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The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism

Julia Eichenberg
and
John Paul Newman

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Also by Julia Eichenberg

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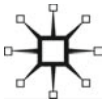

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Allgemeiner Verband der Kriegs- und Arbeitsopfer Deutschlands – a left-wing veteran association in Germany, representing war wounded and those injured in work accidents

American Legion (Legion) – American veteran organization founded in 1919 in Paris by members of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Bund der Kriegsverletzten, Witwen und Waisen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik – Association of War Invalids, Widows and Orphans of the Czechoslovak Republic.

CIAMAC – Conférence Internationale des Associations de Mutilés et Anciens Combattants (International Conference of Disabled Soldiers and Ex-Servicemen).

CIP – Comité International Permanent (the 'Permanent International Committee').

Czechoslovak legions – Czechoslovak volunteer divisions which fought with the Allies during the First World War.

disarmament – the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations.

doughboys – Informal name given to US Army infantry personnel in the First World War.

Družiny československých válečných poškozenců – Association of Czechoslovak War Victims.

FIDAC – Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants (the Inter-Allied Ex-Servicemen Federation).

FPZOO – Federacja Polskich Związek Obrońców Ojczyzny (Federation of Polish Associations of defenders of the '*Ojczyzna*' (Fatherland)).

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization, an international organization with non-profit objectives established by and consisting of private individuals rather than governments.

Jungdo – abbreviation for Jungdeutscher Orden, a German youth paramilitary group established in 1920.

Office national des mutilés – The National Office for the Disabled, office in France in charge of the rehabilitation, placement and assistance of wounded and sick soldiers. The Office national des pupilles de la Nation was in charge of orphaned children adopted in a bureaucratic sense by the nation.

Der Rote Frontkämpferbund – 'The Red Veterans' Federation', the paramilitary organization of the German Communist Party

Savez dobrovoljaca – 'The Union of Volunteers', ex-Serviceman's association based in Yugoslavia whose members had served in South Slav volunteer divisions during the Great War

Sudetendeutsche Partei – Sudeten-German Party.

Udruženje reservnih oficira i ratnika – The Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors, Yugoslav Ex-Servicemen and Patriotic Society active in internationalist organizations during the inter-war period.

UF – Union Francaise, The French Veterans' Union.

VFW – Veterans of Foreign Wars, an American veteran organization founded in 1899 by veterans of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars.

ZIWRP – Związek Inwalidów Wojennich Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (The Association of Polish War Invalids).

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Introduction: The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism

Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman

The Great War created a new social group throughout Europe: ex-servicemen. Mass conscription and total warfare led to a vast number of combatants returning from the various battlefields. Unlike previous wars and times – and in what turned out to be a long-term legacy of the First World War – veterans emerged as a distinct group, defined by a construction of war commemoration and identity, as well as by their legal demands and rights.

The destructive capacity of the First World War and the divisive legacies the conflict left throughout Europe and the wider world are not in doubt. Quite rightly, historians have written at great length about the twentieth century's 'seminal catastrophe' (George F. Keenan) and the tense 'twenty year armistice' (Ferdinand Foch) left in its wake. But, in charting a course directly from the First World War to the Second World War, historians are at risk of neglecting equally important 'positive' legacies left by the conflict. Zara Steiner's ground-breaking history of Europe during the first decade after the First World War highlights the positive steps taken towards reconstruction and reconciliation across the continent after the war.[1] Steiner's work also takes into account the radical departures in international relations embodied in institutions such as the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization. Similarly, and often following her lead, other recent works have emphasized the contingency of the inter-war period, showing that there were many and various developments after the First World War, not all destructive, and not all leading to renewed conflict.[2] The international veterans' movement was one of them.

More specifically concerned with consequences of the war is, for example, the recently published biography of French activist and *ancien combattant* René Cassin by Antoine Prost and Jay Winter; a work which

eschews prevailing periodization to show how an influential individual was shaped by pre-war and wartime experiences, and in turn went on to shape inter-war and post-1945 history.[3] In this way, Prost and Winter are able to escape hermetically sealed time-frames and teleological conclusions about the inevitability of the Second World War.[4]

This volume aims to contribute to this growing body of research. It sheds light on the positive and constructive steps taken towards international co-operation and reconciliation. More specifically, it is concerned with analysing the important role played by veterans of the First World War in creating this long-lasting international culture of peace and reconciliation. One of the most important legacies of the war was the creation of a mass, transnational cohort of men bound by the fact that they had all served as soldiers during the war. With very few exceptions, veterans were a new phenomenon within their own nation states and on the international stage. As the first example of 'total war' (Chickering, Förster), the First World War involved the mass participation of populations across the continent; conscription, 'citizen armies' and the *Levèe en Masse* meant that men from various backgrounds and of differing social status served together in uniform. Their status as veterans after 1918 raised a number of new questions about the presence of ex-soldiers in society, their entitlement in terms of welfare (pensions, disability benefits, etc.) and their role in politics and on the international stage. On this last point, once again, historians of fascism and the European right in the inter-war period have dwelt at length on the enduring camaraderie and the 'trenchocracy' (to use a term allegedly introduced by Mussolini himself) which led ex-servicemen – most notably in Italy and Germany – to duplicate the military forms and practices they had experienced during 1914–1918. But there is another, equally important, side to this story: the many men who returned from war committed not to its continuation but to its cessation, and not to a radical nationalist agenda but to one of internationalism. Whereas it could be argued that the 'dead-end' of right-wing veterans' militancy arrived with the end of the Second World War, this volume will show that the traditions of internationalism, of commitment to international institutions as the foundations of a peaceful community of nation states, and of a universalist welfare programme, were highly influential in the inter-war period and went on to survive into the post-1945 world.

So far, veterans have been examined primarily in a national framework. At first sight, veterans might seem like the paradigm of a national interest group. They volunteered – or were conscripted – to fight for their nation state, they experienced war within the lines of their national

armies. The experience of fighting and extreme violence could reinforce the demarcation of members of other nations, specifically those of the enemies. At the same time, the common experience of soldiers fighting for their home country enforced a sense of a specific national identity. Looking closer at the life of soldiers' and former soldiers, however, it is obvious that the phenomenon of the veterans' movement goes beyond national borders. Ute Frevert pointed out that the Great War constituted a powerful transnational experience, a period of multinational contacts and transfers.[5] This experience naturally influenced veterans' lives and mind-sets in the post-war period, and left them feeling a bond that distinguished them from 'civilians' – for better or for worse. This was especially true with regard to the many ex-servicemen, who, due to the massive changes to European political landscapes and borders after 1918, did not necessarily share their war experience with ex-servicemen of the same national citizenship.

War experiences were manifold, and they could not be separated according to the post-1918 national borders. By the same token, the interests of veterans were of transnational relevance. Ex-soldiers of all states struggled with problems of demobilization, that is to say, with problems of re-integration into the labour markets and claiming social benefits. Throughout the world, they were concerned with their medical, material and social needs, and also with their political lobbying power. Beyond national boundaries, veterans expanded their activities to an international level, seeking contacts and collaboration with their fellow ex-servicemen. Returning home to a civilian life and trying to re-adapt after the long absence pointed out to many of them that they had more in common with ex-servicemen of other states than with the broader civilian population; this was even more true in the case of disabled veterans. Just as being a soldier of the Great War was a transnational experience, so was being a veteran of the Great War. This transnational experience provided the basis for the emergence of an international veterans' movement, embodied not only, but predominantly by the inter-Allied veterans' organization FIDAC and the international veterans and war victims' organization CIAMAC.

Therefore, this volume will explore veterans and veterans' transnational activism at an international level. Veterans' internationalism distinguishes two different, sometimes intertwined, spheres. On the one hand, connections between the former Allied powers became highly influential, because they controlled international relations – this also shaped the emergence of veteran internationalism. This aspect of veteran internationalism focused on the former war alliances as the foundation for future collaboration

between states and between veterans. Accordingly, Allied veterans sought to maintain their links and were involved in an inter-Allied transnational network to promote a peaceful political international system, relying on the existing treaties. In societies that were victorious and helped make the peace, veterans are often considered less likely to engage in political violence. But veterans' internationalism could also transcend these war alliances. Many ex-soldiers from different countries all over the world believed that stable peace could only be achieved through reconciliation with former enemies. Thus, a significant number of veterans' organizations followed a more international approach to achieve a lasting peace and to promote a political international system which regulated non-armed state conflicts.[6]

In the reading and usage of transnationalism, the editors embrace the suggestion of Patricia Clavin to represent the transnational community as a honeycomb, in which the respective national group forms a larger unity with its own identity.[7] The coherence of this volume is structured accordingly: each chapter deals with an individual national case study, but follows the same key questions with regard to their respective engagement in international activities. While the veterans' meetings may be described as international encounters, the network and the identities formed are truly transnational, constructing their own aims and dynamics via communication processes and personal encounters. In this understanding, transnational history does not claim to compete, but to give a new perspective to the history of international relations.[8]

International veterans' associations – how they form and how they function

A network of contacts developed from the collaboration of First World War veterans in international ex-servicemen's associations to form a new transnational infrastructure, in particular the *Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants* (FIDAC) and the *Conférence Internationale des Associations de Mutilés et Anciens Combattants* (CIAMAC). Annual meetings, lively correspondence and personal contacts created a transnational community. Even ex-combatants who fought each other only a short time ago now cultivated a joint commemoration of the dead and engaged in pursuing common interests.

Initiated by the mostly pacifist French ex-servicemen, FIDAC was founded in 1920 as an assembly of veterans who had served the armed forces of the Allies. FIDAC wanted to provide a forum for an inter-Allied commemoration of war and the dead, to organize inter-Allied assemblies

and thereby conserve an inter-Allied comradeship of ex-servicemen.[9] Membership was restricted to veterans of the Allied forces. This, among other reasons, set the need for the foundation of a second organization.

CIAMAC aimed to unite all ex-servicemen and war invalids of the Great War, including the former enemies: Germany, Austria and Bulgaria. Again, the idea of founding the organization was initiated by French veterans' associations. Both the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the League of Nations supported the co-operation of ex-servicemen, intending to take advantage of its network, in awareness that the associations of invalids and ex-servicemen seem to provide an effective way to campaign the ideas of both organizations. 'They count more than 10 million members, are highly organized and hold a periodic press, which is read by all their members with the utmost attention.'[10]

Both FIDAC and CIAMAC stated as their principal aims 'the protection of material and moral interests of war victims and former combatants'. The material interests meant welfare and supply, the moral interest referred to an active engagement against war.[11] The majority of FIDAC members eventually decided to join CIAMAC (with the notable exception of the British Legion), but despite this and their frequent collaboration the two organizations remained fundamentally distinct in their world-view. While CIAMAC envisaged international reconciliation on a level that eventually would lead to appeasement, FIDAC was based on a belief in the continuity of wartime alliances into peacetime. To pursue their principal aims, to fight the case of First World War veterans, they were, however, ready to collaborate. Their shared past motivated the ex-servicemen to unite in transnational organizations to fight a common battle: against the threat of a new upcoming war. Not just in spite of, but in fact because of being ex-servicemen, they thought of themselves as morally able, responsible and justified to step up for peace. Not surprisingly, CIAMAC, with its programmatic reconciliation with former non-Allies and the proximity to the League of Nations, was the most pacifistic. But even FIDAC, with its continuity of wartime alliances, stated disarmament and arbitration in international and bi-national conflicts as one of its major policies. By supporting new international politics, based on conflict resolution, their activities for the League of Nations and their international collaboration, the veterans qualify as a 'proactive' peace movement.[12]

The aim of the transnational veterans' movement to support demands for disarmament, peaceful conflict solutions and pacifism provided a dilemma for most of the participating former combatants. Veterans chose a 'non-dogmatic concept of pacifism' that denied militarism and

supported any form of peace-building and peace-keeping policy, but allowed defence.[13] In doing so, ex-servicemen often found themselves in direct opposition to the more nationalized and militarized policies of their own national governments. The assembled veterans' organizations tried to use their moral capital as war victims and ex-servicemen. By taking a firm stand on the subject of war, the veterans opposed their respective national slants for the benefit of the common interest of a transnational ex-servicemen's community. Besides the actual reduction of weapons and arms, the former combatants demanded a demilitarization of thoughts and the elimination of prejudices and hate among nations, and the moral disarmament of European societies.[14]

In addition to their fight against a new war, veterans continued fighting to solve the tragic heritage of the previous one. International contacts provided an opportunity to bundle their interests and demands for pensions and medical care and to strengthen their position at home by exchanging knowledge and strategies with their peers. As early as 1921, invalids' organizations from France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Austria and Poland addressed the joint wish for international meetings and turned to the ILO for support.[15] They were trying to achieve international or, failing that, bi-lateral conventions on prostheses and pensions for war invalids. In a joint resolution they declared the setting up of international committees inquiring into questions of medical care and prostheses and the continuation of international meetings on a regular basis on the problems of war invalids.[16] They hoped the ILO could back up their demands for war invalids pensions, especially for those who lived beyond the borders of their native country. As their demands met the interests of the ILO, director Albert Thomas sponsored these beginnings of transnational exchange. Starting in 1922, the ILO issued a journal '*Mensuel d'information*' in French, English and German, dealing with central questions of invalids care. Furthermore, 1922 saw the first ILO-organized international conference on the topic. Among ten experts present, six had been commissioned by the veterans' organizations, among them René Cassin and Henri Pichot. A following conference, in 1923, featuring representatives of a vast number of veterans' organizations (including Australia, South Africa and Canada), focused on the re-integration of invalids into working life.[17] These conferences were the first step to the foundation of CIAMAC.

From the late 1920s on, both FIDAC and CIAMAC not only dedicated a large part of their journals to articles on pensions and welfare, but began to compare the living standards in the respective member countries systematically. This marks the change from passive comparison to

following a decisive strategy to use shared information as a capital to better promote demands on the national level. Articles and comparative tables show the retrieval and processing of information offered to be used in national contexts. Information and numbers were usually provided by the national veterans' movements, but also taken from official governmental statements and sometimes implemented by ILO and LoN statistics.[18] Over the years FIDAC and CIAMAC professionalized their comparisons, converted currencies, adapted the same criteria for welfare and included results of questionnaires collected from their members. Also, the retrieved data were more and more put into perspective and discussed as a core interest of the veterans' movement: as General Marco Nikiforov (Bulgaria) pointed out:

> Our aim is to facilitate the understanding of legislation within the individual countries by comparison. This way countless organizations in different countries are able to combine their demands. Should these demands be granted, we will be able to achieve respective legislation in those countries. These are the means to achieve an pan-European legislation. War victims have repeatedly postulated their claims with reference to similar benefits in other countries. This method has proven to be successful.[19]

With regard to the material interests and the welfare debate, this volume wants to discuss the extent to which the social group of veterans was defined by their interaction with the state, legislation and welfare demands. With regard to their engagement at an international level, it asks how important material issues were compared to more ideological agendas. Finally, it will address the question of what impact the membership in FIDAC and CIAMAC had on the national veterans' movements.

Internationalism vs brutalization

Until recently historiography of First World War veterans has been dominated by the 'brutalization thesis', based on the works of George Mosse. The impact of the experience of war and violence on the brutalization and radicalization of soldiers has perhaps been overemphasized, meaning that studies of the veteran movement have been more likely to stress the importance of the nation and to reject national and ethnic minorities and other nationalities more generally.[20] The experience of war, as much of the existing historiography would have it, led to a constant affirmation of wartime values, less peaceful and less

democratic than those of other people. But one need not presume that this was the only path taken by veterans after the First World War. This book wants to emphasize an alternative line, stating that it was exactly the experience of violence that led millions of men to engage in international collaboration and to promote peace.[21] The role played by veterans in the creation, promotion and support of international organizations after 1918 is just as important as the role they played in the rise of radical right and authoritarian movements. Through veteran organizations, many ex-servicemen made sincere attempts to maintain a peaceful internationalism in the inter-war period. Moreover, many veterans fully supported the work of international organizations such as the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization; organizations which they saw as instrumental in creating a peaceable system of international relations after 1918.

There is, however, an important caveat to this challenge of the 'brutalization' thesis in the study of the veteran's movement. The authors are aware of the extent to which Italian Fascism and German National Socialism used the legacy of the First World War and war veterans as a means of legitimizing their authority. This was especially true in the latter part of the 1930s, when the National Socialist regime in Germany presented itself as the champion of veterans' welfare. Adolf Hitler's vocal support for the veteran cause meant that many ex-soldiers, including those in inter-Allied countries, began to look kindly on the regime in Germany as a country that valued its former soldiers and made adequate provision for them. Several historians have pointed out that Hitler's concern for former soldiers was merely a ploy through which he could improve his own credentials as the rightful heir of Germany's wartime legacy. It was been argued that, in this sense at least, the grievances and peaceful aspirations of the veterans' movement in the inter-war period were hijacked by Hitler and his radical right supporters for their own ends. The contributions to this volume reflect on this important attempt to undermine the internationalist and pacifist aspirations of the majority of veterans in inter-war Europe. Whilst it seems clear, in hindsight, that many leaders of the veteran movement were naïve in their dealings with Hitler and National Socialism, it is also clear that, especially within the inter-Allied veterans' movement, many former soldiers were not responsive to radical right ideology. In fact, most were able to distinguish between Hitler's support for veteran welfare and the more central tenets of Nazi ideology, embracing the former whilst rejecting the latter. Others deeply believed that war had to be avoided at all costs, leading them not only

to appeasement, but to close collaboration with the fascist movement. Indeed, in many cases it was the adherence of veterans to a 'culture of victory' that prevented radical right movements gaining a successful foothold in formerly Allied countries.

In this respect, the well-known failures of French and British fascists to mobilize former soldiers can be in part attributed to an entrenched culture of internationalism and pacifism amongst ex-soldiers in these countries. It is also the case, as this volume will show, that minor strains of fascism in Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia were unable to displace veterans' commitment to internationalism and to the preservation of transnational inter-Allied networks.

There is another advantage to this approach. Mosse's brutalization thesis also encourages the notion of a hermetically sealed inter-war period that begins and ends with the world wars. We suggest that the ideas of social welfare, internationalism and pacifism, which informed the veterans' movement in the 1920s and 1930s reach beyond the historiographical watersheds of 1918, 1933 and 1939. The book will show that veterans' activism drew upon pre-1914 notions of socially progressive legislation and pacifism, both intellectually and through personal contacts. By the same token, the authors do not consider either 1933 or 1939 as evidence of the total failure of the veterans' causes. This transnational collaboration prepared the foundations for much of the post-1945 international order. Essentially, this volume calls for a shift in perspective, away from that of the inter-war period as one with a definite and clearly defined beginning – 1918 – and end – 1939.

The contributions stress the contingency of the inter-war period. It will show the importance both of activism and internationalism, which survived from the pre-1914 period into the inter-war period, and the traditions of veteran internationalism and activism, which survived the Second World War.

Generational and social impact

A related concern of this work is the question of how far these men can be analysed as a single generational cohort, how far they defined themselves as such a cohort and how far they shared a common experience and perspective on internationalism and pacifism after 1918. Again, the generational approach serves to undermine the notion that the inter-war period is simply the story of how Europe went from one war directly into another. Many of the men who were at the vanguard of the veterans' movement during the inter-war period started to become

active in the pre-war period. In many cases, the attitudes and opinions of veterans were based on pre-war socialist and international circles. It is one of the questions of this volume to explore the extent to which the international veteran movement of the inter-war period in some ways was a re-iteration of these pre-war currents. Or did veterans instead pursue these ideas more vigorously due to their experiences during the First World War? Secondly, the volume discusses the dynamics of these attitudes during the inter-war period: did veterans become more conciliatory, more conservative or more radical as they aged? And, finally, what happened to these men after 1945?

We reject the notion that the outbreak of the Second World War should be seen as the ultimate failure of internationalism in the inter-war period, and also reject the idea that international relations in 1945 were a *tabula rasa*. Instead, the respective chapters explore the continuities between the internationalism of the inter-war period, the establishment of renewed veteran activism after 1945 and the expanding influence of international organization, such as the United Nations and the Human rights movement.

This edited volume, therefore, focuses on international collaboration between ex-servicemen of the First World War, the development of international networks and, eventually, of certain transnational identities emerging among the veterans. So far, the international activities of national veterans' movements have been mentioned within national case studies, but mostly in passing and from a national angle. However, the two biggest veterans associations of the inter-war period, FIDAC and CIAMAC, are well worth a closer look. At the same time, the national level provides an important balance for the international network. National case studies show the expectations and hopes the national movements projected on the collaboration – and discuss in how far the peaceful and international rhetoric was all words or the indication of a transnational civil movement. Within this volume, specialists of the respective national veterans' movements engage with the entanglement in international collaboration, thus contributing both to a better understanding of this important transnational movement and the national veterans' movements.

To analyse the movement it is important to consider scale and structure of national veteran movements and the extent of their involvement in international movements such as CIAMAC and FIDAC. Information on the relative sizes of veteran organizations throughout the world help determine in which parts of the world veteran activism was more prominent, and the contributors consider reasons for the appeal (or lack

thereof) of veteran activism and internationalism in their case study. In terms of numbers, obviously some veteran movements (especially in France) will dwarf others. Whilst these conclusions are not entirely novel, little is known about the size and support of veteran activism in other parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe. This volume draws out important comparative points between well-researched and documented movements and those that are less well-known, aiming to focus primarily on those active within the international movement, but also putting these into perspective within the broader national veterans' movements.

In addition to data on numbers of men involved during the inter-war period, the contributors were also encouraged to consider the extent to which the veteran movements, at both national and international levels, constitute merely collaboration between elite groups or whether they are examples of grass roots activism. The demands of total war called for governments to mobilize all sections of society, and mass participation in national armies was the norm. However, in many cases, veteran activism after 1918 was on a much smaller scale than this, and in many cases ex-servicemen returned to pre-war lives apparently unconcerned with the issues and agendas raised by their former comrades in FIDAC and CIAMAC. This work, then, considers the social structure of national and international veterans' organizations. It will explore the extent to which they enjoyed popular or mass support in some countries but not others. Furthermore, the contributions consider whether veteran activism rose and fell during the inter-war period, and, if so, when, and for what reasons.

Cultures of victory and defeat

Veterans' internationalism offers an excellent opportunity to study the nature of cultures of victory and cultures of defeat, and the differences between them. Veterans in countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary and Italy participated in, and helped form, 'cultures of defeat', a concept introduced by Wolfgang Schivelbusch that has been widely accepted as an analytical tool in recent discussions of the period.[22] By the same token, we argue, ex-servicemen on the Allied side felt connected by what John Horne has called 'cultures of victory'.[23] In veterans' organizations and associations throughout Europe in the inter-war period, ex-servicemen from formerly Allied countries sought meaning from their wartime sacrifice by celebrating their role in the Allied victory. Unlike the culture of defeat, which often went hand in hand with revisionism, this

culture of victory called for the preservation of the post-war order, and rather than seeking new battles and opponents, ex-servicemen from Allied countries often hoped that their transnational associations and organizations would prevent war from recurring. Although clearly led by larger veteran movements in France and Great Britain, this culture of victory was in fact a pan-European, even a global phenomenon. Veteran movements in Eastern Europe, for example, readily embraced notions of an inter-Allied culture of victory and of a lasting peace presided over by former soldiers. Ex-servicemen from Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia were enthusiastic participants in FIDAC and sent and received delegates from other inter-Allied countries throughout the inter-war period. The Little Entente, the diplomatic alliance comprising Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, also organized parades and festivities whose intention was to celebrate and commemorate the inter-Allied victory.

Allied veterans were intent on preserving a sense of the Allied victory and, in the successor states of Eastern Europe that were founded or confirmed by that victory (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia), with validating the veterans' role in nation building. In international terms, the 'culture of victory' favoured the transfer of the commemorative and monumental practices of Britain and France to the victorious successor states of Eastern Europe. In this sense, the Little Entente was a cultural as well as a political phenomenon. It also favoured the emergence of an inter-Allied veteran internationalism rooted in this victory culture and embodied by FIDAC.

A distinctive ideology of veteran pacifism and a common action to prevent future conflict was evident by the second half of the 1920s. It was accompanied by the elevation of ex-servicemen's moral and material claims on their own societies to a more universal plane and by the sharing of practical information on the pursuit of these pragmatic goals. This form of veteran internationalism was especially manifest in CIAMAC. This body became the unofficial ex-servicemen's organization of the League of Nations.

In addition to the decimation of the weapons and armies, the former combatants called for a social and moral demobilization, for the demilitarizing of thoughts and the demobilization of hatred against other nations. Everyday influences such as education and literature were considered as influential factors to this cultural demobilization and thereby to international relations in a broader sense. Invalid associations in particular questioned the dominant military enthusiasm. The belief that only social and moral demobilization could guarantee a lasting peace

prevailed all over Europe. Companies which produced arms should be shut down; the arms trade controlled by strict international juries. In addition, moral disarmament should include the suppression of all influences in public life, with a specific focus on schools and youth organizations.

Within a 'European Moment' (John Horne) of history, when European societies entered a calmer phase of cultural demobilization after the immediate and tense post-war period, veterans expanded their collaboration beyond national borders.[24] Following their two most important interests, peace and welfare, the ex-servicemen built up an international network to exchange knowledge and ideas. The 'culture of victory' was thus transformed by a process of cultural demobilization into one of attempted reconciliation and peace, in which it established an uncertain and contested juncture with ex-servicemen's organizations from the defeated powers. In this sense, the project departs from more traditional approaches to the study of inter-war Europe, which have separated the continent into categories of the 'defeated' and the 'victorious', or have divided the space into discrete geographical regions. One of the aims of the book is to show the way in which cultures of victory and reconciliation amongst ex-servicemen attempted to eschew these divisions. Certainly, in terms of geography, the project will show that these cultures did not exclude any part of formerly belligerent Europe, and that 'fraternal links' between veterans branched out across the continent. Reconciliation between former enemies was a more complicated and protracted process; nevertheless this volume will explore the ever more numerous examples of co-operation and collaboration between inter-Allied veterans and those formerly of the Central Powers. This volume will explore these transformations in the memory of war and the identity of veterans in the inter-war period throughout Europe and the wider world.

Notes

1. Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. See, e.g., Robert Gerwarth (ed.), *Twisted Paths. Europe 1914–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
3. Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *René Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
4. Jay Winter, 'Veterans, Human rights, and the Transformation of European Democracy', in Elizabeth Kier and Ronald R. Krebs (eds.), *In War's Wake: International Conflict and the Fate of Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 121–138.

5. Ute Frevert, 'Europeanizing German History', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 36 (2005), pp. 9–31, esp. pp. 13–15.
6. Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy. British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921–1939* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005); Antoine Prost, *Les anciens combattants et la société française, 1914–1939* (3 Vols.) (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977); John Paul Newman, *Embattled Kingdom. South Slav Veterans in Yugoslavia, 1918–1945* (forthcoming) Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge. Polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre internationalen Kontakte, 1918–1939* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).
7. Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', in *Contemporary European History* 14/4 (2005), pp. 421–439.
8. Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte', in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52/7 (2004), pp. 626–645.
9. This identity of being an Allied veteran was central to FIDAC. To strengthen it, Colonel Fred Abbot, then FIDAC president, designed a flag in 1928, combining the flags of all member states around the inscription "FIDAC PAX" in the centre, as depicted on the cover of this volume. Additionally, a 'Journée inter-alliée" was introduced to commemorate the foundation of FIDAC.
10. Correspondence in the League of Nations Archives (LoN): Registry 40 / 23984 / 17591: Invalides de Guerre. Dossier concernant la collaboration du Secrétariat à une Conférence des Représentants des Associations de mutilés de Guerre et d'anciens combattants et avec les différentes associations d'anciens combattants. Letter October 7th 1922; from Albert Thomas to the General Secretary of the League of Nations (Eric Drummond). See Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge*, pp. 105–111.
11. For principal aims, see CIAMAC, Annual Assembly, September 9th to 12th, 1937. Report 3 'Pensions, Medical Care', General Marco Nikiforov (Bulgarien), 'Die Entwicklung der Renten für Kriegopfer im Jahre 1936–37', pp. 91–140, citation on p. 91. For material and moral interests, see Julia Eichenberg, 'Suspicious Pacifists', in Michael S. Neiberg and Jennifer D. Keene (eds.), *Finding Common Ground. New Directions in First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 113–138.
12. Robert D. Benford and Frank O. Taylor, 'Peace Movements', in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, Conflict* (vol. 2) (London: Academic Press, 1999), pp. 771–786, particularly p. 773.
13. Wolfram Wette, 'Einleitung: Probleme des Pazifismus in der Zwischenkriegszeit', in Karl Holl and Wolfram Wette, *Pazifismus in der Weimarer Republik: Beiträge zur historischen Friedensforschung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1981), pp. 9–25, particularly pp. 13 and 15.
14. John Horne (ed.), 'Demobilisations culturelles après la Grande Guerre', in *Dossier de la revue 14–18 Aujourd'hui,* no. 5 (2002), pp. 43–53.
15. Leon Viala, *Les relations internationales entre les associations des mutilés de guerre et d'anciens combattantes* (Paris: Cahiers de l'Union Fédérale des Associations françaises des victimes de la guerre et anciens combattants, 1930). p. 18; SdN, R. 1595 General 1919–1927; Registry 40 / 17591 / 17591: Pension de Guerre letter dated November 21st. 1921.
16. Viala, *Les relations internationales*, p. 20.

17. Viala, *Les relations internationales*, p. 21.
18. Relying on numbers taken from: Bulletin de l'Office National des Mutilés, April 1927, Chambre des Députés n. 624, Rapport Nogaro, p. 7; Reichsarbeitsblatt [mit Zahlen für 1928 aber ohne weitere Quellenangaben, J. E.]; 10th annual report of the Ministry of Pensions, 1927, Annual report of the Veterans Bureau for 1927. Ibid.
19. CIAMAC, Annual Assembly, 1937. Report 3, General Marco Nikiforov (Bulgarien), 'Die Entwicklung der Renten für Kriegopfer im Jahre 1936–37', pp. 91–140, pp. 92–93.
20. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918–1925* (New York: Enigma, 2005).
21. Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
22. On 'cultures of defeat' see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: on National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (London: Granta, 2004); John Horne, 'Defeat and Memory in Modern History', in Jenny Macleod (ed.), *Defeat and Memory. Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11–29.
23. Leaning on Schivelbusch's concept, the term 'cultures of victory' was introduced by John Horne. It constituted a major point of reference of the workshop 'Veterans' Internationalism and the Cultures of Victory and Peace, 1918–1933', Trinity College Dublin, 23rd/24th October 2009. See conclusions.
24. John Horne, 'The European Moment Between the Two World Wars (1924–1933)', in Madelon de Keizer and Sophie Tates (eds.), *Moderniteit. Modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914–1940* (Vijftiende jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, cop., 2004), pp. 223–240.

Part I
Cultures of Victory

2

René Cassin and the Victory of French Citizen-Soldiers

Antoine Prost

French soldiers were citizens of a Republic. Len Smith made this point well in his work on the mutinies of 1917, and I fully agree with him.[1] However, it seems to me that soldiers' citizenship is still much more evident when considering their behaviour after combat than during it. The French system of pensions, benefits and assistance has been framed by the idea that wounded soldiers were citizens. This idea was obvious to them, and it became obvious to politicians too.

I first wish to discuss some of the terminology I will use in this chapter. I will not use the term 'veteran', for it does not exactly translate the French term '*ancien combattant*'. I will also use occasionally the French term '*mutilé*', as a generic word for wounded, sick and disabled soldiers. Another term requires explanation: '*Office*' in this paper refers to particular French official organizations in charge of war victims. The *Office national des mutilés* was in charge of the rehabilitation, placement and assistance of wounded and sick soldiers. The *Office national des pupilles de la Nation* was in charge of orphaned children adopted in a bureaucratic sense by the nation. When their fathers were killed or were unable to care for them, and only if the family asked for state protection, they could become '*pupilles*'. '*Pupille*' is not at all equivalent to 'war orphan', because the families of many war orphans did not ask for this kind of assistance, and because some *pupilles* were not orphans, but only sons or daughters of men unable to care for them. Hence, I will use the term *pupille* for this particular category of soldiers' children.

Any discussion of this matter must start with the foundational Pension Act of 31 March 1919. Its importance is well known. Before this law, pensions and benefits were regulated by a law dating from 1831 designed to serve the needs of regular soldiers. Politicians on all sides were convinced it was absurd to apply this law to the victims of this huge industrial war

which injured millions of soldiers starting in August 1914. Pensions were too meagre, and access to them was limited by so many absurd conditions, that many wounded or disabled men had no right to any kind of disability benefit. For instance, injuries following exposure to gas warfare were not on the list of those conditions enabling a soldier to obtain a pension. Everybody agreed it was necessary to pass a new law, which would give the victims of this new kind of warfare legitimate access to pensions for their wounds and at a level sufficient for them to have enough money to live on, should they be unable to work.

The appropriate Commission of the Chamber of Deputies launched its work on a new Pension Act in 1915, and tabled its report in the Chamber at the beginning of 1917. Its provisions were discussed at the end of November in that year. It contained some innovative measures. The pensions were proportional to the degree of disability, according to a scale ranging from 5 to 100 per cent. The most important element of the new law was the 'presumption of origin'. Behind this legal terminology, a crucial issue was at stake: whether the wounded had to prove his wounds had been caused by the war or not? According to the law of 1831, he had to do so. This was at times very difficult and always very time-consuming, for the military authorities demanded documents and certificates of many kinds, even when the wound was evidently due to shrapnel or bullets. The proposal of 1917 was much simpler and favourable to the wounded: any wounded or sick soldier, tubercular for instance, was deemed to be a victim of the war unless the army proved the contrary. If he had been ill before wearing a uniform, the argument went, the army should not have enrolled him in the first place.

Then, two main issues remained in discussion. The first was the level at which to set a pension for 100 per cent war-related disability. This discussion focused on the level of subsistence, for a full pension was expected to be equal to this minimum. The second problem was to decide if privates would get the same benefits as officers. Many *anciens combattants* would answer yes, according to deeply-rooted French sentiments about equality. But such a measure would have been very expensive, and it was difficult to dispense entirely with the military hierarchy in a military Pension Act.

The wounded discussed these issues, but they had a third point, which was not yet at the core of the politicians' discussion. For the wounded, it was a matter of principle: what was the principle upon which the law was founded? Was it a form of social assistance law or not? They strongly opposed any kind of law which would consider them as poor

men needing help. They wanted justice and reparations, not charity. A first general convention of the associations of *mutilés* was held in the Grand Palais in Paris on 11 November 1917. The claim they all made, unanimously, was for justice, not charity. One of the leaders, an army doctor, put it this way:

> It is said that you have a right when you can impose it and enforce it in court. But this right, you have not. [...] The first question is to find out whether you have a right, yes or no. Currently, there is no right, it is assistance. You'll have to know whether the war wounded, who saved the country, will constantly have to be grateful for the generosity of the government, or whether he might, on the contrary, appear before the nation as an actual creditor! (Loud applause). [...] When a man returns mutilated and he shed his blood, [...] this gives him a right, not to a handout, but to reparation of the damage he has endured (repeated applause).[2]

The author of this talk, Charles Valentino, was appointed Director of the Pensions Office in 1920, after the creation of the Ministry of Pensions. His argument was accepted by the convention, which approved a statement claiming an explicit acknowledgment of the right of repair, rather than help or assistance. It appointed delegates to meet members of the Commission of Pensions of the Chamber of Deputies. As the discussion in the Chamber was to begin a few days later, these delegates were immediately received. They perfectly knew the subject and were able to present good arguments. Deputies understood that the *mutilés* were demanding their rights, and they wrote down the principle of this right of compensation in the Pension Act's first article:

> The Republic, grateful to those who ensured the salvation of the country, proclaims and determines, in accordance with the provisions of this Act, the right to reparation: 1. To the militaries of army and navy affected by infirmities resulting from the war, 2. to widows, orphans and the dependents of those who died for France.

Behind this juridical controversy, lays the crucial issue of the relationship between soldiers and the state, and the definition of citizenship. To be a citizen does not mean only to vote in general and local elections, as Frenchmen had done since 1848. This was a point which must be stressed, since the French position was different from that of soldiers in Britain and Germany. Being a French citizen is being part of the

sovereign. The state is not a kind of sacred entity, dominating society and defining the rights of its members; it is only the collective of citizens whose rights come first and are inalienable, nothing more. The rights of the state are those citizens gave it, not the opposite. Between the state and the citizens, the relationship is a contract, a covenant, with reciprocal obligations. War pensions are, therefore, neither gifts nor charities. Wounded men do not have to thank the state, which through its pensions entitlements, is merely paying its debts. Wounded men are creditors, and even creditors of the first rank, privileged creditors. And they could ask special courts, the pension courts, to enforce the state to pay them a higher pension if what they got did not match their exact level of disability.

We can see the crucial importance of this point when considering some critical moments of French political history. It made the success of Clemenceau's well-known statement of 11 November 1918: 'They have rights upon us'. Three years later, when Briand came to the Chamber of Deputies, in January 1921, to present the government he led, he thought useful, perhaps necessary, to repeat this point. He said:

> We would like to confirm that we consider the maimed, widows, and parents of our soldiers and our dead as the first creditors of the nation.[3]

This statement was considered so important that it was quoted and repeated. The headlines of the following issue of the journal of the main union of *mutilés*, the Union Fédérale, read: *'Les premiers créanciers de la Nation'* (the first creditors of the nation). Under this title, René Cassin, then Professor of Law at the University of Lille, Vice-President of the UF, wrote a long article elaborating on the implications of this principle, which was at the heart of the entire French scheme of war pensions and benefits.

Such a stand was not always easy to maintain. The high level of inflation was striking the purchase power of pensions and *mutilés* rapidly claimed for higher pensions. As public opinion resented pensions given to soldiers who were in the army's offices during the war, some *mutilés* thought it would be easier to get higher pensions if they were to be given only to soldiers who had fought on the front line. The annual national convention of the UF discussed this point several times. Agreeing that this seemingly more efficient position – higher pensions for true *anciens combatants* only – would abandon the main principle of pensions as a right to reparation. The UF never changed its position on this issue and

maintain that if someone has suffered a prejudice, even in an office, reparation is needed.

This principle was at the core of the '*retraite du combattant*', the pension given from 1930 on by law to every soldier who had served more than three months in the combat zone. This pension was a compensation for sufferings and risks endured in the trenches and for time lost to all other pursuits. This system is still in effect, and de Gaulle provoked a kind of upheaval when he tried to suppress it in 1960. Although the level of this pension was very low, its symbolic value was so high that de Gaulle had to retreat.

Establishing in law the soldiers' right to compensation was the first victory of French citizen-soldiers after the war. However, there was a second victory, perhaps an even more interesting one, though it may not have been so evident at the time. In France, as in other belligerent nations, many voluntary associations emerged during the war to care for wounded and disabled soldiers: the Red Cross, or rather Red Crosses – there were three different Red Crosses in France – associations of many kinds, sometimes denominational, sometimes secular, American aid or benevolent societies, and so on. Wealthy people had open houses for recovering soldiers, for tubercular men, for orphans. Other people launched associations to help the wounded and *anciens combattants* to find adequate employment. All these charities were very useful, but some co-ordination was needed to avoid disorder, and some additional funding was needed too, for as the war was going on for weeks and months, it became difficult for sponsors of such private initiatives to give more and more money indefinitely.

This is the reason why the government created, in January 1916, the Office National des Mutilés et Réformés. At its beginning, it was part of the Ministry of Labour, and its executive board was made up of civil servants from three ministries: those of war, labour and home affairs. It was quite difficult to organize, from Paris, services in the countryside. With some help from the *préfets*, the Office National launched committees for each *département* to develop and co-ordinate the work of the local charities. At this time, there was no specific bureaucratic structure to deal with *mutilés* and *anciens combattants*: the Ministry of Pensions was not created until January 1920. For the Ministry of Finance, it was clear, practical and efficient to establish only two great lines of expenditure in its budget: pensions, directly paid by the Treasury, and all other expenditures, for which a global amount was given to the Office National. The office had to distribute this money to the diverse charities, the schools of re-education and so on, and to supervise how they would use these

funds. As its importance was growing, on the second of January 1918, a law gave it a more efficient status, with autonomous legal existence.

When Parliament decided, in 1917 (by a law of 27 July), that the nation would adopt the *pupilles*, it created, along the same pattern, another Office National to co-ordinate and support the associations for orphans and to supervise the education of the *pupilles*.[4] Many associations had been launched to care for war orphans, with some rivalries between the secular and lay groups and the catholic ones. The Office des Pupilles was controlled by the Minister of Public Instruction, who was the chair of its high council, but it was not an integral part of the ministry; it had its own legal personality. Offices were created in every *département*. In order to co-ordinate the many charities in this domain, delegates from the charities were involved at the local as well as at the national level. The executive board of the Office National was composed of civil servants, MPs and the heads of the most important charities.

These two offices were very similar. Both had a national level and branches in every *département*. Both were made up of a general or plenary assembly composed of MPs, high civil servants, highly competent persons and representatives of many kinds of associations, in particular, charities dealing with the re-education of the disabled, their placement and, in the Office des Pupilles, charities caring for orphans. Both offices had an executive committee, made up of the main delegates of each group. However, there was a difference: the general assembly of the Office des Mutilés was useless, and its annual meetings had no importance. The executive board, chaired by one of the most important politicians, a former minister, or a minister-to-be, such as Chéron, Queuille, Maginot or Lebrun, had all the power, and its decisions were not actually discussed by the general assembly. On the contrary, the general assembly of the Office des Pupilles met twice each year during several days, elected its vice-presidents, and then the executive board had to apply its decisions.

Associations of wounded soldiers, widows or *anciens combattants* had no part in these two offices. This was a matter of timing: the creation of both offices happened when associations of *mutilés* were just emerging. But they thought their exclusion was unacceptable. The offices were dealing with their affairs, and, as citizens, they demanded forcefully to join the offices. It was one of the claims of the Grand-Palais convention of 1917:

> That l'Office de perfectionnement des mutilés de la guerre, officially recognized, since it has its seat with the Ministry of Labour, should be predominantly composed of invalids, designated by the existing associations.[5]

Another motion demanded that in the departmental committees, a large number of wounded and disabled, chosen by the local *mutilés'* association, would be appointed by the prefects. Surprisingly, there was no mention of the Office des Pupilles at this time.

However, there was a difference of nature between the two offices. Giving the representatives of *mutilés* some seats in the Office des Mutilés seemed legitimate, and it was difficult to reject such a claim. The only question was to what extent and according to what standards they would take part in the office. For the Office des Pupilles, it was quite different. Associations of wounded men, even including wives and parents, were not directly in charge of educating the children of fallen or disabled soldiers.[6] Their right was questionable and was a subject of debate.

There was a second, more subtle but perhaps more important difference, owing to the juridical status of both offices. The Office des Pupilles had been created in 1917 by a law which had precisely detailed its structure and composition. Such was not the case for the Office des Mutilés. When the 1918 law framing its legal status was discussed by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, there were *mutilés'* departmental committees in most departments, with diverse elements in each of them. Defining their structure in law would have provoked many changes and complications, at a time when efficiency depended on stability. It was absurd to disturb recently launched committees which were facing the task of re-educating and finding jobs for thousands of wounded soldiers. An amendment proposing that the composition of the office be inscribed in law was discussed and turned down by the Senate,[7] so that the structure of the Office des Mutilés was left a matter of decree.[8] Hence, modifying the Office des Pupilles' structure needed another law, but modifying the governing structure of the Office des Mutilés needed only a decree, which was a much simpler process. These two considerations meant that the reform of the Office des Mutilés was much easier and faster than that of the Office des Pupilles.

The 1918 decree had authorized an Office des Mutilés made up of 60 persons, of whom six were wounded soldiers. In the departments, prefects were expected to choose representatives of local associations. One year later, another decree introduced into the office ten more delegates of associations of *mutilés*.[9] They immediately demanded a much larger representation: their claim was for parity with other members. The executive board, chaired by Henri Chéron, a senator and a former minister, discussed this proposal on May 1920, and Chéron suggested that half of the members of the departmental committees be elected by associations of *mutilés*, and half of the members of the national office

be wounded soldiers or wives elected by departmental committees. This proposal was approved by the General Assembly of the office on 10 June, and a decree signed on 14 October 1920 changed the membership of the office: it was now composed of 80 members, 40 of whom were representatives of associations of *mutilés*.

This reform was of the highest importance, because it created a very interesting precedent. It is the first example of a public organization, financed by public funds, jointly managed by the representatives of the state and those of the people it was set up to serve. There are, in France, in the field of social policy, several organizations which have adopted this precedent: social security is one. But the representation of people concerned by these organizations does not come directly from the voluntary associations. They do not directly appoint their delegates: they only decide who will be candidates, and then voters decide who is appointed. Delegates to the departmental committees were elected by an assembly in which each association had as many votes as did members, and delegates to the Office National were elected by departmental committees. Precisely the same procedure was used in 1945 to compose joint committees in industry: the trade unions did not appoint their representatives directly, they only had the monopoly on choosing the candidates, who were elected by the workers, either members of the unions or not. It is a typical French way of merging the strength of the voluntary associations with the legitimacy of universal suffrage. Undoubtedly, the Office National des Mutilés began this way.

The Office National des Pupilles did not follow exactly the same path. Changing its membership required a new law, which meant public debate. Delegates of the charities often belonged to what we now term 'the establishment' and had a powerful network of friends. They were not disposed to leave seats to delegates of wounded men and widows' associations: their charities were actually caring for war orphans, which was not the case with respect to the associations of *mutilés* and *anciens combattants*. They were on the inside and opposed the intrusion of less qualified newcomers. *Mutilés* had to fight for their places, with some support from the Office National des Mutilés. They fought, but had to compromise.

Their leader in this struggle was René Cassin. In 1920, then general secretary of the UF, he convinced the Minister of Public Instruction, Léon Bérard, to put into law provisions giving the *mutilés*' associations a larger part in the Office des Pupilles, as well as in its Offices Départementaux, and more seats than those of the charities.[10] The parliamentary process was quite long and it finally produced the law of 26 October 1922.

Veterans did not gain parity. *Mutilés*' delegates were a tiny minority: 18 out of 130 members. However, that minority took on a kind of leadership. *Mutilés*' delegates were always present, they were efficient and demanding, and they gave a decisive impulse to develop the office and its work for the *pupilles*. The first plenary assembly of the office in which they took part, on 29 June 1923, looked like a victory: their proposals were unanimously adopted, and Cassin was elected deputy chairman by a huge majority of voters.[11] Under his and the UF delegates' pressure, the assembly launched a large programme to give the status of '*pupille de la nation*' to all the war orphans whose families had not yet asked for help. The *mutilés*' delegation had given the Office des Pupilles a decisive impulse.

But Cassin went further than this. He took the discussion on the rights of war victims to an international level.[12] With the help of the International Labour Organization (ILO) he started to promote the foundation of an international veterans' movement during the early 1920s: CIAMAC.[13] Cassin's audacity in this project was to transcend all opposition that the war had created: just as he made no distinctions between disabled veterans, whether they had seen active combat or not, he was convinced that war victims, whether German, Polish, French or other nationality, had the same rights. For Cassin, this was a fundamental principal: rights were above states. FIDAC, which was founded immediately after the war, did not respect this principal, placing German and Austrian veterans under quarantine. Although Cassin never officially opposed FIDAC, he could not accept such exclusion. Instead, he believed that since the ex-enemies had participated in the same war, faced the same dangers and suffered the same injuries, they had the same rights.

CIAMAC's goal was to make national states recognize the rights of their citizens. The fact that veterans' representatives were acting on their own behalf, defending their own rights, not sent by national governments nor responsible towards them, was something Cassin took specific pride in. But he went further: to prevent a new war, it was necessary to set limits to state sovereignty by imposing respect of an international order. This was precisely the aim of the LoN. To make states respect the rights of the citizen-soldier and to make them respect international law was one and the same battle. A veteran himself, Cassin now became a soldier for another war: the one against war itself. Not all French veterans shared this attitude. But still, with time, Cassin's internationalist approach became the dominant point of view among French *anciens combattants* during the inter-war period.

This commitment led to an international career on a second platform: for a significant period, from 1924 to 1938, Cassin was also a member of the French delegation to the League of Nations (LoN) in Geneva, as the official representative of the ex-servicemen. He was a 'partisan' of the LoN. He deeply believed in international collaboration, and continued helping the young organization develop in every way.

The late 1920s constituted years of hope for the rise of international collaboration. CIAMAC was up and running, gaining impact by the minute. The years following 1925 saw the emergence of a pacifist movement among veterans on an international level and, specifically, the rising demand of a multilateral disarmament. Accordingly, the years between 1924 and 1928 were the heyday of Cassin's work for the LoN. Carried on a wave of optimism of the 1920s, he contributed his part to the development of the organization, always representing veterans to the LoN just as he represented the LoN to the veterans. By now, with three million members, the French veterans' movement had considerable weight within French civil society. Cassin served as their mouthpiece on an international level. At the same time, he was the advocate of the LoN among the ex-servicemen.

In Geneva, he was involved in organizing the disarmament conference. Preparations for this conference had started as early as 1925, and had steadily intensified during the late 1920s. As one of the French delegates, he dedicated his work specifically to pleading against the use of chemical and biological weapons against civilians. But Cassin never lost his real aim: the prohibition of war itself. The Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 went in the right direction, but even the signatories admitted they were impotent to oppose the centrifugal powers tearing apart not only Europe but the world. The sovereignty of states remained unbridled. Though he clearly saw this flaw of the LoN, Cassin worked as hard as he could, together with dozens of other men and women who thought like him, to find a way to put a ban on war and to reduce armaments, as these made war inevitable. In Cassin's eyes, the conference turned out to be a missed opportunity. Nationalists and arms dealers were much more numerous and better connected. Already in 1929, Cassin had assumed that 'the further one distanced oneself from the direct memory of the war, the more difficult it becomes to lay down the headstone for a new international regulation of armaments';[14] this was the proof.

The fact that the conference which opened in 1932 was checkmated came as a shock. It was but the first of a lot of bad news. In 1933, the Nazi takeover led to the arrest of a significant number of German veterans who until then had participated in CIAMAC meetings. Major Italian

organizations started boycotting the meetings. CIAMAC's *raison d'être* vanished rapidly. Cassin's dream of forming a massive, international pacifist movement of ex-servicemen, had turned out to be a chimera.

On the other hand, the LoN was incapable of guaranteeing and safeguarding an international system by its own means. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 opened a decade of disasters for the LoN, a sorry spectacle which Cassin witnessed at first hand. While he and his colleagues continued to work on disarmament and other matters of common concern, the LoN crumbled, gave proof of its impotence when faced with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and then collapsed after the Munich accords of 1938.

However, 1935 marked a significant change in Cassin's attitude towards the LoN. Until then, his engagement rested on the hope that security of sovereign states could be guaranteed by a collective security policy. From then on, he slowly but surely lost his faith in the LoN, since it still relied on the sovereignty of states. The deficits of this system to maintain peace became more and more obvious during the 1930s. Cassin, therefore, came to think of collective security as impossible and instead steered towards a new engagement for universal human rights. Still, however, Cassin continued pleading with the community of ex-servicemen to assemble in support of the LoN and to fight the fatalism leading to a new war, first in Africa, then in Europe. His articles became more vigilant, more aware of defending the LoN's authority and its existence as such. Still, in September 1938, referring to the impending dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Cassin wrote that if France and Great Britain were to give this victory to Hitler, it would be 'a new Sadowa' (referring to the French name for the Battle of Königgrätz, the decisive battle of the Austro-Prussian War), which would irrevocably soon lead to a general war. 'Just as 1866 had led Prussia to 1870, Munich 1938 would certainly lead to another war.' [15]

At the same time, his role within the UF changed. The UF had always been a big family for Cassin, and he continued to participate in most of the offices, administrative councils and federal committees. Cassin still had many friends in the movement. However, a rising number of militants thought it possible to appease the dictatorships by concessions, and did not understand why he insisted on criticizing this policy as directly leading to war. Pichot, as leader of the UF from 1934 until the outbreak of the war, remained convinced that discussions with the Italians and Germans were possible and necessary. The German ambassador to Paris, Otto Abetz, intensified his advances and convinced Pichot to meet Hitler in 1934, to accept being a part of the Franco–German

committee created in 1935 and to become Secretary General together with the president of the UNC, Jean Goy. Finally, he even contributed to the formation of the Comité International Permanent (CIP), whose only intention was to sideline CIAMAC and to break with the line of Cassin and Viala. Cassin held Pichot responsible for the current deadlock of the internationalist veterans' movement, and regarded this almost as a betrayal to their friendship. However, he saw himself incapable of openly criticizing Pichot and his political bedfellows, as this would have meant openly breaking with Pichot and, therefore, losing the UF, which was unanimously behind Pichot's lead. Instead, Cassin chose to distance himself and to focus his articles and contributions to commenting on international politics, where he was still regarded an expert. Despite his past, Cassin's status was diminished.

He had lots of reasons to be bitter. His 14 years at Geneva came to an end. Once again, he was named member of the French delegation in September 1938, and he spent the days of the Munich Crisis in Geneva. This experience had a deep impact on him. He did not resign from the French delegation, but refused to return to Geneva. The LoN was not only abandoned by the dictatorships, France and Great Britain did the same. From here on, it was dead. Most importantly, Cassin did not succeed in opening his comrades' eyes to the Nazi threat; on the contrary, his efforts in this regard accelerated his loss of influence. In 1940, Cassin's career ended in a double checkmate, internationally and nationally.

Paradoxically, when everything seemed lost, a new opportunity presented itself to Cassin. His departure for London in June 1940, and his collaboration with de Gaulle, reserved him a place in the front line of Free France. He became the representative of inter-Allied reunions, preparing the later war crime trials and the foundation of the United Nations. In this way, he took up the combat he had fought during the inter-war period to secure universal rights and peace.

One has to understand that, actually, these two battles were but one. The Shoah (Holocaust) and the world war share their common roots in the absolute sovereignty of the state, the Leviathan-state, as Cassin termed it. After Hitler, it became clear that it was necessary to imperatively limit the sovereignty of the state on two levels: firstly, in a national sense, to prevent violations of imprescriptible rights of their citizens; secondly, in an international sense, to prevent states from starting new wars. The battle began to make states recognize the rights of their citizens, as fought for by Cassin before the United Nations Human Rights Commission and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in

1948. The project of a whole generation, which traversed the two wars of the twentieth century, found its outcome here. In this regard, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the ultimate victory of citizen-soldiers.

Notes

1. Leonard Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
2. Compte-rendu du congrès, *Journal des mutilés et réformés,* 8 December 1917.
3. 20 January 1921, quoted by *La France mutilée,* 23 January 1921.
4. On this Office, see Olivier Faron, *Les enfants du deuil, orphelins et pupilles de la nation de la première guerre mondiale (1914–1941)* (Paris: Ed. de la Découverte & Syros, 2001).
5. *Journal des mutilés et réformés*, 17 November 1917.
6. In French, this referred not only to their physical capacity, but their moral capacity. Thus, not all wounded men were disabled: some were unable to act as parents.
7. De Lamarzelle's amendment, Senate, 6 July 1917, *Journal Officiel,* p. 709.
8. 26 February 1918.
9. 18 March 1919. Among these delegates were Cassin and Maginot.
10. In the Office National, 18 seats to the *mutilés*' associations, 12 to the charities; in the Offices Départementaux, 12 to 9.
11. 29 June 1923, proceedings of the Conseil supérieur des Pupilles, *Bulletin* de l'ONM, 1923.
12. I would like to thank Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman for their assistance in finalizing this last part of my chapter and for translating it into English.
13. This argument is developed in more detail in Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *René Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
14. Cassin on collective security for the LoN conference in London dealing with said subject, June 1935, p. 49 seq. (French National Archives, 382AP22)
15. Cahiers de l'Union Fédérale, August–September 1938.

3

'The Legion that Sailed but Never Went': The British Legion and the Munich Crisis of 1938

Niall Barr

The involvement of the British ex-service movement in the diplomatic prelude of the Second World War is now very much a forgotten episode. Despite the publicity which surrounded these efforts at the time, the British Legion's controversial policy of contact with German veterans in Nazi Germany has left little trace in historical research. However, the involvement of a voluntary group in diplomatic affairs and decisions during the inter-war period is rare indeed, and British Legion contacts with Nazi veterans and Nazi leaders might even be considered unique. In many respects, this late attempt by the British Legion to promote peace and avert war forms a sad coda to the bright hopes generated by the spirit of veterans' internationalism as generated in the 1920s. In that decade, many veterans' groups, including the Legion, had espoused the 'Brotherhood of the Trenches'. This was a bond which, it was believed, joined all the men who had shared the experience of hardship, suffering and loss in the trenches of the battle fronts. This credo connected with the comradeship said to be at the root of the Legion itself, and the wider, international concept was used to invoke unity amongst veterans across the barriers of nationality, politics and language, primarily through the auspices of FIDAC.

However, veterans' efforts to develop international understanding proved more difficult in reality, and this chapter focuses upon the dramatic, if minor and ultimately ineffectual, intervention made by the British Legion during the Munich crisis of 1938. This episode, when suitably placed within its historical context, illuminates the significance of the belief held by British veterans of the Great War that they could and should have an important role in promoting international peace.

Ultimately, these strongly held and sincere beliefs withered in the glare of Nazi Germany's manipulative propaganda machine and its cynical use of veterans' internationalism for its own, much darker, ends.

The British Legion emerged in 1921 as a unified organization out of a number of competing groups, and soon became the single focus for British veterans of the Great War. Ex-servicemen and women could join this unified voluntary movement, which possessed the multiple characteristics of a working man's club, a charitable institution, a trade union and a political pressure group.[1] Although the Legion only ever managed to harness the energies of a small minority of the millions of men who had served in the British Armed Forces during the Great War, it still represented an important new departure in British life, becoming a powerful and well loved British institution as it grew during the twenties and thirties. The Legion offered veterans a powerful sense of identity based upon comradeship and care for others as well as pride in past service and a strongly held belief that the Legion formed a group of men and women who had saved the country during the Great War.[2]

It is important to acknowledge that the main focus of the British Legion throughout the inter-war years remained firmly fixed upon domestic issues of concern to the vast majority of British veterans. These included a long running battle with the Ministry of Pensions for more equitable pension provision and better treatment for the long term disabled and ill. The Legion became a major fund-raiser and provider of support for disabled veterans, as well as for those men who became 'casualties' of the long-term trade depression which caused such intractable unemployment and poverty amongst British veterans. Not surprisingly, these issues absorbed the vast bulk of the Legion's attention and energies throughout the period.

However, the members of the British Legion also saw themselves as a body of men and women who had been specially marked out by their war service to play an important role in the promotion of international peace and harmony. It was felt that ex-servicemen, who had experienced the horrors of war at first hand, understood the importance of peace better than any other group. This belief was perhaps best summed up by an editorial in the *British Legion Journal* in 1927 which stated that:

> it is not the politicians who will bring peace on earth, nor the scientists, nor the professors! It is the simple soldiers - those who went through the muck and slime and the mud: beastliness of battle: who endured the shelling and the sniping, the toll and burden of the War.

> The hope of the world lies in the getting together of the men who fought, and there also, is the road to peace.[3]

In Britain this was connected with the argument that the public 'war fever', which had developed so suddenly in 1914, was the true cause of the war. The argument ran that if ex-servicemen could educate public opinion, and particularly the next generation, in the horrors of war, then the danger of war fever might be avoided in the future.

From its foundation, the Legion marked out a role in the promotion of international understanding. As part of the National Constructive Programme of 1921, the Legion declared that amongst its 'Imperial Objects' was its wish to develop contacts with fellow ex-servicemen 'throughout the Empire and our Allied countries'.[4] In combination with these developments, the Legion also pledged 'to support actively all direct efforts for peace' by working with the League of Nations (LoN), while at the same time ensuring that the 'defence of the Empire' was not neglected.[5]

Yet, although the Legion cultivated a dislike for future conflict, this did not diminish its pride in the exploits of the British Army during the Great War. Unlike other peace groups in Britain and many French veterans' associations, the Legion still maintained great enthusiasm for the military trappings of standards, parades, medals and other martial paraphernalia. Conscientious objectors were not allowed to join the Legion, even if they had served during the war and decided subsequently to renounce violence.[6] Legion opinion on this matter was no doubt based on the resentment felt by soldiers during the war towards objectors who had 'shirked' their duty to fight, but the continuance of these feelings into peacetime contrasted with the Legion's belief in peace and goodwill. The contradictions inherent in the Legion's stance did not worry Legion leaders; indeed, they argued that the Legion's position was of great benefit to the organizations which they supported, in particular the LoN. However, although the Legion was affiliated to the LoN Union, many other supporters of that organization saw the Legion as anathema. Just as the Legion saw pacifists as incompatible with the true objects of the LoN, many other supporters of the LoN saw the Legion as a militaristic organization totally unsuited to promoting the cause of peace. Thus, the Legion's foreign policy was essentially unilateral, stressing the role of ex-servicemen rather than providing a collective strategy incorporating all supporters of peace.

Instead of working closely with other like-minded British groups, the British Legion directed its energies towards FIDAC. While FIDAC was

influenced by French concerns to strengthen the Entente, the British Legion saw the organization as a useful way of comparing international practice on practical matters as well as forming 'a very strong factor towards ensuring peace in the world'.[7] However, although FIDAC held an annual conference which brought delegates from the member nations of France, Belgium, Britain, United States, Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Portugal, Czechoslovakia and Italy together, there remained many imperfections in Allied relations both during and after the war, and these were often continued within FIDAC itself. The personal relations between eighty FIDAC delegates were generally cordial but this could not ensure good relations between Allied ex-servicemen or their respective countries.

More importantly, veterans were not immune to the influence of national politics. Anglo-French relations were strained by the Ruhr crisis of 1923, and although the British Legion continued to work within FIDAC to promote the cause of peace, little constructive work was actually achieved.[8] Increasingly, the British Legion moved toward the opinion that real peace in Europe was only possible by involving the Germans and Austrians in international discussions.

Although Major Brunel Cohen first mooted the idea of making contact with ex-enemy ex-servicemen after the 1922 FIDAC Conference in New Orleans, it was General Sir Ian Hamilton, then the Metropolitan Area President, who first gave it widespread publicity. He travelled across Britain early in 1923, giving lectures to British Legion members on the theme 'The Friends of England'.[9] He first argued that the Legion should hold 'out the hand of camaraderie to the millions of ex-enemy war veterans'. Hamilton believed that such friendship between veterans who had fought one another would lead to rapid reconciliation between all the nations of Europe.[10] The idea may have been admirable, if over-optimistic, but its implementation was barbed with difficulties given French and Belgian attitudes towards Germany. Hamilton's views were given great publicity at the time, and provoked much controversy, but did not immediately alter either Legion or FIDAC policy.

However, by 1925, Hamilton's views were given the stamp of approval by the Legion's President, Earl Haig, when he remarked:

> Now, here is a question in which the Legion can exercise an enormous power for doing good, if we set to work to convince our Allies that the only way to secure the peace of the World is by agreement, by co-operation and by mutual goodwill. And what a proud boast it will be for the British Legion to say that it took a leading part in putting an end for all time to war between civilised nations![11]

It was believed that British ex-servicemen found it easier to let bygones be bygones, mainly because British territory had not been occupied during the war. While British civilians had enjoyed relative security, the same was not true for many other Allied nations; large areas of France and Belgium had been occupied and devastated, and their veterans found it much more difficult to extend the hand of friendship to German ex-servicemen. Thus, the Legion saw its role as a peace-maker, not only for British ex-servicemen but also for their Allied comrades. In reality, the Legion found it difficult to make practical progress towards this goal.

Many attempts were made by Legion representatives to change the 'I' in FIDAC from 'Interalliee' to 'International' and to promote meetings between ex-servicemen on an international basis, but progress was made only once the international situation had altered.[12] After the Locarno honeymoon and the Geneva protocol, relations between France and Germany improved sufficiently for ex-servicemen from the two countries to begin contact with each other. Thus, at the 1926 FIDAC Conference, a resolution moved by the British Legion was passed urging that an international conference should be held between members of FIDAC and ex-enemy organizations which were sincerely working for peace.

After an initial conference held in November 1926 under the auspices of CIAMAC, FIDAC eventually organized its own international conference in Luxembourg in July 1927. Although there was a great deal of excitement about the meeting, the results were decidedly disappointing. While the purpose of the meeting was meant to be a discussion on 'the best means of collaboration in the interests of world peace', the entire discussion stalled over the initial resolution, which included the phrase 'respect for existing treaties'.[13] The German delegates did not wish to include the phrase since this meant acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles. Ultimately, there was no constructive discussion on how ex-servicemen could promote peace and goodwill. Ex-servicemen were not immune to matters of national interest, and instead of veterans from all countries being able to discuss the war in a friendly manner, the conference demonstrated the depth of mistrust, suspicion and grievance which was still felt between ex-servicemen who had fought against each other.

A second international conference, held in 1928, did little to further relations between FIDAC members and the ex-enemy nations. After this disappointing meeting there was no more formal contact between FIDAC and ex-enemy organizations; FIDAC felt the next conference

should be organized by the Germans and Austrians, and not surprisingly they declined to do so.

Legion and FIDAC rhetoric had promised a utopian vision for international ex-service contacts but the reality was that ex-servicemen did not seem to have a special role to play in the promotion of peace. They were as vulnerable to propaganda and prejudice as any other body of civilians, and could not offer any realistic alternatives to the work of diplomats and governments. Nevertheless, Legion leaders continued to utilize the same type of rhetoric even after the disappointments of these conferences. In the May 1935 policy statement, published just before increased contact with German and Austrian ex-servicemen was made, it was stated that:

> The British Legion has never lost hope that steps may be taken towards bringing all ex-servicemen of the world together in some permanent organisation. It is the sincere hope of the Legion that it may be possible for all ex-servicemen, whatever side they fought on during the Great War, to meet together on the same basis with the sole object of promoting a better understanding and increasing peace and stability in the world.[14]

This was very similar to the type of rhetoric used by the Legion in the 1920s, but from 1935 onwards the actions carried out in its name were very different. Legion contact with ex-servicemen from former enemy countries increased, but it suffered from the same problems and limitations as previous attempts. And although the basis of Legion rhetoric remained unchanged, Legion attitudes underwent important alterations in the early thirties, which assisted its leaders in their independent approach to German ex-servicemen in 1935. During the 1920s, Legion leaders had been convinced of the need to maintain Allied ex-service fellowship in order to support the Entente and Anglo–French relations. In the early 1930s, the lavish FIDAC conferences came to be seen as expensive luxuries by the Legion, which was economizing in the face of Britain's trade depression, particularly when such conferences seemed to accomplish little other than volumes of resolutions and hot air.

Although the Legion's interest in FIDAC was fading, there were few other constructive avenues to further its programme for international ex-service co-operation. The Legion was now willing to make an approach to German and Austrian ex-servicemen independent of FIDAC, but there were still important obstacles to overcome. During the Weimar

Republic, the German ex-service groups were violently polarized along political lines, which made any approach by the Legion difficult.

However, when Hitler came to power in 1933, he quickly began to neutralize any potential source of opposition or dissent, which included the myriad ex-service organizations. While many of the existing veterans groups disappeared, those that remained were forced into avowedly national socialist organizations. Unfortunately, Legion leaders made the mistake of assuming that the new regime had forced the German ex-service movement to shed their political differences and join in one unified non-political organization. The truth was very different, a Foreign Office official warned in 1935 that: 'there exists in Germany no non-political non-party organisation of ex-servicemen corresponding to the British Legion. The bodies with which the British Legion will have to co-operate are purely Nazi organisations with the usual strong political bias.'[15] Unfortunately, the strongly national socialist nature of the new German ex-service organization was easily glossed over when Legion leaders realized that Hitler and other Nazi leaders used a similar language and rhetoric.

Hitler's use of the image of the Frontkämpfer – the front line soldier who had fought and suffered in the trenches, as opposed to the people in the rear who had 'stabbed the German Army in the back' – was a well established part of his rhetoric. At the same time, the images of martial splendour and military efficiency were integral to the Nazi party, with its mass rallies, parades and uniforms. The virtues claimed for the Nazi leaders from their war service were comradeship, plain speaking and a desire for peace, law and order. However, the Nazi use of Frontkämpfer rhetoric mirrored Legion leaders' statements on the same subject and provided forceful arguments that the new leaders of Germany were not only sincere and genuine in their desire for peace, but were especially suited to guide Germany and the world towards understanding and peace. The German cult of the Frontkämpfer, and its particular significance to Hitler and his colleagues, helps to explain why they endeavoured to develop good relations with British ex-servicemen. Not only did this give a great deal of good publicity in Germany by demonstrating that the German ex-serviceman was respected by his former opponents, but because the ex-service movement was very important to the German government, it was assumed that the British Legion was more representative of the British government than was the case. Equally, it helps to explain why Legion leaders became enthusiastic about contacts with the newly unified German ex-servicemen. Here were leaders of a former enemy nation, who seemed to speak the same language as themselves.

At the same time, the Legion Chairman of the day, Major Francis Fetherston-Godley, also wanted the Legion to develop a higher national profile which moved beyond mundane benevolent work and make progress on some of the more ambitious Legion aspirations. His desire to develop the Legion's foreign policy, with the aim of developing better relations between Britain and Germany can be seen not simply as a support for existing British foreign policy but as an attempt to direct it into different channels.

British Legion contact with Nazi ex-servicemen began in June 1935 with a high profile visit to Berlin by a British Legion delegation which attracted international attention. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement had just been signed and the Prince of Wales, the Legion Patron, had endorsed the visit in a highly publicized speech. Although the delegation was warned by the Foreign Office that Nazi propaganda was 'deliberate and carefully thought out and just as insidious and in some ways more dangerous than any communist propaganda' the entire visit was a major propaganda coup for the Germans.[16]

The cultivation of contacts also led to German visits to Britain, the first being to Brighton, where Nazi ex-servicemen saluted the memorial to German prisoners of war. The Legion's policy of developing friendship amongst allies and enemies alike gained momentum and reached a crescendo in 1937 when 1,700 excursions were made by Legion representatives all over Europe.[17]

However, it was during 1938 that the Legion's foreign policy reached a dramatic climax, when the Legion played a minor part in the negotiations during the Munich crisis. The crisis concerning Czechoslovakia developed after German troops annexed Austria in March 1938. Hitler then turned his attention to Czechoslovakia and the three million Sudeten Germans living on the border with Germany. With Austria annexed, Czechoslovakia was surrounded by Germany on three sides, which left it in a very dangerous strategic position. Hitler chose to exploit this situation in his demands that the territory occupied by the Sudeten Germans should be transferred to Germany. As might be expected these developments elicited no response or change of direction from the Legion, which argued that such matters were outside of its province or relations with German ex-servicemen. However, the Legion did become involved in the tension leading up to the Munich crisis because in August 1938 a party of legionnaires from London, led by General Sir Ian Hamilton, visited Germany.

Fetherston-Godley was warned by the Foreign Office before the party left that the international situation was serious. He was told that the

Germans 'intend to partition Czechoslovakia and as the Czechs will fight, it would mean universal conflagration'.[18] Fetherston-Godley was instructed to ensure that the Metropolitan party did not say anything 'likely to encourage the Germans in the view that they could do as they liked, as it might have disastrous repercussions at the moment'. Since German leaders had put so much emphasis on ex-service contacts, and obviously believed the Legion to be more representative of the British Government than was actually the case, it was important not to allow the trip to be manipulated by German propaganda, or for any encouragement to be given to the German regime. Fetherston-Godley thought that Hamilton 'could do so much good if you told them that while we are out for peace, we are not yet a decadent nation, and will not stand for aggression at any price'.[19]

When the Metropolitan Area party actually visited Germany, the German authorities pulled out all the stops on their considerable propaganda machine. Although this was an informal holiday trip, and not an official Legion delegation, it received more attention than any previous Legion visit. The leader of the party, Mr Kelley, Vice-Chairman of the Metropolitan Area, who had served as a private during the war, related that:

> The friendliness and generosity we received the whole time we were in Germany surpassed all our expectations. Officials, the military, and German leaders, laid themselves out to do us every possible honour, particularly myself as leader of the party. On many occasions and at various ceremonies, I was given privileges and paid honours which are usually only accorded to German people of the highest rank.[20]

Customs officers waved the party through barriers, lavish meals were laid on for the party at every opportunity and enthusiastic crowds met the legionnaires wherever they went. One of the more important honours was a salute given to the party at Godesberg. As the ship containing the Legion party sailed down the Rhine, the German flag was hauled down and a 21 gun salute was fired in their honour. But these compliments were not spontaneous gestures in honour of the British ex-servicemen. Although the *British Legion Journal* claimed that the reception of the party was a 'demonstration of Germany's respect and regard for Britain's ex-servicemen', the real reason was surely to cover up German intentions over Czechoslovakia.[21] A clue lay in General Sir Ian Hamilton's message of encouragement for Metropolitan Area members to participate in the trip. He said: 'For a statesman, a Diplomat, a Pressman, or indeed any

Figure 1 Munich Crisis. From the left: Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Neville Chamberlain, Neville Henderson, inspecting an SS-formation before Chamberlain's departure from Oberwiesenfeld, September 30th 1938. *Source*: Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-F051631-0475 / CC-BY-SA

civilian, a sail up the Rhine and walk down the Unter den Linden would just be an ordinary jaunt; for US it becomes an historic occasion.'[22]

By giving ordinary ex-servicemen the welcome and honours only normally paid to statesmen, the German authorities overwhelmed the Metropolitan party, which went back to Britain with glowing reports about Germany, its friendliness and desire for peace. While a statesman or diplomat might have been unmoved by what were artificial demonstrations, ordinary ex-servicemen were bound to be affected and carry back an artificial impression of Germany and its intentions.

The presence of General Sir Ian Hamilton gave the visit more prestige, but his behaviour did not give the Germans the impression desired by the Foreign Office. In Berlin, the legionnaires laid wreaths on the memorial for the German war dead in a ceremony attended by many prominent German leaders and a strong party of the Reichskriegerbund. Hamilton remarked that:

> it was a strange sight ... to see our little party drawn up facing a really magnificent Guard of two companies of Reinhard's ex-servicemen in

> uniform and with the Guards band on their flank. Our men, many of them disabled, looked smaller. After inspecting the German guard I asked permission to say a few words when I said I was specially enthused by their splendid bearing when I reflected that they had come as friends of England.[23]

The image of a small number of British ex-servicemen, in civilian clothes with empty sleeves, ranged against the martial splendour of a large body of uniformed German ex-servicemen is compelling. Hamilton's enthusiasm for the German guard because they were 'friends of England' was exactly the message which the German authorities wished the German crowd to receive. It was a message of image, not substance, of symbolism comparing Britain and Germany. The symbolism would not be lost on the German audience as it suggested that Britain was willing to keep quiet over the Czechoslovakian question. At the end of the tour Hamilton was whisked away to Berchtesgarden for a four-hour interview with Hitler who clearly thought he was dealing with the Legion National President. After staying overnight in the mountain hideaway, Hamilton returned to Britain, in Hitler's personal plane, where he told reporters that 'Hitler is strongly for peace. It is up to the rest of Europe to give up its pinpricks against Germany'.[24] The visit of the Metropolitan party and General Sir Ian Hamilton to Germany in August 1938 had exactly the opposite effect to that desired by the British Foreign Office, and may have given the German authorities and people a dangerous impression about British intentions during a critical period of tension.[25]

As the Munich crisis developed during September 1938, the British Legion became a willing pawn in the diplomatic manoeuvrings between the British and German Governments. Legion leaders were certainly kept informed of most of the diplomatic developments by the Foreign Office and, thus, the decisions which led to the development of the British Legion Volunteer Police Force for Czechoslovakia were not made in a vacuum. The intervention of the Legion President, General Sir Frederick Maurice, at the height of the crisis on 26 September, when he flew to Berlin to offer Hitler the services of 10,000 British Legion volunteers to supervise the transfer of territory from Czechoslovakia to Germany, was based on an idea which had taken time to develop.

The genesis of the Legion Police Force can be traced back to early September 1938, when Maurice wrote to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, pledging the Legion's support in any national emergency. The Legion was always anxious to be seen to be supporting the state, and ideas for a Legion Defence Force had already been aired. The letter

was indicative of the attitude of the Legion President and Chairman; as ex-servicemen and as officers, they felt the need to affirm their loyalty to the state and, in effect, to re-enlist in whatever capacity was required.[26] Sir Frederick's wish for the Legion to play an important part in a national emergency became father to the thought of a British Legion police force in Czechoslovakia.

The wider diplomatic situation is too complex to give in any detail here, but it is important to trace some of the developments which led to the Legion's involvement in the crisis. In August 1938, while the Metropolitan party was in Germany, Lord Runciman was despatched by the British Government to Prague with instructions to act as an independent mediator between the German and Czechoslovakian governments. He recommended, in his report to the Cabinet of 16 September, that the Sudeten Germans should be given the right of self-determination in areas where they were in the majority. This meant holding a plebiscite with an international force keeping order during the voting and the transfer of territory. On 21 September, a memorandum by the British General Staff estimated that up to nine infantry brigades or three divisions would be required, but the whole operation would be 'dependent on the goodwill and co-operation of the German and Czechoslovakian Governments'. At best, Britain could provide only one infantry division, and contingents would have to be found from other neutral countries.[27]

Given this situation, it is not surprising that the Anglo–French proposals of 19 September dispensed with the idea of a plebiscite and 'suggested' the cession of a larger area of territory to Germany – all areas with over 50 per cent German inhabitants. The British and French Governments forced these proposals on the Czech government by warning that if they were refused, Czechoslovakia would be left to fight alone. Chamberlain took these terms to Hitler at Godesberg (where only one month before the British Legion party had been so flattered by the 21 gun salute), but was shocked to find that Hitler's demands had been raised to all those areas occupied primarily by Germans – and all Czechs had to be evacuated by 28 September.[28] Hitler also suggested a plebiscite held by an international commission in certain disputed areas. It was after Chamberlain flew back from Germany on the 24 of September that the British Legion became involved in the chain of events.

The version given by Sir Frederick Maurice, to the assembled Police Force on 8 October 1938, is that Fetherston-Godley was approached by the Foreign Office on 24 September for 5,000 men 'at very short notice, to be followed by a further 5,000' for service as 'neutral observers on the

frontier of Czechoslovakia'. This was to 'prevent collisions' and ensure that 'any plans agreed upon by the respective Governments were carried out with a minimum of friction'.[29] It now seems clear that the plan was General Sir Frederick Maurice's own, and had been formulated with little or no prompting from the Foreign Office. He approached the Foreign Office on the 24 or 25 of September, offering the government the services of ten or twenty thousand Legion members to ensure that the transfer of territory suggested in the Anglo–French proposals would be supervised and carried out peacefully. That it was Maurice's own idea is mentioned variously by Halifax, Chamberlain and Hitler.[30] He had contacted the Foreign Office, who had informed Lord Halifax and eventually the Prime Minister. In a very short space of time, both had given their assent to Maurice's plan.

In examining the scheme, it becomes clear that Maurice's original intention was to facilitate the smooth operation of the British and French proposals of 19 September. The Legion plan mentions that:

> these disciplined ex-servicemen would be distributed throughout the area proposed by the British and French Governments ... they will be able above all to play an important part in countering untrue propaganda and protecting the population during the period preceding the transfer of the above territories.[31]

The importance of the idea, and the reason for its attractiveness to the British Government, was that the large areas to be transferred from Czechoslovakia to Germany would be in the hands of British neutral observers, and not given immediately to German troops. More importantly, it would take time to place the Legion Police Force in Czechoslovakia, and, with the British government desperately trying to avert war, any delay might give a valuable breathing space for diplomatic negotiations. The plan was considered and adopted very quickly, probably in a matter of hours during 25 September, and, thus, the suitability of the Legion for such an important endeavour, or the real implications of the plan were given scant attention.

But for Maurice and other Legion leaders, the Legion plan for a Volunteer Police Force in Czechoslovakia was the glorious culmination of the Legion's foreign policy. The last paragraph of the details handed to Hitler reveals the Legion's motivations in the matter:

> As ex-soldiers ourselves, we address ourselves to you, Herr Fuhrer, principally as head of the ex-servicemen of Germany, and request

> your agreement to what would alone enable us to put before the World a matchless example of co-operation between the ex-servicemen of both countries in the promotion of peace and important plans based thereon.[32]

Maurice was attempting to draw on the fund of goodwill which he believed had been built up by contact with German ex-servicemen. It is also significant that the plan addressed Hitler as an ex-service man, not as a statesman or diplomat. The whole idea fitted perfectly into the Legion's rhetoric and belief. Here was a chance for the plain speaking, goodwill and comradeship of the ex-service man and Frontkämpfer to bring about peace and understanding. This example of ex-servicemen's co-operation in a practical and important project would be broadcast to the world, finally proving the worth of ex-servicemen in their efforts for peace. It would raise the name of the British Legion to new heights, while giving a chance for the Legion to play an important national role by loyally serving the British government in its hour of need.

On the same day that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had approved the scheme, General Sir Frederick Maurice made arrangements to fly to Berlin that night to present the plan to Hitler in person. It is quite clear that Maurice was consciously aping the Prime Minister's previous dramatic flight to see Hitler. However, on his arrival in Berlin at 10.45 pm, Maurice met an attaché on behalf of Herr Ribbentrop who 'told him it would be quite impossible for him to see the Fuhrer' the next day. Maurice replied that if he could not see Hitler he would return to London on the next plane. Having got so far, Maurice was not going to have his supreme moment denied.

The next day, at the interview, Hitler was in a very difficult mood, as he evidently thought that the plan was a 'try-on of the Prime Minister's to cause delay'. It was only when Maurice reiterated that he: 'had no mission at all from the Prime Minister and was not discussing the negotiations in any way. He had come only on behalf of his proposition to use German and British Legion men for policing during the plebiscite.'[33] This is the final proof that the plan was Sir Frederick Maurice's, and also that, had the British government been involved, or had the plan gone through normal diplomatic channels, it would have been ignored. However, the diplomatic advantage which the British Government may have gained through use of the plan was scotched during the interview. Hitler insisted that he welcomed the proposals in principle, but was determined that the whole of the organs of government in the Sudeten area up to the Green line must be in his hands by October 1st, and said

that there would be no time to give effect to the Legion plan in the area up to the Green line up to that date.[34] Thus, the basic intention of the Legion plan, which was to provide neutral observers in the area to be transferred under the Anglo–French proposals, was refused by Hitler; these areas would be occupied by German troops immediately. Hitler quickly swung the balance of advantage round to his side by stating that: he cordially welcomed the proposal that the British Legion should provide an adequate body of neutral observers in the areas proposed by Plebiscite, whose tasks it would be to ensure that the Plebiscite was carried out fairly and without any military pressure from Germany.[35]

Yet, it was this element of the plan which must have been quickly sketched in on 25 September, so that the Legion plan accommodated the Godesberg memorandum and its proposals for a plebiscite. It was also this element of the plan which the British Legion was not capable of carrying out effectively. The British General Staff may have overestimated the number of troops required and the difficulties involved in a plebiscite, but it is clear that the British Legion would have been hard stretched to be equal to the task. Unlike a diplomat or national leader, Maurice could not negotiate or bargain; all he could do was agree with whatever version of the plan Hitler decided to accept.

Although the plan had been deflected from its original purpose, it was this modified scheme which went ahead. Hitler made his acceptance public in a speech at the Sports Palace, Berlin, on 27 September, when he said that: 'I was prepared to withdraw the troops during the plebiscite and have to-day declared my readiness to invite the British Legion to enter these areas during this period to maintain law and order.'[36] Almost immediately Maurice returned from Germany, Legion headquarters began to organize the force. There was a frenzy of activity to work out the details of uniforms, transport arrangements, billeting and organization. Whatever the merits or demerits of the plan, the response from ordinary Legion members was astonishing – over 17,000 members volunteered.[37] This was, for the Legion leaders, a real embodiment of Legion spirit – men volunteering, as they might have done in 1914, for hazardous service overseas. It also shows the great desire among British Legion members, and the general population, for peace.

While the British Legion was confident of its usefulness, and convinced that it would and could carry out any mission required of it, the same confidence was not held by the British Government or the officials of the Foreign Office. Reservations about the plan began almost as soon as Hitler had announced his acceptance of the Legion's offer. A telegram on 29 September, from the Foreign Office to the British delegation in

Munich, expressed real doubts about the role of the Legion force. The ministers at the Foreign Office asked for the delegation's views on how the Legion force could be used, while they also mentioned the change in the plan that had occurred after Maurice had seen Hitler:

> it is difficult to see how the Legionaries are going to make themselves useful. Indeed they might, owing to the indefinite nature of their functions and their uncertain discipline, easily involve themselves and us in local incidents.[38]

The British Government was left in the very difficult position of having had the Legion's offer accepted by Hitler, which meant that the plan could not be ignored or shelved. At the same time, the role of the force was left undefined, and it was unlikely that the Legion could maintain law and order in areas restive and angry at the settlement. Both Duff Cooper, the Secretary of State for War, and Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, expressed reservations about the plan, while Mr Newton, the British Ambassador in Prague, pleaded that the force should either be armed or disbanded.[39] Even Fetherston-Godley announced that the original plan had 'grave disadvantages' – but he was adamant that the Legion must be allowed to go to Czechoslovakia, since he argued that: 'If other nations send bodies of ex-servicemen, it is essential that the Legion takes part, or we lose both nationally and in the ex-service community all the prestige and leadership we have gained by the work of the last few years.'[40] The British Legion Police Force was the culmination of his foreign policy, and would give the Legion great publicity and a position of leadership among the international ex-service community, but it also contained very serious risks.

On 6 October, Orme Sargent, at the Foreign Office, showed that he was very concerned about these problems. He suggested 'even at the eleventh hour' that Legion involvement in Czechoslovakia should be prevented. He felt that 'from the outset we have been rushed into accepting this idea without ever thinking out its dangerous implications'. The plan had been conceived and accepted very quickly, and this had not given time to consider the difficulties inherent in sending unarmed ex-servicemen into a very difficult and dangerous situation. He continued:

> I feel we are playing with fire in sending out these unarmed and undisciplined men to a district where feelings are likely to become more and more strained and embittered as the date of the plebiscite

> approaches ... it is in Hitler's interest that law and order should not be maintained, so that he may have a pretext for sending German troops into the plebiscite areas before the plebiscite and keeping them there indefinitely. It would be intolerable if attacks on isolated members of the British Legion enabled Hitler to claim that he had to send German troops in order to rescue the British Legion from Czech 'atrocities'.[41]

It was perhaps unfair to describe the Legion volunteers as 'undisciplined', but they would be unarmed and unprepared for any serious disturbances. Under the original plan to supervise the transfer of territory in the Anglo–French proposals of 19 September, the Legion volunteers might have served a useful purpose. But after the plan was changed through Hitler's intervention, the dangers outweighed the advantages of the scheme. The Saar plebiscite had passed off peacefully in 1935, but there had been a large number of troops present and had the Legion force gone to Czechoslovakia they might have found conditions much more difficult. The plebiscite would have been hurriedly organized and although the Legion volunteers would no doubt have acted in a disciplined manner, they did not have the training or experience to deal with disturbances. It is quite likely that had they been sent, German forces would have organized 'partisan' activity in order to give Hitler a pretext to send German troops to 'save' the British Legion volunteers. Sargent had divined Hitler's true purpose, and it is not surprising that from 2 October, the British delegation at Munich argued against the use of plebiscites in Czechoslovakia. Hitler's insistence that the only forces to be used to police the plebiscites should be 'international bodies', meaning ex-servicemen, made his intentions plain; he hoped to use plebiscites to increase the amount of territory transferred to Germany by both fair means and foul. Eventually, on 11 October, Hitler's desire to use plebiscites in this manner became apparent to Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador, who insisted to the German representative that: 'I personally would never agree to plebiscites being held for such a purpose and would if it were suggested withdraw from the International Commission pending instructions from my Government.'[42] This finally sealed the fate of any plebiscites in Czechoslovakia.

Meanwhile, the British Legion had hurriedly organized a force of 1,200 in little over 55 hours.[43] Uniforms and ash sticks – the only weaponry – were provided for all members who assembled at Olympia on 8 October. It was kept in readiness due to uncertainty and the long negotiations taking place at the International Commission held in

Munich, and although the force embarked on two ships, the SS *Naldera* and *Dunera*, at Tilbury Docks on 12 October, it did not sail further than Southend.[44] They were moored there until, on 14 October, the force was informed that they would not be required in Czechoslovakia. On 15 October, the force was quickly dispersed.

Although the force was not used, the Legion leaders hailed the event as a great triumph. Fetherston-Godley remarked at the 1939 Legion Conference that:

> The whole Press, with one exception, supported the formation of the Force, and they had got an advertisement for the Legion which could not be bought for £100,000. That was all he need say about a Force which had a very long name and a very short life.[45]

The Legion had gained kudos and prestige out of the event, but use of the Legion force may have had serious repercussions. The Legion leaders had forced the pace, taken all the decisions and finally might have placed Legion members in a very difficult and dangerous situation. The idea of a Legion Police Force in Czechoslovakia began as a plan to give a minor advantage to the British Government in difficult negotiations but quickly became a pawn manipulated by Hitler, which caused embarrassment and anxiety for the British Government. The leadership of General Sir Frederick Maurice and Major Fetherston-Godley took the Legion into waters well beyond its depth. While the police plan sought a practical role for ex-servicemen in the international crisis, and demonstrated a sincere desire for peace, it also showed that the Legion leaders were prepared to go to almost any lengths to build Legion prestige through publicity. No one in the Legion seems to have considered the dangers and problems which the police force might have faced, nor the irony of actively assisting in the dismemberment of a former Allied nation, whose ex-servicemen were members of the brotherhood of Allied ex-servicemen.

After the drama of the Munich crisis, the Legion's foreign policy of greater contact with German veterans lost its prominence very quickly. Almost as soon as the force had dispersed, the British Legion changed its focus from the ideals of peace to the service of the state.[46] With war clouds gathering in the aftermath of the Munich crisis, the Legion volunteered its services for national defence. In 1939 the British Legion organized a highly publicized pilgrimage to the Unknown Warrior in Paris, not Berlin, to demonstrate an Allied solidarity which had been lacking over the previous few years.

The unique attempt by the Legion to bring 'peace in our time' demonstrated the power of the myth concerning the 'Brotherhood of the Trenches' but also the difficulties inherent in such an approach. Legion leaders – and members – really did believe that they could make a contribution to international understanding, but while they were able to develop cordial relations with their former enemies over cups of tea and glasses of beer, this had little influence upon British diplomacy. Ultimately, the Legion could not deliver concrete results in foreign relations based on the brotherhood of all veterans. It was a cruel twist of fate that saw these well meaning British veterans put forth their greatest efforts for peace with the one leader and regime that most ardently desired war.

It was not until September 1941 that the British Legion's National Executive Council finally decided that FIDAC had ceased to exist.[47] By this time, all of the other members of that international organization, with the exception of the United States, had been conquered and occupied by Germany. The hopes of the veterans' international movement, which had burned so brightly during the 1920s, had ultimately died in the inferno of another world war. After the Second Great War, the same impulses that had motivated the cause of veterans' internationalism took root in a different soil, and might be said to have given birth to the nascent European Community. For its part, the British Legion never attempted to take centre stage in international events again. Instead, its considerable effort was channelled into the organization of annual pilgrimages of veterans and widows to war cemeteries around the world.[48] In this way, the British Legion held true to its central guiding principle of comradeship, as well as the importance of remembering the sacrifice of the fallen, but also tacitly acknowledged that the efforts of veterans alone could not bring peace to the world.

Notes

1. Graham Wootton, *The Politics of Influence: British Ex-Servicemen, Cabinet Decisions, and Cultural Change 1917–57* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 65.
2. Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: Veterans Politics and Society 1921–1939* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), p. 3.
3. British Legion Journal (hereafter BLJ) August 1927, p. 20.
4. See Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy*, p. 202.
5. Ibid.
6. *The Times*, 'British Legion and an Ex-Service Pacifist', 10 September 1932.
7. British Legion Annual Report (hereafter BLAR), 1922, p. 25, RBLHQ.
8. BLJ October 1923, p. 111.

9. General Sir Ian Hamilton, *The Friends of England: Lectures to Members of the British Legion* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1923), p. 75.
10. BLJ January 1923, p. 161.
11. Annual Conference (hereafter AC), 1926, Earl Haig Presidential Address, RBLHQ.
12. Graham Wootton, *The Official History of the British Legion* (London: MacDonald and Evans, 1956), p. 118.
13. G. R. Crosfield to S. S. for Foreign Affairs, 3 December 1926, FO371/11858, the National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA).
14. British Legion Policy Statement 1935, RBLHQ.
15. O. S. Sargent, 17 June 1935, FO371/18882, TNA.
16. R. Wigram, 14 June 1935, FO371/18882, TNA. See also Wootton, *British Legion*, pp. 182–189.
17. BLAR 1937, p. 8, RBLHQ.
18. Fetherston-Godley to Hamilton, 22 July 1938, IH11/2/35, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London (hereafter LHCMA)
19. Ibid.
20. BLJ September 1938, p. 82.
21. Ibid., p. 83.
22. BLJ, July 1938, Metropolitan Area Supplement p. i.
23. Hamilton to Fetherston-Godley, 8 August 1938, IH11/2/35, Hamilton Papers, LHCMA.
24. BLJ September 1938, p. 81.
25. There seems to have been continual confusion amongst the Nazi leadership over who General Sir Ian Hamilton actually was, and he was variously described as the Duke of Hamilton and the British Legion National President rather than his correct title of President of the British Legion (Scotland). He was certainly accorded an importance beyond his actual status. It is perhaps interesting to speculate that when Rudolf Hess flew to Scotland in 1941 he may well have been attempting to contact General Sir Ian Hamilton rather than the Duke of Hamilton whose estate he crash-landed in.
26. Maurice to Chamberlain, 6 September 1938, PREM1/268, TNA.
27. Memorandum by the General Staff, International Control of a Possible Plebiscite, 21 September 1938, FO371/21782, TNA.
28. Robert Rhodes James, *The British Revolution 1880–1939* (London: Random House, 1977), p. 596.
29. BLJ November 1938, p. 155.
30. Hitler to Chamberlain, 26 September 1938, FO371/21782, TNA.
31. See Barr, *Lion and the Poppy*, p. 208.
32. Ibid.
33. E. M. Watson, 26 September 1938, FO371/21782, TNA.
34. Maurice to Chamberlain, 26 September 1938, FO371/21782, TNA.
35. Ibid.
36. Adolf Hitler, Speech at the Sports Palace Berlin, 27 September 1938, FO371/21782, TNA.
37. BLJ November 1938, p. 156.
38. Telegram to British Delegation at Munich, 29 September 1938, FO371/21783, TNA.

39. Duff Cooper to Lord Halifax, 29 September 1938; Halifax to Cooper, 29 September 1938; Newton to Foreign Office, 5 October 1938; FO371/21783, TNA.
40. Fetherston-Godley to Halifax, 2 October 1938, FO371/21783, TNA.
41. O. S. Sargent, Suggestion to Cancel Despatch of British Legion to Czechoslovakia, 6 October, FO371/21783, TNA.
42. Henderson to Foreign Office, 11 October 1938, FO371/21783, TNA.
43. BLJ November 1938, p. 156.
44. Board of Trade to Foreign Office, 11 October 1938; Foreign Office to Board of Trade, 13 October 1938, FO371/21783, TNA.
45. AC 1939, Res. No. 2., RBLHQ.
46. General Secretary's Circular Letters to Branches, October 1938, Fetherston-Godley to Chairmen of Areas, Counties, Districts and Branches, RBLHQ.
47. National Executive Council Minutes, 20 September 1941, RBLHQ.
48. Wootton, *British Legion*, p. 293.

4

Well-Armed Internationalism: American Veteran Organizations and the Crafting of an 'Associated' Veterans' Internationalism 1919–1939

Stephen R. Ortiz

Introduction

In October 1922, representatives of the international veteran organization FIDAC resolved, at the end of their third annual meeting, to seek, among other things, world peace through the eventual disarmament of the 'implements of war' and the creation of an 'international court … to outlaw war'. FIDAC's well-known insistence on internationalism, peace and disarmament in the inter-war period made this episode part of a larger and longer trend. What is less well-known, however, is that FIDAC met in conjunction with the American Legion's fourth annual convention, held in New Orleans during the autumn of 1922. Moreover, the legionnaires officially endorsed the resolutions coming out of the FIDAC meeting, institutionally wedding what until then had been a loose affiliation between the organizations. Alvin Owsley, the Legion national commander elected in New Orleans, explained his fledgling (if already powerful) organization's endorsement of the FIDAC resolutions: 'It is a vision of the future', he added, 'It may not result in immediate effects, but when these men grow to positions of power in their Governments they will try to do what they can to meet their comrades of other nations on the footing of friendship.' He concluded that veterans' internationalism, as expressed in the resolutions, 'means much for the future peace of the world'.[1] Or, in the words of veteran James E. Darst, 'Each veteran

is intensely patriotic, a nationalist through and through … but he is also an internationalist for the good of all.'[2]

This participation of American veterans in the internationalist zeitgeist of the post-war world remains an under-examined phenomenon and will come as a surprise to many. Studies of US veterans almost entirely focus on the role that they and their organizations played in the battles over post-war veterans' benefits and in the anti-radical crusade begun in 1919.[3] Meanwhile, scholars of American foreign relations relatively recent insistence on the continued internationalism of the 1920s and 1930s, despite the Senate defeat of the Treaty of Versailles in 1920, has yet to extend to groups such as veterans, who maintained a more ambivalent internationalist perspective and who frequently battled other internationalists on issues of importance, such as military spending, US participation in the League of Nations and the World Court and chemical weapons control.[4] Indeed, since studies of inter-war internationalism in the United States tend to focus on pacifist organizations, often women's pacifist organizations, such as the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, veterans' ardent opposition to pacifists' policy prescriptions on defence matters typically leads historians to portray them incorrectly as enemies of internationalism.[5] Finally, one might argue that since the end of the Second World War, US veteran organizations' hawkish insistence on the virtues of unilateral military intervention abroad and their forceful nationalism at home have had the effect of obscuring the particular strains of peaceful internationalism practised by their founders' generation in the wake of the Great War.

The goal of this essay, then, is to examine veterans' approaches to peace and international relations that connected American Great War veterans to the larger international currents of co-operation and conciliation, as practised by other national and transnational veteran groups. I contend that American veterans of the Great War maintained an awkward posture toward international affairs in the inter-war period. Stung by the blundering, chaotic mobilization of 1917, less bloodied during the fighting than their Allied counterparts and more troubled after the war by the associations between pacifism and radicalism, American veterans emphasized, through organizations such as the American Legion and, later, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the strategy of military preparedness over disarmament as their preferred method of pursuing peace. And yet, I argue that veterans embraced new vehicles of veterans' internationalism by joining and actively participating in FIDAC until 1939, and by individually and collectively seeking to accentuate the

more intimate ties of fraternity with other nation's veterans in a series of post-war exchanges meant to foster a spirit of peace. In doing this, American veterans couched their demands in a new, post-war idiom of muscular or 'militant' pacifism, similar in aims but not in the methods of other forms of international pacifism. In what was always a tenuous balancing act, American veterans crafted a version of internationalism bearing a resemblance to the American Expeditionary Force's 'Associated' status during the war: simultaneously co-operative and yet pointedly distinct from versions more common to European veterans.

The American Legion and FIDAC

A brief overview of the American Legion's efforts in its first decade makes clear how the organization came to be seen as an enemy of internationalism and peace efforts, even while joining FIDAC and endorsing its goals as described above.[6] After the armistice, the American Legion quickly developed into the foremost American veteran organization. Founded in Paris in 1919 by members of the American Expeditionary Force, the Legion became the representative organization for all American Great War veterans. A group of men drawn from the nation's political and economic elite dominated the Legion's national leadership and steered the fledgling organization through its first steps. Never far from the reins of national political power, founding members, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Eric Fisher Wood, Ogden Mills, William J. Donovan and Bennett Champ Clark, correspondingly exerted a tremendous amount of control over the Legion's policies and its internationalist orientations. Despite initial competition for veterans' allegiance, the Legion almost immediately became the dominant organization for the former doughboys. A little over a year after its creation, 843,013 veterans swelled the Legion's ranks. Only in the mid-1930s would the Veterans of Foreign Wars significantly appeal to Great War veterans looking for alternative options to the Legion.[7]

Although veterans' welfare issues commanded the majority of the Legion's attention in its formative years, anti-radicalism and continued military preparedness also proved cornerstones to the organization's national political agenda. The Legion fervently opposed any semblance of Bolshevism, and stridently promoted the emotionally-charged goal of 'Americanism'. The anti-radicalism of legionnaires was hardly a historical coincidence. In fact, the preamble to the Legion's chartering document highlighted the centrality of anti-radicalism: 'to uphold and defend the constitution', 'to maintain law and order', 'to foster one hundred percent

Americanism' and 'to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses' were all listed as founding principles.[8] Legion co-founder Wood put it more bluntly still when he wrote in 1919 that 'the American Legion will become the greatest bulwark against Bolshevism and anarchy'.[9] Indeed, upon returning to the US, legionnaires became central actors in the unfolding anti-radicalism of the 1919–1920 Red Scare. The most notable of many examples centred on the Centralia (Washington) episode in which conflict between International Workers of the World and legionnaires turned into a pitched battle during the 1919 Armistice Day parade, ending with four legionnaires killed and brutal acts of retributive violence.[10]

In additional to strident anti-radicalism throughout the inter-war period, the Legion consistently called for a strong national defence. The Legion based its policy prescriptions on the belief that the lack of preparedness had been the cause of a great deal of chaos and unnecessary loss of life during the war. Therefore, the organization supported 'adequate' military spending for naval and ground forces that were under pressure to contract both for fiscal reasons and due to a new political climate promoting disarmament through international treaties. To aid in preparedness, legionnaires also supported the maintenance of civilian military training camps with compulsory military training. Moreover, the Legion supported the enhancement of the almost non-existent air power of the US, while helping to scuttle American involvement in the Geneva Gas Protocol (1926) as a supporter of the US Chemical Warfare Division. Writing in 1926, National Commander John R. McQuigg explained the thinking vividly: 'members of the Legion who have seen war at first hand, have seen the bloody consequences of a short-sighted military policy, do not intend that unpreparedness through lack of public interest shall slay the youth of another generation should war break upon us'.[11] Interestingly, these positions did not preclude the Legion from endorsing the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference (1922) or even the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact (1928) outlawing war. In addressing the obvious inconsistencies caused by these endorsements, the Legion warned during the 1928 convention that 'approval of [the Kellogg-Briand] treaty does not, in any way, guarantee peace, and does not, therefore permit of any reduction in the very modest military establishment maintained by our nation for purely defensive purposes'. [12]

Despite being on record supporting some of the same peace causes, the Legion became a fierce enemy of pacifist groups such as the National Council for the Prevention of War and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, who championed further disarmament

and the outlawing of war throughout the period. To the Legion, radicals and pacifists were overlapping, often conflated, categories of antagonists. The organization became increasingly indifferent to the variations among these groups – all were dangerous to the American polity. The Americanism committee of the Legion published a warning to all posts, explaining that they beware 'the Communist, in the guise of the professional pacifist', who 'spreads his doctrine to palsy the arm of national defense'.[13] An Americanism committee pamphlet of 1927 entitled 'Preparedness vs. Pacifism' put it more bluntly: 'The Russian Soviet, the Communist, and the revolutionary radicals of the world continue to lend every support to the spirit of extreme pacifism in America.'[14] The Legion and its members also actively spread the graphic created by General Amos Fries, an active legionnaire, head of the US Chemical Warfare Division and president of the American Defense Society, known as the 'spider-web' chart, which purportedly showed the links among radicals and pacifists. Throughout the 1920s battles over national defence matters, Legion officials joined defence-spending supporters in deploying the 'spider web' to first link and, then, de-legitimize the radical–pacifist–feminist nexus as 'an international conspiracy of course directed by Moscow'.[15]

And yet, despite all of this hostility against radicals and pacifists, and fervour for continued military preparedness, the Legion became intimately involved in the non-communist internationalist enthusiasm of the post-war period thanks to its membership and active participation in FIDAC until 1939. Even before FIDAC was created, in December of 1920, Legion Commander Frederick W. Galbraith, Jr., had begun to contemplate a 'veterans' League of Nations.' After FIDAC's creation with European-based legionnaires in attendance as American representatives and the Legion designated as the officially participating US veterans' group, Galbraith studied its charter and sought to persuade his comrades of further involvement. In 1921, Legion trips to Europe were planned to more fully realize the relationships between veterans' organizations there. Also, FIDAC President Charles Bertrand was invited to speak to the Legion convention later in 1921. All of these meetings laid the groundwork for the large conclave held in New Orleans in October 1922, where legionnaires and FIDAC members met on back-to-back days and issued their joint proclamations about disarmament, peace and the outlawing of war.[16]

After the 1922 melding of the two institutions' goals, the American Legion began a seventeen-year formal relationship that included prominent legionnaires becoming FIDAC presidents, the Legion's creation of

a standing committee on World Peace and Foreign Relations to institutionally house and address the organization's ties to FIDAC, and further hosting of FIDAC annual gatherings. In 1923, legionnaires travelled to Belgium as the American representatives to FIDAC. National Commander Owsley, who had spoken so promisingly of Legion participation, travelled with the delegation unofficially, joining a representative from the Carnegie Peace Foundation. The American FIDAC representatives hoped their participation in the Brussels conference would lead to 'a practical means towards world peace'.[17] In 1924, American legionnaire Thomas Miller was chosen as FIDAC's President. Throughout the period, prominent legionnaires were chosen to represent American veterans at FIDAC meetings, and the Paris Legion Department worked collaboratively with the Paris central offices of FIDAC. The *FIDAC Review*, the organization's publication, and the *American Legion Weekly* (followed by the *Monthly)* shared stories on international veterans' meetings and ideas on veterans' welfare matters.[18]

The decade of the 1930s began on a very high note when FIDAC once again convened in the United States for its annual meeting. After the conference in New York City, FIDAC members travelled to the Legion convention in Boston where they were regaled by President Herbert Hoover and their Legion comrades. Throughout the 1930s, FIDAC presidents from various former Allied countries visited the US and attended scores of veterans' gatherings. As the 1930s wore on, the Legion's enthusiasm wore off, even while giving ample time to FIDAC reports at national conventions and continuing to send representatives to FIDAC. In 1939, as FIDAC was wracked by the European tensions that would lead to war, the Legion announced its withdrawal from the organization in fear that continued participation with other countries' veterans might ensnare them into wartime advocacy and away from the new insistence on neutrality. But, by 1939, all of the synergies of the 1920s that had led to intense internationalist interest in FIDAC by American veterans had, in truth, floundered already on the rocks of the Great Depression and international crisis.[19]

International veterans' exchanges

Beyond the institutional confines of FIDAC, veterans' internationalism was fostered and sustained throughout the inter-war period in one other important manner. Despite the geographical and cultural distances, veterans' groups maintained constant transnational movement, celebrating their ties of comradeship during the war with fêtes and commemorative

celebrations on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. As Akira Iriye has written about the inter-war period, a cross-cultural exchange of people who viewed themselves as the connective tissues in a budding movement toward peace became one of the defining features of US international relations. Even though American scholars and student groups remain the most widely remarked upon practitioners of this kind of internationalism, veterans' cultural exchanges also took place with noteworthy regularity.[20] Often situated around Armistice Day celebrations and commemorative unveilings and ground-breakings, French, Italian and British military leaders from the Great War joined national veteran organizations' leaders in coming to the United States in the 1920s and early 1930s. Legionnaires were also frequent transatlantic visitors to Europe in the same period. By the mid-1930s, this had expanded to trans-Pacific meetings under the auspices of the VFW. A selective examination of these exchanges reveals how they promoted the fraternal bonds of common wartime experiences while expounding on the shared responsibilities for maintaining peace among nations in the new veterans' idiom of peace.

Early examples of veterans' exchanges involved the wartime leaders of the Allies making valedictory tours of the United States with veterans as their primary audiences. In the fall of 1921, Marshall Ferdinand Foch travelled to the US to greet officials in New York and Washington. But the principal purpose of his travels was to join in celebratory fêtes with former soldiers and in honour of fallen soldiers. Notable stops in Foch's itinerary included visits to the third Legion convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, and to Indianapolis, Indiana, where he laid the cornerstone of the city's Indiana Memorial Building and Plaza, future home to the American Legion headquarters. Other Allied leaders joined Foch in Kansas City (and in other cities on the veterans' tour), including Admiral David Beatty (Britain), General Armando Diaz (Italy), Lieutenant General Baron Jacques (Belgium) and General John J. Pershing (US). Before a huge crowd, they laid the cornerstone for the city's Liberty Memorial to the Great War dead (now home to the US National World War I Museum). Foch's nearly two-month tour of the US drew the most excited response.[21]

At both the Kansas City and Indianapolis engagements, upwards of one hundred thousand civilians and tens of thousands more legionnaires cheered wildly for Foch. He responded with speeches valorizing the American war contribution, but also emphasizing the shared understanding of veterans as they strove for peace. In Kansas City, he proclaimed, 'The [Legion] convention testified to me that all ex-soldiers

are brothers, closely united in the United States and also among the Allies.'[22] In Indianapolis, Foch spoke of the demands for peace, demands then taking place in the context of the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference to meet just a few days later. Foch proclaimed, 'War is an abominable atrocity made and [only] waged with peace in mind.' He contended that peace was predicated on the unity and the shared bonds of ex-soldiers that were expressed on his tour. He explained, 'We all want peace; we all must have peace. To maintain peace we must endeavor, if we truly desire it, to form a union for a just and lasting peace … founded on that unity formed by war.'[23]

Before the Legion formally endorsed FIDAC, FIDAC leaders and representatives also became part of the wave of exchanges in the early 1920s. In 1921, French FIDAC President Charles Bertrand visited the United States regaling the Legion convention delegates on their common purposes toward peace, as had his compatriot Foch.[24] Months before, the Legion had sent representatives to Europe as National Commander John G. Emery fulfilled the mission set out by his predecessor, F. W. Galbraith, Jr., who tragically died in an automobile accident just before the planned trip.[25] Dubbed by a *New York Times* writer as an 'expeditionary force of friendship', the legionnaires first went to memorial dedications in their honour in France, including an unveiling attended by Marshall Foch in Flirey, Lorraine, commemorating the Americans efforts at St Mihiel. They then moved on to Brussels, where they were feted by Belgian King Albert and other veteran organizations and government dignitaries. They concluded that these exchanges would lead to the super-veterans' organization that FIDAC became, one earlier dubbed by Galbraith as a '*workable* League of Nations'.[26]

One of the more remarkable episodes in veterans' exchanges took place in 1927 as the American Legion held the organization's ninth annual convention in Paris. Timed with the tenth anniversary of the AEF's landing in France, the Legion convention drew an estimated 30,000 former doughboys to the city of its nativity. Invited (and subsidized) by the French government, the convention was also aided by more lenient travel restrictions and dropped financial requirements. France even declared 19 September 1927 a national holiday to mark the opening of the convention. While the French left denounced the Legion as 'representatives of international fascism' and perpetrators of the Sacco and Venzetti passion just come to an end, non-leftist French veterans and a sizable segment of the citizenry of Paris welcomed the legionnaires. (Ten thousand French troops stood by to keep order, in case.)[27]

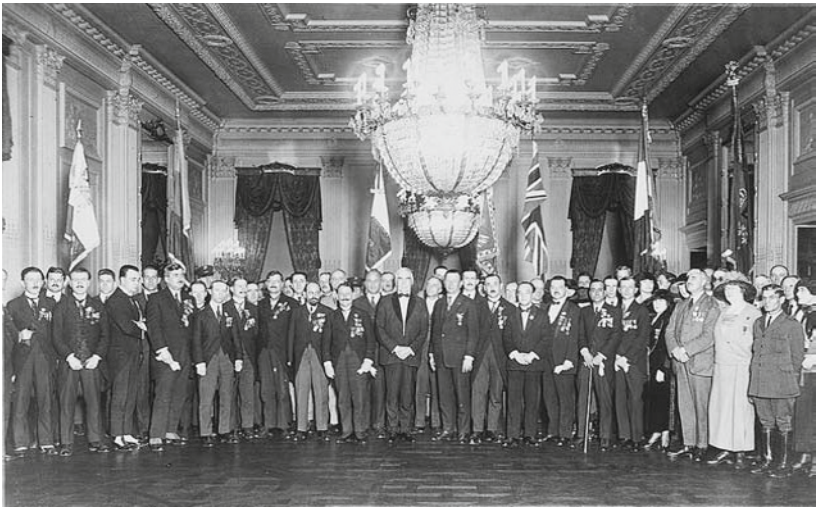

Figure 2 Forty delegates from European countries passing through Washington, DC on their way to attend the American Legion Convention at New Orleans are entertained at the White House by President Harding. Library of Congress LC-USZ62-131904.

The Legion's opening parade through the Arc de Triomphe and down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées drew hundreds of thousands of spectators. Red, white and blue bunting adorned Notre Dame Cathedral, while an American flag topped the Eiffel Tower. The parade wound past a reviewing stand featuring General John J. Pershing, Marshall Foch and Legion National Commander Howard P. Savage. In short, while aggravated by too many displays of drunken chauvinism by the visitors, Parisians treated legionnaires like foreign dignitaries and returning heroes as they began their convention.[28]

The speeches and resolutions from the 1927 Legion convention dwelled on the magnitude of the event as a showcase for peace through mutual cultural understanding. General Pershing addressed the former doughboys in explicit terms about the impact of their pilgrimage to Paris in international affairs: 'It seems to me that the cultivation of mutual understanding and confidence among the nations, such as exist between France and America, presents the true formula that should eventually guarantee

permanent peace to the world.' American Vice President to FIDAC and former national commander, Henry D. Lindsley, addressed the convention floor, explaining that 'the promotion of world peace has been tremendously advanced by this convention here in Paris'. He continued, 'it is our sacred obligation, my friends, in the interest of world peace through world understanding, as we go back to every section of the United States from whence we came, to tell this story of what France has done for us'. At the conclusion of the convention, the Legion issued a resolution explaining the organization's efforts toward international peace:

> That, as the present pilgrimage of the American Legion … has helped Americans to a new knowledge and appreciation of the peoples and the problems of peace-time Europe and helped European peoples to a new understanding of America, a chief objective for the Legion for the coming year at home is declared to be a sane extension of international understanding and goodwill.

Denying pacifism and still embracing nationalism and patriotism, the Legion further resolved to urge 'all possible mutual disarmament and avoidance of the causes of war and a neighborly and tolerant attitude, that progress in peace may be made shoulder to shoulder as the Allied forces made progress in the time of war'.[29]

As American veterans left Paris and reached the US, they continued to express their optimism for such cultural interaction. A New York Congressional representative proclaimed to the *New York Times* upon his return from Paris that the convention was 'one of the most magnificent demonstrations of the goodwill of one people to another that the world has ever seen'.[30] An Ohio legionnaire contended that 'more has been accomplished toward the realization of world peace through the Paris convention of the Legion than any diplomatic conference since the signing of the Armistice'.[31] Newly-elected National Commander Edward E. Spafford addressed a gathering in New York City after his return from Paris. Referring to the Paris excursion, he announced that 'the American Legion has just returned from France and Continental Europe on a peace-time mission'. He added that, while the Legion was born of war, the Paris trip demonstrated that all legionnaires 'hoped to live and die in peace'.[32] If these idealistic descriptions by legionnaires sounded a touch overblown, they received independent confirmation from unlikely sources. The General Secretary of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, just returning from Europe as a participant in international church conferences, described the Legion's Paris convention as 'a great pacifist meeting'.[33]

Although the American Legion dominated veterans' cultural exchanges in the 1920s, by the mid-1930s, a newly buoyant Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) began to arrange exchanges with veterans both from Allied countries and veterans' groups not active in FIDAC.[34] In 1935, the VFW welcomed a contingent of Japanese veterans to the national encampment held in New Orleans. The Japanese members of *Dai Nippon Zaigo Gunjin-Kai* (Imperial Reservists Association of Japan), an organization of some three million veterans, joined with French, Canadian and other Allied veterans to form a 'Good Will Congress' at the VFW as a counterpart to the Legion-dominated FIDAC gatherings and exchanges.[35] At their initial meeting upon the Japanese veterans' arrival in San Francisco, National Commander James E. Van Zandt welcomed them in the joint venture, a promotion of 'the interests of a common ideal, peace'. The head of the Japanese delegation, Admiral Isamu Takeshita, expressed his gratitude to Van Zandt: 'I thank the American veterans for their kind welcome voiced by their commander-in-chief. He has spoken in the language of the soldier, the language of peace. I respond in the same language.' Soldiers and sailors, he explained, were 'the real pacifists'. Takeshita announced the purpose of his group's American tour in cultural, rather than diplomatic terms. He contended that his group should be seen as 'messengers of peace', advancing a 'mutual spirit of concession and friendship'. He ended by summing up the goal for interaction with American veterans: 'It is your duty and our duty to make the Pacific Ocean as peaceful as the name implies.'[36]

A few days later, Commander Van Zandt and Admiral Takeshita addressed VFW members, and the other assembled international veterans, at the VFW encampment. Van Zandt explained the purpose of inviting the Japanese veterans: 'There is a mutual understanding, honor, and respect among war veterans who have fought on the field of honor in the uniforms of their countries that no other group or class of men can possess.' He continued, 'who has a greater right to speak and strive for peace than these men – not peace at any price but a lasting peace, a peace with honor welded by sincerity and the straightforward handclasp of fighting men who understand each other, and who realized in fact, through their common experiences, the futility of war'. Takeshita echoed these remarks, but expounded on the importance of cultural understanding as a foundation for peaceful international relations. He called for the veterans' organizations to serve as 'a bridge of understanding', explaining further that 'a close and effective co-operation between the two [veterans] bodies can accomplish immense good in improving mutual understanding and friendly relations between the United States and Japan'.[37]

In 1936, the VFW leadership returned the favour with a six week excursion to Japan, hosted by their Japanese counterparts. Despite the continued diplomatic tensions caused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the visit received the blessing of both countries' State Departments. VFW Commander Van Zandt gave statements to the Japanese press in advance of the visit that undergirded the emphases on cultural understanding between the veterans' groups. He explained, 'We have accepted the invitation of Japanese veterans as evidence of the sincere desire of war veterans of this country to develop a mutual friendship in the interests of international amity and world peace.'[38] During the trip, the Japanese hosts treated the American delegation to a series of ceremonial receptions and sightseeing excursions to cultural and even military landmarks. In his greetings to the Japanese people, Van Zandt elaborated on the role of cultural exchange in the relationship between the countries. Broadcasting over Japanese radio, he announced, 'We do not pose as experts on the problems of world peace, nor do we bring you any proposed panaceas to the ills of the world. In truth, we come to Japan only as ambassadors in goodwill.' But, Van Zandt continued, it was their shared status as veterans that made the cultural exchange most meaningful. On 15 May 1936, Van Zandt and his counterpart, Admiral Takeshita, jointly recorded addresses later broadcasted over the NBC national radio network. The VFW leadership arrived from Japan nearly giddy with the potential for veterans' internationalism, proclaiming that 'the future possibility of an international veterans' peace conference began to seem practical'.[39]

'Militant' pacifism: a new veterans' idiom of peace

In his address to the Japanese veterans and civilian population, VFW commander Van Zandt exclaimed that 'the ex-servicemen of Japan and of the United States are *logical crusaders* in the field of peace'.[40] That Van Zandt could use the phrase 'logical crusaders' for peace was, by itself, a remarkable commentary on how entrenched a veterans' discourse of peace had become by 1936. Historian of inter-war internationalism, Akira Iriye, has described the 'ideology of peace' that emerged in the 1920s and noted, but not examined, soldiers' contribution to it by proclaiming that '[i]t is [as] if the war had obliterated national distinctions and untied soldiers of all countries through their shared suffering'.[41] This important development allowed for the flourishing of the new veterans' idiom of peace, grounded by a re-fashioned martial masculinity and a corresponding masculine expression of peace.

Former soldiers and other commentators looking back on the destructive madness of the Great War began a re-conceptualization

of martial masculinity from one based on the valorization of wartime prowess to one where ex-soldiers were bound together by shared suffering – from subjects of wartime glory to objects of war's horrors. The anonymous, de-masculinizing violence of modern, trench warfare and the ambiguities of the peace that followed created a powerful need to re-think the meaning of war and of men's role in it. The thwarting of the doughboys' ideological crusade – a world safe for democracy seemed a cruel hoax very early on – added to the need for a different meaning from their war experience. Liberated from narratives of valour, veterans – even ones from the victorious allies – adopted an idiom that emphasized bonds of suffering and of exposure to unspeakable destruction that were echoed, indeed were often invoked to some discomfort, by 'feminine' pacifists in their calls for peace. To be sure, ex-soldiers' experientially-grounded masculinized idiom of peace rested quite closely next to the traditional, feminine pacifism of the 1890–1930 period, threading a needle between traditional valorization and pacifists' tropes of soldiers' victimization. Yet, after 1919, while promoting peace through veterans' international exchanges, American veterans used this new idiom as a 'logical' foundation for their demands for peace.[42]

Even while still overseas, this new idiom had become central to servicemen's understanding of the war and of their role in its wake. In June 1919, doughboys writing in the final issue of the AEF's official publication, *Stars and Stripes*, signalled the deployment of a new rhetoric of war:

> Nobody under God's great tranquil skies can tell us of the rottenness of war but the men who suffered through it. Upon them rests a solemn duty. They must go home and choke the coward jingo who masks himself behind his false and blatant patriotism, and the merchant-politician, not content with stuffing his home coffers till they burst – but anxious to barter the blood of his country's young manhood for new places in the sun.[43]

The Legion and legionnaires also employed the new idiom of peace from the start. In the preamble of their constitution, written nearly simultaneously with the *Stars and Stripes* editorial, legionnaires promised 'to promote peace and good will on earth' and 'to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness', hardly the language of conquerors.[44]

After the creation of FIDAC, however, American veterans' peace pronouncements became more frequent and affective. Writing in the

internationalist periodical *Our World* to explain the Legion's joint meeting with FIDAC, legionnaire James E. Darst gave expression to veterans' internationalism in the new veterans' idiom of peace. Before the article's publication, Darst had already played a prominent role in the early phase of American veterans' internationalism; he was on the staff of the *American Legion Weekly* and served as a press aide to Marshal Ferdinand Foch during Foch's two-month tour of the United States in 1921.[45] In an essay explaining the Legion's coming role in FIDAC, Darst explained how the ideological cast to the American war effort, and the shared experiences of doughboys with other soldiers during the war, had profoundly shaped veterans' post-war perspective. He wrote, 'Rank and File servicemen … must always think of war from their own experiences … They have taken seriously that talk about a war to end wars; there is no lurking smile when these men discuss international friendship.' Darst continued, 'These men learned that brother warriors from far away climes were surprisingly human, once the crust of strange language and odd customs had been penetrated. They wanted a peace and a peace that would stick.' He pinpointed the need for veterans to educate the young as a way of contesting the older valorized visions of war service that limited international moves toward peace. Darst detailed how the new veterans' idiom of peace needed to be shared: 'The plan … is to have all of the veteran bodies work for an educative propaganda that will throw a true spotlight on war, robbing it of its romantic glamour in youthful eyes and revealing its cruelty and waste; to bring peace to the world through the coming generations.'[46]

Throughout the 1920s, other Legion officials and veterans in exchanges reiterated veterans' special calling to now fight for peace. National Commander Emery highlighted veterans' exceptional obligations toward peace at the Flirey dedication, explaining that 'the time has come when the end of wars and of tremendous warlike armaments should no longer be considered in the light of an impossible dream … We are the ones who have the right to point the way' to peace and disarmament.[47] Thomas W. Miller, FIDAC president and legionnaire from Delaware, explained in the article about veterans' peace activism titled 'Now They Fight for Peace', that 'war has no enemy so bitter as the man who's had a taste of it'.[48] In the 1927 convention, a special cable to the *New York Times* announced that 'the visits to the sacred ground on which their comrades died for the Allied cause has greatly increased the love of peace among the American veterans'. A veteran returning from the graves and memorials dotting the French countryside, remarked: 'You know, it has been easy to forget all but the pleasant side of the war these last nine years, but after seeing the

front again it all comes back to us. What a horrible thing it was and I hope to God there will never be another one.'[49] In 1930, O. L. Bodenhamer, the Legion's National Commander, told the FIDAC delegates assembled in New York City for their tenth annual convention that 'veterans of the World War, who know the tortures of conflict, and who saw first-hand much of its futility, will present a bulwark for peace which can and will tend to prevent a repetition of that orgy of bloodshed through which we passed'.[50]

Veterans' peace activism struck legionnaires and other pacifist groups as a new development. In his 1922 essay, Darst stressed that the novelty could not be overlooked. By ignoring 'a vast heritage of belligerence' accumulated over millennia of warfare, he contended, 'never before have the men who fought encircled the globe with a determined organization of peace'.[51] From the 1927 convention dais, former Legion national commander Lindsley proclaimed, 'I have felt as I have listened to these splendid addresses of Marshall Foch, of General Gouraud, and of John J. Pershing that there has never been a time in the history of the world when men who had won a great war had banded themselves together as have these men to perpetuate world peace.'[52] In 1928, the Legion sent representatives to the centennial meeting of the American Peace Society. Commander Edward E. Spafford reported that the Legion had made an impression, noting that 'many of those who attended that convention for the first time learned that ours is essentially a peace organization'. But he added for emphasis that the Legion's was a unique, masculine pacifism, when he qualified that statement by adding theirs was a '*militant* peace organization'.[53]

As the international situation of the 1930s became increasingly tense due to worldwide financial depression and militaristic expansion, it did not cut short American veterans' involvement in the idiom of peace. By the mid-1930s, however, in response to the international crises in Asia and Europe, and to the more pointed and more frequent critiques of war as a profit-making enterprise that emerged during the Great Depression, American veterans' organizations' rhetoric and goals took on a noticeably different inflection, varying from international promotion of peace to more nationally-focused avoidance of war. And it acquired a sharp, populist tone that demonized capitalists, often international capitalists, as the real forces toward war, not the former military man. Throughout, however, the veterans' discourse of peace continued to privilege their common sacrifices in times of war over a valorization of their efforts, and rhetorically situated veterans as custodians of international peace efforts.[54]

In the autumn of 1935, for example, the VFW encampment included a torrent of anti-war sentiments. In the encampment's opening ceremony, broadcast over the NBC national radio network, Commander Van Zandt proclaimed, 'both as veterans and as citizens we are emphatically opposed to war as a means of settling international disputes'. He emphasized national political efforts over international treaties, however. He told the assembled delegates that he was proudly the commander of 'the only veteran organization in the entire country that is publicly on record with a demand for world peace through the immediate federal control of all munitions plants and a policy that will prevent international traffic in arms'. The commander continued, 'America's ex-servicemen are sick and tired of being used as bill collectors or as guards for privately owned American property in foreign countries.' He warned American business that it 'must content itself with small profits in preference to wars that bring only riches to themselves while our young men are losing arms and legs on the field of battle'.[55] The VFW, under Van Zandt, would 'demand peace with all nations' because the 'men who compose this organization know from experience the true meaning of war'. Van Zandt cast the choices as stark and obvious. He declared, 'we prefer peace and poverty, if necessary, rather than war and its hollow promise of glory and riches'.[56]

The VFW monthly publication, *Foreign Service*, echoed the organization's criticism of war. A lengthy editorial bemoaned the 'same short-sighted spirit of greed' as the greatest threat to peace. The organization called on overseas veterans to constantly remind the citizens of their communities that 'war-time booms are only temporary blessings that become boomerangs of death and destruction, increased taxation, economic depressions, and business stagnation'. Reminding their neighbours of this was the only way to avoid a repeat of history with 'America again paying the price of war with bloodshed, broken homes, and battered souls'.[57]

In 1936, the VFW's encampment brought even more heated rhetoric to the anti-war agenda. In the national radio broadcast from the encampment, Van Zandt continued his assault on war by laying out three broad themes: World War veterans wanted peace, the only ways to curtail the causes of war were through a strong national defence and the elimination of war profits and that veterans had a special obligation to the citizenry to continually point out the horrors of war through anti-war activism. Van Zandt explained, 'As veterans who have paid with personal sacrifices for wars that have been fought in the past, we plead for peace.' He continued, 'As citizens who pray for the well being

of our children, and for the future security of the country, we demand peace.' In promoting veterans' vision for peace, Van Zandt reminded his audience that the VFW brooked no pacifists. He begged, 'Please do not mistake this [call for peace] for the cry of a pacifist – the man or woman who believes the citizens of America can keep this country at peace by simply refusing to fight.' He labelled such beliefs, 'the principle of cowardice and a principle certain to undermine and destroy the character and moral fiber of our manhood of tomorrow'. Instead, the VFW endorsed peace through strength – that a strong national defence would inhibit foreign aggression. Van Zandt proclaimed, with some imagination, 'We veterans regard ourselves as the no. 1 pacifists in the world because we are ready to fight, if necessary, to convince other nations that our demands for peace must be respected.' Finally, Van Zandt explained that it was the veterans – those who knew that 'savage butchery on the battlefields' was not a 'glorious contribution to the cause of civilization' – who would need to organize and agitate against war.[58]

The VFW reiterated this anti-war position until the beginning of the Second World War. Upon succeeding Van Zandt, new VFW Commander Bernard Kearney spent the ensuing year promoting the VFW's anti-war measures throughout the nation and on countless radio addresses. Kearney's leadership led the 1937 encampment to call for a new systematic organizational effort called the 'Peace for America' campaign, a campaign that would dominate the organization's efforts for three years. The VFW announced that the campaign would put 'a crimp in the secret ambitions of those who believe America's foreign trade markets are more valuable than American lives, and that eventually America will have to participate in another World War to retain, or regain world markets profits [*sic*]'.[59] To accomplish this goal, the VFW offered a foreign policy vision consistent with the previous years' pronouncements: increased national spending on defence, permanent neutrality and government control of munitions manufacture. Despite the policy prescriptions, however, the veterans' idiom of peace, one shared by other veterans' organizations and, to an extent, by pacifist groups, continued to undergird the 'Peace for America' efforts.[60]

Conclusion

At the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, in September 1939, American veterans hotly debated both American involvement in the war and the wisdom of veterans' internationalism as exercised and expressed

since 1919. Calls for military intervention mingled with demands for neutrality – all, however, continued to be coupled with demands for military preparedness, demands that had been made continuously for twenty years. After decamping from FIDAC, the Legion remained divided on the new war until 1941, when it came into alignment with the Roosevelt Administration's steady move toward involvement. The VFW had made the same decision in 1940, pointedly changing the organization's agenda from 'Peace for America' to 'Security for America'. After the Second World War, both organizations grew dramatically, drawing millions of the 16 million new American veterans to their banners. Not since then, however, could they be accused of this type of veterans' internationalism or of employing the veterans' idiom of peace they had expressed in the inter-war years.[61]

Neither the post-Second World War penumbra obscuring earlier American veterans' internationalism, nor the very complicated nature of that internationalism, should mislead us into denying its existence, however. As this essay hopefully demonstrates, an American form of veterans' internationalism did indeed exist, despite the US government's withdrawal from the most important form of international engagement, the League of Nations, and despite the significant geographical and cultural expanses that separated them from the European and Japanese veteran fraternities. Expressed as it was, simultaneously with calls for military preparedness and with violent denunciations of the pacifist and internationalist left, it was awkward and tension-filled to be sure. Legionnaire Milo J. Warner summed up these tensions in a 1928 report, explaining that 'while we stand firmly … for national defense, we also stand for peace. How we shall handle those two together is always a great problem.' Still, American veteran organizations did attempt to realize veterans' internationalism with immediate and continued involvement in FIDAC, with continual veterans' cultural exchanges and through veterans' new idiom of peace. Much as they had during the Great War, though, American veterans remained 'associated', rather than full allies, in the transnational struggle for peace, disarmament and arbitration that coursed through European veterans' efforts described in this collection. It might be argued by some that 'well-armed' quite simply negates the 'internationalism' it modifies. But American veteran organizations and individual veterans spent enormous institutional and personal energy promoting both, despite the tensions and contradictions. This essay is a tentative first step in expending the same level of energy toward understanding it.[62]

Notes

1. '9,000,000 Veterans Pledged To Peace,' *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), 29 October 1922, p. 20.
2. *Our World*, October, 1922.
3. The few internationally focused exceptions to these emphases are Roscoe Baker, *The American Legion and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Bookman, 1954); Brooke L. Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris: Transatlantic Politics and Culture Between the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and work on African-American veterans and Pan-Africanism by Jennifer D. Keene, 'French and American Racial Stereotypes during the First World War', in William Chew (ed.), *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Frenchmen in America: Americans in France* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) and Chad L. Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
4. Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Akira Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).
5. Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Carrie A. Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989) and *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1946* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995); and Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
6. Since the American Legion was the largest of the veteran organizations representing the First World War cohort, and since the Legion was the American representative to FIDAC, this essay will focus primarily on it rather than other groups. On the American Legion, see Baker, *The American Legion and American Foreign Policy*; William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919–1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989); Raymond Moley Jr., *The American Legion Story* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1966); Alec Duncan Campbell, 'The Invisible Welfare State: Class Struggles, the American Legion, and The Development of Veterans' Benefits in the Twentieth-Century United States' (Ph.D. Diss., UCLA, 1997); and Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History, 1919–1989* (New York: M. Evans and Co., 1990).
7. Pencak, *For God and Country*, pp. 48–77; Rumer, *The American Legion*, pp. 8–78 and 104–109; and Campbell, 'The Invisible Welfare State', pp. 262–328. For more on the Veterans of Foreign Wars as Legion rival in the 1930s, see Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

8. On the Legion's significant record of anti-radicalism, see Pencak, *For God and Country*, pp. 8–14, 144–169 and 236–321 and William Gellermann, *The American Legion as Educator* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1938), pp. 68–134, preamble quoted, p. 71.
9. Wood quoted in Pencak, *For God and* Country, p. 62.
10. On Centralia, see Tom Copeland, *The Centralia Tragedy of 1919: Elmer Smith and the Wobblies* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000).
11. Baker, *American Legion and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 110–142, McQuigg quoted, p. 120.
12. *Proceedings of the Tenth National Convention of the American Legion, 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1929), p. 224. Proceedings issued from all national convention between 1919 and 1939 include large numbers of resolutions laying out the Legion's detailed national defence agenda through the National Defense Committee. The Legion supported the Washington Treaty because it was seen as a way for the navy to retain funding at adequate 5–5-3 levels, not as a real disarmament.
13. Pencak, *For God and Country*, pp. 8–9.
14. Pamphlet quoted in report of Americanism Committee, *Proceedings of the Ninth National Convention of the American Legion, 1927* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 95.
15. Fries, quoted in Pencak, *For God and Country,* p. 9. For more on the spider chart and its use against pacifists and radicals, see Christine K. Erickson, '"So Much for the Men": Women and National Defense in the 1920s and 1930s', *American Studies,* Vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 85–102.
16. Marquis James, *A History of the American Legion* (New York: William Green, 1923), p. 190 and '9,000,000 Veterans Pledged To Peace'.
17. *Indianapolis Star*, 'American FIDACS in Search of Golden Fleece of Peace', 19 August 1923, p. 6.
18. For the Legion's role in FIDAC, see all convention proceedings from 1924–1939 for FIDAC Reports, Alexander Gardiner, 'Patriotic Societies: The Legion, Nationalism, and Internationalism', *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 10, No. 6, (Feb. 1937), pp. 365–368; Baker, *American Legion and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 208–232; James, *The History of the American Legion*, pp. 202–239; and Duffield, *King Legion*, pp. 144–156.
19. Ibid.; 'Legion Thunders Ovation to Hoover', *NYT*, 7 October 1930, p. 22; and 'Walker Hails FIDAC in Behalf on City', *NYT*, 17 September 1930, p. 27.
20. Iriye, *Globalizing of America*, pp. 103–115 and *Cultural Internationalism and World*, passim. Interestingly, the Legion and FIDAC were early and consistent supporters and promoters of student and scholar exchanges, and developed peace awards to be given to educational institutions who demonstrated real initiative in peace efforts.
21. 'Foch Leads Parade, Extols Our Armies', *NYT*, 2 November 1921, p. 1; 'Legion Greets Foch With Wild Acclaim', *NYT*, 1 November 1921, p. 1.
22. 'Foch Leads Parade, Extols Our Armies', *NYT*, 2 November 1921, p. 1.
23. 'Foch Says World Must Have Peace', *NYT*, 5 November 1921, p. 12.
24. James, *A History of the American Legion*, pp. 215–226 and 'Inter-Allied Veterans', *NYT*, 10 July 1921, p. 85.
25. 'Emery To Lead Legion Trip', *NYT*, 15 July 1921, p. 7.

26. James, *A History of the American Legion*, pp. 215–226 and 'Belgium Honors Legion', *NYT*, 29 August 1921, p. 3. Emphasis added.
27. The discussion in these paragraphs is based on the accounts in Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris*, pp. 173–205 and Baker, *American Legion and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 211–214.
28. Ibid.
29. *Proceedings of the Ninth National Convention of the American Legion, 1927* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1928), pp. 18, 33 and 59.
30. 'Legion Convention Praised', *NYT*, 9 October 1927, p. 14.
31. Ohio veteran quoted in Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris*, p. 205.
32. 'Legion to Demand Universal Draft', *NYT*, 19 October 1927, p. 2.
33. 'Three Church Parleys in Europe Praised', *NYT*, 11 October 1927, p. 29.
34. For the new vitality of VFW in the 1930s, see Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March*.
35. 'Japanese Pledge Anti-War Aim Here', *NYT*, 17 September 1935, p. 13.
36. '5 Tokyo Veterans Reach West Coast', *NYT*, 5 September 1935, p. 13 and 'Japanese Pledge Anti-War Aim Here', *NYT*, 17 September 1935, p.13.
37. For Van Zandt and Japanese veterans delegation statements, see 'Japanese Pledge Anti-War Aim Here', *NYT*, 17 September 1935, p. 13 and encampment minutes in *36th National Encampment of the VFW, 1935* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1936), pp. 24–25.
38. *Foreign Service*, 'On a Goodwill Mission', April, 1936, p. 29.
39. *Foreign Service*, July, 1936, pp. 6–8 and 37–38.
40. Van Zandt, quoted in *Foreign Service*, July, 1936, p. 38, italics added.
41. Iriye, *Globalizing of America*, pp. 103–107, quoted in *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, p. 55.
42. Much has been written about the effects of the Great War on masculinity and disenchantment with the war from a European perspective, far less from an American one. A selective list of studies includes, Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
43. *Stars and Stripes* editorial quoted in Gellermann, *American Legion as Educator*, p. 169.
44. Gellermann, *American Legion as Educator*, p. 71.
45. James E. Darst, 'True Stories of Life as a Doughboy in World War I', found at http://www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/stlouis/darst/main.htm, accessed 5 June 2013.
46. James E. Darst, 'Fighters for Peace', *Our World* 2 (October, 1922), pp. 77, 80 and 82.
47. James, *A History of the American Legion*, pp. 222–223.
48. 'Now They Fight for Peace', *Cumberland (MD) Evening Times*, 5 December 1924, p. 23.
49. 'Pilgrimage Has Moved Legionnaires to Peace', *NYT*, 23 September 1927, p. 2.

50. 'Fidac Hears Mayor Laud Foreign-Born', *NYT*, 18 September 1930, p. 25.
51. Darst, 'Fighters for Peace', p. 82.
52. *Proceedings of the Ninth National Convention of the American Legion*, 1927, p. 33.
53. Marcus Duffield, *King Legion* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931), p. 144; 'War Chiefs Plead for Peace at Legion Conclave', *NYT*, 9 October 1928, p. 1; and Commander's report in *Proceedings of the Tenth National Convention of the American Legion*, *1928* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1929), pp. 12–13. Emphasis added.
54. For a discussion of 'the revisionist' historians and popularizing writers who aided in this new atmosphere, see Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists: The Lessons of Intervention in World War I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 120–159; for an example, see H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighan, *Merchants of Death* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1934). For the best treatment of the populist critiques of US foreign policy in the 1930s, see Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932–1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).
55. *36th National Encampment of the VFW, 1935*, pp. 14–15.
56. *NYT*, 17 September 1935 and *36th National Encampment of the VFW, 1935*, pp. 15 and 327–339.
57. *Foreign Service*, November, 1935, pp. 4–5.
58. *37th National Encampment of the VFW, 1936* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), pp. 450–451.
59. *Foreign Service*, January, 1938, p. 5.
60. For a very consistent discourse by the Legion in the 1930s, see Gellermann, *American Legion as Educator*, pp. 169–199.
61. When the peace activist veterans of Vietnam Veterans Against the War employed this idiom in the 1970s, they were savagely attacked by the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. See Andrew Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).
62. Milo J. Warner, quoted in Duffield, *King Legion*, p. 144.

Part II
Aspirational Allies

5

Polish Eagles and Peace Doves: Polish Veterans between Nationalism and Internationalism

Julia Eichenberg

11 November has been celebrated in Warsaw since 1918. It was not only the day of armistice on the Western front, but also the day Poland regained independence. In 1926, it became an official holiday on Piłsudski's orders.[1] Patriotic symbols – the red and white flag and the Polish eagle – and anthems – especially the national anthem '*Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła*' (Poland is not yet lost) and the anthem of the Polish Legion's first brigade '*My, pierwsza brygada*' (We are the First Brigade) – accompanied the celebrations.[2] Even though it was celebrated as Independence Day, *Święto Niepodległości*, 11 November was highly influenced by the 'Western' meaning of Armistice Day, without which independence could not have been reinstalled.[3] Western European symbols and rituals were adapted: in 1925, Poland buried their own Unknown Soldier. Polish difficulties in dealing with the memory of the First World War were clearly expressed by the fact that only battlefields of the border wars had been considered, thus ruling out the risk of choosing an Unknown Soldier who had served with the armies of the partitioning powers, Germany, Austria and Russia.[4] The ceremony included many references to the First World War, such as a one-minute silence, a ritual copied from the British ceremony.[5]

Only a few weeks after the celebrations of 11 November, the tomb of the Unknown Soldier was visited once again by high-ranking members of the military and civilians, carrying flowers and wreaths and holding speeches. On 28 November, Polish veterans once again commemorated their commitment and their sacrifice during the First World War – as part of the Allied powers, and now, as ex-servicemen, as part of the inter-Allied network FIDAC. The regular celebration of its founding as

'*Journée Interalliée*' was introduced to express the common identity of FIDAC members and to remember the Allied victory. This celebration of the official founding date, 28 November 1920, served as a medium of continuous solidification of a common identity: all member countries and associations were encouraged to participate in celebrating FIDAC and thereby the Allied victory.[6] The Polish section annually invited others to a joined commemoration at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw or in such prominent venues as the hall of the city council.[7] Guests included not only representatives of the Polish veterans' movement, but also other members of FIDAC and local notables: representatives of the government and the army and of important social and economic organizations.[8] What seemed like a spontaneous local festivity was initiated by FIDAC headquarters: one month ahead of the celebrations, the general secretary Roger Marie d'Avigneau had sent letters to remind of the event and to provide directions. Laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldiers was encouraged, as was inviting veterans and military attachés of other Allied countries. He also requested that accounts of the day be sent to the General Secretary for the sake of being published in the *FIDAC-Revue* and to represent the celebrations of the Allied victory and the continuous Allied loyalty in the member states.[9]

In the Polish case, veterans, but also the society and press, were keen to live up to these demands. The scale of the celebrations and the choice of speakers and guests present show this was an important social event in Warsaw.[10] Poland saw itself as an Ally and enjoyed portraying itself as part of this broader community. The presence of veterans of other Allied countries and militaries, and international media attention – even if restricted to a specially targeted group – provided a platform to manifest Poland's status as an Ally.

By celebrating their founding date as an 'Inter-Allied Day', displaying parades, uniforms and a proper flag, FIDAC established an Allied day of commemoration with a political agenda. The introduction of a flag and an envisaged identity card further stressed the ambition to represent a transnational community. FIDAC was the institutional representation of the transnational Allied 'culture of victory' and manifested itself with the means of modern national states: flag, passport, commemoration day.[11]

During the First World War, Polish men had fought as conscripts or professional soldiers in the armies of the partition powers: Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Exact numbers are hard to come by, and those cited by historians vary enormously. The most frequent number

cited is 1.5 million Polish soldiers who fought in the partition armies (800,000 in the Russian and 300,000 each in the Habsburg and German armies). However, recent works have given higher numbers, estimating approximately between two and three million Polish soldiers within the partition armies.[12] Calculations by Alexander Watson go up to 850,000 Polish soldiers for the German army (1914–1918) alone.[13] Between 450,000 and 800,000 Polish men died as soldiers during the First World War, countless were wounded. The war experience of Polish soldiers fighting during the Great War thus overshadows the impact of the following border wars. Until final demobilization in 1922, only about 800,000 soldiers served in the Polish army – not all of whom saw active battle.[14]

The immense sacrifice of Polish soldiers during the First World War was, however, not represented by their role in national commemoration. National collective memory and historiography highlighted the following border wars, which were regarded as wars of independence. So far, there are only a few historical writings that deal with the Polish veterans of the First World War, and none dealing with the international impact of their commitment to peace and benefits. The interest in veteran activities is limited to a few publications.[15]

About one-third of the Polish soldiers who fought in the First World War joined veterans' organizations. Jabłonowski estimates a membership rate of about 15.6 per cent, but also quotes the official number of 23.6 per cent. Some have criticized an allegedly low membership rate of Polish First World War veterans compared to other European countries. This might have been due to the larger number and lower social status of their service, compared to veterans of the Polish army. However, the numbers also need to be put into perspective: the British Legion, national umbrella organization, counted 409,011 members in 1938, on the peak of their expansion. This meant only 10 per cent of the First World War veterans of Great Britain were represented by the Legion, much less than in Polish veterans' organizations. The Polish ZIWRP, Association of Polish War Invalids, was one of the most influential social movements of the Second Polish Republic. Among the members of veterans' associations, invalids were the by far dominant group. Again, this phenomenon corresponded to Western European countries: in Great Britain and France up to 75 per cent of the organized veterans' movement had been wounded in the war.[16]

Beyond organizational work in their own country, Polish ex-servicemen of the First World War were actively and enduringly involved in the establishment of the international veterans' network.[17] This participation

of Polish veterans in a transnational veterans' movement is significant – both for Poland and for a European history of veterans during the interwar period. Poles were early members of FIDAC and CIAMAC, even a founding member of CIAMAC. In their commitment to the international veterans' associations, Poles were one of the biggest and most active groups, second only to the French. Poles were quick to join the inter-Allied association FIDAC. The first contacts, established in 1920, were based on personal acquaintances of leading figures of the French veterans' movement, namely Charles Bertrand, General Secretary of the UNC, and Hubert Aubert. Due to the still unorganized structure of the national veterans' movement, and to the ongoing war, it took Poland a couple of years longer to officially join their fellow Allied ex-servicemen.[18]

According to its statutes, FIDAC aimed to unite Allied veterans of the Great War, but constitutionally denied access to veterans of countries who 'formerly raised their weapons against the Allies'.[19] However, FIDAC was quite liberal in its acceptance of Eastern European veterans' organizations, among them representatives from Poland. Polish soldiers had served the armies of Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany as professionals and conscripts, meaning that a large number of their veterans had actually fought against the Allies in the ranks of the Central Powers. After the war, the Polish state had been recognized as an Allied state by the Treaty of Versailles. Due especially to the Polish Army in France, formed of Polish-French and Polish-American volunteers and POWs, and influenced by the political background, FIDAC generously overlooked Poles, former involvement with the Germans and Austrians and accepted Polish veterans' organizations as members.

Poles responded with a devoted commitment to the cause. Twice, Poland hosted the annual international meeting (Warsaw 1926, 1936). Poles were also eager to apply for 'FIDAC identity cards'.[20] These cards were meant to be used while travelling in Allied countries, and were intended to provide the holder with a friendly reception and support on the grounds of being an Allied veteran. The card displayed a member's name, address and nationality, as well as information on the institutional affiliation, the army he fought in and his battlefield injuries in English, French and Italian, and on demand one further language.[21]

In securing membership to FIDAC, Poland's engagement with the Central Powers was trumped by its position as an 'honorary Ally'. Polish representatives underlined the Polish contribution to war and its specific importance with regard to the Soviet revolution, promoting Poland's role as the European stronghold against the threat of Bolshevism.[22] Officially, Polish ex-servicemen were represented by up to 36 single associations

in both FIDAC and CIAMAC, but two national veterans' unions, the Association of Polish War Invalids, ZIWRP, and the umbrella organization, FPZOO, functioned as administrative mediators.

Welfare

While Polish troops were still fighting, the young Polish state was already confronted with the problems of demobilization. Soldiers and invalids of the First World War returned to their homes in the now Polish territory. They turned to the Polish parliament, Sejm, and the (often changing) government with their demands. Since they no longer lived in the state they had fought for, they saw themselves forced to approach the new Polish state. They soon realised, however, that widows and orphans pensions, disability pensions and allowances for unemployed veterans were not the Sejm's first priority. The emerging political institutions preferred to attend to other problems, ensuring the consolidation of state independence, military questions concerning the border wars and the re-unification of the three previously divided parts of the Polish territory.

To achieve their aims, and to secure equal welfare for the invalids and war victims, as well as support at the labour market for veterans, the ex-servicemen had to become organized and to found institutions and associations to promote their needs. This was true in particular for the Polish veterans of the First World War, standing in the shadow of those of the Polish army. The claim of the Polish veterans and invalids was not one for purely charitable aid. Instead, they demanded moral and legal acknowledgement and compensation for the 'work for the state'.[23]

The first provisional regulations issued during the Polish border wars referred only to the Polish army and the Polish Legions. War service on behalf of the nation and defending the state led to an overall accepted right for compensation, just like in other nation-states with a conscription army. However, the service of the large number of Polish First World War veterans was less easily translated to meet the new expectations. Many of those who fought alongside the partition armies did not continue to fight in the Polish army. They had risked their life and health in the war, but they had done so wearing foreign uniforms. Therefore, their position and their claims in the Second Polish Republic were subject to controversy.

The newly formed veterans' organizations tried to impose pressure on the debates and decisions of the parliament. One of the ways to do so was direct lobbyism. Some of the veterans' associations' deputies were

also members of the parliament. These men, who had fought in the First World War, had an important function as intermediaries. They represented the views of the veterans in parliamentary debates and joined the relevant committees. Comprehensive veterans' legislation was seen as the best representation of the Polish state in the international community. By voting for comprehensive welfare, the Polish Sejm deputies wanted to fight the reputation of the Second Republic as a '*Saisonstaat*', a German label indicating Poland was a state that would not last a season.[24] The developments of social benefits policy provided for former combatants abroad, especially in Western Europe, were a constant point of comparison.

The willingness to provide welfare was ranked, preferring some and neglecting others. At the top of the hierarchy were those veterans who could prove to have served in the ranks of the Polish army and who, in addition, fit the definition of 'Polishness'. Veterans who had only fought in the armies of the partition powers and those who belonged to the ethnic and religious minorities were ranked lower in the hierarchy of national commemoration. The journal *Inwalida*[25] accused legislation of distinguishing between 'Polish invalids and invalid Poles' ('*Inwalidzi, Polscy a inwalidzi Polacy*').[26] The implementation of the Invalids' Law of 1921 was postponed repeatedly. In June 1923, even the Komisja Opieki Społecznej i Inwalidzkiej (Committee for Social Benefits and Invalids) handed in a report in which it made the accusation that this law had been repeatedly delayed under different pretexts.[27] The late 1920s saw a nationalization of the discussions, including those related to the pension schemes. The lack of resources and the chronically tight budget of the Polish state worsened this situation.

In an attempt to reclaim the rights they had been granted in international agreements, several veterans' organizations threatened to pursue their claims with the League of Nations. The threat worked – even if only temporarily – maybe less because of the possible success of such an action but rather owing to the Polish parliament being very conscious about making a bad impression internationally, in terms of the national administration and policy of the Second Polish Republic.

After 1918, Poland was in urgent need of building a new infrastructure that would shift the major Polish cities from the periphery of the old empires to the centre of the new national state, and to rapidly adopt an industrialized economy. Even more urgent was the formation and consolidation of modernized Polish politics. The traditions of three very different realms influenced the new state via personal and institutional structural continuities. They formed the basic pattern, which was

picked up on the one hand, but on the other hand served as a landmark of what not to adopt. These inherited influences competed with the target of many policies in Western Europe, especially those from France.

The discussion about the supply of welfare to world war veterans was instrumental in the consolidation and modernization of the Polish state. The demands of war veterans committed the state to provide welfare in a rapid formation of structures. But Poland did not use all the opportunities offered to it. The Polish state failed in the attempt to integrate the minorities effectively in the new social legislation. Despite legal wording giving supposedly secure equal rights, in practice it was rarely implemented.

In 1918, it was by no means self-evident that the newly independent Poland was a welfare state and would take over the responsibility for First World War veterans. The state could have taken a form like Soviet Russia, largely distancing themselves from the previous regime, and thus from the care of veterans themselves. The formation of a liberal state model, as in the UK, could have led to a system that would leave welfare to the private charitable commitment. Poland could have also embarked on an entirely new way, introducing a new kind of welfare system. Instead, certain structures and concepts proved to be particularly influential, which were based on a continental European welfare state, the so called 'conservative model'.[28] This model proved to find overall consensus, because it corresponded to the direction of the two driving forces: via structural continuities in the administration and the political and administrative elite the tradition of social legislation in the division of powers such as Germany and Austria had a significant impact on the new legislation. The option of a liberal model (as in the US, UK, etc.) or a social democratic model (as in Scandinavia) was, therefore, covered by the strong continental influence on a structural and discursive level. The state formation of Poland was in line with its European neighbours.

For the veterans, the identity of having been 'brothers in arms' on the Allied side, and the common 'war experience' in general, proved to be a strong bond. This was extended and deepened by the joint ideals of 'comradeship' and 'devotion to the dependent'. The ex-servicemen united in FIDAC and CIAMAC used their international associations to promote social welfare and governmental aid for invalids, widows and orphans, as well as to claim support and reintegration into the labour market for ex-servicemen. FIDAC and CIAMAC collected figures and statistics about the situation in the single member states and thereby offered useful information for demands in each country. Comparing support

and care for ex-servicemen and their dependents was considered to strengthen the respective bargaining position at home – a tactic explicitly recommended by the international organizations.[29] Representatives of the Polish ex-servicemen and war victims' associations were among those who frequently published on this topic in the regular reports of CIAMAC and FIDAC. Keeping an eye on welfare politics abroad was of especially high interest to them since Poland, as a newly re-founded state, had no tradition of providing social welfare. Furthermore, the thoughts of 'devotion' to the victims and 'immortality to our dead' motivated the ex-servicemen to unite to fight yet another battle: against the threat of a new upcoming war, as will be explored later.[30]

At the same time, the assemblies served to increase the national identity of the Polish ex-servicemen. On the international level, ex-servicemen were organized through national groups. Cleavages within the Polish society (originating from three former differently occupied territories, belonging to an ethnic or confessional minority, military service in the ranks of the occupying forces or of the liberator) were not relevant at the international level. Even though, during the Great War, the majority of Polish ex-servicemen fought alongside Germans, Austrians or French, the outward representation made them 'Polish veterans' in spite of their entirely different war experiences. Both identities were probably more fluid and open with the Poles than with other nationalities. For them, the general language barrier was a lot easier to overcome because of their contacts in exile (French, English) or their belonging to a former occupied territory (German).

With the ongoing debates at national level to ensure a fair supply, and seconded by the increasing importance of the League of Nations and the ILO, this transnational identity supplied a strong support for First World War veterans. The international forum served less and less as a mere contact platform between the respective national associations' agenda, but increasingly transformed into a transnational network, transcending national borders.

Pragmatic Pacifism

Next to securing welfare for war victims and ex-servicemen, the second common interest that became fundamental to the formation of a transnational community of veterans was preventing another war. The aim of the international veterans' movement to support demands for disarmament, peaceful conflict solutions and pacifism provided a dilemma for most of the participating former combatants, as it often stood in

direct opposition to the more nationalized and militarized policies of their own national governments. While Polish veterans participated in an anti-war movement, the Polish government invested the lion's share of their state budget in armament. Polish veterans' organizations published their pacifistic world-view in their own veterans' journals, as in the publications of FIDAC and CIAMAC. Being a part of the transnational movement, in close contact with the League of Nations, opened a 'back door to political participation'[31] to the Polish veterans of the First World War, while political participation in Poland was dominated by the more militarized pro-Piłsudski-veterans. To ease the tension of the dilemma of being pacifistic, Polish invalids' associations argued that the Polish ex-servicemen's commitment to transnational collaboration would contribute to a 'favourable view of Poland abroad'.[32] Veterans chose a pragmatic, 'non-dogmatic concept of pacifism' that denied militarism and supported any form of peace-building and peace-keeping policy, but allowed defence.[33]

Veterans' organizations had been engaged in pacifistic activities before, but experiencing mass death and destruction during the First World War transferred the desire to actively fight against war to a far broader mass of former combatants. They based their engagement for peace on the moral high ground that they had seen their comrades die, and risked their own life. This peace, 'bought at a price so dear', would have to be defended.[34] Invalids, they claimed, had suffered the 'sacred reality of guns and carbines' and therefore had the 'right to demand humanity to work for peace'.[35] The Polish war invalids claimed to be 'living war memorials'.[36] The fact that they had known war gave them the right to criticize it. These motives and arguments of the Polish veterans were similar to the discourses in other European countries. Former combatants had the moral obligation to fight for enduring peace because only they had the moral ground to fight against war, 'the moral and physical strength required to ensure peace'.[37] There could be no doubt about their patriotism, since they had already risked their lives for their fatherlands.[38] Just like their French and British comrades, the Polish veterans underlined their 'authority of direct experience'.[39]

These arguments for peace were, at the same time, a pre-emptive defence strategy. The dilemma of choosing between peace and security threatened to divide the Polish veterans' movement. FPZOO, which would later itself become involved in anti-war demonstrations, called the Polish Invalids' Association, the most pacifistic group among the Polish veterans, 'suspicious pacifists', too naive about disarmament and blind to German anti-Polish ambitions.[40] The solution to their dilemma of

being veterans and fighting against war was the pragmatic approach: at no time did Polish veterans' organizations completely reject the idea of employing violence. Defence was always an exception to the rule of pacifistic ideas: to defend your country, you would have to take up arms.[41] Despite their desire for peace, even invalids underlined that they would always defend their 'fatherland's soil', since it had literally been 'united by their own blood'.[42] Pacifism was specified as the rejection of war of aggression (*wojna napastnicza*).[43] Defensive warfare, however, provided a completely different case. The fear of once again losing independence was engrained into the Polish political discourse. Even the pacifistic veterans did not dare to commit generally to disarmament and peace.

International contracts were regarded as a first step to peaceful relations.[44] 'Security of our fatherlands and peace in Europe' were defined as most important to the veterans' interests.[45] International treaties and the resolutions of the League of Nations should provide the basis to integrate these two vital interests. The Polish veterans' peace discourse remained very aware of threats from their neighbours, Eastern and

Figure 3 A CIAMAC delegation in Warsaw, on their way to lay a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, 31 August 1931.

Source: Zespół Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny Archiwum Ilustracji, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe 1-P-1580.

Western. In spite of their hearty welcome for agreements on peace, such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which rejected war as a solution to international conflicts, the Polish people remained sceptical.[46]

The Polish attitude corresponded to the predominant definition of pacifism in the inter-war period. Very few pacifists rejected violence in general. Not only former combatants, but even civil peace movements, did not consider it impossible to defend the desired peace with arms – on the contrary, this was regarded as civil obligation.[47] This liberal form of pacifism, which rejected war but did not exclude violence *per se,* was the most frequent phenomenon of the inter-war period. This definition was consistent with international law, which explicitly allowed war as a manner of defence.[48] Nonetheless, the existence of a pacifist movement in inter-war Poland has been almost completely overlooked by historians.[49]

The balance accepted by Polish veterans between pacifistic ambitions and patriotic loyalty was frequently tested. At the same time, this potential threat provided possibilities to underline and strengthen common ground with veterans' organizations of other countries, helping a delicate identity of transnational ex-servicemen within this network to emerge. To read the veterans' activities as the long arm of Polish foreign policy denies important aspects of the transnational collaboration of former combatants.[50] The Polish veterans who engaged in these transnational commitments were no hypocrites, but rather – to use Sandi Cooper's term – 'Patriotic Pacifists;' caught between the lines of their own interest and what was considered to be national loyalty.[51]

To solve this dilemma, disarmament was one of the most important requests of the pacifistic ex-servicemen. The demand for a general disarmament and a decline of the weapons trade could not be regarded as sheer lack of patriotism. At the same time, it suited the pragmatic pacifism of the former combatants, who not only accepted war in case of defence, but approved of it. Aiming for an international regulation of national armament policies not only promised a decline of armed conflicts; applied to the German case it also paralleled the official foreign policy of the Second Polish Republic. However, there was a major difference: while the Polish foreign policy demanded German disarmament, Polish veterans requested a general disarmament, including their own country's. The League of Nations was regarded as the required institution 'to norm, centralize and link' this work.[52]

Besides the actual reduction of weapons and arms, the former combatants demanded moral disarmament, a demilitarization of thoughts and the elimination of prejudices and hate among the nations.[53] Demands

of moral disarmament in Poland were closely linked to a rejection of Prussian militarism and were fuelled by the reaction to the perceived threat by the almost paramilitary veterans' organization in the Weimar Republic.[54] This was not only criticism of Germany, but a rejection of an entire system of education and thought during the inter-war period, it also questioned the rising militarism in Poland itself. Their increasing distance from militarism proves to be a further indicator of the pacifistic tendencies of Polish ex-servicemen and invalids. Pacifistic education of children was regarded as a founding stone of moral disarmament.[55] Polish delegates Jan Karkoszka and Edwin Wagner (both ZIWRP) issued a statement underlining that two procedures were necessary for the maintenance of peace: firstly, the official collaboration with the League of Nations, and secondly, the contribution of public opinion and a moral disarmament, to be achieved by collaboration in economy, culture, education and youth exchange.[56]

Despite growing international tensions, the Polish interest in disarmament and peace was not cut off at the end of the 1920s. Poland saw a decline in pacifistic interest, caused by the disappointment over the failure of the Kellogg–Briand Pact. However, the Polish veterans' movement took up the discussions of disarmament and peace movement only in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[57] At the peak of these veterans' activities, an international anti-war rally took place as a side event to the League of Nations' disarmament conference in 1932/33.[58]

The Polish delegation to the disarmament conference in Geneva in 1932 assembled key figures of the Polish veterans' movement and was headed by the two presidents of the most influential and biggest veterans' associations in Poland: General Roman Górecki, president of the national umbrella organization of ex-servicemen, FPZOO, and Jan Karkoszka, president of the ZIWRP. Both were major political figures in Poland (Górecki as president of the Bank of National Economy, Karkoszka as a long-standing member of the parliament), but furthermore, they were part of the inner circle of the international veterans movement represented in Geneva: at the time of the Geneva protests, Górecki was the elected president of FIDAC, Karkoszka one of the vice-presidents of CIAMAC.[59] The Geneva manifestation of ex-servicemen against war thereby constituted a heyday both for the success of the Polish ex-servicemen's movement and for Polish integration into the transnational network of First World War veterans.

Roman Górecki, a key figure of the Polish veterans' movement, in particular was engaged far beyond sheer attendance. As president of FIDAC,

he chaired the meeting jointly with Maximilian Brandeisz, president of CIAMAC.[60] In his function, Górecki delivered the opening speech – and his anti-war address was applauded. He referred to the main lines of argument of the pacifist veterans' movement. He demanded renunciation of revenge and aggression.[61] He underlined the importance of the peace treaties and of the rejection of any kind of revisionism concerning the borders for an enduring peace. Górecki called for sanctions in case of violations. His definition of peace was defensive and did not condemn an eventual use of violence. To achieve peace, military and moral disarmament would have to be combined with the close attention of an international community and the possibility of punishing violations of international law.[62] His speech concluded with his expression of the desire to one day establish enduring and everlasting peace, and with the demand to commit to this aim in remembrance of the victims of the last war: 'Comrades, in memory of your dead, work with all your heart and all your will for its realization.'[63] The Polish delegate Skórewicz took up this pacifistic notion, and declared 'Poland […] will always remain profoundly pacifistic.'[64]

In Poland, as in most other European countries, radicalized nationalist attitudes rose slowly but surely within public debates during the late 1920s. In May 1926, Piłsudski performed a *coup d'état* with the support of ex-servicemen, mainly of the Polish Legions. Piłsudski chose not to be head of state, nonetheless the way he maintained a democratic façade to his autocratic regime has been rated a 'pseudo-parliamentary charade'.[65] During the following years of his *Sanacja*-Regime, a cult of Piłsudski and his Polish Legions was established and cultivated as part of the political founding myth.[66] This also resulted in a new interest in the First World War, since Piłsudski was regarded as 'the builder of the fatherland', who had foreseen Poland's chances to independence and seized it. Yet, this new interest in the First World War remained restricted to Piłsudski, his legions and 'national achievements'.

This nationalist drift highly influenced the structure of the Polish veterans' movement. Up to that point, the biggest national umbrella organization had been ZIWRP.[67] Focusing its work on war victims and war invalids, as well as the bereaved and orphaned, the ZIWRP was comparatively open-minded, and aimed to integrate former combatants of the partition powers and veterans belonging to minorities. From the early 1920s, it represented Poland in international veterans' meetings. The impact of its rate of organization was regarded as a challenge by the more nationalistic veterans' organizations. In 1928, they founded the pro-Piłsudski umbrella organization FPZOO. The spirit of this federation was highly dominated

by the ideal of '*polskość*' (Polishness), including several aspects considered to be a 'Polish character', predominantly Polish language, cultural heritage and Catholicism.[68] On the international scale, the FPZOO gained influence by taking over the representation of many Polish member associations, owing to the fact that these organizations could not afford to keep up steady communication and long-distance travel costs for their own representatives. The invalids' association ZIWRP, however, remained their strongest competitor, and maintained its influence in Poland and abroad. Although the FPZOO never achieved its aim to unite all Polish ex-servicemen, it became highly influential and clearly shaped the further development of the Polish veterans' movement. Its advantage was its influential members, among them members of the parliament and other important notabilities, such as its president Roman Górecki. The rise of the FPZOO marked a shift towards more nationalized attitudes within the ex-servicemen's movement. Even though it never matched the extent of rising nationalism in public debates, it obviously corresponded to it.

A final break with the pacifist movement can be seen after Piłsudski's death in 1935. Under General Edward Śmigły-Rydz the political culture of Poland became even more militarized than it had been under Piłsudski. The last years of the inter-war period were highly influenced by the rising conflicts with Germany and the dawning threat of another world war. From 1937 on, articles in Polish veterans' journals changed and became radicalized. In 1938, finally, the atmosphere changed for the worse. Instead of peace, war appeared to move to the centre of interest. Even the invalids' journal *Inwalida* headed 'We are ready'[69] and argued for mobilization and armament to confront German politics. 1939 saw new aggressively nationalistic slogans that supported expansion plans to Silesia and the Sudetenland.[70] National interests had become central to the veterans' movement in Poland. Polish engagement in FIDAC, however, was only to be strengthened by the outbreak of war. While the exile government fled first to Paris, then to London, Allied connections and a common memory of war experience were important symbolic capital for the Poles. Articles in the *FIDAC Revue* on the Polish sacrifice during and after the Great War (against Soviet Russia) promoted Allied bonds far into the war years.

Conclusions

During the inter-war period, a new identity as a world war veteran developed from the commitment to common interests and shared political goals. War experience was the founding myth of their community and

at the same time the starting point and argumentative capital of their demands for better care and disarmament. Initial cross-border contacts between First World War veterans developed into a network, which expanded and strengthened during the 1920s. It relied on mutual trust based on a joint experience of war, and on the belief in fighting (even alongside the former enemy) for common interests. In this way, the First World War did not just not lead to a breach of international relations, as often assumed, but to the intensification and eventual development of a transnational elite of veterans. The shared biographical experience was the starting point, but collaboration was consolidated by common social, material interests and ideals. The Polish veterans' movement was strongly influenced by the co-operation with (Western) European veterans' associations. At the same time, the recent (re-)foundation of the Polish state and the consolidation of a civil society put the Poles in a particular situation. The loyalty of the former combatants was to the Polish state and national independence. However, the fact that national interests might have stirred the activities of Poles on an international level does not lessen their participation in international organizations. With regard to Poland, neither the thesis of a brutalization of society through the First World War experience (Mosse and his adaptation), nor a theory of direct continuity based on left social movements (Prost/Winter) might be proven in general.

Indeed, veterans did have specific national interests, but they were not necessarily the same as their national state's interests. Accordingly, there was no contradiction between nationalism and internationalism. On the contrary, in the given case of Polish war veterans, these two aspects complement each other. Their participation in international veterans' organizations, especially the pacifist meetings, has been criticized as a farce, to cover up interests of official national Polish foreign policy. The examples and the extent of the Polish commitment to the transnational cause presented here should be enough to prove the contrary. Most importantly, debates on what they 'truly and honestly' meant when participating, are futile. Their actions and words contributed to building an international peace movement and international collaboration during the inter-war period. With letters, speeches and publications condemning war, Polish veterans and invalids fought against war, thus manifesting a transnational pacifism of war veterans in the inter-war period. Their actions developed their own dynamics. Whether some of them did not 'mean' what they said (and can the historian ever know?), is secondary. With their words and deeds they created and performed standpoints, they committed to a

transnational veterans movement, they strengthened international collaboration. Their participation was a performative act, their words declarations of peace.[71]

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the veterans' peace movement failed. The (sometimes all too naive) belief in a lasting peace had led them into co-operating with the Nazis. This led to the veterans' eventual moral and political 'bankruptcy'.[72] For them, it was not about supporting Hitler, but, in the words of Antoine Prost, merely a 'moral imperative' to prevent another war.[73] However, in their quest for peace, the First World War veterans were willing to sacrifice too much. Despite this failure, the veterans succeeded in laying the foundation for a more peaceful time: the international veteran network, built on links of pacifism and social interests and formed in close collaboration with the Geneva institutions, provided the starting point for the development of pacifism and human rights movements since 1945, and long term for a European civil society.[74] As Jay Winter puts it: 'The defeat of interwar soldiers' pacifism was a prelude to their longer-term victory.' [75]

At the end of the road, however, Poland did not return to the status quo. The debates on social benefits contributed to designing the modern Polish state and with it a modern Polish nation.[76] The formation of associations and the establishment of interest groups of Polish First World War veterans contributed to the construction of the Polish nation, as well as to the consolidation of the Polish state. Continuities from this continued into the post-war period, after 1945, particularly with regard to the welfare-state element in Polish politics.[77] Most importantly, the debates of the veterans' movement on care as well as on pacifism were firmly embedded in the European context. During the Second World War, both the narrative of independence and the close contacts with the Allies would once again become vital for the Polish nation.

Notes

1. 'Swięto niepodległości', *Kurjer Polski* (hereafter KP), 11.XI.1926, p. 1.
2. Compare 'Obchód rocznicy Wyzwolenia', KP, 10.XI.1920, p. 1; 'Swięto czyni wyzwoleńczego', KP, 15.XI.1920, p. 1; 'Porządek pochodu', in *Gazeta Warszawska* (hereafter GW), 17.XI.1918, p. 5–6; 'Manifestacja stolicy', GW, 18.XI.1918, p. 2; 'Obchód 11-go listopada', GW, 11.XI.1920, p. 2; 'W piątą rocznicę niepodległości', GW, 12. XI.1923, p. 3.
3. 'Obchód Paryski', KP, 10.XI.1920, p. 1.
4. Christoph Mick, 'Der Kult um den "Unbekannten Soldaten" im Polen der Zwischenkriegszeit', in Martin Schulze-Wessel (ed.), *Nationalisierung der Nation und Sakralisierung der Religion im östlichen Europa* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), pp. 181–200.

5. 'Akt Erekcyjny Grobowca Zołnierza Polskiego', KP, 8.XI.1925, p. 4. 'Obchody Zwycięstwa Aljantów w rocznice zawieszenia broni', KP, 13.XI.1922, p. 2; 'Rocznica Zawieszenia Broni', KP, 10.XI.1925, p. 1; 'Rocznica Zawieszenia Broni', KP, 12.XI.1925, p. 1; 'Akt Erekcyjny Grobowca Zołnierza Polskiego', KP, 8. XI.1925, p. 4.
6. Hubert Aubert, 'La FIDAC – The FIDAC', in *FIDAC – Revue Mensuelle des Problèmes d'après guerre/Monthly Review of Post-War Problems*, V. Year, Vol. V (March 1929), 3, pp. 18–19.
7. Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN): FPZOO: Sekcja Polska FIDAC 340/376: Rocznica Powstania FIDAC. Obchody organizowane przez Sekcję Polską. Przemówienia, Artykuł, Komunikat, Korespondencja, Rachunki, Wycinki prasowe. 1929–1938.
8. Representatives of Sokoł and Strzelec were present as well as of PKO and PBR.
9. Letter by Roger Marie d'Avigneau to Roman Górecki, 28.10.1931. AAN: FPZOO: Sekcja Polska FIDAC 340/376.
10. Ibid. See also 'W 11-ą Rocznicę Powstania FIDAC u. Wielka akademia w Sali Rady Miejskiej', *Gazeta Polska*, 29.11.1931, p. 2; 'Jedenasta Rocznica utworzenia FIDACu. Uroczysty obchód w Warszawie' and 'FIDAC a Polska. Przemówienie gen. Góreckiego', *Polska Zbrojna*, 29.11.1930, p. 7, and further press clippings.
11. See Introduction.
12. Piotr Wandycz, 'Se remobiliser pour renaitre: Les voies polonaises de la sortir de la guerre', in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Christophe Prochasson (eds.), *Sortir de la grande guerre. Le monde et l'après-1918* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008), pp. 307–328, esp. p. 314. Lesław Dudek calculates the number at 2,250,000 men, deducting from the total number of inhabitants of the Polish territory of 1921: Lesław Dudek, 'Polish Military Formations in World War I', in Béla K. Király and Nándor F. Dreisziger (eds.), *East-Central European Society in World War I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 454–470, esp. p. 455. Kossewska and Rosen-Zawadzki speak of 3.5 million: Elzbieta Kossewska, *Związek Legionistów Polskich (1922–1939)* (Warszawa: ASPRA-JR, 2003), p. 7. Jabłonowski speaks of 3 million. Marek Jabłonowski, *Sen o potędze Polski. Z dziejów ruchu byłych wojskowych w II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939* (Olsztyn: Ośrodek Badań Nauk. im W. Kętrzyńskiego, 1998), p. 5.
13. Alexander Watson, 'Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in The German Army, 1914–1918', in *English Historical Review* 2011; CXXVI, pp. 1137–1166. See also Stanisław Czerep, 'Straty polskie podczas I wojny światowej', in Daniel u. a. Grinberg (ed.), *Lata Wielkiej Wojny. Dojrzewanie do niepodległości 1914–1918* (Białystok: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2007).
14. Jabłonowski, *Sen o potędze Polski*, S. 20.
15. Jabłonowski, *Sen o potędze Polski*. Piotr Wróbel, 'Kombatanci kontra politycy. Narodziny i początki działania Związku Legionistów Polskich 1918–1925', in *Przegląd Historyczny* 76 (1985), pp. 77–111. Paweł Letko, 'Działalność międzynarodowa polskich organizacji kombatanckich w okresie Międzywojennym' (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Warsaw, 2001). Paweł Letko, 'Stosunki wzajemne między polskimi i niemieckimi kombatantów w okresie międzywojennym', in *Echa przeszłości* V (2004), pp. 135–154.

16. Jabłonowski, *Sen o potędze Polski*, pp. 20, 34 and 103. Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921–1939* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), pp. 57–58 and 63. Barr considers the League official numbers of 560,000 members unlikely. Furthermore, membership rates were only about 2 per cent in the cities. Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War* and *'Les anciens combattants' and French Society, 1918–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), p. 45.
17. For a more detailed discussion: Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge. Polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre Kontakte, 1918–1939* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).
18. Aubert, 'La FIDAC – The FIDAC', pp. 18–19. Antoine Prost, *Les anciens combattants et la société française, 1914–1939.* 3 Vls. Paris: 1977. Vol. I, p. 75.
19. 'It is forever closed to any association in the countries which bore arms against the allied nations'. Artikel 3, FIDAC. Statuts et Règlement Intérieur 1927, Paris, p. 6.
20. Information leaflet with regard to the FIDAC identity card, AAN, FPZOO: Sekcja Polska FIDAC 340/363: Przyjęcie Federacji do FIDAC. Udział Skecji Polskiej w Działalności FIDAC. Korespondencja z sekretariatem FIDAc w Paryżu, Regulamin Posługiwania się legitymacją Fidac, wykaz czasopism wydawanych prze organizacje kombatanckie. 1928–1931.
21. FIDAC Reports and Resolutions of the Eleventh Annual Congress, New York/Washington/Culver, September, 15–20, 1930, p. 57. Minutes of the Conseil de Direction de la FIDAC, du 3 juin 1931 in: AAN, FPZOO: Polska Sekcja FIDAC 340/346: FIDAC, Conseil des Directions. Protokóły posiedzień, porządki dzienne obrad. V.-XII. 1931.
22. Roman Górecki, 'New Poland', in FIDAC, 7 (July 1930), p. 9–20, here p. 13.
23. Michael Geyer, 'Ein Vorbote des Wohlfahrtstaates. Die Kriegsopferversorgung in Frankreich, Deutschland und Großbritannien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9 (1983), pp. 230–277, esp. p. 236.
24. RP II/0/15, p. 819–828, 18.3.1919, p. 822, speech by Putek.
25. Official Journal of the Association of Disabled Veterans, ZIWRP.
26. Bolesław Kikiewicz, 'Inwalidzi polscy, a inwalidzi Polacy', in *Inwalida*, 8 (10.8.1919), p. 1–2.
27. Stenographic Records of the Sejm: RP II/0/Druk Nr. 607 Sprawozdanie Komisji Opieki Społecznej i Inwalidzkiej w przedmiocie ustawy o opiece społecznej, signed by Edmund Bigoński, 13.6.1923, also RP II/1/Druk Nr. 132: Wniosek Nagły Sejmowej Komisji Opieki Społecznej, signed by Edmund Bigoński.
28. Gosta Esping Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
29. CIAMAC, Annual Assembly, 1937. Report 3, General Marco Nikiforov (Bulgarien), 'Die Entwicklung der Renten für Kriegopfer im Jahre 1936–37', pp. 91–140, quote pp. 92–93.
30. International Assembly of Ex-Service Men and War Victims in Geneva, March 19 and 20, 1933. Official Report published by THE CIAMAC and THE FIDAC, 'Declaration of General Roman Górecki, President of the F.I.D.A.C.', p. 8.
31. Similar to the case of French women pacifists: Mona Siegel, '"To the Unknown Mother of the Unknown Soldier": Pacifism, Feminism, and the Politics of Sexual Difference among French Institutrices between the Wars', in *French Historical Studies*, 22 (1999) 3, pp. 421–451, esp. p. 446.

32. Karkoszka, '8 Millionów', p. 1.
33. Wolfram Wette, 'Einleitung: Probleme des Pazifismus in der Zwischenkriegszeit', in Holl and Wette (1981), pp. 9–25, esp. pp. 13 and 15.
34. 'Because as ex-service men we are really the best qualified representatives of our respective nations to defend peace bought at so dear a price; because we speak in the name of thirteen million of our dead who fell on the field of honour on both sides of the front'. 'Declaration of General Roman Górecki', p. 8.
35. T. M. Nittmann, 'Inwalidzi a Rozbrojenie', in *Inwalida* 40 (1929), p. 2.
36. Anon. 'CIAMAC wobec niebezpieczeństwa wojny', in *Ociemniały Żołnierz (OŻ)* 5, 1936, p. 5–6.
37. Opening speech at the FIDAC congress in Białogród. Anon., 'Zjazd żołnierzy wielkej wojny', in *Inwalida* 36 (1929) p. 3–4.
38. 'Declaration of Mr. Maximilian Brandeisz, President of the CIAMAC', in *International Assembly of Ex-Service Men and War Victims in Geneva, March 19 and 20, 1933*. Official Report published by THE CIAMAC and THE FIDAC, p. 24–25, here p. 24.
39. Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p 174, ed. seq.
40. M. L., 'Podejrzani Pacyfiści', in *Federacja* 2, 1929, p. 3–5.
41. Anon., 'Morał jest jasny', in *Inwalida* Nr. 17, 1928, p. 1–2.
42. T. M. Nittmann, 'Inwalidzi a Rozbrojenne', in *Inwalida* 40, 1929, p. 2.
43. Gabryel Paradis, 'Jak zapewnić pokój światowy', in *OŻ,* 7, 1931, p. 4–6.
44. Junoszyc, 'Akcja Międzynarodowa Związku Inwalidów F.I.D.A.C. – C.I.A.M. A.C – Luksemburg', in *Inwalida* 47, 1928, p. 1.
45. Anon., 'CIAMAC w Obliczu Wojny Włosko-Abisyńskiej', in *OŻ,* 2, 1936, p. 7.
46. Łukasiński, 'Krok naprzód', in *Inwalida*, 36, 1928, p. 1.
47. This is true even for the French catholic peace movement around Marc Sangnier. Gearóid Barry, 'Marc Sangnier's War, 1914–1919: Portrait of a Soldier, Catholic and Social Activist', in Pierre Purseigle (Hg.), *Warfare and Belligerence. Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Brill: Leiden, 2005), pp. 163–188, esp. p. 183–184.
48. The European approach to pacifism is a pragmatic one: David Cortright, *Peace. A History of Movements and Ideas* (CUP: Cambridge, 2008), pp. 10, 31 and 48ff.
49. A rare exception: Peter Brock, 'Conscientious Objectors in Interwar Poland', in Ibid., (2006), pp. 365–377.
50. As has been done by Letko and Jabłonowski.
51. Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism. Waging War on War in Europe 1815–1914*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
52. Sch. L., Rozbrojenie, in *Inwalida Żydowski* 1, (June 1st 1928), pp. 2–3.
53. John Horne (Hg.), 'Demobilisations culturelles apres la Grande Guerre', in *Dossier de la revue 14–18 Aujourd'hui*, no. 5 (2002), pp. 43–53.
54. Polish veterans introduced the demand for moral disarmament into the resolution at the CIAMAC disarmament meeting in 1932. Later it was presented by the Polish minister at the disarmament conference. In: Anon., 'Międzynarodowe manifestacje', pp. 3–4.
55. W. Berkelhammer, 'Propaganda Pokoju', in *Inwalida Żydowski* 3 (August 1st 1928), p. 1.
56. Ibid. p. 3–4.

57. Wette, *Militarismus und Pazifismus*, p. 139 et seq.
58. Inwalida Nr. 13, 26. März 1933, S. 1, '8 Millionów b. kombatantów przeciwko wojnie. Wielka manifestacja zw. b. uczestników wojny w Genewie' (Jan Karkoszka); *International Assembly of Ex-Service Men and War Victims in Geneva, March 19 and 20, 1933*. Official Report published by THE CIAMAC (Geneva, 15, Rue Levrier) and THE FIDAC (Paris, 15, Rue de Presles (XVe)); *Historical Sketch*, p. 3. Also see Chapter 10, by Tom Davies, in this book.
59. Karkoszka, '8 Millionów', p. 1.
60. Ibid.
61. 'Declaration of General Roman Górecki', p. 8–9.
62. Karkoszka, '8 Millionów', p. 1. Górecki chose explicit words: 'It is sentimental prattle to believe that all international allegations can be settled by arbitration, if arbitration is devoid of sanctions.' 'Declaration of General Roman Górecki', p. 10.
63. Ibid.
64. 'Declaration of Mr. Skórewicz, Representing Poland', in *International Assembly of Ex-Service Men and War Victims in Geneva, March 19 and 20, 1933*. Official Report published by THE CIAMAC and THE FIDAC, pp. 20–21, quote p. 21.
65. Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland. Bd. II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 422.
66. Heidi Hein, *Der Piłsudski-Kult und seine Bedeutung für den polnischen Staat 1926–1939* (Marburg: Herder, 2002).
67. For a detailed view of Polish veterans' associations in the inter-war period, see Jabłonowski (1998).
68. Mick (2003), p. 298.
69. Anon., 'Jesteśmy gotowi!', in *Inwalida* 10 (1938), p. 2.
70. Anon., 'Zwycięstwo-naszym celem!', in *Inwalida* 1, (1939) p. 1.
71. Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002), p. 242. Ziemann speaks of a 'process of communicative and symbolic exchange' about the fundamental problems of society, Ziemann, *Konstruktion des Kriegsveteranen*, p. 103.
72. Jay Winter, 'Veterans, Human Rights, and the Transformation of European Democracy', in Elizabeth Kier and Ronald R. Krebs (eds.), *In War's Wake. International Conflict and the Fate of Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 122 ff.
73. Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War. 'Les anciens combattants' and French Society, 1918–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), p. 75.
74. Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *René Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
75. Winter, 'Veterans, Human Rights', p. 122.
76. Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, p. 29.
77. Julia Eichenberg, 'War Experience and the National State in Poland – Veterans and Welfare in the 20th Century', in 'Veterans and War Victims in Eastern Europe during the 20th Century: A Comparison', in *Comparativ* 20/5 (2011) Guest-Editors: Katrin Boeckh and Natali Stegmann, pp. 50–62, esp. pp. 60–62.

6

Allied Yugoslavia: Serbian Great War Veterans and their Internationalist Ties

John Paul Newman

Introduction

In March 1941, Prince Paul, a reluctant regent of Yugoslavia since the assassination of his uncle, King Aleksandar Karađorđević, in 1934, signed his country up to the Tripartite Pact. Under the agreed terms, Paul promised that Yugoslavia's neutrality in the Second World War would be advantageously slanted towards the Axis by allowing German military vehicles and weaponry to pass through Yugoslavia *en route* to help Mussolini's faltering campaign in Greece. The terms, agreed after months of pressure by Hitler, were relatively lenient, but even this loose association with the Axis was unacceptable to many of Yugoslavia's Serb population; Germany, after all, was a traditional foe. There were demonstrations against the signing on the streets of the Serbian capital, Belgrade, as protesters carried placards with slogans such as 'Better War than Pact' (*Bolje rat nego pakt*) and 'Better the Grave than a Slave' (*Bolje grob nego rob*). Then, on 27 March, a group of army officers, mainly from Yugoslavia's air force, carried out a coup against Paul's regime, deposing his regency and installing themselves in power. Winston Churchill was delighted with this development; the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) had been active in Yugoslavia for some months, cultivating pro-British and pro-Allied groups in Serbia with some success.[1] The British prime minister claimed that with the coup 'the Yugoslav nation found its soul'.[2] Hitler was also impressed by the Belgrade coup, albeit less favourably. On hearing of the generals' putsch, the Führer flew into a violent rage; the Serbs, responsible for the downfall of Austria-Hungary, were at it once again. Hitler moved quickly to ensure

that, this time, the Balkan mouse would not roar. He ordered a *Blitzkrieg* on Yugoslavia, whose defences lasted barely six days against the Axis' onslaught.

The Yugoslav 'soul' that Churchill referred to was born in the First World War. For many of his generation in Britain, inter-war Yugoslavia was indentified with 'gallant little Serbia': the wartime ally that stood up to Austria-Hungary at great cost. Hitler, too, remembered how a small and inferior Balkan nation had brought on a European conflagration whose *dénouement* had been the destruction of Austria-Hungary, the defeat of Germany and the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles. And for many people in Serbia, wartime traditions were of paramount importance: in signing the Tripartite Pact, Paul was betraying the country to its traditional enemies. This chapter will look at the cultivation and maintenance of these First World War traditions through the study of veterans' associations in inter-war Yugoslavia and their links to the international veterans' movement. The focus is on three of the largest veterans' organizations in Yugoslavia, all of which were closely linked to the international movement: The Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors (Udruženje reservnih oficira i ratnika, primarily although not exclusively a veterans' organization, having many members on the active list of the Yugoslav army), the Union of Volunteers (Savez dobrovoljaca) and the Association of War Invalids (Udruženje ratnih invalida). Due attention will be paid to the importance of the close ties between veterans of the Serbian and French armies. Indeed, it was these ties that led Yugoslav veterans towards involvement in the international veterans' movement, through membership in FIDAC. The constancy of inter-Allied ties amongst veterans resulted in an increasingly critical stance on the part of many veterans towards their country's foreign policy. This was especially true in the 1930s, as Yugoslavia's political leaders gradually abandoned (and were also abandoned by) France and Great Britain in favour of closer relations with Germany. Thus, the signing of the Tripartite Pact was seen by many Yugoslav veterans as the culmination of a perilous drift away from traditional allies towards traditional enemies, and was, for this reason, vehemently opposed.

The chapter's other aim is to show how these three associations' attempts to gain welfare from the state led to a deep and, ultimately, fatal disillusionment on the part of many veterans towards the new state's politics. The constant state of political crisis in Yugoslavia's parliament during the 1920s meant this institution was incapable of passing legislation in an efficient and timely fashion. Veterans, frustrated by this

failure, became increasingly critical of the parliamentary system itself, and by the end of a decade of sterile parliamentary rule most of them were willing to accept King Aleksandar's dictatorship (promulgated in 1929) as a route out of political paralysis. This chapter, then, is also a case study of the attempt, and failure, to create a compact between the state's politics and its veterans based on a feasible welfare programme acceptable to all sides.[3]

This opposition to official policy – to the welfare programme in the 1920s and the state's pro-Axis drift in the 1930s – shows how serious tensions existed between the high politics of the inter-war state on the one hand and veterans of the First World War on the other. The chapter, therefore, refutes the characterization of veterans' associations that has prevailed in existing historiography in Yugoslavia (in both socialist and post-socialist periods), i.e., that these groups were paramilitary auxiliaries of the Belgrade regime, ready and willing to wield violence against their opponents.[4] In fact, not only were the veterans' associations studied in this chapter frequently at loggerheads with the official line, they also frequently eschewed violence in favour of pacifism. Here, the influence of international organizations such as FIDAC is evident, for, as will be shown, Yugoslav veteran leaders were evangelists of the international movement's message of peace.

Finally, the divided nature of the veterans' movement within Yugoslavia will be addressed. The emphasis on inter-Allied ties, promoted through involvement in the international veterans' movement, enhanced the prominence of the Serbian culture of victory within Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was a 'successor state' of Austria-Hungary, created at the end of the First World War. It inherited numerous political, historical and institutional traditions, all of which needed to be woven together into a coherent whole by state-builders. Such cleavages were present also in the state's veterans' movement, for there were war veterans in Yugoslavia who had fought and served for the Allies (in the Serbian and Montenegrin armies) *and* there were those who had fought for the Central Powers (in the Austro-Hungarian army). Unsurprisingly, veterans associations in Yugoslavia were dominated by men who had fought in the Serbian and Montenegrin armies during the war. This was partly because 'Allied' veterans far outnumbered 'Central Powers' veterans in the inter-war state. But it was also because the impetus to organize into veterans' associations was stronger amongst Allied veterans. Each of the associations studied in this chapter, even while celebrating their Serbian members' role in the Allied victory, made important efforts to breach the divide which separated former 'enemies' within Yugoslavia.

Welfare

The 1920s were a formative decade in Yugoslavia, both for the state itself and for the Yugoslav veterans' movement. In this period, the Yugoslav parliament was in a state of near-permanent crisis, punctuated by three major crises: the controversy of the passing of the constitution in 1920–1921, a crisis involving opposition deputies in 1924 and a final, fatal crisis in the latter part of 1928, which will be discussed in more detail below.[5] This parliamentary turmoil is the context for the dissatisfaction of many veterans with the new state's politics; too often their demands for welfare seemed to go unheard by political parties jockeying for position in the parliament. Disappointment of this kind was certainly a prevailing mood amongst the members of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors, formed in Belgrade in 1919. The idea for an association to promote the interests of officers and war veterans was first forwarded in 1913 by a group of Serbian army officers who had fought in the Balkan wars.[6] The outbreak of the First World War put these plans on hold, and it was not until after the war that the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors held its first meeting. The association's membership was open to veterans of the Balkan wars and the First World War, as well as officers on the active and reserve lists of the Yugoslav army. Starting small – there were just 500 members in 1920 – the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors became one of the largest patriotic or veterans' associations in the South Slav state, claiming 15,000 members by the middle of the first post-war decade, and as many as 20,000 in 1930.[7] By the end of the 1920s, the association had branches throughout Yugoslavia, including former Habsburg territories in Bosnia, Dalmatia and in the Croat lands.

The association's president for much of the inter-war period was Milan Radosavljević, erstwhile major of the Serbian army and a veteran of Serbia's wars of 1912–1918. His hope was that the association would preserve the importance of military and wartime traditions in Yugoslavia, as well as help organize welfare for disabled veterans and their families, and for war widows and orphans. Radosavljević explained these aims at the association's first meeting in 1919

> We will preserve our bloody achievements and gains and pass them unspoilt to future generations.[…] we will preserve the memory of our fallen comrades, we will be devoted to our invalids, their children and the families of our fallen comrades […] We will pass on the cult of our fallen comrade to the coming generations, we will educate

> them and teach them about how they should love the fatherland and die for it […] we will be a secure foundation of the fatherland, which we gained with our blood.[8]

True to Radosavljević's words, the association was always ready to support veterans seeking welfare from the state. The pages of its journal, *The Warriors' Herald* (*Ratnički glasnik*), were full of complaints about the unhappy 'post-war conditions' under which former soldiers strained, in a state whose labyrinthine bureaucracy seemed designed to vex and dissuade supplicant veterans.

In fact, the welfare problem was primarily institutional. In the years immediately after the war and the unification of the new state, Yugoslavia's welfare programme was little more than an entanglement of pre-war and wartime arrangements. Veterans of the Serbian army were still provided for by pre-war Serbian laws, Austro-Hungarian veterans by Austro-Hungarian laws, and so on. It was a consequence of the myriad legal systems and welfare programmes inherited by the South Slav state in 1918, itself a consequence of the hasty fusing together of different territories at the end of the war.[9] Bringing order to this institutional chaos was too great a task for the Yugoslav parliament: the various coalitions that governed the country tended not to survive long enough to legislate effectively. Thus, for example, a law for disabled veterans was not passed until 1925 (after 16 drafts), and ex-soldiers had to wait until 1926 for a single law establishing their pension allowances.

This institutional failure alienated many former soldiers from the state. On this matter, the attitudes of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors were typical of veterans and patriotic societies in Yugoslavia. The association saw this legislative paralysis as symptomatic of official neglect of veterans and the values for which they had fought. It was unfortunate, noted the association, that the ideals of the war were trammelled in a state that 'respected war profiteers and post-war speculators – parvenus – more than warriors who paid for freedom and liberation with their own blood'.[10] On the battlefield, 'everyone knew his place and his duty;' now, veterans were treated with 'indifference', and a 'certain ministry' (Social Affairs, responsible for veterans' welfare) 'does not look too kindly on our association'.[11] When, in 1922, veterans from across the country, who were unhappy with the state's national welfare programme, protested on the streets outside the parliament in Belgrade, the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors joined them. From an early stage, these veterans were ready to call out their leaders, vocally and publicly, if they fell short of their expectations. And

the country's leaders fell short of veterans' expectations with damaging frequency. It was not that veterans' societies, such as the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors, were anti-state or unpatriotic. It was just that the association's patriotism did not rule out a critical stance towards national politics and national institutions. Warriors once, warriors always, the association's members were ever-ready to defend the state, even from its own institutions.

Veterans and the inter-Allied culture of victory

The Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors was active also in commemorating Serbia's war victory, an activity which, its members hoped, would help instil a sense of patriotism in the state's subjects. Frequently, this commemoration was situated in the context of the Allied victory. The association was involved in the international veterans' movement from an early stage, becoming a member of FIDAC in 1921, upon invitation by French veterans. Indeed, the association cultivated and maintained numerous ties with French veterans in the interwar period, based in large part on the bonds formed between soldiers of the French and Serbian armies who had served together on the Balkan front at Salonika. These ties, which were sincerely held by Serbian and French veterans, could be exploited by Yugoslav and French diplomats during the 1920s. The French considered 'victorious' Eastern European states such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland as vital to their geostrategic interests in the region, as bulwarks against Bolshevism and German revanchism. By the same token, Yugoslav leaders had much to gain from favourable relations with a powerful sponsor like France.

So, for example, at the beginning of 1921, French General Franchet d'Esperey, who had commanded the *Armée d'Orient* and the Serbian army during the breakthrough at Salonika in September 1918, was despatched, with much ceremony, to Yugoslavia. According to the Belgrade daily *Politika*, the streets of the Serbian (and Yugoslav) capital were filled with people keen to show their gratitude to Serbia's wartime ally.[12] A military band playing the Marseillaise greeted the general's train at the station, and French and Yugoslav tricolours adorned the windows of public and private buildings. The Yugoslav regent Aleksandar Karađorđević bestowed upon d'Esperey the honorific title of Vojvoda, and d'Esperey, in turn, conferred upon the city of Belgrade and its inhabitants the *Order national de la Légion d'honneur*, in recognition of their defence of the city against Austro-Hungarian attack in 1914.

D'Esperey was certainly an ace in the French diplomatic pack; and the masterly way France played its hand in Belgrade did not go unnoticed by the British Foreign Office. Britain was also a wartime ally, albeit one consigned to playing the second fiddle when the French were in town. Of d'Esperey's visit, a Whitehall official sniffed that 'I think [the Serbians] would rather hear less of "Heroic Little Serbia" […] and would prefer some mark of honour testifying to their importance as a modern state in the future rather than glorification of their past deeds.'[13] The British were far off the mark, however: it was precisely the culture of inter-Allied victory that testified to the importance of the new state, and the involvement of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors in FIDAC was not reducible to diplomatic gestures. The French general's poignant eulogy at the graveside of Vojvoda Živojin Mišić, who had died just shortly before the visit, would have struck a chord with many veterans of the Serbian army. D'Esperey addressed his wartime comrade by saying 'Dear Vojvoda, not only will your memory live on in the hearts of the Serbian people, but the whole of France will remember you eternally and with upmost piety.'[14] *Politika* thought it was a spontaneous and sincere gesture. Whether this was the case or not, it was certainly the case that ties between French and Serbian veterans were deeply entrenched, and remained so throughout the inter-war period, without regard for the shifting tides of international diplomacy. Members of the Poilus du Armée d'Orient were several times visitors to Yugoslavia, as were delegates of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors to France. In 1930, the association was part of a committee that welcomed a delegation of French veterans on the occasion of the unveiling of Ivan Meštrović's 'Monument of Gratitude to France' at Kalamegdan Fortress in Belgrade. In the inter-war period in Yugoslavia, 14 July, the storming of the Bastille, was a national holiday.

The Monument of Gratitude to France was just one example among many: most of the country's grandest monuments of the First World War were raised through the efforts of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors; a tribute to its energetic fundraising activities, but also to the generous subventions it received from the Royal Palace in Belgrade. Amongst the association's most impressive commemorative projects were the first monument to the 'Unknown Serbian Soldier' at Avala, raised in 1922 (which, in the 1930s, became a monument to the 'Unknown Yugoslav Hero'), a monument to Swiss criminologist Rudolf Archibald Reiss, at Topčider Park in Belgrade, and a large monument and ossuary to the 'Defenders of Belgrade' – the men who fought against the

Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia in 1914 – in the Serbian capital's New Cemetery.

This last monument, an initiative of Radosavljević himself, featured on its peak a statue of a Serbian soldier, clasping the (Serbian) national flag, and standing over a huge Habsburg double-headed eagle which lay slain at the base. If this design spoke volumes about the Serbian culture of victory in Yugoslavia, its unveiling ceremony revealed the importance of this culture of victory's inter-Allied aspect. The monument was unveiled on Armistice Day 1931, not a red letter date in Serbia's war calendar: her army had broken through the Salonika front in September 1918, and Austria-Hungary, Serbia's great adversary, had collapsed in October 1918. Armistice Day was observed in Yugoslavia so that ex-soldiers there could be in accord with the international veterans' movement. When the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors observed a minute of silence on 11 November, they knew they were doing so alongside former soldiers throughout the world. The association explained in the pages of its journal the importance of 'that day, a day of peace, dedicated to the dead and celebrated by nine million Allied warriors of Europe and America, organized in FIDAC'.[15]

The inter-Allied culture of victory, then, allowed the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors, and patriotic and veterans' organizations like it, to link Serbia's victory to a large, international group, and to sit alongside comrades from across the world as equals in the inter-Allied veterans' movement. Indeed, Milan Radosavljević, Yugoslav delegate to FIDAC throughout the 1920s, became president of the entire organization in 1930. And yet embracing this inter-Allied culture so whole-heartedly meant discarding an important part of Yugoslavia's war legacy, for the state's subjects had fought not only *for* the Allies, but also *against* them. Like Czechoslovakia and Poland, other eastern European states in which an inter-Allied culture of victory was prominent, Yugoslavia owed its existence to the war and to the defeat and disintegration of Austria-Hungary. And yet, the monuments of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors told only part of the story: at the New Cemetery, a Serbian soldier stood triumphantly over the slain Habsburg eagle; in reality, whilst Austria-Hungary was defeated, many thousands of its army's onetime soldiers were alive and were now subjects of the South Slav state. In Yugoslavia, the inter-Allied culture of victory was prominent, but it was also, potentially, exclusionary.

The members of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors were cognizant of the gap between inter-Allied veterans and those of the Central Powers in Europe, and they were cognizant of the debates

in the international veterans' movement about reconciliation between former enemies. This was due in large part to their affiliation with FIDAC.[16] And, of course, they were aware of a corresponding gap in their own country between veterans of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies on the one hand, the 'victors', and those who had fought for Austria-Hungary on the other, the 'vanquished'. Indeed, it would be difficult to ignore the correspondence, with the Italian section of FIDAC repeatedly underlining (at the organization's conferences during the 1920s) that South Slavs – and especially Croats – had fought against Allied interests during the war.[17]

At home, the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors attempted to incorporate the 'Habsburg' contingent of Yugoslav veterans into its ranks. In summer 1926, the association held a Gala in Zagreb, claiming that about 2,500 of its 12,000 members were Croats and Slovenes.[18] The glittering ceremonies in the Croatian capital were attended by, *inter alia*, the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior and the Minister of the Army and Navy, and by colonel Fred Abbot, chairman of FIDAC's 'Propaganda Committee'. The secretary of the Zagreb branch of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors welcomed his comrades and spoke of how 'All eyes, and especially those of our neighbours, are fixed on us at this solemn moment.' To this, a delegate from Belgrade replied 'We are today united and will always remain so.'[19]

This ostentatious display of unity had a double purpose: to show FIDAC and the world that Yugoslavia belonged wholly to the inter-Allied camp, and to show Yugoslav veterans that they were all comrades together, without regard for their wartime past. Quite obviously, it was a message undermined by the association's emphasis on a commemorative culture that celebrated Serbia's role in the Allied victory during the war. It was the crux of the veterans' question in Eastern Europe, for, whilst reconciliation amongst former enemies was of primary importance to the international veterans' movement throughout the inter-war period, in Yugoslavia, as in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania, reconciliation was also a domestic concern.

The Association of War Invalids and the Union of Volunteers

The international veterans' movement did not always deepen rifts caused by the absence of a shared, positive sense of wartime sacrifice in Yugoslavia. It could also help to mediate these rifts, as the example of the Association of War Invalids shows. If South Slav veterans were

Figure 4 The Monument to the Defenders of Belgrade at the New Cemetery in Belgrade.

Source: Author's photograph.

divided between those that had fought for the Allies and those that had fought for the Central Powers, then, collectively, the Association of War Invalids resided in a kind of 'no man's land' between the two. The members of this national association had fought in the Austro-Hungarian, Serbian and Montenegrin armies during the war, on different fronts, even against one another.

A single, pan-Yugoslav Association of War Invalids was formed at a congress in 1922. It was no coincidence that, in the same year, a congress of inter-Allied disabled veterans was held in Yugoslavia. This congress, and others like it, was an important antecedent to CIAMAC, the international movement of disabled veterans. Differences of opinion could be put to one side in order to present a united front to the international veterans' movement. The presentation of a united front was especially urgent, since veterans from Italy were keen to drive a wedge between South Slav veterans by insisting that Croats and Slovenes that had fought in the Austro-Hungarian army should not be allowed to take

part in an inter-Allied congress. It was better for disabled veterans of the Austro-Hungarian army to get along, or at least appear to get along, with their Serbian counterparts in the international veterans' movement. This was good practice at home, too, since it was felt that acting together with Serbian colleagues increased chances of successfully lobbying the government for better welfare terms. Disabled veterans that had fought in the Austro-Hungarian army often complained that their requests for welfare were denied on account of their war record. Exemplary in this respect was the Croat veteran whose request for financial aid from the state was turned down by an official who told him to 'go to [deposed Habsburg emperor] Karl, maybe he will give you something'.[20]

Variations of this retort echoed on amongst Austro-Hungarian veterans throughout the inter-war period. And yet, as we have seen, the going was tough for disabled veterans even without the Habsburg stigma: disabled veterans of Serbia's wars also frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the failures of the state's welfare programme. It was this shared sense of suffering that over-ruled categories of victory and defeat amongst disabled veterans in Yugoslavia. Frequently, whose side one fought on was less important than the scars one bore. And this was true both in Yugoslavia and in the international disabled veterans' movement. CIAMAC had the same priorities as the Association of War Invalids and was, therefore, more successful at bringing together veterans of the Central Powers and the Allies than FIDAC. The culture of victory, marginal or absent in CIAMAC, prominent in FIDAC, was an obstacle in the path of post-war reconciliation. It was far easier for disabled veterans to emphasize their common suffering in war and at the hands of a negligent welfare state in the post-war period.

Uniting former 'enemies' through a celebration of war victory was far harder, as shown by the example of the Union of Volunteers, another Yugoslav veteran association that offered a means of stitching up the Allied/Central Powers divide in Yugoslavia. The members of this association were South Slavs of all nationality who had fought as volunteers in the Serbian army during the Balkan wars and/or the First World War. Most of these veterans had been soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army who were recruited into the Serbian army's volunteer divisions whilst in Russian captivity.[21] During the war, the volunteers had been valuable as pro-Allied propaganda, since Austro-Hungarian subjects fighting for the Allies against the Central Powers could be used as evidence of a broader pro-Allied stance amongst South Slavs in the Habsburg lands. It was a much needed counter-weight to the tens of thousands of South Slavs who were fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army.

After the war, soldiers who had served in these divisions formed the Union of Volunteers. The union held its first meeting in Sarajevo in 1919 and expanded during the 1920s to become a national association with branches throughout the country, similar in form and size to the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors.[22] Welfare, commemoration of the war and the preservation of wartime values were also central concerns of the volunteers. The Union of Volunteers laid out their demands of the new state, in strident terms, in the *Memorandum of the Union of Volunteers* (1923), a quasi-manifesto which, as well as promising to hold the new state's government to account, called on Yugoslavia's subjects to look on its members as avatars of the new Yugoslav culture.[23] The Union of Volunteers worked hard to sustain the image of wartime South Slav solidarity in the volunteer movement and the image (actually a myth) of widespread pro-Allied sentiment amongst South Slavs during the war. Their members published memoirs and fictionalized accounts of the war years, and took part in commemorative celebrations of their wartime sacrifice. In turn, volunteers were cultivated by unitary Yugoslavs keen to create a more inclusive, less Serbo-centric culture of victory.

The outstanding figure of the Union of Volunteers was Captain Lujo Lovrić, its president from 1928 onwards, who was also, arguably, the outstanding figure of the inter-war veterans' movement in Yugoslavia. Lovrić was a Croat from Bakar who had deserted the Austro-Hungarian army on the Eastern front, thereafter fighting with distinction in the ranks of the Serbian army. Lovrić survived the war, but lost his sight after being shot in the temple by enemy fire, thus becoming one of the state's many disabled veterans. In fact, Lovrić defied easy categorization in the Yugoslav veterans' movement, serving as a kind of composite figure who embodied all the fissures and fault-lines of the veterans' movement in Yugoslavia. He was the movement's leading activist, but he was also a disabled veteran, a confluence which upset the notion of the 'passive invalid' at the mercy of the state, cultivated so assiduously by the Association of War Invalids and the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors. He was a veteran of both the Austro-Hungarian *and* Serbian armies, thus a soldier of both the Central Powers and of the Allies. Lovrić's sympathies lay squarely with the latter, of course. Indeed, there were few Serbs who had sacrificed as much and fought with such distinction in the Serbian army as this Croat, who held some of the highest distinctions the Serbian army bestowed upon its soldiers. As president of the Union of Volunteers in the post-war period, Lovrić was instrumental in involving the Yugoslav volunteers in the international veterans' movement during the inter-war period, attaching the association to FIDAC in 1928.

Volunteers such as Lovrić were important symbols throughout the region. The figure of the pro-Allied volunteer became a potent symbol of the culture of victory in the successor states of Eastern Europe: where no national army had existed, such as in the Czech lands or the Habsburg South Slav lands, the volunteer became a national hero *par excellence*, a warrior at the vanguard of the anti-imperial struggle, ready to fight in a national army even when a national state was still unformed.[24] The archetypal 'national army before the national state' in inter-war Eastern Europe was, of course, the Czech Legion, the veterans of which were the subject of much mythologization (and self-mythologization) in inter-war Czechoslovakia,[25] a process which was in turn parodied to great comic effect in Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Švejk*. There was a similar process at work in Yugoslavia, as prominent volunteers published memoirs or fictionalized accounts of their exploits in war, which were eagerly promoted by unitary Yugoslavs in the inter-war state.[26] Lovrić himself published two volumes about volunteering in Russia: *Tears of Autumn* (1922) and *Through Snow and Fog* (1923). A third volume, *Return in Spring*, which would have dealt with the hardships faced by veterans in Yugoslavia after 1918, was abandoned by Lovrić, who claimed that this highly-critical account of the state's politics would not have made it past the censors.[27]

The disabled veterans and the volunteers were two sides of the same coin. The memberships of both groups straddled the Allied/Central Powers divide in Yugoslavia, but whereas the volunteers rallied around a positive message about fighting for the Yugoslav national cause, the disabled veterans were bound by little more than a sense of shared fate as wounded soldiers and a shared hostility to the state's welfare programme. The internationalist links of both associations reflected these concerns: under Lovrić's presidency, the Union of Volunteers became a member of FIDAC and a proponent of the inter-Allied culture of victory; the Association of War Invalids was, quite naturally, affiliated with CIAMAC. And it was the international disabled veterans' movement that was more successful in bridging the divide between victors and vanquished in Yugoslavia, just as it did between Allied and Central Power veterans in the international field.

Veterans during the dictatorship

In June 1928 a Montenegrin parliamentary deputy of the Serbian People's Radical Party shot five deputies of the Croatian Peasant Party on the floor of the Belgrade parliament, killing two outright, and fatally

wounding a third: the Croatian Peasant Party leader Sjtepan Radić. This ushered in a months-long period of parliamentary crisis which ended in the promulgation of King Aleksandar's royal dictatorship, at the beginning of 1929. The veterans' associations under discussion in this chapter warmly welcomed the royal dictatorship since they saw the king as a symbol of national unity. The king, in turn, drew closer than ever to veterans' associations after 1929. Aleksandar, who had served as Chief of Staff of the Serbian Army during the First World War, had always been a champion of veterans' interests and his royal court had funded, in part or in whole, numerous commemorative projects during the 1920s.

It was no accident that this political crisis coincided with a period of prominence on the international scene for Yugoslav veterans. In September 1929, FIDAC held its annual conference in Belgrade. The following year, the *Poilus du Armée d'Orient* made what amounted to an official visit to Yugoslavia for the unveiling of the Monument of Gratitude to France. Towards the end of 1930, Milan Radosavljević was elected president of FIDAC. And in 1931, Lovrić, who now held the presidencies of both the Union of Volunteers and the 'Volunteers of the Little Entente',[28] hosted a four-day jubilee in celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the First Serbian Volunteer Division, attended by delegates from Romania, Czechoslovakia and France.

Aleksandar was undoubtedly using the Yugoslav veterans and their prestige in the international movement to help shore up his personal regime. This was a matter of urgency, since Aleksandar needed support both at home and abroad if his dictatorship was to have any chance of succeeding. At home, Aleksandar had set himself a grand ideological task: nothing less than the forging of a unitary Yugoslav identity, the absence of which, according to the king, had been the root cause of the country's troubles during the 1920s. The veterans' movement had an important role in the fostering of this identity, especially the Union of Volunteers, the archetypal 'Yugoslav warriors'. Indeed, Lujo Lovrić and other volunteers were often visitors at the royal palace during the years of the Aleksandrine dictatorship (1929–1934). There was a reciprocal relationship between the king and his veterans, the bearers of the dictatorship's official ideology. South Slav unity under the Karađorđević sceptre was also the desire of Serbian veterans and volunteers, and, as we have seen, they had been amongst the fiercest critics of post-war politics and society during the 1920s. For the leaders of the Union of Volunteers, and of the Association of Reserve Officers,

Aleksandar's strike against parliamentarianism promised a better future for Yugoslavia; free of corruption and party bickering, it would start to resemble the kind of country they had fought for during the war.

Abroad, Aleksdandar sought and found Franco-British support for his personal regime. As Vesna Drapac has shown, Franco-British observers placed great importance on the viability and survival of the inter-war state.[29] Obviously, the public ceremonies that accompanied FIDAC's Belgrade conference and the Congress of Volunteers of the Little Entente helped confer legitimacy on the king's personal rule, evoking as they did the wartime alliance. But FIDAC were not simply unwitting dupes of Aleksandar: for the international veterans' movement, as represented by FIDAC, the king's move promised the continued integrity of the South Slav state and stability throughout the region. Such attitudes were also present in the upper echelons of FIDAC, where the South Slav state was equated with Serbia's war victory, and therefore with the inter-Allied culture of victory. FIDAC's coverage of the Belgrade conference included numerous articles on Serbia's gallant role in the victory of the Allies.

The dictatorship in Yugoslavia was a failure, however. Aleksandar himself paid a high price for attempting to impose Yugoslavism on his people by royal *fiat*: he was killed whilst on a state visit to France. Aleksandar's assassin was a Macedonian gunman, a member of a joint operation planned and executed by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) and the Croatian paramilitary terrorist group, the Ustashe. The assassination was met with outrage throughout Europe, especially in France, whose foreign minister, Louis Barthou, was also killed in the operation. The two men had been *en route* to visit French war graves in Marseilles when the assassin struck; a visit which showed how the Franco-Serbian wartime connection was still significant in the mid-1930s.

There was outrage in Yugoslavia too, even though Aleksandar's dictatorship was increasingly unpopular, especially amongst non-Serbians, who saw the king's Yugoslavism as simply Serbian hegemony by another name. At Avala, the monument to the unknown Serbian soldier, raised by the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors in 1922, became the 'Tomb of the Unknown Yugoslav Hero', designed by Croat sculptor Ivan Meštrović. The shift in emphasis from Serbian soldier to Yugoslav hero represented an attempt to create a more inclusive, pan-Yugoslav memory site. It became a monument, if not to Aleksandar himself, then at least to his vision of a unified state of South Slavs. Meštrović's tomb eshewed the symbols of Serbia's culture of victory – soliders,

Serbian heraldry and so on – in favour of female figures meant to represent all of Yugoslavia's peoples.[30] As Andrew Baruch Wacthel has noted, however, Meštrović suffered the worst of all possible fates for a cultural synthesizer: 'Rather than being accepted by two sides as a bridge between cultures, he ended up being seen as a foriegn body by both'.[31] It was simply impossible to conjure up a common legacy of the war where none had existed before. Involvement in the international veterans' movement could facilitate reconciliation between veterans of the Austro-Hungarian and Serbian armies, but it could not generate a positive, pan-Yugoslav legacy of the war.

Zbor

After Aleksandar's death, Yugoslavia entered a new and final phase of domestic and foreign policy, characterized by a greater willingness on the part of the political elite to compromise on matters of the organization of the state at home and abroad by closer ties, primarily in the economic sphere, with Nazi Germany.[32] The policy of compromise at home is associated with the regency of Prince Paul, Aleksandar's British-educated cousin and his successor as ruler of Yugoslavia (whose tenure lasted from 1934 until 1941); the demarche towards Nazi Germany is associated with the premiership of Milan Stojadinović (1935–1939). Both policies met with resistance from veterans of Serbia's war, who feared that these new political courses went against the grain of their war sacrifice. Serbian veterans overwhelmingly rejected closer relations with Nazi Germany, since such relations meant also the abandonment – or at least the loosening – of the inter-Allied ties they had cultivated in the preceding years.

In fact, the new attraction to National Socialism was twice rejected by veterans of the Serbian army. For, along with the official demarche between Yugoslavia and Germany pursued by Milan Stojadinović, the latter-half of the 1930s also saw an unsuccessful attempt to form a Yugoslav fascist movement based simultaneously on the support of (mainly Serbian) war veterans, whose values it claimed to promote, *and* the espousal of National Socialist ideology. This improbably composite creature was Zbor (Rally), a fascist party formed in 1935, self-styled as a 'national movement'. Zbor was the creation of Dimitrije Ljotić, scion of a wealthy family from the Serbian town of Smederovo and renegade Radical Party member who had served as Minister of Justice at the beginning of the 1930s. Ljotić was also a veteran of the Serbian army who had served in the Balkan wars and the Great War. He was a onetime pacifist

who came to embrace the positive and transformative power of the war experience and of military discipline.[33] Ljotić resembled a Serbian Ernst Jünger, and if not exactly brutalized, he followed closely the path, traced by George Mosse, which led from the trenches into the inter-war radical right.[34]

Zbor was a fusion of Ljotić's supporters, based mainly in Serbia, with members of Yugoslav Action (*Jugoslovenska akcija*), a Yugoslav nationalist group based in Serbia and Croatia, and the 'Association of Yugoslav Combatants' (*Združenje borcev Jugoslavije*, or BOJ), a veterans' association based in Slovenia and comprising mainly former volunteers.[35] Zbor's ideology was corporatist, anti-liberal (in both the economic and political sense), anti-communist and anti-Semitic, borrowing heavily for its programme from German National Socialism and Italian Fascism.[36] Although the movement espoused unitary Yugoslavism, Ljotić also incorporated elements of Serbian Orthodox Christianity into Zbor's programme. Ljotić's political views, and subsequently those of Zbor, were especially influenced by Nikolai Velimirović, bishop of Žiča, whose teachings, Ljotić believed, could rescue the Yugoslavs from the twin perils of Western materialism and Russian Bolshevism.

This spiritual and political critique of the West must count in part for Zbor's failure to ignite veterans' passions in Yugoslavia. As we have seen, Serbian veterans, by far the largest contingent of South Slav veterans, valued their inter-Allied ties too highly to support a group which so whole-heartedly rejected the West. Nor were Austro-Hungarian veterans impressed by Zbor's close embrace of Serbian Orthodox Christianity, which made the party's Yugoslavism look like crypto-Serbianism, which is to say, made it look like the same Trojan horse that Aleksandar's dictatorship had tried to wheel into the non-Serbian lands. These were not the credentials to endear Zbor to the state's non-Serb subjects.

Ljotić's additional mistake was to enter the realm of party politics, for the leaders of the veterans' associations discussed in this chapter had, from an early stage, decided to remain aloof from parliamentary politics *in toto*. The fear was that veterans and patriotic associations would become auxiliaries of political parties with interests that were partisan and partial, rather than bearers of national values. In fact, a number of prominent veteran activists served as deputies in the parliament (notably Ljudevit Pivko, a Slovene volunteer), but only on the understanding that they did so as individuals, entirely detached from associational affiliations to the veterans' movement. Ljotić's attempt to cross the Rubicon dividing soldiers from party politics was contentious, even within the narrow confines of his own cadres: the majority of BOJ

members, including the group's leader, former volunteer Stane Vidmar, was opposed to Zbor contesting elections.[37] And when Ljotić took Zbor to the country, at the national elections of 1935 and 1938, his failure was absolute. The party garnered just a few thousand votes on each occasion, mainly, it seems, from voters in Smederovo, which was the closest thing Ljotić had to an electoral stronghold.[38] This backing was too meagre even to return a single candidate on the party list. Yugoslav veterans did not turn towards the radical right in the 1930s.

In the political mainstream, veterans' associations were, in the latter part of the 1930s, closer to the opposition than to the government. As already mentioned, the majority of veterans of the Serbian army were at odds with prime minister Milan Stojadinović's foreign policy, favouring as it did Nazi Germany over traditional allies such as France and Great Britain. Stojadinović kept close surveillance on veterans' and patriotic associations during his premiership. Many veterans, in turn, rallied against the new directions Yugoslavia was taking. Ilija Trifunović 'Birčanin', a veteran and a leader of the patriotic association National Defence in the latter part of the 1930s, spoke out against Stojadinović publicly, an act for which he was arrested.[39]

Conclusion

Ultimately, it was not Stojadinović, the authoritarian leader who draped his premiership in fascist-trappings, that pushed former soldiers to their most militant stance. It was his successor, Dragiša Cvetković, who was guided by the regent Prince Paul to agree terms with Croat leader Vlatko Maček over the internal organization of the state. In 1939, Cvetković and Maček agreed to the creation of a large Croatian *Banovina* (district), which encompassed all of the Croatian lands as well as much of (Serb-populated) Bosnia, and which enjoyed *de facto* political autonomy from the rest of the South Slav state. This, for many veterans of the Serbian army, was tantamount to capitulation, for whilst former soldiers were critical of the state's government throughout the inter-war period, the sanctity of the state itself, which they had created with their blood sacrifice, was inviolate. The creation of the *Banovina* came less than a year after Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland and was seen by many Serbian veterans as part of the same process of bargaining away the gains of the First World War. The victorious successor states of Eastern Europe, once the bulwarks of post-1918 order, were now being dismantled by aggressive German revanchism and by their own pusillanimous leaders. According to one prominent veteran, the creation of

the *Banovina* was the 'Serbian Munich'. [40] Veterans' anti-appeasement in Yugoslavia was informed by the inter-Allied culture of victory that had anchored their activism throughout the inter-war period. Such was the situation when Yugoslavia 'found its soul' in March 1941. The bitter truth was that, in spite of Churchill's words of support, and the SOE's attempts to cultivate the Association of Reserve Officers in the months before the signing of the Tripartite Pact, the British supplied little by way or material support for the anti-Axis forces amongst the Serbs. Inter-Allied ties were of little consequence to the sphere of high politics.

Notes

1. See Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans: the Special Operations Executive in Yugoslavia 1941–1945* (London: Hurst and Company, 2003).
2. Cited in Winston Churchill, *The Second World War Volume 3: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), p. 148.
3. There is an obvious comparison here with Weimar Germany, see Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).
4. See, e.g., Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1978* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1981), p. 90; Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation 1918–2004* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 58–59.
5. On this topic, see Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji 1919–1929* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1979).
6. On the formation of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors, see *Ratnički glasnik*, March 1922; and (in English) *F.I.D.A.C. Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 1 April 1926. For a history of the Association of Reserve Officers and Warriors in the inter-war period, see Danilo Šarenac, 'Udruženje reservnih oficira i ratnika 1919–1941', *Istorija XX. veka* 1 (2011).
7. *Ratnički glasnik*, May–June 1930.
8. Ibid., March 1922.
9. On this topic, see John R. Lampe, 'Unifying the Yugoslav Economy, 1918–1921: Misery and Early Misunderstandings', in Dimitrije Djordjević, *The Creation of Yugoslavia, 1914–1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980).
10. *Ratnički glasnik*, December 1923.
11. Ibid., May 1924.
12. *Politika*, 30 January 1921.
13. National Archives, Kew, FO371–6208-20709.
14. *Politika*, 30 January 1921.
15. *Ratnički glasnik*, November 1931.
16. See their report on the FIDAC congress in London, September 1924, at which the discussion of relations with 'former enemies' was discussed, mentioned in Ibid., October 1924.
17. See Ibid., November 1925.
18. Ibid., May 1926.
19. Ibid., June–July 1926.

20. On this topic, see John Paul Newman, 'Forging a United Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes: The Legacy of the First World War and the "Invalid Question"', in Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London: Routledge, 2011).
21. For a history of the wartime volunteer movement, and its antecedents, see Pero Slijepčević, *Naši dobrovoljaci u svetskom ratu* (Zagreb: [s.n.], 1925).
22. On the formation and expansion of the Union of Volunteers, see *Prosveta Kalendar*, 1924.
23. *Memorandum Savez dobrovoljaca* (Belgrade: [s.n.], 1923).
24. On the Czech Legions, see Natali Stegmann's contribution to this volume.
25. See Robert Pynsent, 'The Literary Representation of the Czechoslovak "Legions" in Russia', in Mark Cornwall and R. J. W. Evans, *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe, 1918–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
26. The Zagreb-based journal *Nova Evropa* dedicated an entire issue to volunteers, in 1927, see Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 99–100.
27. Boris Grbin, *Portret Luje Lovrića* (Zagreb: Republički odbor Saveza slijepih Hrvatske, 1985), p. 80.
28. The 'Little Entente' alliance of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania also had a section for volunteer veterans, who would visit each others' countries for the purpose of celebrating and commemorating their war sacrifice. Indeed, the Little Entente itself was more than just a symptom of Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš's 'pactomania' (as one British observer wryly described the Czechoslovak foreign minister's energetic efforts at international diplomacy), the alliance also had its cultural aspect, promoted by volunteer veterans themselves, who saw the preservation of these wartime links as a way of celebrating a regional 'culture of victory' which was also part of a larger inter-Allied internationalism. It was the Hungarian press that first derided the alliance as a 'Little Entente'; for volunteer veterans, the moniker was most apt, indeed, complimentary.
29. See Vesna Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
30. On the tomb of the Unknown Yugoslav Warrior, see, Aleksandar Ignjatović, 'From Constructed Memory to Imagined National Tradition: The Tomb of the Unknown Yugoslav Soldier (1934–1938)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 88/4 (October 2010).
31. Wachtel, p. 117.
32. On this period, see J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis 1934–1941* (New York, London: 1962).
33. Dimitrije Ljotić, *Iz moga života*, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odbrana dela* (vol. 1) (Munich: s.n., 1981), pp. 292–294.
34. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
35. See Branislav Gligorijević, 'Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u ljotićevom zboru', in *Istorijski glasnik*, 4 (1965).
36. Mladen Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934–1945* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1984), pp. 29–35.

37. Branislav Gligorijević, 'Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u ljotićevom zboru', in *Istorijski glasnik*, 4 (1965), p. 76.
38. Zbor won 25,705 votes in 1935, and 30,734 in 1938, or roughly 1 per cent of votes cast. See Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934–1945*, pp. 41–47.
39. AJ 37/22/171.
40. Dragiša Vasić, cited in Petranović, p. 148.

7

Social Benefits and the Rhetoric of Peace in Czechoslovak Veteran Organizations[1]

Natali Stegmann

On the twentieth anniversary of the declaration of war, the (German) Association of War Invalids, Widows and Orphans of the Czechoslovak Republic (Bund der Kriegsverletzten, Witwen und Waisen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik) called for a demonstration against war in its journal *Der Kriegsverletzte*, in an article titled 'Nie wieder Krieg!' (No more war!).[2] An 'artless and dignified' (*schlicht und würdig*) commemoration for the fallen soldiers stood at the core of the event. The call was directed to the members of the association and to other war veterans. The resolution confirmed the strong desire of the ex-servicemen and of the surviving dependants for peace and understanding among nations, and for disarmament.[3] In their interpretation, remembrance of the millions of European deaths would lead humanity to find the right path to peace. The death of their comrades, fathers and husbands was declared a sacrifice for a better future – a future without war. It was formulated as a mission of those who suffered from war and its consequences. Four years later, the same people would bring into line (*'gleichschalten'*) the mentioned association according to the politics of Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei (Sudeten-German Party).[4] His party collaborated with Hitler to 'bring home' those Czechoslovak territories which were mainly inhabited by Germans. Of course, the Munich Agreement saved Europe from war for another year. But unlike appeasement politics, the idea of peace was, at the mid of the 1930s, even among the German invalids of Czechoslovakia, inseparable from democracy and justice, which meant, above all, social care, but also international solidarity.[5]

These few remarks draw attention to the fact that commemorational and social politics in inter-war Czechoslovakia had decisive international

implications. The foundation of the Czechoslovak state was an outcome of the First World War and its independence was lost on the eve of the second. It was inhabited by a large German minority and it was legitimized by, among other things, Masaryk's ideology of Czechoslovakism.[6] But to conclude that these supposed faults of the post-war organization automatically led to the disaster of the late 1930s would be to oversimplify matters. It suppresses the voices of the men and women gathering at the aforementioned demonstration, as well as of their Czech and Slovak comrades.

Veterans' policies were marked by discontinuity and ambiguity in inter-war Czechoslovakia. First, this chapter sketches the puzzling landscape of veterans' organizations in Czechoslovakia during the 1920s. Second, it will examine the actions of Czech and German invalid associations in Czech Lands (Bohemia and Moravia) in the 1930s, focusing, above all, on the international congress of CIAMAC, which took place in Prague in August 1931. It concentrates on the War Victims' Association as they – in contrast to other veterans' organizations – actively participated in international interaction in the 1930s. It will show that the desire for peace was serious, but at the same time it was being used as a rhetorical move that glossed over national antagonisms. In this way it functioned best in international contexts in the first half of the 1930s. In addition, the chapter analyses the invalids' struggle for social recognition in its inter-ethnic and international dimension. It is based on sources from Czech libraries and archives, especially on the examination of invalid organizations' newspapers and on the material of the Ministry for Social Care (*Ministerstvo sociální péče*), available in the National Archive (*Narodní archiv*) in Prague; the aforementioned German organizations' monthly published *Der Kriegsverletzte* from 1919 to 1938 in Liberec; and the organ of Czech organization *Družiny československých válečných poškozenců* (Association of Czechoslovak War Victims), also a monthly, which came out from 1919 to 1951 in Prague under the title *Nový život* (with some interruption during the Second World War).

The landscape of veterans' organizations in Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia was assembled in October 1918 out of Bohemia and former Upper Hungary. As a result of general conscription, the majority of Czechs and Slovaks had fought in the Austro-Hungarian army. At the outbreak of war a few Czechs and an even smaller number of Slovaks

had established a legion, initially recruited in Russia to fight against the Austro-Hungarian army, first for Czech, and later for Czechoslovak, independence. It grew rapidly through desertions and recruitment in the Russian POW camps. Some Czech units also joined the French and Italian armies. The founding presidents of the Czechoslovak Republic, Tomáš G. Masaryk and his successor Edvard Beneš, played an important part in the so-called foreign revolution, which took place simultaneously. At the end of the war, these politicians worked very actively for an institutional and rhetorical interlinking between the legion and the exile government. At the beginning of 1918, the legion fell under the supreme command of the Czechoslovakian national committee and came to be recognized by the Entente as the army of the still-to-be-founded Czechoslovakian state.[7] At the same time, the First World War was declared a war of independence; state autonomy was thereby seen as having been achieved independently. To legitimize the newly-founded state, its democratic character was underlined. It claimed to stand on a higher moral level than its predecessor.[8] Against this backdrop, the legionnaires became the idealized prototype of a soldier in the Czechoslovak battle for independence. The idea that the legionnaires risked their lives for the nation voluntarily, while ordinary servicemen were forced on the battlefields by the former occupying power, was of great relevance. After the declaration of the independent Czechoslovak state on 28 October 1918, the Slovak territories were occupied by members of the legion, to defend them from Hungarian claims. At the same time, Germans living in the border zones, also suppressed by the Czechoslovak military, declared their autonomy. Thus, during the process of state foundation, the legionnaires were styled as the ideal campaigners for the Republic. This produced numerous problems in relation to the majority of Czechoslovakian veterans, who had, until the end of the war, fought in association with the Habsburg monarchy, now seen to have been the 'wrong side'. Most of the war victims had been engaged with the Central Powers. The best estimates are that over 1,400,000 soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army were either of Czech or Slovak nationality; several hundred thousand members of this army were Germans from Bohemia.[9] In contrast, the number of legionnaires – excluding those who were recruited from Italy, the *domobrana* (Home Guard), only after the foundation of the Czechoslovak state – is estimated at approximately 100,000.[10] That is, according to these estimates, just over 7 per cent of former soldiers were legionnaires. As for the number of war victims, the ministry of social welfare assumed, in January 1921, that the young Czechoslovakian Republic counted

175,000 war invalids and 400,000 relatives of invalids and surviving dependants of soldiers killed in action.[11] With a total population of just over 13 million (in 1930),[12] this would put over 4 per cent of the population into the category of 'war victims'. We have to assume that in some battles Czech and Slovak soldiers fought against their compatriots.[13] Nevertheless, state authorities tried to draw a picture of a national army that was fighting for national purposes.

As a consequence of the complications described above, only legionnaires joined veterans' associations that were for people who were proud of their contribution to the national army. A second type of veterans' association united war victims. The latter were also the first to be defined by law. The definition of a legionnaire was codified in 1919. Central to the definition was that a 'true legionnaire' had joined the 'Czechoslovak army' voluntarily before 28 October 1918, i.e. before the official establishment of the Republic. These legionnaires enjoyed privileges such as special pensions; they also profited from the land reform of 1920/21, and were given preference for employment in the civil services.[14]

The first important legislative act of the new state with regard to policy on war victims was a law enacted in 1919. It determined who was to be seen as a war victim, namely:

1. Invalids of Czechoslovakian nationality whose ability to work is intermittently or permanently influenced or entirely lost as a result of an injury or disease, incurred or worsened in military service, other military arranged assignments or during imprisonment;
2. Their relatives to whom they are liable for support;
3. Surviving dependants of persons deceased or who went missing under the circumstances mentioned in point one, who are liable for their support.[15]

To ensure the implementation of this law, national offices were introduced in October 1919.[16] The numerous tasks of the national offices were determined in a decree of 26 November 1919. This included: the guarantee of medical support and schooling for invalids; support in founding and maintaining invalid co-operatives, as well as support in searching for accommodation; the production and distribution of prostheses payments to war victims and the compilation of statistics; payments of pensions; career counselling; and general care of war victims. War victims were also given preference with regard to employment in the civil service.[17] A new regulation on pensions for war victims was introduced in February 1920. The percentage of loss of working ability

(*ztráta výdělečné schopnosti*) was henceforth the basis of any calculation.[18] Before this, invalids had received their pensions according to the older, insufficient Austrian and Hungarian norms. The main task of Czechoslovak rule was clearly to reintegrate male invalids into the workforce.[19] But still, pensions remained far too low to cover the cost of living.[20]

The law cited above defined a group of 'people harmed by war'; the term *válečné počkzence* has no exact English translation. The construction is the same as in the German and the Austrian case (*Kriegsgeschädigte* or *Kriegsbeschädigte*). These so-defined war victims – invalids, widows and orphans – officially united in war victims' associations; but in fact, these organizations were dominated by invalids. This was especially true for Czech and German war victims, who each founded their own association. The Association of Czechoslovak War Victims was founded in 1917. Formally, Slovak war victims participated in it, but in reality most Slovak causes were dealt with on a regional level.[21] Therefore, this chapter focuses on the Czech lands. The above-mentioned association's German counterpart, the Association of War Invalids, Widows and Orphans of the Czechoslovak Republic, was founded in the same year. To complete the picture, there was also a Jewish war victim organization, named Spolek židovských válečných poškocenců (Association of Jewish War Victims), which obviously functioned on the principle of reciprocal Jewish help.[22] The legionnaires had their own victim organization, the Spolek invalidů československých legií (Association of the Invalids of the Czechoslovak Legion).[23] According to *Nový život*, 225,000 war victims were members of these associations nationwide in 1931.[24] This means that more than one-third of Czechoslovak war victims were associated with the aforementioned organizations. This hints at a high organizational level of invalids, and we can assume that it was much higher than among widows, orphans and other dependants. Sources show that only members of the Czech and German associations interacted constantly with the institutions of the Czechoslovak state, and only they participated in CIAMAC.

In the early 1920s, the relations between Czech and German war victims were conflicting, as they had contrary perceptions of the war and its outcomes, and of the Czechoslovak state. Czech war victims tried to assert their own stories of a Czechoslovak fight for independence in the new state, stories which were opposed by the German veterans. Nevertheless, they demanded social help from the Czechoslovak state very bluntly. The different perceptions of war and of their own situation in the newly-founded state was, in the first case, based on the

national discourse of independence; in the second case, it was based on the misery of the German people after the war, on German losses and mortifications. Thus, Czech and German organizations used completely different language to underline their needs. This led to distrust on both sides, and caused friction between German war victims and the social institutions of the Czechoslovak state. The Czechoslovak organization was accused by Germans of being too close to the state institutions, and of being corrupted by national feelings.[25] In this view, only the German association fought independently for the interests of war victims. Indeed, the chairman of the Czechoslovak Družina, Ondřej Kypr, was also the head of the Bohemian Office for War Victim's Care (Zemský úřad pro péči o válečné poškozence), and he was a member of the national parliament.[26] The members of parliament and the Ministry of Social Care considered social rights an important task in legitimizing the new order. They regarded the obligation to help war victims as proof of their honest intentions.[27] By definition, the German war victims were embraced, too; but at the same time, they were suspected of undermining the given order.

The distrust between Czech institutions and German war victims can be illustrated by an anecdote. In 1920, the official journal of the Bohemian Office for War Victim's Care was printed in Czech and German. The Czech title was *Socialní služba* (Social Service), the German one *Soziale Arbeit* (Social Work). The reason given for bilingualism was that the office wanted to prove its desire to care for all war victims 'regardless to their nationality' and to express its hope that the 'objectivity' of its aims would be recognized by Germans.[28] The authors of the journal were well aware of the fact that it would be difficult to work constructively with Germans, so they made their offer and appealed for co-operation.

Kypr himself underlined the democratic character of the constitution, based on the ideas of equality and justice for all citizens. Minorities would have the same opportunities for free development, and it would be up to them to leave behind old patterns of behaviour and to co-operate for the good of the state.[29] In the same breath Kypr stressed that the new state would have 'enough strength to suppress all strivings for existence which would damage the interests of the state'.[30] The message was clear: the newly-created nation of the Czechoslovaks asserted the status of the majority and made – from that perspective – a fair offer to the Germans as a minority. The Germans should get everything they had a right to and become true citizens of Czechoslovakia. If they refused, the officials had demonstrated their strength and made clear who was in charge.

This warning had to be understood in the context of a far reaching petition by German war victims to the 'Government of the Czecho-Slovak state' from 1919. It painted a very drastic picture of misery, fear of the future, and hunger and poverty among Bohemian German war victims. The government was accused of leaving only 'the last leftovers' to Germans, and of applying double standards. And the petition included a threat, drawing the attention of the addressee to the fact that they had united to fight for their rights, and that the state had to fulfil their desire if it did 'not want to lead the German war victims into the arms of Bolshevism'.[31] This was not a political statement but a well-calculated tactic, evoking the bugbear of Bolshevism. The petition illustrates that Germans defined their misery in national categories, and that they presented themselves as uncompromising. Consequently, they were regarded as a potential danger by the Czechoslovak institutions. The attitude expressed had nothing in common with Kypr's conception of a fair constitution. German war victims did not take into account that their misery was not exclusively German. Also, they did not analyse their situation in categories of citizenship, but only in a national perspective which was in part directed from the Czechoslovak periphery to the outside. They regarded the constitutionally guaranteed status of a minority not as a positive right but as an affront. Such patterns dominated inter-ethnic interactions in the first years of the Republic.

When the German version of the journal stopped publication one year later, the local organization of the *Bund* interpreted this as a 'damage of our interests, a setting back'.[32] The Social Minister replied to them that the journal was financed by private sources and that it was stopped due to financial reasons.[33] Obviously, Czechoslovak social policies had created expectations, especially among the Germans, that could not be fulfilled. The feeling of national and social degradation after the establishment of the Czechoslovak state shaped German perceptions. The disappointment of unmet social expectations was echoed by the feeling of a national setback. The perception of their own sacrifice was interpreted as analogous to the affront of becoming a minority, and it was in part interpreted separately from Czechoslovak action. In this respect, the Czechoslovak claim to power was questioned time after time and its legitimacy was measured by its ability to fulfil the social desires of German war victims. The Germans seemed unable to accept the concept of the foreign revolution as a pre-condition of the state founding, because they were not ready to deny that they had been fighting for German purposes during the war. This was obviously easier

for the former members of the Habsburg troops, who saw themselves as Czechs and Slovaks and who interpreted their war action as a fight for Czechoslovak independence, however illogically.[34] The corresponding narrative was that the Czechs and Slovaks had contributed to the defeat of the Habsburg Army through sabotage and resistance.[35]

The different attitudes of Czechoslovak and German war victims' organizations towards Czechoslovak social policy were manifold. One of the conflicting fields was the striving for an obligation to engage invalids in the workforce and the attitude towards the legionnaires. In 1922, the German *Bund* argued about the effectiveness of this regulation in the Weimar Republic.[36] As in many other causes, they compared their situation with that of their German fellow invalids across the border. One of the most striking differences in that comparison was the presence and the status of legionnaires in the Czechoslovak Republic. Thus, *Der Kriegsgeschädigte* concluded that there was no obligation to employ invalids in that country because of the legionnaires' legislation.[37] Czechoslovak war victims also argued for a similar valuation of their sacrifice to that received by legionnaires. They struggled very hard when it came to competition over jobs in public services and over kiosk licences (the Czechoslovak republic had continued to give

Figure 5 Soldiers arriving in the new Czechoslovak state at the end of the war.

those licences to war invalids as had been the political practice in the Habsburg Monarchy).[38] But this was a competition for social recognition among Czechoslovak citizens, whose rhetorical orientation was, more or less, based on the same principles. Czechoslovak war victims would never use a positive example from the Weimar Republic in their argument.

Bohemian and Moravian invalid organizations during the 1930s and the CIAMAC Congress in Prague 1931

The conflicting attitudes of German and Czechoslovak war victims are hardly astonishing; we are used to interpreting Czechoslovak inter-war history in terms of national antagonism – above all with the so-called Sudeten Crisis and the Munich Agreement in mind. A glance at the 1930s is, however, much more confusing; veterans' organizations developed in a considerable new direction. This is especially obvious with regard to the international context, and, in part, the changes are even an outcome of international co-operation. Who, then, participated in international veterans' organizations? There is no evidence that Czechoslovak legionary organizations participated in CIAMAC. I also could not find any proof of participation in FIDAC by Czechoslovak invalid organizations. This makes sense, since legionnaires were, by definition, a part of the Entente, and cultivated contacts with British veterans' organizations, which also did not participate in CIAMAC. On the other hand, members of the invalid organizations had been fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army, which means with the Central Powers. Because of the ambivalence of their participation in the First World War, on the wrong side but for the right purpose – the Czechoslovak state – CIAMAC's concept of peace and brotherhood, even between former enemies, fitted very well into their idea of justice and solidarity. It also made co-operation between Czechs and Germans easier for both sides. But these implications were not discussed openly by invalid organizations.

The most important shift in Czech–German relations was the changing attitude of German leftist parties towards collaboration with the Czechoslovak state. In opposition to the radical separatists, they built a so-called 'activist camp'. In that context, the German Social Democrat Ludwig Czech became the Social Minister of the Czechoslovak Republic from December 1929 until February 1934. This was the time of the worldwide economic crisis and of Adolf Hitler's seizure of power. It was also the time when the CIAMAC Congress took place in Prague. These events and the growing distance from the First World War also

led to some changes in Czechoslovak veterans' organizations. Many of these changes were inter-linked with developments in CIAMAC and the threat of a coming war.[39]

Both Czech and German war victims' press reported in detail about the CIAMAC Congress in August 1931 in Prague. While internationalism did not play an important role in the self-presentation of the war victims' organizations until then, there was a remarkable shift after the congress. Especially the German *Bund* underlined its united participation with the Družina in CIAMAC's missions.[40] The congress started on 31 August with 180 delegates attending from Germany, France, Austria, Denmark, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Yugoslavia 'and some others', who were not identified.[41] František Neumeister, the active chairmen of the Družina at that time, welcomed them in Czech, followed by German and French translations. All three versions were printed in *Nový život*.[42] The speech consisted of two main elements: peace and social security. He first underlined that war victims, who were still suffering from the terrible war, had 'the first obligation to work for peace between people' and that this was the reason why they were walking hand in hand. Quoting Masaryk's hope that former enemies will become friends one day, he expressed his conviction that war victims were on the right path. In the second part, Neumeister stated that war victims had a right to social security and that social care was the obligation of all nations and states. Because the war victims felt a moral obligation to rally for peace and to overcome hatred, they also had the right to live in dignity. With the worldwide economic crisis in mind, this was also the tenor of the conferences' resolutions. Veterans' internationalism was a very profound tool to express social needs in universal categories.

Their ability to unite, even with former enemies, went along with a higher mission: the call for 'moral disarmament'.[43] As peace was a demand for everyone, regardless of his or her origin, this link made their particular interests a universal need. So it came to a petition by Czechoslovak war victims to the state authorities, which was also supported by international delegates. It demanded, among other things, the enactment of the working obligation in Czechoslovakia, too.[44] On the platform provided by CIAMAC, the cause was moved from the stage of inter-ethnic conflict to that of international. The congress also underlined that the war victims should not suffer from the economic crisis because their sacrifice deserved social recognition everywhere.[45] While these statements for social proposes and for universal peace united the delegates, the idea of supporting German comrades in their desire for international financial help led to controversial discussions. A resolution for the reduction

of the credit of the Weimar Republic was worked out at the congress. In that context, German war victims made it clear that no reasonable person in Germany wished for a new war.[46] The resolution was, therefore, understood as preparation for disarmament negotiations in the next year.[47] But, nevertheless, the Polish delegates were not ready to support the resolution, as they feared German revisionism, and they left the gathering because of this. They accused CIAMAC's chairmen of behaving as if only German and French associations were involved in it. They said that they trusted their German comrades, but they did not trust Hitler. The Germans tried to make clear that only the improvement of the economic situation in Germany would avoid National Socialists empowerment. The cause led to some disputes between German Bohemian and Czech delegates, too. A member of the Družina expressed his understanding for the Polish standpoint as the German National Socialists had sent agitators to the Sudetenland to convince Sudeten Germans to support them. Comrade Bernard Leppin, one of the founders of the *Bund*, got angry about that. He stated that Sudeten Germans were able to form their own opinions, and if they had called for autonomy at the end of the war it was because they had the same right to national self-determination as any other national group. The chairman of CIAMAC, Pichot, finally made a very blunt statement directed towards the Polish delegates. According to him, he had to do so because he was a Frenchman. He reminded the Poles that their liberation had been paid for with French blood. He explained that the resolution was almost identical with Paragraph 19 of the pact of the League of Nations and that the Confederation of French War Veterans shared the same opinion, so that it was the standpoint of 3.5 million French frontline fighters.[48] Here it became clear that the peace rhetoric could not gloss over the old national antagonisms in Central Europe. Not only the Poles, the Czechs and the Bohemian Germans began to argue in national terms, the French chairmen of the international institution did so also. The rhetoric changed completely when it went from the universal to the concrete. In the end, the resolution passed without the Polish votes.

Czechoslovak state institutions and the press were highly interested in the congress. This was especially true for an exhibition of war victims' work, which was organized for the occasion. The Czech Social Minister was deeply impressed by the objects made by handicapped people. The will and the ability of war veterans to work productively were interpreted as some kind of working heroism. Because the invalids were willing to contribute to the community, they needed support if they were unable to earn their families living. That was the mission

of victims' organizations and it was echoed positively in the public. Secondly, it was acknowledged as admirable that men who were wounded at the front were ready to reach out to the former enemy, to the men who might have wounded them. So it succeeded in painting a positive picture of the civil heroism of former soldiers.[49] But this did not contribute to any improvement of the social situation of the ex-servicemen. Nevertheless, there were some remarkable new orientations in the Czech veterans' landscape.

Two important movements of the following years can be interpreted in the context of CIAMAC's action and international proposals: the formation of a youth organization in 1933 and the collaboration with the Czechoslovak Legionary's Community (Československá obec legionářská). The founding of the Czechoslovak war victims' youth organization, Mládež Družiny československých válečných poškozenzů (Youth of the Association of Czechoslovak War Victims), was obviously paralleled by developments in CIAMAC. The systematic organization of the children of war victims also took place in other European countries. In 1933, the international congress of the youth organizations of CIAMAC had a meeting in Geneva. The Czechoslovak war victims' youth organization was a member.[50] The goal of the Czechoslovak association was the organization of children of war invalids who reached the age of 18. In the context of the worldwide economic crisis, the initiative strove, above all, for access to work for socially disadvantaged children of war victims. The organization also called for lasting peace, which had a clear social-political connotation. At the founding meeting of the war victims' youth organization it was stated that peace could only prevail if the nation was confident, if life was 'a little bit easier'.[51] This is exactly the same perception which united the delegates of the international meeting in Prague two years before. The legionnaires established a similar organization, which co-operated which the Youth of the Association of Czechoslovak War Victims.[52]

A 'new stage' in the work of the Družina began in 1934, when it openly started to collaborate with the Czechoslovak legionaries' community in a joint veterans' presentation.[53] Therefore, a new concept of 'former Czechoslovak soldiers'[54] was created. War victims and legionnaires co-operated for the erection of monuments for the fallen soldiers, among other things. On that occasion they recalled how terrible the war had been, and swore simultaneously to the founding myths, especially the fight against monarchy. They demonstrated for a lasting peace and confessed their belief in democracy in terms of truth, freedom and humanity. The common action was based on an inter-linking of founding

myths and peace appeals, of the rhetoric of sacrifice and liberation.[55] The appeal for peace was not new, but it became more urgent and it was connected more clearly to the democratic order. *Nový život* called 'us self and all nations of our dear republic' for freedom and justice, because the 'peace we will have among us will be the best service for peace in the world'.[56] This mirrored exactly the situation in the 1930s: the threat of a new coming war in connection with the international economic crises united Czechs, even across former conflicting lines as between Czech war victims and legionnaires. This was also true for the co-operation of Czech and German war victims. While the threat came from German fascists across and inside the border, some Germans were perceived as, and perceived themselves as, Czechoslovak citizens, participating in democratic institutions. But for the idea of Czechoslovak inter-ethnic solidarity, social welfare was of highest importance. It was interpreted as a part of democratic order and a precondition to lasting peace. This was the point where social benefits and the rhetoric of peace combined in an international idea of war victims' interests and solidarity. In Czechoslovakia, this had an inner political component, too.

So the Czechoslovak veterans' landscape of the 1930s was ambiguous: on the one hand, the closer ties between legionnaires and war victims worked with the national idea of democracy and the morally higher standing of the Republic. On the other hand, co-operation with Germans worked under the banner of peace rhetoric. The German war victims' association worked very hard to co-operate on exactly that basis. Until the eve of the Sudeten Crisis, members of the Bund and the Družina had joint delegations to state institutions in the name of CIAMAC. An illustrative example is the delegation from both organizations to president Beneš in 1936. The outcome of the meeting was the common desire to avoid a new war. *Der Kriegsverletzte* described the atmosphere as very friendly. Beneš answered the Germans in their mother tongue and expressed his optimism for a lasting peace and the possibility of finding solutions for the problems of war victims.[57] The climax of the reciprocal declarations of friendship was the remarks made on the twentieth anniversary of the Bund, in 1917. The Social Minister, Jaromír Nečas (the successor of Czech), in his ceremonial address, spoke of how the Bund co-operated locally with the state institutions for the interest of war victims.[58] Doing so, he differentiated implicitly between the Sudentendeutsche Partei and the members of the Bund. In sharp contrast to the conflicts of the 1920s, he stated that in the field of war victims' care a social question had never existed.[59] Also very conciliatory, was the Bund obituary of the 'president-liberator' Masaryk, printed

on the whole title page in 1937, stating that the same had always had a full understanding of the situation of Sudeten Germans.[60] The reconciliation of state institutions and German war victims stood in context with the closer political co-operation of activist German and Czech parties after the election victory of the Sudentedeutsche Partei in 1935. The task was to strengthen those German parties and organizations that approached the Czechoslovak state with a positive attitude.[61]

But how did the German war victims' organizations achieve the equalization mentioned above? One could argue that the rather social democratic Bund was more or less forced into this position after Henlein's people terrorized the Sudetenland. This is only partially true: it is also evident that the anti-Czech positions in the German camp were not completely suppressed when it came to national and international collaboration between Czechoslovak and German war victims. The Czechoslovak side also did not completely trust their German comrades. What was meant by peace and how it should be organized is a much more difficult question than calling for universal peace in the abstract. As invalids, Czech and German ex-servicemen had lost their health during the war. In the early 1930s this stood at the foreground. In that reading, it was not important who belonged to the winners and who to the losers. But there was also a second reading of the story – the one of national competition; this preoccupation was never overcome completely. Beneath the co-operation there were also signs of a closing of ranks in the German camp. One example was the establishment of the Association of Sudeten German War Participants (Vereinigung der sudetendeutschen Kriegsteilnehmerschaft) in 1935. It united the Bund with the German veterans' organization Verband der Unterstützungsvereine, 'der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg' (Association of the Supporting Organizations, the Heimat Sons in the World War) and Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener (Reich Association of former POWs).[62] Like Czech war victims and legionnaires, the German working community called, above all, urgently for peace. In April 1938, the Bund almost joined in with the agitation of the Sudetendeutsche Partei, when it printed the parliamentary speech of one of the mentioned party's members with declarations of sympathy. The same stated that war victims received far higher pensions in Austria then in the Czechoslovak Republic and that they would become even higher after the *Anschluss*. The speaker further demanded that German war invalids should be examined by German doctors and accommodated in German hospitals. It also harshly criticized the fact that there were German members in the Czechoslovak war victims' organization. It stated that

the idea of a German war victim being a member a Czechoslovak association was an insult. The Družina should not even try to speak for the interests of German war victims.[63] The old German–Czech antagonism was thus propagated in a clearly radicalized manner, which operated with a strict national separation on each field of action. When it touched the interaction of the invalid and his doctor it was not about a common language but about a national essentialism, according to which a Czech doctor should not examine a German, even if he was able to speak German, and a German should, on principle, not join a Czechoslovak organization. From the next issue onwards *Der Kriegsgeschädigte* consequently served this new racist paradigm and declared that the Bund had strived from its very beginning to 'maintain the true national community'. This corresponded to the confession of the chairman Ferdinand Pfeifer that only the Sudetendeutschen Partei could speak for Germans in the Republic. Adapting the new rhetoric, he wrote that it had always been the strength of the Bund that it associated only Sudeten German, and thus only German, war victims.[64] The manifold options of Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic became reduced to only one Sudeten German option: being members of the National Socialistic German community. This was the end of veterans' internationalism in Czechoslovakia; the ideals of the first half of the 1930s did not prevail. As Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia at the end of the Second World War, there was no second chance for them. Czech disappointment over the Munich Agreement had its international and internal political implications, as well as the described war victims' politics. Czechoslovak politicians tended to distrust their Western allies and their German inhabitants. Of course, the politics of Beneš's exile, and later of the national front government, must be read in that context. That is true for the orientation towards the Soviet Union, for the acceptance of national homogenization and also for the idea of state restricted social contribution, until the communist *coup d'état* in 1948.

Conclusion

This article concentrates on the specifics of Czech and German invalid associations in the Czech Lands (Bohemia and Moravia) in the 1930s and on the international congress of CIAMAC which took place in Prague in August 1931. It focuses on the ambitious demands of the given organizations for universal peace and concrete social, national deeds, showing that the desire for peace was serious. But, at the same time, it was used as a rhetorical move that glossed over national antagonisms. In the context

of a broader look at veterans' organizations in Czechoslovakia during the inter-war period as a whole, and especially at Czech and German organizations, it illustrates that the rhetoric of peace functioned best in the international context in the first half of the 1930s.

Notes

1. This contribution is essentially based on my book, *Kriegsdeutungen – Staatsg ründungen – Sozialpolitik. Der Helden-und Opferdiskurs in der Tschechoslowakei, 1918–1948* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010).
2. *Der Kriegsverletzte. Organ des Bundes der Kriegsverletzten, Witwen und Waisen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik* [The War Invalid. Organ of the Association of War Invalids, Widows and Orphans in the Czechoslovak Republic, in following: Der Kriegsverletzte] 10/7 (1934), p. 1.
3. Ibid., p. 2.
4. See Narodní archív, Praha, Ministerstvo vnitra (MV), Karton (K.) 4570, číslo 2/88/8.
5. This is true for the aforementioned association, and I found no evidence for the existence of other German war invalid organizations in Czechoslovakia.
6. Jan Rychlík, 'Teorie a praxe československého národa a československého jazyka v 1. republice', in Jaroslav Opat and Josef Tichý (eds.), *Masarykova idea československé státnosti ve světle kritiky dějin*, (Praha: Ústav T.G. Masaryka, 1993), pp. 69–77; Jan Galandauer, 'Čechoslovakismus v proměnách času. Od národotvorné tendence k integrační ideologii', in *Historie a vojenství* 47 (1998), 2, pp. 33–52.
7. For Czechoslovakia in the First World War see: Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka, 1914–1918* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001); and, by the same author, 'Velká válka 1914–1918', in *Český časopis historický* 96 (1998), pp. 1–14; Josef Kalvoda, *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); for the legion see: Manfred Alexander, 'Die Rolle der Legionäre in der Ersten Republik. Ein politischer Verband und sein Geschichtsbild', in Ferdinand Seibt (ed.), *Vereinswesen und Geschichte in den böhmischen Ländern. Vorträge einer Tagung des Collegium Carolinum in Bad Wiessee vom 25. bis 27. November 1983 und vom 23. bis 25. November 1984* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1986), pp. 265–279; Ivan Šedivý, 'Legionářská republika? K systému legionářského zákonodárství a sociální péče v meziválečné ČSR', in *Historie a vojenství* 51/1 (2002), pp. 158–164; 'Velká válka'; 'Zed' mezi odbojem domácím a zahraničním', in *Historie a vojenství* 6, 1998, pp 84–93; 'Zur Loyalität der Legionäre in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik', in Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1918–1939. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004), pp. 141–152; Martin Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität, Die tschechoslowakische Armee und ihre Nationalitätenpolitik, 1918–1938* (München: Oldenbourg, 2006); 'Memory of War and National State Integration: Czech and German Veterans in Czechoslovakia after 1918', in *Central Europe* 4/4, 2006, pp. 111–121; Nancy Wingfield, 'The Battle of Zborov and the Politics of Commemoration in Czechoslovakia', in *East European Politics and Societies* 17/4, 2003, pp. 654–681.

8. T[omáš] G. Masaryk, *Das neue Europa. Der slavische Standpunkt* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1922), pp. 90–112; for the Masaryk-Cult, see: Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europa, 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) pp. 11–135.
9. Zückert, 'Memory of War', p. 111.
10. Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität*, p. 84f.
11. Narodní archive, Praha: Ministerstvo sociální péče (in following MSP), K. 487, Nr. 773, 1920.
12. Wolfgang Kessler, 'Die gescheiterte Integration. Die Minderheitenfrage in Ostmitteleuropa 1919–1939', in Hans Lemberg (ed.), *Ostmitteleuropa zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen (1918–1939). Stärke und Schwäche der neuen Staaten, nationale Minderheiten* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 1997), pp. 161–188.
13. For example, in the battle over Zborov when the legion took part in a battle won by the Russian troops, see: Jan Galandauer, *2.7.1917. Bitva u Zborova. Česká legenda* (Praha: Havran, 2002).
14. Šedivy, 'Legionářská republika?', definition on p. 160.
15. *Sociální revue*. Orgán Ministerstva práce a sociální péče 1, 1919/20, Nr. 1–2, 44.
16. Jan Svoboda, *Příručka válečného poškození československého. Soubor zákonů, nařízení a výnosů v péči o válečné poškození se vzorci podání a žádostí* (Brno: Obzor sociální péče, 1923), p. 9.
17. *Sociální revue* 1, 1919/20, pp. 310–312.
18. Ibid., pp. 415–419.
19. *Národní shromáždění československé 1920–25*, 178. schůze, část 3/6, 2.
20. Ibid.
21. Státní národní archiv, Bratislava, Ministerstvo s plnou mocou pre správu Slovenska, K. 45, Nr. 5308.
22. Archív hlavního města Prahy (AHMP), spolkový katastr SK II / 559.
23. Statutes in: Narodní archive, Praha, Ministerstvo sociální péče (in following MSP), K. 487, Nr. 773, 1920 MSP, K. 491, 1921 (?).
24. *Nový život. Ustřední organ Družiny československých válečných poškozenců* [New life. Central Organ of the Association of the Czechoslovak People Harmed by War] 15 (1931), 31. Slovenska príloha: 3.
25. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 4 (1922), 11: 1.
26. I could not find any biographical publications about Kypr. All information is based on my research; he himself wrote a brochure about his war experiences and a publication about the Czechoslovak war victims, see: Ondřej Kypr, *Na vojně v Karpatech a Haliči. Dojmy českého vojáka* (Pardubice: O. Kypr, 1917); *Světová válka a její oběti* (Prague: Vytiskla knihtiskárna Josefa Obrdy, 1929).
27. Národní shromáždění československé 1920–25, 84. schůze, část 1/9, 2; 115. schůze, část 9/12, 1, 4, 6; 308. schůze, část 1/4, 7, 178. schůze, část 3/6, 2, available online: http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/win/eknih, 16.9.2005.
28. *Soziale Arbeit* 1 (1920), 1: 1.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. MSP, K. 4.
32. Ibid., K. 490, číslo 3828, 1921.
33. Ibid.
34. According to the veterans' organizations, similar findings were made by Zückert, 'Memory of War', p. 121.

35. Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität*, p. 228f.
36. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 3/10 (1921), p. 2.
37. Ibid., 4/7 (1922), p. 3.
38. This is the tenor of many letters to the Ministry of Social Care and of many articles in *Nový život*.
39. See Ibid., 19/12 (1935), p. 1.
40. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 19/7 (1937),pp. 1 and 4.
41. *Nový život* 15/31 (1931),. Slovenska príloha, p. 3.
42. Ibid., p. 1 (German and French versions on p. 2).
43. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 13/9 (1931), p. 2.
44. *Nový život* 15/36 (1931), pp. 1–2; *Der Kriegsverletzte* 13/8 (1931), p. 1.
45. *Nový život* 15/35 (1931), pp. 1–2.
46. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 13/10 (1931), pp. 1–2.
47. Ibid. 13/9 (1931), p. 2.
48. Ibid.
49. See the report and reprints from other newspapers in: *Nový život* 15 (1931), 31, pp. 2–4.
50. V. Halíková, O. Kohn, L. Neškrabal, J. Pivoňka and M. Říhová (eds.), *Mládež Družiny čsl. válečných poškozenců. Konference mládeže, Programové zásady, organisační pokyny* (Prague: Družina čsl. válečných poškozenců, 1936), p. 17
51. *Nový život* 18 (1934), 50, p. 1.
52. *Mládež Družiny čsl. válečných poškozenců*, p. 16f.
53. *Nový život* 18/32 (1934), p. 1.
54. Ibid., 18/31 (1934), p. 1.
55. Ibid., 19/28 (1935), p. 1.
56. Ibid., 18/29 (1934), p. 1.
57. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 18/3 (1936), p. 1f.
58. Ibid., 19/7 (1937), p. 10.
59. Ibid.
60. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 19/10 (1937), p. 1.
61. See: Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität*, p. 257f.
62. *Der Kriegsverletzte* 17/9 (1935), p. 1.
63. Ibid., 20/4 (1938), p. 1f.
64. Ibid., 20/5 (1938), p. 1.

Part III
The Revionist Challenge

8

German Veterans' Associations and the Culture of Peace: The Case of the Reichsbanner

William Mulligan

Amongst the foremost supporters of the Weimar Republic were veterans' associations. German veterans were also amongst the most visible supporters of a policy of reconciliation with their former enemies. Of course, veterans' associations, such as the Stahlhelm and Der Rote Frontkämpferbund, were powerful opponents of the Republic and the foreign policy of fulfilment. The purpose of this essay is to examine the relationship between support for constitutional politics in the domestic sphere and reconciliation and internationalism in the foreign policy sphere, with particular reference to the most prominent of the veterans' associations, the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold. The Reichsbanner articulated a culture of peace that recognized that the preservation of the Republic was dependent upon and bolstered the re-establishment of peace after the First World War. In this context the meaning of peace was broadly conceived. Peace did not simply mean an end to fighting and a signature on a treaty. Peace required constitutional democracy, the primacy of civilian control of the military, welfare provision (particularly for disabled veterans, war widows and orphans), the reduction of armaments, territorial guarantees, international institutions to regulate and moderate disputes between states and reconciliation between societies as well as states. A broad range of parties and associations in the Weimar Republic espoused this culture of peace, though different groups emphasized different elements of the broader vision. These groups faced challenges, including the persistence of war cultures, particularly on the right of the political spectrum.

The history of the veterans' associations has received considerable attention from scholars of the Weimar Republic. The overwhelming focus of these studies has been on the impact veterans' association had on domestic political culture.[1] Historians have argued that the veterans' associations accelerated the militarization of Weimar politics. Even

groups that supported the Republic, such as the Reichsbanner, contributed to this process by adopting a military style of politics, replete with marches, uniforms and institutional structures that mirrored those of the army. In their efforts to protect the Republic from the violent assaults of the Stahlhelm and later the Nazi party's SA, the Reichsbanner contributed to the processes that undermined the legitimacy of parliamentary politics and rational debate. In addition, the paramilitary and veterans' associations increased the fragmentation of German society; different milieus had their own particular associations, which made co-operation, even between those who shared some basic goals, such as the preservation of democracy, impossible. The Reichsbanner was an attempt to provide cross-party support for the Republic, as the German Democratic Party (DDP) and the Catholic Centre Party also lent their nominal support to the association. However, owing to the massive predominance of Socialists (SPD) within the Reichsbanner, members of the two other parties drifted away.

While Berghahn, Rohe and Voigt locate the veterans' associations within the domestic political contest in Germany in the inter-war period, other historians, such as Deborah Cohen and Richard Bessel, have argued that the Republic failed to provide the returning soldiers with adequate social support.[2] This failing is most easily identified in the difficulties surrounding the provision of welfare to disabled veterans. The moral economy, created by the First World War, meant that veterans expected that their sacrifices and on-going health problems would be compensated by a grateful society and well-meaning state. Despite spending a far greater proportion of its budget on veterans' pensions than Britain, the Weimar Republic found itself vilified by many veterans. As Cohen has suggested, compensation was not just monetary, it was also a process that required social healing between those who had stayed on the home front and those who had suffered on the fighting front. Owing to the scale of state provision for veterans, there was less space in Weimar Germany for charitable organizations that, in the British case, helped repair the divisions between ex-servicemen and society.

Cultures of war and cultures of peace provide a means of thinking about the relationships between the international system, domestic politics and welfare provision. Groups that adhered to the cultures of war contended that the international system remained anarchical and states must be in a state of constant preparedness. Domestic political structures were to be geared towards the preparation for war and the state's budget should prioritize military, over welfare, spending. On the other hand, those who adhered to the culture of peace argued that

the international system was becoming increasingly peaceful, which in turn allowed for the diversion of resources from military expenditure to the solution of pressing social problems. Constitutional democracy, it was assumed, had an inherent interest in meeting the welfare needs of citizens and, therefore, in maintaining a peaceful, stable international system.

The success and failure of the Reichsbanner owed much to its ability to craft a compelling vision of peace and to institutionalize this, both at home and abroad. While it offered a consistently strong defence of the Republic, reconciliation with former enemies proved slow and less rewarding than anticipated, while it failed to address adequately the welfare interests of veterans. Although supporters of the Republic were sometimes criticized for failing to acknowledge the importance of an emotional appeal to German citizens after 1918, this charge cannot be levelled at the Reichsbanner, which arguably devoted too much energy to its festive culture, at the expense of addressing the material and institutional bonds of peace.

Veterans, demobilization and the early Republic

Returning from the war, most soldiers integrated into civilian life. Only a small, though politically important, proportion had been brutalized to such an extent that they continued to view fighting as a way of life. Many soldiers faced difficulties once they returned to their homes, but these were often related to finding employment, rekindling family relationships and generally discarding the habits of the trenches. Their experiences of war fuelled an anti-war sentiment. Franz Osterroth was born in 1900 and was called up in 1918. After the war he joined the SPD and became a member of the Reichsbanner. In his brief essay, 'Schreie eines Aufgewachten', penned in late 1918, he described the destruction of intimacy and human relationships wrought by the war. 'Entangled in the violence of animal-like anger', he declared, 'man has murdered his brother, has destroyed his young body with grenades, has bored through him with life-eating bullets, and has suffocated his youthful hope in poisonous clouds.' He called on his fellow soldiers to fight a 'war of extermination' against weapons, so that war would never return.[3]

The German revolution in 1918 was essentially about peace, rather than constitutional change. The abdication of the Kaiser and the proclamation of the Republic was a consequence of the widespread desire for peace. Throughout the negotiations in October 1918 between the American and German governments, it had become clear that constitutional change

was a precondition for peace. Front soldiers shared this desire for peace with those in the rear and the home front. In the specific circumstances of November 1918, peace was a somewhat formless concept, its appeal grounded in the urgent desire to end the war. As Wilhelm Groener, the Quartermaster General and key figure in the Supreme Command (OHL), told William II, soldiers 'are tired and indifferent. They want only rest and peace. … Above all they want an end to hostilities.' Hermann Schützinger, later a left-wing police chief in Saxony and founder member of the Reichsbanner, remembered the troops' 'boundless desire for one word: ceasefire'. In some cases, front soldiers indicated a more developed vision of peace. 'We front troops want nothing to do with a Bolshevist government', proclaimed the 167th Infantry Regiment. 'After four and a half years of the hardest sacrifices, we want to live in a homeland of peace, order, and freedom. Only the current government [provisional government coalition of the SPD and the Independent SPD] can bring that to us.'[4]

Although peace in November 1918 meant a ceasefire, throughout the First World War there had been an intense debate in Germany as elsewhere about the future of the international order and the peace that would follow the war. In July 1917, the Reichstag passed the peace resolution, supported by the Catholic Centre Party, the SPD and the Progressives. The resolution was significant for many reasons, three of which are worth noting in the context of this essay. First, it called for a peace based on reconciliation between warring peoples, international law and institutions and economic co-operation. Second, the resolution, proposed by the Centre Party politician Matthias Erzberger, asserted the right of parliamentary institutions to play a role in foreign and military policy, despite the condemnations of the OHL and the government. Third, the parties that supported the peace resolution were the ones which won over three-quarters of the popular vote in the January 1919 elections. In short, cultures of peace had a substantial basis in German politics and society during and immediately after the First World War.

Between 1918 and 1924, peace cultures within Germany suffered a number of setbacks. To many ordinary Germans, the post-war settlement hardly seemed like peace at all. The Treaty of Versailles imposed a territorial and financial settlement that shocked German citizens. Economic dislocation and political upheaval continued to cause turmoil, culminating in the hyper-inflation of 1923. In the same year, French and Belgian forces occupied the Ruhr, the radical right attempted a putsch in Munich, and the radical left, in conjunction with the Soviet Union, sought a 'German October'. The years following the armistice

of 1918 proved a bitter experience. Otto Hörsing, the first president of the Reichsbanner, was the Reich Commissar for Silesia and Posen after the war, territories that passed to the newly-formed Polish state. In his unpublished memoirs, he recalled how he went around towns and villages, comforting Germans who would become citizens of Poland.[5] Hörsing never denied his identification with German nationalism or his dissatisfaction with the territorial settlement forged at Versailles; yet, he continued to support the Republic and was committed to international reconciliation. Any territorial revisions, he believed, would only come through arbitration, rather than force. Like Osterroth and Schützinger, Hörsing had served in the war, ending it as a representative on a soldiers' council.[6] By late 1923, peace in Europe and the future of the Republic were at stake. It was in this context that Hörsing began the work of establishing an association for veterans who supported the Republic.

The founding of the Reichsbanner

The Reichsbanner was founded in February 1924. The so-called Magdeburg Circle of moderate socialists, centred on the figure of Hörsing, was at the core of the new association. It attracted some prominent members of the DDP, including the former general-turned-pacifist, Berthold von Deimling, and Theodor Wolff, the influential editor of the *Berliner Tagesblatt*. The political purpose of the Reichsbanner was to mobilize support for the Republic by consolidating relations between the three republican parties, the SPD, the DDP and the Centre Party. It did not aim to supplant the parties, nor did it ever seek to enter the arena of parliamentary and high politics. Senior politicians in the Reichsbanner, such as Severing and Hörsing, followed a party line in the Reichstag and the Prussian government. The leaders of the Reichsbanner recognized that veterans' associations had little hope of creating a politically autonomous movement. The Stahlhelm tried and failed to enter parliamentary politics directly in the mid-1920s. The Reichsbanner did, however, shape popular politics. It provided guards for party meetings, especially those of the SPD in the early 1930s, it turned out in large numbers at republican celebrations, such as the annual Constitution Day every August, and, through its newspaper, it supported the institutions of the Weimar Republic. The Reichsbanner stuck to its self-prescribed field of veteran associational politics.

The extent to which the Reichsbanner perceived itself as a veterans' association remains open to debate.[7] Unlike the Stahlhelm, the

Reichsbanner allowed those who had not served in the war to join their ranks. Many members of the Magdeburg Circle had served in the First World War. In addition to Hörsing, Karl Höltermann, who became the chairman of the *Reichsbanner* in 1932, had been a front soldier for three years, before becoming a journalist after the war. Ernst Böhme, Magistratsrat in Magdeburg and later mayor of Braunschweig, had joined the SPD before the First World War and volunteered for service in 1914. The lawyer, Horst Baerensprung, from an old Prussian family, became a socialist during the course of war, in which he served first as a cavalry officer and then in the airforce.[8] Their experiences of war were varied – they had fought on different fronts and in different branches. Carsten Voigt analysed the age profile of Reichsbanner members, based on a sample of members who had been arrested for street-fighting between 1932 and 1934. 15.6 per cent were 20 years of age or younger, 42.8 per cent were between 21 and 30 years old, 30.6 per cent were between 31 and 40 years old and 11 per cent were over 40 years of age.[9] Street-fighting was a younger man's game, but, nonetheless, these figures suggest that veterans did not dominate the rank and file of the Reichsbanner.

On the other hand, the Reichsbanner cast itself avowedly as a veterans' association. Its first public appeal, in March 1925, stressed that it aimed to bring together all *Kriegsteilnehmer* (participants in the war) who supported the Republic.[10] One of the purposes behind its foundation was to contest the claims of the Stahlhelm to the legacy of the front soldier and to assert a different set of values based on the experience of the war. The Stahlhelm and other veterans' and paramilitary associations argued that the Republic represented the betrayal of the front soldier, a polity established by those who had stabbed the heroic army in its back. This was a potentially potent political message in a country where over 13 million men had served in the First World War, though not all, by any means, had been front soldiers. From the point of view of political tactics, therefore, the Reichsbanner leaders regularly invoked their credentials as former front soldiers.[11] References to their service were not merely rhetorical devices to attract political support. The war experience had been central to many of its founding figures. The Reichsbanner's ceremonies of commemoration of the war presented a very different image of the front soldier, and represented genuinely held convictions. Fritz Einert, a member of the Reichsbanner in Thuringia, remembered 11 November 1918 as a day of liberation from hunger and fear, rather than a humiliating personal and national defeat.[12] At the commemoration of the outbreak of the war in Löbau in August 1925, Wilhelm Buck

told his audience that the First World War had been a disaster: 'We waded through a sea of misery and hardship. The World War, which we commemorate today, demanded countless victims.'[13] The Reichsbanner sometimes shared commemorative platforms with other veterans' associations, but its message was uncompromising. At an early meeting of the Plauen group, in July 1924, Schützinger declared that 'pacifism had been hammered into the Reichsbanner leaders at the front'.[14] Heinrich Krone, a member of the Catholic Centre Party and member of the Reichsbanner since 1926, argued that the shattering of private lives and the misery caused by injury and death, so often only evident behind the closed doors of homes around Germany, compelled the survivors to campaign against war as an instrument of international politics. This campaign for peace, he argued, required manly courage.[15]

Historians have chronicled the path from one world war to another. George Mosse's work on the brutalization of soldiers and its political manifestation in inter-war fascist movements has had a powerful impact on our understanding of the legacy of the First World War.[16] The experience and commemoration of war was glorified and undermined peace, but this was by no means the only possible legacy, nor the most dominant. The war had been such a miserable experience for many people that it served to make peace a more precious achievement. Veterans claimed that their experience of war gave them a special role as advocates of peace. This extended to transnational contacts between veterans' associations. Enemies were recast as comrades. The common experience of the trenches united men who had recently fought against each other. War was an internationalizing as well as nationalizing experience.

The commitment of the Reichsbanner to a set of political ideals, notably the Republic and international reconciliation, was directly related to the experiences of their leaders during the war. It saw its work as rebuilding Germany, and this could only be achieved in the context of international peace and the Republic. The Reichsbanner, according to its guidelines, 'will work for the economic and social reconstruction of Germany and will stand up vigorously for the interests of participants in the war and especially the war wounded and those left behind'.[17]

The Reichsbanner and international politics

The foundation of the Reichsbanner coincided with an improvement in Germany's international position. The occupation of the Ruhr had exhausted both Germany and France. Gustav Stresemann, German

Foreign Minister between 1923 and 1929, and Aristide Briand, French Foreign Minister between 1925 and 1932, were the architects of the new conciliatory Franco–German relationship. The Dawes Plan (1924), the treaty of Locarno (1925) and Germany's entry into the League of Nations (1926) were the key stages in this changing relationship. In both France and Germany, the new foreign policy dispensation was contentious, and Stresemann and Briand both relied heavily on the left and centre of the political spectrum for support.[18]

The Reichsbanner supported the policy of reconciliation pursued by Stresemann between 1923 and 1929. Leaders of the Reichsbanner presented the policy of reconciliation as being in Germany's national interest, but they recast the national interest as one compatible with peace in Europe. At the Republican Day in Bielefeld, in March 1925, during which the Reichsbanner played a prominent role in the festivities, Ryffka, a member of the Centre Party, declared: 'The Republic is us and I consciously place it in contrast to the monarchy, as a state of internal and external peace. We do not want war again. As Germans and as citizens of the world, we have the duty to counter war enthusiasm with the holy enthusiasm for peace. We also hope that responsibility will triumph in France.'[19] Hörsing, Severing and others were adamant that Germany could only be regenerated in co-operation with its former enemies. The evacuation of French troops from Cologne and Germany's entry into the League of Nations were early achievements that helped to sustain Stresemann's policy and justified the arguments of Reichsbanner leaders (and others) that reconciliation served the national interest more effectively than confrontation.

Carl Severing, the SPD Prussian Minister of the Interior and member of the Reichsbanner, explicitly linked stabilization in foreign and domestic policy in a speech following the signing of the Treaty of Locarno, in November 1925. He claimed that the opposition of the DNVP (the German Nationalist Party) to the treaty was an attempt to bolster its domestic political support, which, in turn, would provide it with the opportunity to pursue reactionary politics.[20] Six years later, at a meeting in Coblenz, he made a similar claim: 'He who desired peace among nations must desire peace at home. The best protection of the German frontier was the German nation's desire for peace.'[21] At the founding of the Reichsbanner, Paul Löbe, who was the SPD president of the Reichstag, drew on the traditions of the 1848 revolution to suggest that a democratic and united national Germany would be a bulwark of peace. He reminded his audience that the revolutionaries of 1848 sought to remove the domestic and foreign yoke around the German nation.[22]

The leaders of the Reichsbanner sought to go beyond commenting on foreign policy and offering domestic political support for the Locarno pact and entry to the League of Nations. It is striking that the Reichsbanner saw itself as projecting an image of a peaceful, democratic and constitutional Germany that wanted international stability and harmony. This reflected their awareness that French politicians and society remained nervous about German revanchism. The visibility of militarized veterans' associations, such as the Stahlhelm, fuelled concerns in Paris that the social and political basis of the Franco–German détente in the mid-1920s was fragile. French officers on the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission regularly argued that the veterans' associations were an army in reserve. In the case of a war between France and Germany, officers concluded that the mobilization of veterans would compensate for the numerical weakness of the *Reichswehr*.[23] The public profile of the Reichsbanner, therefore, was aimed at a French audience, as well as a German one. 'If we want to develop the peaceful understanding', Severing told a national rally in August 1928, 'then the Reichsbanner must be represented beyond the black–red–yellow border posts, in France and Belgium, when peace-seeking war veterans march in other lands'.[24]

In June 1924, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Labour Prime Minister, and Edouard Herriott, the French Radical Premier, wrote to Stresemann, expressing concern about the popularity of nationalist associations in German public life. This letter provoked a contribution to a Reichsbanner pamphlet, in which the writer argued that the constant drum-beat of revenge from nationalist associations was creating a false impression of both German intentions and power. 'The Reichsbanner is a purely defensive organisation', claimed the writer, 'aimed against the dangers, which the nationalist associations present domestically. In terms of foreign policy the nationalist associations are without any importance. This should not be lost sight of due to their presumptuous and noisy manner and their interventions in foreign policy questions.'[25]

Forging contact with veterans' associations in other countries was a means of institutionalizing these pronouncements on foreign policy. In July 1927, members of the Reichsbanner (and the Jungdo and German Prisoners of War Society) attended, for the first time, a meeting of FIDAC in Luxemburg. Colonel G. P. Crosfield, of the British Legion, noted that the 'German societies which had accepted the invitation were more powerful than the Steel Helmets and, though just as patriotic, did not believe in the "blood and iron" policy of the rival organization. The conference was for the purpose of furthering the cause of peace and

it was hoped that other meetings would follow.'[26] At a meeting of the *Union fédérale des mutilés* in Brest, in May 1929, Erich Rossmann, member of the Reichsbanner, SPD deputy, and head of the Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten, joined hands on the stage with counterparts from Belgium and France. Discussions at this meeting went beyond the common concerns of disabled veterans. With Robert Cecil, René Cassin and Henry de Jouvenel attending the congress at Brest, it was also an opportunity to promote the League of Nations. Rossmann supported calls by Cecil and Joseph Paul-Boncour, a French socialist, to strengthen the Convention of the League of Nations by introducing an element of coercion to support the League's decisions.[27] A few months later, on the tenth anniversary of the passing of the Weimar constitution, a special issue of the *Reichsbanner Journal* carried an article by Abbé Bernard Secret, who had attended the meeting at Brest, in which he argued that the preservation of the Weimar Republic was an essential pre-condition for the maintenance of world peace.[28] However, meetings between former enemies could also re-open wounds. In 1928, the Reichsbanner refused

Figure 6 German veterans on parade in front of the Brandenburg Gate, 1929; 'Die grosse Verfassungsfeier am 11. August in Berlin! Ruderabordnungen des Reichsbanners beim Einzug durch das Brandenburger Tor in Berlin', Berlin, 11th August 1929.

Photographer unknown. Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-08217/CC-BY-SA.

to recognize that the German invasion of Belgium had been a crime and went so far as to charge the Belgian government with violating its own neutrality by making agreements with the Entente before the outbreak of war. The meeting ended by urging delegates to look to the future, not the past, but it demonstrated the limits of reconciliation.[29]

Commemorating the war also offered a symbolic means of forging reconciliation. The war had created numerous sites, from battlefields to monuments, where the war could be remembered. Gestures, such as the linking of hands, were simple and poignant means of infusing the war experience with the language of peace. At the meeting in Brest, Paul-Boncour concluded his plea for a more robust League of Nations by invoking the 'fraternity of the grave', which embraced the dead of all belligerents in the First World War.[30] In 1930, the Reichsbanner planned to send members to meet French veterans at the site of the battle of Chemins des Dames. The meeting was supposed to differentiate the Reichsbanner from other veterans' associations in the eyes of French veterans.[31] In an article in a special issue of the *Reichsbanner* to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the armistice, the pacifist author, Ernst Glaeser underlined the private lives shattered by the war as a means of evoking sympathy for the bereaved of all nationalities. At a cemetery near the battlefield of Verdun, he described how a group of women got out of a car, their eyes filled with pain and despair.[32] From the story it was not clear – and this was surely the point – whether the women were French or German or both.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the Reichsbanner's efforts on popular attitudes towards Germany in France and Britain, which were shaped by a multitude of factors. The Reichsbanner's assertion that it provided popular and official opinion in Europe with a more positive image of German foreign policy is difficult to sustain. On many occasions reports lumped the Reichsbanner in with other more right-wing strands of German foreign policy. Events, which were confined to symbolic gestures and all-encompassing declarations about the importance of peace, were welcomed. In short, there was a tendency only to recognize the distinctive character of the Reichsbanner vision of foreign policy when it fitted with the general foreign policy interests of France and Britain. On the first anniversary of its foundation, *The Times* noted that the parade in Magdeburg emphasized the desire for *Anschluss* with Austria. It acknowledged the democratic roots of this ambition, but expressed concern at the idea.[33] *Le Temps* dedicated its front page editorial to the same event. While it acknowledged the importance of the preservation of the Republic to peace in Europe, it expressed alarm at the Reichsbanner's call for union with Austria, which would destroy the

European peace.[34] The common foreign policy goals of German republicans and nationalists – union with Austria and revision of borders in Eastern Europe – could not but alarm readers in France and Britain.[35] In October 1932, as the disarmament conference was meeting in Geneva, *The Times* editorial argued that the existence of paramilitary associations in Germany, including the Reichsbanner, violated the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles and constituted a military threat: 'These organisations have never been and are not now comparable with units trained and equipped for modern warfare. They are however first class human material, broken in to discipline and drill, some well advanced in the preparatory stage which facilitates quick army training; all made and kept fit and ready for serious training in arms.'[36]

The Reichsbanner and the crisis of the Republic

By the late 1920s, the bonds of peace, in which international reconciliation, domestic stability, welfare provision and prosperity flourished, began to fray. The interlocking domestic and international institutions and values, which represented the cultures of peace, were coming undone. The election of January 1928 had resulted in a triumph for the SPD, which formed a broad coalition with the DDP, the Catholic Centre party and the DVP. For the Reichsbanner, the electoral result was a vicarious success. Soon the coalition became submerged in difficulties, particularly over the proposals to build a naval cruiser, *Panzerschiff A*. The debate over whether to proceed with the construction of the cruiser dominated German political debate throughout 1928. It posed dilemmas for the Reichsbanner. Like the SPD, the Reichsbanner was instinctively opposed to the project, as it represented a reversion towards the militarization of foreign policy, it demonstrated the persistent influence of the Reichswehr and it diverted resources from welfare towards armaments just as the economy was beginning to worsen. On the other hand, the Reichsbanner feared being tarred with the pacifist brush. Right-wing militarist associations condemned opponents of the cruiser as pacifists.

Severing's initial rejection – his loyalty to the party would lead him to change his mind in the summer of 1928 – of the cruiser project drew on the political economy of peace. 'It is very strange', he argued, 'that a government, which knows exactly what enormous sums will have to be spent in the coming years, brings forward such a demand. They say the peace treaty allows it, well, indeed, the peace treaty also demands the payment of reparations.'[37] He noted that German policy was also

seeking disarmament; the cruiser needlessly undermined the credibility of this policy.

Hörsing adopted a different stance, informed by his disappointment that the policy of reconciliation had not achieved more substantial results. His roots in Memel and his experiences in Silesia after the First World War gave him a different perspective from figures like Severing and Löbe. At a meeting of the Reichsbanner in Upper Silesia, in April 1927, he criticized the injustice of the territorial settlement, though he still hoped that the strengthening of democracy in Germany would lead to significant revision of the Treaty of Versailles.[38] He was keenly aware of the military weakness of Germany. He dismissed attacks by Reichsbanner members on the government and especially the SPD ministers for approving the construction of the cruiser. He pointed out that, while Germany was disarmed, her neighbours continued to improve their military position. The cruiser was a legitimate instrument of defence. This reflected frustration at the slow pace of disarmament, which, in turn, invigorated demands for German re-armament, demands that would culminate with Hitler's decision to leave the disarmament conference at Geneva in October 1933. Hörsing was also concerned at the vulnerability of the Reichsbanner to charges of pacifism, which would weaken its domestic appeal. 'The idea of peace', he argued in October 1928, 'was the common value of all republicans. … However fundamentally it must be said that the type of antimilitarism, which is pursued in Germany, is incomprehensible. We are a disarmed people. The whole world around us bristles with weapons. Here one preaches the rejection of military service, in a country where nobody must serve as a soldier.'[39]

At the same meeting, Severing, constrained by his seniority in the SPD, reverted from his condemnation of the cruiser project. His argument, however, was that the continued presence of the SPD in the coalition government outweighed the disadvantages of approving the cruiser project. Had the SPD ministers rejected the cruiser project, the government would have been replaced by a coalition leaning towards the right. The strategic aim of securing the Republic and implementing a foreign policy of reconciliation trumped the issue of the cruiser, in Severing's analysis.[40]

In the *Reichsbanner* journal, the section devoted to foreign policy was increasingly critical of French foreign policy in the late 1920s. Slow progress on the evacuation of French troops from the Rhineland and the reparations settlement led Gustav Warburg, the SPD member and foreign policy editor of the *Reichsbanner*, to express doubts about Briand's

intentions.[41] The lack of specific achievements made it more difficult to sustain the vision of a peaceful Europe, based on disarmament and arbitration. For example, at the Lübeck Gautag in September 1928, at the height of the cruiser debate, Severing argued that a republican military programme was part of a wider political vision of disarmament, arbitration, reparations and welfare spending. The editorial comment, however, that Briand's recent speech in Geneva showed little evidence of progress on disarmament, concluded that, in these circumstances, Germany needed to bolster its defensive capabilities.[42]

In 1929, Briand launched his policy for a European Union. Though it remained but an idea, the debate surrounding Briand's plan demonstrated the tensions within the Reichsbanner and between veterans' associations in France and Germany. Paul Schoffit, the secretary of the L'association des mutilés et anciens combattants de Muerthe-et-Moselle argued that the plan would allow for a better distribution of resources to disabled veterans, by reducing the war-debt burden, though the mechanisms of a reduction remained vague.[43] The reaction to the Briand plan in the Reichsbanner was almost as varied as the reaction across German society. A union of European nations, in one interpretation, was a justifiable response to the overwhelming economic superiority of the United States. Julius Deutsch, an Austrian socialist and leader of the Republikanischer Schutzbund, a paramilitary organization, argued that the spirit of Locarno provided the opportunity for the Anschluss of Germany and Austria, which would then form a constituent nation of a Europe of the nations, fulfilling the aspirations of the 1848 republicans, democrats and nationalists. However, Warburg warned that the emotional purchase of Locarno had been lost, frittered away by Poincaré.[44]

The relationship between foreign and domestic politics in Weimar Germany requires considerable research, particularly the impact of developments in the international system on the electoral politics of the day and the stability of the Republic. But at least, in a subjective sense, contemporaries considered foreign policy an important test of the credibility of the Republic – success would reinforce its legitimacy; failure would confirm the alleged weakness of a democratic, parliamentary system. Committed republicans, such as Hörsing and Warburg, though frustrated by the inertia of revision in the late 1920s, were not about to abandon the Republic. Other followers may well have. Accounts of the Nazi electoral surge in 1930 and 1932 focus almost wholly on their appeal to voters on grounds of domestic policy.[45] Part of the appeal of the Reichsbanner was that it rejected war and offered a new vision

of international politics. As that vision grated against the slow pace of change in the late 1920s, it became less compelling. Rearmament and a more assertive, confrontational nationalism proved increasingly appealing. The Reichsbanner's links, often fragile, with veterans' associations in other states, particularly France, did not enable the mobilization of a transnational popular veterans' movement in support of further treaty revision. Veterans' associations were constrained by national boundaries and interests in two ways. First, the state controlled foreign policy, and veterans' associations that wanted to achieve foreign policy goals had to work through the state. Transnational networks could help to bolster arguments, but they could not (nor did they wish to) overturn the framework of (nation)-states. Second, many veterans shared the assumptions that guided their countries' policies. The desire for an Anschluss between Germany and Austria was anathema to many French people. Veterans' claims that they were in the vanguard of a new Europe, based on the common suffering of the trenches, were dashed when specific issues and institutions were at stake.

This failure in the sphere of foreign policy was also compounded by the Reichsbanner's utter failure to attend to the material needs of veterans, especially disabled ones. Over two decades ago, Detlev Peukert argued that the Weimar Republic derived much of its legitimacy from the promises that the state would provide welfare to its citizens and that its inability to deliver on these promises in the late 1920s and early 1930s undermined the regime.[46] In his speech to the Reichstag setting out his government's programme, Hermann Müller had declared: 'Improving the lot of the war wounded, widows, and orphans represents the sentiment of the German people.'[47] During the debate over the cruiser, speakers and editorials had linked expenditure on armaments with welfare spending. Reductions in welfare provision were more difficult to justify to republican voters, as they watched increased spending on the military. The Reichsbanner failed to defend the welfare provisions for veterans and war widows. There is no evidence that the Reichsbanner provided advice to those seeking to negotiate the state's complex system for providing war pensions.

This contrasted with an organization such as the Allgemeiner Verband der Kriegs-und Arbeitsopfer Deutschlands, which set up regular events to provide advice to veterans.[48] Under the leadership of Hugo Gräf, it devoted considerable efforts to improving the circumstances of its members. Gräf viewed such events as a means of recruiting and mobilizing support. He and his colleagues also linked the political economy of welfare cuts for veterans with the increased military expenditure in

the late 1920s. Reviewing the cuts to the war pensions budget in 1929, the left-wing *Mitteilungsblatt des Allgemeinen Verbandes der Kriegs-und Arbeitsopfer Deutschland* commented:

> The reasons, which the government gave for the unfortunate financial position of the Reich, cannot be regarded as true by victims of war and work. If the budgetary position of the Reich is really so poor, why would the expenditure on the Reichswehr and the navy not be limited and the disgracefully high pensions for former generals be simply stopped or significantly reduced? If the Reich is preaching thrift, then it should start to save there where, up to now, money has been squandered, but not on the insufficient provision for victims of war and work.[49]

These acerbic attacks showed that veterans' organizations based to the left of the Reichsbanner could exploit the culture of peace as a means of undermining the Reichsbanner and the SPD.

The Reichsbanner was quick to recognize the rise of the Nazi party in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a threat to the Weimar Republic. The Reichsbanner, after all, had been fighting against SA and a wide array of other right-wing veterans' organizations and paramilitary groups since its foundation in 1924. Its members experienced the visceral edge of anti-democratic violence. The failure of the Reichsbanner lay not in its lack of muscle or its misjudgement of the Nazi party, but in the absence of an articulate social policy, linking constitutional democracy and international peace.

The Third Reich, veterans' internationalism and the culture of peace

The persistent strength of the culture of peace was evident in the manner in which leaders in the Third Reich perverted the language, gestures and networks constructed by veterans' associations in the 1920s to achieve foreign and domestic policy aims. Between the summer of 1934 and the spring of 1935, Nazi leaders exploited the associations between veterans' groups and the culture of peace for foreign policy aims. On 8 July 1934, Rudolf Hess, deputy leader of the Nazi party, gave a speech in Königsberg entitled 'Germany and peace: a soldier's message'. As a former front soldier, he called for peace, and, in particular, a rapprochement between France and Germany. Hess directed the speech towards veterans on both sides of the Rhine. He referred on several

occasions to the common war experience as the emotional basis for contemporary peace.[50] The purpose of the speech was to improve the international image of the Third Reich, badly damaged by the Night of the Long Knives. Germany's growing isolation would be compounded later in the month by the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss. With re-armament under way and the referendum on the future status of the Saarland, scheduled for January 1935, the Third Reich was in a vulnerable position. Hess's speech was a tactical manoeuvre – one of many – designed in this case to stimulate debate within French veterans' association and make more difficult the establishment of a solid block against the Third Reich.[51]

The German Foreign Office, which paid close attention to relations between French and German veterans' associations, appeared uncertain about the purpose and benefits of these contacts. At one level, diplomats acknowledged the importance of influencing French public opinion. Creating a positive image of Germany amongst three million veterans was infinitely more valuable than converting one 'noteworthy but uninfluential intellectual' to a positive view of the Nazi regime.[52] Roland Köster, the German Ambassador to Paris, seemed to fear that contacts between veterans' associations could undermine diplomatic control of the Franco–German relationship.[53] This reflected the poor relations between the German ambassador and the new Nazi regime as well as the competition within the Third Reich for control of foreign policy. Ribbentrop played a leading role in pushing the so-called veterans' diplomacy, as a means of outflanking official channels and unsettling French public opinion during a critical phase of the re-establishment of German military power and security.

Over nine months, from Hess's Königsberg speech until the announcement of the introduction of conscription in March 1935, Nazi veterans' associations, such as the Kriegsopferversorgung, established contacts with French counterparts. Hanns Oberlindober, the head of the Kriegsopferversorgung, held meetings with French veteran leaders, including Jean Goy (Union Nationale des anciens combattants) and René Cassin.[54] In pursuing this policy, Nazi organizations adopted many of the ideas and gestures that the Reichsbanner had pioneered during the previous decade. The culture of peace was so deeply embedded that it provided both a restraint on Nazi language and a cover for the militarization of German foreign policy. In July 1935, before a meeting of FIDAC, Oberlindober laid a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris.[55] The previous November, Goy travelled to Berlin, where he met Hitler and Ribbentrop. Hitler greeted Goy, he claimed, as a fellow

veteran, not as Reich Chancellor. 'It is not possible', claimed the Nazi leader, 'that the ex-combatants will not impose peace on the world'.[56] Hitler crafted his message carefully, drawing on French and German veterans' common experience. He dismissed concerns that his wilder assertions in *Mein Kampf* about France reflected his foreign policy aims. These chapters, he argued, reflected the emotional legacy of the Ruhr occupation in 1923. French and German veterans had a relationship founded on mutual respect for each other's soldierly qualities and a shared interest in avoiding a second major European war. Hess claimed, in December 1934 during a speech in Bochum, that the visits of French veterans to Berlin had allayed German fears that France wanted to wage a preventive war.[57]

The French veterans' movements were divided, but Nazi veteran diplomacy exacerbated the splits. Goy, who would later support Pétain and collaborate with the Third Reich, argued from September 1934 that any attempt to build better relations with Germany was better than another war. 'We are resolutely opposed to the thesis of the preventive war', Goy claimed. 'Preventive or not, war is always war.'[58] Following his visit to Berlin, Goy had to defend his para-diplomacy. He gave speeches at Marseilles, Vincennes and Paris in December 1934. He claimed that veterans' particular understanding of the horrors of war placed them in an excellent position to ensure peace. 'Rudolf Hess, himself a former combatant, after having described the miseries of war, voiced the profound hope for peace of those who lived through the horror of the trenches and whose mission it was to prepare the way [towards peace] if the politicians could not agree amongst themselves.'[59] Even members of the left-leaning Union Fédérale des anciens combattants, such as Henri Pichot, were impressed by Hitler and considered a rapprochement with German veterans' associations.[60]

Others were much more sceptical. On 9 February 1935, at Théatre des Ambassadeurs, Georges Scapini, deputy in the French Chamber and blinded during the war, debated with the editor of the *Echo de Paris*, Henri de Kerillis. While Scapini was willing to try all means to preserve peace in Europe, Kerillis warned of German revanchism.[61] The previous December Kerillis had warned his fellow French veterans that the Nazi leadership was exploiting the cult of the veteran and its association with pacifism to undermine French popular support for a forceful response to German re-armament.[62] *Action Française* was also critical of conversations between French and German veterans, which were designed to divert French public attention from the substance of the German threat.[63]

In January 1935, voters in the Saarland referendum decided to return to German administrative control. The collapse of Franco–German veteran diplomacy followed the announcement of German conscription in March 1935, a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. On 5 April 1935, FIDAC decided to cancel a meeting with German veterans. Although contact continued, and Oberlindober visited Paris in the summer of 1935, veterans' diplomacy had served its purpose from Hitler's point of view. It had provided one form of cover during a period of risk in Franco–German relations. By the summer of 1935, Nazi officials showed much less interest in cultivating contacts between veterans on either side of the Rhine. Hitler had used, as he would throughout the rest of the 1930s, the language and ideas of a durable peace – mutual respect, the horrors of war and equal rights – to cast off the restraints of Versailles.

Conclusion

The Reichsbanner, the most numerous veterans' association in Weimar Germany, was dedicated to the protection of the Republic, the maintenance of international stability and the provision of welfare to veterans and war widows. The different elements of the Reichsbanner's vision were welded together in a broader culture of peace. Foreign and domestic politics were interwoven. Founded in 1924, the Reichsbanner contributed to the stabilization of the Republic, the resurgence of Social Democracy in 1928 and the reconciliation between former enemies. The Reichsbanner developed a rich festive culture, centred on Constitution Day, commemorations of the war and celebrations of 1848. The Republic was not weak in the realm of its self-presentation and cultural politics. Its vulnerabilities were rooted in more material and tangible areas – the slowing pace of revisionism and the pressure placed on the welfare budget by the onset of the Great Depression. These issues frayed the republican coalition, which the Reichsbanner represented.

During the years of the so-called presidential dictatorship, the Reichsbanner pursued a more confrontational approach, particularly in the area of street politics. Höltermann, who succeeded Hörsing, formed 'protection units' or Schufo to protect political meetings and counter the propaganda effect of SA violence. The pressure placed on the Reichsbanner's vision of peace at home and abroad was neatly illustrated when Rossmann, who went, at the behest of the Foreign Minister, Konstantin Neurath, to the reparations conference at Lausanne in early 1932 to put Germany's case to other veterans' associations, decided to return home to help the SPD's July 1932 election

campaign.[64] The conference resulted in a moratorium on German reparations payments, but the SPD were unable to prevent the Nazis from becoming the largest party in the Reichstag.

The appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933 marked a decisive defeat for the Reichsbanner and other republican associations in Germany. However, some of the central figures in the Reichsbanner played a role in reconstruction after 1945. Drawing on the same general ideas that informed the cultures of peace during and after the First World War, they found more congenial political circumstances for their projects in Western Europe after the end of the Second World War. Franz Osterroth became the secretary of the SPD in Kiel, was a prolific writer and supported the socialist youth movement. Hermann Fischer, who served in the First World War and joined the Reichsbanner, went into exile in Sweden and returned after the war to rebuild the SPD. Karl Raloff, who founded the Hannover branch of the Reichsbanner, was forced into exile, first in Denmark and later Sweden. After 1945, he made important contributions to the restoration of good relations between the Federal Republic and Denmark. Undoubtedly, the experience of exile shaped the internationalist outlook of SPD members after 1945; however, the Reichsbanner had already created transnational networks after the First World War. The Second World War reinforced the political ideas, often vague and jagged around the edges, which many veterans had already embraced in and after the First World War. To that extent, the history of the Reichsbanner had a more positive outcome than its members would have dared to hope in 1933.

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9

The Italian Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra and Its International Liaisons in the Post Great War Era

Martina Salvante

> Fidac is not a commercial society, as the name could erroneously suggest. It is, instead, an effective initiative of French comrades who, once returned home from the frontline, thought it was possible to create the Federation Interalliée des Anciens Combattants. After the five words' initials had been merged, the Fidac was established with its seat, of course, in Paris. […] What does Fidac do? It meets once a year and, for a very moveable propagandistic purpose, in a different country. Those who attend the convention are due to wear a morning dress, a tuxedo, a tailcoat and, as stated by the last conference's newsletter, many morning dress' shirts. Since the convention is continuously touring, it would be otherwise difficult to get a *blanchissage*. The attendees can also share some news about the assistance of veterans in their country. Because Fidac's meetings had already used European capitals up, this year the conference took place in America. Therefore, we shouted all together: Good bye, America![1]

That is the half-serious report of the 1930 FIDAC meeting in Washington, written by the First World War veteran Titta Madia, in the official bulletin of the *Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra* (ANMIG, National Association for War Mutilated and Disabled), *La Vittoria*.[2] Giovanni Battista Madia, known as Titta, was both a member of ANMIG and a deputy, who had first been elected to parliament in the ranks of the Fascist Party in 1924.[3] A leg-amputee after a grenade explosion in 1917, he worked as a lawyer and journalist, in addition to his political career. He had joined the Italian delegation to the 1930

FIDAC conference in the role of a distinguished member of ANMIG, as well as a commissioner of the National Institution for War Disabled (ONIG).[4] His article went on to portray Italy's delegates and their roles in the discussions run by the diverse working groups of which FIDAC was composed. Madia facetiously added: 'Those days at the conference were tiring, exhausting and draining: receptions, banquets, excursions, roof-gardens, garden-parties, breakfasts; then again visits, lunch-meals, tours: today as yesterday, tomorrow as today.'[5]

Joking aside, Madia's account effectively reveals the ambivalent position of Italians with regard to FIDAC: on the one hand, they often criticized it for being just an excuse for travel and lavish meals; on the other, they acknowledged its usefulness as a tool of propaganda for the fascist regime's achievements. At the time of the 1930 conference in the US, Giovanni (commonly called Gianni) Baccarini, an Italian, was vice-president of FIDAC.[6] Another Italian had been assigned to the presidency in 1927, Nicola Sansanelli, a prominent member of the National Association for Combatants (ANC).[7]

Baccarini was appointed vice-president of FIDAC during the Belgrade congress, in September 1929. By then, the Italian press remarked that the FIDAC conventions were a great opportunity for Italy to obtain prestige at an international level, given that on such occasions Italy had been publicly praised for its groundbreaking measures in aid of war veterans.[8] In preparation for the Yugoslav conference, the Italian government had taken into consideration the idea of arranging a special train for all the international veterans travelling to Belgrade. The train was intended to go through 'the sore Fiume', so that 'the delegates would have better realized what great sacrifice Italy had made by accepting these borders'. Since this idea was deemed unfeasible (Fiume was not *en route* to Belgrade), it was suggested instead to organize a ferry from Split (where the congress was meant to end its sessions) to Zara and then Fiume (in Croatian: Zadar and Rijeka), where 'the delegates would have the opportunity to erase or modify some impressions artificially propagated in the hostile environment where the congress would take place'. In addition, the Italian government decided to accept the demands of the Belgian delegates, who asked for highly discounted train tickets to travel to Belgrade, so as to press their case at the congress and 'avoid any awkward confrontation with the hospitality they could enjoy in Belgrade'.[9] Italian and Belgian veterans' associations had, in fact, a very close connection: ANMIG's leader Carlo Delcroix's grandfather was a Belgian.[10]

Yet again, the aforementioned documents are evidence of Italy's ambiguous position towards FIDAC; it worked as an important opportunity

for Italy to intensify her international relations with the war's victorious states and to work with them for adequate social measures for war victims. However, political tensions and acrimonies affected her relations with some nations under FIDAC's umbrella: e.g., Italy scarcely accepted the loss of Fiume or other territories by then embraced within the Yugoslav borders.[11] Moreover, the two countries had also been so much at odds over the influence on Albania that FIDAC had already invited both countries to abandon any hostility.[12]

Despite such antagonistic stances, the international organization had been created in 1920 'to keep up the fraternal comradeship arisen among Allied servicemen on the battlefield'.[13] According to the founders, such a bond should be used to settle any future conflict among nations and thus help keep peace. As a matter of fact, in those early years FIDAC was even perceived as 'the world's greatest peace society'.[14] I agree with the editors of this volume when they affirm in the introduction, that the impact of the First World War in the inter-war period cannot be measured only in terms of brutalization and political radicalization.

In Italy, the veterans' movement was varied, and sectors of it were predominantly peaceful; however, the coming to power of Benito Mussolini in 1922 (himself a war veteran), and the definitively dictatorial turn of his government in 1925–1926, eventually affected the nature of the veterans' movement. The support Mussolini received (or drew) from veterans in the crucial period (for his government) 1924–1926 determined the loss of any autonomy for them, since the associations of ex-servicemen were gradually included in the Fascist Party's apparatus, becoming, therefore, a straightforward expression of fascist power. Hence, this aspect should be taken into account in further analysis of ANMIG's (or others) role within FIDAC or any other international organization. In any case, the history of Italian involvement in ex-servicemen's international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is still to be retraced and fully accounted for.[15]

This chapter will try, therefore, to analyze the Italian stance towards and participation in the transnational movement of veterans. The sources used are articles published in the two major news-bulletins of the National Association for War Mutilated and Disabled: the Rome-based *Il Bollettino* ('The Bulletin', 1918-onwards; in the period 1929–1945 renamed *La Vittoria*, 'The Victory') and the Milan-based *La Stampella* ('The Crutch', issued in the period 1921–1934).[16] These sources are combined with other papers taken from official documentation issued by Italy's central bureaus, such as the Prime Minister's Office and the

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as documents found in the private archive of Giovanni Baccarini.[17] The chapter, therefore, focuses on the national dimension of the transnational experience of FIDAC, that is to say, on the ways that FIDAC was regarded and portrayed by the Italian disabled veterans involved in it. It will largely examine the period between 1918 and 1938, or more precisely, from the first calls for international co-operation coming from Italian servicemen in 1918, until the crucial year of 1938, when international peace was drastically put under threat. In the intervening time, Italy waged an imperial war against Ethiopia and also sent some troops in aid of General Francisco Franco in Spain. Despite breaking off its commitment to peace, in 1938 Italy was, quite embarrassingly, still counted among FIDAC's members.

Veterans in post-war Italy

The Italian post-war period was characterized by a variety of political and social events which, among others, directly involved war veterans. Referring to Germany, Antoine Prost asserts that the brutalization of German politics was due not exclusively to the war experience, but also to specific socio-cultural conditions for people in Germany.[18] The same could be said for Italy. The brutalization of the country's political life was certainly due to the persistence of a war culture first developed on the battlefields, but it was also rooted in the already-existing tensions of the pre-war period, in the incapacity of the liberal ruling class to understand the changes taking place in the political arena and, last but not least, in the practice of brutal intervention of army and police forces to crush any turmoil (e.g., the killing of fifty workers during the hunger protests in Turin in 1917).

Even so, the requests and deeds of war veterans were so varied that talking uniquely of the unruly acts committed by *arditi*, *fiumani* and *squadristi* does not do justice to the experiences and claims of other ex-servicemen.[19] The political power of Mussolini and his Fascist Party, however, largely contributed to the one-dimensional portrait of veterans' profiles in post-war Italy. Therefore, the concepts of culture of defeat and culture of victory turn out to be particularly intertwined in the Italian context. Italy was, in fact, among the Allied and victorious countries, but the defeat suffered at Caporetto in 1917 (only partially redeemed by the military success at Vittorio Veneto in 1918) and the trauma of the 'mutilated victory' (*vittoria mutilata*), caused by a final reward inferior to what Italians saw as due to them, led Italy to view

itself as a loser among the winners and, therefore, to partially share the culture of the defeated.[20]

Moreover, the internally-contested victory resulted in the angry disappointment of nationalists and, on the other side, in socialists' expectations of revolution and class struggle. As soon as Italy exited the war, a long period of social unrest started, which later culminated in violent and persistent clashes between opponents. Hence, war culture continued to affect Italian society, though in different ways: the 'Liberal ruling class […] reapplied wartime methods of authoritarian repression', instead of responding with extensive reforms; outraged nationalists and right-extremists addressed their violent rage against 'the 'internal enemy […], fighting a political battle that would liberate and redeem Italy';[21] finally, workers and peasants claimed their rights to radical social change, if not through revolution, then through demonstrations, strikes and occupation of buildings. Bolshevism represented both hope and fear for the diverse classes of an Italian population marked by massive social inequalities.

Veterans, demobilized soldiers and militarists all suffered from, and actively participated in, such events. It is important, however, to again point out the variety of ex-combatants' stances and practices. The main organizations of ex-servicemen, such as the National Association for Combatants (ANC) and the National Association for War Mutilated and Disabled (ANMIG), initially made an effort to hold back from openly supporting any of the political factions, while often condemning the violence which had also hit some of them. Nevertheless, internal controversies occurred within these groups, as some members differed politically from others, while another minority, including the *arditi*, resolved on employing violence as a tool of political confrontation.[22]

Ute Frevert claims that 'war holds the potential [..] to forge relationships across national borders' thanks also to veterans' 'unifying experience' of 'remembering the war'.[23] War may, in fact, contribute to bringing nations together in the commemoration of those who fought and died, thus propelling them to make all efforts to prevent further battles. Though Italy contributed to a reinterpretation of the war, her case is somehow exceptionally ambivalent. Post-war leader Benito Mussolini, in fact, emphasized the positive, regenerating role of war, which he regarded as the starting point of the 'fascist revolution'. Moreover, participation in the First World War was acknowledged as an integral part of the fascist ideological heritage, so much so that it was used as a badge of distinction.[24] In a famous article written in 1917, Mussolini approved the organizational initiatives of disabled soldiers and labelled them 'the

vanguard of the great army coming back tomorrow', recognizing in those who had fought in the trenches Italy's new ruling class.[25] As a matter of fact, the fascist movement/party was dominated 'by ex-combatants: of the 151,644 members of the *fasci* in late 1921, almost three-fifths (57.5 per cent) were returned soldiers. Almost all leading fascists proudly proclaimed their formative war experience.'[26] In addition, the fascist regime laid emphasis on its legacy of the First World War by equating the fascists who were injured or killed during the 1919–1922 civil guerrilla war with Great War veterans and, thus, offering them the same assistance and benefits.[27] To what extent, therefore, could Mussolini's regime be credible in a transnational organization aimed at pursuing a diplomatic war on war?

National turmoil and the call for internationalism

As soon as it was established, in Milan in 1917, as an apolitical cluster of disabled servicemen aimed at representing those who had been severely injured while fighting for their country, ANMIG proclaimed the necessity of forming a large alliance and cohesive family in order to avoid 'being overcome by the able-bodied, so that these latter would then impose upon us their conditions for a new life'.[28] On the significant date of 4 November 1918 it launched its manifesto, which was distinctly pacifist in its orientation, condemning the 'barbarities of war' and calling for a regeneration of the Italian country, which the 'aristocrats of sacrifice' should have been protagonists of.[29] It further stated:

> From the free land of Italy we invite every country's combatants and invalids to join us in an honest and willing collaboration, sealed by the Pact of Sacrifice, which – as a living disapproval for war cruelty and a vivid example for the future – will be a mighty defence of the League of Nations.[30]

In addition, during the 1919 national congress, ANMIG's executives expressed their wish for the creation of an 'International Conference for War Disabled' in the name of the Pact of Sacrifice.[31] Even before the signing of the armistice, the association had willingly specified 'From the war shall the true International of Blood rise upon the buried Socialist International, as it is the only one which can guarantee that the League of Nations, resulting from the war, will effectively be a society among free and equal nations. […] To make it happen, the victory of the Entente is essential.'[32]

The idea of the 'Socialist International' was still carried forward by another organization, i.e. the *Lega proletaria fra mutilati, invalidi, reduci, vedove e genitori di caduti in guerra* (Proletarian League for the war mutilated, the disabled, veterans, widows and parents of fallen soldiers).[33] According to this organization, the war represented a further validation of the oppression which the international caste of profiteers was implementing, to the detriment of the poor and sacrificed classes. In 1920, the League's press organ, *Spartacus*, enthusiastically reported the words of the French veteran and author Henri Barbusse calling for the constitution of 'the army of those who did not die, the army of life',[34] as well as passionate accounts of the first international gathering of veterans in Geneva.[35] Barbusse and his *Association républicaine des anciens combattants* (ARAC), indeed, had attracted the attention of those who regarded the Bolshevik revolution in Russia as the only means of exiting war and promoting radical social change.[36]

As already mentioned, in Italy the very first post-war years were marked by a diffused social unrest, which began with the occupation of factories by workers and of lands by peasants and culminated in violent confrontation between groups with contrasting political views. Even disabled veterans got deeply involved in such practices of conflicting opposition (e.g., staging sit-ins and occupying public buildings to protest against the government,[37] as well as getting involved and sometimes being killed in heavy fighting). Recent scholarship gives the period the status of a long civil war, thus abandoning former, more clear-cut, classifications, such as 'red' or 'black' two-years, in accordance with the protagonists' political colour.[38]

Therefore, while veterans were soliciting international peace, they were also going through tough antagonisms at home, which later resulted in the rise of fascism. In this context, ANMIG continued to proclaim itself as an apolitical group and also asked for reconciliation between the various parties.[39] Yet, internal divergences developed in those years and the executive progressively moved toward the right, coming closer to Mussolini, at that time the new Head of Government, and his party.[40] The following years were then crucial both in the definitive confirmation of Mussolini as political leader (after the Matteotti affair in 1924) and in the survival of the association during the establishment of the fascist state.[41] From then on, ANMIG, which in 1923 was acknowledged as the only moral and material representative of disabled veterans by the government,[42] was, indeed, progressively absorbed in the fascist apparatus, as testified by its subsequent statutes.

Founded as a grassroots movement aimed at defending the rights of disabled veterans, ANMIG was intended for officials and rank and file soldiers who had been injured during the war. It met with success in the very early stages of its existence: in 1920 its members numbered 500,000. In 1927, ANMIG was organized within the National Association of Fascist Syndicates, in line with the so-called Delcroix-Rossoni Pact,[43] while in 1938 it was put directly under the control of the Fascist Party's Directorate.

This digression on the early post-war period in Italy helps to clarify the motives of the changeable attitude that ANMIG had within the international network of veterans throughout the inter-war period. The initial and enthusiastic strivings for peace faded as time went by and subjugated to more nationalistic interests. In 1923, ANMIG still vehemently defended the idea of making every effort for peace through international veterans' organizations linked to the League of Nations.[44] Italy, in fact, had already collaborated with the LoN and the International Labour Organization,[45] along with taking part in annual inter-Allied conferences on the care of disabled veterans.[46] The latter were truly transnational in their scope, as they developed before the war ended and focused on health and welfare issues, like surgery and prostheses, rehabilitation and vocational retraining.

Italy and the Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants

In 1924, the vice-president of the British Legion, Colonel George Crosfield, contacted the Italian ambassador in London to invite an Italian delegation to join FIDAC at its coming congress in the British capital. He defined FIDAC as an organization whose main objective was 'to keep the peace in Europe' and said that, given that veterans had 'personally experienced the horrors of the modern war, they could be useful in achieving that specific goal'.[47] According to Crosfield, the Italian Association for Combatants (ANC) was a formal member of FIDAC, but, since it had never paid its membership fee, it was not allowed to take part in the meetings.[48] Therefore, he invited Italy to join the international network of veterans, because it would be 'regrettable that the great Italian nation was not represented among the veterans of Europe and USA'. Moreover, he wanted to avoid any further gossiping about the absence of Italians at such gatherings, as had happened one year earlier in Brussels. As a result, he formally asked the ambassador, Pietro Tomasi della Torretta, to arrange an official meeting with Benito Mussolini in Rome,[49] where they would discuss in person the programme of FIDAC

and Italy's chance to join it.[50] Eventually, ten Italian delegates from ANC took part in the FIDAC Congress in London, in September 1924, where they also proposed Rome as the location for the 1925 meeting.

In 1925, the Central Board of the Association happened to be changed by the direct intervention of Mussolini: a transformation that the American delegation, according to a reserved document, was expected to argue against. More importantly, however, Italy intended to profit from the international meeting to gain as much support as possible from other associations in the censure of communism. Rome's representatives begged and pleaded so much that the Rome congress ended with two requests: the condemnation of German military escalation, as denounced by the Czechoslovakian and Polish delegations; and an accusation that communism was a danger for international peace. Such an achievement for the Italian delegation was further amplified by the visit of Colonel Crosfield and his wife in April 1926 to Italy, where they were hosted in various cities (Genoa, Turin, Milan, Naples and Rome) by the ANC. In his report, the British veteran wrote of 'a great difference between the way the internal affairs are now handled in Italy and the way they were in 1919. [...] I do not exaggerate when I say that the actual regime, thanks to the great personality of Mussolini and the intelligence of King Victor Emmanuel, has likely giving birth to a new Nation.'[51] Such positive remarks about Italy induced ANC to look for the support of the government in longing for the presidency of FIDAC, since major sympathies had by then converged on Italy.

It is in 1926 that FIDAC is mentioned for the first time on the pages of ANMIG's periodical, *The Crutch*.[52] This is also, probably, the year that the Association for War Mutilated and Disabled joined FIDAC, as it did not appear among the association's members listed on the pages of the May issue of the monthly bulletin *F.I.D.A.C.*[53] There, the international network of veterans was briefly described as a 'free association which, by embodying the highest spirituality of ex-servicemen, could likely be above daily political affairs and, therefore, voice both the ideals of the last war and the guiding principles for the ex-allied governments'. The report went on to identify two currents within FIDAC: 'a Franco–Belgian one, characterized by an eternal hatred for the Germans, and the English one which, instead, is pro-peace but in a more or less interested way'.[54]

Actually, later that year, ANMIG participated in the annual FIDAC conference in Warsaw,[55] where the most debated topics were the problem of migration and colonialism for Italy, the question of war debts and relations with formerly-hostile countries. By then, ANMIG was represented by its General Secretary, Gianni Baccarini, who, dressed in full fascist uniform, would attend FIDAC conferences in the following years. He was the

mouthpiece of the fascist regime, which he publicly praised in the course of the Washington conference in 1930 by declaring: 'Our fatherland, whose intents are clear-cut and fair, as well as it is extremely humane but determined in its decisions, is today spiritually better equipped than every other nation to partake in the great cooperative work of civilization.'[56]

During the subsequent FIDAC Congress, held in Prague in 1931, the Italian representative within the Committee for Foreign Affairs firmly rebuffed the items on the agenda proposed by Romania, Yugoslavia and Poland with regard to the intangibility of the peace treaties and of the borders they established.[57] In his usual report from such conferences, Titta Madia reasserted his idea of FIDAC as 'a creation of France, supposed to attract ex-Allied veterans in order to keep their hatred against Germany living, as a contribution to true peace'.[58] And thus continued: 'FIDAC – headquarters in Paris, journal in French, official language French, French employees – is inter-Allied: it gathers once a year or, better said, some eager men in black meet to discuss the way to keep the peace, which in French means the way to keep Germany submissive'.[59]

Beyond Madia's sarcasm, doubts about the real efficacy of FIDAC initiatives were shared by other international members of FIDAC, and even by those French veterans whom Madia had largely criticized. FIDAC was perceived by some as an organization immobilized by nationalistic interests, above all when international tensions increased in the mid-1930s. So, for example, the then president of the French *Union fédérale* (UF), Henri Pichot, wrote in 1935 that FIDAC could be considered a 'generous travel agency', rather than an 'operating force',[60] while in 1937, another eminent member of French UF, René Cassin, explained the failure of the transnational lobbying practice of FIDAC through the dependence of veterans' associations on their national governments, lacking, as a result, any real autonomy of expression and action.[61]

Pichot's use of the term 'generous' is probably not to be taken as an allusion to the fact that FIDAC was in charge of the travel expenses of all conveners to its annual conferences. Rather, it may refer to its capacity – like a travel agency – for organizing and putting in motion dozens of veterans coming from diverse countries to gather in a different country every year. In truth, it was the various national associations which funded their members' trips, perhaps asking national authorities to agree to some form of discount on their domestic transport network.[62]

The transnational connections of ANMIG

In the meantime, ANMIG took part in another gathering of invalid and able-bodied veterans, in September 1925 in Geneva, under the sponsorship

of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and planned to participate in a second conference in September 1926 in the same city.[63] Other Italian veterans' associations were invited to that event, resulting in a protest by ANC owing to the political affiliation of one of these (the Catholic-oriented Union for Veterans).[64] Following some enquiries made by the Italian representative at ILO, Giuseppe De Michelis, it was verified that those conferences had been promoted by Adrien Tixier, an ILO executive and disabled war veteran, in order to encourage contact between veterans coming from both the ex-Allied and the formerly hostile countries. Though not mentioned with its name, this is the first official reference to CIAMAC that I have been able to source.[65]

The following years registered an escalation in animosity within the veterans' movement as a result of the different objectives and practices of the two international federations and of the divergences arising inside the national unions. Italy kept away from CIAMAC, which was accused of being 'an organization with widespread Masonic-Socialist tendencies' according to Gianni Baccarini.[66] Already in 1932, a report written by the Italian Legation in Vienna for the Police Department and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs presented CIAMAC as 'piloted by the Second International and under French influence'.[67] The finding of such accounts testifies to the attention the Italian government paid to the decisions taken and the declarations made during such international occurrences, despite Italy's withdrawn membership from CIAMAC. Actually, the first resolution taken by CIAMAC during the Belgrade congress in 1935 explicitly condemned the Italian approach in Ethiopia, which put under threat any effort of peace-keeping in the world, as well as the survival of the League of Nations. One year earlier, CIAMAC had already announced its disapproval of any national politics aimed at arousing the hatred against other peoples or at educating younger generations into warfare.[68]

The question of Italy's involvement in the veterans' movement was even tackled by Benito Mussolini, in an interview he granted to the French veteran and journalist André Gervais in 1934. Gervais was the president of the Fédération Bourbonnaise des Anciens Combattants and the head of the Comité France-Italie, as well as chief editor of the periodical *Veiller Bourbonnais*. The talk, entitled *The fighting life. A conversation with Duce Benito Mussolini*, had a great resonance with the French press and was published in full on the pages of the review *Trait d'union*, organ of the Union fédérale of French associations of veterans, disabled and war victims based in Italy, which had been established a year before.[69] In the interview, the fascist leader discussed a variety of topics, such as the future of the younger generation and relations between European countries. Mussolini emphasized the civilizing function Europe had car-

ried out in the past and the necessity for the main European countries to find again a common *état d'esprit* if they did not want to lose their primary position in the world to the advantage of America and Japan. On this subject, the interviewer brought up the issue of the international role of veterans, producing, on one side, Mussolini's enthusiastic agreement with veterans' internationalism, and, on the other, his disapproval of the way this had been pursued to date.

More precisely, the Italian leader accused FIDAC of being just a pretext for discourse, travel and banquets, which brought nothing useful. Concerning CIAMAC, he denounced it since it had failed to include British, American and Italian veterans in the first instance, while its Germans members eventually pulled out. Then, prompted by a question about the possible forms of international collaboration among veterans, Mussolini limited his suggestions to studying the principles, functions and activities of the established associations so as not to repeat their mistakes in the future. Finally, he confirmed his belief in co-operation among ex-servicemen, claiming that men who fought in the war could better understand each other, even when they fought on opposite sides, and in particular, when they were Allies. It is evident that, according to Mussolini, such collaboration should comply with the expansionist pretensions of one country.

Regardless of such unfavourable evaluations, as well as some disagreements and tensions, Italy carried on its co-operation with FIDAC. The Italian delegates, in fact, continued to engage with this specific network of veterans to the extent that Italy proposed hosting, in Rome, an encounter between ex-hostile countries and members of FIDAC in 1936. The gathering was meant to take place during the annual commemoration of the Great War, on 4 of November at *Casa madre del mutilato* (the Motherhouse of the Mutilated), ANMIG's headquarters which happened to be newly renovated and expanded. It would be the first official meeting of veterans from both sides (Allied and Central Powers) encouraged by FIDAC. For the fascist government, such an event would represent an important political achievement, since representatives from the 'sanctioning countries' would also be present, 'attracted by the spirit of Rome which is harmony, unity and justice'.[70] Moreover, great personalities from various countries would honour the day of Italian victory, now 'made brighter' by the conquest of the empire.

The 1936 meeting in Rome and the creation of the Comité International Permanent

Italy had threatened to exit FIDAC in 1933, as attested by the minutes of the proceedings of ANMIG's Central Board,[71] but three years later it was

hosting a FIDAC meeting in Rome with general plaudit. Meanwhile, Italy had fought a war and brutally conquered an empire, as celebrated by the brand new frescoes decorating the court of the *Casa madre* which had been expanded.[72]

In September 1936, during a meeting in Berlin in which FIDAC members were meant to sort out future closer relationships with German and Hungarian delegates, Italy invited all the ex-combatants' organizations, together with ex-opposing countries, to gather in Rome.[73]

The gathering in Rome on 4 November hosted about 10,000 veterans from all over the world, while the FIDAC meeting took place on 6 November, when Mussolini visited ANMIG's headquarters and met the guests. The whole event, therefore, was sumptuously organized in order to make a lasting impression of fascist Rome's magnificence, as well as of the prestige invalid servicemen had gained in the country.[74] Besides, in his official speech as new president of FIDAC and leader of ANMIG, Carlo Delcroix emphasized the importance of such an assembly and declared the shared intention to create a Permanent Committee to favour the relationships among veterans of all countries: it would be the Comité International Permanent (CIP).[75] In the previous months, Italy had already come nearer to Germany through the drawing up of the Rome–Berlin Axis (24 October 1936) and the joint decision to intervene in the Spanish Civil War by siding with General Francisco Franco's troops.

The creation of CIP looked as if FIDAC's members had at last raised their awareness about the inadequacy of peace-keeping when performed without the collaboration of the formerly-hostile countries; nonetheless, their decision to finally open up to these nations came about at a time when Hitler was threatening international harmony. Furthermore, a number of French veterans had started getting closer to Germany and Italy by creating specific bi-lateral committees, such as the Comités France-Italie and France-Allemagne, in order to avoid casting the two countries aside on the international level. Instead of effectively keeping away from any diplomatic rupture, these collaborations were liable to back Italy's and Germany's aggressiveness by eluding proper censure.

A deliberate misuse of CIP is illustrated by some documents issued by the Italian Ministry for Interior, where the outcomes of the CIP congress in Paris, in 1937, were reported. The new transnational group was portrayed there as an organization created to displace FIDAC and CIAMAC. 'It has been similarly useful that in the capital of freemasonry, Judaism and socialism, the spirit and style of fascism became apparent among veterans from all over Europe, to whom we have taught in what terms

and tone soldiers can talk about peace.'[76] The report drew to a close with some considerations on the likely election of the Duke of Coburg to the presidency of CIP in 1938, to avoid 'the organization falling out of the hands of those who had established it to prevent that the moral strength of combatants would be subjugated by the societary politics of the so-called democracies'.[77] Such words are clear-cut evidence of the nationalistic interests that Italy – as well as Germany – was pursuing by depriving such collaboration among veterans of its initial meaning as real peace-keeper.

Towards a new bellicosity

Even with the newly-formed CIP, FIDAC carried on its activities, although this kind of collaboration among ex-Allied veterans would, eventually, fail to prevent war from happening again. During an Executive Board meeting in June 1938, the then FIDAC president, Polish General Roman Górecki, even congratulated Italy and Britain for their reconciliation and invited Italy to perform the same compromise with France. Likewise, it was publicly announced that a world demonstration for peace, jointly organised with CIP and CIAMAC, would be organized for the following October.

At that same meeting, however, the Italian delegation showed so vehemently its annoyance with the French decision to abandon CIP that it decided to leave the room and desert FIDAC's Board and Commissions for the time necessary to reflect upon the future steps to take. After the Italian withdrawal, the British Legion disclosed its decision to quit FIDAC in view of the fact that CIP was no longer an effective peace-keeping tool, owing to the exit of France.[78] Italy thus condemned FIDAC to a definitive end, once the more malleable CIP had witnessed the desertion of France. Italy tried, indeed, to shift the blame on France for the end of any co-operation, when, in truth, Italy was taking steps towards international disengagement by then, as evidenced by its abandoning the League of Nations and ILO in December 1937.

Along these lines, 1938 marked a dramatic step forward in the escalation of international tensions among ex-Allied and formerly hostile countries, which, after the German *Anschluss* with Austria, would result in a new wave of belligerence in Europe and the wider world. Even a great number of war veterans, subjugated to the nationalistic interests of their governments, opted for their active involvement in the new wars, regardless of the long-standing peace-keeping efforts of their fellow-comrades in the previous years.

Conclusions

The events narrated here have shown an inconstant attitude of Italy with regard to FIDAC and CIAMAC activities. However, such mutable positions – now collaborative, now defiant – are difficult to interpret in the absence of research on this topic and, more generally, on the international relations of inter-war Italy by means of non-governmental organizations. It is only possible here, therefore, to raise some hypotheses and formulate a few tentative explanations.

The stance of Italian veterans towards FIDAC and CIAMAC reflected the changing patterns of Italy's domestic and foreign policies. We have observed how their positions changed, from a commitment to peace in the very early post-war period, to a capricious tug-of-war in the 1930s, passing through an interested collaboration in the 1920s.

In 1925/26, Mussolini secured, or forced, the support of veterans' associations for his regime, while on the international stage the latter demanded the public condemnation of communism, as previously mentioned with regard to the 1925 FIDAC meeting in Rome. Yet, that move was meant to reflect on Italy's domestic politics more than on international politics: at that time Mussolini's government was effectively turning dictatorial, by empowering the Head of Government with new functions and by issuing special decrees concerning public safety and the defence of the state.[79] These laws were expressly directed against anti-fascist militants including those who had left the country to escape any restriction of freedom. Therefore, a formal condemnation of communism by the association of Allied veterans (those who had fought and won the Great War) would have been useful to the Italian government's credibility and, likewise, rebuked the (not only) leftist exiles' blame on Mussolini's way of ruling the country.

The following episode is evidence of the successful consequences of such a line of attack by the regime. In 1929, the British colonel Fred Abbott, at that time president of FIDAC, was praised by the fascist press for a statement he had made against some Italian émigrés in France. During a ceremony in Paris, Abbott had offered a British flag to a group of Italian ex-servicemen living in France and publicly stated his sympathy for Italy and her *Duce*. When, later on, some exiles complained against his speech in favour of Mussolini, Abbott firmly asserted his non-political closeness to the Italian ally,[80] and this prompted the fascists to enthusiastically invite him to Rome the following year.[81] The voices of the Italian émigrés had, thus, been silenced and, consequently, went unheard.

In the eyes of the Fascist dictatorship, international occasions, such as Great War commemorations and servicemen's gatherings, could act, therefore, as means of 'cultural diplomacy' and fascist propaganda, by presenting the regime and its policies in a positive light, especially with reference to Italy's war victims. For such promotional objective, the fascist regime also made use of other groups specifically established outside Italy, like the various *Fasci* abroad or Italy's abroad-based veterans' associations.[82] Such organizations were meant both to engage in ample propaganda in favour of the regime's achievements – so to contrast the counter-information of Italian exiles and, at the same time, endorse fascism internationally – and 'to transform the Italians' living abroad 'into Fascists'.[83] Yet, it was with the assignment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dino Grandi, in 1929,[84] that fascist (cultural) diplomacy made a step forward in terms of efficiency and dynamism.[85]

Apart from a few international questions, such as the revision of post-war resolutions for the Balkan and Mediterranean areas, Mussolini was more than anything interested in settling Italy's domestic situation in the 1920s. 'Until Nazism came to power in Berlin in 1933, Italy behaved in a predictable manner on the international stage. Thus, in the first decade of Fascist power, some plots were laid, some advantage was sought in byways.'[86] In the 1930s, however, Mussolini's ambitions no longer addressed merely the nation, but rather the empire. 'The concept of empire did not only refer to the question of achieving colonies', as it did in the Liberal era. 'After 1930 in particular, the regime developed its 'revolutionary' belief also in the direction of a 'universal vocation', thus ascribing to itself the role of 'spiritual vanguard of European civilisation'.[87] Besides, in those years Mussolini again and again endeavoured to present himself as the one holding the balance of power in European politics, as he tried to assert once again in September 1938 with the Munich Agreement.

Despite these brief considerations about Italian foreign policy, which doubtless affected the way Italian veterans acted within FIDAC and CIAMAC, further research would be necessary to understand what kind of personal relations matured inside these international organizations during the years. Did the 'unity of the trenches', i.e. the supposed fraternal bond generated by the war experience, result in any kind of informal interaction between ANMIG's members and their international counterparts?

Are the certificates that Giovanni Baccarini gained during his life (and now collected in his personal archive) simple evidence of the important offices he held during his life or, rather, are they also proof of his emotive

attachment to a sort of transnational 'brotherhood of the trenches'? Only a thorough and crisscrossing analysis of veterans' private papers might help us answer these questions and understand whether there was any 'gap' between the official line of their national associations and their personal attitudes towards FIDAC as a diplomatic channel for keeping peace in Europe. And more importantly, they might enable us to grasp what were the attitudes towards peace and war of those who had 'personally experienced the horrors of the modern war'.[88]

On the other hand, it is exactly Baccarini's personal history which displays the haziness of FIDAC's conduct and objectives in the 1930s. How is it possible that this man, who had just returned from a war where he had fought and commanded a battalion of disabled veterans in 1936,[89] in the very following years performed the office of vice-president for an organization acting for global peace?

Hence, it is exactly these still open questions which should urge us into researching further the intriguing and underdeveloped topic of veterans' internationalism in the inter-war period.

Notes

1. Titta Madia, 'Il Congresso della F.I.D.A.C. a Washington (Resoconto semiserio, senza licenza delli Superiori)', *La Vittoria*, October 1930, p. 23.
2. Actually, the ANMIG press organ had changed its name from plain *Il Bollettino* (The Bulletin) into *La Vittoria* (The Victory) in 1929. The first issue of the journal came out in August 1918 in Milan.
3. Madia (1894–1976) was born in Perilia Policastro (Catanzaro). He graduated in law at the University of Naples and worked as a lawyer and journalist in the capital. In addition, he held a post of deputy from 1924 until 1939, when he was assigned to the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations in the role of representative of the professionals' and artists' corporation. In 1945, he was sentenced as an apologist of fascism: see Rome, Central State Archive (from now on ACS), High Commission for Sanctions against Fascism, fasc. 14 (7.3), b. 165. In the 1950s, he was elected to parliament among the ranks of the neo-fascist movement *Movimento sociale italiano* and became a member of the first *Consiglio superiore della magistratura*, i.e. magistrates' internal board of supervisors, for the period 1959–1963.
4. The National Institution for War Disabled (ONIG = *Opera Nazionale Invalidi di Guerra*) was established by Law no. 48, of 25 March 1917. This state-agency was especially meant to care for the war disabled. It lived on until 1981, when it was dismissed.
5. Madia, 'Il Congresso della F.I.D.A.C. a Washington (Resoconto semiserio, senza licenza delli Superiori),' p. 24.
6. Baccarini was born in Cernobbio (Como) in 1897. He had firstly joined the Milanese *Comitato d'azione* before becoming an active member of ANMIG. Fox, 'Capi e gregari: Gianni Baccarini', *Il Bollettino*, August 1928, pp. 20–23.

7. Cf. 'L'insediamento dell'on. Sansanelli alla Presidenza della FIDAC', *Il Bollettino*, January–February 1928, pp. 37–38. Nicola Sansanelli (1891–1968) was a fascist of the first degree, and held the office of Secretary of the Fascist Party in 1922–1923. He was directly appointed member of the triumvirate running ANC by Mussolini in March 1925 as a first step towards the overall fascist penetration of the combatants' movement.
8. 'Il segretario generale dei mutilati italiani eletto vice-presidente della F.I.D.A.C.', *La Vittoria*, September 1929, pp. 8–10.
9. ACS, Cabinet of the Prime Minister Office (from now on PCM Gab.), 1929, fasc. 14.3.8172. From such documents, however, it is not possible to assert whether the return journey by ferry really happened.
10. Cf. 'Il trionfale viaggio nel Belgio dei Mutilati italiani', *La Stampella*, May 1927, pp. 7–9. Carlo Delcroix (1886–1977) was the unquestioned leader of ANMIG from 1924 to 1943. He had lost his sight and the use of both hands in 1917 after handling a grenade. After his discharge from the hospital, he became well-known as a speaker while urging both soldiers and public opinion to vigorously endure the last months of the war. During the Second World War, he was occasionally accused of being too close to France and Belgium and, therefore, anti-German: see ACS, National Fascist Party, Personal files of senators and national councilors, b. 9, fasc. 117.
11. Actually, the contested city of Fiume/Rijeka was meant to be a 'free city' according to the decisions taken at the Paris Peace Conference. In September 1919, however, the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, together with hundreds of armed men, took possession of it. They occupied and ruled the city (Italian Regency of Carnaro) until the Italian army forcefully intervened to drive them away from Fiume in late December 1920 (an event later labelled 'bloody Christmas'). Free elections in 1921 sanctioned once again the autonomy of the city, which was annexed to the Italian Kingdom according to the Treaty of Rome in 1924. See Ilona Fried, *Fiume, Città della memoria: 1868–1945* (Udine: Del Bianco Editore, 2005), p. 213 ff.; Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale, 1866–2006* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008), pp. 43–205.
12. Cf. 'La F.I.D.A.C. e la vertenza Italo-Jugoslava', *La Stampella*, April 1927, pp. 4–5.
13. Fédération interalliée des anciens combattants, 'Statuts & Règlement intérieur', 1922, p. 3.
14. Henry C.Wolfe, 'War Veterans Who Work for Peace', *World Affairs*, 98, no. 3 (1935), p. 172.
15. I use the term INGOs as illustrated in Thomas R. Davies,*The Rise and Fall of Transnational Civil Society: The Evolution of International Non-Governmental Organizations Since 1839*, Working Paper, Working Papers on Transnational Politics. (London: City University, April 2008). I also refer the reader to Davies's chapter in this volume.
16. Originally, *Il Bollettino* had been issued in Milan, where ANMIG had its headquarters. Once the latter moved to Rome, in 1921, the monthly's editorial office was transferred to the capital as well. Most likely that is why the Milanese section of the association decided to get a new journal into print, i.e. *La Stampella*.
17. The archive of Giovanni (Gianni) Baccarini is deposited at the Centro Studi Raul Merzario in Cernobbio (Como). The inventory of this archive is in progress; therefore, the reported classification is provisional. I am grateful

to the centre's executive board for having granted me its authorization for citing the documents.

18. Antoine Prost, 'Brutalisation des sociétés et brutalisation des combattants', in Bruno Cabanes and Edouard Husson (eds.), *Les sociétés en guerre 1911–1946* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), p. 111.
19. The term *arditi* designates the Italian army's elite storm troops created in 1917. After the war, many of them joined Italy's National Association for *Arditi* (ANAI), founded by Mario Carli in 1919. *Fiumani* were those who followed the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio in his occupation of the city of Fiume in 1919. Finally, *squadristi* were the members of fascist paramilitary groups, who used violence and intimidation against political opponents and 'internal enemies'. They were the military tool of the political movement launched by Benito Mussolini in 1919. Among *fiumani* and *squadristi* there was a high percentage of First World War veterans.
20. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (London: Granta, 2004), esp. p. 27.
21. Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 295 and 323.
22. I mostly refer here to the *arditi* led by Mario Carli, who participated in the assault against the premises of the socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, in Milan, in 1919. Nonetheless, the *arditi*'s movement, although small, was extremely composite. Cf. Ferdinando Cordova, *Arditi e legionari dannunziani* (Padova: Marsilio, 1969); Giorgio Rochat, *Gli arditi della grande guerra* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981). Moreover, few *arditi* decided to organize armed resistance against fascist violence, cf. Eros Francescangeli, *Arditi del popolo. Argo Secondari e la prima organizzazione antifascista (1917–1922)* (Roma: Odradek, 2000).
23. Ute Frevert, 'Europeanizing German History', *GHI Bulletin*, 2005, pp. 13–14.
24. Emilio Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista (1918–1925)* (2nd ed.) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001).
25. Benito Mussolini, 'Trincerocrazia', *Il Popolo d'Italia*. Milan, December 1917. Reprinted in Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (eds.), *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, (Florence: La fenice, 1951–63), vol. 10, pp. 140–143.
26. Kramer, Dynamic of Destruction, p. 300.
27. Law no. 2275 of 24 December 1925 and others.
28. Silvio Lavagna, 'Se vogliamo essere forti', *Il Bollettino*, August 1918, p. 4.
29. Comitato Centrale, 'Manifesto al Paese', *Il Bollettino*, 15 November 1918, pp. 1–2.
30. Ibid., p. 1.
31. 'Il Convegno nazionale per l'assistenza agli invalidi', *Il Bollettino*, January 1919, pp. 47–50.
32. 'Guerra e pace', *Il Bollettino*, October 1918, p. 1.
33. Gianni Isola, *Guerra al regno della guerra! Storia della Lega proletaria invalidi reduci orfani e vedove di guerra: (1918–1924)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990).
34. Henri Barbusse, 'L'armata della vita!', *Spartacus*, 15 February 1920, p. 2. In 1916 Barbusse was awarded with the prestigious Goncourt Prize for his anti-war novel *Le Feu (Journal d'une escouade)*.
35. E. Cavagnola, 'L'Internazionale delle vittime della guerra', *Spartacus*, 15 April 1920, p. 3; 'Il I Congresso Internazionale degli ex-combattenti', *Spartacus*, 15 May 1920, p. 1.
36. Cf. Annette Vidal, *Henri Barbusse: Soldat de la paix* (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1953).

37. Cf. 'La nostra agitazione. Per l'onore d'Italia e per la giustizia', *Il Bollettino*, May 1920, p. 1; Opera di assistenza ai militari ciechi, storpi, mutilati di Roma, *Relazione del Consiglio Direttivo in seguito all'agitazione degli Invalidi di guerra*. Roma: Tipografia delle cartiere centrali, 1920. About protests organized by disabled veterans in Milan in 1919 see State Archive in Milan, Prefecture, Cabinet series I, b. 373. The association, however, had exceptionally received a government grant of *lire* 150,000 in 1919.
38. Fabio Fabbri, *Le origini della guerra civile: l'Italia dalla Grande Guerra al fascismo (1918–1921)* (Torino: UTET, 2009).
39. La Direzione, 'La tregua, in attesa della pace', *La Stampella*, August 1921, p. 1.
40. Madia, 'Il fascismo e i mutilati. Limite e forme dell'apoliticità', *Il Bollettino*, March 1923, pp. 3–5; Egidio Calvini, 'Fra i benemeriti della nostra Vittoria. L'invalido Benito Mussolini', *Il Bollettino*, April 1923, pp. 34–36.
41. Cf. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista. L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista, 1925–1929* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1968).
42. Royal Decree Law no. 850 of 19 April 1923.
43. The Pact was signed on 14 February 1927. Delcroix was ANMIG's president, while Edmondo Rossoni was the president of the Association of Fascist Syndicates.
44. Achille Mocchi, 'I minorati di guerra e la Società delle Nazioni', *La Stampella*, 15 April 1923, p. 11.
45. 'Congresso internazionale di Ginevra', *Il Bollettino*, 1 February 1922; 'Première réunion d'experts pour l'étude des questions intéressant les mutilés', *Revue international de la Croix-Rouge*, 1922, pp. 313–319; Antoine Prost and Jay M. Winter, *René Cassin et les droits de l'homme, le projet d'une génération*. (Paris: Fayard, 2011), p. 84 ff.
46. The first conference took place in Paris in 1917, the second in London one year after and the third occurred in Rome in 1919. Cf. Opera nazionale per la protezione ed assistenza degli invalidi della guerra and Federazione nazionale dei comitati d'assistenza agli invalidi della guerra, *L'opera svolta in Italia, 1915–1919*. (Roma: Tip. dell'Unione editrice, 1919).
47. Rome, Historical Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (from now on ASMAE), League of Nations, b. 66.
48. Italy, in fact, appears in the list of countries which founded FIDAC. See Fédération interalliée des anciens combattants, 'Statuts & Règlement intérieur', p. 3.
49. Mussolini was at that time both Head of the Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs.
50. ASMAE, League of Nations, b. 66. The exchange of letters and the meeting in Rome happened in March and April 1924.
51. George R. Crosfield, 'Mon voyage en Italie', *F.I.D.A.C.*, May 1926, p. 3.
52. 'Notiziario d'Italia e di fuori. La Federazione inter-alleata degli ex-combattenti', *La Stampella*, September 1926, p. 13.
53. 'Qu'est-ce que la F.I.D.A.C.?', *F.I.D.A.C.*, May 1926, p. 16. The fact that ANMIG joined FIDAC in 1926 is entirely my assumption on the basis of the documents I have been able to source.
54. 'Notiziario d'Italia e di fuori. La Federazione inter-alleata degli ex-combattenti'.
55. Attilio Tamaro, 'I combattenti interalleati al congresso di Varsavia. L'opera dei Delegati italiani e del nostro Segretario Generale nel giudizio della stampa nazionale', *Il Bollettino*, September 1926, pp. 409–411.

56. 'Gianni Baccarini al Congresso della F.I.D.A.C. in Washington', *La Vittoria*, September 1930, p. 9.
57. 'Baccarini a Praga', *La Stampella*, September 1931, p. 7.
58. Madia, 'Il fiero congresso della "Fidac" in quel di Praga', *La Vittoria*, September 1931, p. 22.
59. Ibid.
60. Citation taken from Claire Moreau-Trichet, *Henri Pichot et l'Allemagne de 1930 à 1945* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 210. Speaking of the various reasons why FIDAC was ineffective, Pichot defined the attitude of the Italians totalitarianism.
61. Ibid., p. 211. Actually, Cassin, who intensely collaborated with the League of Nations and contributed to the foundation of CIAMAC, gradually grew away from Pichot and his naïve, though well-intentioned, dealings with the Nazis. See Prost and Winter, *René Cassin et les droits de l'homme, le projet d'une génération*, p. 128 ff.
62. E.g., the above mentioned request of Belgian veterans to the Italian authorities with regard to their train journey through Italy to get to Yugoslavia.
63. Cf. Ettore Mattiello, 'La conferenza internazionale degli invalidi a Ginevra', *Il Bollettino*, September–October 1925 pp. 389–392. Such information may strengthen the hypothesis that disabled and mutilated ex-servicemen were anyway closer to the League of Nations' agency ILO, with which they had already started co-operating in the previous years with regard to the question of employment for handicapped soldiers.
64. About this organization see Giovanni Sabbatucci, *I combattenti nel primo dopoguerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1974), pp. 86–90.
65. ASMAE, League of Nations, b. 66, fasc. FIDAC. The exchange of letters happened in August 1926, while the second congress of CIAMAC was due the following month.
66. Ivi, fasc. CIAMAC 1934–1936. He further stated that ANMIG was not a member of CIAMAC and, therefore, not partaking in its congresses (here specifically referring to the 1935 one in Belgrade). Nonetheless, two members of the association monitored the work of the congress, while another Italian, the officer Raffaele Pilotti, was charged with writing a report about it.
67. ACS, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security, G1 Associations, b. 298: CIAMAC 1932.
68. Conférence Internationale des Associations des Mutilés de guerre et Anciens Combattants, 'Résolutions adoptées à la X Assemblée annuelle. Genève, les 20, 21 et 22 septembre 1934', 1934, p. 4.
69. André Gervais, 'La vie combattante. Une conversation avec S.E. le duce Benito Mussolini', *Le trait d'union*, March 1934, pp. 11–16.
70. ACS, PCM Gab. 1936, fasc. 14.3.7961. Citation taken from a note written by ANMIG's Central Board for the Cabinet of the Head of Government (October 1936).
71. Archive ANMIG, Motherhouse, Rome, *Proceedings of the Central Board*, 11 April 1933.
72. Mussolini publicly announced the founding of the Italian empire in Ethiopia on 9 May 1936. The Motherhouse of the Mutilated was inaugurated for the first time in 1928 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the battle of Vittorio Veneto. Cf. 'L'inaugurazione della nostra "Casa Madre"', *La Stampella*, December 1928, pp. 5–11.

73. ACS, PCM Gab. 1936, fasc. 14.3.7961.
74. Ibid.
75. Cf. H.W. Dunning, 'Les Anciens Combattants de quatorze pays se réunissent à Rome', *F.I.D.A.C.*, December 1936, p. 5; Bernhard Ragner, 'Réception en Italie des anciens combattants de treize nations', *F.I.D.A.C.*, December 1936, p. 6. I thank Julia Eichenberg for having shared these articles with me.
76. ASMAE, League of Nations, b. 66, fasc. Permanent International Committee for Combatants.
77. Ibid.
78. Centro Studi Raul Merzario (from now on CsRM), Archive Baccarini, b. 2, fasc. FIDAC.
79. Law no. 2263 of 24 December 1925; Royal Decree-Law no. 1848 of 6 November 1926 and Decree-Law no. 2008 of 25 November 1926.
80. 'Il Presidente della FIDAC e i fuoriusciti italiani', *La Vittoria*, December 1929, pp. 13–14.
81. 'Il Presidente della F.I.D.A.C. a Roma', *La Vittoria*, June 1930, pp. 9–10.
82. Emilio Gentile, 'La politica estera del partito fascista. Ideologia e organizzazione dei Fasci italiani all'estero (1920–1930)', *Storia contemporanea* XXVI, no. 6 (1995), pp. 897–956; Luca de Caprariis, '"Fascism for Export?" The Rise and Eclipse of the Fasci Italiani all'Estero', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, no. 2 (April 1, 2000), pp. 151–183; João Fábio Berthona, 'Emigrazione e politica estera: la "diplomazia sovversiva" di Mussolini e la questione degli italiani all'estero, 1922–1945', *Altreitalie*, no. 23 (2001), pp. 39–60; Francesca Cavarocchi, 'Propaganda e associazionismo fascista nelle comunità di emigrazione: il caso di Parigi (1922–1939)', *Società e storia*, 31, no. 120 (2008), pp. 279–307.
83. Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (London: Berg, 2003), p. 2.
84. Dino Grandi (1895–1988) joined the fascist movement at its inception and, in spite of his young age, was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1921. He held important institutional offices during the fascist dictatorship: e.g., he was Minister for Foreign Affairs (1929–1932) and Italy's Ambassador to the United Kingdom (1932–1939). It was Grandi's motion at a Fascist Grand Council's meeting, in July 1943, which brought about the effective removal of Mussolini from his office.
85. Francesca Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie dello spirito. Il fascismo e la propaganda culturale all'estero* (Rome: Carocci, 2010).
86. Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World 1860–1960* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 43.
87. Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism*, p. 2.
88. ASMAE, League of Nations, b. 66.
89. Giovanni Baccarini effectively went to the Ethiopian war in the vanguard of a battalion, called *Battaglione Baccarini*. The unit was a component of the 6th Blackshirt Division *Tevere* formed by volunteers (WW1 disabled and able veterans, *arditi*, Italians living abroad and university students). See: CsRM, Archive Baccarini, b. 4, fasc. Battaglione Baccarini.

Part IV
The International Dimension

10

International Veterans' Organizations and the Promotion of Disarmament Between the Two World Wars

Thomas Richard Davies

Introduction

The pursuit of international disarmament through the League of Nations mobilized European and North American transnational civil society to an unprecedented extent in the period between the two World Wars. International non-governmental organizations, which claimed a combined membership of between one-tenth and one-half of the population of the world at the time, joined forces to promote the issue at the World Disarmament Conference, held in Geneva from 1932 to 1934. Amongst the most effective participants in this movement, especially in continental Europe, were the international ex-servicemen's organizations. This chapter explores the promotion of disarmament by two of the most significant international ex-servicemen's organizations of the period: CIAMAC and FIDAC.

The leadership of CIAMAC and FIDAC believed that the experience of their members in the First World War made them better qualified than other civil society representatives to speak out on the issue of disarmament in the inter-war years. As this chapter will demonstrate, it was an argument which had considerable resonance with both policy-makers and public opinion. After introducing the disarmament issue of the inter-war years and the wider movement for its promotion, this chapter explores the place of CIAMAC and FIDAC in the movement and the nature and evolution of their involvement. It highlights their pioneering role in the development of the transnational movement and

its propaganda. The chapter concludes by analysing their approaches to the disarmament issue, including their differences, and the impact that their activities were to have.

The disarmament issue after the First World War

The peace settlement following the First World War made only partial provision for disarmament. Although German armaments were strictly limited in the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the armaments of the victorious powers were left untouched, save for a commitment that the impositions on Germany were 'in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations' and provisions in the League of Nations Covenant for the devising, by the Council of the League, of plans for 'the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety, and the enforcement by common action of international obligations'.[1]

In 1920, a 'Temporary Mixed Commission' was set up by the League of Nations Assembly to produce 'reports and proposals for the reduction of armaments'.[2] Two distinct approaches to the issue emerged in the discussions of this commission, which were to shape the disarmament discussions of the subsequent decade and a half. The first approach – the 'direct' approach, generally favoured by Anglo-Saxon representatives – put forward 'the view that armaments provoked fear and suspicion, and so were themselves a cause of war. Nations should first disarm, and security would then ensue.'[3] French delegates, on the other hand, tended towards the alternative 'indirect' approach, which put forward the perspective that fear provoked the build-up of armaments, and so international security guarantees are necessary before general disarmament can progress successfully.[4] In the absence of US ratification of the post-war peace settlement, France had been left without the security guarantees that had been anticipated, such as the Anglo-American Treaty of Assistance to France.

Early official discussions of general disarmament were, therefore, dominated by discussion of proposals that could, in exchange for commitments to disarm, strengthen the League of Nations' capacity to provide for the security of its members, such as the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Geneva Protocol. Although each of these proposals failed to acquire British support, the Locarno agreements of 1925 helped to make possible the establishment of a 'Preparatory Commission' to draw up a draft disarmament convention for an anticipated World Disarmament Conference. The Commission was a League of Nations

body, but had a wide membership, including official representatives of the United States, Germany and the Soviet Union. However, the progress of its discussions was slow, held back by disputes, such as over the types of reductions to be made and the possibility of international supervision. It took until December 1930 for a draft convention to be agreed upon, which left blank all figures for the reductions to be made, and until February 1932 for the opening of the World Disarmament Conference.

All but four countries (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay and El Salvador) took part in the World Disarmament Conference, at the time the largest international conference ever to have been held. The delegations of France, Great Britain and the United States each put forward grandiose schemes at this conference, which reflected their respective national approaches to the issue. While the French plans advocated further security provisions such as an international police force, together with international supervision of disarmament, the British and US proposals advocated direct disarmament, and failed to provide the accompanying security provisions that the French hoped for. By the time these three core delegations had agreed upon a compromise, Hitler withdrew Germany from both the World Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, in October 1933, and with no further progress the conference was adjourned *sine die* the following year.[5]

The transnational campaign for disarmament

Given the slow progress of governments towards agreement, transnational non-governmental campaigning around this issue developed considerable scale in the run-up to the World Disarmament Conference. The breadth of transnational mobilization was remarkable. In 1931, four transnational co-ordinating committees were set up to promote disarmament in Geneva. The largest of these was the Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations, which united international women's organizations, claiming a combined membership of 45 million, ranging from the International Council of Women to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which circulated a petition for disarmament that acquired 12 million signatures worldwide. Also established were disarmament committees of Christian organizations, students' organizations and League of Nations associations. In July 1932, disappointed with progress at the World Disarmament Conference, representatives from these committees – together with CIAMAC – joined to form an International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament,

which claimed to represent a combined membership of 100 million people, equivalent to one-in-twenty people alive in the world at the time. Five months earlier, member organizations of the International Consultative Group, together with a wide range of non-governmental organizations ranging from Rotary International to the International Co-operative Alliance to the International League for the Rights of Man to the Labour and Socialist International, had addressed a special session at the opening of the World Disarmament Conference, at which the diverse organizations present appeared to unite behind a common set of objectives for the conference to achieve, the so-called 'Budapest programme' presented by Robert Cecil, who spoke on behalf of the League of Nations associations.

Transnational mobilization on this scale came at a price. Although the representatives of the many organizations lobbying the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva had appeared to unite around a common programme, grassroots campaigners within different national contexts put forward very different objectives in order to maximize support. In France, therefore, non-governmental organizations' propaganda for disarmament tended to include assurances that it would be accompanied by improved international security arrangements and international supervision of disarmament. In the United States and Great Britain, on the other hand, as one leading activist Gilbert Murray of the British League Union noted, their speakers 'rather funked the question of security because audiences don't like it'.[6] Such inconsistencies in activist propaganda did not go unnoticed by governmental decision-makers: for example, British Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon complained: 'I wish ... that there had been more public education as to the methods of disarmament and less public eloquence about the ideal of disarmament.'[7]

CIAMAC, FIDAC and the promotion of disarmament

The two pre-eminent international ex-servicemen's organizations of the inter-war years, CIAMAC and FIDAC, became amongst the most prominent components of the disarmament movement, with a high point being reached when they put together a joint demonstration for disarmament in Geneva in March 1933. This co-ordination of the disarmament-promotion activities of the international organizations of ex-servicemen was much later than for the major international organizations of, *inter alia*, labour, religion, students and women.

The promotion of disarmament by CIAMAC and FIDAC individually, however, dates back much further. Having been formed in 1920, FIDAC

had the longest tradition of passing resolutions for the promotion of disarmament, such as in resolutions on 'moral' and 'material' disarmament at its New Orleans congress in 1922.[8] At the formation of CIAMAC three years later, 'compulsory arbitration, security and general disarmament' were resolved to be central to the facilitation of a durable peace.[9] At each of its annual congresses for the rest of the decade, CIAMAC passed resolutions promoting 'effective and controlled', 'general and progressive disarmament', 'together with provisions for arbitration and security'.[10]

As with the majority of organizations concerned with the promotion of disarmament through the League of Nations, the conclusion of the work of the Preparatory Commission in December 1930 stimulated the principal wave of ex-servicemen's organizations' activism on this issue. In 1931, both CIAMAC and FIDAC passed substantial resolutions outlining their positions on disarmament in the build-up to the World Disarmament Conference scheduled for the following year. At its annual conference in August–September 1931, FIDAC passed a resolution stating:

> FIDAC, realising the vital importance of the question of general reduction and limitation of land, naval and aerial armaments, strongly urges all its constituent members to press their respective governments to throw their whole weight into an effort to: (1) secure the greatest practicable measure of such reduction and limitation; (2) make all possible efforts to assure the success of the General Disarmament Conference to be held in 1932. Furthermore, FIDAC is of the opinion that this reduction and limitation can, and ought to, be brought about without diminishing national safety.[11]

CIAMAC's resolution at its congress in July and August 1931 went further:

> It is essential that States, whether Members or non-Members of the League of Nations, should make a strong concerted effort to ensure the success of the General Disarmament Conference convened at Geneva for 1932.
>
> This conference should result in some system for the limitation and reduction of armaments of all kinds, of such a nature as to permit of the practical realisation of national equality in full security, with full account taken of the special position of each country. The conventions to be concluded should in no case allow of any increase in armaments.

> They should on the contrary legalise substantial reductions, arrived at in close relation with the strengthening of the means of coercion belonging to the League of Nations for the purpose of guaranteeing respect for the Covenant and the renunciation of war.
>
> The prohibition of chemical and bacteriological warfare should be further strengthened. Military aviation should be abolished. Civil aviation should be internationalised or placed under the control of the League of Nations.
>
> Finally, some system of international control should be set up to supervise on the spot the full and faithful execution of all undertakings entered into, and thus to prepare the way for the progressive elimination of national armaments.
>
> In the event of the 1932 conference failing, or failing to yield immediate and tangible results, the ex-Servicemen, who were assured by all Governments that they were engaged in a war to end war, would be fully entitled to warn the rising generation of the Governments' double-dealing in their relations with them.[12]

At this congress, René Cassin[13] submitted a report on the disarmament issue, and pleaded to CIAMAC's member associations to 'speak out clearly and lay down each individual's duty without a peradventure' to make arbitration and disarmament conventions 'living realities constituting the accepted canon of future generations'.[14]

CIAMAC's leadership played a pioneering role in the development of the major components of the wider global disarmament campaign in 1931. CIAMAC's secretary, J. Ch. de Watteville, was particularly influential, and took part in the discussions in Geneva in February 1931 that originated the development of a transnationally co-ordinated campaign uniting ex-servicemen's, business, labour, human rights, women's, students', religious, peace and many other organizations for the promotion of disarmament over the subsequent three years.[15] Following these discussions, de Watteville became a founding member of the first initiative in this respect, the Disarmament Information Committee, which from June published an international bulletin 'to give as true an impression as possible of the movements of opinion, official and unofficial, in the different countries concerning the prospects of disarmament'.[16] The committee brought together leaders from international women's, peace, press and broadcasting organizations, along with CIAMAC, with de Watteville acting as the committee's treasurer.[17]

Amongst the most significant roles of the international ex-servicemen's movement in 1931 was its influence upon what became the common

platform for much of the international disarmament movement – the 'Budapest programme' of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies. This resolution was drafted at a meeting held in Paris in March 1931, during which French ex-servicemen's leader René Cassin played a critical role. The initial text of the Budapest resolution advocated global budgetary reduction of armaments by 25 per cent, without reference to the need for greater arrangements for arbitration and collective security. Cassin, however, insisted that the resolution be modified to incorporate suggested extra security measures to make possible more extensive disarmament.[18] This provided the resolution with its broad appeal, effectively bridging the direct/Anglo-Saxon and indirect/French approaches to disarmament.

The culmination of international disarmament activism in 1931 was intended to be 'a more representative gathering of the great political, social, religious and cultural organisations of many nations than has ever taken part in any international meeting in the past'.[19] The 'International Disarmament Demonstration' that took place at the Trocadéro in Paris in November 1931 brought together more than a thousand representatives of nearly four hundred non-governmental organizations from around the world and a wide variety of sectors of society. Amongst the most prominent were ex-servicemen's organizations, including CIAMAC, the Reichsbanner, the Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegerhinterbliebenen, and the major French ex-servicemen's organizations including the Union Fédérale, the Union Nationale des Combattants, the Union Nationale des Mutilés, and the Confédération Nationale.[20] René Cassin, who had also played an important role in the preparations for the conference,[21] was introduced as 'in a way the foreign minister of the disabled veterans of France' and spoke of 'their desire for reconciliation and their wish for a successful outcome of the general disarmament conference' and of the need for moral disarmament.[22]

When the World Disarmament Conference finally opened in February 1932, the ex-servicemen's organizations did not take part in the extraordinary session of 6 February to which a broad variety of international non-governmental organizations had been invited to present their petitions and promote the 'Budapest programme'. Instead, CIAMAC had a prior arrangement to present a deputation to conference President Arthur Henderson on 7 February which 'was unfortunately deemed impossible at the last moment to alter'.[23] Following a public meeting held by CIAMAC in Geneva on 7 February, with an audience of 2000, CIAMAC's deputation to Henderson presented an extensive resolution urging 'that the Disarmament Conference should reach sufficiently

tangible results to start the nations definitely along the road towards organised peace'.[24] Such was the perceived significance of the deputation that when the official proceedings of the World Disarmament Conference began the following day, Henderson read out the resolution to the assembled official delegations.[25]

With the World Disarmament Conference making little progress over the course of its first six months, in July 1932 CIAMAC joined with the four transnational disarmament committees in Geneva representing women's, students', religious and League of Nations associations, to form a council 'to coordinate, where necessary and desirable, their programmes and policies, in order that the action of public opinion during the second phase of the Conference may be more effective than the first'.[26] The resultant International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament issued joint statements on disarmament over the following months, but could do little while the Disarmament Conference remained in recess.[27]

Frustration at the lack of progress at the World Disarmament Conference was reflected in the deliberations of the eighth annual conference of CIAMAC in September 1932. The detailed resolution on disarmament passed at this conference decried 'that the majority of responsible leaders appear to take insufficient account of the deep-seated desire of peace felt by the peoples, and of the determination of the ex-servicemen, who are best-qualified to voice the ideals of their generation' and demanded 'total and gradual abolition of armaments, concurrently with compulsory arbitration and guarantees, either preventive or coercive, against any violation of the Covenant for the renunciation of war' and 'a common effort at removing the obstacles which will be opposed to the successful conclusion of the First General Conference for Disarmament'.[28] At FIDAC's annual congress the following month, a resolution was passed expressing 'the wish ... that the indispensable reduction of national armaments so desirable for the maintenance of peace and necessary for the reduction of public expenditures shall be effectively controlled by adequate technical bodies and linked with certain guarantees of security'.[29]

By the time that the Disarmament Conference reconvened the following year, Hitler had already become the German Chancellor. In these inauspicious circumstances, the two leading international ex-servicemen's organizations briefly became the most prominent components of the transnational disarmament movement. The International Consultative Group proved to be unable in early 1933 to organize a proposed mass demonstration in Geneva uniting the broad range of international

Figure 7 Disarmament Conference, Delegation of disabled veterans received by Arthur Henderson (Great Britain).

Source: League of Nations Photo Archive.

non-governmental organizations of which it was composed.[30] CIAMAC and FIDAC, however, succeeded in March 1933 in putting together a demonstration of over 4,500 people in Geneva to highlight 'the determination of ex-servicemen throughout the world that the Disarmament Conference succeed in a substantial reduction of armaments within the framework of a reasonable peace organisation'.[31] The prime-mover behind this demonstration was CIAMAC, which, at its eighth annual conference, had advocated organizing 'at the close of 1932 or early 1933, a General Meeting of all ex-service men for Disarmament and against War'.[32] At a meeting on 5 and 6 January 1933, CIAMAC and FIDAC agreed upon a joint resolution for the demonstration and subsequent presentation to Arthur Henderson.[33]

CIAMAC and FIDAC's joint resolution emphasized that this was the first time that these organizations had assembled in a common effort, and the resolution promoted 'substantial, simultaneous and progressive' material disarmament, as well as moral disarmament, compulsory arbitration and security guarantees.[34] In terms of its scale, the event was perceived to be a considerable success: CIAMAC's Vice-President expressed

his pleasure at 'the long and magnificent procession' that took place and how 'so many of our members attended that we had to hold successive meetings in the historic Salle de la Réformation, and that, even then, some were unable to attend'.[35] However, there was one significant set of absentees: despite de Watteville's 'firm hope that the Germans could come despite all the risks',[36] this proved to be impossible, and the President of CIAMAC had to inform those present of 'the absence of the German delegates, for reasons which were well understood'.[37]

The morning following the Reformation Hall assembly, five hundred ex-servicemen took part in a deputation to Arthur Henderson at which he was presented with the joint CIAMAC–FIDAC resolution on disarmament.[38] Henderson received them warmly, telling those present that 'all your striking enthusiasm, has touched a responsive chord in my heart', and arranged for publication of the proceedings in the official journal of the Disarmament Conference.[39] He was later to state that 'I shall never forget the day on which I received the ex-servicemen of all countries'.[40] The International Consultative Group thought that the deputation was 'very impressive' and noted that 'the press were well represented and many of their accounts were most generous'.[41] However, the Group also noted the absence of any national delegates to the Disarmament Conference at the meeting: they had not been invited since it was felt 'that the delegates were not sympathetic to such public demonstrations and were tired of expressions of public opinion'.[42] By the time that the major international ex-servicemen's organizations co-ordinated their activism for disarmament, it was already too late.

Over the course of the following year, ex-servicemen's promotion of disarmament faded but did not disappear. CIAMAC, for instance, passed a further resolution on the issue at its September 1933 conference, advocating 'a strong organization of permanent and sanction-bearing supervision of armaments, a plan of staged reductions in effectives, military expenditure and materiel, official or camouflaged', and moral disarmament.[43] The following month, CIAMAC took part in the last major international non-governmental demonstration that hoped to save the World Disarmament Conference, organized by the International Consultative Group in October 1933,[44] and the month after that CIAMAC sent a telegram to Henderson pleading for him to persevere and stating the 'unshakeable conviction' of CIAMAC members 'of the absolute necessity of concluding a disarmament convention, which alone can save the peace that is in peril'.[45]

The co-operation of CIAMAC and FIDAC in the promotion of peace continued into 1934. In February 1934, for instance, both organizations

were represented at the major International Congress in Defence of Peace in Brussels: CIAMAC was represented by Cassin and FIDAC by Victor Cadere.[46] By this time, however, the focus of their peace efforts was clearly turning away from disarmament and towards collective security, although CIAMAC continued to take part in the much-reduced activities of the International Consultative Group.

The characteristics of the promotion of disarmament by CIAMAC and FIDAC

The propaganda of CIAMAC and FIDAC on the subject of disarmament featured three common themes, evident in their key resolutions on the issue of 1931–1933. The first was that they should work 'to ensure the success of the General Disarmament Conference convened at Geneva for 1932' and promote 'the greatest practicable measure' of disarmament.[47] The second was that disarmament should take place 'without diminishing national safety' or be 'of such a nature as to permit of the practical realisation of national equality in full security, with full account taken of the special position of each country'.[48] And the third was emphasis upon the importance of 'moral disarmament', defined in their joint resolution of 1933 as 'the suppression of everything which publicly – and particularly in schools – tends to hinder mutual understanding between the peoples'.[49]

Given their emphasis upon 'practicable' disarmament and 'full security', the approach of CIAMAC and FIDAC to the disarmament issue was considerably more cautious than that of pacifists such as the continental European branches of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which circulated a petition advocating 'total and universal Disarmament'.[50] Instead, the ex-servicemen's organizations' approach to the issue was pacificist, in that 'like pacifists, ... [they] criticize defencists for exaggerating the extent to which peace and security are produced by military as distinct from political or diplomatic factors' but 'unlike pacifists, they accept that it will take time to phase the military component out altogether'.[51]

CIAMAC and FIDAC did not see the promotion of disarmament simply in terms of facilitating international agreement upon the reduction and limitation of national armaments at the World Disarmament Conference. Equally important was the principle of 'moral disarmament'. At the 1931 Trocadéro conference, for example, CIAMAC President Henri Pichot emphasized that 'the guarantee of material disarmament can also be found in moral disarmament: it is necessary to remove war

from minds, hearts, and customs'.[52] By bringing together ex-servicemen from both sides of the First World War, CIAMAC believed that it was playing a vital role in the process of moral disarmament. In his work on cultural demobilization in the aftermath of the First World War, John Horne notes the important part played by organizations such as CIAMAC in bringing together former enemies.[53]

As was indicated in the introductory chapter to this volume, 'veterans' organizations tried to use their moral capital as war victims and ex-servicemen' in their efforts to promote disarmament.[54] During the CIAMAC deputation to Henderson at the commencement of the World Disarmament Conference, for instance, Pichot 'stressed the moral significance and standing in the eyes of the world of his organisation' and presented a resolution emphasising that 'the ex-service men and disabled soldiers, members of CIAMAC since 1925, have suffered more severely than any other class of citizens from the disastrous effects of warfare'.[55] At the joint CIAMAC–FIDAC demonstration and deputation the following year, their joint resolution emphasised how their co-operation was 'evoking the memory of the millions of war dead', and Morel emphasized that 'these men, who went to war with the immense hope that thereafter war should be removed from human possibilities, do not intend that their sacrifice shall have been in vain'.[56]

In addition to linking the disarmament issue to their experiences in the First World War, the international ex-servicemen's organizations also linked the issue to their economic concerns such as war pensions highlighted in the opening chapter of this volume.[57] When introducing CIAMAC's 1931 resolution on disarmament, for instance, Cassin emphasized how:

> composed as it is of ex-Servicemen or of the families of dead soldiers or of soldiers who after serving lost their health or their means of existence as a result of the War, and are still compelled to bear the burden of public debts and War reparations, CIAMAC has always emphasised the pain and scandal inherent in the continual increase of armaments budgets of all kinds, when, in order to avoid the increase of an already crushing taxation, steps are taken *pari passu* in all countries to reduce expenditure on objects of the highest moral value, such as war pensions.[58]

The exceptional resonance of the ex-servicemen's movement's disarmament activism was recognized by leading statesmen. For instance,

when he received the joint FIDAC–CIAMAC deputation, Henderson exclaimed:

> For fourteen months we have been listening to speeches about armaments and their reduction by people who are qualified by one title or another to make their voices heard at the Disarmament Conference; but this morning we have listened to those, who, in my opinion at any rate, have the very best title in the world to speak on the important questions of disarmament and peace … I will lose no time in telling it, by all means at my disposal, that the men who fought in the last war are resolutely determined that their sacrifices shall not have been in vain.[59]

On this occasion, Henderson also complimented CIAMAC and FIDAC as speaking 'for 12 million paying members and represent[ing] what is possibly the greatest organisation of paying members in the world'.[60] Although far from fully inclusive of the vast variety of ex-servicemen's organizations, CIAMAC and FIDAC could still claim considerable breadth of participation. At the 1931 Trocadéro conference, for instance, Pichot introduced CIAMAC as 'Republican Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, Finns, French, Poles, Romanians, Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs, we are four million European ex-servicemen loyally and unfailingly united, not only by hatred of war, but by the pledge to work to extirpate it from the world'.[61] Although centred around inter-Allied rather than broader international participation, FIDAC could claim an even larger membership of organizations comprising a total of approximately eight million people.[62]

The ex-servicemen's movement was particularly important to the disarmament campaign in France, where 'left-wing' ex-servicemen's organizations were viewed as far more critical to the disarmament campaign than the primary peace movement. A representative of Great Britain's most powerful peace organization, the League of Nations Union, noted in February 1931: 'I have the impression that the only popular organization which … *could* carry effective propaganda into the provinces [in France] is that of the ex-servicemen.'[63] Furthermore, ex-servicemen's organizations constituted four-fifths of the membership of the League of Nations movement in France.[64]

Divisions in the international ex-servicemen's movement

Despite the impressive membership figures of CIAMAC and FIDAC, the extent to which they represented the preferences of their constituent organizations and individuals is questionable. In his work on

the Disarmament Information Committee and subsequently in the International Consultative Group, for example, CIAMAC's de Watteville acted highly independently. At the discussions in early 1931, during which the Disarmament Information Committee was established and the multi-movement transnational disarmament campaign launched, de Watteville was keen to emphasize that the opinions he expressed were predominantly personal.[65] As for FIDAC, in his study of the British Legion, Barr has highlighted how 'although FIDAC leaders claimed to represent millions of ex-servicemen, they could really only speak for themselves' and 'the ordinary membership of the Legion was little affected by the deliberations of FIDAC'.[66]

The international collaboration of ex-servicemen under the auspices of CIAMAC and FIDAC shielded the considerable differences on the disarmament issue between the national organizations of which they were composed. Constituted as it was of ex-servicemen from both victorious and defeated participants in the First World War, CIAMAC had to reconcile their competing positions on multiple international issues. At the same meeting during which de Watteville emphasized the personal nature of his opinions, he also stressed the extent to which CIAMAC had recently been concerned with overcoming German–French and German–Polish divisions.[67]

Although composed simply of Allied members, FIDAC also had to confront the competing national perspectives of its participants on disarmament. This was evident in the drafting of the joint FIDAC–CIAMAC resolution for their joint demonstration of March 1933. When passing the text of the resolution on to the League of Nations secretariat, de Watteville of CIAMAC stated that he was 'very concerned that the resolution in the present circumstances seems very timid, but the text is the maximum we could obtain from FIDAC. The Americans and Italians refused to agree even to that, in one case because of the mention of traffic in arms, and in the other case due to reference to respect for treaties.'[68] In the event, the American and Italian members of FIDAC put forward a separate resolution of their own at the March 1933 demonstration, promoting 'moral and material disarmament' in general terms, but failing to make reference to international supervision of disarmament, control of arms traffic and containment of acts of aggression, reflecting the respective national positions of their countries.[69]

Despite the commonalities of their treatment of the disarmament issue discussed earlier in this chapter, the contrasting pan-European and inter-Allied composition of CIAMAC and FIDAC respectively resulted in significant differences between their approaches to the issue. As Julia

Eichenberg has argued, whereas CIAMAC was clearly concerned with the 'culture of peace' given its unification of ex-servicemen from each side of the First World War, FIDAC (although also claiming that its 'main object' was 'the prospect of peace'[70]) embodied a 'culture of victory' given its inter-Allied membership.[71] As is evident from the foregoing discussion of the development of internationally-organized ex-servicemen's disarmament activism, CIAMAC was greatly more prominent in the disarmament movement than FIDAC: CIAMAC alone took part in the International Consultative Group, and CIAMAC alone lobbied Arthur Henderson at the opening of the World Disarmament Conference in February 1932.

FIDAC's approach to the disarmament issue was consistently more cautious than that of CIAMAC. For instance, when the Preparatory Commission for the World Disarmament Conference began its discussions in 1926, FIDAC's leadership agreed with the position that was to cause the Commission's work to drag on for so long: that national differences with respect to 'the minimum compatible with its national defence and the execution of its international obligations for each individual country' needed to be addressed first.[72]

The contrast between FIDAC and CIAMAC positions on disarmament can be seen in the 1931 resolutions on disarmament adopted by each organization in the build-up to the World Disarmament Conference. FIDAC's resolution called simply for 'the greatest practicable measure of … reduction and limitation ... without diminishing national safety', and contained no reference to accompanying international security arrangements.[73] CIAMAC's resolution, in contrast, not only advocated 'the limitation and reduction of armaments of all kinds' but also promoted 'substantial reductions, arrived at in close relation with the strengthening of the means of coercion belonging to the League of Nations for the purpose of guaranteeing respect for the Covenant and the renunciation of war' together with 'some system of international control … to supervise on the spot the full and faithful execution of all undertakings entered into'.[74] Whereas FIDAC's position reflected more closely the 'direct' approach to disarmament, which was generally more popular in Great Britain and the United States, that of CIAMAC was closer to the 'indirect' approach that was more popular in France.

The divisions in approaches to disarmament apparent within the international ex-servicemen's movement were to spill-over into the wider movement for disarmament. Cassin's significant contribution to what became the common programme for much of the international disarmament movement – the 'Budapest resolution' discussed earlier – not

only provided the flexibility of approach that helped to provide the movement with its wide appeal: its combination of both the 'indirect' and 'direct' approaches to disarmament also gave legitimacy to a wide range of ultimately incompatible positions, to which it was impossible for policymakers effectively to respond. As British Prime-Minister Ramsay MacDonald complained: 'The government unfortunately cannot plume itself on passing or supporting a resolution. It has to get the hidden background of all resolutions settled as well.'[75]

In addition to the divisions between CIAMAC and FIDAC and between their respective member associations, there were substantial sections of ex-servicemen's opinion that did not participate in either of these organizations, and which adopted highly contrasting perspectives on disarmament. On no occasion was this clearer than at the Trocadéro Conference of November 1931. The League of Nations' representative at that conference noted that at the closing meeting, he was 'unable to hear a single word spoken by the speakers. During the whole meeting fights took place all over the theatre ... there appeared to be an organised opposition ... The police only intervened at the end when the platform had been invaded by various groups of armed disturbers.'[76] The event had been infiltrated by seven hundred members of the *Croix-de-Feu*, who aimed to 'sabotage the pacifist meeting at the Trocadéro, organized by those whom we affirm are traitors to the French homeland'.[77] The similar opposition faced by CIAMAC participants, such as the Reichsbanner in Germany, needs no introduction.

Conclusion

Given the exceptionally difficult circumstances in which the participants in CIAMAC and FIDAC operated, the extent to which these organizations co-operated for the promotion of peace and international disarmament between the two World Wars was remarkable. CIAMAC's leadership, in particular, played an especially crucial role in 1931 in the development of a transnationally co-ordinated disarmament campaign involving numerous sectors of transnational civil society. Furthermore, in early 1933, CIAMAC and FIDAC were the leading international non-governmental promoters of the World Disarmament Conference, succeeding in putting together mass demonstrations where other sectors of transnational civil society had failed. The warm reception that these demonstrations received reflected the widespread perception that ex-servicemen were justified in claiming to be particularly well-placed to speak on the disarmament issue.

However, CIAMAC and FIDAC were no more able to agree upon a common approach on the disarmament question than any other element of the transnational disarmament campaign. The contrasting 'direct' and 'indirect' approaches to disarmament, reflecting a division between Anglo-Saxon and continental perspectives on the issue, split the ex-servicemen's movement as much as the Allied/non-Allied divide, and the division was to have a significant impact on the propaganda of the disarmament campaign more generally once incorporated in the campaign's 'Budapest programme'. Furthermore, beyond the membership of CIAMAC and FIDAC, some elements of the ex-servicemen's movement proved to be amongst the transnational disarmament campaign's most notorious opponents.

Notes

1. John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Disarmament and Security since Locarno, 1925–1931* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932), p. 26.
2. Ibid., provides the text of the Assembly resolution.
3. W. M. Jordan, *Great Britain, France and the German Problem* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 154.
4. Ibid.
5. The development of the official disarmament discussions is outlined in Wheeler-Bennett, *Disarmament and Security.* More recent analyses tend to focus on the development of the disarmament policies of individual countries, such as Maurice Vaïsse, *Sécurité d'Abord: la Politique Française en Matière de Désarmement, 9 Décembre 1930–17 Avril 1934* (Paris: Editions Pedone, 1981) and Carolyn Kitching, *Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament, 1919–1934* (London: Routledge, 1999).
6. Murray to Cecil, 18 February 1933, file 216, Gilbert Murray papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, quoted in Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 301.
7. Sir John Simon to Gilbert Murray, 24 May 1932, box 72, Sir John Simon papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. For a detailed account of the broad campaign for disarmament, see Thomas Richard Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament between the Two World Wars* (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007).
8. Elliott Pennell Fagerberg, *The 'Anciens Combattants' and French Foreign Policy* (Geneva: University of Geneva, 1966), p. 203.
9. 'La S.D.N. réconcilie les anciens combattants de France et d'Allemagne', *La Paix par le Droit*, 36(1), January 1926, p. 31.
10. *La Paix par le Droit*, December 1926, p. 471; January 1928, p. 43; October 1928, p. 464; October 1930, p. 366.
11. 'FIDAC and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 7(10), October 1931, p. 5.
12. 'International Conference of Disabled and Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review,* 1(3), August–September 1931, p. 19.

13. On René Cassin's work with CIAMAC, see Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *René Cassin et les Droits de l'Homme: Le Projet d'une Génération* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), pp. 88–93.
14. 'International Conference of Disabled and Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review,* 1(3), August–September 1931, p. 19.
15. 'International Organisations and the Disarmament Conference, 1932. Report of Negotiations in Geneva and Paris, February 2nd–8th 1931', file 209, Gilbert Murray papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
16. *Disarmament: A Review*, 1, June 1931, p. 1.
17. The composition of the committee is provided in *Disarmament: A Review.*
18. Minutes of the Disarmament Committee of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies, 21–22 March 1931, box P.97, International Federation of League of Nations Societies papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
19. Undated memorandum, box 5/144, Philip Noel-Baker papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.
20. 'Le Congrès du Désarmement', *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 5 Décembre 1931, pp. 1617–1621.
21. *Disarmament: A Review*, August–September 1931, p. 7.
22. 'Le Congrès du Désarmement', *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 5 Décembre 1931, p. 1633.
23. Vox Populi Committee, *Vox Populi* (Geneva: Vox Populi Committee, 1932), p. 67. The correspondence on the issue is in R.2455, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
24. The full text of the resolution is provided in Vox Populi Committee, *Vox Populi*, pp. 68–70.
25. Vox Populi Copmmittee, *Vox Populi,* p. 70. The resolution was printed in the official *Journal of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, 7, 9 February 1932, pp. 48–50.
26. Pickard to the members of the Disarmament Committee of Christian International Organizations, 30 July 1932, box 1, papers of the International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
27. Davies, *Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, pp. 132 and 137.
28. 'A Call from Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review*, 29 September 1932, p. 6.
29. *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 8(10), October 1932, p. 28.
30. Davies, *Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 139.
31. 'Ex-Service Men and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 9(4), April 1933, p. 2.
32. 'A Call from Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review*, 29 September 1932, p. 6.
33. de Watteville to Henderson, 14 January 1933, box S.475, Arthur Henderson papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
34. 'Ex-Service Men and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 9(4), April 1933, pp. 2 and 40.
35. Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, *Journal*, Special Supplement 3, 23 March 1933, p. 3.
36. de Watteville to Baker, 14 March 1933, box S.475, Arthur Henderson papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
37. 'Ex-Service Men and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 9(4), April 1933, p. 2.

38. CIAMAC and FIDAC, *International Assembly of Ex-Servicemen and War Victims in Geneva, March 19 and 20, 1933. Official Report.* (Geneva and Paris: CIAMAC and FIDAC, 1933). See also Rassemblement Universel des Anciens Combattants pour la Paix et le Désarmement organisé à Genève, les 18, 19, et 20 Mars 1933 par la FIDAC et la CIAMAC, *Compte Rendu in extenso et illustré de la réception officielle à la Conférence du Désarmement (Société des Nations)* (Geneva: CIAMAC, 1933).
39. Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, *Journal*, Special Supplement 3, 23 March 1933, p. 4.
40. Henderson to Porte, 10 November 1933, box S.475, Arthur Henderson papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
41. Records of the meeting of 22 March 1933, International Consultative Group papers, box 2, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
42. Ibid.
43. 'Le Congrès de la CIAMAC à Genève', *La Paix par le Droit,* October 1933, p. 400.
44. See the correspondence in box 6, International Consultative Group papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva.
45. 'M. Henderson et les Anciens Combattants', *La Paix par le Droit*, December 1933, p. 492.
46. *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 10(4), April 1934, p. 14. Details of the congress appear in 'International Conference in Defence of Peace, Brussels, 15th–17th February 1934', *Bulletin of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies,* 1934, pp. 55–61.
47. 'FIDAC and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C. Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 7(10), October 1931, p. 5; 'International Conference of Disabled and Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review,* 1(3), August–September 1931, p. 19.
48. 'FIDAC and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C. Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 7(10), October 1931, p. 5; 'International Conference of Disabled and Ex-Service Men', *Disarmament: A Review,* 1(3), August–September 1931, p. 19.
49. 'Ex-Service Men and Disarmament', *F.I.D.A.C.: Bulletin of the Allied Legions*, 9(4), April 1933, p. 40.
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54. Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, Introduction to this volume.
55. Vox Populi Copmmittee, *Vox Populi,* p. 68.
56. Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, *Journal*, Special Supplement 3, 23 March 1933, pp. 2 and 3.
57. Eichenberg and Newman, Introduction to this volume.

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59. Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, *Journal*, Special Supplement No. 3, 23 March 1933, pp. 4–7.
60. Ibid.
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64. Thomas Richard Davies, 'The Possibilities of Transnationalism: The International Federation of League of Nations Societies and the International Peace Campaign, 1919–1939' (MPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), p. 40.
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11

Beyond Cultures of Victory and Cultures of Defeat? Inter-War Veterans' Internationalism

John Horne

Introduction: the living and the dead

On 12 July 1936, thousands of veterans from eighteen countries, Germans and Italians among them, met at the ossuary of Verdun, filled with body fragments retrieved from the battlefield, to mark the twentieth anniversary of what had become the symbolic battle of the Great War. There, in the presence of the dead and swept by the searchlight from the ossuary's tower, they swore an oath to uphold peace.[1] Several things are remarkable about the ceremony. It shows that behind the actions of inter-war veterans, particularly those of an international nature that are the subject of this book, lay the war dead, the comrades who had not survived the conflict. It was their presence that empowered the veterans to speak out on political matters. Many others – politicians, church leaders, writers – also tried to capture the moral capital of those who had made the 'ultimate sacrifice.' But no group was better placed than the veterans to do so. The sheer scale of the military dead (over ten million) and the fact that civilian deaths were by comparison marginalized, gave the veterans a unique opportunity to pronounce on the meaning of war and peace, and hence on international politics.[2] They enjoyed no such role after the Second World War, in which two-thirds of the dead were civilians, when the Cold War resulted in very different paths for coming to terms with even greater loss.

This relationship with the 'war dead' helps explain a second feature of the Verdun ceremony: the veterans' belief in their own political agency. The moral authority to speak out about war translated into a conviction that veterans were a serious force, whose legitimacy came from their own

members and the cause for which they stood. Without that belief, the manifold activities traced in this book make little sense. True, there was a strongly pragmatic side to veteran internationalism, which sought to use external pressure to improve conditions for veterans nationally. But, when one looks at the texts and debates of the international meetings, the social reformism only made sense in the context of a world freed of war, just as freeing the world from war depended on social reforms, without which militarism would go unchecked. For all the differences between the two main international bodies, FIDAC and CIAMAC, they shared a vision that veterans were uniquely placed to preserve peace.

Proof of this comes from the date of the Verdun meeting – July 1936 – which is its third remarkable feature. For it took place after Nazi Germany's re-occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles and following the election victory of the Popular Front in France on a wave of anti-fascist feeling. Even at this late date, a week before the start of the Spanish Civil War, these veterans could still believe passionately that war was the over-riding evil, although many came from Nazi Germany bearing swastika flags. In fact, the sun had long set on their conviction that comradeship in suffering and fidelity to the war dead could ensure that the Great War would never be repeated. But by the same token, only the strength of that vision explains its persistence against all the contrary evidence. The credibility that it conferred on Hitler as he manipulated his own veteran status resulted in the spectacle two years later, described by Niall Barr in this volume, of the British Legion mobilizing 17,000 volunteers in a few days to police the carve up of Czechoslovakia in September 1938 – all in the name of peace.[3]

The present volume demonstrates beyond doubt how important were the Great War veterans who organized internationally in order both to pursue their corporative interests and also to preach a universal message about human dignity in the wake of war and to warn against any repetition of the catastrophe of 1914–1918. They were not as important as they hoped they would be. Time and again, both national movements and international federations overestimated the authority of those they represented. Their voice did not carry as widely or loudly as they felt it should. Yet, unless we make the mistake of dismissing all the 'lights that failed' in the phase of internationalism and potential reconciliation that took place between the wars, we must place the veterans alongside others, such as Christian pacifists, reformist trade unionists, democratic socialists and anti-war intellectuals, who together formed a nascent international civic sphere in the cause of peace.[4] As the editors

have rightly argued, the strength of this achievement should be recognized in its own right. It also tells us a great deal about the interplay of memory, opinion and politics that shaped the inter-war period, and about how societies tried to come to terms with mass death, battle trauma and the social and political upheaval caused by the war. By way of conclusion it may be worth reflecting a little further on the subject from this perspective.

Veterans and their associations

As the editors have already noted, veteran internationalism was founded on a key feature of the Great War, namely that a conflict which turned on national antagonism and nation-states (those in existence and those in the process of realization) also generated transnational dynamics and created international experiences. Combat is a prime example. However distinct the forms that it took for different armies, these were variations on a theme. That theme was the dominance of the defensive over the offensive and the particular kind of siege warfare in which it resulted. Soldiers endured industrialized firepower in the form of mechanized small arms and heavy artillery fire and they did so in close proximity to the enemy. New modes of offensive warfare remained weak till the end. While less typical of the eastern front, though still relevant to its long periods of immobility and the fact that neither side achieved a decisive break-through, this sums up the kind of war 1914–1918 was. Trench warfare, costly offensives and grinding attrition were the norm. Despite differences of climate and geography, Gallipoli and Macedonia were similar to the western and Austro-Italian fronts. Only in East Africa, Mesopotamia and Palestine did other conditions obtain.

The experience of combat thus transcended national contexts, as did the way in which both sides learned how to deal with it, which meant borrowing from enemies as well as allies. Without glossing over differences between theatres (and the naval and air wars), the soldiers who formed the overwhelming mass of First World War combatants shared a great deal – more perhaps than was the case with the wider range of fronts and types of combat in the Second World War. This provided the foundation for veteran identities and politics. When they invoked a common 'war experience', the veterans were not just indulging in rhetoric but referred to a lived reality. *The Trench Opposite Us* was the telling title of a 1933 enquiry by a French veteran and journalist, André Gervais, into the German veterans' mentality. He dedicated it: 'To two unknown soldiers: one who sleeps under the *Arc [de Triomphe]*, in the

heart of Paris, and another who rests over there, on the *Unter den Linden* of his Berlin; yesterday enemies, today and forever, at peace in death.' Gervais concluded that despite their differences, 'so long as the men who fought the war are there, whether French or German, [a new] war is impossible'.[5]

But as every chapter in this book has shown, a veteran is not a soldier. It is not just that veterans survived, and so had obligations towards dead comrades and their widows and families. They also sought to construct new lives in the varied settings of the post-war world as they processed the memory of the war. Just exactly how they did this, and what importance they attached to it, was what turned them into veterans, and there was nothing automatic about it. At their broadest, veterans were a group only in the sense that they shared an experience of war and in a minority of cases had been physically or psychologically disabled by it. Even for the latter, being a veteran was only one role and identity among the many open to them. For most former soldiers, it did not take precedent over class, politics and place, or other determinants of their lives.

Where and when it turned into a more cohesive identity, and even a movement, thus depended on circumstances. In the USSR, Great War veterans could neither organize nor gain state recognition. Only Red Army veterans of the Civil War could draw invalidity pensions, while the public space for seeing the Great War as anything other than an 'imperialist' conflict barely existed.[6] In the new nation-states of Eastern Europe, war service was valued differentially. As Julia Eichenberg and Natali Stegmann show, the 'legions' that claimed a key role in founding the new nation-states of Poland and Czechoslovakia were distinguished from the mass of former soldiers who had fought with the armies of Germany, Austria or Russia, and they organized (and were rewarded) accordingly.[7] Even in the most favourable case of a victorious France, aware of its debt to all surviving *poilus*, only one-half of returned servicemen joined associations. Elsewhere they were a minority.[8] The sociology of veterans and their movements thus contrasted with the claims of the peak organizations to speak for a single constituency. Turning the veterans into a voice was a political act.

Yet, viewed from another angle, these levels of self-organization were impressive. French veterans' associations amounted to the largest civic movement in the country, representing one in four adult men. In Poland, about one third of the soldiers who fought in the First World War joined one of the country's veterans' associations, and in the USA, over 800,000 war veterans joined the American Legion.[9] Even the smaller totals in Britain, Germany and Yugoslavia were a major achievement. Moreover,

veterans exercised a more diffuse influence in the parliamentary democracies that predominated in the former belligerent states in the 1920s. Whether electors or elected, they expressed not an exclusive identity but rather a myriad of practical demands and rhetorical references that kept the memory of the 'front experience' alive in post-war politics. There was, for example, a cross-party branch of the British Legion in the House of Commons.[10] Veterans had a greater visibility than after any previous war (with the possible exception of the American Civil War), reflecting the mass nature of military service in 1914–1918. They could not be ignored (the USSR apart), and it is not surprising that in most countries they won recognition with regard to pensions and benefits. Organized veterans, though a minority, played a crucial role in converting this societal presence into the political process of recognition and reward. The transition from war to peace meant settling the moral debt to the soldiers engendered by the conflict. Veterans' movements (and war widows) were at the heart of this transaction, and the status and benefits they won were one of the main paths by which societies came to terms with the domestic legacy of the war.

In the process, the veterans' movements developed two characteristics that in turn shaped their emergence on the international scene. The first, attested to by many chapters in this book, is the vital role played by the disabled. Blindness, loss of limb, a disfigured face and other physical afflictions, let alone psychiatric disorders, were an irreducible legacy of the conflict. Marked for life, it is neither surprising that disabled soldiers were the first to organize and demand state aid during the war nor that they took the lead subsequently, as shown by Antoine Prost, in forming effective organizations and in framing their demands in terms of rights and entitlements rather than charity.[11] Since there were some eight million disabled veterans world-wide, with nearly a million in France and 1.5 million in Germany, their impact was considerable.[12]

For not only did disabled organizations join the umbrella veterans' movements as these developed from 1919 (and the leaders of the latter were not infrequently men who had been blinded or mutilated in the war), but the veterans in general supported the disabled as they did the war widows. This was because the disabled made the moral case for general veteran status and entitlements in the most powerful terms. But it was also because every combat soldier had risked death and disability, and many bore the mark of wounds that, fractionally different, could have resulted in either of these outcomes. The sense of a shared experience that underlay veteran solidarity ensured a key place for the disabled as it did for the war dead. At the Verdun ceremony

in July 1936, for example, the climactic oath to uphold peace was preceded by the arrival of a torch, lit from the eternal flame that burned on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris, which was accompanied by war widows and blinded and mutilated veterans.

The second characteristic of the domestic movements was no less fundamental to their international role. The organizations through which veterans pursued their aims and expressed their war experience were as varied as the beliefs and backgrounds of their members. They ranged politically from right to left, and socially they reflected both the civilian worlds from which the soldiers came and the military settings in which they had served. There were organizations by civil profession and also by rank and regiment. Yet, with few exceptions, the associations that prevailed at the national level over-rode this complexity and incorporated all former soldiers on a geographical basis with no distinction of rank. They reframed the military hierarchy of wartime as an idealized and egalitarian post-war comradeship within the nation. To be sure, not all countries had one main organization, like the British Legion or American Legion; but there was usually just a handful that predominated (though diverse subordinate groups continued to flourish), such as the centre-right Union Nationale des Combattants (UNC) and centre-left Union Fédérale (UF) in France, or the nationalist Stahlhelm and republican Reichsbanner in Germany. In this move from the particular to the general lay the conversion of soldiers into veterans and the effort to create a distinctive and over-riding veteran voice.

However, that same effort meant limiting the use of the 'front experience' for political purposes precisely because veterans had other social and political affiliations. To engage in ordinary politics was to threaten the solidarity on which the cause was premised. This did happen, as Paul Newman explains regarding the tensions between Croatian and Serb veterans' groups in the new Yugoslavia.[13] It also accounts for the rift between the Stahlhelm and the Reichsbanner in Germany, referred to by William Mulligan, and tensions that arose between the UNC and the UF in the crisis decade of French politics in the 1930s.[14] But by and large, the main national veterans' organizations kept their distance from those (and there were many) who wanted to use the veterans for their own ends. Both fascism and national socialism courted them and invoked the myth of the 'front soldier' to justify the re-organization of society under a war-hardened elite. Communism attracted other veterans. But these were minorities.

The major veterans' organizations thus used their moral capital to pursue their own interests and preach their own message, which was

political only to the degree that it sought to express a distinctive veteran politics. This was true at the international as at the national level. The leader of the UNC told André Gervais: 'I believe in the international veteran spirit provided that it can be placed above political contingencies.' That sentiment was widespread.[15] By the second half of the 1920s, the 'veteran spirit' meant extending solidarity to former enemies, now seen as potential comrades. The UNC joined the UF in 1929 in a plan to organize peace in the name of 'our noble war dead who gave their lives to end all war'.[16] While the Stahlhelm never took this route, the Reichsbanner, which remained the larger organization, did. It was critical of the Treaty of Versailles but agreed that veterans should draw a lesson of peace from their own past. On this evidence, as William Mulligan argues, German veterans may have been divided but the majority were neither militarist nor revanchist.

FIDAC and CIAMAC were, thus far, more than bureaucratic bodies. Both were premised on the veterans' belief in a shared combat experience, on wartime sacrifice as embodied by the disabled and on the ideal of solidarity between ex-soldiers. Their limitation was the reverse of their strength. Like the national movements from which they came, they could not exceed a specifically veteran politics without risking division. Whether their cause was strong enough to overcome the political, ideological and international conflicts of the inter-war period, on which veterans had a range of views in their other capacities and incarnations, was the drama of the veteran movement on the international stage, as it was nationally. A vital story in its own right, it also tells us much about the constraints – and the potential – of the period in which the veterans acted.

Victories and defeats

The over-riding tragedy was the war itself, which had not been able to resolve the forces that had caused it but which had transformed them by the multiple mobilizations that it required of the belligerent societies (military, economic, cultural, political), before producing deep divisions over how it ended.[17] Veteran internationalism derived its edge and purpose from the fear that war might return and the soldiers' sacrifice might have been in vain. But veterans were affected by the bitterness left by the war just as others were, if not more so. For to see the war crowned with victory or negated by defeat meant looking at the post-war world and the veterans' place in it with very different eyes.

The victory parades of 1919 were an Allied affair. So, too, was the creation of a national ritual that acknowledged the cost of the war but presented it as the price for liberating the fatherland (France), saving 'civilization' (the British Empire) or achieving or securing national independence (Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia). Quite different was the plight of the former Central Powers. Austria and Turkey had to rebuild smaller nation-states from the implosion of multi-ethnic empires. Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria all lost territory and people. Division over the meaning of the war in Germany prevented the building of a national monument equivalent to those created in London, Paris and Brussels, with the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and (in London) the cenotaph (or empty tomb) in Whitehall. Only in 1931 was a tomb of an Unknown Soldier installed in the Neue Wache guardhouse on the Unter den Linden in Berlin (referred to by André Gervais in his dedication). This was too late to play the required role even had this been possible.[18] Hungary, which lost large minorities to surrounding states (especially Romania) by the Treaty of Trianon, did experience a consensus, but it was one of national mourning and bitter resentment over defeat.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch has proposed the idea of a 'culture of defeat' in order to explain how Germans understood the war in retrospect.[19] Although the Armistice deprived Germany of the means of further resistance, many Germans felt that a suspension of hostilities at least entitled them to participate in the peace process, which the Allies refused. They also believed the army to be unvanquished. The new Socialist President, Friedrich Ebert, told returning troops on 10 December 1918 that: 'No enemy has defeated you. Only when the enemy's superiority in numbers and resources became suffocating did you relinquish the fight.'[20] This made the peace treaty not only a *Diktat* but also harsh and unfair. To injustice was added enemy treachery. The 'hunger blockade' was felt to be illegal and Allied propaganda was seen in the same way.

All this was contrasted with a chivalrous Germany. Allied charges of German atrocity and misconduct (which had strongly influenced the peace conference) were repudiated. In 1927, Field Marshal Hindenburg, who was then President of the Republic, inaugurated a war memorial built on the site of the 1914 victory over the Russians at Tannenberg, in East Prussia, in the form of a Teutonic Knights' castle, with twenty unknown soldiers, and he used the occasion to declare that the German army had fought 'with clean hands' for an honourable cause. Unjustly defeated Germany bathed in nostalgia for a golden past, variously identified with Bismarck's Germany, the 1813 war of 'national liberation'

against Napoleon or older medieval and *völkisch* ideas, which could all too easily become a vision of future redemption. It was but a step for the military (including Hindenburg) to mythologize the home front as the 'enemy within' that had 'stabbed' the army in the back. Although as a veterans' organization the Stahlhelm did not engage in formal politics, it expressed precisely this nationalist refusal of defeat. Founded in 1918, its goal was the recreation of a strong and independent Germany and, while its president told André Gervais in 1933 that as 'front soldiers, who know what war is, [the Stahlhelm] do not wish for any new war', they did seek a 'peace with honour'. This meant revision of the Treaty of the Versailles, and on these grounds the Stahlhelm refused links with French colleagues.[21]

The inter-Allied rituals described above suggest that a corresponding 'culture of victory' marked some or all of the Allied countries.[22] By and large, the ceremonies marking the signature of the Treaty of Versailles and the anniversary of the various armistices were not triumphalist in tone but sought to reconcile a positive outcome to the conflict with the enormous price paid by the soldiers. The place reserved in these ceremonies for both the dead (by means of the cenotaph and the Unknown Soldier) and the handicapped (a thousand of whom led the 1919 victory parade in Paris) foreshadowed the role that veterans would play in the inter-war commemoration of the conflict. Not surprisingly, representatives from the other wartime victors participated in each nation's commemorative events in 1919–1920, and the form taken by the rituals was adopted across the Allied powers, including in Italy and the 'victorious' successor states in Eastern Europe.[23] In Czechoslovakia, for example, the cult of the legionnaires and a set of symbols closely aligned with those in Britain and France shaped official mythology and popular views about the Great War as a crusade for the 'democracy of humanity' that had resulted in national independence, with the Sudeten Germans a dissenting minority.[24]

FIDAC was arguably one of the clearest expressions of this 'culture of victory'. Founded in November 1920, it aimed to foster both veteran well-being (with special attention to the disabled) and peace, but to do so on the basis of victory and in a way that preserved the wartime coalition. Not only did it exclude 'enemy' veterans but it endorsed the peace settlement, and continued to uphold the payment of German reparations so that the Allied states could pay their war debts.[25] As Stephen R. Ortiz shows via the relations of the American Legion with FIDAC, the latter expressed the veterans' preoccupation with peace and a kind of brotherhood of the trenches almost from the start.[26] But

it was a sensibility firmly embedded in the Allied 'culture of victory' (and expressed on the occasion of its rituals and commemorations), and thus depended on safeguarding the outcome of the war. Especially in France, the FIDAC reflected the opinion of the more conservative veterans (in the UNC) that Germany remained unchanged behind the façade of Weimar democracy and was still the enemy. Victory in this view remained insecure, since what the veterans had achieved at such cost in battle might yet be thrown away by peacetime politicians and pacifists – a perspective shared by the American and British Legions.[27] Logically, veterans in the East European successor states that owed their birth to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920 shared this perspective and joined FIDAC. Showing that this was so of is one of the strengths of this volume.

Neither the 'culture of victory' nor the 'culture of defeat' represented the totality of opinions on the war in the societies concerned. Each was strongest on the political right (and in the German case in the army) but both had a broader power of attraction that made them a significant framework for understanding the war. The suspicion of the former enemy reached its paroxysm in the Franco-Belgian 'invasion' of the Ruhr in January 1923, which recreated a wartime atmosphere in Germany, triggering an outpouring of nationalist propaganda that castigated the French for their 'barbarism' and urged outright resistance. But, because there were also dissenting voices (German and French communists who saw 1923 in class terms, French socialists, trade unionists and others who, while not approving the German refusal to pay reparations, felt that the whole matter should be addressed through the League of Nations), the crisis was divisive internally as well as between the former enemies. The polarization between the cultures of victory and defeat resulted in the widespread feeling that, ten years after its outbreak in 1914, Europeans were still locked in the mental landscape of the war.

Cultural demobilization

In the second half of the 1920s, however, attitudes changed. Haltingly but unmistakeably, wartime antagonisms abated and former enemies (the USSR still excepted) reached out to each other. In what this author has termed a process of 'cultural demobilization', wartime attitudes were gradually dismantled and the hostility that opponents had reserved for each other during and after the Great War were transferred to war itself. War became the foe, and as the idea of the enemy nation was dismantled, joint action to prevent war became possible. Left-leaning French

intellectuals promoted the idea of 'moral disarmament' in the mid-1920s in order to express the point that for war to be made unthinkable, thoughts, minds and, thus, cultures had to be demobilized first and foremost. The term was readily adopted by veterans.[28]

The kernel of the process was the need to end the occupation of the Ruhr and re-stabilize the German economy. But this broadened into Germany's acceptance of its new frontiers in the west by the Locarno Treaties of 1925 and its rehabilitation as a diplomatic partner when it entered the League of Nations in 1926. The French and German foreign ministers, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann, were the architects of the process, and the British Foreign Minister, Austen Chamberlain, closely supported them. Neither Briand, who had been Prime Minster at the time of Verdun, nor Stresemann, who was a conservative nationalist during the war, was a woolly idealist. Each remained a hard-headed pragmatist concerned with national security and (in Stresemann's case) the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, especially with regard to Germany's so-called 'war guilt'. Both faced strong criticism from those within their own countries who continued to embrace the cultures of defeat and victory. But this was also the clearest proof that at root they sought to transcend those post-war cultures. Their ascendancy over their respective country's foreign policy in the second half of the 1920s is only explicable by their construction of a political future which seemed at last to promise a resolution of the war. Both men insisted that it had been a catastrophe for Europe and that, whatever their differences in the future, France and Germany should never fight each other again.

Locarno politics also had profound implications for Central and Eastern Europe. While the revision of Germany's eastern frontiers remained an open issue, the mode of politics adopted, which combined a traditional balance of power with procedures of arbitration and reconciliation vested in the League of Nations, offered at least the hope for Poland and the nations of the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia) that the tensions left by the peace settlement might be settled peacefully. Consequently, they were deeply implicated in the process of post-war reconciliation.

The 'cultural demobilization' of the second half of the 1920s was supported by international contacts between numerous groups and interest organizations making up the international civic sphere already referred to. The League of Nations, which was mainly a European creation (the USA having withdrawn when it rejected the Treaty of Versailles), became its hub. But arguably no identity or interest group invested in it more profoundly than did the veterans, especially the veteran internationalism

dealt with in this book. For none were better placed to bear witness to the 'catastrophe' of the war. Over the period that the politics of Locarno were being defined, the second and ultimately larger of the two international veteran organizations, CIAMAC (or International Conference of War Handicapped and Veterans), was founded. Set up as the Locarno treaties were being negotiated in September 1925 and confirmed a year later as Germany took its seat in the League of Nations, it put the disabled at the heart of its activities, as did FIDAC. But with its headquarters in Geneva (FIDAC remained in Paris), CIAMAC became, in effect, the veterans' organization of the League of Nations, and thus a key advocate of 'cultural demobilization'.

At the first regular congress in 1926, at which the Reichsbanner and the French UF were both present, the delegates declared that:

> [They] consider that the men who waged the war, and whose flesh still bears the marks of the suffering they endured during it, have the right and the duty to collaborate actively in the pacification of [men's] minds and the rational organization of the relations between different peoples. They express their horror of war and recognize durable peace as the supreme goal of their efforts.[29]

The symbolism and rhetoric of CIAMAC blazed the trail of veteran reconciliation. The organization held its third conference in Vienna in 1927 as a gesture to 'a country that has been cruelly touched by the war'. When Briand hosted a reception at the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the occasion of a meeting in Paris in 1928, he praised the veterans along with civilians who had lost loved ones in the war as those on whom he could most count in his work of 'moral disarmament'.[30] A key moment came at CIAMAC's fourth conference in Berlin, in August 1928, French and German delegates thrashed out two of the issues preoccupying Briand and Stresemann (German humiliation over the Franco-British occupation of the Rhineland under the terms of the peace treaty and French concern over Germany's reluctance to pay reparations). But they agreed to call for mutual concessions and emphasized that 'moral disarmament' alone could pave the way to 'the fraternal cooperation of all peoples in the work of peace'. [31] The Franco-German axis was the key. Looking back in the early 1930s, three-time president of CIAMAC, Henri Pichot, recalled that its founders believed not only that the idea of an 'inevitable or hereditary enemy' had to be abolished but also that without peace between France and Germany there could be no peace in Europe.[32]

Nonetheless, like FIDAC, CIAMAC drew strong support from Central and Eastern Europe, and it held its annual conference in both Prague and Warsaw, quizzing the Foreign Minister, Edvard Beneš, on the former occasion over the hierarchy of aid to veterans in Czechoslovakia. The pull of reconciliation also drew FIDAC into meeting delegates from former enemy states, including the Reichsbanner, from the mid-1920s. Its inter-Allied base remained important, but its views on international politics increasingly overlapped with those of CIAMAC. This led to tensions of different sorts in what might be seen as two hybrids of the cultures of victory and defeat, Italy and Yugoslavia.

In the case of Italy, the inability of the liberal state to derive a credible culture of victory from the outcome of the war opened the way to fascism, which took the war to be a quasi-defeat that necessitated both a revanchist foreign policy and the overthrow of the parliamentary regime. Not surprisingly, as Martina Salvante explains, the fascist regime found it difficult in the mid-1920s to reconcile its territorial aspirations with the increasingly pacifiistic orientation of FIDAC, to which it continued to adhere as a former Allied power.[33] Yugoslavia faced the problem of integrating South Slavs who had fought in the Austro-Hungarian army for their vision of a devolved South Slav state within the Habsburg realm, and had been defeated, into a triumphant Serbian 'culture of victory', replete with Allied rituals. Ostentatious membership of FIDAC allowed Serb veterans' organizations to underscore the all-important alliance with France, but to the detriment of the very different sensibility of Austro-Hungarian veterans. Yet, as John Paul Newman shows us, the Association of War Invalids in Yugoslavia, whose members had fought in the Austro-Hungarian, Serb and Montenegrin armies, were able to forge a trans-ethnic identity, which they confirmed by affiliating with CIAMAC, highlighting once more the distinctive role of handicapped veterans.[34]

Conclusion: transcending the war

In general, however, the convergence of the two organizations from the mid 1920s to the early 1930s is the clearest proof that veteran internationalism did transcend the cultures of victory and defeat. If one had to find a culminating moment, it was perhaps the joint meeting described by Thomas Richard Davies in his chapter, when FIDAC and CIAMAC gathered four and a half thousand delegates in Geneva in March 1933 in order to make clear the 'determination of ex-servicemen throughout the world' that the League of Nations should achieve a sub-

stantial reduction in armaments.[35] Yet, despite its superficial success, the gesture revealed the vulnerability of veteran internationalism as a political construct. For no delegates came from Germany, which was in the throes of the Nazi takeover, and Hitler's decision to pull out of the League and its disarmament conference in October 1933, and to re-arm Germany, cruelly exposed the weakness of veterans' internationalism (like the League itself) in the face of renewed militarism.

It is true that more than half a decade remained of dwindling hopes in collective security. But the high tide of cultural demobilization had passed. Veterans living under fascist or dictatorial regimes had little freedom to forge an independent message, while those in democracies found it hard to remain above politics when calling for peace, conciliation and disarmament, because those very issues had become the object of deep political discord, including among veterans themselves. The swastika flags waved by the German veterans at the Verdun ceremony in July 1936 are a stark reminder of the ambiguities created by the Nazi takeover in Germany for the conciliators and peace-makers. So are the events a week later that began the Spanish Civil War and which seemed to call for re-armament by the watching powers even as they raised the spectre of a new world war.

As the editors have argued, and this book shows, veteran internationalism was a remarkable achievement. It left many traces – on subsequent veterans' organizations, on international human rights and on European reconciliation after the Second World War, not least between France and Germany. It also provides a fascinating example of the complex relationship between grass roots identities, national organizations and the translation of both into an international movement and incipient world civil society. This has increasing relevance in the contemporary world, and points to the inter-war period as an important precursor. However, the veterans' movements, both nationally and internationally, can also be read as a set of rich and distinctive symptoms of the larger processes by which inter-war societies sought to come to terms with the first great catastrophe of the twentieth century. Success or failure is less important in that regard (since we know the outcome and also know that the veterans had limited power to change it) than the process. About that there is still much to be found out. Whichever angle of approach interests the reader, this book will hopefully restore to life the ideals and endeavours of the men (and more rarely women) who sought so actively to find original solutions to a tragedy that was none of their making.

Notes

1. *Le Populaire*, 12 and 13 July 1936; Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War. 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society 1914–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), p. 75.
2. Antoine Prost, 'The Dead', in Jay Winter (ed.), *Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols, vol. 3, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1072–1126.
3. See Chapter 3 of this volume.
4. Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
5. André Gervais, *La Tranchée d'en face. Enquête d'un combatant français chez les combattants allemands* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1933), pp. 1 and 231.
6. Alexander Sumpf, 'Une Société amputée: Les retours des invalides russes de la Grande Guerre, 1914–1929', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 51/1, 2010, pp. 35–64; Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 178–183.
7. Chapters 5 and 7 of this volume.
8. For France, see Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War. 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society, 1914–1933* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), an accessible summary of his magisterial three volume study of 1977 in French. On Britain, see Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics and Society, 1921–1939* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2005) and for Germany, Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War 1914–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).
9. See Chapters 4 and 5 of this volume.
10. Stephen Ward, 'Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost', in Stephen Ward (ed.), *The War Generation. Veterans of the First World War* (Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, 1975), pp. 10–37.
11. See Chapter 2 of this volume and also Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *René Cassin and Human Rights. From the Great War to the Universal Declaration*; translation from French, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
12. Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 1 and 193.
13. Chapter 6 of this volume.
14. Chapter 8 of this volume.
15. Gervais, *La Tranchée d'en face*, p. 23.
16. Ibid., p. 37.
17. John Horne, 'Introduction', in Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War One* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
18. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 97–98.
19. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery*: translation from German (London: Granta, 2003), pp. 189–288. See also, John Horne, 'Defeat and Memory in Modern History,' in Jenny Macleod (ed.), *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11–29.
20. Schivelbusch, *Culture of Defeat*, p. 203.
21. Gervais, *La Tranchée d'en face*, p. 173.

22. For the 'culture of victory,' see 'Paramilitary Violence in France, 1918–1926: A Counter-Example,' in John Horne and Robert Gerwarth (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
23. The forthcoming doctoral thesis of Victor Demiaux at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, deals with these processes of transfer and the creation of an inter-Allied 'culture of victory'.
24. Mark Cornwall, 'Mémoires de la Grande Guerre dans les pays tchèques, 1918–1928,' in John Horne (ed.), *Démobilisations culturelles après la Grande Guerre*, *14–18 Aujourd'hui-Today-Heute*, 5, (Paris: Noesis, 2002), pp. 89–101 (here p. 90).
25. Léon Viala, *Les Relations internationals entre les associations de motiles de guerre et d'anciens combatants*, (Paris: Cahiers de l'Union Fédérale des Associations Françaises des Victimes de Guerre et Anciens Combattants, n.d., but 1930), pp. 99–143 (esp. p. 111, resolution of the 1925 Rome conference).
26. Chapter 4 of this volume.
27. Archives Nationales (AN) F7 13242, dossier on the FIDAC, 1920–1926.
28. John Horne, 'Introduction,' in Horne (ed.), *Démobilisations culturelles*, pp. 45–53; id., 'Demobilizing the Mind: France and the Legacy of the Great War, 1919–1939', *French History and Civilization*, 2, 2009, pp. 101–119 (also on www.h-france.net).
29. Viala, *Relations internationales*, pp. 38–39.
30. Ibid., pp. 53 and 69.
31. Ibid., p. 77.
32. Gervais, *La Tranchée d'en face*, p. 213.
33. Chapter 9 of this volume.
34. Chapter 6 of this volume.
35. Chapter 10 of this volume.

Annex: Meetings of the International Veterans' Movement

During the interwar period FIDAC and CIAMAC meetings were organized once a year, mostly in autumn (September/October). They were hosted by different member states, to share the costs and to increase the feeling of a common identity by travelling.

Year	FIDAC meeting[1][2]	CIAMAC conference
1920	France, Paris	
1921	France, Paris	
1922	USA, New Orleans	
1923	Belgium, Brussels	
1924	Great Britain, London	
1925	Italy, Rome	Switzerland, Geneva
1926	Poland, Warsaw	Switzerland, Geneva
1927	Great Britain, London	Austria, Vienna
1928	Romania, Bucharest	Germany, Berlin
1929	Yugoslavia, Belgrade	Poland, Warsaw
1930	USA, Washington, DC	France, Paris
1931	Czechoslovakia, Prague	Czechoslovakia, Prague
1932	Portugal, Lisbon	Austria, Vienna
1933	France, Casablanca (French Morocco); Italy, Rome	Switzerland, Geneva
1934	Great Britain, London	Switzerland, Geneva
1935	Belgium, Brussels	Yugoslavia, Belgrade
1936	Poland,Warsaw	Denmark, Copenhagen
1937	France, Paris	France, Paris
1938	Romania, Bucharest	
1939	Yugoslavia, Belgrade (cancelled after Germany's attack on Poland)	

[1]The biggest FIDAC member states hosted at least once, with the notable exception of Greece.

[2]Sources: Eichenberg, Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge, p. 82, 90; AAN, FPZOO: Sekcja Polska FIDAC 340/357: FIDAC. Organizacje Afiliowane z poszczególnych Państw. Wykaz, Repolucje,Oświadczenie, Korespondencja. 1931–1939; Letko, Działalność międzynarodowa, p. 19 and Annex No. 3.

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Index

The most frequent topics of this book, such as veterans, ex-servicemen, invalids, First World War, FIDAC, CIAMAC, pacifism, transnational, international, inter-Allied, are not listed in the index.