that explained “the elements that compose this part of the population which forms a dangerous class by its vices, its ignorance and its misery,” and suggested solutions. Responding to that call Honoré

¹² Ibid., 119-120.

¹³ Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England*, 71-74.

¹⁴ During the Second Empire some people held hereditary titles but privileges were eliminated.

Frégier, bureau chief in the Paris Prefecture, published in 1840 a two volume “scientific” study. Frégier came up with the notion of ‘dangerous classes,’ in the plural, the “poor and vicious” urban populations that generated crime and vice. Rather than poverty Frégier considered moral depravity the cause.¹⁵ Frégier’s work was quickly translated into English, where police and Benthamite reformers also referred to poor urban populations as the ‘dangerous classes.’¹⁶

Another concern about the urban poor in the nineteenth century centered on English economist Thomas Malthus’ theory that population growth always exceeded a society’s ability to produce resources needed to support itself. During the mid-nineteenth century Benthamites in Britain and Positivists in France connected Malthus’ theories of resource scarcity with Frégier’s ideas of dangerous classes. These social reformers believed that inevitable shortages of resources naturally produced criminals. However, they argued that the state could reform all but the most deviant people through policing, controlled welfare, workhouses and prisons.¹⁷ The British and French governments responded to heightened fears of growing poor population in urban areas by bolstering police forces and powers. In Britain the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act created police forces in 178 counties while the 1839 Rural Constabulary Act empowered rural counties to form police forces. The 1856 County and Borough Police Act forced localities to create their own police, though they could decide its structure. However, the central government required local police to pass an inspection to receive Treasury funding, retaining some measure of control over the country.¹⁸

¹⁵ Olivier Faure, “La naissance des classes dangereuses: entre mythe et concept,” *Rhizome* 23 (July 2006).

¹⁶ Clive Emsley, *Crime, Police, & Penal Policy*, 139, 142.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 158-9.

¹⁸ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (Harlow, UK: Longman. 1991), 35-56.

Fear shifted from the middle and working classes to foreign spies and subversives

Over the late nineteenth century suffrage expanded in Britain and France to include all the middle class men, in Britain some and in France all working-class men. In France the republicans won a majority in 1876 and began to take control from the monarchists.¹⁹ Tensions calmed as respectable parties dominated the French Parliament, while voters relegated monarchists and socialist radicals to smaller fringe parties. In England, general elections in 1885 and 1886, shortly after the expansion of suffrage, resulted in Conservatives winning a plurality. Conservatives realized that British workers did not define themselves solely by class but by region, religion, nationality and other identifiers to which the party could appeal. Such moderate voting patterns and limited agitation of the newly enfranchised allayed concerns about radical social upheaval.²⁰

Changes in perceptions of poverty reduced inter-class tensions. By the 1880s most policymakers and reformers viewed the poor as victims of social circumstance rather than as moral deviants. The British and French states aimed to reform petty criminals rather than punish them.²¹ In 1885 the French Parliament passed the Parole Law which granted parole for those criminals who could be reformed. To remove those beyond redemption from France, the Relegation Law deported “habitual criminals” to the colonies.²² In Britain in 1889, the large-scale London dockworkers strikes remained orderly and did not precipitate violence, theft or

¹⁹ GeoElections, “Législatives de 1876,” accessed November 28, 2019, http://geoelections.free.fr/France/histoire/1876L_elus.htm

²⁰ United Kingdom Election Results, “General Election Results 1885-1979,” accessed November 28, 2019, <http://www.election.demon.co.uk/geresults.html>

²¹ Paul Lawrence, “Policing the Poor in England and France 1850-1900,” in *Social Control in Europe, Vol. 2: 1800-2000*, ed.s Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson and Peter Spierenburg, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2004) 221-222.

²² Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 49.

criminality, proving that workers had reasonable grievances and would negotiate peacefully.²³

By the 1890s many political leaders in Britain recognized that the working-class movements aimed to improve living conditions, not spur violent revolution. By the turn of the twentieth century nearly all political leaders recognized that only a small cabal of dedicated revolutionaries desired to overthrow the state.

As tension between economic classes declined, new foreign threats challenged Britain and France's internal stability. Prussia's unexpected and rapid victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, followed by the consolidation of the German Empire shifted the attention of political leaders in Britain and France from domestic discontent to the new military threat.

France's rapid defeat in the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871 shocked the nation, which had long been one of the great land powers of Europe. Prussia had mobilized its intelligence-gathering expertise to facilitate rapid and coordinated troop deployment. The early leaders of France's Third Republic, formed after defeat, recognized the German Empire's superior intelligence capabilities. Within the year, the French Parliament created a new military intelligence organization, the *Deuxième Bureau*, to neutralize German espionage within France and deal with the new challenges of the modern era.²⁴ The *Deuxième Bureau*, rather than conducting operations, primarily processed information which it received from police.

By the end of the century political events would embroil the *Deuxième Bureau* and its subdivision, the *Section de Statistique*. The Dreyfus Affair, which quickly became a national scandal, started in September 1894 when French intelligence agents discovered evidence that a military officer was passing classified information to Germany. The General Staff quickly

²³ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study In The Relationship Between Classes In Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 281, 315.

²⁴ The *Première Bureau* handled troop movements. In 1874 four other bureaus were created. Deborah Susan Bauer, *Marianne is Watching*, 2, 7, 106.

pinned the blame on Jewish lieutenant-colonel Alfred Dreyfus. The army quickly court martialed, convicted and sentenced Dreyfus to life imprisonment on Devil's Island. However, efforts by his family turned up information that vindicated Dreyfus and implicated a different office. Rather than admit their mistake, the Army and its intelligence agencies fabricated evidence to deceive the nation. The Affair became an international scandal after world-famous writer Émile Zola published the editorial *J'Accuse!* asserting that the General Staff had conspired to uphold Dreyfus' conviction.²⁵

Reacting to the corruption and anti-Semitism of the French Army and intelligence community, on 1 May 1899 the government did not shut down the *Deuxième Bureau* but transferred its counter-espionage operations to the civilian-run *Direction de la Sûreté Générale*.²⁶ For the next decade, the *Deuxième Bureau*'s subdivision, the *Section de Statistique*, openly warred against the civilian *Sûreté Générale* for power.²⁷ In response the government reorganized *Section de Statistique* and revoked its autonomy. The Dreyfus Affair led to a rupture between the Army, determined not to admit its errors, and the police, which backed Dreyfus and the constitutional framework of the Republic.²⁸ The Affair ensured that civilians, not the military, directed domestic intelligence-gathering. From 1899 through World War I the *Sûreté Générale* oversaw domestic surveillance, partnering with both the *Deuxième Bureau* and local police in an overlapping web of prerogatives.

Another factor in the expansion of surveillance, a surge of terrorist activity began in the 1880s. Terrorist attacks rocked Britain starting in 1881 when Irish nationalists launched bombing

²⁵ Ibid., 248-249.

²⁶ Sébastien Laurent, "Aux origines de la « guerre des polices » : militaires et policiers du renseignement dans la République (1870-1914)," *Revue Historique* 307, 786.

²⁷ Ibid., 787-788.

²⁸ Ibid., 788-789.

campaigns across England and in Glasgow. That year, in response to the Irish nationalist attacks on civilians, the government created a bureau within the London Metropolitan Police tasked with counterterrorism. Two years later this bureau became its own entity called Special Irish Branch and eventually in 1910 just Special Branch as it expanded surveillance to anarchists and suffragists. Special Branch started out small and even by 1914 had only 80 employees.²⁹ British politicians recognized public fears of a French-style political police and did not yet support large-scale domestic surveillance.

A decade later, in Europe and the US anarchists unleashed a wave of high-profile assassinations attempting to overthrow what they deemed oppressive regimes led by wealthy elites. In 1894, an Italian anarchist in Lyon stabbed and killed French President Sadi Camot. Three years later anarchists shot Antonio Canovas del Castillo, the Prime Minister of Spain in Santa Águeda, Spain. The following year anarchists stabbed Empress Elisabeth of Austria to death in Geneva. Anarchist activity continued into the next century with the shootings of Umberto I, King of Italy, in 1900 and US President William McKinley in 1901.³⁰

Britain, however, largely avoided anarchist violence after the Irish nationalist attacks. Haia Shpayer-Makov pointed out, “the only person killed by an anarchist weapon in Britain was the French anarchist Martial Bourdin, who died while mishandling a bomb in Greenwich Park in 1894.”³¹ Nevertheless, the British press widely reported on occasional police arrests of anarchists for possessing weapons or planning attacks.³² Adding to concerns, 2.4 million Jews from Russia, a hotbed of anarchist activity, immigrated to Britain between 1880 and 1914, forming an

²⁹ Bernard Porter, *The Origins of the Vigilant State: The London Metropolitan Police Special Branch before the First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), 19, 181.

³⁰ Haia Shpayer-Makov, “Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914,” *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 4 (Summer, 1988), 490.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

especially large community in London. Anti-Semitic fears of Jewish involvement in radical, international plots intensified worries about anarchism.³³

By the early twentieth century, attention shifted back to external threats. Press coverage of Germany's naval buildup was amplified by a popular book about German spying. William Le Queux, in 1906, published *The Invasion of 1910*, a best-selling novel detailing how German spies infiltrated nearly every branch of the British government. The novel opens with Londoners waking up to discover most telegraph and rail lines cut across the country by German agents in advance of a swift invasion. While Britain remains crippled a German army lands in southeastern England and marches on London, where it seizes part of the city before eventually being repulsed. Le Queux claimed that he based the novel on sources within British intelligence who confirmed the book's authenticity. Special Branch's chief, William Melville, promoted the book, legitimizing it to the public.³⁴ Le Queux's novel and its exaggerated and unverifiable claims spread the belief that German spies were widespread and ready to paralyze British communications and transport at a moment's notice. The novel prompted a wave of anti-German spy literature, increasing British fears of invasion. Fears rose as the German government launched a naval buildup which many British leaders and the general public considered a direct threat to their security.³⁵

In response to allegations of German spying combined with the naval arms race in 1909 the British government quietly created the Secret Services Bureau, overseeing both foreign and domestic counterintelligence. In 1910 the Secret Services Bureau split into multiple agencies.

³³ Paul Knepper, "The Other Invisible Hand: Jews and Anarchists in London before the First World War," *Jewish History* 22, no. 3 (2008), 296-297.

³⁴ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 7-9.

³⁵ The Boer War was another impetus for Britain to develop intelligence services as its large military struggled to counter the guerilla fighters. Jennifer Siegel, "Training Thieves: The Instruction of "Efficient Intelligence Officers" In Pre-1914 Britain," in *Intelligence and Statecraft: The Use and Limits of Intelligence in International Society*, ed.s Peter Jackson and Jennifer Siegel, (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2005), 128-129.

The two most important new agencies were Military Operations Section (t), or MO(t), which handled domestic surveillance, while Military Operations Section (c) oversaw foreign espionage.³⁶ Like the French *Deuxième Bureau*, MO(t) processed information gathered primarily by police. MO(t) also ordered police to act against dangerous individuals. In 1911 Parliament passed the Official Secrets Act which authorized investigations into suspicious persons. Once in court, the burden of proof was upon the accused.³⁷ While MO(t) had only six employees, already in 1912 its ambitious leader Vernon Kell had created a registry of suspicious persons, including foreigners and British civilians.³⁸ MO(t) began as a small organization with an enormous portfolio, though Parliament endowed it with incredible powers to surveil individuals.

Citizens in Britain and France had long struggled to limit their governments' arbitrary power to punish individuals or to suppress large groups. Rather than resist the changes, both governments adapted, creating new agencies that exchanged heavy-handed repression tactics for innovative methods that maximized intelligence-gathering to forestall challenges. When the war started in 1914 these highly sophisticated groups gained personnel, expanded budgets and a mandate to defend the nation at any cost with few limits to their authority.

A Shared History: The development of domestic surveillance in France and Britain

Britain and France's domestic surveillance and social control mechanisms were to a significant extent shaped by the intense relationship, complementary and competitive, they

³⁶ MO(t) it changed its name to Military Operations Section 5 (MO5) during WWI and finally became Military Intelligence Section 5 (MI5) in 1916, its current name. Military Operations Section (c) later became Military Intelligence Section 6 (MI6).

³⁷ Kevin Quinlan, *The Secret War between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s* (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2014) 3.

³⁸ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm*, 52. Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 42.

shared. Whether in opposition or through coordination, these two countries forced each other to develop new intelligence-gathering agencies and mechanisms. The first London police services emerged in 1792 specifically to monitor the Jacobin clubs. Ideas, such as Honoré Frégier's 'dangerous classes' and Thomas Malthus' theories on social collapse, crisscrossed the Channel, prompting both governments to direct attention to working people. The Dreyfus Affair raised the prospect of German spies infiltrating critical government agencies, as did novels such as Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910*. However, British fears of a French-style secret police prevented them from developing large-scale surveillance agencies until World War I. Meanwhile, French people looked to the British 'Bobby' as a respectable agent of the peace and demanded similar limitations on police power.

Britain and France's interconnected history is essential to understanding the similar development of their agencies and practices prior to and during World War I. Britain and France, while hardly friendly partners for much of their history, influenced each other in ways that resulted in remarkably similar agencies, practices and ideas regarding surveillance and social control.

Methodology, Sources and Organization

Governmental domestic surveillance, not as simple as one party observing another, is a complex web of cooperative and contentious relationships between government organizations and individuals. No agency in Britain or France had a monopoly on state surveillance and punishment. Multiple intelligence agencies cooperated with each other and with police to

identify and neutralize threats to the public order. However, by 1917 disputes over policies and prerogatives between agencies led to conflict.

The organization of domestic surveillance in Britain and France took the form of a three-tiered system with national cabinet leaders at the top, intelligence agencies in the middle and police on the bottom. Cabinet leaders dictated policies to intelligence agencies for maintaining national order. Intelligence agencies formulated practices for dealing with spies and subversives and charged police to act upon them. Finally, police departments and individuals translated these directives into actions against individuals. Although orders flowed from above, subordinate entities reinterpreted them for a variety of reasons. Change also filtered upward. Police relayed information to intelligence agencies that altered perspectives on which groups were dangerous and how best to deal with them. In turn, intelligence agencies furnished reports to political leaders above them, shaping policy.

As complex as the relationships between government agencies were, equally complex relationships existed between the watchers and the surveilled. Intelligence agencies and police were tasked with protecting the nation's citizens from radical subversion that threatened to disrupt the war effort. That included anti-government activity linked to labor movements aimed at protecting workers' rights and standards of living. Intelligence agencies and police struggled to silence, sequester and punish the most radical labor agitators without angering the workers they needed to keep war production going. Finally, police who often came from the neighborhoods they policed often felt sympathy for workers. Intelligence leaders and the heads of police departments had to convince their officers their actions were just and necessary, which became increasingly difficult as war weariness set in.

A thorough examination of all parties involved will illuminate the complex interrelationships between the watcher and watched, and between divisions within the watchers. The dissertation will examine national political leaders, ministries, intelligence agencies, police departments, labor groups, political parties, anti-conscription and anti-war groups, and notable individuals, incorporating the interrelated actions of each party to elucidate the development of domestic surveillance agencies and practices. Chapter 1 sets the stage with an examination of theories of western European state surveillance and considers how historians have conceptualized this complex topic. It then sets out the dissertation's theoretical approach.

This dissertation relies on a variety of sources. Government papers from the numerous ministries and intelligence agencies, supplemented by personal correspondence and memoirs from prominent figures, form the basis of observations of the central states' actions. Police reports, circulars and notes detail direct actions taken by the forces of order. In contrast, anti-government and anti-war pamphlets, newspapers, recorded speeches, letters and memoirs provide the perspective of those surveilled. Popular newspapers and reports from government agencies not directly involved in surveillance complete the source list.

The dissertation examines the evolution of domestic surveillance over each of the four years of World War I. Both British and French governments massively expanded their powers to surveil and punish, starting in 1914, even though the overwhelming majority of people in both countries responded to the declarations of war with patriotic vigor. Early on both governments used their new powers only against the most vocal anti-war agitators. As the war continued, dissatisfaction spread across the homefront. By 1917 anti-war sentiment and agitation became more frequent, prompting the British and French governments to expand their power and presence in civilians' lives.

The dissertation concludes by following developments in the immediate post-war. Even though they had won the war, the 1917 Russian Revolution prompted both the British and French governments to retain their expansive surveillance states to combat a feared Bolshevik threat. As those fears abated, surveillance continued through the 1930s to counter the rise of anti-democratic far-right groups. The dissertation concludes by examining potential areas of future research in surveillance.

Chapter 1: The Theory and Historiography of Surveillance in Western Europe

A study of surveillance presents a number of challenges to the researcher. Those surveilling often act secretly. Intelligence agents' primarily work to prevent harmful incidents from happening. Therefore, a dearth of incidents in the sources does not necessarily mean a lack of action. On the contrary, states employ habitual surveillance to deter dissidents from acting. Moreover, surveillance also changes with developments in politics, society and technology. For these and other reasons surveillance is a complex topic that is subject to change from a variety of factors.

The historiography of domestic surveillance and social control in Britain and France evolved markedly over the past half-century. Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1975) is a starting point for many. Foucault was a pioneer in critiquing totalizing systems within developed democracies. His work challenged theories of state influence as he argued that democracies conditioned their people to act in ways amenable to state authority. Theda Skocpol led the major criticism of Foucault. Noting that he was a philosopher, not a historian, Skocpol argued that he mischaracterized the state. Skocpol argued that the state must be understood as a series of interlocked, ever-evolving processes.

As historians approached the topic, contemporary events deeply shaped the orientation and approach. During the Cold War, sources on spying were classified, and historians tended to focus on governments and global power struggles, in both theoretical and political ways. The rise of social history led scholars in the 1980s to shift to studies of the police agents who served as the eyes, ears and arms of the state. Eventually that attention to the people who interacted with the public inspired historians to reconsider the

idea that control flowed entirely from the top down. By the late 1990s historians began to explore the two-way nature of interactions at every level. The end of the Cold War opened up another new era as archives filled with formerly classified documents became public. New sources turned historians' attention to close examination of the people, mechanisms and operation of specific agencies.

While not a historian, Foucault's *Surveiller et punir* was highly influential in historical studies of state power, knowledge and social control. Foucault detailed Enlightenment philosopher Jeremy Bentham's designs for a new type of prison, the Panopticon. Within a Panopticon, guards could observe prisoners at all times without themselves being observed. Bentham theorized that since prisoners never knew when they were watched they would constantly act as if they were surveilled. Foucault argued that modern Western states developed these institutions which surveilled their populations "continuously in the very foundations of society, in the subtlest way possible." Modern political and economic systems, rather than relying on local control, relied on internalization of norms. Foucault interpreted that function leading to omniscient organizational structures such as the "barracks, schools, workshops."³⁹ From childhood on, surveillance and discipline molded the thoughts and actions of individuals. This culture also fostered suspicions between individuals, limiting their ability to coordinate and resist authority. Foucault concluded that Western states do not control their populations through harsh, public punishments but through the constant threat of punishment which discourages people from disobeying authority.

The ideal point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgement that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would be interlaced with the ruthless curiosity of

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 208-9.

examination, a procedure that would be at the same time the permanent measure of a gap in relation to the inaccessible norm and the asymptotic movement that strives to meet infinity.⁴⁰

Foucault argues that earlier Western political systems used force to keep the public under control while modern governments achieved this by molding the minds of their citizenry to inhibit effective resistance to state authority.

Surveiller et punir, remarkably influential, launched a number of subsequent works, such as Stanley Cohen's *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification* (1975), Françoise Castel's *The Psychiatric Society* (1982), and an important collection by leading historians of psychology *The Power of Psychiatry* (1986) among others. However, his approach also came under intense scrutiny. Political scientist Theda Skocpol criticized its theoretical vision which offered little elaboration on how institutions, particularly government, actually operated. In *Bringing the State Back In* (1985) Skocpol emphasized how divided central state powers were, focusing on their bureaucratic and cooperative nature. Skocpol builds on the work of Alfred Stepan who argued that the state, more than just the government, "is that attempt not only to structure relationships *between* civil society and public authority in a polity but also to structure many crucial relationships within civil society as well."⁴¹ Skocpol further emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of a multifaceted and multitiered modern state.

In another response to Foucault, Allan Sekula in "The Body and the Archive," examines the uses of mid-19th century photography. Sekula agrees with Foucault that, "social power operates by virtue of a positive therapeutic or reformatory channeling of the body." Photography became a mode whereby police in the 1860s could capture individual identities. Many British

⁴⁰ Ibid., 227.

⁴¹ Alfred Stepan *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978) p. xii, quoted in Theda Skocpol "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research" in *Bringing the State Back In*, Ed.s Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, 3-38 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 1985).

and French law-abiding citizens accepted, even welcomed the mass photographing of criminals so that police could protect them and their property from dangerous individuals.⁴² Sekula accepts Foucault's contention that the panoptic model of total information-gathering permeates Western state institutions, but adds that in modern states this regularly occurs with the consent of the governed when these methods prove useful to the protection of bourgeois property rights.⁴³

Historians also criticized the notion of surveillance organizations as a calculated state control mechanism. The historiography from the 1980s portrays surveillance as arising as preexisting institutions for social control underwent rationalization and mechanization. Christopher Dandeker's *Surveillance, Power & Modernity* (1990), summarizes the three prevailing theories of surveillance development: bureaucratization, Marxism and Machiavellianism. Bureaucratization theory, which asserts that growing populations and increasing complexity led to greater oversight, draws largely from Max Weber, who argued that modern societies naturally create surveillance since they are a necessary part of complex bureaucracies, which in turn are needed to regulate increasingly complex societies.⁴⁴ Marxist doctrine contends that greater production and the subsequent seizing of excess profit led to more surveillance. Later Marxist historians having adapted Weber's theories supporting a Marxist interpretation as he argued that the development of complex economies increased rationalization which led to increased surveillance. As rationalization of production increased oversight to eliminate variables that cut into production, surveillance became a natural facet of capitalism.

Dandeker proposes 'Machiavellian theory,' attributing increased surveillance to competition between states.⁴⁵ Simply put, the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries brought about a

⁴² As this was the height of phrenology, photography also aided the study of delinquent types.

⁴³ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *The MIT Press* 39, (Winter 1986): 3-64.

⁴⁴ Christopher Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power & Modernity*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990) 2, 8-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Preface VII.

military revolution as European states competed with each other for resources. Funding constant warfare required more efficient taxation systems and a more effective bureaucracy. Increased warfare broke down the distinctions between war and peace as states engaged in constant surveillance for tax purposes.⁴⁶ These trends continued into the twentieth century with total wars mobilizing entire societies to fight.

Dandeker argues that in the 1970s philosophical and sociological approaches dominated interpretations of the surveillance state's origin. During this period historians did not possess the necessary archival material to write comprehensively on state surveillance. However, by 1990 contextualization reemerged as a dominant force. Rather than creating a teleological narrative from the development of the first professional police to the gulag, historians looked backward to chart the precursors to professional surveillance and policing. Surveillance has become increasingly important as a 'society of strangers' emerged with modern industrial capitalism and the breakdown of traditional interpersonal linkages. Dandeker notes pre-modern societies had little central surveillance since governance relied on local elites overseeing populations living in self-contained agricultural communities. Before the American and French revolutions, government had been a prerogative of the elite, and thus only indirectly connected to most people. Due to natural technological, geographic and bureaucratic constraints, pre-modern policing was an internal communal activity largely disconnected from the central state. Capitalism created a society of strangers as it undermined horizontal relations and largely erased the personal patronage connections of vertical relationships. Surveillance was a way to recover 'knowing,' although in an impersonal manner.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 70-75, 102-105.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 110, 116.

Social historians pioneered new ways of thinking about domestic surveillance by focusing on individual police officers. Inextricably linked to surveillance, police prior to World War II served as intelligence-gathering and enforcement agents of centralized surveillance organizations. The main domestic surveillance organizations in Britain and France during World War I possessed few field agents of their own, had limited resources and were tasked with primarily processing information from police sources. Only during World War II and the ensuing Cold War did British and French domestic surveillance organizations develop into well-funded, well-staffed modern bureaucracies.

Because the early surveillance state relied on the police to gather intelligence, police studies represent an essential element surveillance studies. Before the 1990s, ‘surveillance studies’ generally referred to the actions and intentions of a centralized state to monitor and control its population. However, states acquired their information largely through their local police forces who could be sympathetic to their communities. Citizens had the ability to contest police power, and police (in theory) were employed not just to maintain order and oppose crime, but also to protect citizens safety and property.

Social historians working on history from below focused on individual police agents and target of surveillance. In the collection of essays titled, *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism, and Public Order, 1850-1940* (1991), a number of scholars reassert the importance of the individual police officer. In her essay “Urban Policing And Its Objects: Comparative Themes In England And France In The Second Half Of the Nineteenth Century,” (1991) Jennifer Davis highlights, in contrast to Foucault, the constraints police faced. Police enforced the law selectively as they sought cooperation with the subjects of their authority. She argues that while elites feared ‘the masses’ in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution,

as crime rates declined in the nineteenth century, they imagined the ‘dangerous class’ to be a small group of underemployed vagrants, rather than the working class as a whole. In order to prevent crime, police had to make their presence felt in as wide an area as possible which was difficult due to budget constraints. With limited numbers, police avoided arousing popular opposition by acting selectively against sequestered groups.⁴⁸ While police were paid agents of the state, Davis’ research contends that in fact their work demanded popular support.

Emphasizing the realities of police operations and not just official powers, David Englander, in “Police and Public Order In Britain 1914-1918” (1991) examines policing during World War I. He found that police had near-unlimited authority but their forces remained small, particularly as many policemen served in the army. Given their limitations, police largely ignored petty crimes while punishing lawbreaking actions that hampered the war effort.⁴⁹ Davis and Englander convincingly demonstrate that while states make laws, the enforcement of those laws remained predominantly in the hands of working and middle-class police officers serving the communities they originate from. The relationship between citizens and central states was mediated by local police, who in turn negotiated relations with those they policed.

Another question involves how policing functioned not in authoritarian but liberal systems? Examining the link between police and the state over a long period of time, Hsi-Huey Liang in *The Rise of Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the Second World War* (1992) explains why the rise of police in Britain coincided with a liberal era. He argues that police were not seen as tools of overarching governmental power but as

⁴⁸ Jennifer Davis, “Urban Policing And Its Objects: Comparative Themes In England And France In The Second Half Of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism, and Public Order, 1850-1940* ed. by Clive Emsley and Barbara Weinberger, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991) 2-4, 8.

⁴⁹ David Englander, “Police and Public Order In Britain 1914-1918” in *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism, and Public Order, 1850-1940* ed. by Clive Emsley and Barbara Weinberger, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991) 91-96.

promoting freedom and liberalism. British police followed certain rules, operated within clear laws, interrogating individuals, using minimal force and minimizing damage to society.⁵⁰ In contrast, Liang found a more complicated situation in France; police were divided between the *Direction de la Sûreté Général*, the gendarmerie and the local police. Liang argues that the general population in France was suspicious of the two national police groups which they linked to harsh authoritarianism. Conversely, Liang found that the local police aroused much less suspicion because they generally acted to maintain public order across regimes, rather than supporting any individual government. The national police forces were accused of being political police but the public saw local police forces as agents of order.⁵¹

Making the link between politics and policing explicit, Clive Emsley and Jean-Marc Berlière, in *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (1997) reassert local police's role as actors for a central state. Berlière's research revealed that the Third Republic continued political policing, defined as harassment, censorship, or other uses of police force directed against specific groups the state opposed. Surveillance activities increased while direct action decreased as a method of social control.⁵² In addition to prisons and policing, surveillance also involved centralized intelligence organizations that issued directives and worked with agents on the street who collected information. Furthermore, Berlière found that in France police regularly engaged in acts of suppression, including using agent provocateurs.⁵³ In comparison, in Britain,

⁵⁰ Hsi-Huey Liang. *The Rise of Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the Second World War*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992) 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 44-45, 48, 56.

⁵² Jean-Marc Bèrlière "Republican Political Police? Political Policing in France under the Third Republic, 1875-1940" in *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century* edited by Mark Mazower, 29-49, (Oxford: Berghan Books, 1997) 29-30.

⁵³ Clive Emsley "Introduction: Political Police and the European Nation-State in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century* edited by Mark Mazower, 1-28, (Oxford: Berghan Books, 1997) 3-11.

Emsley argued that while police were less invasive than their continental counterparts, the ‘Bobbies’ engaged in political policing during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well.⁵⁴

The collapse of the USSR opened up a new era in the history of surveillance studies. The release of previously classified materials enriched research on Cold War era surveillance.

Richard Thurlow’s *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (1994) examined government control of political extremism with a focus on the Communist Party of Great Britain, British fascists and Irish nationalists. Thurlow argues that late nineteenth century Victorian liberalism eroded in the face of internal and external challenges. Internally, a number of political pressure groups engaged in extra-parliamentary activities, most notably anarchists, feminists and Irish separatists.⁵⁵ Externally, British politicians became increasingly aware of the importance of intelligence agencies to modern warfare, which Germany had demonstrated in the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871. German intelligence services provided crucial information that resulted in a stunning military upset.

Thurlow portrays British intelligence services developing as ad hoc responses to specific threats rather than a conscious attempt to create a police state. In 1881 Irish nationalists launched a series of bombing campaigns against Britain, prompting London’s Metropolitan Police to create the Irish Special Branch. Although intelligence services had been operating in the empire, Special Branch, as it came to be known, was the first investigative state-intelligence service of the Victorian period based within metropolitan Britain. As its original name implies, Special Branch initially focused on Irish terrorism, then expanded to counter the radical women’s

⁵⁴ Clive Emsley “Introduction: Political Police and the European Nation-State in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Policing of Politics* edited by Mark Mazower, 11. This is for evidence of 19th century political policing. 20th century political policing will be heavily detailed throughout this work.

⁵⁵ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994) 15-25.

suffrage movement.⁵⁶ The government still rejected using the military to monitor and punish its citizenry. In 1910, during a series of miners' protests in South Wales, then-Home Secretary Winston Churchill directed the police, rather than the army, to maintain public order. Troops could be used, but only under the direction of local police authorities. This decision established the precedent that troops would only be used when police alone could not maintain order.⁵⁷

Thurlow depicts the emergence of Military Intelligence Section 5 as a similarly slow and cautious process. Before 1914, Military Operations Section (t) (a precursor to MI5) investigated foreign spies in Britain.⁵⁸ Thurlow argues that the British government focused on external threats because it did not consider internal threats a serious challenge to the state. As suffrage expanded to broader groups of men over the nineteenth century political leaders were reassured by the moderation of new voters. They saw little evidence of revolutionary socialist or Marxist ideas, or any sizeable anti-government movement.

Thurlow contends that Britain abandoned its cautionary ethos during World War I, a critical era that led to expanding secretive state organizations like Special Branch, MI5 and other intelligence bureaus connected to different departments. The 1914 Defense of the Realm Act (DORA) imposed martial law on common law organizations. DORA weakened Parliament while giving the executive near-total control over government functions. Special Branch grew from 112 to 700 secret police. MI5 increasingly monitored British citizens, rather than German spies. The Ministry of Munitions reported on laborers in 1916 when the government feared the growing labor movement merging into a unified national movement.⁵⁹ Thus, Thurlow concludes that

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20-25, 28-29.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 47-50, 71.

Great War surveillance shifted intelligence services monitoring from external threats to internal threats.

Along with Thurlow's book on British intelligence services, a similar study focused on France, Douglas Porch's *The French Secret Services: A History of French Intelligence from the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War* (1995). Thurlow and Porch agree that Britain was an outlier, having created intelligence services in the latter nineteenth century that rapidly expanded only during World War I. According to Porch, France's large-scale, intensive domestic spying had been developing for centuries. Porch argues that French domestic spying gained new life under Napoleon Bonaparte who combined the authoritarian mechanisms of the *Ancien Régime* with the Enlightenment belief in progress and rational application of laws upon society. From the Restoration until 1848, French monarchs' personal spy network, the *cabinet noir*, served as a secret police force. The Second Republic briefly dismantled this practice before Napoleon III revived secret policing. The fall of the Second Empire and the birth of the Third Republic only enhanced France's predilection for secret policing, in response to the role Prussia's superior intelligence played in its victory in the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871.⁶⁰

Thurlow and Porch refocus attention on the central state. Both historians argue that domestic intelligence developed in response to geopolitical threats. Britain's military successes and relative domestic tranquility gave way to unease caused by the Long Depression of 1873-1896, Sinn Fein bombs, anarchist and feminist agitation and the rise of Germany as a world power. In the nineteenth century France, by contrast, experienced repeated revolutions and two military defeats which prompted governments, including the democratic Third Republic, to build and maintain domestic intelligence service.

⁶⁰ Douglas Porch, *The French Secret Services: A History of French Intelligence from the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1995) 5-7, 17-19, 30-31.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, studies of surveillance expanded beyond states' tactics for social regulation to a broader vision of mechanisms of social control. Whereas previous scholarship, deeply shaped by a Cold War understanding of totalitarian regimes, emphasized the power of the central state to order society in accordance with its political goals, by the twenty-first century historians emphasized the collaborative nature of social regulation and social control. The governments of Britain and France from the late nineteenth century through World War I relied on collaborators within radical organizations to give them information and, during the war, on the press to self-censor sensitive information. Both governments relied on radical organizations to police their more militant members and turn them over to the authorities. During the height of war fever, the governments of Great Britain and France turned patriotic crowds against dissenters. Finally, they relied on popular support to condone their repressive tactics. Before World War I, the British general public was suspicious of domestic intelligence agencies. The French grudgingly accepted them, although the Dreyfus Affair severely damaged the *Deuxième Bureau*'s reputation. During World War I in both Britain and France, the public supported domestic intelligence agencies, agents and their directives to purge society of the German, and later Russian communist, infiltration.

The total nature of World War I clearly had an impact on governance. Focusing in on the war years, Brock Millman in *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (2000) argues modern social control developed during World War I due to the requirement to mobilize all society in support of the war effort.⁶¹ When war began in 1914, previously anti-war and anti-government political parties, organizations and newspapers either supported the war or engaged in self-censorship. While the Independent Labour Party (ILP) had been the leading anti-war party

⁶¹ Brock Millman. *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000) 1-2.

before the declaration of war, its patriotic members believed it was their duty to defend Britain from German aggression, and large numbers enlisted in the army. Enlisted men outnumbered conscientious objectors nine to one in the ILP. Meanwhile, members of the Liberal Party who opposed the war remained silent to avoid internal divisions.⁶²

Millman argues that the participatory nature of modern social control makes it more effective than its antecedents. Medieval and early modern states enacted harsh punishments against their subjects which at times led to uprisings. In contrast, the World War I-era British state primarily surveilled dissident groups then effectively guided mass movements and crowds to suppress them. One of the states' most effective control mechanisms was publishing information about anti-war groups' public meetings. Beginning in Spring 1915 politicians leaked details of the anti-war Union for Democratic Control's meetings to newspapers. On its own the press publicized anti-war meeting locations and times and in turn large patriotic crowds violently broke up the meetings. Owners of theaters and opera houses regularly refused to host ILP and British Socialist Party meetings due to their anti-war stances. Newspapers with dissenting opinions engaged in self-censorship as the mere threat of being labelled 'unpatriotic' was often enough to scare away advertisers and readers.⁶³ Millman argues that the British government effectively managed dissent by promoting patriotism, labelling dissenters as unpatriotic and allowing the majority of citizens to target and silence anti-government individuals and groups.

Confirming Millman's emphasis on public self-censorship, Lionel Marchand's *Lettres censurés des tranchées, 1917: Une Place dans la Littérature et l'Histoire* (2001) examines government censorship between the warfront and the homefront in France. As in Britain, the popular French press engaged in a level of self-censorship, until 1917, insisting that the French

⁶² Ibid., 11, 14-15, 44.

⁶³ Ibid., 53-56, 77.

army was winning the war.⁶⁴ The press published this narrative, aware that it was not entirely accurate, in part to avoid censorship but mostly out of patriotic desire to calm the homefront. Furthermore, newspapers that wrote positively about government management of the war gained access to the Front, gaining credibility over the anti-government papers that relied on hearsay. The more a paper followed the government line, the more credible its access to information made it seem.

However, Marchand argues that the press convinced few French people about conditions at the Front in part due to ongoing correspondence between soldiers and their families. By law letters between civilians and soldiers were censored, but the bureaus tasked with censorship, woefully understaffed, only read two to four percent of the roughly 180,000 letters mailed every week. Soldiers and civilians also circumvented censorship through allusions and coded language. Marchand asserts that this was a way of circumventing state authority without challenging it.⁶⁵ Marchand demonstrates that the government did not have complete power and people could evade or subvert attempts at censorship. The public was aware of widespread surveillance and exercised agency in contesting government power.

Both Millman and Marchand highlight the importance of looking at how people on the ground reacted to government censorship. Although it could be subverted, both British and French governments relied on the public to do the work, employing as little direct pressure as possible. Both wartime governments primarily acted during the war against the most radical anti-government agitators rather than the rank-and-file. Furthermore, relatively light punishments meant that these states could better depict themselves as liberal and free. Finally, these

⁶⁴ Lionel Marchand, *Lettres censures des tranchées, 1917: une place dans la littérature et l'histoire*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001) 89.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 150-152, 160-161.

governments allowed for some level of private dissent so long as it did not transform into anti-government action. The British government allowed the No-Conscription Fellowship and anti-war groups to hold private meetings so long as they did not publish anti-war literature or deliver speeches to non-members. The French government censored only the most virulently anti-government papers, not by shutting them down but by denying access to information. Lack of access discredited their reporting and hurt sales. These tactics marginalized dissenters as anti-patriotic, uninformed, self-segregated groups of radicals. Dissenters denied being anti-patriotic and insisted they were either anti-war or critical of the government's handling of the war. However, both governments considered their dissent a threat and barred them from public engagement, making it difficult for them to counter the government's portrayal of them as defeatist. Both governments managed to make dissenters appear to be uninformed while keeping them from offering their opinions to a wider group of citizens. In their approaches Marchand and Millman demonstrate the effectiveness of ostracizing anti-government groups and leaders. Calling them 'unpatriotic' and allowing the public's approbation proved more effective than heavy-handed suppression. Marchand and Millman demonstrate that surveillance was not a purely top-down phenomenon. The public played a role in shaping surveillance either by aiding the government as patriotic enforcers or subverting state power through censorship evasion.

The most recent trend in historical study of surveillance has been again shaped by research circumstances. As archives in Britain and France declassified official papers, historians shifted towards institutional studies.⁶⁶ Olivier Forcade, in *La République Secrète: Histoire des services spéciaux français de 1918 à 1939* (2008) establishes continuity between the Second Empire's social control tactics and those of the Third Republic, which retained the political

⁶⁶ British and French national archives have released many of their papers related to WWI. However, new papers continue to be released.

police under the *Sûreté Générale*. Forcade argues that after the Franco-Prussian War, the newly formed Third Republic focused intelligence agencies away from controlling their own population to countering foreign (namely German) spies. The government created the *Deuxième Bureau* for counter-espionage but it and related organizations over time increasingly engaged in surveillance of their own citizenry.⁶⁷

Building on Forcade's insights on the shift from counter-espionage to domestic surveillance, Deborah Susan Bauer's dissertation, *Marianne is Watching: Knowledge, Secrecy, Intelligence and the Origins of the French Surveillance State (1870–1914)* (2013) focuses on the *Deuxième Bureau*. Bauer argues that French domestic intelligence gathering developed more from "individual initiative and an esprit de corps than from legal codifications."⁶⁸ Bauer contends that since the end of the *Ancien Régime*, with its *lettres de cachet* the French public vehemently opposed secret police beholden to the central state. Nevertheless, the French public had a favorable opinion of the Army. After the Franco-Prussian War, the public supported domestic spying networks operating in the name of national defense. Bauer argues that Ministry of War and Ministry of the Interior operated intelligence and counterintelligence systems where secrecy "was accepted under the aegis of the important task of national defense." They kept the legislature, which would have protested secrecy, "at a considerable distance from intelligence and counterintelligence operations." Meanwhile,

Slowly, but methodically, the army administration created institutions tasked with secrecy, with discovering secrets of neighboring countries and simultaneously defending their own. Both projects had tacit and evident support from the public (as far as they were known), as the notion of secrecy became crucial to the sustainability of the nation.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Olivier Forcade. *La République Secrète: Histoire des Services Spéciaux Français de 1918 à 1939*. (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2008) 22, 25.

⁶⁸ Deborah Susan Bauer. *Marianne is Watching: Knowledge, Secrecy, Intelligence and the Origins of the French Surveillance State (1870–1914)* DISS. 2013, 4-5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

Institutional histories of the organizations that conduct surveillance bring out the importance of work cultures and geopolitical outlooks. Christopher Andrew's *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (2009), commissioned by MI5 which hoped to improve its public image, highlights the agency developing a culture set apart from both the central government and the public.⁷⁰ He looks back to the years near the end of World War I, when many people and government leaders in Britain feared a communist plot following the Russian Revolution. Andrew found that MI5 leaders worried less about socialists and the ILP, which had publicly denounced Bolsheviks, and instead prioritized 'subversives' brought to their attention by the activities of the 'Red Clydeside,' the far-left agitators in industrial Glasgow.⁷¹ After the war, priorities flipped. Vernon Kell, head of MI5, considered communist Russia as Britain's gravest threat, even as Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald tried to normalize relations between the two countries.⁷² Thus the work of Forcade, Bauer and Andrew clarifies the importance of particular institutional cultures and outlooks of those conducting surveillance. The inclusive, secretive nature of intelligence organizations separated them from the public and even from political leaders.

Because domestic surveillance is an incredibly complex topic, my approach to the study of the surveillance state is shaped by all of these methodologies. Individual agents conducted surveillance and relayed information to their bureaus. These bureaus created reports which they passed on to their mother organizations for data analysis, who in turn reported to the central government. Each transferal of information contained a measure of

⁷⁰ Christopher Andrew. *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009). Foreword.

⁷¹ Ibid., 103. For more information, see Iain McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, (1983: repr., Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), 2.

⁷² Christopher Andrew. *Defend the Realm*, 142.

selective reduction as agents removed irrelevant data. By this process biases filtered upward from individual agents to the central government. At the same time, biases filtered downward as the central government sent directives to the bureau heads, who in turn ordered their agents to focus on particular groups and individuals. This discursive process could be harmonious or contentious as disagreement emerged between and within organizations.

Domestic surveillance in World War I-era Britain and France was filled with contradictions. Police and individual agents were the most capable surveyors of their neighborhoods due to their familiarity. Yet, that familiarity meant they could be sympathetic to those they monitored and policed. The central government expected the heads of MI5 and the *Deuxième Bureau* to operate on their behalf. However, these institutions developed their own outlooks that could contradict the central governments. For example, MI5 chief Vernon Kell came to loggerheads with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald over the Russian threat in World War I's aftermath. Furthermore, institutions angled for increased power and independence, often against other agencies. In Britain this led to a bitter struggle between MI5 and Special Branch after World War I, whereas in France a divide emerged between civilian and military intelligence during the Dreyfus Affair.⁷³ Finally, policing and surveillance institutions, not mere subsidiaries of central governments, became self-contained entities that protected and furthered their own interests. The most notable example took place during the Dreyfus Affair, when the

⁷³ For Britain, see Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 51. For France, see Olivier Forcade. *La République Secrète*, 27-29.

Section Statistique covered up its knowledge of the ‘petit bleu’ to protect its own reputation while framing lieutenant-colonel Alfred Dreyfus.⁷⁴

Domestic surveillance in Britain and France during World War I was further complicated by a lack of centralization and coordination. Surveillance was conducted by numerous agencies created to address specific threats. France had a long history of harsh political policing, making the Third Republic reluctant to develop similar practices. The French state divided power and prerogatives between the Ministry of the Interior which controlled central police, the Army, and new domestic intelligence agencies. Britain prided itself as being free of continental despotism. Given the public’s opposition to a large central government, the state developed domestic surveillance organizations piecemeal. In Britain, intelligence was split between Military Operations Section 5 (later MI5) and Special Branch originally charged only with countering Irish terrorism. In both Britain and France intelligence agencies had overlapping powers, portfolios and agendas. Furthermore, neither government centralized intelligence until 1936 and 1937, respectively.⁷⁵

For decades Britain and France operated without centralized intelligence agencies, which both publics viewed as a threat to individual liberty. As such, Foucault’s theoretical framework of a central state that operates through select institutions to impose order upon its citizenry is oversimplified. Rather than a chain of command, there existed a web of priorities, obligations, loyalties and sympathies spread across a wide array of

⁷⁴ Jean-Denis Bredin. *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*. Trans. By Jeffrey Mehlman. (New York: George Braziller Inc, 1986) 144, 161-3.

⁷⁵ Between 1919-1921 Britain had a Directorate of Intelligence, but this was ended with the sacking of Sir Basil Thomson of Special Branch. Kevin Quinlan. *The Secret War between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2014) 10. For information on France, see Olivier Forcade. *La République*, 23.

actors and institutions. These entities occupied a general stratum of privilege with individual police and intelligence agents on the bottom, their bureaus above them and the central government on top. However, the power relations were never fixed points, but generally accepted loci of authority.

This study of the history of domestic intelligence in Britain and France examines all aspects of its operations and developments. Failure to examine any part of domestic intelligence gathering, processing and action misrepresents the processes, individuals, agencies and governments involved. Only a total history can fully explain how such radical change developed in British and French societies. Another shortcoming of previous studies has been the failure to consider the transnational element between Britain and France. Taking into account the adversarial, cooperative and discursive relationships between Britain and France with regards to domestic intelligence explains how and why their agencies, ideologies and practices developed. Thus, this dissertation examines the central governments, the various intelligence bureaus involved, police agencies and individual agents, and finally the people and groups subject to surveillance. It examines the actions and intentions of political leaders, intelligence heads, police agents and the recipients of surveillance. This study incorporates previous methodologies to create a total history of the emergence of modern domestic surveillance institutions and practices in Britain and France in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 2: Control through Cooperation, Pre-War through 1914

The European powers spent decades preparing for a war most viewed as inevitable. Politicians in pre-World War I Britain and France had grown increasingly concerned about public opinion. Press coverage of Britain's scorched earth tactics and concentrations camps during Second Boer War 1899-1902 divided the public and turned world opinion against Britain. In France, supporters of the Third Republic contended with monarchists, Boulangists and other popular movements that threatened the government. As a new European war loomed British and French officials monitored the press and public mood to direct public opinion.⁷⁶

When the war began, British intelligence, "rounded up all the agents of any significance working for German naval intelligence." Following this summer purge, "no remaining agent was able to pass on potentially crucial intelligence on the departure for the continent of the British Expeditionary Force."⁷⁷ In France, "In the first weeks of the war a wave of arrests targeting foreigners occurred, but no one was found guilty of espionage in the trials that followed."⁷⁸ Afterwards British and French intelligence agencies increasingly focused on harnessing domestic public opinion and inhibiting the activities of political radicals. Throughout the war the British and French governments massively expanded their surveillance apparatuses and their powers to find and neutralize subversives. Despite their concerns about public opinion, during the first year of the war British and French officials realized that their people's overwhelming patriotism gave the government broad support to silence dissent without much government interference. That

⁷⁶ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 34.

⁷⁷ Christopher Andrew, "MI5 in World War I," MI5, accessed 31 May 2021. <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/mi5-in-world-war-i>

⁷⁸ Sebastien Bischoff, "Spy Fever 1914," 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, accessed 5 May 2021. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/spy_fever_1914

would change as the war continued with no clear end in sight, officials in both countries more directly silenced and sequestered dissidents.

In spite of the public support from the start of the war, officials in both countries passed a number of highly restrictive laws, but they were precautionary and rarely used before 1915. Widespread demonstrations of patriotism and the retreat of anti-government radicals convinced officials to stand back and allow their citizenry to silence dissent. Major labor groups like the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in Britain and the *Confédération Générale du Travail* in France supported the war and their governments' execution of it. Labor groups supported the government both due to genuine patriotism and fear that they would be accused of betraying the country in its time of need. Patriotism and the fear of being seen as anti-patriotic meant that citizens voluntarily avoided striking, censored themselves and cooperated with new government directives. In France the name for this period of national unity in defense of the homeland, the "*union sacrée*," indicates the depth of initial public support.

Britain, The Press and Public Opinion before the War

British policymakers became acutely aware of the power of public opinion following international outcry against the government's actions during the Second Boer War. In a speech before Parliament Liberal leader Campbell-Bannerman declared that the British army was not fighting a war but engaging in, "methods of barbarism," through its scorched earth tactics and use of concentration camps. Campbell Bannerman had a reputation, "as a principled and credible politician," and newspapers regularly repeated his description of British "barbarism."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Chris Williams, "Our War History in Cartoons Is Unique": J.M. Staniforth, British Public Opinion, and the South African War, 1899–1902," *War in History* 20, no. 4 (November 2013), 521-522.

Moreover, the British military appeared ineffective due to its difficulty in subduing the Boers. As historian Thomas Fergusson argues, “The greatest cost of the South African War...was a perceptible loss of British international prestige...The fact that the British ultimately prevailed over the Boers made little difference in this respect.”⁸⁰ International press during the Second Boer War spread the perception that Britain was morally compromised and militarily weaker than many assumed. The press’ dramatic effect on domestic and international opinion convinced many MPs to support censorship in the event of another major war.

In 1904, two years after the war ended, MP (later Lord) Arthur Balfour drafted a bill to censor the press, which he “kept in readiness for submission to Parliament when an emergency arises.”⁸¹ Balfour communicated this proposal to numerous newspapers through Sydney Brooks, writer for the *Sunday Review*. The press initially responded with overt hostility. The editor for the *Western Daily Mercury* argued that measures prohibiting publication of sensitive information, “would doubtless be put into force during wartime,” making peacetime censorship unnecessary.⁸² Nevertheless, the editor replied that his paper would comply with a censorship bill during a crisis if it were applied fairly to all press outlets.⁸³ The editor of Sheffield’s *Daily Telegraph* indignantly claimed that censorship was, “a subject which should be dealt with by the Newspaper Society, of which I am President.”⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the editor for the *Yorkshire Herald*

⁸⁰ Thomas Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization*, (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc., 1984), 198.

⁸¹ United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. CAB 16 27, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸² Western Daily Mercury’s response to Sydney Brooks’ further inquests, Nov 27, 1905, Dec 5, 1905. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸³ Western Daily Mercury’s response to Sydney Brooks’ further inquests, Nov 27, 1905, Dec 5, 1905, Dec 23rd, 1905. Western Daily Mercury’s response to Sydney Brooks’ further inquests, Nov 27, 1905, Dec 5, 1905. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸⁴ Letter from The Daily Telegraph, Sheffield Dec. 4, 1905. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

suggested holding a conference of major newspaper editors to discuss the matter.⁸⁵ Finally, the *Liverpool Courier*'s editor claimed government censorship laws were a "power altogether drastic."⁸⁶

Despite this initial pushback, many government officials maintained that press censorship was essential during wartime. Lord Ellenborough claimed, "the most patriotic journalist, without a thought that he was doing his country any harm," could unknowingly publish devastating information. Selborne gave the example of the Fashoda Incident in 1898, a war scare between Britain and France over a dispute in Egypt. He also mentioned the Dogger Bank incident in 1904, during which Russian warships misidentified a British ship as a Japanese vessel and fired upon it.⁸⁷ National and international newspapers reported on these armed stand-offs, which led to diplomatic crises as militarists in each country called for war. First Lord of the Admiralty Lord Selborne contrasted how Britain handled these incidents with Japan's management of the press, "The Japanese have shown the world that an effective control over the dissemination of news is both possible and of the utmost advantage."⁸⁸ In 1906 the Committee of Imperial Defence supported a censorship bill, describing the power to inhibit the dissemination of information was "essential" to prevent further incidents and should be done just before the outbreak of a war.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Letters from the Yorkshire Herald, Yorkshire Evening Press and Yorkshire Weekly Herald, Nov. 27 1905. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸⁶ Letter from the Liverpool Courier, Jan. 30, 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸⁷ Memo by Mr. Sydney Brooks, Jan 3, 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 1-2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁸⁸ Lord Selborne is clearly referring to the recent Russo-Japanese War 1904-5, during which the Japanese successfully surprised the Russian military. *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁹ 2. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. CAB 16 27, London: National Archives, 1913.

The *Sunday Review*'s Brooks, in support of Balfour's second proposal, appealed to the other major British newspapers. He requested that they support a bill giving the government power to penalize newspapers for publishing dangerous materials and to join a committee regarding censorship.⁹⁰ Newspaper editors reacted more warmly to this second overture, either because Brooks successfully appealed to their patriotism or because the government showed its commitment to a censorship law and these editors wanted a hand in its crafting. *The Manchester Guardian* replied that it would consider a bill but warned, "if the Government had the power which you suggest it would be a dangerous weapon."⁹¹ The editor of *The Evening News* and *Hampshire Telegraph Company* voiced support for, "the establishment of a Press censorship over all Naval and Military movements during period of national emergency, but at no other time."⁹²

The harshest opposition came from John Leng of the *Dundee Advertiser* who wrote that censorship during the "South African War" had killed his faith in government benevolence. He defiantly responded in private to Balfour,

A State Press, directed and controlled by not improbably incompetent and injudicious underlings of Government Departments, is altogether alien to my ideas of what an enlightened and influential Press should be. I recognise the danger of a few unscrupulous journalists doing occasional mischief; but I would rely on the real patriotism of the mass of the people not to encourage their rashness, and on the enlightened patriotism of the great majority of newspaper editors to act with sincere desire for the best interests of their country.⁹³

⁹⁰ Memo by Mr. Sydney Brooks, Jan 3, 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹¹ Letter from the Manchester Guardian, Jan 3., 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹² Letter from the Evening News and Hampshire Telegraph Company, Feb 2nd. 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹³ Letter from John Leng of the Dundee Advertiser, London, June 19th, 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

Incensed, Leng published an open letter to the British public, accusing the government of planning to copy Japan's harsh censorship practices. He further claimed that a free press ensures peace because press reports on troop movements prevent surprise attacks, discouraging countries from launching wars. "The days for war in camera between so-called civilised and Christian Powers have passed away."⁹⁴

Balfour and the other members of the Committee of Imperial Defence were resolute about ensuring press censorship in the event of a war. In 1907 the committee drafted a bill that stipulated: (1) No information may be published about the Admiralty or military that isn't provided by the government, (2) Any person who publishes or distributes illicit information is subject to a fine up to 1,000 pounds and up to 12 months prison, (3) Any police officer who suspects illicit information is going to be published can search and seize documents and press equipment from a suspect before the act of publishing is committed.⁹⁵ This last measure showcases the decline in Victorian liberal principles, as the post-publication censorship of the nineteenth century gave way to pre-publication censorship.

Journalist Brooks again presented the government's aims to the large circulation newspapers. *The Institute of Journalists* took up the issue at their annual conference in Scarborough 1907 and issued a resolution in which they accepted the necessity of censorship in wartime but insisted on the ability to criticize the government based on common knowledge.

⁹⁴ Open Letter to the Press of the United Kingdom by Sir John Leng, July 20th, 1906. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹⁵ Draft of a Bill to Provide for the Control of the Publication of Naval and Military Information in Cases of Emergency, 1907. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

Furthermore, they argued that the government must prove a newspaper's intent to harm the nation in order to prosecute them for any printed information.⁹⁶

At the following year's annual newspaper conference "the Secretary of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association, without warning, read a paper strongly condemning the proposed legislation. In consequence of this disappointing result, though the Admiralty and War Office still considered that legislation was desirable, no direct steps were taken to proceed on the lines first proposed."⁹⁷

During negotiations members of the press consistently agreed that some censorship was necessary and logical but objected to the statutory powers in the bills. However, the Admiralty and War Office stressed the necessity of blanket censorship because evaluating what information was permissible on a case-by-case basis was impossible in wartime.⁹⁸

Beginning in 1910, then-Home Office Secretary Winston Churchill spearheaded censorship efforts. Churchill supported censorship but believed that the government could accomplish its aims through subterfuge rather than direct action, as Balfour suggested. In a July 11 meeting Churchill argued against further legislation because the Home Office had ample power to curtail the press when war broke out. Furthermore, he noted that the government already covertly monitored suspicious letters. Churchill argued that police should provide the War Office with lists of persons suspected of providing information to foreign governments

⁹⁶ Resolution from The Institute of Journalists Annual Conference Scarborough, 1907. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹⁷ 2. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. CAB 16 27, London: National Archives, 1913.

⁹⁸ Letter from Gen. H.H. Wilson, 10 Nov 1910. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

during periods of “strained relations,” to be censored.⁹⁹ Balfour’s attempt at broad censorship foundered and the group instead endorsed Churchill’s methods of covert actions and direct suppression of dissenters.

Meanwhile, the Joint Standing Committee, an informal body composed of representatives of the War Office, the Admiralty and the five major newspaper organizations formed to facilitate negotiations with the press. In 1911 and 1912, when representatives from the five major newspaper organizations agreed to report potentially sensitive information for clearance to the Joint Standing Committee, “to decide what information should be withheld from publication by the Press, and that the Press would accept and act upon every such decision.” Furthermore, “Press members stipulated that the Joint Committee should not be used as a medium for the dissemination of false information, or for the purpose of stifling criticisms of policy, or, except in really important cases where national interests were at stake, for the restriction of news.” Finally, members of the press, “pressed most strongly the importance of avoiding favouritism in the distribution of news to journals.”¹⁰⁰

At this time the War Office launched an experiment to test the press’ willingness to acquiesce to censorship demands. The War Office in 1912 ordered a military mobilization test for soldiers at Southampton. Beforehand, the Office contacted major newspapers and requested that they not cover the military exercises in the interests of national security. “With one exception of no great importance,” all papers complied.¹⁰¹ This successful experiment confirmed Churchill’s view that members of the press were loyal patriots who would willingly do what the

⁹⁹ Minutes of First Meeting July 11, 1910. United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 2. Cab 17 91, London: National Archives, 1913.

¹⁰⁰ United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 3. CAB 16 27, London: National Archives, 1913.

¹⁰¹ United Kingdom Committee of Imperial Defense, *Reports and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on Press And Postal Censorship in Time of War 1913*, 4. CAB 16 27, London: National Archives, 1913.

government requested. Officials at the War Office communicated this to government officials on the Joint Standing Committee. From the start representatives of the press censored information government officials on the Joint Standing Committee requested they censor, including such non-sensitive information as dockworkers at a military facility not receiving overtime pay.¹⁰² To the government officials' relief, the Joint Standing Committee reacted more rapidly than it had during the 1912 Southampton test case, when instructions to the press to self-censor occurred weeks in advance.

Government officials on the Joint Standing Committee resolved that censorship must be voluntary and not involve legal punishment, which would scare the press and anger the public. Although the Joint Standing Committee preferred an Act giving the government censorship power, opposition from newspaper owners and editors, "appears to be as strong now as at any time during the last few years when such measures have been under discussion, the Sub-Committee feel that it would be useless to attempt legislation in advance of the outbreak of war. An effective Act would not be secured, and the present agreement with the Press would almost certainly be lost."¹⁰³

Even as British officials complained that they could not get a censorship bill passed they recognized that press cooperating. At a meeting held in November 1912, Secretary of State for War J.E.B. Seely asked if the government could, "secure the silence of the Press as to any particular matter," to which Sir Reginald Brade, Assistant Secretary of the War Office, "the operation could be carried out in one and a half hours." As Permanent Secretary of the Admiralty, Graham Greene explained that even without legal punishment the government still possessed a great deal of coercive power through denial of information. Greene argued that,

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5.

“contact could be stopped, for instance, with naval centres. Should the newspapers refuse to accept news from such quarters, their actions would tend to dry up the source of supply.” When the question of small local papers came up, the Joint Standing Committee concluded that most papers were bought and controlled by larger groups; hence all the government had to do was pressure their parent companies since, “there was no chance for a modern newspaper to stand alone.” At one point Sir Brade argued that the recently-passed Official Secrets Act of 1911 might be used against uncooperative press. The Secretary of War, urged caution, arguing, “that the Government were bound in honour not to employ the Act against editors or other persons connected with the Press. The House of Commons had been induced to pass the Bill as an emergency measure, on the understanding that it would be directed against the class of spies, and not for the purpose of muzzling the press.”¹⁰⁴ However, the vagaries of the Act’s language, which punished intentional and unintentional transmission of sensitive information and put the burden of proof on the accused, was a powerful weapon in the government’s punitive arsenal.¹⁰⁵

After years of rising tension across, on August 4 1914 Germany invaded neutral Belgium. That same day, the British government honored its commitment to defending its ally and issued a formal declaration of war against the German Empire. The British people reacted with overwhelming patriotism for what they considered the defense of their country. Four days later, Parliament quickly passed the Defense of the Realm Act 1914, commonly known as DORA. The original act gave the executive branch the power to court martial, “any persons communicating with the enemy or obtaining information for that purpose or any purpose calculated to jeopardise the success of the operations of any of His Majesty’s forces or to assist the enemy.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 5, 9, 10, 11.

¹⁰⁵ The Official Secrets Act, 1911.

¹⁰⁶ Defence of the Realm Act, 1914.

Like the 1911 Official Secrets Act, DORA was originally intended to counter German spies operating within Britain. Yet, within three months Parliament amended DORA to include multiple provisions directed at British citizens. New provisions included measures “to prevent the spread of false reports or reports likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty or to interfere with the success of His Majesty's forces by land or sea or to prejudice His Majesty's relations with foreign powers,” and, “to prevent assistance being given to the enemy or the successful prosecution of the war being endangered.”¹⁰⁷ The purposefully vague wording of the 27 November amendments allowed the government to prosecute anyone overly-critical of the war. Finally, on 13 August 1914 the government instructed the Press Bureau to send communiqués to newspapers editors informing them what they could print about military operations.¹⁰⁸ Although compliance was entirely voluntary, the Press Bureau, the War Office, Admiralty, Military Operations Section 5 (MO5) and their police agents rarely directly censored newspapers before 1916.¹⁰⁹

Thus when war broke out the British government had in place an effective coercive apparatus of press self-censorship. Newspaper editors’ patriotism compelled them to follow state-issued directives; if they refused, they risked losing access to information, thereby damaging their reputations and hurting readership. Widespread support for the war meant that newspapers tempered their criticism of officials so as not to alienate their subscribers. Under DORA the government could prosecute anyone in a military tribunal who demoralized the

¹⁰⁷ Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914.

¹⁰⁸ Historical Sketch of the Directorate of Military Intelligence during the Great War 1914-1919, 16. The Directorate of Military Intelligence, *History of Military Intelligence Directorate, 1914-1918*. KV 4 183, London: National Archives, 1931.

¹⁰⁹ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 44.

public. Meanwhile the 1911 Official Secrets Act stipulated anyone accused of passing sensitive information was assumed guilty and had to prove their innocence.

This system of self-censorship accomplished more than the War Office and Admiralty had ever desired, using hardly any direct action whatsoever. The British public, accustomed to traditional English rights and liberties, balked at continental-style censorship. Before 1914 British newspapers could virulently criticize the government without fear of reprisal, as evidenced by the public relations nightmare that was the Second Boer War. The British public were famously proud of their empire, their culture and their freedoms. By appealing to newspaper editors and the public's patriotism the government avoided criticism. By crafting one narrative they effectively censored another. The near-constant articles and speeches in favor of the war and in support of the government drowned out most expressions of opposition while patriotic crowds, police and censors harangued the defiant anti-war minority.

Silencing and Tracking Dissent

Prior to the war, British police regularly engaged in direct censorship of radicals. On 24 May, Glasgow police decided to restrict socialist literature. They arrested pacifists selling pamphlets at Glasgow Green in June 1914, even though far-left agitators had sold their works there for years. In London, The Metropolitan Police did the same at Hyde Park.¹¹⁰ However, officials at the Home Office and in the intelligence services, recognizing the unpopularity of centralized censorship, even against anti-war agitators, pursued subtler forms of control. DORA empowered local police to deny pacifists venues for public engagement, though the police

¹¹⁰ *The Spur*, July 1914.

preferred letting anti-war activists appear in public because the anti-war rhetoric ended up arousing anti-pacifist, patriotic counter-demonstrations.

After the war began public rejection of pacifism rose to new heights. In Motherwell three days after the declaration of war, as a speaker denounced the war a patriotic crowd became incensed and rushed the stage, chanting “German spies” and “they are Germans.”¹¹¹ At Walham Green Church a patriotic crowd pelted an anti-war speaker with garbage, shouted that he was a German, rushed the stage and, “pulled [it] to pieces from beneath him.” Another meeting at the Grove in London dissolved into chaotic shouting as patriots chanted “God Save the King” to drown out anti-war speakers, who responded by singing, “The Red Flag.”¹¹² On 28 September, Mr. Henry Sara was delivering a speech critical of the government when the “crowd became very hostile, and threatened to throw the speaker in the river.” Police arrested Sara on charges of obstructing a highway to protect him from the violent crowd.¹¹³ According to historian Brock Millman, “by the end of 1915 dissenters found it almost impossible to organize mass meetings outside Glasgow, which was almost the only place where they could always count on a sufficiently large, convinced and violent crowd to protect them.”¹¹⁴ After the No-Conscription Fellowship formed in November 1914, its English, fearing attacks by patriotic crowds, limited their public interactions to handing out literature to sympathetic people.¹¹⁵

While patriotic crowds attacked pacifists, the central government, behind the scenes, directed and empowered the police to act. The military’s MO5 monitored subversives, provided local police with information on dissidents and gave them unprecedented authority to act. Just

¹¹¹ *The Spur*, Sept. 1914.

¹¹² *The Spur*, Oct. 1914.

¹¹³ *The Spur*, Nov. 1914.

¹¹⁴ Brock Millman, “HMG and the War against Dissent, 1914-18,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, No. 3 (Jul., 2005): 426.

¹¹⁵ Thomas C. Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919*. (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), 54-55.

prior to the war, on 1 August 1914, MO5 had five officers, three agents and a total staff of fifteen.¹¹⁶ Once war began it expanded rapidly. By the war's end the agency had 844 staff members.¹¹⁷ In August 1914 MO5 scrambled to meet wartime demands but it had been collecting data on subversives since 1912.¹¹⁸ The MO5 registry was initially crude, usually little more than unconfirmed gossip focused mostly on foreigners. However, as the war continued MO5 concentrated on domestic dissidents.¹¹⁹ MO5 began monitoring high-profile anti-war activists like Sylvia Pankhurst as early as 1914.¹²⁰ Moreover, Churchill overruled the requirement for warrants to open individual letters. Instead, a general warrant allowed MO5 to open all letters to and from people on a list of suspected spies.¹²¹

Thus, beyond public silencing of anti-war sentiments, Britain had created a program for social control. Intelligence services coordinated broad public surveillance conducted by local police and prosecuted by civilian courts. The British public, who only saw their local police and regular court system, was largely unaware of centralized domestic intelligence activities. This reassured Britons that their country remained a free, liberal democracy fighting against Prussian authoritarianism.

The British government refrained from authoritarian measures because it could more effectively control its population through democratic institutions and norms. Turning patriotic gatherings against anti-war speakers silenced dissenters without prompting anti-government

¹¹⁶ Notes about reorganising MI5 from 1918-1925. The Directorate of Military Intelligence, *Notes on reorganisation and future status of Defence Security Intelligence Service (MI5) including proposed amalgamation with other intelligence services*, 1925. KV 4 182, London: National Archives, 1925.

¹¹⁷ Historical Sketch of the Directorate of Military Intelligence during the Great War 1914-1919. The Directorate of Military Intelligence, *History of Military Intelligence Directorate, 1914-1918*. KV 4 183, London: National Archives, 1931.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 52.

¹¹⁹ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 42.

¹²⁰ Kevin Quinlan, *The Secret War between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s* (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2014), 4.

¹²¹ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm*, 37.

backlash. Throughout the war, the police regularly informed patriotic organizations of pacifist and conscientious objectors' activity and watched as the public silenced dissenters. This method proved effective at quieting dissenting writers and speakers during 1914. Only later, as public opinion began to turn, did officials resort to heavy-handed tactics and direct action to silence dissent.

France: The Union Sacrée

The French Third Republic, born of the defeat of the authoritarian Second Empire, remained in control of monarchists for its first decade. When republicans finally took control of all three branches of government in 1881 they passed the Law on the Freedom of the Press which opened, "L'imprimerie et la librairie sont libre."¹²² For twelve years the French public enjoyed unprecedented press freedoms before events led the government to reverse course.

On 9 December 1893 anarchist Auguste Vaillant threw a bomb in the Chamber of Deputies, wounding twenty deputies. This terrorist attack inspired widespread fear of radicals. Two days later the Chamber passed the Law Tending to the Repression of Anarchist Threats. The law banned promotion of crimes. A second law passed the following week, broadly banning attacks against the government. Finally, on 28 July 1894 the third and final law banned, "provocation to soldiers of the Army or Navy, with the aim of diverting them from their military duties and from the obedience which they owe to their leaders and their commands for the execution of laws and military regulations and the defense of the Republican Constitution."¹²³

¹²² Loi du 29 juillet 1881 sur la liberté de la presse.

¹²³ Loi tendant à réprimer les Menées Anarchistes 28 juillet 1894.

Insulting the President became a crime that could result in three months' imprisonment or a fine of up to 3,000 francs.¹²⁴

The restrictions on free speech came just a few years before the Dreyfus Affair began. The Affair, among its many ramifications, led to a national debate on press freedom. Tensions climaxed in 1898 when internationally-known writer Émile Zola tested the 1881 press law with his editorial *J'accuse...*¹²⁵ Zola accused political and military leaders of conspiring to wrongfully imprison Dreyfus, hoping that they would bring him to trial for libel. The government tried Zola, who fled to England before he was found guilty. Zola's trial reignited the Dreyfus Affair, which became an international embarrassment for France. Fellow Dreyfusard Francis de Pressensé attacked the 1893-1894 anti-anarchist laws. In a pamphlet produced by *La Revue Blanche*, he dubbed them the *lois scélérates*, "the villainous laws."

France has experienced on several occasions during this century a number of panics, provoked by certain attacks and cleverly exploited by a reaction that reduced liberty under the false pretext of security... This republic which has deceived so many expectations, in a day of panic, adopted its September laws, its general security law, its law on suspects. Under the terrifying impression of attacks, for which those who know me will surely not expect me to stoop to defend myself from any indulgence, the Chambers voted in 1893 and in 1894, urgently, at off the cuff, in unheard-of conditions of haste and lightness, measures that are nothing less than the violation of all the principles of our law.¹²⁶

The Dreyfus Affair damaged the military's popularity and the reputations of the secret service and individual politicians but failed to instigate repeal or reform of the anti-anarchist laws. *Revanchism* for Alsace-Lorraine and fears over German aggression outweighed public concerns over censorship.

¹²⁴ Article 26, Ibid.

¹²⁵ *L'Aurore*, 13 Jan. 1898.

¹²⁶ Francis de Pressensé and Emile Pouget, *Les Lois Scélérates de 1893-1894*, (Paris: Editions de la Revue Blanche, 1899) 1-3.

The Third Republic faced constant threats to its existence from the monarchist right to the revolutionary anarchist left. In response, intelligence services regularly monitored subversive groups. The *Sûreté Générale* kept an active dossier on the *Fédération Communiste Anarchiste Révolutionnaire de Langue Française*, including meeting locations, a list of its leaders, its affiliations with other radical groups, its newspapers, each chapters' year of founding, and notes on meetings and general activity.¹²⁷ Another dossier followed the same pattern with communist and anarchist groups not affiliated with the *Fédération Communiste Anarchiste Révolutionnaire de Langue Française*.¹²⁸

The government also regularly monitored workers' movements, often led by radical syndicalists and revolutionary socialists, highly critical of the Third Republic. Intelligence agencies and police intensely surveilled workers every May Day, a workers' holiday held every 1 May in commemoration of the violent 1890 Haymarket Affair in Chicago where demonstrations for workers' rights and solidarity had resulted in a violent confrontation with police killing demonstrators. In March 1914, the *Sûreté Générale* worried that the *Confédération général du travail* (CGT), the largest trade union within France, was planning widespread anti-government strikes for May Day. A report in March 1914 concluded that the CGT, while not promoting revolution supported, "a large number of militants desire to decrease work hours to 8 or 9 hours, with the application of the English workweek...and the augmentation of salaries." More radical CGT branches also planned to protest the unpopular three-year conscription law.¹²⁹ Another optimistic pre-war report explained, "since 1 May 1906, and after restrictions have been

¹²⁷ Intérieur, Direction de la Sûreté Générale: archives du Contrôle général des services de police administrative, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, 1914, Archives Nationales de France, F7 13503, 2-19-20.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 21-44.

¹²⁹ Memo À la C.G.T., 1-2, La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue, 28 March 1914. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914

taken by successive governments against anarchist threats within the CGT, 1 May has largely lost its allure for revolutionaries. The coming May Day promises to be even less turbulent than its predecessors.” The agent attributed the visions amongst workers to scandals within the syndicalist movement, the decline of the most radical group, *La Fédération du Bâtiment*, and election years disagreements.¹³⁰

Throughout April 1914, the Paris police monitored labor groups, taking note of their meetings, speeches, organizational structure, membership and finances as they sought to measure their strength, radicalization and intentions for the coming May Day.¹³¹ The *Paris Police Préfecture* remained cautiously optimistic about a calm May Day. On 20 April the Paris police alleged that for, “manufacturing workers it is customary for many years [for management] to give their personnel the freedom to strike on 1 May, under the condition that they are not paid that day...It is very probably that again this year the manufacturing workers will not take advantage of this latitude.”¹³²

Approaching May Day the situation outside Paris also remained calm. Police from nearly every major city and region sent reports to the *Sûreté Générale* most of which reported that local trade unions had not planned demonstrations.¹³³ The only major exceptions were in Ain where the prefect reported that, “a certain number of workers celebrate, as usual, with a banquet,” and

¹³⁰ Memo Pronostics, 1-3, 29 April 1914, Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

¹³¹ Memo Confédération général du travail réunion d’hier soir 8 April 1914, Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914. Memo Union des Syndicats de la Seine 15 April 1914, Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

Memo Union des Syndicats de la Seine réunion d’hier soir 16 April 1914 Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

¹³² Memo La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue 20 April 1914, 2. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

¹³³ See the full folder for details : Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

in Marseille, where syndicalists scheduled demonstrations, though, “they confirmed that the strike will be restrained and limited to a few factories.” The report concluded, “it seems that the May Day will not produce any incident in Marseille.”¹³⁴

May Day of 1914 came and went without much fanfare. Perhaps the most radical event took place the day before in Toulon when 180 tramway strikers attempted to halt the city’s transport. Police and intelligence services were ready. Mounted gendarmes broke up the strike and ensured the trams would run.¹³⁵ Even before the war, the heightened concern of the intelligence services and police led them to overprepare to stop revolutionary. Workers’ movements remained relatively weak; patriotism and *revanchism* dominated public opinion.

Long before 1914 French intelligence services also regularly monitored far-right, anti-democratic groups. The *Ligue des Patriotes* (LDP) had supported General Ernest Boulanger in 1882-1889 and led violent anti-Dreyfusard demonstrations in 1889.¹³⁶ However, far-right groups rallied behind the war effort. The LDP’s meetings turned into pro-France propaganda sessions. At a meeting held in July 1914 the LDP’s president insisted there could be no peace as long as Alsace-Lorraine was, “under the Teuton’s boot.”¹³⁷ At a session attended by 1,000 people, the

¹³⁴ Memo Préfet de l’Ain, La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue 17 April 1914, 2. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

Memo Préfet des Bouches-des-Rhône, La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue 24 April 1914. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

Memo Préfet des Bouches-des-Rhône, La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue 25 April 1914. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

¹³⁵ Memo Préfet de Toulon, La Préparation au 1er Mai 1914 Paris et banlieue 30 April 1914. Intérieur; Police, *Manifestations 1 mai 1914, Préparation, la journée, affiche, tracts, presse*, F7 13271, Paris: Archives de la Préfecture de Police, 1914.

¹³⁶ Peter M. Rukoff, “The Ligue des Patriotes: The Nature of the Radical Right and the Dreyfus Affair,” *French Historical Studies* 8, No. 4 (Autumn, 1974): 586-587.

¹³⁷ Memo F. 509 Seine 11 July 1914 1-2, Intérieur, Police général, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, F7 12873 Paris: Archives Nationales de France, 1914.

LDP pledged to fight socialists and anti-patriots during a war with Germany.¹³⁸ The group meetings ended with a procession and the annual laying of flowers at the statue of Joan of Arc.¹³⁹ Shortly after the meeting a police informant in the LDP claimed they knew the group's leader, Maurice Barrès, intended to hold peaceful demonstrations if the war started so as not to inhibit the national order, support the government and its war effort.¹⁴⁰ Thus by 1914, with the LDP dedicated to pro-war propaganda, surveillance became less frequent.¹⁴¹

Simmering tensions between Austria, Germany and Russia exacerbated with the June assassination of the Austrian Archduke in Serbia. They erupted on 3 August 1914 when Germany declared war on France and invaded neutral Belgium. As in Britain, an outpouring of patriotic fervor swept across France. The following day President Raymond Poincaré delivered a speech to the French Parliament that called for the union of all French people against German aggression: "[France] will be heroically defended by her children and the enemy will not break the Sacred Union, which now is assembled in fraternity with the same indignation against the aggressor and with the same patriotic faith."¹⁴² The *Union Sacrée* represented a moment of national unity across the political spectrum in the face of an unprovoked attack by a power that had humiliated France in 1870. That political and class unity would not last through the war but was potent in 1914 and prevented dissent.

¹³⁸ Memo sur l'assemble général de la Ligue des Patriotes 11 July 1914, 1-2, Intérieur, Police général, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, F7 12873 Paris: Archives Nationales de France, 1914.

¹³⁹ Memo Manifestation de la Ligue des Patriotes, 11 July 1914 1 Intérieur, Police général, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, F7 12873 Paris: Archives Nationales de France, 1914.

¹⁴⁰ Memo F. 532 Arras, 27 July 1914, 3-4. Intérieur, Police général, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, F7 12873 Paris: Archives Nationales de France, 1914.

¹⁴¹ The LDP used a Catholic masse as a venue to espouse patriotism and anti-German sentiment. Memo F. 626, 7 Dec. 1914, Intérieur, Police général, *Anarchistes Français – Groupe Communistes et Individualistes*, F7 12873 Paris: Archives Nationales de France, 1914.

¹⁴² France, *Sénat Débats Parlementaires Session Extraordinaire de 1914, Séance du mardi 4 août 1914*, 1298-1299. Poincaré never actually delivered the speech himself. The President was prohibited from addressing the chambers directly. Instead the minister of justice read his speech to the Senate while the Prime Minister read it to the Chamber of Deputies.

French government control of the homefront at the war's outset mirrored Britain's. France adopted policies of control through cooperation and largely refrained from targeting the small number of anti-war activists. As in Britain, intelligence services sorted and analyzed data while police collected information, relayed it to the appropriate agencies and served arrest warrants on their behalf. However, with war underway, the French parliament passed harsher anti-press laws and engaged from the start in more widespread and regular surveillance of dissidents than Britain.

During a 4 August legislative session following Germany's attack, legislators supported a number of draconian restrictions on press freedoms. Minister of War Adolphe Messimy proposed, to thunderous applause, a law to counter "press indiscretions."¹⁴³ According to Messimy

Article 9 of the 9 August 1819 law concerning a state of siege gives the military the right to censor completely those publications which it judges to excite or nurture disorder. But, without going to this extreme, it is necessary to repress those communications which were not expected by the penal code, the 1881 law on the press and the 1886 law on espionage: the publication of information or intelligence concerning military or diplomatic opinions, likely to favor the enemy, or exert an undesirable influence on the spirit of the army or the people.¹⁴⁴

On 5 August parliament passed a law mandating that newspapers could only publish once every twenty-four hours. The new law also prohibited publication of specific information related to the warfront, including casualties, the size of the army, or anything that might demoralize the public. All who failed to comply faced suspensions, one to five years in prison and fines of 1,000-5,000 francs.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the new censorship law gave the military authority over

¹⁴³ France, *Sénat Débats Parlementaires Session Extraordinaire de 1914, Séance du mardi 4 août 1914*, 1304.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ France, *Sénat Débats Parlementaires Session Extraordinaire de 1914, Séance du mardi 4 août 1914*, 1304. Memo, Internal Memo of the Paris Police Préfecture, concerning the new censorship law, August 19, 1914, Paris Police Préfecture archives.

police matters and made causing disorder illegal. Finally, the government could prevent meetings and stop the creation of political organizations deemed a threat to the war effort.¹⁴⁶

At war's outbreak the Ministry of the Interior instructed the police to shut down anarchist and radical demonstrations that might hinder the war effort.¹⁴⁷ However, although the French government assumed near-total authority to censor dissident voices in the name of national security, these measures proved largely unnecessary. Just as in Britain, the threat of state action combined with a wave of patriotic fervor meant that newspapers self-censored. The press held to an unspoken agreement that the military would give them proper information.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, at the war's outset many paper plants converted to arms production and the military seized paper reserves. Over time, the government took advantage of the resulting paper shortage to ration paper to favorable publications, subtly silencing opposition.¹⁴⁹ The *Union Sacrée* in defense of the nation sufficed to silence dissidents through the first year of the war.¹⁵⁰ Still, despite the initial outpouring of support for the war, government intelligence services and the police maintained regular surveillance of suspected subversives. Moreover, Poincaré's government covertly ignored work-based exemptions from military service for noted anarchists, sending them to the Front where they could not radicalize factory workers.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard Histoire, 2016) 18-19.

¹⁴⁷ Hsi-Huey Liang, *The Rise of Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 205-206.

¹⁴⁸ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre*, 2016, 31.

¹⁴⁹ Françoise Navet-Bouron, "Censure et dessin de presse en France pendant la Grande Guerre," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 197, (March 2000): 8-10.

¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, 1,500 cabaret pieces were examined alongside 9,000 films, 1,500 plays and 150 concert programs between Aug 1914 and Sept 1915. 25,000 songs were examined, refused or modified during the war, many of which were composed before the war. Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre*, 328. Finally, mass censorship of letter to and from the trenches occurred. For more information, see Lionel Marchand, *Lettres censurées des tranchées, 1917: une place dans la littérature et l'histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

¹⁵¹ Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure Militaire et Policière 1914-1919* (Paris: Cherche Midi, 2014), 14.

Editors of papers like *Le Bonnet Rouge* that had long been anti-war continued publishing anti-war and anti-government editorials. These were smaller papers that the government could act against with impunity. Within three days of the declaration of war the Ministry of War ordered the governor-general in Montpellier to suspend, *Le Roussillon de Perpignan* for fifteen days for publishing information on troop movements.¹⁵² The Ministry further admonished the governor, stating, “You must be more diligent in your surveillance of the press.”¹⁵³ Calling for peace was illegal, and censors acutely monitored the left-wing press.¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

In the years before 1914 most European governments had expected war given the international tensions of the era. Thus prior to the war they had developed organizations and procedures for surveillance in preparation for war. British government officials viewed the press as the largest threat to wartime domestic tranquility due to its influence during the Second Boer War. In contrast, French officials countered popular labor groups. Once the war began governmental powers expanded as parliaments in both countries passed laws giving the forces of order blanket powers to censor and arrest anyone who hindered the war effort or criticized the government. In the end however, neither government needed to make use of these measures at the war’s outset. The vast majority of the public greeted the war with overwhelming patriotism in both Britain and France. Journalists accepted government directives, agreed to self-censor and avoided overly criticizing politicians or the military. Trade unions agreed to suspend labor

¹⁵² Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure Militaire et Policière 1914-1919* (Paris: Cherche Midi, 2014), 37.

¹⁵³ Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure Militaire et Policière 1914-1919* (Paris: Cherche Midi, 2014), 37.

¹⁵⁴ See Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure Militaire et Policière*, 46. Olivier Forcade. *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre*. (Paris: Fayard Histoire, 2016), 266-283.

activism until the war's end. For the most part, the general public silenced the small minority of radicals who criticized the government, and if not the police took action. British and French officials largely refrained from using their new powers because they believed that they could more effectively control their citizenry through cooperation rather than direct repression. However, intelligence officials and security services increased the size and activity of their services to ensure continued support of the war. As the war continued and became a deadly stalemate, intelligence services used the tools they had put in place before the war and developed new techniques for punishing subversives and maintaining order.

Chapter 3: Total War and Internal Surveillance, Britain and France 1915

The first months of the war had been devastating for the Allies, particularly France. The rapid German invasion nearly reached Paris and was only repulsed at incredible cost. On one day during the Battle of the Frontiers, 22 August, France lost 27,000 soldiers. British forces suffered heavy casualties as well. World War I became a total war, wherein each government mobilized all of society towards the war effort. Because the vast majority of citizens in both countries supported their governments' actions, British and French officials pursued cooperation with the public throughout 1914, an effective strategy. However, by 1915 increasing hardship tested public support as military casualties remained high and the cost of living climbed. Both British and French leaders made it illegal to "demoralize" the public by criticizing the war or the governments' handling of it. Furthermore, in Britain, the 1915 Munitions of War Act made inhibiting arms production illegal. Still both governments operated with a relatively light hand in 1915, even as criticism of the war and how it was being waged began to appear. Anti-war agitators found ways to dissent without breaking the law. Instead of 'striking,' for example, factory workers in Glasgow created 'labor-withholding committees.' Newspapers evaded censorship through subtlety, and anti-war activists tempered their language. Very few people openly criticized the government or the war, but in 1915 a growing number of people began to criticize the way policymakers conducted the conflict.

Surveillance bureaus in Britain and France expanded their operations because they needed more information to properly determine who was acting in a subversive manner. Intelligence agencies in both governments grew increasingly concerned as they gathered more information on dissidents. As war fatigue gripped both countries, intelligence officials became

preoccupied with silencing subversives who sought to use popular anger to propel their anti-government platform. In 1915 British and French officials still believed that they could effectively sequester agitators with limited direct action.

Britain: Conscientious Objectors and Industrial Unrest on the Clyde

For centuries the British took pride in their society's freedom relative to countries on the continent. However, by the end of 1914 the military faced dual crises that threatened their ability to fight: a shortage of both munitions and army volunteers. Britain remained the only major power in the war without national conscription. Many policymakers realized that the only way for Britain to continue fighting effectively was through a mass levying of manpower. Likewise, a *laissez-faire*, free market proved unable to provide the necessary armaments to repel the German army.

From 1915 to 1919 Glasgow was the main battleground between the British government, which tried to win the war at all costs, and the workers, activists and conscientious objectors who chafed under new repressive measures and the rising cost of living. Glasgow became the second city of the Empire well before 1914 with a population of over one million.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, it was an industrial city and from 1909 to 1913 Glaswegian shipbuilders launched over one-fifth of world maritime tonnage.¹⁵⁶ During the war Glasgow produced more military supplies for Britain than any other city and its large munitions labor force was vital.

¹⁵⁵ "Population Estimates: Glasgow's Population 1801-2019," The Glasgow Indicators Project (Understanding Glasgow, 2020), https://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/population/trends/historic_population_trend

¹⁵⁶ David Charles Unger, "The Roots of the Red Clydeside: Economic and Social Relations and Working Class Politics in the West of Scotland, 1900-1919" (1979, PhD thesis, University of Austin Texas), 40.

The financial cost of war and the legal controls upon labor inordinately affected this all-important city and socialist labor activists took advantage of popular discontent.¹⁵⁷ Labor leaders such as David Kirkwood, William Gallacher, John Maclean and others acted largely through the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC). The CWC was a small organization compared to the larger Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), the Glasgow Trades Union Congress or the Scottish Trades Union Congress.¹⁵⁸ Yet, CWC leaders exerted an inordinate influence on shopfloors, and took credit for Glasgow's 1915 Rent Strikes, the first large-scale strikes of the war. This event convinced many policymakers that the CWC was the main threat to stability on the homefront. One MP stated, "to obtain a reasonably smooth working of the Munitions Act, this committee should be smashed."¹⁵⁹ Moreover, officials mistakenly believed the average worker was sympathetic to radical politics when most strikers were primarily concerned about increased wages and better conditions. The CWC's successful self-promotion misled intelligence officials into thinking that a large-scale workers' revolt could happen at any moment. Thus, the fight between the CWC and the forces of order greatly influenced the British government's relation to the working-class during World War I.

From the start of the war, the government requisitioned materials for the Front and converted factories producing consumer goods to military production. These actions meant the

¹⁵⁷ Most of the CWC leadership were Marxist adherents of the anti-war Socialist Labour Party. See David Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, (London George G. Harrap & Co. LTD., 1935) 82-83. Iain McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, (1983: repr., Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), 97.

¹⁵⁸ Even during the final years of the war, socialists were in a very small minority. According to the 1919 Glasgow Trades Council annual report, of the 74,951 members of the Glasgow Trades Union Congress, 71,860 were in non-socialist unions. Of the remaining 3,091 members, 2,568 were affiliated with the I.L.P., while 523 were affiliated with the B.S.P. The explicitly socialist unions or branches of such unions numbered a mere 31 out of 255 in the Trades Council. The following year would see a relative decline in socialists as the membership of unions in general increased to 84,465 while those in openly socialist unions increased only to 3,134. Glasgow Trades Council Annual Report 1918-1919, 4. Glasgow Trades and Labour Council Annual Report 1919-1920, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Bev.iii p.94, Barttelot to Third Sea Lord, 24 November 1916, as quoted in James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, (Manchester, The Gresham Press, 1973), 140-141.

cost of living rose rapidly while wages remained constant.¹⁶⁰ In February 1915 local branches of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers demanded their employers raise hourly wages by two pence.¹⁶¹ The armaments bosses refused, believing that they could meet any challenge presented by labor since strikes were illegal and workshop owners could portray workers who inhibited arms production for the Front as unpatriotic. The employers and government were caught completely off-guard when the CWC led a work stoppage at G. & J. Weirs munitions factory, owned by the Scottish Minister of Munitions, William Weir. CWC leaders cleverly avoided the word ‘strike’ and instead created a “Labour-Withholding Committee” to escape prosecution under the Defense of the Realm Act 1914 (DORA). When it became apparent the government would not crack down on the CWC, 10,000 engineers, “about two-thirds of the total number of skilled engineers in Glasgow,” downed their tools in what was the first large-scale strike since the beginning of the war.¹⁶² This was a remarkable event as workers stood against their bosses, the government and the largest engineering trade union in Great Britain, the ASE, whose national council issued a statement demanding engineers return to work.¹⁶³ In response, the Glasgow branch of the ASE came out in favor of the strikers, and it was promptly ejected from the national union. Employers quickly realized that they needed to bargain with the engineers, at which point the local ASE branch negotiated a raise of one pence per hour and a ten percent bonus on piece-work.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ According to the 1916 STUC report, the cost of living between July 1914 to July 1915 increased by 35% while food prices increased by 17% in small towns and 19% in cities. This would prove to be but a mere taste of the war’s costs for the lower-class. By December 1917, food prices had increased 106% while the cost of living increased by 85% to 90% as compared with pre-war levels. Workers’ wages did not even come close to keeping up with this inflation. By April 1917, skilled laborers’ wage increased by roughly 50% with wages varying by profession. The average cost of living from July 1914-1920 rose by 137% for large towns. STUC Report 1916, 42-43. STUC Report 1917, 23, 35. STUC Report 1920. Glasgow Trades and Labour Council Annual Report, 1919-1920, 17-18.

¹⁶¹ James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards’ Movement*, 103-104.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁶³ Charles Unger, “The Roots of the Red Clydeside” 378.

¹⁶⁴ James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards’ Movement*, 106, 108.

The Glasgow strike undermined, but did not destroy, the understanding between workers, their employers and the government that Britain had to prioritize munitions production while setting aside social issues until after the war. Strike activity across Great Britain remained low, with less than half as many working days lost in 1914 than in 1913 and in 1915 only one-tenth as many. Yet, despite DORA's harsh language the government could not make good on its threat to end all strike activity during the war. Nor could it rely on patriotism to keep all people working and abstaining from divisive social movements until the war's end. The engineers' strike highlighted workers' power and clarified that many people sided with workers in labor disputes, especially in radical Glasgow. Political leaders in London and conservatives across the country quickly realized that war fatigue opened the door to popular anti-government agitation.

The public's attitude toward the war began to shift as the Allies suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties while only gaining a few kilometers of shell-blasted territory. News of the stalemate on the Western Front reached the British populace despite stringent press censorship. Worse still, poor planning, as a 14 May 1915 article in the *Times* reported, resulted in major shortages of explosives for British soldiers:

One of the greatest battles in the war on the West is now in progress...Twenty miles farther south the British attack towards Lille was made on Sunday and it achieved no definite result because of the want of an un-'limited supply of high explosives' which our Military Correspondent explains in the important dispatch we publish to-day. Our losses were heavy, and they led to nothing tangible because shells were lacking.¹⁶⁵

The so-called Shell Crisis and other setbacks early in the war gave the government justification to act. Prime Minister H.H. Asquith formed a new coalition government and appointed David Lloyd George to the new position of Minister of Munitions. On 3 June, Lloyd George delivered a speech which shaped the government's position on labor for the rest of the war.

¹⁶⁵ *The Times*, May 14 1915, 9.

It is a war of munitions. We are fighting against the best organized community in the world – the best organized, whether for war or peace – and we have been employing too much of the haphazard, leisurely, go-as-you-please methods which, believe me, would not have enabled us to maintain our place as a nation, even in peace, very much longer... We must increase the mobility of labour, and ... we must have greater subordination in labour to the direction and control of the state.¹⁶⁶

In response on 2 July Parliament passed the Munitions of War Act which gave Lloyd George near-unlimited authority over munitions workplaces and workers. The government could seize any munitions factory and make it a “controlled establishment,” which made it illegal for a munitions worker to leave their place of employment without government permission. Employers could not knowingly hire “shirkers,” employees who were known to strike. Strikes became illegal.¹⁶⁷ The act also limited company profits in an attempt to appease labor activists. However, this “levy was easily evaded by claims for capital expenditure and depreciation allowances.”¹⁶⁸ Despite amendments to the act, the government did not prevent “the munitions firms from making huge profits out of dilution,” the process of replacing skilled craftworkers with unskilled laborers.¹⁶⁹ The Ministry of Munitions became even more heavy-handed towards labor after the appointment of prominent industrialist William Weir to the position of Scottish Director of Munitions. Weir, who saw trade unions as a hindrance to the war effort and in a communication with the government, asserted, “Trade Unionism in war time and adherence to its principles is Anti-National,” and only “justifiable” in peacetime.¹⁷⁰

Thus, by mid-1915 government rhetoric and policy rapidly moved from cooperation to coercion. Moreover, DORA and the Munitions of War Act 1915 empowered the government to target workers and dissenters. In spite of its enhanced powers however, for the remainder of

¹⁶⁶ *The Times*, 4 June 1915, as cited in Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 32.

¹⁶⁷ Munitions of War Act, 1915.

¹⁶⁸ James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 34.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁷⁰ William Weir, “Memorandum by William Weir,” 20th September 1915, Weir Papers, 1-2. DC/96/17/58.

1915 the government maintained its policy of cooperation. The Ministry of Munitions worked with munitions factories to expand production by hiring hundreds of thousands of women and poor, unskilled workers, successfully ending the Shell Crisis.

Simultaneously, the British government had to address the army's manpower crisis. British generals increasingly requested more soldiers. After the initial enthusiasm faded by December 1914, the number of new recruits trickled to 30,000 a month, a figure which the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, described as sufficient, if not ideal.¹⁷¹ Britain was the one major power in the war that did not employ conscription, since the British public had long regarded it as the "foreign yoke."¹⁷² For centuries the British viewed conscription as an infringement of the natural rights of Englishmen. This perspective limited Britain's ability to raise large land armies compared to France and Germany that had since 1871 required all men to serve in the military. Churchill advocated for conscription in August 1915, but Prime Minister H.H. Asquith feared a public backlash.¹⁷³ Throughout 1915 the government relied on incessant pro-war propaganda to encourage men to join the army, though this proved insufficient.

A group resisting the imposition of conscription began to organize before the end of 1914 and formed the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF). Quickly the organization compiled a list of 150 men who vowed to object to conscription, should enlistment become mandatory. By 1915 the NCF "claimed to have 5,000 members in 50 separate branches."¹⁷⁴ Still, in all of Britain throughout the war, there were only around 16,500 conscientious objectors (COs). Nevertheless,

¹⁷¹ Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship 1914-1919* (University of Arkansas Press: Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1981), 29.

¹⁷² See Kevin Morgan, "Militarism and Anti-Militarism: Socialists, Communists and Conscription in France and Britain 1900-1940," *Past & Present* no. 202 (Feb., 2009), 228.

¹⁷³ Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship 1914-1919*, 31.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas C. Kennedy, "Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919." *The Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 2 (1973). 106-107.

government officials worried that pro-peace propaganda would damage recruitment. Moreover, some officials believed that the anti-war movement was part of a German plot to undermine British morale, a conspiracy theory fostered by Military Operation Section 5 (MO5) which began a series of investigations.

Since before the war, MO5 had investigated foreigners connected with German intelligence, but in late 1914 it increased surveillance of local anti-war activists. MO5 opened a file on one well-known peace activist Ferdinand Louis Kehrhlán and discovered he had fought for the Prussians during the Franco-Prussian War. MO5 agents described Kehrhlán as, “Well known to police as an extreme socialist with German sympathies who addressed open-air meetings at Hampstead. He was involved in the anti-war movement and labor disruptions.” Police arrested Kehrhlán on 25 August 1915 under DORA for taking photos at a munitions factory, though agents could not prove he intended to pass on the photos to Germany or had any connections with German intelligence. MO5 agents continued to monitor Kehrhlán and arrested him again under DORA on 9 November 1914 for “seditious talk.”¹⁷⁵

Another person of interest to MO5 agents, Alphonso Samms was “an extreme Socialist and Pacifist who visited wounded soldiers at Firvale Hospital, Sheffield on the 1 July, 1915 and attempted to spread disaffection among them.” MO5 passed this information to police who arrested him and sentenced him to two months in prison under DORA. Intelligence officials wanted to hold him longer, but the Secretary of State refused because Samms had no connection to foreign agents.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Case 58, UK MI5, *MI5 'Game Book' Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937.

¹⁷⁶ Case 53, UK MI5, *MI5 'Game Book' Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937.

One group particularly interested authorities, men who refused military service as conscientious objectors (COs). Public opinion was markedly against COs, and private newspapers vilified them. The *Glasgow Herald* advocated deporting COs until the war was over.¹⁷⁷ The *Sunday Herald* claimed that COs “were not worth the power and shot” needed to kill them, but in view of the extreme circumstances, “perhaps a few rounds might spared.”¹⁷⁸ From Spring 1915 newspapers regularly published meeting times and locations of COs’ gatherings so that patriotic crowds could attack them.¹⁷⁹ In late November 1915, the *Daily Express* slandered the anti-conscription group Union of Democratic Control as a pro-German conspiracy and asked loyalists to buy tickets to its London meeting in late November. That day patriotic attendees rushed the stage and called for the dismemberment of Germany. The following day the *Times* reported that the violent “demonstration” was “spontaneous and unorganised.”¹⁸⁰ Owners of venues did not want to be associated with the Independent Labour Party or the Union of Democratic Control and denied them venues. Only in Glasgow could anti-conscription and COs groups organize public meetings without fear of interruption.¹⁸¹ Intelligence agencies regularly monitored dissenting groups but rarely did more than that for the rest of 1915, save for a handful of cases against the most fervent radicals. MO5 intercepted mail and telegrams of pacifists, including MPs such as Phillip Snowden. Special Branch and police working for MO5 regularly raided houses connected with the No-Conscription Fellowship.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Kennedy, “Public Opinion,” 112.

¹⁷⁸ *Evening Standard*, March 23, 1916 as quoted in Thomas C. Kennedy, “Public Opinion,” 112.

¹⁷⁹ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*. (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 52.

¹⁸⁰ The Union of Democratic Control, *The Attack on Freedom of Speech: The Broken-Up Meeting at Memorial Hall*, 29th Nov. 1915, The People’s History Museum, 3-4.

¹⁸¹ Millman. *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, 57, 63.

¹⁸² Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 62-63.

The British government successfully isolated the anti-conscription movement from the general population while monitoring radical groups. While the population remained patriotic, the number of men volunteering for the army did not meet the military's needs. In October Lord Derby enacted a plan known as the Derby Scheme, a public campaign directed at men between 18-41 years old not in essential occupations to volunteer for military service. By January 1916 most MPs recognized the need for conscription and passed the Military Service Act, inaugurating a new phase of the war and of government oversight of the country.

While government leaders in 1915 faced munitions and recruitment crises, pressures created by war had a growing impact on the British public. In addition to loss of loved ones, the general public faced a rapidly rising cost of living. With the government requisitioning food, clothing and other essentials for the war the cost of living on the homefront increased by 35 percent between July 1914 to July 1915 while food prices increased by 17 percent in small towns and 19 percent in cities.¹⁸³ Glasgow's housing situation had already been dire before the war; the wartime rise of rent throughout the city made an already tense situation unbearable for tens of thousands of Glaswegians. "By 1914 no fewer than 700,000 people resided within three square miles of Glasgow Cross and created the most densely populated, central-urban area in Europe."¹⁸⁴ In some cases there were "1,000 persons per acre."¹⁸⁵ Prior to the war, Glasgow's unique tradition of city planning meant Glaswegians paid a smaller amount of their income on housing than any other major city in Britain. Because "wage levels in many trades were highly unstable... 'canny' Scots workers tended to rent houses that were affordable in the bad times, to treat the surplus of good times as a windfall, and seldom to aspire to homeownership."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ STUC Report 1916, 34, 42-43.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Pacione, "Housing Policies in Glasgow since 1880," *Geographical Review* 69, no. 4 (1979): 398.

¹⁸⁵ McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 18.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Pacione, "Housing Policies in Glasgow since 1880," 397-398.

Glasgow had an unusually dense population. Already by 1891, “more than two-thirds of Glasgow’s population lived in overcrowded conditions of two or more persons per room.”¹⁸⁷ With the war underway, rents began to rise. Combined with a highly unpredictable labor Glasgow surpassed the much larger city of London in evictions.¹⁸⁸ To make matters worse, due to the Ministry of Munitions’ demands, housing development had come to an abrupt end even as workers flooded into Glasgow’s four and five story tenement housing. All of these factors resulted in a city whose inhabitants lived in some of Britain’s worst condition.

A government study found that over one-third of rents had increased by 5 percent, while in “Govan and Fairfield, the center of the storm, all the houses...suffered rent increases ranging from 11.67% to 23.08%.”¹⁸⁹ Frustration about rising rents and prices resulted in a mass uprising that would change the dynamics between the workers, agitators and the British government. That summer a Mrs. Barbour from Govan, “a typical working-class housewife, became the leader of a movement such as had never been seen before,” with no direct support from any major political party or sponsor, save for the Women’s Housing Association.¹⁹⁰ “Notices were printed by the thousands and put up in the windows,” with the slogan, “WE ARE NOT PAYING INCREASED RENT.” Because of the determined women of Glasgow, “the [landlords] could not collect the rents.”¹⁹¹ Unable to gather the money themselves, landlords applied for eviction warrants from a judge, thus passing the job on to the police. As Glasgow had long been known for its high number of evictions, it was not surprising that Glasgow’s police force thought that they could

¹⁸⁷ Glasgow Trades Council Annual Report 1916-1917, 34.

¹⁸⁸ David Englander, “Landlord and Tenant in Urban Scotland: The Background to the Clyde Rent Strikes, 1915,” *Scottish Labour History Society* No. 15 (1981) 4-5.

¹⁸⁹ McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 21-22. Due to the boom and bust nature of the Scottish micro-economy numerous Scots were left unable to pay their rents, leading to Glasgow to become famous for its high rate of convictions McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 18.

¹⁹⁰ William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, (1936: repr., London Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1990), 52.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

continue their work as usual.¹⁹² CWC leader William Gallacher recalled, “Mrs. Barbour had a team of women who were wonderful. They could smell a sheriff’s officer a mile away. At their summons women left their cooking, washing or whatever they were doing. Before they were anywhere near their destination, the officer and his men would be met by an army of furious women who drove them back in a hurried scramble for safety.”¹⁹³

In June 1915, the Glasgow Labour Party, the Women’s Housing Association and the Govan Labour Representation Committee encouraged tenants to pay only the rent originally agreed upon before the recent price increases.¹⁹⁴ By October, 15,000 Glaswegians were withholding surplus rent.¹⁹⁵ By mid-November, the number had risen to “20,000, including five Labour councilors.”¹⁹⁶ The scene in Glasgow become more heated as anger against the landlords increased. Glaswegians became enraged as landlords began to evict soldiers’ wives. One group burned a landlord in effigy.¹⁹⁷

Landlords realized that they could sue tenants who refused to pay, which allowed them to take the tenant workers’ money from the employer while charging tenants for the legal fees. On 17 November a landlord summoned eighteen tenants to court to evict them. This event sparked a mass demonstration. Mrs. Barbour’s women marched on the city chambers and were met there by workers from the CWC.¹⁹⁸ The crowd roared in support as Marxist schoolteacher John Maclean stood on a platform decrying the iniquities of the capitalists.¹⁹⁹ In response, Parliament quickly passed the Rent Restriction Act of 1915, which returned rents to pre-war levels.

¹⁹² McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 21-22.

¹⁹³ Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, 53.

¹⁹⁴ John McHugh, “The Clyde Rent Strike, 1915” *Scottish Labour History Society* No. 12 (1978) 598.

¹⁹⁵ McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 22.

¹⁹⁶ *Forward*, 30 Oct., 1915.

¹⁹⁷ *Forward*, 15 Jun., 1915, <http://gdl.cdli.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly193.htm>.

¹⁹⁸ Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, 54-57.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

The CWC neither lead the strike, nor involved itself at the start. Its constituency, primarily skilled craftsmen, were better-situated to deal with the financial burdens of war. The CWC did not even officially sponsor the housing movement and instead set up a shadow organization called “Vigilance Committees” which monitored rent levels and evictions but was not directly involved.²⁰⁰ Eventually the CWC joined the movement but then it claimed leadership which some government leaders mistakenly believed. Politicians in London easily believed that subversive, male labor leaders took advantage of workers’ concerns to launch a massive protest movement, rather than accept the idea that working-class housewives organized a movement not strictly anti-government but aimed at ameliorating their living conditions. The CWC’s *Forward* further claimed credit for the strikes, while other newspapers fed government fears. *Labour Leader* reported, “Glasgow, without exaggeration, is seething with rebellion on the rent question.”²⁰¹ By 1916, the British government would move to take a more active role in suppressing dissent, with the CWC as one of its main targets.

France: Police, Labor movements and Pacifism

In contrast to Britain’s restraint, the French government early on took an active role in monitoring and silencing dissent. Throughout 1915 government officials expanded their powers of surveillance, censorship and control. On 17 July the Ministry of the Interior gave police permission to silence those propagating “false information.” In a memo directed to the *Paris Police Préfecture*, the Minister of the Interior Louis Malvy explained, “It is not necessary to impose optimism on this country...but it is necessary to use force to silence those unknowingly

²⁰⁰ McHugh, “The Clyde Rent Strike, 1915,” 60.

²⁰¹ *Labour Leader*, 14 Oct., 1915, 3, as quoted in John McHugh, “The Clyde Rent Strike, 1915,” 59.

working for the enemy,” concluding “it is treasonous to unnerve or worry people by spreading our enemies’ propaganda.”²⁰² On 22 August the Fifth Army claimed that due to “daily indiscretions” by civilians all private correspondence would be monitored within the military zone.²⁰³ Censors aggressively silenced newspapers and even non-news sources. In the first year of the war censors reviewed 1,500 cabaret pieces, 9,000 films, 1,500 plays and 150 concert programs for suspect content. Police denied venues for anti-war meetings.²⁰⁴ However, Poincaré’s government still wanted to rule primarily through consent rather than force.

The government feared anti-war activity by an array of groups. Unlike Britain, France had a far-right that had long worked to overthrow the Republic in favor of monarchy. The *Sûreté Générale* felt the need to monitor those groups. In 1915 the *Sûreté Générale* increasingly surveilled the *Action Française* (AF) as it supplanted the Ligue des Patriotes (LDP) in popularity among the monarchist-right. A report from 28 January 1915 claimed that the AF operated the only pro-royalist paper in Paris and commanded the loyalty of most, if not all the royalists in France. The report concluded that the organization had a small cadre of devoted members but struggled to reach a broader audience.²⁰⁵ However, the group’s rhetoric was enough to concern the police. On 26 February a *Sûreté Générale* agent embedded in the AF reported that the group, “supported regime change.”²⁰⁶ On 13 March another inside agent reported that one of the AF’s members confided that they were planning to stage some sort of political action to replace the government with, “a triumvirate headed by [its founder Maurice] Barrès, Barthou and an

²⁰² Le Préfet de Police à Messieurs les Directeurs, les Chefs de Service et les Commissaires du police au ressort, 17 July 1915, 1-2. *Guerre 1914-1918: Rapports dévers, Journaux interdits*, Paris: Paris Police Préfecture, 1917. BA 1755.

²⁰³ *Avis aux Populations Civiles*, Vème armée Quartier Général, poster, Paris: Bibliothèque National de la France, 22 August 1915, Recueil d’affiches émanant des autorités militaires françaises pendant la guerre 1914-1918.

²⁰⁴ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard Histoire 2016), 249-251, 328.

²⁰⁵ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Jan., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²⁰⁶ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 26 Feb., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

unspecified general to be chosen later.”²⁰⁷ In early March, the government censored their newspaper, which shocked the group according to another undercover police agent who had infiltrated the party’s inner circle.²⁰⁸

Although both groups had long openly supported overthrowing the French Republic, after August 1914 they were committed to winning the war. One *Sûreté Générale* agent claimed, “their patriotism is irreproachable.”²⁰⁹ Both the LDP and the AF were small but their few members often came from elite circles with connections to the upper ranks of the military. The AF claimed “it was making progress spreading royalist ideas to the army.” Thus, intelligence agents feared subversion from within the military.²¹⁰ One of the AF’s leaders, Maurice Pujo, was part of an a-political agency, the *Comité du Secours National*, which aided refugees from the occupied north. The *Sûreté Générale* suspected Pujo was proselytizing to refugees.²¹¹ On 31 May 1915, reports concluded that the AF appealed to soldiers and officers’ “patriotic sentiments and heightened religious feelings.”²¹² On 10 June the AF published a list of wounded soldiers in hospitals and instructed its members to visit them to show support. *Sûreté Générale* agents suspected the AF planned to propagandize to them and ordered discrete surveillance of any AF members entering hospitals.²¹³

By 1915 the AF aggressively proselytized to the Parisian public using patriotism as its calling card. AF members posted placards across Paris in support of the war insisting they were the only party in France, “that will guarantee authority, liberty, prosperity and honor.”²¹⁴

²⁰⁷ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 13 Mar., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²⁰⁸ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 11 Mar., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²⁰⁹ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 22 Mar., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁰ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 20 May, 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹¹ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 26 May, 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹² Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 31 May, 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹³ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 10 Jun., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁴ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 18 Aug., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

Additionally, AF members checked newsstands in Paris to ensure their papers were in plain view on display in kiosks.²¹⁵ The *Sûreté Générale* watched the AF intensely, tracked numbers of papers sold by each *arrondissement* and recorded its delegates within each area. *Sûreté Générale* police monitoring the AF suspected its membership knew government agents had infiltrated it, though the monarchists could not identify the actual agents.²¹⁶

The AF's appeal to military personnel worried the *Sûreté Générale*, but the security services noted that the organization struggled to expand beyond a relatively small following. First, AF members were privately divided on religion. Many of their members were Catholic, but priests had increasingly dropped their support for monarchy.²¹⁷ Moreover, a major rift opened in the AF about religion. One of the AF's leaders warned that overtly pro-Catholic messages could scare people away. He argued that the AF should avoid seeming "too Catholic," while, "using religious figures to propagandize."²¹⁸ Beyond the issue of religion, the AF struggled to appeal to a broader base. Many of its members pressed the AF to be more moderate. In 1915 the death of the AF's president, Léon de Montesquieu, damaged party leadership and left it low on funds.²¹⁹ Moreover, even the AF's own members were lukewarm about advocating the overthrow of the republic for a monarchy in the middle of a war. Thus, the government, through monitoring, concluded that the threat of the AF and far-right in general was minimal.

In addition to the anti-Republican far right, French authorities also weighed the potential threat from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Given their appeal to the working-class,

²¹⁵ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 23 Aug., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 25 Aug., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁶ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 24 Aug., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁷ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 Jun., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁸ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Jun., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

²¹⁹ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 20 Sept., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 25 Oct., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 Nov., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 7 Dec., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12863.

government officials considered left-wing, radical syndicalists' potential threat to the war effort a more serious concern than that of the far right. In September 1914 as the German army came within thirty kilometers of Paris, the normally radical labor leaders dedicated themselves to victory first.²²⁰ Labor leaders and most of the left adhered to the *Union Sacrée* hoping for political change after the war. However, as the war progressed, intelligence services increasingly focused on left-wing agitation. As it turned out, 1915 was a low point for labor militancy with only 12 official strikes in the Paris region involving an official total of 361 strikers between August 1914 and August 1915.²²¹

One particular date gave government agents pause, May 1 or May Day, an internationally recognized holiday commemorating workers' rights. Under normal conditions tens to hundreds of thousands of workers demonstrated across France. In 1915 local police, the *Sûreté Générale*, the *Chemins des Fer* and the *Deuxième Bureau* monitored labor and left-wing groups in the lead-up to May Day. The information looked promising. Censors forwarded an early copy of *La Voix du Peuple*, the CGT's official newspaper, which declared its support for a defensive war which it hoped would be, "the last spasm of savage violence," before socialism led to international harmony between workers. The paper exhorted workers not to celebrate May Day which might hinder mobilization. Instead, the holiday should be used to "remember workers' accomplishments," and reflect on future endeavors.²²² Calm prevailed on May Day, as the CGT did not call for any action, deferring to local branches.²²³ These affiliates recognized their

²²⁰ Consequently, Lyon became a hotbed of labor activity, since many Parisian workers put security before workers' rights. For more information, see M/9745 Confédération Générale du Travail: Réunion d'hier matin, Le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 April 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

²²¹ Unofficially, historian Jean-Louis Roberts counted 19 strikes and 379 strikers, Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution: Paris 1914-1919*, (Paris: L'Université de Besançon, 1995) 12.

²²² *La Voix du Peuple*, 1 May 1915, 1.

²²³ Au sujet de la journée du 1er Mai, *Paris Police Préfecture*, 2 May 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272, 1.

position and only a small minority stopped work. The Paris police estimated that only 600-700 demonstrated while police agents in large cities such as Bordeaux, Dijon and Brest reported no labor agitation whatsoever.²²⁴ Only a handful of the most radical syndicates planned to stop work. One *Sûreté Générale* report concluded that the May Day work stoppages, “will be insignificant and the grand-majority of strikers (the number of which is estimated at approximately at 1,200-1,500) will be unskilled workers.”²²⁵ Most workers’ groups outside of Paris either held meetings or did not celebrate May Day at all. The *Chemins de Fer* of Châlons-Sur-Saône concluded that this year, “there will be no May 1.”²²⁶

While organized labor remained loyal in 1915 the *Sûreté Générale* began opening extensive files on individuals they considered potential subversives. French intelligence services focused surveillance efforts on the heavy metals’ industries which had long been hotbeds of far-left agitation. At the war’s outset the majority of CGT leaders voted to support the war, but a vocal minority continued to agitate for peace.²²⁷ At the start of 1915 the *Sûreté Générale* created files on four ‘minority’ (pacifist) leaders, infiltrated metalworkers’ unions, took extensive notes on their meetings and financial records and meticulously tracked the leader of the labor-based peace movement, Alphonse Merrheim. The Ministry of the Interior, the *Deuxième Bureau*, *Sûreté Générale* and *Paris Police Préfecture* followed and recorded Merrheim’s movements, speeches, publications and intercepted his mail.

²²⁴ Au sujet de la journée du 1er Mai, *Paris Police Préfecture*, 2 May 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272, 2. À Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté générale, *Commissariat Spéciale des Chemins du Port & de l’Emigration Bordeaux*, 2 May 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272. À Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté Générale Ministère de l’Intérieur, *Département de la Cote-d’Or, Ville de Dijon, Commissariat Central de Police*, 1 May 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272. Rapport 1er Mai, *Commissariat Spécial de Brest*, 1 May 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

²²⁵ Au sujet de la manifestation du 1er Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Apr. 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

²²⁶ Rapport, *Commissariat Spéciale de Châlons-Sur-Saône*, 28 Apr. 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

²²⁷ See chapter 2 of Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution*..

Merrheim had long been a fixture of radical anti-government and anti-war politics, leading the *Sûreté Générale* file on Merrheim to depict him as a troublemaker. The file narrated his radical trajectory. He moved to Turcoing in 1904 where “he maintained close relations with socialists and anarchists, notably with Lienart, a known anarchist,” and henceforth became a firm radical.

At the Confédération Générale du Travail he revealed from the start that he was a revolutionary syndicalist, violent partisan of direct action, fervent and adept with antimilitarist and anti-patriotic doctrine. Frequently charged with missions in the provinces, he supported strikes at Longwy, de Cluses, Draveil, Basse-Indre, etc...etc... During a conference at the Town Hall in Mans, the 16 January 1906, he declared, “There is no country, there is only the exploited and the exploiters”²²⁸

Merrheim became a fixture of radical anti-government and anti-war politics. “In June 1907, after the clashes in Narbonne, he signed, with many leaders of the CGT, an antimilitarist notice titled, ‘Government of Assassins,’” for which he was prosecuted, though later acquitted. After his acquittal, Merrheim continued his activities in 1908 and 1909, the authorities reported. As tensions climbed in Europe, Merrheim attended an anti-war demonstration in Lyon 16 December 1912 and encouraged wives, mothers and daughters to oppose their male relatives’ departure in case of mobilization. The file notes, “one can multiply these citations of the same genre. Merrheim collaborates with the ‘Mouvement socialiste,’ the ‘Courrier Européen,’ the ‘Révolution,’ the ‘Temps Nouveaux,’ the ‘Voix du Peuple,’ the ‘Bataille Syndicaliste;’ he conducts a violent campaign against the industrial bosses, against [low] workers’ pensions and the army.”²²⁹

Starting in 1910 Merrheim built his institutional power and gained a large following when his metalworkers’ union, the *Fédération des Métaux* (FM), merged with two other unions.

²²⁸ Profile of Merrheim, Alphonse, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-2.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

After that he became a CGT leader. At a 1912 CGT congress in Paris the commission charged Merrheim with leading anti-war agitation. He and all but two members voted for a resolution opposing any war except one directed against capitalism. In 1913 he campaigned against the three-year conscription law.²³⁰

During the summer before the war with tensions rising after the assassination of the Archduke of Austria, Merrheim planned a peace march scheduled for 2 August 1914. However, shortly before the march was to take place, on 31 July, socialist leader Jean Jaures was assassinated. By 1 August the French government ordered a general mobilization. Merrheim and his followers recognized war was unavoidable and cancelled the demonstration. For the rest of the year Merrheim worked within the CGT, leading the minority anti-war members against CGT leader Léon Jouhaux and the majority.

The *Sûreté Générale* kept files on three other anti-government leaders: Raoul Léopold Lennoir, “an antimilitarist syndicalist,” who declared “guns should be turned against the bourgeois, not fellow workers in other countries”; Marius Blanchard, a “syndicalist, revolutionary and antimilitarist,” who advocated proselytizing revolution to young soldiers; and Alexandre Bouchet, “a revolutionary socialist.”²³¹ Merrheim, Lennoir and Blanchard were three of the FM’s four secretaries while Bouchet led a separate metals’ union. In December 1915 the *Sûreté Générale* opened a new file for anarchist Léon Jahane after he tried to enter factories and propagandize to workers.²³² After the French army experienced its own munitions crisis in 1915, the French government prioritized maximum munitions production and intelligence agencies

²³⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

²³¹ Profile of Lennoir, Raoul Léopold, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Profile of Blanchard, Marius, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Profile of Bouchet, Alexandre, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²³² Profile of Jahane, Léon, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Police Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 3 Dec., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

fervently spied on anti-war labor leaders within the munitions factories. However, for these intelligence services Merrheim was the sun around which all the other dangerous subversives revolved. He became synonymous with subversive labor actions and the anti-war movement. Throughout 1915 intelligence services tracked his travels, official actions, correspondence, public and private speeches, and regularly debated arresting or conscripting him, even though he was beyond the age of military service.

Intelligence services saw Merrheim's subversive influence on every shopfloor, reporting on a conference Merrheim led in January 1915 where he criticized a wage freeze and dilution.²³³ By February another report blamed the FM for reducing munitions production and recommended turning all relevant intelligence on Merrheim and the FM over to the Ministry of War.²³⁴ Merrheim seemed to be everywhere. A 22 February meeting of tinsmiths in Paris agreed to follow the FM and produce more syndicalist propaganda to combat the capitalists.²³⁵ In April the eighteenth section of the *Union Corporative des Ouvriers Mécaniciens de la Seine*, connected to the FM, discussed peace advocacy, anarchism and criticized "the cops."²³⁶ When Merrheim wasn't promoting anti-government activity on factory floors he was organizing a global anti-war movement. On 19 April the *Sûreté Générale* reported, "He is in contact with Sassenbach, Secretary of the General Commission of German Syndicats (the German CGT) Merrheim does not appear to be a German agent, but in accordance with his theories, an admirer of German economic action, vis-à-vis the French industrial regime. He still believes in the good faith of the German minority [anti-war movement]."²³⁷

²³³ Conférence par Merrheim, *Ministère de L'Intérieur*, 12 Jan., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²³⁴ M/9646, Au sujet de la fabrication du matériel de guerre, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, Feb 12, 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13366, 1-2.

²³⁵ Note, *Préfecture de Police*, 22 Feb., 1915, F7 13366.

²³⁶ Note, *Préfecture de Police*, 11 Apr., 1915, F7 13366.

²³⁷ M/9747 Au sujet de Merrheim, *Préfecture de Police*, 19 Apr., 1915, F7 13366.

On 18 April Merrheim received permission from the FM and the *Union départementale du Rhône* to hold a peace protest on May Day.²³⁸ The following day he travelled to Paris to garner support from the CGT. Jouhaux led the majority in opposing national peace demonstrations, but the CGT voted to allow each syndicate to decide for themselves what they would do on May Day.²³⁹ French intelligence tracked Merrheim back to Lyon and reported that he was working on a special edition of the FM's journal while planning possible violent incidents. Reassuringly, the report concluded that most "trade union leaders disapproved of his initiatives." In the end there were hardly any public anti-war demonstrations on May Day in 1915.²⁴⁰ Instead of leading a peace march, Merrheim, at a conference, blamed "capitalists of all countries," and not solely Germany, for the war. Merrheim insisted, in opposition to widely promoted stories about the German occupation of the Nord, "that French soldiers committed as many atrocities as the Germans." That day he also published a special issue of *L'Union des Métaux* in support of German peace advocate Karl Liebknecht's manifesto for international peace. Censors tried to suppress the issue, although contraband copies were still plentiful.²⁴¹

Even though Merrheim failed to arouse a national anti-war movement, French intelligence agencies remained concerned about his influence and considered arresting him for promoting peace within the CGT.²⁴² Ironically, Merrheim was spared imprisonment or conscription due to his fellow trade unionist's successful opposition to his goals. On 27 June Merrheim spoke out against Jouhaux's pro-government stance at a CGT meeting, but the CGT leader received the majority support. At the 15 August 1915 *Conférence Confédérale*, Merrheim

²³⁸ Profile of Merrheim, Alphonse, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 4-5.

²³⁹ M9745 Confédération Générale du Travail: Réunion d'hier matin Le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 Apr., 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-3.

²⁴⁰ M/9759 Le Premier Mai 1915, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 26 April 1915 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

²⁴¹ Profile of Merrheim, Alphonse, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 5.

²⁴² M/9784 À la C.G.T.: Nouvelles diverses, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, May 7 1915, F7 13272.

proposed restoring international relations and advocated for peace at any price. The motion lost by 26 votes against 78.²⁴³ Afterwards Merrheim decided to skip its future meetings and work outside France's largest trade union, concentrating on metals' syndicates.²⁴⁴ Merrheim's failures allayed government worries, sparing him from arrest.

Meanwhile the CGT under Jouhaux increasingly allied with the government. That summer socialist politician Albert Thomas became the Under-Secretary of State for Artillery and Munitions. While many members of the CGT criticized Thomas for abandoning his syndicalist principles, one leader argued that Thomas had not renounced his beliefs, but that defeat would mean, "the death of revolutionary syndicalism within France."²⁴⁵ The rest of the year Thomas worked closely with the CGT. Although many CGT leaders balked at more government control, most of them chose to sacrifice autonomy for the promise of victory.²⁴⁶

In early September socialists from across Europe gathered in Zimmerwald, Switzerland for a conference that many hoped would help them end hostilities. A *Sûreté Générale* report warned that Merrheim might conspire with German nationals to create agitation in the two countries if allowed to attend the conference. Yet, Merrheim and a fellow labor leader acquired passports and were permitted to leave for Switzerland, likely because their recent defeat in the CGT's peace vote calmed fears among intelligence leaders.²⁴⁷ Upon his return Merrheim created a new committee for peace within the CGT. Intelligence agents focused on Merrheim because he

²⁴³ Profile of Merrheim, Alphonse, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 5.

²⁴⁴ C.G.T. Au sujet de Merrheim, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 24 Jul., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁴⁵ M/9873 A La C.G.T., *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 13 Jul., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

²⁴⁶ M/9847 Dans les Métaux: Les non-professionnels, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 21 Jun., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1. The CGT still promoted peace, largely due to Bourderon's influence. However, Jouhaux maintained the majority line that France needed to defend itself for peace to occur, which stymied the pro-peace movement. M/9862 Confédération Générale du Travail: Réunion d'hier soir, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1 Jul., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁴⁷ M/9936, Dans Les Organisations Parisiennes, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 2 Sept., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

had become the leader of France's pacifist movement, and "we must fight [pacifism] by any means."²⁴⁸

Merrheim's repeated defeats against Jouhaux within the CGT, together with labor groups' collaboration with the new Ministry of Munitions convinced him to take the anti-government fight to the shopfloor. Late July an unsigned circular appeared in Parisian metalworkers' factories calling on workers to reduce production of the weapons that would be used against their fellow working-class Germans. Intelligence officials reported that "anarchists at Basse-Indre, linked with Merrheim," released a circular exclaiming, "workers, it is we who give arms for the killing of our German brothers. This must cease."²⁴⁹ Another report in October claimed that while Jouhaux encouraged workers to keep producing, Merrheim "exploited" the workers' desire for, "a general augmentation of salaries."²⁵⁰ The police found a pro-peace brochure in a Paris shopfloor. Initially a group of anarchists blamed Merrheim but he denied having written the brochure and claimed "it is the work of the anarchists."²⁵¹ Later in October a report claimed the metalworkers of Paris were working more slowly than usual and more workers than usual were reporting sick. The report concluded the metallurgists, "are not persuaded of the grandeur of their task," and produce as little as possible.²⁵² While the government tolerated Merrheim's failed peace agitation they could not tolerate the slowdown of munitions production. A 10 November report concluded "since it appears impossible to let him

²⁴⁸ M10.047 A La C.G.T., *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 15 Nov., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁴⁹ Ouvriers Métallurgistes et la Guerre, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 31 Jul., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁵⁰ M10.015 Dans la Métallurgie, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 Oct., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁵¹ M10.017 Au Sujet de Merrheim, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 Oct., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁵² M10.031 Renseignement, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Oct., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

continue to agitate, [the government must follow] one of the two following options: either bring him before a tribunal or call him to the colors.”²⁵³

Then, on 22 November a French intelligence inside agent attended a closed meeting wherein Merrheim met with thirty militant syndicalists and a handful of anarchists to decide how to deal with their dismay about pro-war fellow socialists and union leaders. Merrheim bemoaned international socialists’ failure to maintain peace before the war. “Jouhaux sold himself to the government,” Merrheim thundered, and betrayed the working-class to such an extent that, “the CGT regularly sent its meetings’ minutes to the government.” Merrheim suggested the CGT’s paper the *Bataille Syndicaliste* should change its name to “*Bataille Gouvernementale*.” The CGT had become so subordinate to the state Merrheim complained that nothing could be done or said without the government knowing. The minority syndicalists decided to reach out to the disaffected labor unions that had left the CGT to bolster their numbers.²⁵⁴

Still, in 1915 the government did not fear labor unrest. Intelligence agents managed to infiltrate Merrheim’s innermost circle. Equally reassuring for government agents, by late 1915 most workers had rejected Merrheim and the minority faction. Even the radical munitions workers favored peace through victory rather than an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Merrheim spent the winter of 1915 agitating for peace, always under the watchful eye of the government. Censors reading his mail discovered his regular collaboration with pacifist journals in Denmark and Switzerland.²⁵⁵ On 2 December a secret agent attended another private meeting, and heard Merrheim complain that, “*La Bataille* gave itself for free [to the government]

²⁵³ M10.042 Au Sujet de Merrheim, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 10 Nov., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

²⁵⁴ M10.054 La Propagande Pacifiste: Une Réunion secrète, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 22 Nov., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-3.

²⁵⁵ M10.070 Au sujet de Merrheim, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 2 Dec., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

and was the organ of the Ministry of the Interior.”²⁵⁶ Near the end of the year, Merrheim planned a peace conference for 5 December in Paris but the government refused permission, forcing him to relocate to Tours where he hosted a much smaller gathering.²⁵⁷

At the start of 1915 intelligence agencies worried that Merrheim might ignite a strong anti-government, pacifist movement. However, over the year moderate laborers defeated his efforts. Simultaneously agents tracked his every move, publication and speech. Even at the end of the year when Merrheim launched a guerrilla propaganda campaign, intelligence agents and police discovered his publications and infiltrated his secret meetings. Ultimately, the troublemaker was spared conscription because he had been successfully sequestered from the majority of munitions workers.

Conclusion

British and French officials understood that the war against Germany would require total mobilization of labor and resources for victory, although they did not know how to achieve it. In the preceding decades both governments had built expansive intelligence gathering and surveillance powers in response to foreign and internal threats. When war started, overwhelming patriotic fervor spared intelligence organizations and police forces from having to suppress dissidents in 1914.

The events of 1915 convinced intelligence agents, policymakers and police that the radical left agitation posed a threat to the war effort. The CWC under Gallacher and Kirkwood

²⁵⁶ M10.069 A la “Bataille”: Une campagne contre le journal, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 2 Dec., 1915, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-2.

²⁵⁷ Profile of Merrheim, Alphonse, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6.

led work stoppages in munitions factories during the Shell Crisis. The FM under Merrheim slowed munitions production even as Germany occupied much of the northeast. British politicians mistakenly believed that the CWC led the first large-scale protests of the war over the rent issue, while across the Channel Merrheim advocated peace and opposed labor collaboration with the new Ministry of Munitions. The British No-Conscription Fellowship and radical French labor groups protested conscription and in Britain discouraged young men from joining the military. The rebirth of the international pacifist movement reignited fears of anarchist-style transnational plots and possible German-sponsored sabotage. MO5 agents caught one German sympathizer aiding the anti-war effort and suspected many more. French intelligence understood that Merrheim was not a paid German agent but still claimed he was a 'Germanophile' who coordinated with foreign peace movements to hinder the war effort.

In spite of the lack of serious protest, the year's events led government officials to become increasingly fearful of working-class activists. Before the war, Britain's intelligence services focused on foreign threats, pro-Irish radicals, anarchists and suffragists. French intelligence countered foreign agents, anarchists and right-wing plots such as the Boulangist movement. Latent fears about a right-wing coup meant that during the early phase of the war French intelligence services closely monitored the *Ligue des Patriotes* and *Action française*. Once war began these groups declared unwavering support for the war effort, lessening the government's concerns about the far right-wing. Workers, particularly munitions workers, worried British and French leaders because they were essential to war production while at the same time were susceptible to anti-government radicalism. Marxists, socialists and syndicalists led the all-important munitions factories in Glasgow and Paris. While these radically anti-government labor leaders represented relatively small sections of the working-class they

appealed to a broad base by addressing general workers' concerns. Thus, controlling workers and countering radical leftist agitation became the primary concern of British and French intelligence services.

As the conflict dragged on and war fatigue set in political leaders on both sides of the Channel decided that they needed to do more than observe radical worker agitation. In 1916 both governments became far more active in silencing dissenters while appeasing the majority of their people.

Chapter 4: Successful Suppression? 1916

The year 1916 was a pivotal one for Britain. Political leaders determined to crush any opposition to the war effort as the government greatly expanded its powers and presence on the homefront. Through a reorganization of Military Operations Section 5 into a newly-invigorated Military Intelligence Section 5 and severe crackdowns on dissident leaders the government successfully enforced conscription and undertook mass government oversight of industry. For France, 1916 was the final year of relative domestic stability. From the war's beginning the French government employed sweeping measures for surveillance and limiting dissent. Popular opinion began to turn against the government over its draconian measures as general war fatigue set in. Yet, the radical opposition failed to provide a popular alternative and the status quo remained in place until the mass movements of 1917.

Britain: Crushing Labor and the Anti-War Movement

Three major changes in British counter-subversion occurred at the beginning of 1916. First, on 3 January 1916 the various MO sections reorganized. Military Operations Section 5 (MO5) became Military Intelligence Section 5 (MI5) with the task of countering internal threats. Second, MI5 expanded its personnel greatly, eventually growing to 1,000 staff by war's end. Third, MI5 (alongside its partners in Special Branch and the Metropolitan Police) aggressively pursued dissidents in the labor and anti-conscription movements. By 1916, MI5's main role moved from anti-German activity to counter-subversion. While Germany did not attempt any serious subversion in Britain this did not stop intelligence leaders from believing that all anti-war

efforts were created or sponsored by Germany.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, policymakers understood that the only way Britain could contend militarily with Germany was to implement military conscription and industrial dilution, the process by which complex tasks within factories were broken down into simpler ones allowing unskilled laborers to enter munitions factories and increase production. The reorganization of domestic intelligence was a preemptive measure against dissidents the government assumed would oppose these new policies. The central government's focus on dissidents filtered down to police departments working on behalf of the security services. Between 1914-1915, police were instructed to watch for spies, but from 1916-onward, they increasingly shifted their attention to homegrown radicals.²⁵⁹

Many Britons opposed conscription as an assault on their natural English rights. British statesman David Lloyd George moaned that the government should have implemented conscription at the war's beginning but did not because, "to the British people [conscription] was unfamiliar, and we move slowly in these islands. we also had a strong traditional objection to the creation of large armed forces, as potential instruments of tyranny and an infringement of personal liberty."²⁶⁰

Simultaneously, craft-workers feared dilution's effects on their workplaces. Skilled workers were difficult to replace and thus they had power over their shopfloors to demand higher wages and better conditions. In contrast, unskilled workers performing simple tasks could be easily replaced. Labor unions representing craftworkers, such as the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC), feared that government-mandated dilution would empower factory owners to replace

²⁵⁸ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 84-86.

²⁵⁹ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*. (Harlow, UK: Longman. 1991), 128. Brock Millman, "HMG and the War against Dissent," 1914-18, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Jul., 2005), 413-440, 436.

²⁶⁰ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol. 1*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1933) 426.

skilled workers with American-style mass production by unskilled assembly-line workers with little job security and poor pay.²⁶¹ Skilled workers worried they would lose their military service exemption as unskilled women, poor Irish and immigrant workers replaced them in the factories.

The government started the year with an immediate crackdown against potential opponents of dilution. On 1 January 1916 police shut down the Independent Labour Party's (ILP) *Forward* and Glasgow radical John Maclean's paper *Vanguard*.²⁶² On 2 February, "police raided the Socialist Labour Press, broke up the machinery, and suppressed the forthcoming issue of *The Worker* [The CWC's official newspaper]."²⁶³ On 7 February, police arrested William Gallacher, Johnny Muir, and Walter Bell and charged them with sedition for writing an article entitled "Should the Workers Arm?" even though they concluded that they should not.²⁶⁴ John Maclean was arrested the next day and charged with making a long list of speeches in favor of strikes and against enlistment. Ten thousand workers demonstrated in support of the imprisoned leaders, which forced the authorities to release all of them except Maclean on bail.²⁶⁵ By 9 February strikers began to go back to work. The next day the CWC leadership recognized their weakened position and called off its strike.²⁶⁶

Thus the government struck a powerful blow early on and rapidly implemented dilution. On 21 January Prime Minister H.H. Asquith announced that dilution would be enforced and within three days "three Dilution Commissioners arrived on the Clyde."²⁶⁷ Minister of Munitions

²⁶¹ French skilled workers had the same fears of de-skilling and 'Taylorism,' the process of scientific management named after Frederick Taylor. Note, 18 Dec., 1916, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

²⁶² *Daily News*, 1 Jan., 1916.

²⁶³ James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, (Manchester, The Gresham Press, 1973), 147.

²⁶⁴ *Forward*, 22 Apr., 1916, *The Worker*, 29 Jan., 1916. For Gallacher's account see William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, (1936: repr., London Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1990), 115-126.

²⁶⁵ Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 147.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

William Weir provided a brilliant and ruthless scheme to gradually break the power of organized labor. Appointed officials were sent to certain factories where they would present the government's agenda for dilution. The workers were given two days to meet with management and try to change the scheme, although invariably their demands would be ignored and on the third day dilution began.²⁶⁸ If a strike occurred the strikers would be met by the entire force of the government. The police or even the military would be called in to defend the new employees brought in under the scheme; trade unions were prohibited from using money to defend any anti-government action and any trade union leaders who incited workers to strike were tried under the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA).²⁶⁹

Weir began by implementing dilution in "half-a-dozen" factories that had been strongholds of labor, such as Parkhead, Weir's, Dalmuir and Yarrows. The Commissioners of Dilution carefully worked through any inequality or labor disputes that these factories had so that workers did not oppose the new organization.²⁷⁰ After developing a foothold in these important shops, the government implemented dilution across Glasgow.²⁷¹ As historian James Hinton wrote, "Within a week, dilution schemes were in operation at Parkhead and Weir's. During the second week Dalmuir and Yarrows followed."²⁷² Parkhead, the birthplace of the CWC, became the "Commissioners' main foothold [in Glasgow]."²⁷³

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 143.

²⁶⁹ See "Summary of dilution programme as based (with modifications) on Mr Weir's memorandum," 1. <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly118a.html>.

²⁷⁰ Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 145.

²⁷¹ Baillie proves in her thesis that women were already present at various factories even before the official program of dilution was enforced by the government, with Beardmore's in particular being noted for its women. Firstly, this proves that dilution may have been easier to implement as it was already in progress, secondly, it disproves McLean's claim that women were not present before dilution was enforced. Myra Baillie, "The Women of Red Clydeside: Women Munitions Workers in the West of Scotland During the First World War" (2002, PhD thesis, McMaster University) 114-115.

²⁷² Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 145.

²⁷³ Ibid., 145.

While government agencies suppressed the most radical CWC leaders, more moderate individuals decided their best option was to work with the government. Just a few days after the arrest of his fellow Clydesiders, Kirkwood broke ranks with the CWC and negotiated with the government to allow women to work at certain factories, albeit at a reduced pay rate.²⁷⁴

Kirkwood then organized the female workers to such an extent that in November 1915 the mere threat of a strike caused the employers to raise their wages at the Parkhead factory.²⁷⁵

Intelligence agents feared that Kirkwood would radicalize incoming workers and decided he had to be removed from the shopfloor. On 25 March 1916 at three o'clock in the morning police arrived at Kirkwood's home where they arrested him for hindering the war effort. They took him to the Central Police Office where they held him in solitary confinement before quietly putting him on a train for Edinburgh before he was eventually moved into Edinburgh Castle's dungeon.²⁷⁶ This act had its intended effect; deprived of their most sympathetic supporter in the labor leadership, only a handful of unskilled women became active in the CWC.²⁷⁷ Police arrested more Clydesiders in April, including James Maxton and James McDougall, resulting in nine CWC leaders arrested without charges or trial.²⁷⁸ Across the country the Ministry of Munitions employed Special Branch to monitor opponents of dilution.²⁷⁹

The battered CWC still tried to control the shopfloors and install their own regulations to limit dilution. Johnny Muir promoted a program which demanded that the shopfloors be

²⁷⁴ Iain McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, (1983: repr., Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), 71-72.

²⁷⁵ Myra Baillie, "The Women of Red Clydeside," 125-127.

²⁷⁶ Myra Baillie, "The Women of Red Clydeside," 148. See also, *Forward*, 1 Apr., 1916. See David Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, (London George G. Harrap & Co. LTD., 1935), 129-148.

²⁷⁷ The CWC would extend "moral and financial support" to female strikers between November 1917 to January 1918, and would support the appointment of women to various shop stewards positions. Myra Baillie, "The Women of Red Clydeside," 169.

²⁷⁸ *Labour Leader*, 6 Apr., 1916, 2.

²⁷⁹ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 108.

controlled by unions and all people who entered factories be required to join a union.²⁸⁰ Weir refused and declined to meet the remaining CWC leadership as the government preferred to work with the much more conciliatory Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE).²⁸¹ Every day non-unionized women, poor Scots and Irish entered the factories. Those who joined unions usually chose the more moderate Scottish Trades Union Congress or ASE, rather than the CWC, whose influence declined. Dilution was widespread by the time the CWC leadership returned to Glasgow in 1917.

While government officials worked to increase industrial production they simultaneously addressed manpower shortages in the army. On 5 January 1916 Parliament passed the Military Service Act, which ordered most unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 41 to register for military service starting 2 March.²⁸² Two weeks later the High Court ruled that DORA allowed the government to override the Habeas Corpus Act and detain British citizens without trial. Anti-conscriptionists responded with horror and disgust. *The Herald* protested,

One by one the liberties we have enjoyed in this country are being filched from us, and scarcely a voice is raised in protest. Freedom of speech is gone. Freedom of the press is gone. The right of public trial has been taken away. Workmen are forbidden to change their employment or their masters. Conscription is upon us. And now by a decision in the Courts last week the Habeas Corpus Act, the very basis of our liberty, has been set to nought.²⁸³

The British government imprisoned hundreds of conscientious objectors (CO) within a month without clear charges. *The Call* claimed that Britain essentially adopted *Ancien Régime* France's infamous *lettres de cachet*, so that, "by a mere stroke of the King's pen you or anybody

²⁸⁰ McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, 76.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁸² Military Service Act, 1916. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28449>

²⁸³ *Herald*, 29 Jan., 1916, Warwick Modern Records Centre, Misc. Papers, MSS.292/1989/1.

else living in these islands...can be thrown into prison and kept there ever so long, without trial and even without charge.”²⁸⁴

Compared to France and Germany, the British government implemented conscription late and needed to meet its quotas to effectively continue the war. The military could not afford slow mobilization and the government vigorously persecuted anyone who opposed conscription. In February a magistrate in London, “imposed the maximum penalty...of £100 and 10 guineas or 61 days’ imprisonment,” on eight NCF leaders for passing out a leaflet opposing the Military Services Act.²⁸⁵ On 1 March Evan Parker was charged with discouraging conscription and causing disaffection for having vowed that he would go to the scaffold before he let the military conscript his son and calling King George V, “a German bastard.”²⁸⁶ Also in early March police charged Charles F. Murrell of the ILP £10 for having an anti-militarist document in his hair-dressers’ shop. Police raided The Brotherhood Church in Leeds twice for anti-militarist leafletting. Two men were sentenced to prison while a woman was arrested for handing out leaflets criticizing the war from a religious perspective.²⁸⁷ In Leeds two men were sentenced to, “six months imprisonment for saying that war is contrary to Christianity.” A man in Bradford was sentenced to, “two months hard labour,” for saying

- (1) These young men who are enlisting are not in their right minds...
- (2) He would rather be ruled by a dog than by the king...
- (3) The army before the war broke out was made up of the scum of the country...
- (4) The very people who wanted us to go to fight in their interests are that people that looked upon the army as scum in times of peace.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ *The Call*, 24 Feb., 1916, 2.

²⁸⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 18 Feb., 1916.

²⁸⁶ *The Spur*, Apr., 1916.

²⁸⁷ *Labour Leader*, 16 Mar., 1916.

²⁸⁸ *Labour Leader*, 30 Mar., 1916, 2.

The government continued its crackdown on opponents of conscription through the fall with arrests and fines.²⁸⁹ In Penarth, South Wales, police seized the Bishop of Oxford's copy of *The Sermon on the Mount* leading MP Walter Roch to ask in the House of Commons, "whether any person in possession of this work was subject to the penalty of having his premises searched and the book seized." Home Secretary Herbert Samuel deflected, saying, "no official of the Home Office had anything to do with the matter. The local police acted on their own responsibility," to which MP William Pringle responded, "then are we to understand that expositions of the New Testament-(cries of "Oh")-are to be subjected to the censorship of local police constables?"²⁹⁰ By September the *Labour Leader* estimated that 2,260 anti-militarists had been arrested and 1,266 court-martialed.²⁹¹

Alongside the official crackdowns, as in 1914 and 1915 the government could continue to rely on patriotic crowds to disrupt CO meetings. On 23 January a crowd broke up an anti-conscription meeting with Sylvia Pankhurst, and members of the ILP and the British Socialist Party.²⁹² *The Daily Express* reported that there would be a NCF meeting in London on 7 April and an angry crowd assembled to meet it.²⁹³ In November the National Council of Civil Liberties planned a convention against conscription but counter-protestors led by coal and shipbuilding owners threatened to break them up. One of their leaders claimed they would use any means short of murder to stop COs and that police would never protect "blighters," against patriotic

²⁸⁹ That September police in Hull fined a man £10 under DORA for having anti-conscription literature. On 27 October a Bristol police caught a youth with NCF material and he was sentenced to 26 days in prison while two other members were fined £10 and £15. *The Tribunal*, 30 Sept., 1916. *The Tribunal*, 9 Nov., 1916.

²⁹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Jun., 1916.

²⁹¹ *Labour Leader*, 21 Sept., 1916.

²⁹² Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, (Frank Cass: London, 2000) 84.

²⁹³ Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship 1914-1919* (University of Arkansas Press: Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1981), 115.

Brits.²⁹⁴ In Cardiff patriots and protestors brawled in what the press dubbed the “Battle of Cory Hall,” for the public meeting-place.²⁹⁵

Conscientious objectors and their allies, recognizing that the government targeted them, fought back insisting on their right to free speech. On 30 March the *Labour Leader* asserted that police and censors selectively curtailed free speech for, “those whom the Government, the governing classes, and the Executive object to.” Whereas pro-war individuals such as Lord Northcliffe could say the invasion of, “Belgium was not the cause of our entering the war,” an ILP member who said the same thing could be arrested and charged under DORA.²⁹⁶ When the Lord-Justice General sentenced Scottish anti-war advocate John Maclean to prison he explained that, “in normal times the expressions which the accused was stated to have used would not come under the cognisance of the criminal law, but we were not living in normal times.”²⁹⁷

Head of Special Branch Basil Thomson encouraged his colleagues across intelligence agencies to suppress pacifist movements. He claimed “pacifism, anti-Conscription, and Revolution were now inseparably mixed. The same individuals took part in all three movements. The real object of these people, though it may have been sub-conscious, appeared to be the ruin of their own country.”²⁹⁸ Government forces routinely raided NCF and other CO organizations on behalf of MI5 and Special Branch.²⁹⁹ They aggressively harassed anti-conscription leaders beginning in April when the Chief Constable of Salford stormed the National Labour Press in Manchester (publisher of the *Labour Leader*) and confiscated a large number of pamphlets.³⁰⁰ A week later police raided the house of the head of the southwestern National Council Against

²⁹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Nov., 1916.

²⁹⁵ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, 138.

²⁹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 30 Mar., 1916, 2.

²⁹⁷ *The Call*, 20 Apr., 1916, 2.

²⁹⁸ Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard*, (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1922) 302.

²⁹⁹ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century*, 62-63.

³⁰⁰ *Labour Leader*, 6 Apr., 1916.

Conscription.³⁰¹ In mid-May police raided the ILP branch in Cwmavon and seized all their literature.³⁰² By late May police raided ILP offices across the country.³⁰³ In June new regulations criminalized owning dissenting material, to which the *Labour Leader* replied,

Shortly we may anticipate further regulation making it possible for the authorities to arrest and imprison any person on the ground that he has been guilty of *thinking* something likely to prejudice recruiting or cause disaffection, unless he can prove that the seditious thought did not, in fact, enter his mind or that he did not intend to circulate it by expressing it to others! The Government is rapidly making this country the laughing-stock of the civilised world. Does it not realise that the suppression of liberty which it is practising is only having the effect of forcing those who wish to remain law-abiding to become unconstitutional?

Further expansions of DORA banned plays and films that discouraged recruiting.³⁰⁴ In June police raided ILP, NCF and other anti-conscription houses across the country, including in the working-class strongholds of Glasgow and Manchester, seizing and destroying all literature they could find.³⁰⁵ Police agents intercepted the mail of people suspected of working against the government; they frequently monitored, harassed and ultimately imprisoned COs.

Intelligence services and police employed every opportunity to silence anti-conscription leaders, regardless of the latter's power or popularity. On 20 July Charles Glyde, city councilor for Bradford and ILP member, was fined £20 for saying that soldiers' reward for fighting is "widows, taxes, the workhouse, wooden legs and debt."³⁰⁶ On 8 February, the London Metropolitan Police forbid Bertrand Russell, Britain's most prominent anti-conscription advocate, from entering certain areas within the country where he might cause disaffection. "It is most outrageous," Russell protested. "The order prevents me going to a great many large towns in England. I had been thinking of giving lectures in various towns, not about the war, but

³⁰¹ *Labour Leader*, 13 Apr., 1916, 2.

³⁰² *Labour Leader*, 18 May, 1916, 2.

³⁰³ *Labour Leader*, 25 May, 1916, 2.

³⁰⁴ *Labour Leader*, 1 Jun., 1916, 1-3.

³⁰⁵ *Labour Leader*, 8 Jun., 1916, *Labour Leader*, 22 Jun., 1916, *Labour Leader*, 29 Jun., 1916, *Luton Today Times*, 10 Jun., 1916, *Labour Leader*, 6 Jul., 1916.

³⁰⁶ *Labour Leader*, 20 Jul., 1916, *Labour Leader*, 10 Aug., 1916.

matters quite unconnected with it. Now I cannot do it.”³⁰⁷ Authorities constantly monitored MPs Russell, Philip Snowden and Charles Trevelyan hoping to arrest them if they violated the Defense of the Realm Regulation 24’s restrictions on press freedoms.³⁰⁸ Moreover, MI5 intercepted mail and telegrams sent by pacifists, including MPs such as Phillip Snowden.³⁰⁹ On 11 September the *Manchester Guardian* reported that the police interrogated a number of respectable Birmingham citizens trying to find out if they were members or supporters of the NCF. They asked a series of ten questions including:

- 1) Are you now, or have you been connected with (a) the No-Conscription Fellowship; (b) the National Council Against Conscription; (c) the Union of Democratic Control...?
- 2) have you supplied any money to any such society or societies, and, if so, to what and when?...
- 4) You are required to produce for inspection your cheque and bank pass books and to answer any questions in regard to any item...
- 7) Have you been present at or associated with or have you assisted with money or otherwise the holdings of meetings in public or private at which speeches have been made against conscription or recruiting or the upkeep of military forces?³¹⁰

No amount of institutional power or influence shielded popular anti-conscriptionists from government surveillance and repression. A number of conservative MPs wanted to shut down the NCF, but Home Secretary Herbert Samuel refused, saying as long as they did not oppose the war effort directly but pursued their consciences privately they were not treasonous.³¹¹ Thus, COs were allowed to disagree with the state’s actions so long as they did not contest state power.

The British government’s swift actions at the start of 1916 caught radical labor agitators and anti-conscription advocates completely off-guard. The government had used a light hand to

³⁰⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Sept., 1916.

³⁰⁸ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, 89.

³⁰⁹ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 62-63.

³¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Sept., 1916.

³¹¹ Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience*, 126.

control public opinion in the first two years of the war, preferring to let patriotic citizens silence dissidents. By 1916 however, domestic disturbances combined with the military stalemate convinced Whitehall that they needed to take a more active role in shaping public opinion. Policymakers hoped that conscription and mass production of arms through dilution would turn the tide of war. The government rapidly silenced those who opposed either policy and sequestered them from the general population so that they could not foment dissent. Nevertheless, these efforts did not save Prime Minister H.H. Asquith's position. By the end of 1916 David Lloyd George replaced him as prime minister. Lloyd George was committed to war until victory and under him the government surveilled and controlled workers more than ever before.

France: The Last Calm

During the final year of relative domestic calm in France, 1916, French intelligence services continued tracking dissident leaders, monitored pacifist mail and censored anything deemed critical of the government. Even as French people balked under these draconian measures they accepted them as necessary to counter German aggression. Police continued to monitor the monarchist *Ligue des Patriotes* (LDP), which oscillated between calling for unity against Germany and criticizing the government for failing to prepare for war. Yet, the government considered the far-right far weaker than the far-left. By 1916 the LDP, a small organization that struggled financially, was divided between its three leaders, Barrès, Galli and Marchel Habert, and between Bonapartists, republicans and reactionaries.³¹² On 28 June the LDP

³¹² Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 8 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1 July. 1916 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873.

led a large gathering in Notre-Dame de Paris as a show of strength. The *Sûreté Générale* agent watching the demonstration happily recorded that it, “did not have the expected success. In truth, there were lots of people, the church was filled but it was the quality of attendants that did not respond to the organizer’s invitations. One sees very few officials and deputies, and even fewer senators.” Few officials came as they did not want to be part of the political-religious gathering which they viewed as a dangerous mix.³¹³ Financial problems, internal divisions and lack of powerful support rendered the right-wing incapable of posing a serious threat to the government. Finally, police effectively monitored the LDP leaders in each Paris arrondissement.³¹⁴ By the end of the year the LDP abandoned its limited anti-government activity and resigned itself to propagandizing for the war effort, which police were more than willing to allow. On 30 October in a speech at the grave of LDP founder Paul Déroulède, a Ligue member declared, “it is necessary to continue our war work as long as necessary, until final victory...in the day of victory we will affirm our place as defenders and servants of the nation.”³¹⁵

French officials were not only concerned with select groups, but engaged in broad censorship of the general public. From the beginning of 1916 until the war’s end censors opened 180,000 letters a week.³¹⁶ On 3 January the government banned all German-language publications from entering France. On 15 January soldiers were prohibited from using the post office and had to send letters through the military service.³¹⁷ Newspaper censorship became more frequent. Newspapers could even be banned for criticizing individual military leaders, as when police seized the 8 September copies of *La Libre Parole* for criticizing General Maurice Sarrail.

³¹³ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Jun., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873.

³¹⁴ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 15 Dec., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873.

³¹⁵ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Oct., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873.

³¹⁶ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre*, (Paris: Fayard Histoire 2016), 12, 222.

³¹⁷ Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure Militaire et Policière 1914-1919*, (Cherche Midi: Paris, 2014), 50, 168.

Police regularly targeted minority socialists, banning their meetings.³¹⁸ Police raided The Society for the Documentary Study and Criticism of the War numerous times between 1914 and 1916. While the group still operated officials put pressure on any notables attending. The *Labour Leader* reported, “At one meeting General Perier was announced to give a lecture on ‘The Military Preparation of the War.’ The lecturer failed to put in an appearance. It is rumoured that official pressure was put on him, and that the withdrawal of his pension was threatened.”³¹⁹ Furthermore, The *Paris Police Préfecture* regularly opened pacifist correspondence, made copies and even compiled a list of pacifist mail sent by teachers.³²⁰

Intelligence services’ primarily focused on organized labor and its most defiant rebel, Alphonse Merrheim. Agents followed Merrheim wherever he went, infiltrated the *Fédération des Métaux* (FM) and his associate organizations, recorded upcoming travel and collected his publications. They even intercepted one of his letters warning his fellows that, “the government has given orders to surveil our correspondence.”³²¹ Their intense scrutiny suggests that some within the intelligence community feared a widespread anti-government and anti-war movement that could sweep the country if it only had a spark to set it off. That had, in fact, been Merrheim’s plan. He claimed that militant pacifism, “was gaining ground in Lyon, Tours and Limoges,” in union with German pacifists for a transnational peace movement.³²²

Merrheim’s allies included many skilled workers and peace activists. Raymond Pericat led the *Comité d’Action Internationale*, “to reach all syndicate organizations... ‘to act in favor of

³¹⁸ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France*, 50, 249-251, 267.

³¹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 30 Mar., 1916.

³²⁰ *Memo on Pacifist correspondence*, 18 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Police Préfecture de Paris), BA 1559. Report on the Letters, 26 May 1916, 1916, (Paris: Police Préfecture de Paris), BA 1559.

³²¹ Avis important, *Ministère de l’Intérieur*, Undated, arrived 5 May, 1917 from the Paris Police Préfecture, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³²² Memo M/10136, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6 Jan., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

the reconciliation of all oppressed peoples of all countries.”³²³ Albert Bourderon relentlessly propagandized against what he believed, “was not a war for liberation but a war for capital and conquest.”³²⁴ By May *La Fédération des Syndicats d’Instituteurs* joined the FM’s efforts, becoming the second of, “two important organizations completely committed to pacifist propaganda.”³²⁵

Intelligence services considered the peace movement and Merrheim inseparable; he either led pro-peace organizations or coordinated with them. Moreover, Merrheim’s potential promotion of industrial sabotage in late 1915 meant that intelligence services connected him to new acts of sabotage and mutiny. On 9 February Merrheim received a letter from a socialist metalworker at Epinay who told the union leader of acts of sabotage. The letter was worded with the censors in mind and gave no indication of who was responsible, and ended with the metalworker asking, “I tell you these things so that you can advise me what I must do. Receive, comrade, my fraternal, socialist salute.”³²⁶ Even more alarming to the authorities, Merrheim received numerous letters from soldiers encouraging him to further the anti-war movement. He chose not to respond to such letters because, “the time for action had not yet arrived.”³²⁷

Political leaders hoped that the CGT under Jouhaux would maintain its hold over the working-class but Merrheim and the minority fought mightily to discredit both. His followers boycotted CGT meetings. They branded Jouhaux a class traitor, publicized his meetings with government officials and worked incessantly to unite the minority factions against the

³²³ Memo M/10151, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 14 Jan., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³²⁴ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 13 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-2.

³²⁵ Memo M/10414, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³²⁶ Letter to Merrheim by A. Hubert, a socialist at Epinay, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 9 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³²⁷ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

majority.³²⁸ Throughout March, Merrheim held meetings for many hundreds to thousands, denouncing the war, the government and demanding immediate peace so that France, “the most bloodied of all belligerent nations,” could care for its orphans and widows.³²⁹ On 13 March *L’Union du Rhône* officially demanded Jouhaux step down so that Merrheim could replace him.³³⁰

Intelligence agents watched nervously as Jouhaux struggled to counter his radical opponents. On 6 March 1916, the same day Merrheim spoke to roughly two thousand listeners at two meetings in Paris, Jouhaux authorized the production of brochures to promote patriotism, explain the majority position and appeal to loyalists in the provinces.³³¹ On 27 March Merrheim made a rare appearance at a CGT meeting, during which Jouhaux claimed that there could be no peace since, “German democrats marched in step with the Kaiser.” In response, Merrheim took the podium and declared, “now the massacres are bad enough. We must, by all means, stop the carnage, because there will be neither vanquishers neither vanquished.”³³² Officials at the *Sûreté Générale* worried about Merrheim’s growing strength, sent orders to all prefects to “surveil the actions of those named Bourderon and Merrheim, [who are] pacifist propagandists. We invite you to make it impossible for them to speak to workers’ groups or hold meetings or talks,” they further ordered, “you must not deliver a passport to persons who are indulging in pacifist

³²⁸ Memo, M/10.204, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 7 Feb., 1916 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Memo M/10.231, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 21 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 Feb., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Memo M/10249, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 4 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³²⁹ M/10256 *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³³⁰ Memo M/10209, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 13 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³³¹ Memo M/10255, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³³² Memo M/10291, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 27 Mar., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 2-5.

propaganda.³³³ On 9 April Merrheim appeared in Lyon, a hotbed of radical labor activity, to hold a peace conference but the military authorities shut it down.³³⁴

Government officials could take some comfort in another lackluster May Day. The CGT announced that it would not support work stoppages during the war. Most members of the radical FM decided against demonstrations because they were performing essential war-work.³³⁵ Paris remained calm with only 1,500 workers demonstrating.³³⁶ A few incidents across the provinces took place, with work stoppages at Tarn and miners downing tools at Albi, but there was no concerted national protest movement.³³⁷ Moreover, one agent happily reported that munitions workers, laboring 11 hours a day, “did not even have the time to think about holding meetings.” Merrheim pushed metals unions to have meetings every Saturday near factories to promote militant propaganda but most workers did not attend. Merrheim, “noted sadly that many militants were at the front and the mass of workers left in the factories remained indifferent to pacifist propaganda.”³³⁸

While most workers did not support pacifism they chafed under harsh government regulations. The *Comité pour la reprise des relations internationales* protested against the military’s cancellation of Merrheim’s 9 April 1916 meeting in Lyon.³³⁹ Workers grumbled about their long work hours relative to British workers and complained that the Minister of Armaments Albert Thomas, “was more interested in the production of munitions of war than he was

³³³ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), 28 Mar., 1916, F7 13366.

³³⁴ Memo M/10320, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), 10 Apr., 1916, F7 13366.

³³⁵ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 26 Apr., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-3.

³³⁶ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 2 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

³³⁷ Commissariat Spécial Albi le 2 Mai 1916 to the Tarn Prefect, *Commissariat Spécial Albi*, 1 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

³³⁸ Memo, M/10429, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 25 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³³⁹ M/10424, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 20 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366

interested in workers.”³⁴⁰ On 1 June the *Sûreté Générale* issued a circular prohibiting any meeting that might endanger public security:

If you have the impression that a planned meeting will provoke troubles and disorder or weaken the public moral, you must coordinate with the military authorities and pronounce a prohibition on the meeting to the organizers, make an appeal to their patriotism and council them to renounce their project. Under these restrictions you can authorize meetings, notably corporate meetings where professional and economic questions will be discussed. No meeting can be tolerated which insults the Republic. I ask that you surveil with utmost vigilance all anti-republican propaganda.³⁴¹

Despite this, Merrheim held meetings in five different cities between 3 and 11 June 1916.³⁴² The FM leader concluded that the government would not arrest him to avoid the outrage it would cause. Moreover, he calculated that the CGT would force Jouhaux to launch a protest for his release.³⁴³ Merrheim may have been amused about this, as just two weeks prior Jouhaux called him a, “dirty bastard,” in public and asked if his, “debauchery,” was at an end!³⁴⁴ The *Ligue Française pour la Défense des Droits du L’Homme et du Citoyen* publicly defended Merrheim, claiming that while the government had a right to ban his peace meeting in Lyon, it had no right to ban him from holding future meetings about workplace procedures.³⁴⁵ On 5 July the Governor-General of Lyon relented and allowed Merrheim to speak so long as his meetings “were solely about workplace practices.”³⁴⁶ Merrheim had called their bluff and won a small victory. For the rest of the year Merrheim avoided holding peace meetings but continued

³⁴⁰ Memo M/10435, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 29 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴¹ Circular to the Prefects of France and Algeria, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), 1 Jun., 1916, F7 13366, 1.

³⁴² Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1 Jun., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴³ Memo M/10514, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 16 Jun., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴⁴ Memo, M/10437, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 May, 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366

³⁴⁵ Letter regarding Alphonse Merrheim’s cancelled meeting in Lyon, *Ligue Française pour la Défense des Droits du L’Homme et du Citoyen*, 19 Jun., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴⁶ Letter from the Governor General of the 14th region Lyon *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 5 Jul., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

speaking to anyone who would listen about how the working-class would save France from a capitalistic war.³⁴⁷

While the rest of 1916 saw little agitation, the simmering tension between workers and the government grew. Each Friday an agent from the *Paris Police Préfecture* visited factories to ask bosses about “the work in general, accidents on the job, sabotage, noise about strikes, etc,” a practice that *L'Œuvre* denounced.³⁴⁸ In September the radical metals syndicates of Paris protested against abuses by bosses and war profiteers. Still, under Jouhaux’s influence their *Comité Confédéral* would not support Merrheim’s protests against bosses.³⁴⁹ Instead of attacking the government directly, the metals unions appealed to the masses of women munitions workers to join their syndicates.³⁵⁰

Merrheim held one last major meeting that year on 17 November 1916 in Paris, with *l'Union des Ouvriers Mécaniciens de la Seine*. Before a crowd of 250 people he declared that the CGT was stopping French workers from acting in accordance with the international peace movement and was toeing the government line. He blasted Jouhaux and the CGT as accepting government oversight which he claimed would lead to food rationing. Merrheim bemoaned losing, “comrades who, before the war, I had much affection for,” but was unapologetic in his fight for workers’ fair pay and dignity. He welcomed women in the factories as long as they were paid fairly, although he insisted women should be banned from, “certain forms of labor that their delicate bodies were incapable of doing.” Then he blasted Thomas for using women to de-skill

³⁴⁷ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 3 Aug., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴⁸ Memos M10510 and M/10533, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 24 Jun., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁴⁹ Memo M/10696, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, Sept., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

³⁵⁰ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 11 Sept., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 13 Sept., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

work, implement Taylorism and lower wages. He concluded by advocating that women be encouraged to join the unions and the struggle for the working-class.³⁵¹

The year ended quietly despite Merrheim's fiery rhetoric. Fellow anti-war advocate Marius Blanchard angrily proclaimed that their propagandizing efforts had not broken working-class complacency.³⁵² Even the radical metalworkers disagreed about peace prospects. At a meeting of the *l'Union Corporative des ouvriers mécaniciens de la Seine*, one speaker doubted that Germany would accept peace even if it was offered.³⁵³ Radical labor leaders and peace activists failed to launch a mass movement against the war or to improve working conditions. The status quo may have been unpopular, but the radicals did not offer a realistic alternative for most workers. Only in 1917 would French workers reach a breaking point.

Conclusion

The British and French governments entered the war with a number of large, professional intelligence agencies equipped for domestic surveillance. The British and French governments tasked Special Branch, MO5 and the *Deuxième Bureau* with counter-espionage. Affiliate police organizations such as the London Metropolitan Police and the *Direction de la Sûreté Générale* assisted the intelligence community. Yet, from the outset policymakers feared radicals' destabilizing impact, expanded surveillance and passed sweeping laws to punish dissent. These measures were largely precautionary until popular labor movements began opposing government policy. The spontaneous Rent Strikes 1915 caught the British government off-guard, leading to

³⁵¹ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 7 Nov., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-11.

³⁵² *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 11 Dec., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

³⁵³ *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 14 Dec., 1916, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 14.

the punitive 1916 crackdowns against dissenters. With few exceptions, French laborers refrained from striking while the country was under siege. French officials monitored and constrained prominent agitators because many believed the strategy was more effective than direct repression. However, once mass strike movements erupted alongside mutinies within the army the following year, the French government followed Britain's example and harshly pursued dissenters.

Chapter 5: 1917: The May Strikes

The year 1917 tested Britain and France more than any preceding year during the war. Unprecedented numbers of workers and soldiers, fatigued by the seemingly endless war, disobeyed government directives. The simultaneous Russian Revolution convinced radical agitators that a worker-dominated revolution was possible. In response, the British and French governments increased their surveillance and suppression to counter heightened threats.

By January 1917 Britain and France achieved near-total mobilization of society for the purpose of winning the war. Governments in both countries seized sweeping powers to conscript soldiers and control workers. Police and military governors regulated society using information from intelligence services which were larger, more advanced and coordinated than any preexisting organizations. Agencies on both sides of the Channel isolated labor leaders and anti-war activists from the general population by censoring their publications, denying them platforms to speak and arresting the most active protestors. To the general public, these figures became unpatriotic ‘peace cranks’ and *embusqués*. Meanwhile, nearly all major national politicians supported the war. The British and French governments presented a united front against opposition. While war fatigue gripped these two countries, their governments remained in firm control of the homefront because there was no apparent alternative to war until victory.

In March the Russian Revolution began as workers and soldiers overthrew the Tsarist regime. A provisional government attempted to create a liberal, democratic system. However a soviet, a workers’ and soldiers’ council, assumed power in the capital of Petrograd and declared that the working-class would dominate a new government. The rise of the Petrograd Soviet inspired radicals in Western Europe to relaunch their efforts to mobilize the discontented masses for anti-war and anti-capitalist action. In May 1917 workers in Britain and France led the largest

strikes of the war. Moreover, they acted without the guidance of radicals and in opposition to the major trade unions' directives. Despite this, the governments of both countries feared these mass demonstrations portended a communist revolution. Policymakers scrambled to monitor and control their populations against the red menace that threatened to stall the war effort and even overturn society. By mid-summer the mass strike movement tapered off.

On 7 November 1917 the Russian Bolsheviks launched a *coup d'état*. Communists under Vladimir Lenin overthrew the Provisional Government and claimed to establish the first state led by and in service to the working-class. Moreover, Lenin called for peace negotiations with Germany. This unprecedented seizure of governmental power by workers' reinvigorated left-wing agitators and terrified conservatives across western Europe. For far-leftists in Britain and France, the militant Communist Party of Russia had accomplished more than anything they had dared attempt. The quick and relatively bloodless overthrow of the tsarist authoritarian system then democratic liberal system with a new social order dominated by the working-class and the end to the war all seemed possible. The horrified policymakers in Britain and France responded with increased surveillance and oppression. Leading government officials hoped to hold off a revolution long enough for the United States to deploy its soldiers and tip the war in the Allies' favor. US troops could not come soon enough for officials who feared that a breakdown of order could occur at any moment.

Lloyd George's War

In 1917 David Lloyd George, the new Prime Minister of Britain, faced a tense balancing act between appeasing and controlling a homefront which was increasingly suffering war fatigue.

Earlier in his career, workers regarded Lloyd George as a champion for their cause. His popularity reached a crescendo with the People's Budget 1909, which included an unprecedented tax on the wealthy to pay for an expanded welfare state. When war broke out he went from workers' hero to their greatest villain. As the Minister of Munitions he enforced dilution and was a major force for conscription. In contrast to the vacillating and conciliatory H.H. Asquith, elite policymakers viewed Lloyd George as a capable leader. Lloyd George's tenure proved his supporters and critics correct by overseeing British victory while expanding surveillance and curtailing civil liberties.

Lloyd George inherited from the Asquith Cabinet a relatively stable homefront, though social stability probably had less to do with government action than the public's relative complacency. In 1917 there were roughly 50,000 organized socialists in the whole country; 33,000 of them affiliated with the pro-war, non-revolutionary Labour Party.³⁵⁴ Britain's success as a world power, its relative wealth, patriotic culture, traditionalism and hostility to continental ideas shielded the islands from radical anti-government ideologies. While British minds differed from their cross-Channel brethren they suffered the same financial woes during the war. Food prices increased by 35 percent from July 1914-1915, then roughly another third through 1916. This trend continued and by December 1917, food prices had increased 106 percent while the cost of living increased by 85 percent to 90 percent compared to pre-war levels.³⁵⁵ Conversely, workers' wages failed to keep pace with inflation. By April 1917, skilled laborers' wages increased by roughly 50 percent with smaller gains for semi-skilled and unskilled.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ A.W. Humphrey, "The British Labour Movement and the War," *Political Science Quarterly* 32, No. 1 (1917); 2.

³⁵⁵ STUC Report 1917, 35.

³⁵⁶ STUC Report 1920.

Male-dominated trade unions feared that government officials were reneging on promises struck with them at the war's outset. Skilled workers had grudgingly accepted government-mandated dilution after the Shell Crisis 1914, but this had come with concessions. Government officials promised that munitions workers were exempt from conscription, women workers would be removed from the workplace at the war's end to secure male employment and dilution would be restricted to military work.³⁵⁷ Despite these promises, some civilian industrial firms hired unskilled women workers while officials responded slowly to these infractions. Moreover, the government scrapped the 'trade card' scheme under which members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) were issued cards that exempted them from military enlistment.³⁵⁸

Pent-up workers' frustrations exploded at "Tweedale and Smalley, a spinning frames manufacturer in Rochdale...when in February 1917 the management instructed male engineers to train female employees for civilian work, however, thus undermining the bases on which dilution had been accepted, the men refused and over 400 were discharged." The men, who were ASE members, appealed to their union, who referred the case to the Ministry of Munitions. Sympathy strikes broke out across Britain before the Ministry could resolve the situation. At its height the strikes involved 200,000 workers across forty-five cities, even as the ASE leadership condemned the spontaneous demonstrations.³⁵⁹ As in the case of the 1915 Rent Strikes, Parliament and Whitehall made concessions which ended the demonstrations. However, policymakers feared that mass workers' movement could develop into revolutionary action. Historian David Stevenson found that the government feared subversives were everywhere. The

³⁵⁷ For the secret agreement on removing women from the workplace after the war, see Thomas Alexander Fyfe, "Treasury Agreement" within *Employers & workmen under the Munitions of war acts, 1915-1917* (London, W. Hodge & Company 1918). For dilution remaining a military-only measure, see David Stevenson "Britain's Biggest Wartime Stoppage: The Origins of the Engineering Strike of May 1917," *History* 105, No. 365, (April 2020); 269.

³⁵⁸ Stevenson "Britain's Biggest Wartime Stoppage," 269.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 268, 274.

Home Office warned constables of, “an organized attempt to create trouble in munitions works which has more than local importance.” Army Major F.A. described “a ‘Revolutionary Ring’ [that] linked union radicals with compromise peace advocates in the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the No-Conscription Fellowship, and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC).” A number of other politicians reported on ILP and UDC plans, “to provoke a general strike against the war,” and to send suspected revolutionaries to the Front. Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George’s secretary and mistress, blamed the February 1917 strike on “German agents and Pacifists who are trying to corrupt the workers,” while Lloyd George himself on 20 May attributed to the unions, “unworthy motives . . . everything must be subservient to the war and that the working classes must be patriotic and trust the government.”³⁶⁰

A month later MP George Barnes oversaw an investigation of the causes of strikes. Although his report concluded that the rising cost of living and government policies regarding the workplace led to the strikes rather than pacifist or revolutionary propaganda, his report did little to change elite thinking or policy.³⁶¹ David Lloyd George and his cabinet, whether or not they truly believed it, acted as if there was a revolutionary conspiracy out of an abundance of caution.

Top cabinet officials met on 15 May 1917 and agreed to massively increase surveillance of workers. The Ministry of Labour agreed to furnish weekly reports with information about, “stoppages, disputes and settlements, labor propaganda...together with a general appreciation of the labour situation.” Meanwhile MI5 would, “examine the Foreign Press for material bearing on

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 282.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 279-280.

labour questions.”³⁶² The Ministry of Munitions and MI5 further agreed to monitor and report on “(1) Strikes. (2) Impending strikes and labour unrest generally (3) Sabotage.”³⁶³

Additional surveillance initiatives emerged that autumn when the Ministry of Munitions asked Special Branch to look at labor unrest. Metropolitan officers disguised themselves as Ministry of Munitions inspectors, organized informants within the ranks of “revolutionary labor,” and furnished daily reports. Home Secretary Lord George Cave asked the War Office for fortnightly reports on, ‘Pacifist and Revolutionary Organisations,’ from the War Office. Head of Special Branch Basil Thomson recounted, “when Bolshevism began to be a menace, arrangements were made with the Foreign Office that all despatches bearing on the spread of Bolshevism be sent to me, in order that I might be prepared against the landing of Bolshevik agents in this country.”³⁶⁴ From then on the reports focused on communist initiatives and possible connections to foreign revolutionary movements. Anti-pacifism and anti-communism filtered down to local police who were ordered to report on revolutionary or pacifist propaganda, agitation and “the growth of pacifism generally and the activities of particular individuals.”³⁶⁵

Political and military leaders alike feared that Bolshevism might infect the working-class. Although MI5 was founded for counter-espionage against German spies, by 1916 its primary duty shifted to surveilling British factory-workers for radical behavior. By 1917 every government department related to intelligence, the war or labor monitored worker discontent, radicalization and potential revolutionary action. Since these agencies relied on local constabularies, thousands of police officers also engaged in monitoring workers’ for anti-

³⁶² Notes of a Conference, *War Cabinet*, 15 May, 1917, CAB 24-13-33 1-3.

³⁶³ Minutes of a meeting, *War Office*, 15 May, 1917, HO 144 1484 349684.

³⁶⁴ Note, *Basil Thomson*, 28 Jan., 1919, KV 4 151, 1.

³⁶⁵ Memo, *Under Secretary of State Edward Troup*, 29 Oct. 1917, HO 144 1484 349684, 349684/2. Basil Thomson to Mr. Dixon, 31 Oct., 1917, HO 144 1484 349684.

government behavior. Historian Brock Millman described the systematic surveillance of the working class that started in April 1917

A special office of the CID [Criminal Investigation Department] was formed for this very purpose. Detectives were posted to areas thought to be infected by defeatism. Intelligence gathered was not simply filed, but shared between interested organizations. Meanwhile, a veritable army of censors (5000) was kept busy opening the mail of suspected spies, while MI7b(5) joined the press bureau in scrutinizing the press. The purpose of this surveillance was to identify particularly dangerous threats before they became real in order to permit preemptive action to take place or to streamline the process of reaction. In many cases, pre-emption took the form of addressing grievances; in others, of intimidation. Meanwhile, dossiers and lists of suspected persons were compiled so that in the event of a real threat, wholesale pre-emptive police action would be possible.³⁶⁶

The May Strikes convinced policymakers that the greatest threat to the homefront was not German infiltration, but discontent within the working-class.

Before the war, much of the British public and ministers of Parliament feared that German spies had infiltrated every base and port, ready to cripple Britain's military capacity. The ever-present German spy, a literary trope did not reflect reality; German sabotage and information-theft were extremely limited. Thousands of British intelligence agents working with police and censors effectively overwhelmed the few German agents within Britain. The summer 1914 purge captured many top German agents, crippling sophisticated spy networks and deterring activity by remaining agents. In 1916 MI5 only caught and tried a single German spy, a sea captain who offered his services to the Kaiser's agents. That same year MI5 arrested three British citizens for espionage, Thomas Lupton Maude & Charles Mattocks for stealing military secrets for personal use. "[T]hey both pleaded guilty, and were sentenced to two months imprisonment."³⁶⁷ MI5 arrested the third British citizen, Roger Casement, in, who, when the war started, "was in New York preaching Sinn Fein propaganda and appealing for funds to supply

³⁶⁶ Brock Millman, "HMG and the War against Dissent, 1914-18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, No. 3 (Jul., 2005), 413-440, 435.

³⁶⁷ Cases 62 and 63, UK MI5, *MI5 'Game Book' Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937.

arms to the Irish volunteers.” A Norwegian national later informed intelligence agents that Casement had letters from the German Embassy in DC he was carrying to Berlin. An associate of Casement’s revealed that he was, “conspiring to land in Ireland for the purpose of organising a rebellion.” On 21 April 1916 officials captured Casement and a co-conspirator in a collapsible boat with “three mauser pistols, 1000 rounds of ammunition and papers and maps in German.” He was convicted of high treason and executed by hanging at Pentonville that August.³⁶⁸

In 1917 British agents captured only one German spy. Captain Hans Boehm was working with Irish extremists to foment rebellion when British agents confronted him and he quickly, “broke down and admitted that he was Captain Hans Boehm.”³⁶⁹ That same year, MI5 arrested five British citizens for espionage-related activities.³⁷⁰ By 1917 political leaders realized that German spies were not as competent, capable or widespread as they had feared. Basil Thomson claimed that though German spies wanted to disrupt arms production “it would be safe to say that none of the accidents that took place during the War was caused by sabotage.”³⁷¹ Very often German ‘spies’ proved to be nothing more than German nationals living in Britain contacted by trained agents and asked to pass on information. Meanwhile, the May Strikes 1917 cost Britain 1.5 million working days and, “in the midst of the battle of Arras, the strike delayed delivery to the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of over sixty heavy artillery pieces and ninety field guns.”³⁷² German espionage within Britain accomplished virtually nothing, while discontent at

³⁶⁸ Case 66, UK MI5, *MI5 ‘Game Book’ Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937.

³⁶⁹ Case 71, UK MI5, *MI5 ‘Game Book’ Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937.

³⁷⁰ Cases 72, 73, 74, 77 and 78, UK MI5, *MI5 ‘Game Book’ Vol 2: 1916-1937, Cases No.s 46-96.*, KV4 113, London: National Archives, 1937. Mrs. Louisa Mathilde Smith. German but naturalized British.

³⁷¹ Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard*, (New York: A.L. Burt Company New York, 1922), 217.

³⁷² Stevenson, “Britain’s Biggest Wartime Stoppage,” 268.

home led to massive slowdowns on arms production and transport, and inspired more serious anti-government plots.

Having shifted attention to internal unrest following the May 1917 Strikes, Prime Minister Lloyd George intensified official and unofficial pursuit of dissenters. Between June 1916 and October 1917, the government investigated 5,246 people suspected of pacifism and anti-militarism, sending 3,000 to labor camps and imprisoning 1,500 ‘absolutists’ who refused all service.³⁷³ Police raided an affiliate of the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) on 15 November, 1917, and again on 17 December.³⁷⁴ Police regularly arrested socialist advocates across Britain when they publicly preached internationalism and peace between workers.³⁷⁵ Glasgow police banned an 11 August meeting of Glasgow workers discussing whether to form a Russian-style soviet.³⁷⁶

Unofficially, Lloyd George and his government continued to rely on patriot groups to harass peace advocates. The Prime Minister had the police inform the British National Workers’ League of public peace meetings so that they could intimidate attendees.³⁷⁷ In June 1917 the hyper-patriotic National Union of Seamen and the pro-peace North London Herald League organized a debate. When the two groups met 200 seamen attacked North London Herald League members in a massive brawl that resulted in no arrests.³⁷⁸ In a similar incident, the Brotherhood Church in Leeds planned a peace meeting for 28 July. Before the meeting, unknown persons distributed circulars to pubs and other public places falsely describing it as a pro-German

³⁷³ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 95.

³⁷⁴ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*. Frank Cass: London, 2000, 186.

³⁷⁵ *The Spur*, May, 1917, 3.

³⁷⁶ Glasgow Police Department, *Prohibition of meeting of workers' & soldiers' council*. Public notice. Glasgow: 1917. <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly059.htm>.

³⁷⁷ Millman, “HMG and the War against Dissent,” 436-438.

³⁷⁸ Ken Weller, *‘Don’t be a Soldier’: The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918* (London: Pluto Press: 1985), 56-7.

meeting led by anti-patriots who had been responsible for demoralizing Russia. The circulars called on soldiers and others to “remember the last air raid” and punish the traitors. Uniformed officers led the assembled patriots and broke up the peace meeting despite prohibitions on police from acting in a political capacity.³⁷⁹

Officials at Whitehall feared revolutionary socialists might take over factories. Worse still, Glasgow, the industrial heart of the British Empire, was filled with militant anti-government agitators. Radical workers in the city even tried to form a workers’ and soldiers’ council in imitation of the Petrograd Soviet before the police shut down the organization.³⁸⁰ Thomson equated the CWC with Russian Bolsheviks and claimed that they desired, “to overthrow Trade Unions and reorganise all workers in a single union with a committee vested with full power to seize all workshops and factories, and thus bring about the Social Revolution.”³⁸¹ Prime Minister Lloyd George blasted the Russian Revolution as a “new infection,” which, “encouraged all the habitual malcontents in the ranks of labour to foment discord and organise discontent...they did not create the unrest, but they took full advantage of it.”³⁸² When in June 1917 Lloyd George visited Glasgow, thousands of protestors greeted him with boos and hisses. Lloyd George moved through the city with, “an army of policemen...on foot, mounted police, inspectors, detectives, [and] superintendents.” One man witnessing the spectacle commented that “The Prime Minister receives the *Freedom* of Glasgow at the point of a bayonet!”³⁸³ The day after Lloyd George’s disastrous visit local police released revolutionary Marxist John Maclean from prison.

³⁷⁹ *The Spur*, Sept., 1917, 1.

³⁸⁰ Albert Inkpin to John Maclean, Jul. 1917, <http://gdl.cdli.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly062.htm>.

³⁸¹ Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard*, 303.

³⁸² David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol. 2*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1933) 1145-1146.

³⁸³ Italics in text. *Forward*, 7 Jul., 1917, 1.

Cabinet leaders feared that any worker in any locality could ignite a movement that would cripple British military capacity and possibly even upend society. In response, Lloyd George used every legal and some illegal means to maintain order, including mass arrests, police harassment, unprecedented mass surveillance and mob violence.

France: The Breaking Point

The government and mainstream press always portrayed France as dominant vis-à-vis Germany and insisted that morale was high. Meanwhile, the military censored overly-critical letters from soldiers to their loved ones. Despite these embargos, many civilians understood that France's position was worse than reported. Hidden messages in soldiers' letters, contraband newspapers from neutral countries, worsening conditions on the homefront and the fact that the war was entering its fourth year undercut the government-backed narrative of imminent victory. Likewise, government officials across bureaus understood that people struggled with low wages and rising inflation. Political leaders worked to maximize production on the homefront and maintain the offensive on the Front even as war fatigue set in.³⁸⁴

Mass arms production was critical to France's military effort. As 1917 began the Minister of Armaments Albert Thomas decreed that no laborer could halt munitions production without addressing a government committee about their grievances.³⁸⁵ Workers could not legally stop work, slow work, or even leave a workplace without government authorization. These unprecedented restrictions aggravated laborers who subtly protested through slowdowns,

³⁸⁴ Lionel Marchand, *Lettres censurées des tranchées, 1917: une place dans la littérature et l'histoire*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 86-89.

³⁸⁵ Fabienne Bock, "L'exubérance de l'état en France de 1914 à 1918," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), 50.

contraband propaganda and opposition to labor union leaders who worked with the government, notably Jouhaux of the CGT.

On 20 January Thomas and the Minister of the Interior, Louis Malvy, agreed to share all information on workers' subversion between their departments. They jointly feared that agitation could ignite a powder keg that could cripple arms production.³⁸⁶ On 5 February Malvy wrote to Thomas, "My attention is called unceasingly to the agitations in the factories working for the National Defense, on those individuals, mobilized or not, known for their revolutionary theories and pacifism." He worried about, "a certain number of incidents provoked by pacifist militants, notably the exhortations of Merrheim, to limit production." Most worrisome to him was, "the near-open distribution of pacifist tracts in the factories."³⁸⁷

Malvy claimed that increasing numbers of workers distributed Sébastien Faure's anarchist journal, illegal materials that directly attacked the stringent government dictates imposed during wartime. "These threats are not without serious repercussions for the productivity of factories." He concluded that workers caught with pacifist propaganda tracts deserved harsh punishments and instructed the Ministry of Armaments, "to explore necessary emergency measures to stop [their] development."³⁸⁸ In response the Ministry of Armaments coordinated with police forces across France to monitor agitators and seize pro-peace pamphlets before they could reach the factories.³⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, Merrheim railed against police presence on shopfloors and the prohibitions on strikes. At a 19 February meeting in Paris he exclaimed

³⁸⁶ Letter, Ministre de l'Intérieur, (Direction de la Sûreté Générale) à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Armement et des Fabrications de Guerre, 20 Jan., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 1917.

³⁸⁷ Letter, Ministre de l'Intérieur, (Direction de la Sûreté Générale) à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Armement et des Fabrications de Guerre, 5 Feb., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 1917, 1.

³⁸⁸ Letter, Ministre de l'Intérieur, (Direction de la Sûreté Générale) à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Armement et des Fabrications de Guerre, 5 Feb., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 1917, 2..

³⁸⁹ Letter, Le Commissaire Spécial à Monsieur le Sous-Préfet, 20 Feb., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 1917, 1.

that workers had become “nothing more than machines.” He expressed sympathy for German workers, saying, “that which interests me is not victory of the law and of civilization, it is the situation facing our German comrades who are bullied, like us, and like us, suffer and die for an ideal that is not theirs, as it is not ours.”³⁹⁰

For months Merrheim tirelessly opposed worker-government negotiations over salaries. When the CGT and other trade unions negotiated a settlement with Thomas, Merrheim voted against their proposal as inadequate.³⁹¹ He maintained that increased production should result in increased wages, yet workers could barely sustain themselves even as they often worked sixty hours a week.³⁹² Jouhaux and moderate trade union leaders accepted low wartime workers’ pay as the price of defense. In contrast, Merrheim and the minority wing viewed the war as illegitimate and therefore an insufficient excuse for workers’ suffering. At a 21 February meeting of the metals syndicates, one worker echoed Merrheim’s claims and blasted capitalists for war-profiteering and dodging conscription. The man concluded that the working-class was, “spineless and ignorant of its own strength.”³⁹³

Radicals believed the oft-repeated sentiment that the working-class had the ability to resist any government action if workers realized how powerful they were. However, agitators concluded that workers were too afraid of the government’s power and overwhelmed by pro-government propaganda to launch a mass movement. Thus, they resigned themselves to low-level subversion including work slowdowns, occasional strikes, propagandizing to new workers,

³⁹⁰ Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 Feb., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 (Paris: Archives Nationales).

³⁹¹ Note, *Dans les Métaux – Contre le Décret de Albert Thomas*, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 21 Feb., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 21.

³⁹² Memo, 21 Feb., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, F7 13366 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), 6-7.

³⁹³ Memo, 21 Feb., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, F7 13366 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), 1-2.

and publishing articles critical of government policies (though not of the government itself, which would result in censorship).³⁹⁴

As May Day 1917 approached, intelligence services and police monitored trade unions and known subversives for potential agitation. Though the international workers' holiday witnessed virtually no subversive activity the previous two years, ministry heads worried that protests could escalate into a wider anti-government movement. The largest trade unions opposed work stoppages as the majority supported war until victory and because they wanted a say in any post-war settlement. On 16 April CGT leaders announced they would not call for demonstrations but would also not oppose any held by individual syndicates. At a 22 April meeting the *Comité Général de l'Union des Syndicats de la Seine* voted against a May Day work stoppage. Minority leaders angrily demanded peace demonstrations. One member yelled, "Shut up dictator!" at the syndicate's president. Another syndicate leader claimed that the minority may have wanted peace but was, "confused about how to attain it."³⁹⁵ The following day, minority leaders organized meetings to plan laying down tools and demonstrating. Moreover, minority leaders exhorted their followers to have a "revolutionary spirit."³⁹⁶

Although the majority leadership of the major trade unions maintained good relations with the government, intelligence officials still monitored them for subversive activity. On 21 April 1917 the *Sûreté Générale* intercepted the upcoming special edition of the CGT's paper, *La Voix du Peuple*. The paper praised the Russian Revolution, and issued a manifesto calling for

³⁹⁴ Letter, Ministre de l'Intérieur, (Direction de la Sûreté Générale) à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Armement et des Fabrications de Guerre, 28 Mar., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Mar. 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Propagande syndicaliste dans les usines de guerre, Albi 13 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366 1917.

³⁹⁵ Note, 22 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

³⁹⁶ Note, Un meeting du Comité Général de l'Union de des syndicats de la Seine, 23 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272. Notes on a meeting of the l'Union des Syndicats de la Seine, 23 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

workers to control society after the war.³⁹⁷ The text no doubt reminded Malvy and Thomas that Jouhaux and his majority were still socialists and syndicalists. Moreover, Jouhaux and his moderates struggled to appeal to an increasingly weary base. As the war dragged on Jouhaux amplified his promises of a post-war settlement. While Merrheim claimed only revolution would bring peace and workers' domination of society, Jouhaux promised that France's victory would lead to workers' political empowerment. Jouhaux and his associates in the majority understood that so long as the war continued, they had to make more radical claims or risk losing their support to the minority.

The *Sûreté Générale* watched the minority of revolutionary workers and listed professions most likely to strike, among them construction workers.³⁹⁸ Further surveillance revealed that the stonemasons, textile workers, roadworkers and construction workers in Paris planned to demonstrate; the latter also voted to support the anti-war movement.³⁹⁹ In April 600 workers assembled at the roadworkers' meeting listened to a speech by Bernard Lepetit who applauded the recent Russian Revolution. Lepetit insisted their true enemies were not the Germans but capitalists in every country, to which the workers responded, "down with the war!"⁴⁰⁰

The pre-May Day *Sûreté Générale* report on the situation in the Seine Department, which included Paris, concluded that radicalized cabals of workers were preparing to agitate. On 25 April some 1,500 syndicate leaders met. Speakers praised the Russian Revolution for

³⁹⁷ Note, 21 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-4.

³⁹⁸ Note, CGT meeting 16 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2.

³⁹⁹ Notes, Meeting de la Chambre Syndicale de la Maçonnerie-Pierre, 16 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1. Notes, Meeting du Syndicat des Travailleurs de l'Habillement, 16 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1. Notes, Meeting Syndicat du Bâtiment, 16 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1. Note, 23 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2.

⁴⁰⁰ Note, 23 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2.

demonstrating that a government could be overthrown. However members blocked the *Fédération des Métaux* from calling for a general work-stoppage. Instead, the syndicates agreed to publish a manifesto calling for solidarity with Russian and German revolutionaries even though many militants sympathized with Merrheim and distributed his revolutionary manifestos across the country calling for peace and global revolution. Meanwhile, intelligence officials intercepted a letter from Pavel Axelrod and Julius Martoff, noted Russian revolutionaries, to the FM leader. The report concluded that demonstrations planned for May Day should proceed unhindered since they were expected to be largely non-revolutionary. However, one agent exhorted that, “I was officially informed that certain anarchists...have envisaged the possibility of forming groups...[and sparking] tumultuous incidents.”⁴⁰¹ The situation was calmer in the provinces where most prefects reported that although many individuals talked about taking action, trade unions opposed demonstrating.⁴⁰²

In the end, May Day 1917 spawned larger demonstrators than any year since the war began. In Paris, the *Comité de la Défense Syndicaliste*, an anti-war group, held a meeting with 1,800 workers. A third of the attendees were foreigners, namely Russians, Spanish and Italians. The Russians voiced support for Russia’s February Revolution, as did the Spanish who called for a similar revolution in their country. At the end of the meeting people sang the Internationale and chanted “Vive la paix! À bas la guerre! À bas la République!” After the meeting the members streamed into the streets yelling, “Vive la paix! À bas la guerre! Vive l’Allemagne!” Police dispersed the crowd and arrested ten people for calling for an end to the war, among them four Russians, three French, one Spaniard, a German who was a naturalized French citizen, and one

⁴⁰¹ Sûreté Général rapport, 30 Apr., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272, 1-9.

⁴⁰² See Note, 18 Apr., 1917, *Préfecture de l’Aveyron*, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272. Note, *Préfecture de l’Allier*, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272. Note, 25 Apr., 1917, *Préfecture de l’Aude*, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272. Note, 26 Apr., 1917, *Préfecture de l’Ain*, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13272.

man born in Egypt.⁴⁰³ Afterwards a group of 4,000 workers listened to Merrheim denounce the war and the Third Republic.⁴⁰⁴

Although there were no major disturbances outside Paris on May Day, pinpricks of discontent dotted the provinces, breaking the usual calm. In Marseille 250 syndicalists held a meeting, wherein a delegate from the construction workers' syndicate exhorted his fellows to take control "of the economic reorganization that will follow the war." Additional speakers, "congratulated the Russian people for seizing liberty and getting ridding of the czar," and proclaimed that, "the Russian Revolution will be the flame that lights the people on a path of progress and will result in the end of armed conflict."⁴⁰⁵ In Bordeaux Paul Dupouy, a socialist and soldier returning from the Front, entered a factory, denounced the bosses and called for peace. Another speaker in Bordeaux cheered the Russian revolutionaries and criticized French police for tracking and silencing workers instead of supporting them in class struggle. Agents wrote that the speaker, "hopes that [the coming] revolution will be more violent than 1793 and finished by saying, 'we will take that which they will not give us. I care a lot about life but I will sacrifice volunteers to obtain results.'"⁴⁰⁶ Similar meetings occurred across the country. In Tours workers praised the upheaval in Russia and called for renewed class struggle and minor work stoppages occurred in Saint-Etienne and Albi.⁴⁰⁷ An uneasiness spread across homefront, as more voices called for overthrowing the government. When the status quo meant protracted war,

⁴⁰³ Note, 1 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-5.

⁴⁰⁴ Note, 1 May meeting, Paris, 2 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁰⁵ Report by the Commissariat Spécial des Bouches-des-Rhône, 2 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2.

⁴⁰⁶ Le Commissaire Spécial à Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, 2 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2

⁴⁰⁷ Le Commissaire Spécial Delgay à Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, 3 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-2. Le Commissaire Spécial [d'Albi] à Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, 1 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272. Le Commissaire Spécial [de la police des Chemins de Fer à Saint-Etienne du port et du l'émigration] à Monsieur le Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, 1 May, 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

constant overwork and worsening living conditions, workers found ‘radical’ agendas less extreme.

However, May Day passed with much talk but almost no action. Nevertheless, intelligence services and police monitored workers with extra sensitivity to any discontent. In the absence of outright subversion police reported on workers’ feelings. On 3 May, the prefect of Saint-Etienne described a local paper that published incomplete information on low future salaries. Disheartened laborers, “when they read the newspaper...talked about nothing other than stopping work.”⁴⁰⁸ In Toulouse the *Sûreté Générale* reported that workers, discontented over low wages, “demanded an augmentation of their salaries, though this did not produce any new strikes.”⁴⁰⁹ Local prefects’ observations from across France revealed that the average worker cared little about Russia or socialist revolution. Laborers fixated on their daily misery, lackluster promises from the Ministry of Armaments about wages and the grim reality that the war had no foreseeable end, especially if Russia made a separate peace. French munitions workers often labored seven days a week, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. six days with a half-day on Sunday, while their British counterparts officially worked five and a half days. French workers were acutely aware of the British workweek, which they called the *semaine anglaise*, and regularly demanded similar hours.⁴¹⁰

Women workers faced even worse conditions. Unskilled women munitions workers made around 60 percent of unskilled men’s salaries. Skilled women munitions workers made slightly

⁴⁰⁸ Note, 3 May, 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴⁰⁹ Note 649, 4 May, 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Memo N.650, 4 May, 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴¹⁰ Unofficially, British workers often labored longer than official hours suggested. Angela Mary Woollacott, *Mad on Munitions: The Lives of Women Munitions Workers in World War I Britain*, (Santa Barbara: University of California, 1988) 106-107.

under half of skilled men's salaries.⁴¹¹ Moreover, French women workers lacked many basic provisions that their British counterparts had. In Britain by 1916, "the Home Office ordered all munitions factories to appoint a welfare supervisor," that ensured its female workers would have, "[a] clean workroom; the availability of food; restricted hours of work; sufficient wages; proper amenities and health precautions; proper supervision...and the provision of some recreational facilities."⁴¹² In comparison French women's harsh conditions left them particularly desperate. As a result, women launched the largest strike movement of the war.

In late April about 800 workers went on strike in the Seine department after their salaries were reduced. In early May the seamstresses of the Jenny couture house sent a letter to their boss, pleading for higher wages, "it is completely impossible to survive...with this reduction in salary." The clothing manufacturer ignored their pleas and, alongside fellow clothing businesses, planned to close on Saturday afternoon. On 11 May 1917, 180 skilled seamstresses from the Jenny house walked out, gathering at the Place Vendôme where they chanted their demands for the *semaine anglaise*.⁴¹³ Over the next two weeks more spontaneous strikes broke out across Paris as female metalworkers joined their compatriots on the streets. During this May-June strike period 99 of the 138 strikes were led mostly or totally by women.⁴¹⁴ The syndicates led less than 10 percent of the strikes, with women in the lead, as workers spontaneously marched for higher wages and better conditions. By 30 May roughly 55,000 were on strike in the Paris area and

⁴¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment of Women in Munitions Making in France*, (Washington D.C.: Department of Labor, 1916) 73.

⁴¹² Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 158. Angela Mary Woollacott, *Mad on Munitions*, 288.

⁴¹³ *Procès verbaux of the Chambre syndicale de la couture parisienne* [CSCP], 12 Jul., 1917, as quoted in Maude Bass-Kreuger "From the 'union parfaite' to the 'union brisée': The French couture industry and the midinettes during the Great War," *Costume*, 47, No. 1, (2013); 28.

⁴¹⁴ Only two were led mostly by men.

strikes had spread across other major cities.⁴¹⁵ Still, the vast majority of workers remained at their posts.

Had worker agitation been France's only May crisis officials might not have worried less. What disturbed government officials were the simultaneous mass soldiers' mutinies that paralyzed the Western Front. On 16 April General Robert Nivelle began a major offensive which he promised would end the war. By 25 April French military leaders recognized that the Nivelle Offensive was a failure. The French army suffered over one-hundred thousand casualties between 16 April and 9 May, primarily at the Second Battle of the Aisne. On 3 May, French soldiers refused an order to advance. The mutiny rapidly spread across the Front. As in Russia, workers and soldiers disobeyed orders and turned on their leaders.

When news of the mutinies reached the homefront radical agitators believed the time had arrived for a general strike, peace and revolution. On 6 May, the *Comité Intersyndicale des Métaux* held a meeting of 600 people with Merrheim in attendance. An FM delegate asserted that the working-class had been asleep for too long and should declare, "Vive la révolution. À bas la guerre!" Another speaker claimed that striking French women were worthy of their Russian counterparts. Merrheim spoke and boasted that the "Loire department is on the eve of a strong workers' revolutionary movement." He then shamed complacent workers by noting that, "our German comrades in the factories all struck on 1 May. They have more courage than we do."⁴¹⁶ These illegal, openly seditious sentiments extended beyond Paris. The prefect of the Girond reported that in Bordeaux the socialist party declared, "the troops at the front have had enough

⁴¹⁵ Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution: Paris 1914-1919*, (Paris : L'Université de Besançon, 1995), 125, 128-129.

⁴¹⁶ Memo, 6 May, 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

and the government must demand peace at any price, without annexations or war indemnity. If the war lasts three more months, there will be revolution.”⁴¹⁷

While local police and the Ministry of Armaments tried to calm strikers, intelligence agents and undercover police attended workers’ gatherings, alarmed by the increasingly radical rhetoric. From the war’s outset the Ministry of the Interior, intelligence services and police attempted to isolate agitators from other workers and the general public to prevent mass worker radicalization. Government agents understood that they had to keep radicals from turning the growing women munitions workers’ protests into a revolution. On 1 June the *Sûreté Générale* insisted that the Ministry of Armaments immediately remedy the women workers’ strikes. The Ministry should invite delegates chosen by workers to talk with bosses to stymie potential unrest. *Sûreté Générale* officials explained that the army mutinies inspired more radical strike movements. They warned that dramatic incidents could lead to further chaos. One such incident had been narrowly avoided. “At Saint-Etienne, two hundred women,” marching for peace and higher wages, “could have been killed by colonial troops,” who threatened to fire upon them.⁴¹⁸ In fact, many in the government were sympathetic to workers’ demands for higher pay. The prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle explained, “Our working population has been agitated for the past few days. This is not shocking at all. Their demands are very legitimate, due to the high cost of living, namely, an augmentation of salaries for everyone, which employers have not initiated.”⁴¹⁹

The French government found itself in a dangerous situation; intelligence agencies hoped that moderate union leaders would control the workers before radicals organized them into more disciplined anti-establishment cadres. However, the situation was spiraling out of control and

⁴¹⁷ Le Préfet de la Girond à le Ministère de l’Intérieur, 21 May, 1917 (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴¹⁸ Memo M/11326, 1 Jun., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴¹⁹ Memo M/11326, 1 Jun., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Prefect de Meurthe-et-Moselle à le Ministère de l’Intérieur, 9 Jun., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

individual conflicts escalated into further strikes. On 4 June, at the Salmson aviation plants in Boulogne-Billancourt, hundreds of women struck after a boss, “fired five women workers from the factory who were absent without authorization the Monday of Pentecost...Even though all the factories of the region working for the national defense gave their personnel Pentecost Sunday and Monday off, Salmson believed its workers must work that Monday.”⁴²⁰ Radicals took command of the strike and told workers that if they stopped making arms the war would end. Metallurgists then struck in solidarity with them. Because authorities believed the Germans were behind the strike, the *Sûreté Générale* profiled each of the suspected leaders. In the end they found no direct evidence of German-backed sabotage, though one major leader was born in Switzerland, so intelligence services did not rule out a foreign plot.⁴²¹

Large-scale, dramatic strike activity continued into June 1917 when the women munitions workers of the Paris Fibrocol factory took to the streets, waved the red flag, formed a syndicate, and demanded better wages. Thousands of women workers joined them, marching from one factory to the next, until a squad of 60 policemen and twenty cavalymen met them at the Renault factory.⁴²² However, by June most of the strikes began winding down. The CGT held off a general strike to negotiate with the Ministry of Armaments for better working conditions and pay increases. At the Front, Philippe Pétain replaced General Nivelle and promised no more large-scale offensives until the Americans arrived. He also instituted longer leaves and cracked down on the most seditious offenders. As a result, the wave of mutinies ended by late June.

While the May-June strikes seriously worried the government, they were severely hamstrung because few male workers supported their female counterparts. Fit adult males either

⁴²⁰ Memo, 4 Jun., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

⁴²¹ Memo, 4 Jun., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-8.

⁴²² Paris Municipal Police Note, 4 Jun., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

had to work in essential wartime occupations or serve in the army at the Front. Many men died in combat by the time the government mobilized a million women to enter the factories. Some men blamed women workers for these deaths.⁴²³ As a result, throughout the war, some male munitions workers sabotaged their women counterparts' work, trained them to perform incorrect actions, set machines improperly, and kept tools from women hoping to secure their own jobs in the factories to avoid military service.⁴²⁴ When beleaguered women took to the streets in mid-1917, many of their male coworkers continued laboring.⁴²⁵ Unlike events in Russia several months earlier, the May-June strikes did not lead to revolution. They ended with embittered women returning to factories to work beside the men who had abandoned them, while the government and CGT secured slightly better conditions and wages for all workers.⁴²⁶

Even as the strikes wound down in July 1917, intelligence services intensified surveillance, collecting names of individual agitators. They created profiles of strike leaders, including place of birth, work history, criminal records, connections to foreign governments and any involvement in agitation. A *Sûreté Générale* agent monitoring the *Nieuport* factory at Issy-les-Moulineaux recounted on 14 September, "three individuals incited their comrades not to return to the factory and after numerous talks, successfully removed 1,200 workers from the factory." After tense negotiations, the boss gave each worker a five centime raise and workers returned to their posts.⁴²⁷ In Paris a police inspector reported that a man named 'Huet' ignored his duties and propagandized in factories. The inspector further claimed Huet coerced women

⁴²³ Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, 122.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴²⁵ Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution*, 134.

⁴²⁶ For more information on the radicals' inability to enlist women in their unions, see Gary Girod, "The women who make the guns: the munitionettes in Glasgow and Paris and their lack of interaction with the far-left agitators," *Labor History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2020), 203-212.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0023656X.2019.1667493>

⁴²⁷ Note P.11505, Dans les Usines de Guerre L'agitation à Issy-les-Moulineaux, 14 Sept., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13366.

workers to sign his petitions by threatening reprisal against their husbands when they returned from the front. The inspector concluded, “The same spirit reigns in every [factory], as agitation is due to a few individuals...Huet is typical.”⁴²⁸ Another Paris police agent caught a worker named ‘Le Bihan’ reading the following Russian-inspired propaganda to his fellows in a factory

The people are in combat. They think but cannot speak. The conduct and the goals of the war are determined by a power that does not understand the aspirations, the spirit or the will of the people. It exploits this forced silence. It falls to the people to fix the conduct of the war; [the people] accomplish all the work on the field of battle and they must exercise all the rights of citizens. The people must have a say in a republic like France as the people of Russia have made their voice heard. How can we know the will of the people? As in Russia, by a Committee of Workers and Soldiers.⁴²⁹

Merrheim and other labor leaders tried to maintain the strike movement and convert it into a radical anti-government movement. In response, police identified the factories that experienced the most radical agitation and enforced order.⁴³⁰ Albert Thomas met regularly with labor leaders to negotiate pay increases and better conditions. By 20 September 1917, intelligence services reported that, “the majority of factory workers are satisfied with their work conditions and salaries. But they looked favorably on a new augmentation of wages, and declared that raises would be justified due to the considerable benefits their bosses experienced and also due to the high cost of living.”⁴³¹

Even as strikes dwindled, government leaders feared Merrheim and his allies would call a general strike. Jouhaux tried to keep CGT workers calm but other labor unions, such as the aviators, approached Merrheim about striking even without CGT support.⁴³² After much

⁴²⁸ Inspecteur de la Police Mobile Tison à Monsieur le Capitain Flory chef du B.C.R., Paris, 17 Sept., 1917. (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴²⁹ Note, 14 Sept., 1917, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1407, 1-2.

⁴³⁰ Inspecteur de la Police Mobile Tison à Monsieur le Capitain Flory chef du B.C.R., Paris 17 Sept., 1917. (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366. Inspecteur de la Police Mobile Tison à Monsieur le Capitain Flory chef du B.C.R., Paris 4 Sept., 1917. (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴³¹ Memo, 20 Sept., 1917 *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-4.

⁴³² Memo, 20 Sept., 1917 *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1-4.

deliberation and internal labor union politicking, on 25 September Merrheim led a strike of 55,000 workers in the Seine department.⁴³³ However, the CGT did not support Merrheim's strike nor did the embittered women munitions workers. By 29 September most workers had returned to their factories.⁴³⁴ Albert Thomas announced that no strikers would be sanctioned for their actions, prompting Merrheim to conclude that workers were, "neither conquerors, nor conquered."⁴³⁵

After the major strike movement ended an uneasy calm settled over France. The workers' brief dream of peace through popular agitation ended, and the country returned to its wartime normal of long hours, shortages and surveillance. The *Paris Police Préfecture* made plans for military occupation of the city in case of a mass strike that never occurred.⁴³⁶ Individual police agents regularly walked the streets and recorded conversations in bars, restaurants, cafés and other public places to measure the general mood. Police noted, "all reports consistently mention an undeniable malaise exists among the civilian and military population since the April offensive to the middle of the month of August." In September, "the arrival of troops from the United States and the hope of cooperation with a new ally has largely contributed to a better spirit [among the public]." Police found, "nothing alarming to note. Pacifist action does not appear to make progress." Based on everyday conversations, the police concluded that most people rejected revolutionary anti-war propaganda and still wanted victory.⁴³⁷

On 16 November 1917 Georges Clemenceau simultaneously became the prime minister and Minister of War. Far less conciliatory than his predecessors, workers dubbed Clemenceau

⁴³³ Memo M/11.556, 27 Sept., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴³⁴ Memo P11574, 29 Sept., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴³⁵ Memo, 27 Sept., 1917, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366.

⁴³⁶ Note, 14 Nov., 1917, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1407.

⁴³⁷ Note, 15 Aug., 1917, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639. Note, 15 Sept., 1917, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639. Note 15 Dec., 1917, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639.

the “No. 1 cop in France,” and “assassin of the proletariat,” while his allies called him ‘Le Tigre.’⁴³⁸ However, rather than unleashing police action, Clemenceau met with workers and listened to their grievances. Privately, he supported whatever measures were needed to win the war. On 18 December he wrote to the Minister of the Interior about how difficult it was to pursue known anti-war agitators with the government’s current practices.

It should be noted, first of all, that this various information does not rest on any precise legal precedent, but comes from the surveillance and the opening of private correspondence taken during transit...Under these conditions it is difficult for me to satisfy the desires expressed by Army’s General Staff and the Commanding General of the 8th region, who asks to dismiss...those mobilized workers who are compromised in this affair.⁴³⁹

Extra-legal surveillance meant government officials knew who many of the agitators were, but also could not legally pursue them which might also arouse worker outrage at the gross invasions of personal privacy. Thus, ‘Le Tigre’ concluded, “It appears to me, for the moment that we must not engage in disciplinary action. I believe it is preferable for me to transmit the dossier regarding this affair which will allow you to organize very attentive and expansive surveillance which will permit you to, with its findings, move the question to the judiciary.”⁴⁴⁰ Clemenceau aggressively pursued whatever legal or extralegal means he deemed expedient to control the homefront. However, he understood that the government had to pose as a protector of civil liberties. Surveillance had to produce evidence of subversion that was acceptable to civilian courts.

⁴³⁸ Maucolin, grévistes du Bâtiment du 16 mai, cf. note 49. André délégué de l’Urbaine d’Aéronautique, grévistes de Saint-Denis du 17 mai 1918, AN, F7 13367, as cited in Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution*, 211.

⁴³⁹ Letter, Le President du Conseil, Ministre de la Guerre à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur, 18 Dec., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Letter, Le President du Conseil, Ministre de la Guerre à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur, 18 Dec., 1917, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13366, 2.

With the United States entering the war, Clemenceau believed victory was possible. France only needed to continue fighting a little longer. He was willing to take whatever measures necessary to win the war, even though his task would be difficult. According to British intelligence, “one of Clemenceau’s intimates said recently that the government was sitting on a volcano.”⁴⁴¹

Conclusion

Three years of war eroded the patriotic fervor that held British and French citizens in each country together. The mass strikes of May and June 1917 exposed workers’ widespread discontent about the rising cost of living, declining relative wages and the unending war. When German espionage and sabotage proved insignificant, domestic intelligence services shifted their focus from foreign plots to homegrown radicalism. The Russian Revolution in March 1917, combined with mass strikes and soldiers’ mutinies in France forced political and military leaders in London and Paris to reevaluate what posed the greatest threat to internal stability. Hawkish leaders who demanded order and victory replaced conciliatory and cooperative predecessors. Both civil and military leaders in Britain and France did not hesitate to massively expand the power and presence of the government at the expense of workers’ rights and civil liberties.

⁴⁴¹ KV 4 151: Security Service Organisation 1919-1939 – Reports of the Secret Service Committee 1919-1923
Note by Basil Thomson, 28 Jan., 1919.

Chapter 6: 1918: The Specter of Communism and the Surveillance of Citizens

The public mood in Britain and France in 1918 was a hollow inverse of the 1914 jubilation. Before Archduke Francis Ferdinand's assassination both countries were beset by class divisions and anxiety about the future. When hostilities began patriotism swelled as many people in each country hoped that war would unite their country in a common cause and ensure a prosperous and secure future. A few dissident voices bemoaned the working-class soldiers of their country fighting against their brothers in the Central Powers but even they believed in an inevitable victory. In 1917 the failure of the Nivelle Offensive, subsequent army mutinies, mass strikes, and unrest in Russia awakened the Allies to the possibility of a stalemate or even defeat. However, by then the Allies had one last card to play: by early 1918 the United States mobilized four million fresh soldiers and sent these 'doughboys' to France. German general Erich Ludendorff understood that Germany needed to crush France before American soldiers arrived *en masse*. The German Spring Offensive was a harrowing final test of Allied resilience.

Government officials in Britain and France were committed to winning the war. Peace without victory would play directly into the hands of revolutionary socialists who claimed that all the people's suffering would accomplish nothing except enriching capitalists. Moreover, the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia gave these subversives a working model for how to overthrow an inequalitarian, incompetent government. In 1918 the prime ministers David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau determined to replace the patriotic fervor of 1914 with grim determination. They attacked defeatism and dissidents, lauded the military's exploits and extolled the necessity of success. They augmented domestic surveillance and directed it towards countering potential left-wing insurrections aiming to duplicate the Bolsheviks' success. British

intelligence services produced regular reports on potential revolutionary activity, monitored and arrested agitators. Clemenceau and his subordinates accused liberal politicians of treason and even temporarily shut down munitions factories that were hotbeds of socialist activity. Both governments demanded that the police monitor their citizenry as never before and preempt strikes before they occurred. These authoritarian measures exhausted police and embittered laborers but the new leaders insisted they were necessary to achieve victory.

Countering Bolshevism in Britain

On 5 January 1918 Prime Minister David Lloyd George delivered a speech to the Trade Union Conference in London. He appealed to labor leaders' patriotism to carry them through to victory. He reassured the crowd that, "we are fighting for a just and a lasting peace," that would lead to a "new Europe [which] must be based on such grounds of reason and justice as will give some promise of stability. *Therefore it is that we feel that government with the consent of the governed must be the basis of any territorial settlement in this war.*" Lloyd George echoed US President Woodrow Wilson's call for national self-determination, contrasting Western democracy with central European "arbitrary rule." He further stated that a free Britain would "stand by the French democracy to the death," against "Imperial Germany."⁴⁴²

Meanwhile the Prime Minister's administration increased surveillance and punishment of anti-war labor leaders. Since the Shell Crisis of 1915 Lloyd George viewed homegrown subversion was the greatest threat to victory. He bemoaned the Russian Revolution's success which, "encouraged all the habitual malcontents in the ranks of labour to foment discord and

⁴⁴² Italics present in the original printing. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol. 2*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1933), 1511, 1513, 1517.

organise discontent.”⁴⁴³ Even as Lloyd George championed the consent of the governed, he silenced and imprisoned non-consenters who he feared were infected by revolutionary socialism.

On the same day that Lloyd George delivered his speech to the Trade Union Conference, Marxist schoolteacher John Maclean received a letter from the Soviet diplomat to the United Kingdom, Maxim Litvinoff, appointing him the Bolshevik Consul for Scotland.⁴⁴⁴ Maclean’s appointment meant that for the first time a British citizen officially and openly worked for a communist state.⁴⁴⁵ The Russian delegate who appointed him also openly encouraged munitions workers to launch a communist revolution.⁴⁴⁶ John Maclean had previously been arrested in February 1916 on six counts of sedition and sentenced to three years penal servitude. However in July 1917, popular protest forced his release after just under 15 months.⁴⁴⁷ Upon release, Maclean published a letter in *Justice*, the official organ of Scotland’s British Socialist Party that he was, “hotter than ever,” though ill health forced him to delay agitation until October.⁴⁴⁸ The success of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia and his appointment as the Bolshevik Consul for Scotland invigorated the aging radical who, “agitated tirelessly for a worker’s revolution and for an immediate end to the war in Europe,” in the winter of 1917-1918. The government responded, “after a week’s touring and speaking in the minefields of Durham in April 1918, Maclean was arrested and charged with making statements likely to prejudice recruiting and

⁴⁴³ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol. 2*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1933), 1145-1146.

⁴⁴⁴ Lenin’s Soviet government sent Maxim Litvinoff as their diplomat to the United Kingdom but the British did not officially recognize the Soviet Union during his tenure, making him, from their perspective, an unofficial representative.

⁴⁴⁵ “John Maclean,” Glasgow Digital Library, The University of Strathclyde, accessed 15 Jan., 2021, <http://gdl.cdli.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redclypeo002.htm>.

⁴⁴⁶ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol. 2*, 1541..

⁴⁴⁷ Telegram to John Maclean on his release from prison Jul. 1917, Glasgow Digital Library, The University of Strathclyde, accessed 15 Jan., 2021, <http://gdl.cdli.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly062.htm>.

⁴⁴⁸ *The Call*, 19 Jul., 1917, 4. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/maclean/works/1917-prison.htm>

cause mutiny and sedition among the people.”⁴⁴⁹ He was found guilty of all charges and sentenced to five years in prison.

John Maclean was hardly the only radical worrying the government. As the head of the Scottish wing of the British Socialist Party he had a small but formidable political group backing his revolutionary advocacy. In 1917, the British Socialist Party entered into negotiations with the Socialist Labour Party to form a united communist party.⁴⁵⁰ While these talks failed, the Scottish Labour Party regularly translated and printed international communist propaganda pamphlets including Leon Trotsky’s “War or Revolution: Bolshevik Socialism versus Capitalistic Imperialism,” and Karl Liebknecht’s “Militarism and Anti-Militarism.”⁴⁵¹

The British government carefully monitored incoming Russians and their associates. Of particular interest, Nicholas Klishko, a munitions worker, Lenin supporter and member of the pacifist 1917 Club. Viscount Bertie of Thame described him as “one of the most trusted and energetic fomenters of trouble in the employ of the Moscow Government.”⁴⁵² On 16 March 1918, MI5 created a list of notable Bolsheviks to be deported, among them Klishko. In June, reports confirmed Klishko’s contacts with British Bolsheviks and pacifists and his membership in the Russian Socialite Committee which spread Bolshevik propaganda. MI5 urged his deportation, against the wishes of the Assistant Chief Constable who argued he was more

⁴⁴⁹ John Maclean at his trial in Edinburgh, May 1918, Glasgow Digital Library, The University of Strathclyde, accessed 15 Jan., 2021, <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly005.htm>

⁴⁵⁰ Talks failed and the BSP dissolved itself in 1920 and restructured into the Communist Labour Party. The CLP was a Scottish-exclusive party and contended with fellow Glaswegian radical William Gallacher’s Communist Party of Great Britain, as these two could not agree on how best to counter nationalism.

⁴⁵¹ Leon Trotsky, *War or revolution: Bolshevik socialism versus capitalistic imperialism*, trans. the Socialist Labour Press, (Glasgow: Socialist Labour Press, 1918) <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly066.htm>. Karl Liebknecht, *Militarism and anti-militarism*, trans. the Socialist Labour Press. (Glasgow: Socialist Labour Press, 1918) <http://gdl.cdrl.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/redcly050.htm>.

⁴⁵² *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 17 Nov., 1931 vol 83 cc49-53, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1931/nov/17/the-case-of-nicolas-klishko>

dangerous outside the country than in, where he could be observed. Despite the constable's protests Klishko was interned on 6 September and deported shortly thereafter.⁴⁵³

Communist revolution became the intelligence community's overriding concern and impacted every connected government sector. The Ministry of Labour, The Ministry of Munitions, Scotland Yard, MI5 and the Home Office all furnished reports on revolutionary activity and workers' agitation. Additionally, Special Branch, the Metropolitan Police, the Ministry of Munitions and the War Office regularly investigated labor agitators, COs and dissidents.⁴⁵⁴ The British government's heightened fears of communist agitation filtered down to police, instructed to relay the names and addresses of "persons taking a prominent part in industrial unrest, and attempting to instigate or organise a stoppage of work," to the Home Office.⁴⁵⁵ The Home Office also asked local police to predict future agitation and report on potential strike leaders. In a meeting held 26 March 1918, Sir Charles Edward Troup, Permanent Undersecretary at the Home Office, and his fellows agreed that any agitators plotting a strike should be conscripted without notice. Moreover, they agreed to use military personnel to put down strike activity, although only as a last resort.⁴⁵⁶

Intelligence leaders were convinced that Britain faced an imminent communist threat. Thomson warned that Bolshevism was a "cancer." He further argued that those who believe, "that the British working man is too staid and sensible a person ever to think of revolution except through the ballot-box...are right, but they forget what determined minorities can do with an

⁴⁵³ Undated report, MI5, KV 2 1412, 1-3.

⁴⁵⁴ The Ministry of Munitions created the Parliamentary Military Secretary Department No. 2 Section, a national intelligence-gathering service. Its largely unprofessional spies infiltrated labor unions and conscientious objectors' groups. Its activities came to light in 1917, angering labor unions, at which point the department was scrapped and its portfolio taken over by Scotland Yard and the War Office. Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 188.

⁴⁵⁵ Letter from Charles Edward Troup, Home Office, 15 Oct., 1918, HO 144 1484 349684.

⁴⁵⁶ Meeting Summary, District Conferences of Chief Constables, Home Office, 26 Mar., 1918, HO 144 1484 349684, 1.

irresolute mass. A single fox will clear out a hen-roost while it is cackling its indignation to the skies.”⁴⁵⁷

Unlike political and intelligence leaders, most of the police and the public remained unconvinced. Local constables especially detested the increased paperwork, writing regular reports on people they viewed as harmless. Moreover, they found the speculative nature of their work a constant irritant. On 29 July the Lancashire Constabulary complained that it, “would require the powers of an inspired prophet,” to predict future agitation.⁴⁵⁸ Local police argued that these reports caused more harm than good, since they submitted them to military authorities, many of whom had been laborers before the war broke out and remained sympathetic to workers. The Chief Constable of Nottingham claimed that anti-labor reports angered former laborers in the military who might slip information to current workers which would foster distrust between them and police. Finally, he argued that these reports were pointless because in an emergency situation, such as a riot, military authorities would speak directly with a senior police officer to solve the crisis. Thus, the Constable viewed the reports as an unnecessary waste of time.⁴⁵⁹

Did Vernon Kell, Basil Thomson, the rest of the intelligence community and adjacent ministers truly believe that Glasgow and London could have analogous revolutions to those in 1917 Petrograd and Moscow? Their consistent warnings about foreign and internal threats indicates genuine concern about the possible reach of radical activity. Conversely, stoking fear among elite policymakers guaranteed these officials the ability to expand their bureaus and personal reputations. In 1914 Vernon Kell’s fledgling MO5 had 6 officers; by 1918 its staff

⁴⁵⁷ Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard*, 307, 328.

⁴⁵⁸ Letter from the Lancashire Constabulary, 29 Jul., 1918, HO 144 1484 349684, 2-4.

⁴⁵⁹ Letter to Dixon at the Home Office from the Chief Constable’s Office, Home Office, Shire Hall, Nottingham, HO 144 1484 349684, 28 Mar., 1918.

expanded to 800.⁴⁶⁰ Basil Thomson of Special Branch greatly enhanced his profile by exaggerating the dangers of organized labor, becoming the head of a unified intelligence service after the war.⁴⁶¹ Regardless of their sincerity, Kell, Thomson and officials within the Home Office used the threat of subversion to increase the size and powers of their organizations.⁴⁶²

British elites focused on new threats, but their tactics resembled what they had done the preceding years, albeit harsher. Censors aggressively pursued the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF). On 14 February 1918 the NCF's newspaper, the *Tribunal*, published an article critical of the military. Government officials used this as an excuse to raid their properties and destroy printing equipment and property. On 22 April police ransacked the NCF's London office and smashed a private printer. Police later arrested noted pacifist Violet Tillard for refusing to divulge the location of the paper's most recent secret printing press. One NCF leader later remarked that for the first time the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA) was invoked to imprison someone for reasons that had nothing to do with defending the realm.⁴⁶³ When the *Venture* published a book on Christian thought censors accused the editors of prejudicing people against recruitment and fined them £100.⁴⁶⁴

As in previous years, patriot groups and police continued to attack public anti-war demonstrations. On 5 May 1918, the socialist North London Herald League attempted to convene one of the largest meetings in years to commemorate the centenary of Karl Marx's birth.

⁴⁶⁰ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 113.

⁴⁶¹ Kevin Quinlan, *The Secret War between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s* (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2014), 22.

⁴⁶² Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State*, 113.

⁴⁶³ Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship 1914-1919* (University of Arkansas Press: Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1981), 250.

⁴⁶⁴ *Daily News*, 24 May, 1918.

When the group gathered with supporters from one hundred other trade union branch members at Finsbury Park, mounted and regular police met them and dispersed the crowd.⁴⁶⁵

Between late August and September 1918 a number of large-scale strikes alarmed government officials. In August the National Union of Police and Prison Officers led a strike for higher pay. The London-exclusive strike resolved in a week when police secured a raise, though Lloyd George and the government worried about the prospect of a nation-wide police strike.⁴⁶⁶ When a major railway strike spread from Dundee that September Whitehall sent six battalions to restore order.⁴⁶⁷ In spite of government fears most Britons continued to support the war effort. Strikes and demonstrations remained rare.

Despite the military stalemate in France the impact of Britain's blockade of Germany deepened, causing widespread hunger. On 3 March 1918, the Russian government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, ending the war on the eastern front. With US troops beginning to arrive, German generals understood that time was against them. Peace with Lenin's government enabled Imperial Germany to move troops from the east to the west. On 21 March Germany launched a massive assault against the allies in France. Ludendorff aimed to knock out France before the millions of American soldiers could deploy to the Front. Successful at first, the German armies advanced to within 35 miles of Paris but failed to break the Allied lines. The exhausted German army soon faced fresh American soldiers. On 5 October 1918 German envoys telegraphed Woodrow Wilson asking for a ceasefire. On 11 November 1918 Germany and the Allies signed an armistice that ended hostilities.

⁴⁶⁵ Ken Weller, *'Don't be a Soldier': The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918* (London: History Workshop Center, 1985) 57.

⁴⁶⁶ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1991) 132.

⁴⁶⁷ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 262-263.

The British public reacted with unrestrained joy and relief at the war's end. Celebrations took place across the nation. The harrowing, four-year trial that claimed so many lives was over. For a few short months Britain looked poised for a return to normalcy. However, even though the Great War ended the British military still had one major battle left to fight in the streets of Glasgow. The following year tanks, artillery, machine guns and 10,000 soldiers seized Britain's tumultuous industrial heart.

Le Tigre

Georges Clemenceau rose to power in late 1917 as an unapologetic patriot who openly criticized the government for not doing enough to win the war. *Le Tigre* brooked no peace talk and crushed even former ministers who he felt hindered the war effort. He accused left-wing politicians of treason, including former prime minister Joseph Caillaux and former Minister of the Interior Louis Malvy.⁴⁶⁸ Clemenceau never produced definitive proof of treasonous actions but by late 1917 incessant right-wing propaganda implicated these two politicians in a national scandal. On 15 May 1917 an administrator for the pacifist newspaper the *Bonnet Rouge*, Émile-Joseph Duval, was arrested near the Swiss border with a check for 150,000 francs from a German bank.⁴⁶⁹ Later in 1917, another man, Paul Bolo, was arrested for taking money from foreign banks with ties to Germany to prop up pro-pacifist newspapers, among them the *Bonnet*

⁴⁶⁸ *L'Ouest Éclair*, 16 Jan., 1918. *L'Humanité*, 23 November, 1917. For Clemenceau's accusation in the Chamber of Deputies, see Chambre des députés de France, "Journal officiel de la République française, Débats parlementaires," 28 Nov., 1917.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63060743/f32.image.r=malvy%20Monsieur%20le%20ministre%20de%20l'Int%C3%A9rieur,%20je%20vous%20accuse%20d'avoir%20trahi%20les%20int%C3%A9r%C3%AAts%20de%20la%20France?rk=21459;2>

⁴⁶⁹ *Le Journal*, 12 May, 1918.

Rouge.⁴⁷⁰ The two men were tried for treason and later executed. Clemenceau and his allies linked Caillaux and Malvy to the *Bonnet Rouge* and other pacifists, alleging a broad conspiracy to undermine French morale on behalf of German agents. These scandals forced Prime Minister Paul Painlevé to resign on 28 November 1917, whereupon Clemenceau replaced him.

In a speech before the Senate, Clemenceau lambasted anti-war agitators as working for Germany, either intentionally or otherwise.

There are certain crimes, crimes against France, which call for prompt punishment...[such as] those pacifist campaigns, led by Germans. Neither treason, nor demi-treason: war! Nothing but the war. Our armies will not be caught between two lines of fire. Justice will pass. The country will know it is defended.⁴⁷¹

Clemenceau insisted, “the government’s mission is to ensure that good citizens are calm and bad ones are not.” As prime minister he enlarged the government and vehemently attacked those he considered unpatriotic.⁴⁷² Authorities arrested Caillaux on 15 January 1918. After a highly-publicized trial Caillaux received a sentence of three years in prison.⁴⁷³ Malvy, convinced of his innocence, sought judgement before the *Haute Cour*, which, on 8 August 1918, exiled him for five years.⁴⁷⁴ These repressive actions outraged the left but Clemenceau maintained his hardline stance.⁴⁷⁵

By 1918 France had endured nearly a million deaths and roughly three times as many men had been wounded in the war. Nevertheless, Clemenceau and his cabinet were determined to hold France together long enough for the Americans to arrive and help defeat Germany.

⁴⁷⁰ *Le Temps*, 13 Feb. 1918.

⁴⁷¹ Chambre des députés de France, “Journal officiel de la République française, Débats parlementaires,” 20 Nov., 1917.

⁴⁷² Georges Clemenceau, *Discours de guerre*, new ed., (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1968), 105.

⁴⁷³ *L'Indépendant des Basses-Pyrénées*, 16 Jan., 1918.

⁴⁷⁴ *L'Œuvre*, 8 Aug., 1918.

⁴⁷⁵ A note on the right-wing: Right-wing radicalism as a political force was at its nadir by the war’s end. The far-right’s only clear political goal were to fight until victory and attack the left. At a 20 February 1918 the *Ligue des Patriotes* voted to dissolve. With the far-right in shambles, Clemenceau was free to turn his whole attention against the left. Memo, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 15 Feb., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 12873.

Clemenceau broke with his predecessors in his treatment of labor. Rather than appealing to laborers as part of the *Union Sacrée*, he expanded the power and presence of the state to crush any left-wing subversion. By 1918 twelve ministers became fourteen, joined by twenty undersecretaries. There were 289 governmental committees and commissions related to war governance by the conflict's end. Moreover, agencies rapidly centralized and coordinated with each other.⁴⁷⁶ The numerous police forces under the *Sûreté Générale* and agents from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Armaments, the Ministry of War, the *Deuxième Bureau*, the post office and government censors united against anti-government agitators. French agencies used new strategies to control the population. At the war's end police used photo identification to track down *embusqués*. Any man found hiding was considered a conscientious objector and associated with pacifism, regardless of his actual intentions.⁴⁷⁷ Clemenceau used the capture and sentencing of CO's to demonstrate his determination to achieve victory. The government and public in general supported the ferocity of *Le Tigre*, although workers and dissenters feared the wrath of France's "No. 1 cop."⁴⁷⁸

From the start of 1918 Paris police increasingly listened to conversations in public spaces to gauge the public's mood and general susceptibility to radicalism. A police report from 15 January concluded that Russia's pulling out of the war caused morale to plummet, but Clemenceau's tight surveillance effectively squelched defeatist propaganda. The *Bonnet Rouge* had been implicated in foreign scandals, pacifism became more closely associated with foreign plots, and the two major Parisian pacifist papers *La Paix Organisée* and *Ce qu'il faut dire*, lost

⁴⁷⁶ Fabienne Bock, "L'exubérance de l'état en France de 1914 à 1918," *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, no. 3 (Jul., 1984), 42-44.

⁴⁷⁷ Philippe Boulanger, "Le refus de l'impôt du sang: Géographie de l'insoumission en France de 1914 à 1922," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 188 (Dec. 1997), 9-10, 22-23.

⁴⁷⁸ Maucolin, grévistes du Bâtiment du 16 mai, cf. note 49. André délégué de l'Urbaine d'Aéronautique, grévistes de Saint-Denis du 17 mai 1918, AN, F7 13367, as cited in Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution*, 211.

subscribers.⁴⁷⁹ The *Paris Police Préfecture* tracked food prices, fearing sudden spikes in the cost of necessities might spark spontaneous protests.⁴⁸⁰ Police continued profiling agitators, more heavily surveilled foreign workers, particularly Russians and Germans, and enforced order on factory floors.⁴⁸¹

The sudden launch and rapid success of German's March 1918 offensive in the west shocked both the French government and public. As the German army approached some government ministers wanted to leave Paris but Clemenceau refused to abandon the capital.⁴⁸² As the French army fought against the German advance, the homefront rallied behind the war effort enabling Clemenceau to aggressively silence pacifist opposition.⁴⁸³

In spite of the military situation, given the wave of strikes in 1917 government officials felt the need to prepare for May Day, an annual test of national strength versus the radical workers' movements. Initial surveillance implied that 1918 might see a repeat of 1917's chaos or even worse. One worker informed police in the Haute-Saône department that, "an understanding exists between the different industrial workers' syndicates in the region for an uprising and a revolutionary movement this coming May if, by that date the war has not ended."⁴⁸⁴ Railroad police at Saint-Etienne reported that 80 local syndicates planned a 24-48 hour strike for an armistice.⁴⁸⁵ On 10 April *Le Conseil Exécutif des Jeunesses Syndicalistes* called for a strike in

⁴⁷⁹ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l'Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Jan., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 1-5.

⁴⁸⁰ Rapport, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 23 Apr., 1918, BA 1587, 1-2,

⁴⁸¹ Note, 23 Jan., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1407. Note, 21 Jan., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1407. Note, 8 Mar., 1918., (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1407.

⁴⁸² David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol. 2*, 1541.

⁴⁸³ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l'Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, Apr., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639.

⁴⁸⁴ Le Préfet de la Haute-Saône à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur à Paris (Direction de la Sûreté Générale), *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Mar., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁸⁵ Rapport, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 6 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

Paris, “so large that the government could not suppress it.”⁴⁸⁶ On 21 April the Parisian *Syndicat du Bâtiment* unanimously voted to reduce work by 75 percent and stop work altogether on 1 May if peace wasn’t declared.⁴⁸⁷ Workers across the Loire department propagandized for a general strike, leading the panicked prefect to request twelve cavalry squadrons and 1,200 infantry to put down a mass movement.⁴⁸⁸ Meanwhile the Prefecture of the Rhône warned that they needed 3,000 gendarmes to suppress a mass movement, complaining that only 1,600 were available. The report insisted they needed at least 300 police, “just for the expected demonstrations in Lyon.”⁴⁸⁹ Paris police and army commanders discussed turning the capital into a military jurisdiction with troops maintaining order.⁴⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the *Sûreté Générale* instructed every informant and agent placed within the trade unions to gather as much information as possible on 1 May activity.⁴⁹¹

However, May Day 1918 was not a repeat of the preceding year. Infighting between workers hamstrung any popular anti-government movement. In mid-April the CGT and the *Comité Confédérale* held a series of meetings that dealt a massive blow to the budding revolutionary movement. Many laborers within these groups supported a general strike but the majority emphasized the need to keep producing to save Paris from the fast-encroaching Germans. Jouhaux, alongside his fellow moderates, agreed that a general strike after the war would be more effective. Thus, the CGT and the *Comité Confédérale* did not call for work stoppages, leaving the decision to individual syndicates. Simultaneously the CGT and allies

⁴⁸⁶ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 10 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁸⁷ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 21 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 3.

⁴⁸⁸ Le Préfeture de la Loire Saint-Chamond à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 17 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁸⁹ Le Préfet du Rhône à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 20 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁹⁰ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 25 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁹¹ Réunion du Comité Général à Saint-Etienne du 21 Avril 1918, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 21 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

within the *Union des Syndicats de la Seine* aggressively propagandized against demonstrating while the Germans advanced. Even though Merrheim and his *Fédération des Métaux* had called for immediate peace and revolution in previous years, in the spring of 1918 they accepted the CGT's position. The radical agitator maintained his beliefs but accepted that paralyzing France while it was under siege would turn the general public against the workers' movement. Moreover, with Clemenceau as prime minister, any workers' agitation would surely be met with police and military action. The CGT, *Comité Confédérale* and FM's opposition to a general strike convinced *Sûreté Générale* agents that Paris would remain calm on 1 May.⁴⁹²

Feeling betrayed by Merrheim, hardline pacifists turned to the *Comité de Défense Syndicaliste* and Raymond Pericat for leadership. In January 1918 he founded *La Plèbe*, an anarchist journal, to lead the new peace movement, but the government immediately censored it.⁴⁹³ Workers across France, learning that major unions abandoned May Day strikes, cancelled their plans to agitate. Despite Pericat's frantic efforts he could not reverse the momentum against a revolutionary movement. Parisians realized that the Germans might take their city and most voted against work stoppages. One of the two Marseille syndicates, "decided not to strike 1 May," and planned meetings instead.⁴⁹⁴ On 25 April the leaders of the *Comité de défense syndicaliste* recognized that even among their own members, "the working population remains hostile to the revolutionary minority," and abandoned a general strike.⁴⁹⁵ Even in radical Lyon

⁴⁹² Prévisions au sujet du 1^{er} Mai 1918, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 23 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-4.

⁴⁹³ Prévisions au sujet du 1^{er} Mai 1918, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 23 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-4. Comité de Défense Syndicaliste, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 23 Apr. 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 3-4. Le 1^{er} mai, Un n^o spécial de "La Plèbe," *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 23 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-4.

⁴⁹⁴ Rapport, *Ministère de l'Intérieur*, 22 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁴⁹⁵ Rapport, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 25 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 4.

most workers agreed not to strike, though they did plan a peace demonstration.⁴⁹⁶ Finally, the Minister of Armaments closed the most radicalized factories between 1-2 May. Albert Thomas justified the closures to prevent mass anti-government demonstrations; in actuality, he and members of the *Sûreté Générale* agreed that depriving munitions workers of two days' wages would turn them against revolutionary agitators.⁴⁹⁷

Clemenceau, Thomas and the *Sûreté Générale*'s willingness to sacrifice two days of munitions production across multiple factories to sow dissension among the workers clearly indicates their concerns and strategy. The Russian Revolution and the rise of the Bolshevik party as a major political force demonstrated the potential of radical agitation to overthrow a government. France's own May-June strikes and army mutinies of 1917 convinced Clemenceau and his ministers that France faced a credible revolutionary threat. The prime minister firmly believed that the French army could withstand German advances until the Americans arrived but questioned the working-class' commitment to victory. Clemenceau saw little difference between external attacks and internal subversion and regularly accused pacifists of being German agents. Socialists had appealed to internationalism, expressed sympathy for German workers, praised Russian revolutionaries and criticized the French government. Although only a handful of French citizens were found guilty of conspiring with German nationals or the German government, Clemenceau and much of the public believed that left-wing defeatists who demoralized the country were acting on behalf of the enemy either intentionally engaging in German plots or unintentionally undermining the war effort.

⁴⁹⁶ Le Préfet du Rhône à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur (Direction de la Sûreté Générale), *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 29 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-3.

⁴⁹⁷ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 3.

In the end, May Day passed with relative calm despite smatterings of outrage. In Bourges one syndicate voted 800-700 to stop working, though the rest of the city's workers remained at their posts.⁴⁹⁸ Seventy workers demonstrated in Nanterre without incident.⁴⁹⁹ Meanwhile, virtually no strikes broke out in large industrial cities like Marseille, Lyon or Paris, although small groups of workers in cities across the country hosted anti-war meetings and cries of, "À bas la guerre!" echoed across France.⁵⁰⁰ *Sûreté Générale* agents infiltrated a secret meeting of the *Comité de Défense Syndicaliste* and learned that while the group affirmed its dedication to pacifism and revolution, it expressed uncertainty about how to proceed. The undercover agent paraphrased one speaker who insisted he,

does not want to train an amorphous, imbecilic and bestial mass that could just as easily be led by cannons and machine guns than for social emancipation. He wants to create thinking individuals and agitators who will lead the workers' movement of tomorrow and which will give international workers the beautiful apotheosis that they have deserved for so long.

The *Comité* adjourned without concrete plans; its leaders bemoaned the complacency of most workers while reaffirming their commitment to revolution.⁵⁰¹

Thus by spring 1918, pacifists were in disarray without clear national leadership. Lack of a unified movement left individual pacifist syndicates to formulate their own peace plans in the aftermath of May Day. In Orléans textile workers vowed to redouble their pro-peace propaganda and urged consistent opposition to capitalism.⁵⁰² The metallurgists of Nevers, "invited workers to come in numbers for a meeting to 'affirm by their presence their desire for peace based on the

⁴⁹⁸ P/3092, La Préparation du 1^{er} Mai à Bourges, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 29 Apr., 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1-3. Le Préfet du Cher à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 2 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁵⁰⁰ Rapport, *Ministère de l'Intérieur*, 2 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272. Télégramme Chiffre, Bourges, *Cabinet du Ministre de la Guerre*, 3 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁵⁰¹ Sûreté Rapport Secret, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 3 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272, 6.

⁵⁰² Rapport, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 3 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

principles [formulated] by Woodrow Wilson.””⁵⁰³ Most labor unions resigned themselves to organizing new workers while waiting for another opportunity for collective action. The pro-peace minority remained dedicated to ending the brutal war, but in four years they had been unable to start a mass workers’ movement. After another disappointing May Day, trade unionists could only propagandize, hatch far-fetched schemes and hope that eventual war weariness would radicalize the working-class.

When Paris police walked the streets in April 1918 nearly every conversation they recorded was about Germany’s Spring Offensive. The German advance initially shocked and frightened the French public, but by early May Allied counterattacks stymied Germany’s progress. Moreover, the German army had suffered heavily casualties to seize battle-wracked territory while the Allies held their most important fortifications. The Paris police reported on 15 May, “the country has recovered from the emotions experienced from the formidable enemy offensive,” and envisioned, “final victory” as Americans soldiers arrived *en masse*.⁵⁰⁴ Then the German army surged forward at the Third Battle of the Aisne and by 5 June came closer to Paris than at any point during the war since 1914. However, the German Army by then was exhausted and the following day French forces held them back. Allied resilience renewed hopes in Clemenceau’s government. Simultaneously, German military aggression turned the public against pacifist and revolutionary propaganda until June 1918 when the Front returned to a stalemate.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Rapport, *Commissariat Spécial Nevers*, 6 May, 1918, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13272.

⁵⁰⁴ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, May, 1918, BA 1639, 1.

⁵⁰⁵ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Jun., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 1-4. Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Jul., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 1-3.

On 15 July Germany launched its last major offensive, the Second Battle of the Marne. Allied armies decisively defeated them. This victory, combined with the massive arrival of US soldiers at the Front, buoyed French hopes that the war was near its end. Police warned that if the army drafted radicals workers from Tarbes they could, “run an active campaign for peace at any price without delay,” but in general pacifism declined sharply.⁵⁰⁶ Paris police recorded that, “the daily successes of the Entente have brought about the near-complete disappearance of pacifist and alarmist propaganda.”⁵⁰⁷

On 8 August 1918 the Allies launched a counter-offensive against Germany, later known as the Hundred Days Offensive. Well-equipped Allied armies, bolstered by hundreds of thousands of fresh American soldiers, pushed towards the Rhine. On 24 October the Imperial Naval Command at Kiel ordered an attack on the British Royal Navy. The German sailors understood the attack was suicide and mutinied. The sailors appealed to trade unions to bolster their numbers. By early November a sailors and workers’ movement spread across Germany with many radicals forming Russian-style soviets. Even before the mutinies, “Hindenburg and Ludendorff reached the conclusion that the War was hopelessly lost...As Ludendorff himself admits, on the Western Front their forces were fading away; battalions reduced from four companies to three; divisions from three brigades to two, of weary, exhausted, underfed men.”⁵⁰⁸

The mutinies forced Germany’s military leaders to abandon the war and concentrate on

⁵⁰⁶ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Aug., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 1-3..

⁵⁰⁷ See Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Sept., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639. Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Oct., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639. Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l’Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Nov., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 3.

⁵⁰⁸ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol. 2*, 1541.

preventing a social revolution. On 11 November 1918, Germany and the Allies agreed to an Armistice. The fighting on the Western Front finally ended.

A nation under siege for four years finally had peace but the French public remained uneasy about the possibility of social conflict at home. Victory in the Great War weakened the revolutionary movement but did not end it. The CGT had promised to lead workers in the post-war settlement. Radical trade union leaders could strike again without fear of being labelled unpatriotic since work stoppages no longer threatened French lives. Economic distress spread across France as low wages and the high cost of living ensured widespread misery.⁵⁰⁹ Demobilization became a contentious issue. Soldiers wanted to return home immediately, while economists warned that the job market could not handle a sudden influx of millions of unemployed men. Finally, as long as Soviet Russia stood radical socialists looked to it as a model for revolution and ideal for their own countries. The end of the war meant that these unresolved issues troubled France for years to come.

Conclusion

Britain and France had suffered together and evolved over the course of the war. While no two nations can ever be wholly alike in any regard, the conduct of both governments and people were strikingly similar during the war. The people in both nations prided themselves as free, enlightened democracies, civilizing the world through their empires and restraining despotism. Free expression enabled dissidents to oppose government actions, hobbling munitions production during wartime. The central states of both countries appealed to popular democratic

⁵⁰⁹ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l'Intérieur, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, 15 Dec., 1918, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 1-3.

sentiments while silencing those who exercised their rights to criticize government policies.

British and French leaders understood that popular opinion could not be suppressed but it could be manipulated. As the war continued both central administrations increasingly stifled dissent, particularly under the hawkish leaders David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau.

Political, military and economic leaders in both countries employed roughly the same strategy to mobilize their economies and societies. High literacy and little direct governmental control of press organs meant that, unlike authoritarian countries, the British and French governments had to pose as defenders of common liberties even as they limited legitimate forms of criticism. Both Britain and France struggled to control public opinion, but when war broke out policymakers realized that public opinion, rather than an impediment to government mandates, could be a tool. From 1914 until 1916 both governments successfully controlled their societies by turning the patriotic majorities against the dissenting minorities. Officials in both states recognized that they could increase government power and presence so long as the majority viewed these new measures as safeguarding their liberties.

Although the two western European countries successfully relied on popular suppression of dissidents through the first two years of the war, starting in 1916 their patriotic fronts began to crack. Mass strikes and mutinies violently informed the government and their fellows of how unpopular the war had become. By 1917, the Russian Revolution and the possibility that Russia would withdraw from the war led British and French leaders to reject the hands-off approach to radical workers and pacifists. Anything short of victory would be a political disaster inviting mass disillusionment, chaos and perhaps even revolution.

In December 1916 hard-liner David Lloyd George became prime minister in Britain, followed in November 17 by Georges Clemenceau, *Le Tigre*, in France. Both men had

established anti-labor reputations and came to power on the promise of victory. Both governments continued to use public support to attack dissenters. However, as cooperation with labor failed, coercion became the overriding government tactic. Lloyd George and Clemenceau both more aggressively punished dissidents to make up for their citizen's lost enthusiasm.

Chapter 7: The Uneasy Aftermath

When World War I ended the Allied victors had to decide what to do with their wartime surveillance states. Without a direct military threat both states gradually rescinded their most intrusive domestic surveillance powers. Censorship declined and prohibitions on speech critical of the government lapsed. However, political leaders in both countries recognized the utility of maintaining a surveillance state. During the war the greatest threat to internal cohesion was not German sabotage but homegrown dissent. After the war, both governments considered internal subversion a serious threat due to the rise of Bolshevism.

In 1919 both countries, workers', unsupported by their major labor unions, led movements for reduced working hours and rapid demobilization of soldiers. In both places intelligence officials warned that these movements augured a communist revolution. Leaders in both countries opposed radical organized labor's attempts to acquire power in the post-war settlement. The threat of Bolshevik, anti-government radicalism justified the continuation of domestic intelligence agencies and mass surveillance during peacetime. Thus, both countries maintained their wartime surveillance states into the Interwar period to counter the new communist threat.

Britain: The Battle of George Square

As soon as the war ended Britain faced the complex process of demobilization. In a speech on 23 November 1918 Prime Minister David Lloyd George declared that his government

would, “make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in,” with jobs for all those returning.⁵¹⁰ Labor groups were less optimistic. The Glasgow Trades Council warned, “the worst should be prepared for.”⁵¹¹ Demobilization at an unprecedented scale was a difficult task. It would take time for munitions factories to transition from producing weapons to consumable products. Another issue was the position of the women in munitions industries. The Treasury Agreement 1915 between government officials and trade union leaders stipulated that women would be removed from factories after the war ended, freeing up jobs for returning soldiers.⁵¹² Yet, by 1919 over a million women were working in factories, many had joined general unions or had formed their own unions. Finally, the Representation of the People Act 1918 gave women over the age of 30 the right to vote, empowering women to vote out officials who pushed them out of their jobs.⁵¹³ Despite government promises to remove women from industry their employment, numbers remained stable.⁵¹⁴ If the women munitions workers retained their employment, government and business would have to create millions of new jobs.

Most trade unions agreed that the best way to create new jobs without jeopardizing existing ones was to lower working hours from the standard fifty-four hours a week while retaining the same wages. The powerful Amalgamated Society of Engineers initially called for a forty-hour workweek, although by 23 January 1919 its leaders and the Ministry of Labour agreed to forty-seven hours.⁵¹⁵ Meanwhile, the radical Glasgow Trades Labour Council supported a

⁵¹⁰ *The Times*, 25 November 1918.

⁵¹¹ Glasgow Trades Council Annual Report 1916-1917, 34.

⁵¹² Angela Mary Woollacott, *Mad on Munitions: The Lives of Women Munitions Workers in World War I Britain*, (Santa Barbara: University of California, 1988) 74.

⁵¹³ The Representation of the People Act 1918.

⁵¹⁴ Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 229.

⁵¹⁵ Iain McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clydeside*, (1983: repr., Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), 114-115.

thirty-hour workweek.⁵¹⁶ The leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) demanded that the government lower the workweek to forty hours immediately, or they would lead a massive strike by 27 January.⁵¹⁷ This movement gained a significant boost when the Scottish Trade Union Council officially supported it.⁵¹⁸ Government officials monitored the CWC, concerned that, the forty hours' strike could spill over into insurrectionary action.

Whitehall's worries about the threat of communism and Bolshevism were deeply-entrenched by 1919. Head of Special Branch Basil Thomson claimed,

During the first three months of 1919 unrest touched its high-water mark. I do not think that at any time in history since the Bristol Riots [of 1831] we have been so near revolution. The Workers' Committees had acquired the chief power in London, Sheffield, Coventry, Wales, and on the Clyde, and the cry for shorter hours was seized upon eagerly by the revolutionaries. On 27th January there were extensive strikes on the Clyde of a revolutionary rather than an economic character.⁵¹⁹

First Lord of the Admiralty Walter Long insisted, "I am no alarmist, and no pessimist, but I firmly believe that the elements of unrest, and what we call Bolshevism are more general, more deep-seated, than many of us believe."⁵²⁰ In a January 1919 meeting Long argued for increased emphasis on countering revolutionary movements. The Secret Service Committee decided to place Thomson at the head of a new intelligence bureau focused on countering subversives, freeing him from normal policing duties. The committee also supported sponsoring propaganda by supplying newspapers with anti-Bolshevik stories, employing public speakers and using films to disparage communism.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, 23 Jan., 1919.

⁵¹⁷ "Memorandum on Movements for Reductions in Hours of Labour," CAB 24/74, 6712, 1-2.

⁵¹⁸ STUC Minutes, 24 Jan., 1919. The STUC feared the CWC radicalism and noted that while it "could not control the forces behind the strike, they, at least, attempted to guide them along the proper lines." STUC Report 1919, 68.

⁵¹⁹ Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard*, (New York: A.L. Burt Company New York, 1922) 309-310.

⁵²⁰ Memorandum for the War Cabinet by the First Lord of the Admiralty, *The Secret Service*, 16 Jan., 1919, KV 4 151, 2.

⁵²¹ Report of Secret Service Committee Feb 1919, *Home Office*, KV 4 151, 1-8.

Thomson amplified the Bolshevik threat, warning of an international conspiracy to overthrow the Entente governments. Under his leadership Special Branch coordinated with the Foreign Office and ordered, “that all despatches bearing on the spread of Bolshevism be sent to me, in order that I might be prepared against the landing of Bolshevik agents in this country.”⁵²² In a 28 January report Thomson wrote, “The outlook during the past fortnight has become rather dark. Strikes have taken place all over the country on the question of the forty-seven hour week...My Glasgow correspondent reports that the revolutionary movement is certainly gaining ground, and he thinks that the strike threatened next Monday will be carefully watched.”⁵²³

On 31 January, 1919, the CWC led a demonstration of tens of thousands of Glaswegian workers who gathered at George Square in front of City Hall demanding a forty-hour workweek. At one point the strikers blocked tramcar operators from traversing their routes through the area. Police escorting the trams clashed with workers, leading to what the *Glasgow Herald* described as “unprecedented scenes of violence and bloodshed,” when “the police made a baton charge on the crowd.”⁵²⁴

In an effort to stop the violence CWC leader William Gallacher tried to talk to the chief constable. However, as he approached the police raised their batons and beat him to the ground along with a fellow worker who had rushed to his aid. Gallacher, covered in blood as he was being dragged toward the municipal buildings, saw his compatriot David Kirkwood rush out. Kirkwood “raised his arms in a gesture of protest, when a sergeant, approaching him from the rear, brought down his baton with terrific force on the back of his head. Kirkwood fell flat on his

⁵²² Note, *Basil Thomson*, 28 Jan., 1919, KV 4 151, 1.

⁵²³ “Fortnightly Report On Revolutionary Organisations In the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad,” 28 Jan., 1919, CAB 24/74/13, 1-2.

⁵²⁴ *Glasgow Herald*, 31 Jan., 1919.

face, unconscious.”⁵²⁵ The sheriff read the official Riot Act to the crowd, but to no effect, as strikers and police continued fighting. The violence only ended when the police allowed Kirkwood and Gallacher to speak, telling the crowd of strikers to relocate to the nearby Glasgow Green. The CWC’s special newspaper for the movement, the *Strike Bulletin*, labeled this event “Bloody Friday,” though it is more commonly called “The Battle of George Square.”⁵²⁶

Two days later, armed soldiers occupied Glasgow to suppress what the authorities considered a potential revolutionary movement.⁵²⁷ The next day the *Strike Bulletin* reported British soldiers stationed along the Clyde River, armed with “the machine-guns you made to destroy prussianism [sic] on the Continent!”⁵²⁸ The CWC claimed that workers were stronger than guns and would keep fighting until victory, but by 5 February the mass picketing ended.⁵²⁹ The following week the *Strike Bulletin* accused capitalists and the government of uniting to create a “policy of terrorism” against workers, before bitterly announcing the strike’s official end two days later.⁵³⁰

The leaders of Britain’s various intelligence agencies held numerous meetings over the next few months to discuss how they might counter continuing revolutionary threats. Already during the January strikes, the Secret Service Committee concluded that there should be an agency devoted solely to civilian intelligence. At the end of March Thomson proposed reorganizing intelligence services under the Home Office to monitor Bolshevism, labor unrest and revolutionary movements by planting undercover agents within the trade unions. On 4 April

⁵²⁵ William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, (1936: repr., London Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1990), 228-229.

⁵²⁶ *Strike Bulletin*, 1 Feb., 1919.

⁵²⁷ *Strike Bulletin*, 2 Feb., 1919.

⁵²⁸ *Strike Bulletin*, 3 Feb., 1919.

⁵²⁹ *Strike Bulletin*, 5 Feb., 1919.

⁵³⁰ *Strike Bulletin*, 10 Feb., 1919. *Strike Bulletin*, 12 Feb., 1919.

1919 the Secret Service inaugurated a news department to disseminate anti-Bolshevik propaganda.⁵³¹

A number of key British socialist groups, including the Independent Labour Party, denounced the Bolsheviks. In response, head of MI5 Vernon Kell, in contrast to most of his peers, downplayed the communist revolutionary threat. His department released a long report in April which attempted to understand the revolutionary tendencies behind labor unrest. This unusually sympathetic document examined the history of socialism in Britain, going back to Robert Owen's early nineteenth century theories. Kell urged understanding, insisting that most worker unrest resulted from "genuine or alleged grievances," which revolutionaries attempted to exploit. According to Kell, "the great majority of trade unionists is opposed to the idea that a physical revolution is the best method by which their conditions of life may be improved." He further claimed that the Labour Party, "has never been revolutionary or unconstitutional in policy."⁵³² In the self-reflective document Kell explained how during the war the government expanded to take up the prerogatives of employers; thus workers' had transposed their animosity towards their bosses to the state.

During the war the State intervened in every-day life to such an extent that the dislike which was previously evinced by the would-be social reformer towards the employers has been deflected upon the Government in their stead. The State had recourse to autocratic legislation...Moreover, the State during the war has figured as an employer of labour on an unprecedented scale. It has, in fact, taken its place as the "super-trader", and so weakened the power of the trade union officials for the time being. Lastly, in order to protect the country, the State has resorted to preventative legislation of a nature which has been unpopular in many classes of society. Any remaining autocratic power exercised by the present Government is therefore viewed with the deepest suspicion by the labouring classes.⁵³³

⁵³¹ *The Secret Service Committee*, 3 Feb., 1919, 1. Secret Service Committee Minutes of the Second Meeting, *The Secret Service Committee*, 7 Feb., 1919, 1-2. Basil Thomson, Reorganization of Intelligence, *The Secret Service Committee*, 31 Mar., 1919, 2-3. Secret Service Committee Minutes of the Third Meeting, *The Secret Service Committee*, 4 Apr., 1919, 1. KV 4 151.

⁵³² Revolutionary Tendencies Behind the Labour Unrest, *The Security Service*, 8 Apr. 1919, KV 3 327, 5-8.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 18.

With stunning clarity, Kell rebuked his colleagues' conspiratorial views and instead connected radicalism to realistic grievances brought on by government actions during the war. Moreover, he predicted that patriotic British workers would not join their continental counterparts in international strikes and that better living conditions would cripple radicalism.⁵³⁴

Despite Kell's cogent understanding of the working-class, his paternalistic attitude towards them justified continued surveillance and control. He warned that British, "common sense," was not enough to undo the effects of revolutionary propaganda. The government had to take a role in shaping public opinion. Kell ended the report with long lists of potential agitators and subversive organizations, including colleges, local courses and Sunday Schools that promoted socialism, soviets, radical papers, revolutionary societies and prominent agitators.⁵³⁵ Even as Kell recognized that the expansion of state power and presence in workers' lives amplified their frustrations he justified these practices as necessary.

Kell's peers in the other intelligence agencies agreed that the state could not revert to its prewar size and powers, but they ignored his overtures for understanding workers and tolerating non-revolutionary socialist movements. In April 1919 the Home Office chose the hawkish Thomson as the future Director of Intelligence, responsible for, "collecting intelligence relating to seditious meetings and conspiracies, threatened disturbances and revolutionary movements."⁵³⁶ From his position Thomson dominated the post-war power-struggle between intelligence branches. Special Branch expanded at MI5's expense. As the Director of Intelligence

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 19-21, 24-39.

⁵³⁶ Letter from the Home Office 380368, *Home Office*, 22 Apr., 1919, HO 144 1484 349684.

Thomson pursued an aggressive anti-communist policy.⁵³⁷ Even after Thomson fell from power in 1921, anti-communist sentiment permeated British intelligence agencies.⁵³⁸

Members of Parliament were likewise swept up in powerful anti-communist fears. In 1919 police strikes in London led to the Constabulary and Police Act which prohibited police from joining trade unions or striking. Instead, officers were automatically enrolled in national, government-operated unions which arbitrated disputes. This and a series of post-war acts replaced localism in British police forces in favor of an increasingly centralized system.⁵³⁹ In 1920 Parliament passed three key laws, the Official Secrets Act, the Emergency Powers Act and the Firearms Act, effectively replacing the wartime Defense of the Realm Act. These acts empowered the state to override common law and seize all telegrams sent within the empire. They gave police the right to deny firearms to anyone they deemed untrustworthy.⁵⁴⁰

Before the war the British government was more decentralized than any of the other great European powers. With local police forces and small intelligence agencies British citizens enjoyed broad freedoms relative to many of their continental counterparts. When the war began the British government rapidly expanded its powers. However, having long established liberal freedoms the British people the government to respect their civil liberties. To control the public, policymakers worked with trade unions, newspapers, patriot groups and common citizens to silence dissent. As the war dragged on government agencies increasingly intervened directly to

⁵³⁷ For more information on MI5's decline in the post-war period, see: Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 103-125.

⁵³⁸ In 1924, when the first Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald began normalizing relations with Russia, agents at MI6 decided to bring down the government. The service forged a document purporting to be directives from the Comintern to British communists to engage in sedition, and leaked the Zinoviev Letter to the conservative Daily Mail. The scandal struck during an election and the conservatives swept to power. Timothy Phillips, *The Secret Twenties: British Intelligence, the Russians and the Jazz Age*, (London: Granta Books, 2017) 182-196.

⁵³⁹ Christopher Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power & Modernity*. (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), 124.

⁵⁴⁰ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the 20th Century* (New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 119.

control public opinion. Even after the war ended the British government largely maintained its surveillance apparatuses, laws and practices. Political leaders justified the surveilling of an unprecedented number of British citizens as necessary to protect them from a subversive few. By the war's end Britain's liberal system boasted a well-organized and equipped structure for controlling and silencing dissent.

Victory and Defeat in France

As with their partners in Britain, peace brought new challenges to France. The economy was in shambles. Four years of trench-building and constant shelling across hundreds of miles rent a gash from the Channel to Switzerland. Germany had squeezed the occupied northern territories to the breaking point. Financial misery and the problems of demobilization plagued a country with a strong labor movement. Police and intelligence services, preoccupied with the threat of a Bolshevik revolution, diligently monitored their citizens, particularly in the hotbed of Paris. A 20 February 1919 report warned,

Meetings of a particular sort are multiplying: meetings for unemployment, for demobilization organized by L'Humanité at the *Cirque d'hiver*...in these meetings violent proposals are taken, but it is remarkable that the audience appears more violent than the speakers, notably at the *Cirque d'hiver*, where they cry, 'Vive les Soviets,' 'À bas la victoire!' There are a group of unique troublemakers, composed of French and foreign revolutionaries and libertines, who are violently hostile to the leaders of the CGT, who sabotage their meetings and truly wish to be able to eliminate them.⁵⁴¹

The military governor of Paris, General Henry Valdant noted "groups of anarchists and libertines, notably *les amis du Populaire*, are actively propagandizing for Bolshevism,"

⁵⁴¹ Bulletin Confidentiel résumant la situation morale de l'Intérieur, *Bureau de centralisation de renseignements*, Paris, 20 Feb., 1919, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), BA 1639, 3-9.

particularly targeting wounded soldiers.⁵⁴² Intercepted letters showed train-workers in particularly receptive to Bolshevism.⁵⁴³

While Paris was the center for revolutionary activity, other cities' prefectures reported anti-government propaganda. Orléans' police reported that some workers supported violent revolution and advocated censoring songs for having a "Bolshevik tendency."⁵⁴⁴ The Bourges prefecture warned that three local newspapers *Le Vague*, *Le Populaire* and *Le Rappel Socialiste* promoted Bolshevism.⁵⁴⁵

In contrast to these alarming reports, most cities' police agents described left-wing anti-government sentiment as weak or even non-existent. According to the Bordeaux prefecture revolutionary propaganda, "is not dangerous at this time, [since] workers rebuke these doctrines."⁵⁴⁶ In the northwest, "energetic measures taken by the Brest authorities have tempered the ardor of Bolshevik propagandists in the region." Particularly, "the arrests of principal leaders and complete lack of funds puts remaining militants in an embarrassing situation."⁵⁴⁷ The prefect of Marseille opined, "rural people are distinctly reactionary towards all new ideas," which made them resilient to the "Russian example [of government]."⁵⁴⁸ In Lille, although police report forms included a special section for reporting on "Propagande Revolutionaire et Bolshevikiste" those sections were regularly blank.⁵⁴⁹ The prefect of Toulouse happily boasted, "Bolshevism does not exist," within the city.⁵⁵⁰ Most cities' prefects reported no active

⁵⁴² Italics added by me. Bulletin Confidentiel, 4 Mar., 1919, 2.

⁵⁴³ Bulletin Confidentiel, 4 Apr., 1919, 2.

⁵⁴⁴ Bulletin Confidentiel, 6 Apr., 1919, 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Bulletin Confidentiel, 4 Apr., 1919, 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Bulletin Confidentiel, 5 Apr., 1919, 3.

⁵⁴⁷ Bulletin Confidentiel, 4 Mar., 1919, 5.

⁵⁴⁸ Bulletin Confidentiel, 3 Apr., 1919, 3.

⁵⁴⁹ Bulletin Confidentiel, 5 Mar., 1919, 2.

⁵⁵⁰ Bulletin Confidentiel, 2 Apr., 1919.

revolutionary movements, indicating that anti-government sentiment was confined to a few cities in the industrial, urban north. A general report by the *Sûreté Générale* concluded that far-left propaganda, “is useless in rural areas where it has no chance of success and lives mostly in industrial regions where it is not always favorably received. The great majority of the country is indifferent or hostile to these initiatives.”⁵⁵¹

Government officials and labor leaders alike understood that May Day 1919 would test the strength of either side. During the war the normally recalcitrant French workers had put aside their grievances so as not to hinder the war effort. After the Armistice, with peace negotiations underway at Versailles organized labor groups prepared to assert themselves in the post-war settlement. At a CGT meeting in April 1919, Jouhaux and Merrheim agreed to a general work stoppage for an eight-hour workweek. Train workers’ unions agreed to join the proposed strike, which would effectively cripple transportation across the nation.⁵⁵² Under Jouhaux’s wartime leadership France’s largest trade union had complied with government directives. Now, labor unified to demand reduced work hours to solve the demobilization crisis and ameliorate working-class conditions.

The *Sûreté Générale* produced a number of concerned notes in the lead-up to the strike. Agents kept track of CGT leaders as they rallied workers across the nation.⁵⁵³ On 16 April Jouhaux estimated that two million people would stop work in Paris on May Day unless their demands were met. Meanwhile miners and transport workers agreed to join the movement.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Bulletin Confidentiel, 15 Apr., 1919, 2.

⁵⁵² Note P/1365 C.G.T. Le Premier Mai 1919, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 7 April 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-2.

⁵⁵³ Note P/1512 C.G.T. Le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 16 April 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-2.

⁵⁵⁴ Note P/1498 C.G.T. Le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 16 April 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-3.

Some train workers' syndicates demanded the nationalization of the railroads.⁵⁵⁵ One agent reported that the radical construction workers of Paris were "all in" on the strike.⁵⁵⁶ Nearly every syndicate came out for the strike, including electricians, newspaper printers, and theater workers.⁵⁵⁷

Intelligence agents were gravely concerned about the radical elements within the strike. While Jouhaux and the moderate CGT would ostensibly lead the movement, radical elements openly plotted to use the general strike as a catalyst for revolution. At an anarchist meeting Armand Hubert, radical secretary of the *syndicat parisien des Terrasiers*, proclaimed, "things are becoming heated and only a little agitation is necessary to raise the proletariat against the capitalists."⁵⁵⁸ A *Sûreté Générale* agent reported that some train workers called for a "social revolution against the bourgeoisie." A secretary of the *Fédération des Métaux* (FM) said that they, "have nothing to offer except revolution."⁵⁵⁹ Meanwhile the FM produced propaganda pamphlets saying, "it is time for the working class to show its power and invincibility... Workers must escape from economic slavery."⁵⁶⁰

One week before May Day, The National Assembly passed a law guaranteeing an eight-hour workday and a forty-eight hour workweek, delivering a massive blow to the general strike

⁵⁵⁵ Note Chez les Cheminots Le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 18 April 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-2.

⁵⁵⁶ Note, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 19 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273.

⁵⁵⁷ Note Le Premier Mai chez les électriciens, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 22 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13273. Note Le Premier Mai dans les spectacles, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 22 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13273.

⁵⁵⁸ Note P/L704 Le Premier Mai Chez les Anarchistes, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13273.

⁵⁵⁹ Undated Report titled "1er Mai", *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, Undated report, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273 1-2.

⁵⁶⁰ Note P/1703 a reprinted pamphlet Fédération des Métaux et Similaires de France année 1, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-2.

movement.⁵⁶¹ While the new law eliminated the *raison d'être* of the strike, it did not kill the movement outright. Jouhaux and the moderates in the CGT announced that workers would still demonstrate for a twenty-four hour period as a show of strength.⁵⁶² Moderates lauded the government's actions but still aimed to use May Day to demand a place at the bargaining table in the post-war government.

On 29 April the government banned all 1 May demonstrations within Paris.⁵⁶³ Soldiers moved into the capital with orders to maintain order. On 30 April, *Sûreté Générale* agents met with Paris police forces to coordinate a response to potential strikes while simultaneously suspending all police activity unrelated to May Day demonstrations.⁵⁶⁴ The *loi des huit heures* was the carrot Parliament hoped would satiate workers until the economy recovered. The ban on demonstrations alongside increased police and military presence was the stick the forces of order employed to ward off a popular anti-government movement.

These dual measures, which outraged radical workers, proved effective in quelling the movement. Jouhaux struck a cautious note and let each syndicate decide whether they should demonstrate. Parisian syndicates quickly held emergency meetings in the leadup to May Day. Most syndicates decided to disobey the government directive, although the movement was fraying. Socialists and anarchists lambasted the CGT's hesitancy and worried that, "the coming demonstrations would be marked by violence."⁵⁶⁵ In response to the far-left's calls for revolution

⁵⁶¹ Chambre des députés de France, "Journal officiel de la République française, Débats parlementaires," 6 Aug., 1919.

⁵⁶² Note P/1630 C.G.T. le Premier Mai, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1.

⁵⁶³ Report P/1760, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 28 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Note Le Premier Mai À La Préfecture de Police, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273.

⁵⁶⁵ Undated Report titled "1er Mai", *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, Undated, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 3-4.

the CGT opposed political action and called for a workers-only movement.⁵⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Clemenceau's heavy-handed approach scared a number of agitators. One *Sûreté Générale* agent reported that some prominent anarchists decided not to protest, fearing that they would be identified and arrested.⁵⁶⁷ The *Syndicat Paris-Nord* struck a day early and was quickly suppressed by soldiers, showcasing government power and willingness to suppress subversives.⁵⁶⁸

On May Day violent clashes erupted across Paris. A group of protestors tried to pass a barricade on the *rue Royale* and clashed with firefighters who charged them twice. The *garde républicaine* fired on demonstrators assaulting the barricades at *Place de la République*. Cavalry defended the *Place de l'Opéra* from workers attempting to enter from multiple fronts. Cavalry charged protestors throwing stones at them at the Pont Alexandre. Police shot and killed Charles Lorne, an eighteen year-old electrician. Dozens were injured.⁵⁶⁹ Yet, the *Sûreté Générale* reported that, "in general the population is calm and the demonstrators are disappointed."⁵⁷⁰ Hardly any disturbances occurred in the provinces. One agent noted that outside Paris calm reigned, "despite Bolshevik propaganda corrupting millions of workers."⁵⁷¹

In the aftermath of May Day, Paris police agents regularly eavesdropped on public conversations to gauge the public mood. One agent reported that most of the conversations he heard condemned the demonstrators as radicals and Bolsheviks. Another report described opinion as divided with some workers blaming Clemenceau for unprovoked attacks against

⁵⁶⁶ Report titled "Résumé," *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1-2.

⁵⁶⁷ Note P/1745 Le Premier Mai Chez les Anarchistes, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13273.

⁵⁶⁸ Note Chez les Cheminots du Nord, F7 13273, , *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 30 Apr., 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales) F7 13273.

⁵⁶⁹ *L'Humanité*, 7 May, 1919.

⁵⁷⁰ Sûreté Rapport Liste des Incident: Manifestations du 1er Mai 1919 à Paris, *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273.

⁵⁷¹ Report titled "Résumé," *Comité de Sûreté Générale*, 1919, (Paris: Archives Nationales), F7 13273, 1.

strikers while other workers criticized agitators for instigating trouble. By 9 May most conversations shifted to unemployment and the economy.⁵⁷² One agent concluded that, “aside from some rare incidents in the 10th, 12th and 15th regions revolutionary propaganda does not seem to find any support. In Paris the elements of disorder tried to exploit 1 May for their own purposes but failed to lead the great majority of the working population.”⁵⁷³

Many Paris syndicalists, anarchists and socialists balked at this post-war settlement. In their view their quiescence during the war merited greater concessions from business owners, if not their outright removal from positions of authority. After the CGT’s pitiful May Day showing, the metallurgists, largely under the leadership of the FM, decided to lead their own strike in June. On 4 June the organization produced a list of demands including: a higher minimum wage, retirement at fifty years, three weeks paid leave and a British-style five and a half-day workweek, known as the *semaine anglaise*.⁵⁷⁴ Within days a quarter of a million workers struck across the Seine region. However, this initial show of strength proved to be the height of a movement that was half the size of the May-June 1917 strikes. Moreover, metallurgists made up 160,000 of the roughly 250,000 strikers as few workers outside the metals industry joined the movement.⁵⁷⁵

Paris police meticulously monitored every syndicate, factory and high-profile figure involved in the strike.⁵⁷⁶ Agents believed that since the FM led the strike it was inherently political and thus more susceptible to revolutionary action. A general report concluded that while

⁵⁷² *Physionomie de Paris, Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), 2 May, 1919, 1-2. 4 May, 1919 2. 9 May, 1919, 2. BA 1588.

⁵⁷³ *Bulletin Confidentiel*, 15 May, 1919, 2.

⁵⁷⁴ *Le Temps*, 4 Jun., 1919, 2.

⁵⁷⁵ Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution: Paris 1914-1919*, (Paris: L’Université de Besançon, 1995), 15a-15c, 377.

⁵⁷⁶ See *Grèves de Mai à Juillet renseignements d’Ordre Général, Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), 1919, BA 1407.

most workers struck for higher wages, “certain radical leaders are trying to shift the movement away from solely economic issues and towards revolution.”⁵⁷⁷ However, police maintained their *sang froid* as they watched and waited for the movement to fizzle out. Two weeks passed and the strike did not grow within the Seine region, nor did it spread to the provinces. Ten days of constant communication between the prefect and the military governor of Paris ended when it became apparent the strikers were not a threat.⁵⁷⁸ Transport workers voted to return to work on 15 June, dealing a devastating blow to the movement.⁵⁷⁹ By the end of June the strike ended when most metalworkers returned to work.⁵⁸⁰ Unlike the strike in Glasgow, the Parisian movement ended quietly. Intelligence services retained a heightened state of awareness as they tracked down Bolshevik threats, but for the time France seemed secure.

That November Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and the right-wing *Bloc National* triumphed over the divided left as voters supported the conservatives in their attempt to turn back the clock to pre-war times.⁵⁸¹ By 1920, Clemenceau had more legislative support than during the war. France’s ‘No. 1 cop,’ demanded order and opposed workers’ movements. On May Day 1920 a strike by railway workers convinced CGT leaders to call a general strike.⁵⁸² *L’Humanité* claimed that within a week, half a million workers marched in support of the movement. Again, the movement did not grow or expand into the provinces. On 22 May the CGT instructed

⁵⁷⁷ Grèves de Mai à Juillet renseignements d’Ordre Général: rapports généraux de la Préfecture de police, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), 1919, BA 1407, 1-6.

⁵⁷⁸ Grèves de Mai à Juillet renseignements d’Ordre Général: Mesures d’Ordre: Correspondence avec le gouvernement militaire, *Préfecture de police de Paris*, (Paris: Préfecture de police de Paris), 1919, BA 1407, 1-6.

⁵⁷⁹ *Le Temps*, 16 Jun., 1919, 2.

⁵⁸⁰ *Le Temps*, 29 Jun., 1919, 2.

⁵⁸¹ Millerand’s coalition government was composed of the *Fédération républicaine*, *Indépendants* and *Conservateurs*, *Parti Républicain Démocratique*, and the *Radicaux Indépendants*. For the election results, see “Élections Législatives 1919.” France Politique, accessed 12 Nov., 2015 <http://www.france-politique.fr/elections-legislatives-1919.htm>.

⁵⁸² *La Croix*, 1 May, 1920.

workers to return to their posts.⁵⁸³ Even after the limited action in May, the FM leadership and associated radicals continued to believe that France was on the cusp of a Russian-style revolution. On 8 June the FM voted for a general strike for a forty-hour workweek and a 25 percent pay raise. A week passed as the FM waited for the CGT to rejoin them. To the FM's disappointment, on 17 June the CGT passed a resolution against joining the strike.⁵⁸⁴ Radical labor leaders again failed to create a nation-wide, revolutionary socialist movement. Meanwhile, intelligence agencies effectively countered agitators using practices developed during the war to isolate subversives from the majority of workers.

However, fear of Bolshevick subversion continued, fueled by changes on the far left. In December 1920, following the Third International, the *Parti communiste français* (PCF) broke from the socialist *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*. Immediately intelligence agencies focused intently on the PCF. Agents uncovered Russian government funding for the party and its newspaper *L'Humanité*, providing Moscow a direct propaganda arm in France. In 1923-1924 intelligence agents caught Russian spies operating within the country, spreading communist propaganda.⁵⁸⁵ The communist threat justified the continuation and expansion of the surveillance mechanisms used during the Great War, into the postwar period.

Conclusion

Political leaders in both Britain and France created their surveillance states piecemeal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to counter military threats (namely German). During

⁵⁸³ *L'Humanité*, 5 May, 1920 and *L'Humanité*, 1 May, 1920.

⁵⁸⁴ Jean-Louis Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution*, 294-7, 298.

⁵⁸⁵ Olivier Forcade, *La République Secrète: Histoire des services spéciaux français de 1918 à 1939*. (Paris : Nouveau Monde, 2008), 352, 353, 356-357, 364-365, 380-381.

the war these agencies' prerogatives rapidly shifted from foreign sabotage to homegrown radicalism. After the German threat subsided politicians and intelligence leaders feared radical labor leaders might attempt a communist revolution. The CWC and FM's mass worker movements after the war worried officials who feared that radical elements would coopt workers' concerns and use them to overthrow the government. Even though these initial post-war movements failed, the widespread discontent that motivated workers' agitation remained. Each country's citizens were weary of long hours, low pay, and unprecedented government interference in their lives and workplaces. Uncertainty regarding the post-war economy, demobilization and unemployment further disheartened workers. Leaders understood that their countries needed many years to recover from the devastation of war. As long as there was widespread domestic discontent the threat of radical anti-government action remained, justifying the continuation of the surveillance state.

After the war the British and French domestic intelligence agencies reorganized as their leaders engaged in internal politicking against their rivals. Agencies gained and lost specific prerogatives as the most severe wartime restrictions lapsed. Bureaus developed techniques to counter subversives using new technologies such as radio signals. Developed for war, the British and French surveillance states continued to operate after it ended. The rise of fascism in the 1930s, World War II and the Cold War ensured that mass domestic surveillance remained a permanent fixture of British and French society.

Conclusion

World War I was a crucial period for the development of surveillance states in Britain and France. Before the war, citizens in both countries feared the power of secretive, repressive agencies. Unlike authoritarian Germany, elected officials in Britain and France were more beholden to popular opinion. Politicians developed organizations piece-meal to deal with specific threats. The advent of global war provided politicians with the justification they needed to massively expand the size and powers of surveillance organizations. As the war continued, governments shifted their attention from counterespionage to monitoring their own radical workers, which they viewed as a greater threat to the war effort. Even after the war ended, intelligence leaders and politicians, motivated by fear of communist revolution after 1917, maintained and expanded the surveillance state.

Protracted conflict between the British and French governments and their citizens created the first large-scale surveillance states for modern democracies. As an autocratic nation Germany already practiced mass surveillance and frequent punishment of dissent. However, late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Britain and France were liberal democratic systems, whose political leaders, chosen by voters, faced the unique challenge of justifying incredible expansions of state power into their citizens' daily lives. Moreover, these two nations developed similar organizations, techniques, and ideas of countersubversion in tandem due to their interconnected history.

Rivalry and occasional cooperation over centuries shaped British and French governmental practices and society. France developed a *cabinet noir* and secret police services to monitor the king's political enemies. The infamous *lettres de cachet* gave the French monarchs

unlimited power to silence anyone even suspected of subversive plotting. The English public regarded French enlightened despotism with disdain; when English citizens referred to 'the natural rights of Englishmen,' they defined them in opposition to France. In response, many French writers and philosophers looked to England as a model for a free society. During the French Revolution, some revolutionary leaders hoped to create a constitutional monarchy without centralized government surveillance as in Britain. Yet, the Revolution radicalized, ending monarchy entirely. Ironically as it moved to the radical left, the revolutionary government became more authoritarian, creating expansive and rational surveillance organizations that would have been the envy of French kings. Simultaneously, with war between the two powers, the British government expanded its own surveillance techniques to counter French influences.

During the nineteenth century ideas crisscrossed the Channel as both countries adapted to industrialization and modernization. France vacillated between republicanism, constitutional monarchy and empire as successive governments rose and fell until the consolidation of the Third Republic. Popular movements for suffrage in Britain, inspired by the French Revolution, opposed the conservative aristocracy. The upper and middle classes in both nations worried about and attempted to control the working class.

However, in 1848 in France and by the late nineteenth century in Britain most adult males gained the vote. Working-class voters, in spite of elite fears, supported moderate candidates. Thus, by the late nineteenth-century elite fears of workers abated. However, terrorist plots and German ascendancy created new threats: on the one side, radical movements advocating violent overthrow of the system; on the other, the possible infiltration of German spies. Because Britain and France were democratic systems politicians had to justify increased surveillance and expanded power to counter new threats. Thus, politicians slowly created and

developed disconnected bureaucracies operating within set prerogatives that were large enough to counter threats yet non-intrusive enough to avoid angering the public.

When war broke out in 1914, after the initial months, expectations for a quick defeat receded and politicians understood that defeating Germany required the total mobilization of society. The British and French parliaments passed laws giving their executive branches of government sweeping powers to surveil citizens and curtail civil liberties, which the public accepted as necessary wartime measures. Even though these two governments had the legal power to silence dissent, decades of experimentation taught politicians that they had to be careful when using these powers. The more intrusive the state was the more pushback it could expect from their citizenry. Thus, surveillance and punishment narrowed in on potential subversives. Moreover, the government worked with those supportive of the war efforts to fight internal threats.

By 1915 the war became a bloody stalemate. A lack of shells weakened the Allied armies at a crucial moment and convinced politicians in Britain and France that cooperation with private business and organized labor was not enough to win the war. Only government-led rationalization of armaments production could ensure the necessary mass production of equipment required to fight the German war machine. David Lloyd George of the Ministry of Munitions in Britain and Albert Thomas of the Ministry of Armaments in France enforced broad dilution of skills programs to expand the labor pool. Meanwhile intelligence officials surveilled and silenced radical labor leaders in the Clyde Workers' Committee and the *Fédération des Métaux* who opposed such measures.

Fighting in northeastern France exacted a brutal toll. Hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers were killed or injured on the warfront. People on the homefronts suffered loss of loved

ones, long work hours, shortages and a rapidly rising cost of living. Public frustrations resulting in the spontaneous 1915 Rent Strikes in Glasgow caught British intelligence leaders off-guard. Worried about future mass movements, intelligence agencies coordinated with police to arrest, censor and harass dissenters. The threat of German invasion deterred French workers from striking due to their own patriotic desire to support the war effort and fear that halting work would turn the public against them. However, French leaders understood that the *Union Sacrée* could not last forever. People on the homefront faced ever increasing labor demands, shortages of basic goods and rising expenses, straining workers' willingness to support the government. Initially Britain and France directed surveillance to counter German espionage. However, even though Germany boasted the best spy network in the world before the war, its agents accomplished very little once fighting began. Meanwhile anti-government agitators slowed arms production during the pivotal Shell Crisis.

In the end, internal discontent and radical agitation proved a far greater threat than foreign infiltration. During 1916, the bloodiest year of the war, some 700,000 soldiers were killed at Verdun and 1.1 million died in the Battle of the Somme. By 1917 public support of the war faltered. In May 1917 both countries experienced mass workers' movements. A mutiny by French troops refusing what they viewed as one more senseless order to go over the top, accompanied by the outbreak of a wave of spontaneous strikes caught French government officials off-guard. The 1917 strikes nearly paralyzed the Allied war effort. According to David Lloyd George, "industrial unrest spelt a graver menace to our endurance and ultimate victory than even the military might of Germany."⁵⁸⁶ During the war intelligence agencies primarily curtailed dissent from their own populations, not foreign threats. Moreover, the Bolshevik

⁵⁸⁶ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol. 2*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1933), 1141.

Revolution in the Fall of 1917 increased authorities' alarm, revealing the potential power of radicalized workers and providing a model and inspiration for radicals to overthrow the government. Both Prime Ministers viewed anything short of victory as a disaster. Even as public discontent declined in 1918 both the British and French states expanded surveillance and punishment of dissent in a final push to win the war.

The failure of Germany's final offensive along with the arrival of American troops pushed Germany to the brink. The outbreak of German naval mutinies and worker revolts threatened to overthrow the government and led German leaders to seek an Armistice, which was signed 11 November 1918. The fighting had ended. The Allies were victorious. Politicians in London and Paris deliberated what to do with the expanded surveillance systems developed during the war.

Even with the end of fighting, the Russian Revolution convinced intelligence leaders and politicians that the surveillance state was more necessary than ever. The Bolshevik overthrow of the government and establishment of soviets alarmed democratic-capitalist leaders even as they inspired homegrown radicals. Moreover, communist Russia sponsored revolutionary movements across Europe. Politicians understood that it would take years for their countries to recover economically from the war. Until then, radicals could appeal to beleaguered British and French workers to follow Russia's example for social revolution.

In 1919 both countries experienced large-scale workers' movements led by radicals. The Clyde Workers' Committee and the *Fédération des Métaux* leadership wanted to take advantage of widespread discontent and led mass strikes. The British responded first with police violence, then with the military occupation of Glasgow. The French police and military dispersed protestors in Paris. Intelligence leaders and politicians feared further action and maintained their

surveillance states. The threat of a Russian-style revolution justified the retention and expansion of these wartime agencies and practices after the war's end. Thus, ad hoc organizations created to address specific threats became permanent institutions. These organizations grew, evolved and began the process of centralization during the 1920s and 1930s. World War II and the Cold War further expanded and centralized intelligence into a few agencies with unprecedented presence and power. Through a gradual process of consolidation and expansion Britain and France became the first modern democratic governments to develop large-scale, sophisticated surveillance institutions that focused on domestic threats, attempted to control public opinion and limit dissent.

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