

**They Will Not Be The Same:  
Themes of Modernity in Britain during World War I**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Through the framework of three of John Buchan's Richard Hannay novels, this study demonstrates some of the social changes which occurred in Britain as the Great War ushered in the modern age. Modern usage of propaganda, the weakening of institutional values, cynicism, and alienation are explored as specific attributes of modernity. Propaganda posters are examined, as are the experiences of British soldiers on the Western Front.

Trench warfare will be analyzed both as a birthplace for alienation and irony, and for its role in producing the Live and Let Live system. When this system was practiced on the Western Front, participating parties rejected nationalism in favor of individualism; they cooperated to save both themselves and the individuals in the trench opposing them. When raids were instituted to destroy Live and Let Live, alienation resulted between the soldiers on the front lines and their High Command.

These concepts, along with the change in social attitudes toward

women, are juxtaposed with the concepts which the modern age replaced: the idea that women had no part in a man's world, that war was glorious, and that practically anything could be made into a game. This last concept will be demonstrated by one aspect of the British response to Bolshevism.

Interwoven throughout this study are both some of the poetry of the Great War and examples from the trilogy of Richard Hannay novels. In this manner it is possible to observe fragments of social change which occurred during World War I; change which led to the modern age.

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And, finally, I thank my husband, Ron, for his patience and devotion.

At this time I would also like to acknowledge that the title of my thesis comes from a poem by Siegfried Sassoon.

“THEY”

THE BISHOP TELLS US: “WHEN THE BOYS COME BACK  
THEY WILL NOT BE THE SAME: FOR THEY’LL HAVE FOUGHT  
IN A JUST CAUSE: THEY LEAD THE LAST ATTACK  
ON ANTI-CHRIST: THEIR COMRADES’ BLOOD HAS BOUGHT  
NEW RIGHT TO BREED AN HONOURABLE RACE.  
THEY HAVE CHALLENGED DEATH AND DARED HIM FACE TO FACE.”

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\*Jon Stallworthy, ed., The Oxford Book of War Poetry, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 176.

"WE'RE NONE OF US THE SAME!" THE BOYS REPLY.  
"FOR GEORGE LOST BOTH HIS LEGS: AND BILL'S STONE BLIND:  
POOR JIM'S SHOT THROUGH THE LUNGS AND LIKE TO DIE:  
AND BERT'S GONE SYPHILITIC: YOU'LL NOT FIND  
A CHAP WHO'S SERVED THAT HASN'T FOUND *SOME* CHANGE."  
AND THE BISHOP SAID: "THE WAYS OF GOD ARE STRANGE!"

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **There was a Plan Somewhere: Molehills Against Modernity.**

"There was a plan somewhere, which you will find in the history books, but with me it was blank chaos."<sup>1</sup>

- Richard Hannay, describing the Western Front.

Although Richard Hannay is a self-described man of action rather than words, his choice of "chaos" in the above quote was perhaps more apt than he knew. Not only did the Western Front seem chaotic, World War I as a whole had thrown society into the sort of bedlam from which it would never recover. The Great War ushered in the Modern Age.

There are many definitions of modernity -- and many types of modernity to define. According to Laura Engelstein, "Michel Foucault has suggested that the path to sexual modernity proceeds from a fixation on family and kinship to a concern with personal relations

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<sup>1</sup>John Buchan, Four Adventures of Richard Hannay, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 812.

and the constitution of the self."<sup>2</sup> Literary modernism is "dominated by images of alienation, dislocation and even madness."<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf's literary modernism is "fragmented, multiple-visioned, detached, ironic."<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this study, the working definition of modernity will be a synthesis of these interpretations. After the Great War, institutional relationships -- such as nationalism -- were questioned, and often replaced by emphasis on the individual. These individuals, recovering from the horrors of war, found themselves isolated, alienated, and sometimes still shell-shocked. Modernity brought with it a special kind of cynicism.

Concepts of honor and glory, previously unquestioned, would hereafter become objects of derision. Modern warfare, mechanized and impersonal, could reduce a battle to a wholesale slaughter. According to Modris Eksteins, "The urge to create and the urge to

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<sup>2</sup>Laura Engelstein, The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>3</sup>Sharon Ouditt, Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War, (London: Routledge, 1994), 37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 169.

destroy changed places."<sup>5</sup> In the modern age, death became an imperative rather than life.

For Britain, the Great War denotes the last stand of a set of attitudes which would become extinct in the modern age. The reaction to -- and against -- this approach of modernity forms the core of this thesis. As a framework for the British experience, one need look no farther than the first three novels written by John Buchan. They feature a character named Richard Hannay.

When war came in 1914, the fictional Richard Hannay was thirty-seven years old. At this age, he was strongly imbued with many pre-war concepts of duty, honor, and glory. Yet he was young enough to be able to modify his views as the winds of change sharpened around him. Throughout the series, both Richard and his friends comment on the world as they see it.

The first novel, The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915), has only one hero -- Richard himself. The story revolves around his attempts to foil a German spy ring within Britain. The second, Greenmantle

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<sup>5</sup>Modris Eksteins, Rites of Spring: The Great War and The Birth of the Modern Age, (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 328.

(1916), has four heroes -- Richard, his English friend Sandy Arbuthnot, his old South African buddy Peter Pienaar, and an American named John Blenkiron. This novel takes our heroes on their own spying mission behind German lines, across Europe, to Turkey. The third novel, Mr. Standfast (1919), features Richard, of course, but also brings back Blenkiron and Pienaar. It involves spying both in Britain and on the Western Front. Sir Walter Bullivant, their link with the Foreign Office, is also mentioned in all three books. This wide span of characters gives plenty of scope for commentary.

Women's emancipation, for example, one of the few positive results of the war, is strikingly reflected by the content of the books. The Thirty-Nine Steps contains no female characters at all. Women, whether of major or minor status, fail to exist. Spying and adventure are strictly the province of men. Greenmantle, on the other hand, contains one major female character. Her name is Hilda von Einem and she happens to be the enemy. Although both beautiful and highly intelligent, she is portrayed as singularly threatening to men. They are unused to dealing with the modern concept of a powerful

woman. As John Blenkiron explains:

My trouble is that she puts me out of countenance, and I can't fit her in as an antagonist. I guess we Americans haven't got the right poise for dealing with that kind of female. We've exalted our womenfolk into little tin gods, and at the same time left them out of the real business of life. Consequently, when we strike one playing the biggest kind of man's game we can't place her. We aren't used to regarding them as anything except angels and children.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently they aren't ready to change this perception either. As Hilda von Einem is neither angel nor child, she loses her identity as a woman. Her social position is unnatural, therefore she becomes unnatural. Because of this, even her emotional responses must be skewed. Although she appears to fall in love with Sandy, he labels it as "some kind of crazy liking for me."<sup>7</sup> She is alternately described as mad, icy, and evil, all of which qualities seem to evoke an exceptional response from our heroes. Blenkiron's vocabulary tends to deteriorate when she is spoken of in his presence. "He indulged in a

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<sup>6</sup>John Buchan, Four Adventures of Richard Hannay, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 347-8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 389.

torrent of blasphemy such as I believe had never before passed his lips."<sup>8</sup> Richard repeatedly professes his hatred of her, and yet desperately wants her to notice him. She doesn't do so until near the end, when she threatens to hang him. "This woman had singled me out above the others as the object of her wrath, and I almost loved her for it."<sup>9</sup>

Hilda can only become a true woman in death. After her back is broken by a shell fragment, Sandy risks his life to retrieve her dead body. Our heroes make a grave for her, and Sandy buries her in his cloak. "He lifted the body and laid it reverently in its place."<sup>10</sup> He even comments on how light she is. Apparently the only good modern woman is a dead one.

This attitude changes with Mr. Standfast. In this novel, Richard meets Mary Lamington. She is young, charming, beautiful, very intelligent, and a British spy. Not only does she become his ally, but she is also so non-threatening that she becomes his love interest as

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 426.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 428.

well. But it is her favorably portrayed feminism which makes this character particularly modern. "Why, women aren't the brittle things men used to think them. They never were..."<sup>11</sup> She teases Richard for being old-fashioned, puts herself in danger, and has no need of being rescued. "Oh, I'm a robust young woman now, and indeed I think women were always robuster than men...."<sup>12</sup> Although in the end Richard does get to rescue her from the clutches of a lecherous German spy, Mary manages to spend the rest of the novel plotting along with the rest of our heroes. She participates equally in playing a "man's game," without having to become either inhuman or a man.

The idea of war and spying as a game is a constant theme throughout all three books. This was truly a pre-war concept destined to die with the advent of the machine gun. While it may seem the height of absurdity in the modern age, some real British officers in the trenches tried to make this spirit of the game literal. Captain W.P. Nevill ranks as the most famous example of "officers trying to rouse their men to bravery by dribbling footballs across no

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 706.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 707.

man's land during an attack."<sup>13</sup> Nevill tried this at the Somme (1916). He didn't last long. The idea, however, did -- despite overwhelming evidence that war was not a game.

Mind games were a different matter. The modern usage of propaganda developed during the Great War. John Buchan knew the importance of propaganda first hand. When Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December 1916, he formed a small War Cabinet which aimed to improve propaganda, and Buchan was asked to "prepare a memorandum with proposals for a new Department of Information."<sup>14</sup> Buchan became the first director of this new Department. Directly responsible to the Prime Minister, the Department eventually became a Ministry.

British propaganda had many goals, not the least of which was to influence the Home Front perception of the war. Topics could range from atrocity stories of German barbarism to morale boosting accounts of the poor conditions behind German lines. The fact that

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<sup>13</sup>Eksteins, Rites of Spring, 124.

<sup>14</sup>Janet Adam Smith, John Buchan and His World, (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1979), 65.

these stories were often pure fiction subtly appears in Buchan's own novels. When Richard Hannay arrives undercover in Berlin during Greenmantle, he and Peter Pienaar "saw no signs of any scarcity of food, such as the English newspapers wrote about."<sup>15</sup>

The importance of the attitudes held by the civilians on the Home Front is apparent when one contrasts it with the attitudes held by the soldiers. Confronted with the maelstrom of modern warfare, some soldiers rejected nationalism in favor of humanity. Those who had German friends already knew that the Germans were not the monsters which the British government propaganda claimed they were:

They called him Sebastian Buchwieser. He was the jolliest boy you ever saw, and as clever on crags as a chamois. He is probably dead by now, dead in a filthy Jager battalion. That's you and your accursed war.<sup>16</sup>

Others came to realize this after encounters with the Germans. For the soldiers of the front lines, often stuck in opposing trenches for extended periods of time, this could come as episodes of the Live and

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<sup>15</sup>Buchan, Four Adventures, 180.

<sup>16</sup>Buchan, Four Adventures, 578-9.

Let Live System. In the Richard Hannay books, Richard meets the German people as he travels through Germany as a spy.

That night I realized the crazy folly of war. . . . I [had] thought we could never end the war properly without giving the Huns some of their own medicine. But that wood-cutter's cottage cured me of such nightmares. I was for punishing the guilty but letting the innocent go free. . . .What good would it do Christian folk to burn poor little huts like this and leave children's bodies by the wayside?<sup>17</sup>

Such thoughts often led to resentment of the commanders of one's own side. When Richard is promoted, Sandy says, "You'll be a blighted brass-hat, coming it heavy over the hard-working regimental officer. And to think of the language you've wasted on brass-hats in your time!"<sup>18</sup>

In the midst of the carnage of trench warfare, which John Buchan saw first hand as a war correspondent, can be found a surprising amount of sympathy for the enemy. Buchan even extends this sympathy to the man whom some blamed for the start of the war, the Kaiser. While Richard is undercover in Germany during

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 241-2.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 133.

Greenmantle, he meets the Kaiser. He describes his face as that of one "who slept little and whose thoughts rode him like a nightmare."<sup>19</sup> As the Kaiser leaves, Richard remarks: "I felt that I was looking on at a far bigger tragedy than any I had seen in action. Here was one that had loosed Hell, and the furies of Hell had got hold of him."<sup>20</sup>

All in all, considering the enormity of the chaos into which Richard and his friends were plunged, they spend little time complaining. Only in Mr. Standfast does one hear any sort of regret, and that is first voiced by a minor character with regard to the ancient injustice of the enclosure movement and the evictions in Scotland. Richard describes this complaint as "far more than a political grievance. It was the lament of the conservative for vanished days and manners."<sup>21</sup> This grievance could also stand for class injustices. In the early 16th century, the upper classes had callously evicted their tenant farmers in order to enclose their land for sheep-farming, which was highly profitable. This blatant

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 213.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 214-5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 549.

disregard for the working class would continue far into the future. In the context of the novel, however, the character is presented as only wishing to return to a pre-industrial, pre-modern time. Richard Hannay is not so unrealistic. And yet, he says, "I went to bed in the loft in a sad, reflective mood, considering how in speeding our new-fangled plough we must break down a multitude of molehills and how desirable and unreplaceable was the life of the moles."<sup>22</sup>

But even he realizes that the flesh of the moles cannot stand up against the steel of the plough. Modernity cometh -- whether the moles have a plan or not.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 550.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Sportsmen in Paradise: Propaganda Posters and the Home Front Perception of World War I.**

#### SPORTSMEN IN PARADISE

THEY LEFT THE FURY OF THE FIGHT,  
AND THEY WERE VERY TIRED.  
THE GATES OF HEAVEN WERE OPEN, QUITE  
UNGUARDED, AND UNWIRED.  
THERE WAS NO SOUND OF ANY GUN:  
THE LAND WAS STILL AND GREEN:  
WIDE HILLS LAY SILENT IN THE SUN,  
BLUE VALLEYS SLEPT BETWEEN.

THEY SAW FAR OFF A LITTLE WOOD  
STAND UP AGAINST THE SKY.  
KNEE-DEEP IN GRASS A GREAT TREE STOOD...  
SOME LAZY COWS WENT BY...  
THERE WERE SOME ROOKS SAILED OVERHEAD -  
AND ONCE A CHURCH-BELL PEALD.  
"GOD! BUT IT'S ENGLAND," SOMEONE SAID.  
"AND THERE'S A CRICKET FIELD!"

T.P. CAMERON WILSON<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>James Bentley, ed., Some Corner of a Foreign Field, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1992), 18.

## BLIGHTERS

THE HOUSE IS CRAMMED: TIER BEYOND TIER THEY GRIN  
AND CACKLE AT THE SHOW, WHILE PRANCING RANKS  
OF HARLOTS SHRILL THE CHORUS. DRUNK WITH DIN:  
"WE'RE SURE THE KAISER LOVES OUR DEAR OLD TANKS!"

I'D LIKE TO SEE A TANK COME DOWN THE STALLS,  
LURCHING TO RAGTIME TUNES, OR "HOME, SWEET HOME",  
AND THERE'D BE NO MORE JOKES IN MUSIC-HALLS  
TO MOCK THE RIDDLED CORPSES ROUND BAPAUME.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON<sup>24</sup>

More than just four years of war separate these two poems by T.P. Cameron Wilson and Siegfried Sassoon. Although both poets were soldiers, these particular poems symbolize not only the psychological rift between the start of the war and its end, but the psychological chasm between the Home Front and the Front Line. In the opening years of the First World War, poets such as T.P. Cameron Wilson could in all seriousness label soldiers as "sportsmen" who would find after their dutiful demise that Heaven resembled England. It was this image which was first presented to the civilian population. They latched onto it, and with a little help from their government they never lost it, for, while many poets and writers espoused this view, the pervasiveness of this image throughout society can be

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 84.

attributed to a successful propaganda campaign organized by the British government.

The most visible arm of this campaign involved the production of propaganda posters. These posters were used to generate support for many aspects of the war effort, ranging from recruitment and popular sentiment to mundanities such as food conservation and the purchase of war bonds. In so doing, these posters reflect both social values and changes in society -- or lack of change. When the soldiers returned, their ideology was very different from when they left. The fact that some of the civilians' attitudes remained basically the same throughout the war reveals just how effective the propaganda posters were in manipulating the mood of the Home Front.

To begin with, it is necessary to realize how pervasive propaganda posters were:

War posters were displayed in every available place from shop windows to country gate posts, from taxi-cabs to trams and railway carriages. In May 1916, the PRC's publications sub-department calculated that it had printed nearly 12.5 million copies of 164 different posters of various shapes and sizes and, in addition, 450,000 copies of 10 different types of display card.<sup>25</sup>

Even placards placed on traffic islands in the middle of streets carried propaganda posters. In January 1915, Times Journalist Michael MacDonagh said:

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<sup>25</sup>M.L. Sanders, British Propaganda During the First World War, (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1982), 104.

Posters appealing to recruits are to be seen on every hoarding, in most shop windows, in omnibuses, tramcars and commercial vans. The great base of Nelson's Pillar is covered with them. Their number and variety are remarkable. Everywhere Lord Kitchener sternly points a monstrosly big finger, exclaiming "I Want You"....Consequently, khaki is to be seen everywhere...<sup>26</sup>

Not even the sidewalks were safe from propaganda. According to MacDonagh, posters were carried "by a line of sandwichmen, walking up and down before the gates of the Chelsea football ground..."<sup>27</sup> They were everywhere in London. One could not escape them, one could not avoid them. It is possible that this was true in most large cities in Britain. It is feasible to assume that wherever there was a good distribution system for information, there would be a surfeit of posters. These posters would inform the public of how the government -- and society -- expected them to act for the duration of the war.

The Home Front began its war on a note of jubilation. On Tuesday, August 4, 1914, time had run out in Britain. At 11:00pm on that day, the British Government's ultimatum to Germany expired. Germany, by following the Schlieffen Plan to attack France, had carved its way through neutral Belgium. Britain demanded the immediate withdrawal of German

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<sup>26</sup>Cate Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1977), 55.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 59.

troops from Belgium's soil but to no avail.

An expectant crowd had gathered outside of Buckingham Palace as the deadline approached. According to the Daily News, "The news that war had been declared was received with tremendous cheering which grew into a deafening roar when King George, Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales appeared on the balcony."<sup>28</sup> In a festive air which would seem inconceivable a few years later, people sang patriotic songs and flew Union Jacks.

Apparently, few shared the sentiments of Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, whose prophetic statement on that night of August 4 has been used time and again by historians to signal the end of the pre-war era. "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."<sup>29</sup>

In keeping with the Home Front's jolly atmosphere, British men enthusiastically volunteered for military service, which was just as well considering the fact that Britain did not have conscription. The need to encourage volunteers sparked the first wave of propaganda produced by the government, aimed not at its enemies, but at its own people.

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<sup>28</sup>James Bishop, The Illustrated London News Social History of the First World War, (London: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1982), 23.

<sup>29</sup>Correlli Barnett, The Great War, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 18.

The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was created specifically to deal with this need to recruit an army. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee worked under the auspices of the War Office. It was an all-party organization, led jointly by the three party leaders at the time -- Herbert Asquith, Andrew Bonar Law, and Arthur Henderson. The PRC consisted of 30 members, most of whom were party whips or principal party organizers, plus two representatives from the War Office.

The PRC produced many recruiting posters. An early technique they employed was to illustrate a direct link between Britain's imperial past and the current conflict. "The Veteran's Farewell"<sup>30</sup> pictured an old, white-bearded soldier shaking the hand of a member of the new generation going off to fight. Another such poster, "A Chip of the Old Block,"<sup>31</sup> informed the viewer, "Your King & Country Need You to Maintain the Honour and Glory of the British Empire." While such appeals to honor and glory might not motivate today's civilians, it is important to remember that in 1914 these concepts were taken seriously. The general British public was extremely proud of their empire -- owning a quarter of the earth's surface might tend to

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<sup>30</sup>No artist given, "The Veteran's Farewell", reproduced in Peter Stanley, What Did You Do In The War, Daddy?, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47.

<sup>31</sup>Lawson Wood, "A Chip of The Old Block", 1914, Australian War Memorial Collection, reproduced in Ibid., 46.

instill such feelings -- and the glory of fighting to defend it could even be expected to be felt among the working class, whose blood had won much of it.

Another concept taken seriously by the British was sportsmanship. As in Cameron Wilson's poem, soldiers were portrayed as sportsmen. On a poster picturing six smiling soldiers is the inscription, "Join the brave throng that goes marching along."<sup>32</sup> Recruiters often used the language of games when referring to the war, and games often preached recruitment. By the end of 1914, 500,000 men had joined the army via football organizations.<sup>33</sup>

Recruiting posters also exploited the idea of personal duty, especially if it could be associated with duty owed to well-known countrymen. If awards were to be given, the one for creating the most famous recruitment poster of World War I, and quite possibly the most famous recruitment poster in the history of posters, would go to Alfred Leete. His portrait of an intensely determined Lord Kitchener pointing an accusatory finger at the viewer, with the words "Wants You" ("Lord Kitchener" being understood) inscribed below,

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<sup>32</sup>Gerald Wood, "Join the Brave Throng that goes Marching Along", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Persuasive Images, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 53.

<sup>33</sup>Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, 59.

was an immediate hit<sup>34</sup>. Although it is impossible to judge its impact scientifically, it is worth noting that a little over a month after this poster was produced, 100,000 volunteers had enrolled in the armed forces.<sup>35</sup>

This poster's popularity can be easily demonstrated as it was reproduced many times, later with the words "Your Country Needs You". The design was well-liked not only in Britain, but in the United States as well. James Montgomery Flagg adapted this poster for American tastes by changing Lord Kitchener's stern face into that of Uncle Sam, and thus created a poster still in use today. The Uncle Sam poster read, "I Want You for the U.S. Army"<sup>36</sup>. It ran over 5 million copies.<sup>37</sup> This theme was given a further twist by Howard Chandler Christy, who produced a poster of a seductive blonde in naval uniform whispering, "I Want You...for the Navy."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Alfred Leete, "(Lord Kitchener) Wants You", 1914, Imperial War Museum, London.

<sup>35</sup>John Williams, The Other Battleground, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1972), 23-24.

<sup>36</sup>James Montgomery Flagg, "I Want You for the U.S. Army", 1917, New York Museum of Modern Art.

<sup>37</sup>Peter Stanley, What Did You Do In The War, Daddy?, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 7.

<sup>38</sup>Howard Chandler Christy, "I Want You for the Navy", 1917, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 56.

Other recruitment posters continued the 'pointing finger' theme. John Bull points at the viewer in "Who's Absent? Is It You?"<sup>39</sup> This poster has a line of soldiers in the background, with obvious space for more. As a variation, one poster, "An Appeal to You", has a soldier beckoning the viewer, rather than pointing at him.<sup>40</sup>

In Belgium, the popular "reason" for Britain's entrance into the war, propagandists had a ready-made subject for recruitment posters. "Remember Belgium"<sup>41</sup> was a common theme. The posters made use of stories straight from newspaper headlines - or straight from the Bryce Report. As an ambassador to the United States and a respected historian, Lord Bryce had the prestige to make his report on the German army atrocities credible. American newspapers which had previously regarded most atrocity stories skeptically, now came to believe that not only were they true, but that perhaps the British were even understating the case. The Germans were accused of everything from spitting babies on bayonets to cutting the hands off children and the

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<sup>39</sup>No artist given, "Who's Absent? Is it You?", 1914, George C. Marshall Research Foundation, reproduced in Anthony R. Crawford, Posters of World War I and World War II in the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 23.

<sup>40</sup>No artist given, "An Appeal To You", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 53.

<sup>41</sup>Ellsworth Young, "Remember Belgium", 1918, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Ibid., 21.

breasts off women. Thus, Belgium was typically portrayed in posters as either a young child or a pretty woman. She was also typically in some state of violation, from being raped to being murdered. These images could serve not only as an incentive for British men to avenge, but as a warning of what would happen to British women if their men did not protect them. And if their men could not see that, the women were encouraged to help them.

In 1914, such encouragement was provided by Baroness Orczy, creator of the fictional British hero the Scarlet Pimpernel. She created her own women's League entirely dedicated to convincing men of the right path to take regarding the war:

Women and Girls of England - Your hour has come! Together we have laughed and cried over that dauntless Englishman the Scarlet Pimpernel and thrilled with enthusiasm over the brave doings of his League. Now we shall form ourselves into an Active Service League, its sole object: influencing sweethearts, brothers, sons and friends to recruit. Pledge: I hereby pledge myself most solemnly in the name of my King and Country, to persuade every man I know to offer his services to his country, and I also pledge myself never to be seen in public with any man who being in every way free and fit has refused to respond to his country's call.

Twenty thousand women joined this League.<sup>42</sup> Others joined the "Order of the White Feather" and distributed white feathers (the symbols of cowardice) to any man who was not in uniform. A popular song entitled "We Don't

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<sup>42</sup>Williams, *The Other Battleground*, 55.

Want to Lose You, But We Think You Ought To Go" aptly sums up the general public opinion.<sup>43</sup>

Not to be in khaki was social suicide. In the Times of July 9, 1915 the following personal advertisement appeared: "Jack F.G. -- If you are not in khaki by the 20th, I shall cut you dead. -- Ethel M." As a side note on German propaganda, the Berlin correspondent of the Cologne Gazette transmitted this ad as, "If you are not in khaki by the 20th, I will hack you to death."<sup>44</sup>

Conscientious Objectors -- known as "conchies" -- were considered a disgrace not only to themselves but to society. Their lives "were made a burden to them", even by their families. In 1918, the Home Secretary admitted in Parliament that thirteen conscientious objectors in prison and three in work centers had gone insane.<sup>45</sup>

Women were encouraged to bring this sort of psychological pressure to bear upon men, and what women were asked to do in real life, they were portrayed doing in posters. Posters of women urging their men into khaki

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<sup>43</sup>Bishop, London News Social History, 38.

<sup>44</sup>Arthur Ponsonby, Falsehood in Wartime, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1971), 20.

<sup>45</sup>Williams, The Other Battleground, 254.

were very popular. "Women of Britain Say - Go!"<sup>46</sup> is one of them. In it, looking out of a large picture window at a marching column of soldiers, are an older blonde woman, a younger brunette girl, and a small blonde boy. In this poster the soldier had his mother, sister, wife, girlfriend, and/or children symbolized -- and they all wanted him to "Go!" Other posters specifically warned women of what might befall them if the Germans invaded. After all, look what they were doing to Belgium, and, according to Lissaner's Hymn of Hate, the country they really hated was Britain: "We love as one, we hate as one; We have but one foe alone -- England."<sup>47</sup>

Other posters admonished girls "Don't pity the girl who is alone," because those girls' men were fighting for them. The poster also said, "If [your man] does not think that you and your country are worth fighting for -- do you think he is worthy of you?"<sup>48</sup> Another poster called, "Women of England, do your duty! Send your men today to join our Glorious Army."<sup>49</sup> Originally, women were used only as agents to push their men into the army.

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<sup>46</sup>E.V. Kealey, "Women of Britain Say - Go!", 1914, Imperial War Museum, London, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 52.

<sup>47</sup>Charles Roetter, The Art of Psychological Warfare, 1914-1915, (New York: Stein & Day Publishers, 1974), 44.

<sup>48</sup>quoted in Bishop, London News Social History, 43.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

Later women would be targeted for what they themselves could do for their country.

In 1915, the British were given two more subjects for propaganda posters. These posters added to the list of atrocities committed by the Germans, which fed the Home Front's hatred as well as encouraged recruitment. These images were especially powerful as they dealt with the deaths of those whom society traditionally protected from harm -- women and children. The sinking of the Lusitania was the first subject. More than 1,000 lives were lost when a German submarine sank this ocean liner on May 7, 1915.<sup>50</sup> One poster produced in Ireland called upon men to "Avenge the Lusitania".<sup>51</sup> The best known of the Lusitania posters portrays a mother holding a baby. Both are very pale, compared to the dark, undersea background. Bubbles issue forth from the woman's mouth, but as she and her child have sunk to the ocean bottom, it is obvious that she has drowned. The poster contains only one word, "Enlist."<sup>52</sup> The connection to the Lusitania would have been unmistakable for the 1915 viewer, thus no more

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>51</sup>John Shuley, "Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 26.

<sup>52</sup>Fred Spear, "Enlist", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Ibid., 27.

explanation was needed.

The second event was the execution of Edith Cavell. Edith Cavell was an English nurse at a Red Cross hospital in Belgium. On August 4, 1915, she was arrested and later found guilty of helping British soldiers, Belgian citizens, and French soldiers to escape into Holland. She plainly admitted her "guilt" -- she was "only doing her duty"<sup>53</sup> -- and under German military law she was shot by firing squad two months later. The outrage following the execution of a woman by firing squad was tremendous in Britain and America. The French had executed female spies by firing squad already -- and would do so again, the most famous case being that of Mata Hari in 1917. Britain, however, had never shot a female spy, and the British found the incident appalling. Edith Cavell became a prominent poster martyr. She is usually portrayed as a young, pretty girl, while in reality she was 50 years old.

Shame was also employed to encourage recruits. The most famous of these posters is "Daddy, What Did You Do in the Great War?"<sup>54</sup> The questioner is the man's daughter, as she sits upon his knee. At his feet, his son plays with model soldiers. The man is looking out at the viewer, a

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<sup>53</sup>James Morgan Read, Atrocity Propaganda 1914-1919, (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 212.

<sup>54</sup>Savile Lumley, "Daddy, What did You do in the Great War?", no date given, Australian War Memorial Archives, reproduced in Stanley, What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?, 45.

worried, almost stricken, look on his face. The intent is clear; after the war, will you have the "right" answer for your children? This phrase became so much a part of the popular culture that a humorous answer to the question (by a "hen-pecked" husband) was that he had done whatever he was told.

In 1916, the Military Service Act introduced conscription. While this could be used as evidence of the failure of the posters to produce significant numbers of recruits, during a war in which one day of battle could wipe out whole divisions (during the First Battle of the Somme the British army alone lost 60,000 men<sup>55</sup>) the fact that Britain was able to depend entirely on volunteers until 1916 is stunning. It could just as easily be said to be evidence that the posters (and propaganda in general) did their job, and did it well.

In any case, once the army no longer relied on volunteers, recruitment posters faded in prominence. The propagandists were now able to turn their attention to different subjects. The conditioning of the public, already begun, continued apace. The vilification of the enemy continued. Germans were portrayed even more intensely as inhuman monsters, Huns, or the Dragon which St. George (patron saint of England) slew. These posters were effective, and in some cases memorable. As a side note, an American poster following these same lines -- this one portraying the Germans as a giant King Kong-like

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<sup>55</sup>William R. Griffiths, The Great War, (Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Co., 1986), 72.

ape, frothing at the mouth and carrying off a half-naked, struggling woman, with the words "Destroy This Mad Brute" blazing above his head -- was later used by the Nazis as evidence of Allied hatred for the German people and an incentive to hate them back.<sup>56</sup>

In May 1917, the PRC was replaced by the National War Aims Committee. This committee had the same all-party emphasis as the PRC -- this time being led by David Lloyd George, Herbert Asquith, and G.N. Barnes -- but it was better organized for propaganda. The NWAC "was given the particular task of persuading the home front that the war had to be seen through to an uncompromising victory and of explaining that this would require nothing short of total commitment, particularly on the part of British industry."<sup>57</sup>

British industry's commitment was expected to be shown not only through encouraging overtime, but in keeping the workers laboring at all. Strikes were considered not just unpatriotic but downright traitorous. One poster of a hangman's noose equated strikers with traitors and implied that they should be hanged.

All in all, 1917 was not a good year on the Home Front. German

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<sup>56</sup>H.R. Hopps, "Destroy this Mad Brute", 1917, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 25.

<sup>57</sup>Sanders, British Propaganda, 139.

submarines sunk a great many British merchant ships; in the last four months of 1916 alone, 632,000 tons were sunk.<sup>58</sup> In April 1917, British shipping lost 526,000 tons.<sup>59</sup> There were severe shortages of sugar, meat, potatoes, and bread. Posters were issued to encourage the public not to waste their food. One poster focused on the shipping incidents. A serious sailor admonished the viewer, "We risk our lives to bring you food. It's up to you not to waste it."<sup>60</sup> Other posters encouraged home canning and home gardens. The simple theme of conservation was always stressed. "Eat Less Bread and Victory is Secure"<sup>61</sup> posters went up in April 1917. By the end of May, there was a 10% decrease in bread consumption from the levels in February.<sup>62</sup>

The public was also exhorted to buy war bonds. "Lend Your Five

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<sup>58</sup>Williams, The Other Battleground, 188.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 192.

<sup>60</sup>J.P. Beadle, "We Risk Our Lives to Bring You Food. It's up to You not to Waste it.", 1917, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 87.

<sup>61</sup>quoted in Williams, The Other Battleground, 190.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 191.

Shillings to Your Country and Crush the Germans"<sup>63</sup> read one poster that showed a giant five shilling piece overwhelming a German. In view of the use of St. George and the Dragon to symbolize the struggle between England and Germany, it is noteworthy that the St. George slaying the Dragon tableau is on the head of a five shilling piece. Such creativity was common during 1915, a year which also produced "Turn Your Silver Into Bullets".<sup>64</sup> (Perhaps a reference to one of the mythical ways to kill a werewolf.)

By 1918, however, weariness with the war was unmistakable. Whereas earlier posters dealt with "winning" the war, in 1918 the goal was just to "end" it. A stark poster of the period shows two giant grey guns, and an equally grey man, on the deck of a ship. "Feed the Guns with War Bonds and Help to End the War,"<sup>65</sup> it states.

While all of these posters were used to promote society's support for the war, some propaganda posters also reflected social issues such as the severe stratification of British society. Most posters targeted the working

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<sup>63</sup>D.D. Fry, "Lend Your Five Shillings to Your Country and Crush the Germans", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 77.

<sup>64</sup>No artist given, "Turn Your Silver Into Bullets", 1915, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Bert Thomas, "Feed the Guns with War Bonds and Help to End the War", 1918, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Ibid., 76.

classes in their quest for popular support. One did not have to be literate in order to understand the majority of the propaganda posters. Some, like the Lusitania inspired "Enlist" poster, only contained one word. The viewer only had to be familiar with the latest atrocity story.

Some posters, however, were specifically aimed at the upper classes. These dealt with how to run a "One Maid Household"<sup>66</sup> or whether you really needed a male servant to preserve your game when he could be "preserving his country" instead. The upper and middle classes -- or at least, the educated classes -- were also targeted by posters with a historical slant.

Both Horatio Nelson and the Duke of Wellington were used in such historical propaganda posters. Nelson's famous quote, "England expects every man to do his duty," was used on a recruitment poster in 1915. The name of Nelson is nowhere mentioned. At one corner is the date 1805, at the opposite corner 1915. Between the two dates is the quote "England Expects."<sup>67</sup> A man dressed in clothing which is obviously supposed to be from 1805 stands at the right, and across the bottom of the poster "Are You Doing Your Duty Today?" jumps out at the viewer. Although the bottom phrase can stand on its own,

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<sup>66</sup>quoted in Bishop, London News Social History, 99.

<sup>67</sup>No artist given, "England Expects", 1915, George C. Marshall Research Foundation, reproduced in Crawford, Posters of World War I and World War II, 27.

its relation to the "England Expects" would only be understood by those who are familiar with the original quote. A more esoteric poster is the one which uses Wellington. William Frank's publicity poster for national war bonds features the Duke of Wellington with the quote "Up Civilians!"<sup>68</sup> However, one has to know that Wellington said, "Up guards and at 'em" at Waterloo for the exhortation to make any sense.

This fascination with past military glory, which was noted earlier in recruitment posters, not only serves to reflect society's nostalgia, but also points up a failing with the British war strategy. The cavalry breakthrough was a favorite fantasy of the British High Command. For a war fought in trenches, across mud which resembled quicksand, and with machine guns and gas, this penchant for cavalry images seems ludicrous. It points out both the High Command's failure to grasp the concept of modern warfare, and highlights the training of many British commanders. Posters which used the Cavalry motif necessarily could not show the battles of the front lines. These posters, at once the most unrealistic of the war, could quite possibly also have used one of the more effective themes. The romance of the cavalry is vividly portrayed, and it must be remembered that horse cavalry were still in use up through World War II.

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<sup>68</sup>William Frank, "Up Civilians", no date given, Australian War Memorial Collection, reproduced in Stanley, What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?, 50.

The propaganda themes that heralded real social change were those which stressed the new place of women. Posters that originally called upon women to make sacrifices by giving up their men, now focused on the women themselves. The Women's Land Army organized women to take on necessary agricultural work. "God Speed the Plough and the Woman Who Drives It"<sup>69</sup> read one slogan for national service in the Women's Land Army. Recruiting for munitions work was also geared towards women. This work could be extremely dangerous. Some of the munitions America supplied were defective, and attempts to fix such shells could cause them to explode. Working with TNT also caused toxic jaundice, which turned the skin a bright yellow, and meant that even the women who survived were often shunned from public places. Nevertheless, munitions work was seen as almost desirable because it gave women a strong purpose in the war effort. "These Women Are Doing Their Bit. Learn To Make Munitions."<sup>70</sup> read one poster from 1917. This particular poster is set up much the same way as the "Women of Britain Say - Go!" poster with a woman, a door/window, and a soldier in the background. However, there are some significant differences.

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<sup>69</sup>H.G. Gawthorn, "National Service Women's Land Army", 1917, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Hoover Institution, Persuasive Images, 62.

<sup>70</sup>Septimus E. Scott, "These Women are Doing their Bit. Learn to Make Munitions.", 1917, Hoover Archives Collection, reproduced in Ibid.

The woman -- still in the foreground -- has now turned away from the window. Instead of looking out after her man, she is looking out at the viewer and purposefully putting on a work coat. The soldier disappearing through the door is not clearly defined like the soldiers on the other side of the window in "Women of Britain Say - Go!" He is rather indistinct, his face blurred compared to the face of the woman. It is quite clear that hero of this picture is the woman.

Women in posters appeared in uniform, wore shorter skirts, or even trousers. The Women's Royal Air Force used posters to advertise for "Clerks, Waitresses, Cooks, experienced Motor Cyclists."<sup>71</sup> Women drivers were also sought, as they could replace men who would then be sent to the front lines.

One particularly interesting poster came out of Ireland in 1914 -- the same year as "Women of Britain Say - Go!" This poster shows a brunette Irish girl, dressed in green and red, holding a shotgun and looking at an unarmed male civilian. She is gesturing with her other hand towards a blackened, burning city across a stretch of water. The city is labelled Belgium. She, meanwhile, is saying to the man, "For the Glory of Ireland, Will You Go Or

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<sup>71</sup>No artist given, "British Women! - The Royal Air Force Needs Your Help", no date given, Australian War Memorial Collection, reproduced in Stanley, What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?, 42.

Must I?"<sup>72</sup> Although it would have been unthinkable to send a woman to the front, this challenge was deeply shaming to men. It was quite different from a humorous poke at women. Heretofore "masculine" women -- women who wanted to do what was normally only within the province of men, such as suffragettes -- were ridiculed. In fact, the result of women's struggle for the right to vote demonstrates a change in societal attitude. Before the First World War, some women had militantly campaigned for the right to vote, but no change had resulted. The war brought with it a sharp reduction in the activity of the suffragette movement, but as society's expectations of the role of women changed over the course of the war, these societal changes eventually led to the first step toward victory for the women. In February 1918, women aged thirty and older were given the vote.<sup>73</sup>

The atmosphere of hate which the posters generated can be clearly documented. After news came of the sinking of the Lusitania, anti-German riots broke out across the country. In Camden Town and Kentish Town over 150 German-owned shops were destroyed or looted. In Liverpool the toll was

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<sup>72</sup>No artist given, "For the Glory of Ireland", 1914, Imperial War Museum, London.

<sup>73</sup>Women could stand as Members of Parliament starting when they were 21. This discrepancy was finally rectified in 1927.

200.<sup>74</sup> There is a photograph taken in the East End of London of rioters in the streets. In the center of the photograph is a boarded up shop. Stark white letters across the dark boards cry, "WE ARE RUSSIANS."<sup>75</sup> It would appear that some of the destruction was indiscriminately aimed at "aliens" in general.

Prejudice against Germans was widespread. The London Stock Exchange excluded all members of German birth. Calls for the internment of all German aliens (19,000<sup>76</sup> were already in what were called "concentration camps") produced government regulations on May 13, 1915 to intern all unnaturalized aliens between the ages of 17 and 55, with provisions for the repatriation of women and children in suitable cases.<sup>77</sup> In 1918 there was a second "Intern them All" campaign during the summer. All Germans were to be interned, whether they were naturalized citizens or not. The philosophy became "once a German, always a German." Civilians adopted this feeling with enthusiasm, sometimes even against fellow British citizens.

When I told her my name she turned and glared at me. I

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<sup>74</sup>Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, 126.

<sup>75</sup>Williams, The Other Battleground, 151.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>77</sup>Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, 128.

inquired what was the matter. She asked me if my name was German. I said it was, but I was a British subject born in South Africa, that my husband was a British subject of pure British descent, and my mother was English, that my father who left Germany eighty years ago, was a naturalized British subject, and had been dead nearly fifty years....She said that if my ancestors came from Germany "three hundred years ago" it would make no difference, no one with a German name should come into her house, and poured forth a stream of abuse that was almost inconceivable.<sup>78</sup>

Germans and all things German (with the exception of Handel) were despised.

I wish Germany did not exist, and I hope that it will not exist much longer. Burke said that you cannot indict a whole nation. But you can.

- Ford Madox Hueffer 1915<sup>79</sup>

It was this sort of attitude and behavior which the returning veterans in 1918 could not understand. They had not hated the Germans, even though they had fought them in the trenches. Consequently, they saw no reason for the civilians to be so rabid. F.H. Keeling wrote that he had met a nurse "whose catlike ferocity of sentiments about Germans and Germany simply made me sick. A dose of shelling would cure a lot in that one."<sup>80</sup> In his poem

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<sup>78</sup>Olive Schreiner cited in Penguin Book of First World War Prose, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1989), 182.

<sup>79</sup>Peter Buitenhuis, The Great War of Words, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 37.

<sup>80</sup>Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 106.

"Blighters", reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, Siegfried Sassoon declared his wish to see a tank mow down the music halls in which performers joked about the Germans and the war. Charles Edmonds wrote,

England was beastly in 1918...Envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, fear and cruelty born of fear, seemed the dominant passions of the leaders of the nations in those days. Only in the trenches (on both sides of No Man's Land) were chivalry and sweet reasonableness to be found.<sup>81</sup>

The public had been fed on war atrocities and propaganda, and as far as they were concerned the Germans were truly evil incarnate. Only meeting their enemy in the printed word or two-dimensional poster, they could not conceive of him as human in a way that the returning veterans could. C.E. Montague wrote that the pockets of "Incarnate Evil",

never contained the right things - no poison to put in our wells, no practical hints for crucifying Canadians; only the usual stuffing of all soldiers' pockets - photographs and tobacco and bits of string and the wife's letters...<sup>82</sup>

Atrocity stories, such as the crucified Canadian, had currency with the public, but the returning veterans tended to consider them as the propaganda they were.

Thus, one can see how the propaganda posters of the First World War effectively manipulated the emotions of their audience. Unlike the American

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<sup>81</sup>Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, 48.

<sup>82</sup>ibid., 73.

war posters, they did not have to impress upon the British public the immediacy of the battle.<sup>83</sup> The south coast of England could plainly hear the rumble of guns. The posters could instead concentrate on recruitment, popular opinion, the necessity of frugality on the home front, and the vilification of the enemy. It was the hostile and belligerent atmosphere that these posters, along with other, written forms of propaganda, created and cultivated that resulted in a civilian mentality about the war so incomprehensible to the returning veteran soldiers that the post-war rift was insurmountable.

The British soldiers had been expected to go and fight, and hate. Instead not only did the majority of them not hate, but some of them had "fraternized" with the "enemy". This was not what the civilian population wanted to hear. Consequently, the Christmas Truce of 1914 has probably found a wider audience through its reenactment in a Paul McCartney video than it had in its day or in history books. Even battles were reported with special emphasis on British heroism. When John Buchan described the "desperate valour" shown by the German soldiers during the Battle of Loos

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<sup>83</sup>The Americans solved that problem by drawing something the British did not do - what their country might look like after a German invasion. This is graphically illustrated in the poster "That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth...Buy Liberty Bonds," reproduced in Hoover Institution, *Persuasive Images*, 75. The scene is a brilliant red, New York is on fire, and the Statue of Liberty has been reduced to a shattered hulk.

(September 1915) in his dispatch to The Times, the passage was expunged by the military censor.<sup>84</sup> But the censors could not expunge the experiences of the soldiers, nor their sometimes surprising sympathy for the enemy.

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<sup>84</sup>Bishop, London News Social History, 55.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **For I Have Watched Them Die: Sympathy for the Enemy.**

#### TO THE WARMONGERS

I'M BACK AGAIN FROM HELL  
WITH LOATHSOME THOUGHTS TO SELL:  
SECRETS OF DEATH TO TELL:  
AND HORRORS FROM THE ABYSS.  
YOUNG FACES BLEARED WITH BLOOD.  
SUCKED DOWN INTO THE MUD,  
YOU SHALL HEAR THINGS LIKE THIS.  
TILL THE TORMENTED SLAIN  
CRAWL ROUND AND ONCE AGAIN,  
WITH LIMBS THAT TWIST AWRY  
MOAN OUT THEIR BRUTISH PAIN.  
AS THE FIGHTERS PASS THEM BY.  
FOR YOU OUR BATTLES SHINE  
WITH TRIUMPH HALF-DIVINE:  
AND THE GLORY OF THE DEAD  
KINDLES IN EACH PROUD EYE.  
BUT A CURSE IS ON MY HEAD,  
THAT SHALL NOT BE UNSAID.  
AND THE WOUNDS IN MY HEART ARE RED.  
FOR I HAVE WATCHED THEM DIE.

- SIEGFRIED SASSOON. APRIL 1917<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Rupert Hart-Davis, ed., The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon (London: Faber & Faber, 1983), 77.

The mere mention of World War I conjures up images of horrendous suffering. Most people are familiar with the stark black and white pictures of carnage, the desolate wasteland of No Man's Land, and the agonies of trench warfare. But the Great War can also be considered one of society's clearest examples of reciprocal altruism, and it is this, and the poetic response to it, which merits further inquiry.

In the study of social behavior, there is a "game" known as The Prisoner's Dilemma in which two individuals are imprisoned separately and each accused of abetting the other in a crime. According to the rules, if neither of them confess, both will be freed. If both accuse each other, both will be punished. If one accuses the other without the accusation being reciprocated, the accuser will not only be freed, but will receive a small reward, whereas the one who did not accuse will receive a harsher punishment than if he had incriminated the other. This concept is symbolized by  $T > R > P > S$ , with T being the temptation to accuse, R being the reward if neither accuses, P being the punishment if both accuse, and S being the "sucker's payoff" -- the penalty for being accused and not accusing in kind.

When faced with playing repeated "games" of The Prisoner's Dilemma, research has demonstrated that only one tactic is successful. This tactic is named Tit-for-Tat. It is a simple strategy, for which the rules are:

- 1) *Never be the first to defect.* That is, tit-for-tatter begins by

cooperating and defects only after the partner has defected. 2) *Retaliate only after the partner has defected.* The tit-for-tatter is a very cautious individual who immediately responds to non-reciprocation by retaliation. 3) *Be forgiving after just one act of retaliation.* The tit-for-tatter is ever optimistic, taking any altruistic act by the partner as an invitation to reciprocity.<sup>86</sup>

The employment of this tactic is considered a demonstration of reciprocal altruism -- an exchange of acts which benefit the recipient at a cost to the actor.

World War I can be seen as a large-scale rendition of repeated "games" of The Prisoner's Dilemma. If both refrain from firing, both will live. If both fire, both die equally. If one side fires and the other does not, the firing side will be rewarded (victorious as well as alive) and the non-firing side will be punished (i.e. dead). In this scenario, the Tit-for-Tat tactic can be called the Live and Let Live system. Many circumstances during the First World War encouraged participation in the Live and Let Live system. Trench warfare was one of them. The Great War was unique in its usage of trenches -- previously battles were brief affairs, not static conflicts which could drag on for years. The fact that enemies actually were stationed opposite each other for extended periods of time opened up the first possibility for participation in the Live and Let Live system.

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<sup>86</sup>Robert Trivers, Social Evolution (Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing, 1985), 392.

The conditions under which the soldiers fought were appalling.

Winter created the most misery:

If you prefer the realistic to the romantic school and wish to appreciate the nature of trench life in winter, find a piece of wet, flat country, dig a ditch seven or eight feet deep and stand in icy water looking across at another ditch, and sleep in a cellar that you have dug in the wall...Of course, the moist walls will be continually falling in and require mending in a drenching, freezing rain of the kind that the Lord visits of all who wage war underground in Flanders. Incidentally, you must look after the pumps, lest the water rise to your neck.<sup>87</sup>

The same walls that protected them could also be their doom. Artillery bombardments often caused the trenches to bury their own dead, as when Siegfried Sassoon vividly described, "two mud-stained hands were sticking out of the wet ashen chalky soil, like the roots of a shrub turned upside down."<sup>88</sup>

Even without the hardships visited by the living upon each other, not to mention the hardships close proximity to the dead visited upon the living, nature itself was often an enemy. Mud was the worst enemy of all:

When two parties are both in danger of being drowned they haven't time to fight. To speak of drowning is no hyperbole; the mud of Flanders in winter is in some places like a quicksand, and men have been sucked under beyond redemption. A

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<sup>87</sup>Frederick Palmer, My Year of the Great War (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1915), 218-219.

<sup>88</sup>Rupert Hart-Davis, ed., Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1915-1918 (London: Faber & Faber, 1983), 159.

common misery begat a mutual forbearance.<sup>89</sup>

It is easy to see how sympathy might have developed between the opposing sides. The British soldiers knew what they were going through, so they could assume that the Germans experienced the same. They could, in fact, often see what the other side was going through. In some areas the opposing trenches were very close together. As one account put it, "We are within about sixty yards of the Germans," said Captain P-----.....Sixty yards! Pace it off. It is not far. In other places the enemies have been as close as five yards..."<sup>90</sup> Under these circumstances, the Live and Let Live system was able to develop out of sympathy. Evidence of its performance is apparent in the policy of creating an unofficial truce dependent on reciprocity. If one side was quiet, the other side was quiet as well. According to another account, "A sort of "after-you-gentlemen-if-you-fire-we-shall" understanding sometimes exists between foes up to a certain point."<sup>91</sup>

Both sides recognized the advantages to holding their fire. As Palmer noted, "this was a quiet corner. Neither side was interested in stirring up the

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<sup>89</sup>J.H. Morgan, Leaves from a Field Note-Book (London: Macmillan & Co., 1916), 271.

<sup>90</sup>Palmer, My Year of the Great War, 251.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 237.

hornets' nest."<sup>92</sup> However, if one side broke the truce, punishment was swift. Often the attacked side would respond with twice as big a barrage as was given to them. This unspoken rule of retaliation helped to enforce the truce, neither side wanting to call down such revenge upon itself.

The really nasty [sic] things are rifle grenades... they can kill as many as eight or nine men if they do fall into a trench...But we never use ours unless the Germans get particularly noisy, as on their system of retaliation three for every one of ours come back.<sup>93</sup>

The Live and Let Live system was not based solely on survival. As it is a system based on optimistic trust, it would understandably engender some consideration for the opposite side. Sometimes one side or the other would express concern for their opponents, or regret if a truce was violated:

I was having tea with A Company when we heard a lot of shouting and went out to investigate. We found our men and the Germans standing on their respective parapets. Suddenly a salvo arrived but did no damage. Naturally both sides got down and our men started swearing at the Germans, when all at once a brave German got on to his parapet and shouted out "we are very sorry about that; we hope no one was hurt. It is not our fault, it is that damned Prussian artillery."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 218.

<sup>93</sup>G.H. Greenwell, An Infant in Arms (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 251 cited in Tony Ashworth, Trench Warfare (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), 149.

<sup>94</sup>Rutter (12th division, 7/R. Sussex Regiment, August 1915) quoted in Ashworth, Trench Warfare, 146.

This policy of Live and Let Live was significantly at odds with the aims of the British High Command. While the soldiers desired the Live and Let Live system, the official policy was Kill or Be Killed. Despite this official condemnation, evidence of such truces can be found on both the Western and Eastern Fronts, though here special focus will be given to British troops on the Western Front. The best known of these truces is the Christmas Truce of 1914, "when nine British divisions held a front line of approximately thirty miles throughout which verbally arranged truces of varying lengths of time occurred."<sup>95</sup>

This Christmas truce was only the most cited form of the Live and Let Live system. Many other incidents occurred. Most dealt with ritualized violence. The big guns could be set off at a precise time every day. Thus the artillery was fulfilling its orders to fire and yet the other side knew exactly when to expect it. Sometimes the target would also be exactly the same, day after day, so the opponents knew what to avoid. Unspoken rules also developed along the lines of "fair play":

Curious conventions grew up, and at certain hours of the day and, less commonly, of the night, there was a kind of informal armistice. In one section the hour of 8 to 9 a.m. was regarded as consecrated to "private business", and certain places indicated by a flag were regarded as out of bounds by the snipers on both

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<sup>95</sup>Ashworth, Trench Warfare, 32.

sides.<sup>96</sup>

Remembering the social penchant for sportsmanship among the British, that they would honor such a truce is not surprising -- it would have been the "sporting" thing to do.

The presence of the Live and Let Live system opened the door to fraternization between the troops. Knowledge that the other side was suffering what you suffered and didn't want to kill you if you didn't try to kill them was humanizing. This solidarity would later often make returning veterans feel they had more in common with the "enemy" than with the civilians of their own society. This sentiment would be much in evidence among the war poets.

One reason the British and the Germans were particularly liable to participate in the Live and Let Live system was the close relationship between the peoples of the two countries. The British royal family was of German descent. In 1917 the King changed his family name to Windsor in order to distance himself from this fact. Many British upper class families still had ties in Germany. Siegfried Sassoon described a friend whose "two cousins, whom I used to know, are fighting for the other side."<sup>97</sup> This close contact with the

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<sup>96</sup>Morgan, Leaves from a Field Note-Book, 271.

<sup>97</sup>Hart-Davis, War Diaries, 37.

German people was not limited to the upper classes. Before the war, many Germans worked in and around London, especially in the restaurant business. This became a running joke on the Western Front:

I remember up on the Aisne," continued the Hoxton man, who had an ingenuous countenance, "one of our chaps shouted "Waiter," and about fifty on 'em stuck their heads up above the trenches and said, "Coming, sir."<sup>98</sup>

On the German side, the Saxons felt particularly close to the British. Although time had made the probability of any genetic kinship with the Anglo-Saxons laughable, the Saxons' perception was that they and the British were a sort of kin. This belief manifested itself in their great willingness to participate in the Live and Let Live system, something that became known by most of the British regiments.

I have heard of an irresponsible Irishman in the trenches who vaulted the parapet to bag a hare and, what is more remarkable, returned with it. Needless to say, his neighbours were Saxons.<sup>99</sup>

As the Live and Let Live system progressed, sympathy for the opposite side could develop into curiosity. Sometimes the British took the lead in fraternizing:

The men of a certain British regiment heard at intervals a monologue going on in the trenches opposite, and every time the speaker stopped his discourse shouts of guttural laughter

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<sup>98</sup>Morgan, Leaves from a Field Note-Book, 182.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 99.

arose, accompanied by cries of "Bravo, Muller!" "Sehr komisch!" "Noch einmal, Muller!" Our men listened intently, and an acquaintance with German, so imperfect as to be almost negligible, could not long disguise from them the fact that their Saxon neighbours possessed a funny man whose name was Muller. Their interest in Muller, always audible but never visible, grew almost painful. At last they could restrain it no longer. At a given signal they began chanting, like the gallery in a London theatre, except that their voices came from the pit: We-want-Muller! We-want-Muller! We-want-Muller! The refrain grew more and more insistent. At last a head appeared above the German parapet. It rose gradually, as though the owner were being hoisted by unseen hands. He rose, as the principal character in a Punch and Judy show rises, with jerky articulations of his members from the ventriloquial depths below. The body followed, until a three-quarter posture was attained. The owner, with his hand upon his heart, bowed gracefully three times and then disappeared. It was Muller!<sup>100</sup>

Some of the Live and Let Live truces incorporated the hostility of one side toward other units of its own. The Saxons, for instance, felt far less animosity toward the British (their pseudo-kin) than they felt toward the Prussians, who were associated with militarism. When one Saxon unit was leaving the front lines they shouted "that the Prussians were relieving them, and asked us to give them hell."<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, the Prussians earned some sympathy from the British:

He was a Prussian with a decent face,

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 271-272.

<sup>101</sup>D. Sutherland, War Diary of the Fifth Seaforth Highlanders (London: John Lane, 1920) 27 quoted in Ashworth, Trench Warfare, 34.

Young, fresh, and pleasant, so I dare to say.  
No doubt he loathed the war and longed for peace,  
And cursed our souls because we'd killed his friends.<sup>102</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, the army commanders did not appreciate the Live and Let Live system. As they were outside the system, they had no need to participate in the reciprocity, nor any desire to honor it. The High Command regarded truces as detrimental to the soldiers' fighting spirit (which it undoubtably was) and therefore tried to crush such truces when they found them. Fraternization could have serious consequences for the participants:

Had I come on trench watch two hours later, not young C. but myself would have been puzzled by the appearance of a German officer and perhaps twenty of his men, who, with friendly cries of "Good morning, Tommy, have you any biscuits?" and the like, got out of their trench and invited our men to do the same...our men were told not to fire upon them, both by C. and the other company's officer on watch; there was some exchange of shouted remarks, and after a time both sides returned to the secrecy of their parapets. When this affair was reported to more senior members of the battalion, it took on rather a gloomy aspect; it appeared that the bounded duty of C. and R. had been to open fire on the enemy...the unfortunate subalterns were reprovved, and, what is more, placed under arrest.<sup>103</sup>

It is intriguing that quite a few incidents occurred involving the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, a specially trained fighting unit and therefore one of the more

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<sup>102</sup>Hart-Davis, The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, 43.

<sup>103</sup>Edmund Blunden, De Bello Germanico: a Fragment of Trench History (Hawstead: G.A. Blunden, 1930) quoted in Jon Glover and Jon Silkin, eds., Penguin Book of First World War Prose (London: Viking, 1989), 164.

unlikely choices to be found fraternizing with the enemy. It may be, however, that it is not so much that this unit participated in truces more often than the average unit as it is that the Royal Welsh Fusiliers coincidentally contained a disproportionate number of articulate men, such as Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, who recorded these incidents:

During the whole of that night the company were employed bringing in the wounded and dead and the enemy didn't fire a shot during the whole of the night. [Robert Graves] was helping to get a stretcher down in the trench when a sentry near him forgot orders and fired a round. Mr. Graves called him a damned fool and wanted to know why he was starting the bloody war again.<sup>104</sup>

The Royal Welsh Fusiliers evidenced particular empathy with the opposing Germans. Often both sides would cease fire so that they could retrieve their respective dead and wounded from No Man's Land. In one instance, however, a soldier of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers took the Live and Let Live system's philosophy to its natural extreme by risking his own life to save a wounded enemy:

One of the men in our left platoon threw his equipment off, jumped on the parapet with his hands above his head and then pointed to a wounded German who was trying to crawl to our lines. He then went forward, got hold of the wounded man and carried him in, the enemy clapping their hands and cheering

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<sup>104</sup>Frank Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die (London: Faber, 1933) quoted in Glover, First World War Prose, 304.

until he had disappeared into our trench...<sup>105</sup>

In 1915 the British High Command introduced a new tactic, the raid, which was intended to stop the Live and Let Live system. It was now not only harder to warn the opposite side of impending hostilities, or to develop a ritual whereby both sides could do their duty without getting hurt, but any warning would effectively condemn the entire raiding party to death. Thus reciprocity clearly became a treasonable act, as well as a suicidal one. There was no way to fake a raid. In the past, the big guns could be fired over the enemy's head. Snipers could "accidentally" miss under the eyes of visiting officers. Scouting parties could cut bits of wire off unused or old trenches. But with a raid, a general exodus from the trench was called for, and results were expected. Losses were not only inevitable, but were proof that the raid had been carried out. Under these conditions, the Live and Let Live system was no longer tenable.

If the strategists thought that this would lead to hatred of the enemy, they were mistaken. The German soldiers remained metaphorical brothers in the incomprehensible maelstrom of the war:

I knew that we had suffered each as other,  
And could have grasped your hand and cried, "My

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<sup>105</sup>ibid., 303.

brother!"<sup>106</sup>

When the British troops had to fight and kill, quite often the deaths they caused were not portrayed as the glorious conquering of an enemy. Siegfried Sassoon illustrated this in his description of "The Stunt":

One night he crawled through the wire and mud and found a score  
Of Saxon peasants half-asleep, and wet and scared.  
Three men he killed outright, and wounded several more.  
But Gentle Jesus kept him safe; his life was spared.  
At dawn we took the trench; and found it full of dead.  
And for his deed the man received a D.S.O.  
"How splendid. O how splendid!" his relations said,  
But what the weeping Saxons said I do not know.<sup>107</sup>

While the Live and Let Live system itself could be eradicated, its effects could not. Frederick Palmer reported a statement made fairly frequently with regard to the Germans: "What good would it do to hate them? No, we don't hate."<sup>108</sup> Many propaganda reports of German atrocities were circulated. While some soldiers may have believed them, others, like Herbert Read, obviously took a more realistic view when he wrote: "And I don't really hate the Hun....I know there are a lot of nasty Huns -- but what a lot of nasty

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<sup>106</sup>Joseph Lee quoted in George Herbert Clarke, ed., A Treasury of War Poetry (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), 176.

<sup>107</sup>Hart-Davis, War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, 102.

<sup>108</sup>Palmer, My Year of the Great War, 241.

Englishmen there are too."<sup>109</sup>

The soldiers tended not to direct their anger outward across No Man's Land, but upward to the generals of their own side. This becomes less and less surprising as the war went on. While 1915 was marked by "stalemate and stagnation,"<sup>110</sup> 1916 would mark the beginning of a slaughter unparalleled in military history. The Battle of the Somme would last from July 1, 1916 to November 19, and cost the lives of 1,070,000 soldiers, 42.1% of whom were British.<sup>111</sup> In 1917, the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as Passchendaele, would last from July 31 to November 10 and accrue 470,000 casualties, the British again taking the heaviest losses with 57.4%.<sup>112</sup> Soldiers might easily wonder whom was the more dangerous enemy -- the opposing soldiers or their own High Command's battle strategy. As Siegfried Sassoon remarked, "I would rather shoot one General Dolt than fifty harmless Germans..."<sup>113</sup> The generals and the desk staff thus became the enemy.

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<sup>109</sup>Herbert Read, The Contrary Experience (London: Faber, 1963) quoted in Glover, First World War Prose, 286.

<sup>110</sup>J.M. Winter, The Experience of World War I, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 125.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 140.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Hart-Davis, War Diaries, 119.

We hate our general, our C.O. and men; we do not hate the Germans: in short we are nearing the attitude of regular soldiers...<sup>114</sup> (May 1915)

The High Command was perceived as prolonging the war, and the longer the war continued, the worse conditions became. German troops first used poison gas in 1915. Their method was to open cylinders of chlorine during attacks, which could be devastating to both sides depending on which way the wind blew.<sup>115</sup> By 1918, modern science had made poison gas even more lethal. Chlorine was “joined by the more lethal phosgene and by mustard gas, the antecedent of napalm, which blistered the skin in hideous ways.”<sup>116</sup> The gas could also be delivered to its target more efficiently, and it was no longer used solely by the Germans. “By 1918 roughly one shell in four fired by both sides on the Western Front was a gas shell.”<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, as far as the soldiers at the Front were concerned, the generals sat in relative comfort well behind the lines and sent other men to their deaths while refusing to brave

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<sup>114</sup>Charles Hamilton Sorley, The Letters of Charles Hamilton Sorley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919) quoted in Glover, First World War Prose, 29.

<sup>115</sup>J.M. Winter, The Experience of World War I, 142.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

the same odds. In his poem "Base Details," Siegfried Sassoon condemned the generals who order the murderous raids and then "toddle safely home and die -- in bed."<sup>118</sup>

It is important to note that not everyone felt the loss of the Live and Let Live system and the prolonged torment of the war as bitterly as Siegfried Sassoon. Some British soldiers did not have the same capacity for empathy.

Lord X's story at lunch of how some friend of his turned a machine-gun on to Turkish prisoners in a camp he was in charge of, and killed 280 (they had been causing trouble, but it seemed an atrocious affair; the story was received with appreciate sycophantic laughter from the company commanders.)<sup>119</sup>

It was this latter type of war story that was provided to the British public. The Live and Let Live system was not compatible with the popular conception of heroism. The men were expected to go and fight, not fraternize, and most published reminiscences avoid mentioning the Live and Let Live system. This is not surprising, considering that it was so frowned on by the commanders. Survivors may have avoided the topic in order to conform to the idea of war that was popular with the public at the time. Ashworth speculates that this might be why Churchill never published a reminiscence of the war, for "the 9th division held a front where live and let live was not

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<sup>118</sup>Hart-Davis, War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, 71.

<sup>119</sup>Hart-Davis, War Diaries, 232.

infrequent, so that unless he described the latter, Churchill did not have a great deal to tell."<sup>120</sup>

One might argue that as Siegfried Sassoon's poems were published during the war, there was obviously an audience for them, and by no means were all of his readers conscientious objectors. Some of his poems, however, were rejected. "In the Pink" was rejected by Westminster magazine because it might "prejudice recruiting."<sup>121</sup> Also, publication does not necessarily reflect popularity. According to one critic:

Mr. Sassoon's verses -- they are not poetry -- are such a cry....We feel not as we do with true poetry or true art that something is, after all, right, but that something is intolerably and irremediably wrong.<sup>122</sup>

This was, of course, the point of his poetry. But note that "true poetry" cannot be negative. This definition of poetry, like the definition of most things held sacred before the war, would change after the war was over.

During the war, British society, not surprisingly, wanted a more patriotic viewpoint. They wanted to hear about the heroism of their boys, and the rightness of their side. They wanted a Rupert Brooke account of the war.

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<sup>120</sup>Ashworth, Trench Warfare, 37.

<sup>121</sup>Hart-Davis, War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, 22.

<sup>122</sup>John Middleton Murry, "Mr. Sassoon's War Verses," The Nation, July 13, 1918 quoted in Glover, First World War Prose, 344.

Something which spoke of the glory of going off to fight, like:

Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we have come into our heritage.<sup>123</sup>

They wanted to believe in the original meaning of Horace's line "Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori," not in the ironic twist that Wilfred Owen gave it. They didn't want their heroes "stark, staring mad because of the guns."<sup>124</sup> But that is exactly what they got.

The war poets, as exemplified by Siegfried Sassoon, produced a remarkable body of work which can be said to have been created in response to the demise of the Live and Let Live system. It was because of the Live and Let Live system that the British soldiers on the Western Front were able to attain some level of empathy with their German foe. The removal of this system threw the irrationality of the war into stark relief. The soldier poets, knowing that the German soldiers were fellow human beings, were sympathetic towards them, and resented the High Command for creating the situation that they were in -- namely, the war. For them, the "enemy" became the concept of war itself, not the opposing side. The poetic response to the futility of war led to the creation of an impressive body of work from which

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<sup>123</sup>Bishop, London News Social History, 38.

<sup>124</sup>Hart-Davis, War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, 85.

this study has freely drawn.

While the frequent occurrence of the Live and Let Live system and the fight to eradicate it may appear of minor importance when compared with the great battles of World War I, battles such as Verdun, the Somme, and Passchendaele, knowledge of its existence is crucial to understanding the true feelings of those who fought. The Live and Let Live system was the bridge across which each side was able to recognize their common humanity. The destruction of the system was one of the reasons for hostility between the soldiers and their own High Command. While the suffering involved was horrendous, it was the inspiration for some of the greatest war -- and anti-war -- poetry ever written.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Dzerjinsky's Rolls-Royce: Britain and the Great Game of Spying

"It is a great game, and you are the man for it, no doubt."<sup>125</sup>

Although the fictitious Sir Walter Bullivant is speaking of World War I in this statement, his sentiments reflect the general attitude towards espionage in Richard Hannay's world. All three of the World War I adventures of Richard Hannay involve spying in one form or another. In The Thirty-Nine Steps, Hannay must foil a German spy ring known as The Black Stone operating in Britain. In Greenmantle, Hannay and his friends set out on a spy mission of their own behind enemy lines in Germany and Turkey. Mr. Standfast combines both types of espionage by first having Hannay investigate a German spy network which has infiltrated the British peace movement, and then involving him in another spying mission behind the German lines of the Western Front. When Richard Hannay is first asked to resume his espionage efforts in Mr. Standfast (between books he fights as an officer on the Western Front), he says that Sir Walter Bullivant "asked me

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<sup>125</sup>Buchan, Four Adventures, 136.

first if I was willing to serve again in the old game and I said I was."<sup>126</sup> As Hannay and his friends were able to play this game in three separate novels and yet never lose a member of their team, it was obviously a game for which Hannay had great skill.

In fact, Britain as a whole is praised for her skill in the espionage game.

The American of the group, John Blenkiron, is lavish with his praise:

You Britishers haven't any notion how wide-awake your Intelligence Service is. I reckon it's easy the best of all the belligerents....If I had a big proposition to handle and could have my pick of helpers I'd plump for the Intelligence Department of the British Admiralty. Yes, sir, I take off my hat to your Government sleuths.<sup>127</sup>

Again, later, he can be found saying, "I reverence the British Intelligence Service. Flies don't settle on it to any considerable extent."<sup>128</sup> While it would not be unexpected for a British author to write highly of the British Intelligence Service, especially during wartime, Britain had a significant stake in the world espionage tournament. They played the game for all it was worth, though sometimes the results were more effective than others. Even the effervescent Blenkiron admits this: "I calculate there isn't much that happens in any corner of the earth that you don't know within twenty-four

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 448.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 305-6.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 492.

hours. I don't say your highbrows use the noos [sic]<sup>129</sup> well."<sup>130</sup>

While it is possible that many real instances of British espionage exist which involve the befuddled handling of intelligence information, one actual occurrence in particular reflects both this and the ubiquitous spirit of the "game." Richard Hannay's world meets reality in what became known to history as "The Lockhart Plot."

Robert Bruce Lockhart had been sent to Moscow in January, 1918 under instructions from Lloyd George to "establish relations with the Bolsheviks."<sup>131</sup> In doing such duty, he was one of the diplomats involved with the evacuation of the Czech army through Russia (on their circuitous journey to fight the Germans). Bruce Lockhart personally found his diplomatic position extremely onerous, as confusion and willful ignorance ruled the day. Confusion came with the fact that the British Foreign Office could not decide how it wanted to handle the Bolshevik situation. "There was no British policy, unless seven different policies at once can be called a

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<sup>129</sup>He is an American, remember.

<sup>130</sup>Buchan, Four Adventures, 305.

<sup>131</sup>Robin Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, (New York: Stein and Day, 1967), 65.

policy."<sup>132</sup> The Foreign Office was also willfully blind to the Russian political situation. Bruce Lockhart asserted that "they were to blame...in listening to too many counsellors and in not realising the fundamental truth that in Russia the educated class represented only an infinitesimal minority, without organisation or political experience and without any contact with the masses."<sup>133</sup> Bruce Lockhart reported that the revolution "was a cataclysm which had shattered all previous conceptions of Russia" but London refused to acknowledge it as more than "a passing storm."<sup>134</sup>

Bruce Lockhart happened to be one of the few diplomatic representatives in Russia who was also a Russian expert. His description of the American Ambassador as "a kind old gentleman" whose "knowledge of anything beyond banking and poker was severely limited"<sup>135</sup> is followed by the (possibly apocryphal) tale of Norman Armour, the secretary of the American Embassy, telling the American Ambassador that he really ought to go see the opera one night as they were performing Evgenie Onegin:

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<sup>132</sup>Robert Bruce Lockhart, British Agent, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 260.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 261.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 272-3.

"Evgeny what?" said the Ambassador.

"Oh! you know," replied Armour, "Pushkin and Chaikovsky." There was a crash from the pedal of the spittoon.

"What!" said the Ambassador ecstatically. "Is Pushkin singing tonight?"<sup>136</sup>

In this atmosphere, Bruce Lockhart was understandably dismayed with his fellow diplomats. He was even more disheartened with his own country's conduct. While he personally believed any intervention in Russia would only alienate the Russians, his views were only met with the charge of being Pro-Bolshevik. While the Foreign Office addressed him as "British Agent, Moscow" and the Bolsheviks called him the "British Diplomatic Representative"<sup>137</sup> he was sometimes never informed of various espionage activities which his own government supported. The "Plot" to which part of his name is attached<sup>138</sup> was actually not conceived by him. In fact, the first murmurings he heard were when a Soviet representative reported to him that "a British officer had walked boldly up to the Kremlin gate and had demanded to see Lenin."<sup>139</sup> He would soon learn more.

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 273.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 260.

<sup>138</sup>Although his last name is "Bruce Lockhart", the plot is only referred to by the "Lockhart" part.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 273.

After the Russian Revolution, the fictional Richard Hannay's opinion that "Russia had gone headlong to the devil"<sup>140</sup> was not uncommon in Britain. This sentiment demonstrated both an underlying fear of Bolshevism and discouragement over the fact that Russia was no longer in the war. Neither the British government nor the rest of the Allies were sanguine over this state of affairs, and they aimed to correct it through military intervention. While the Allies made plans for such an intervention, the British government sent a spy to Russia with orders to hasten the downfall of the Bolshevik government. His name was Sidney Reilly.

Reilly arrived in Moscow on May 7, 1918. He had been a professional spy since 1897. He had out-manuevered the Rothschilds on behalf of the British government for the rights to drill for oil in Persia.<sup>141</sup> He had performed missions behind the German lines on the Western front, and now his mission to Russia reflected the game-like attitude towards spying.

The British government granted Reilly wide latitude in his orders. While it was obvious that they expected the Bolshevik government to be replaced by a non-communist -- and pro-war -- government, the replacement

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 646.

<sup>141</sup>British developers struck oil there in 1908, and the resulting British Petroleum Co. Ltd. exists to this day, easily identified by their green "B.P." signs.

government itself was not specified. Therefore Reilly, who had lived undercover in Russia before the war, planned to create an "alternative government" consisting predominately of his friends:

My great friend and ally [Sasha] Grammatikoff was to become Minister of the Interior, having under his direction all affairs of police and finance. Tchubersky,<sup>142</sup> an old friend and business associate of mine, who had been head of one of the greatest mercantile houses in Russia, was to become Minister of Communications.<sup>143</sup>

While some of the names, such as Sasha's, may have been altered -- perhaps to protect the real people -- other names were not disguised. The head of the army was to be "ex-Tsarist General Yudenich."<sup>144</sup> Reilly, aside from promoting his friends, also had a unique suggestion for the leadership of the replacement government -- himself. As he put it: "A Corsican lieutenant of artillery trod out the embers of the French Revolution. Surely a British espionage agent, with so many factors on his side, could make himself master of Moscow?"<sup>145</sup> Whether a Russia run by Reilly would have been significantly better than one run by the Bolsheviks is open to speculation.

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<sup>142</sup>Also spelt Chubersky.

<sup>143</sup>Sidney Reilly, Britain's Master Spy, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1986), 25.

<sup>144</sup>Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, 69.

<sup>145</sup>Reilly, Britain's Master Spy, 21.

In addition to his Russian friends, Reilly had other British agents involved in his schemes. Captain George Hill, although actually attached to Military Intelligence (a separate organization under the War Office), was one of Reilly's main co-conspirators. In the course of their plotting, Commander Ernest Boyce (head of the British Secret Intelligence Service in Russia) brought them what came to be known as the Sissons Documents.

The Sissons Documents purported to prove that "the Bolsheviks were in secret liaison with the German High Command and that the British War Cabinet's belief that Lenin and Trotsky were German agents was correct."<sup>146</sup> Although these documents were supposed to have come from all over Russia, Reilly discovered that they were typed, curiously enough, on the same typewriter. Having ascertained that they were faked, Reilly suggested that Boyce sell the documents to the Americans. "Mr. Sissons of the U.S. mission in Petrograd paid a very large amount for the documents and Boyce made a profit on the deal."<sup>147</sup> The Americans were apparently not very skilled game players.

Though Reilly's plans went through several stages (including banging on the gates of the Kremlin), his final design revolved around having the

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<sup>146</sup>Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, 75.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 75.

Soviet Central Executive Committee arrested by their own bodyguard. This bodyguard was composed of Lettish soldiers, who according to Allied information were affiliated with the Bolsheviks only because they hated them marginally less than they hated the Germans, who currently occupied Latvia. One of the Lettish commanders, Berzin, told Bruce Lockhart that the Letts "had no desire to fight against the Allies."<sup>148</sup> Bruce Lockhart put Berzin in touch with Reilly, who was supposed to encourage this reluctance. Reilly responded two days later that "he might be able, with Lettish help, to stage a counter-revolution in Moscow," a suggestion which was "categorically turned down" by Bruce Lockhart, and "Reilly was warned specifically to have nothing to do with so dangerous and doubtful a move."<sup>149</sup> Of course, in Bruce Lockhart's position, he could hardly say otherwise.

Reilly continued plotting. "Reilly's grand plan was to arrest all the Red leaders in one swoop on August 28th when a meeting of the Soviet Central Executive Committee was due to be held."<sup>150</sup> While this strategy has a certain logic, his scheme to deal with the Bolshevik leaders is a glowing example of the spirit of the "game," to which not even fictitious Richard Hannay would

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<sup>148</sup>Bruce Lockhart, British Agent, 313.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, 76.

have succumbed.

"De-bagging" was a prank popular at British boys' schools of the period.

This involved the removal of the victim's trousers and underpants.

Reilly's idea was that none of the Bolsheviks were to be killed if possible. He proposed to march them through the streets of Moscow bereft of their lower garments in order to kill them by ridicule, and then to intern them in a prison in Moscow from which they could not escape.<sup>151</sup>

The plan for the de-bagging of the Bolshevik leaders has to rank as one of the more peculiar ways to deal with an ousted government. "This fantastic proposal could have emanated only from Reilly's fertile imagination."<sup>152</sup>

As must be obvious, in the end Sidney Reilly's great game failed. The Soviet Central Executive Committee postponed its meeting until September 6. Unconcerned, Reilly left for Petrograd to confer with Captain Cromie<sup>153</sup> about staging an uprising in Petrograd "to coincide with his coup in Moscow."<sup>154</sup> He informed the French Secret Service, who were also involved, of his plans before leaving. The day after he left, August 30, the Cheka raided

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<sup>151</sup>George A. Hill, Go Spy the Land, ( London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1932), 238.

<sup>152</sup>Bruce Lockhart, British Agent, 320.

<sup>153</sup>British naval attache and member of the old Embassy staff.

<sup>154</sup>Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, 77.

the French Secret Service headquarters. Hill attempted to warn Reilly, but his messenger was arrested en route. The head of the Petrograd Cheka, Uritsky, was assassinated by counter-revolutionaries that same day, and on August 31, a woman named Dora Kaplan attempted to assassinate Lenin. He was shot in the lung and the neck. The Cheka came for Bruce Lockhart that night.

Reilly, finding that two of his Petrograd "hide-outs" had been raided and aware that his careful plans had crashed and burned, tried to contact Cromie at the British Embassy on August 31. The Cheka, still searching for Reilly, had already been there. Captain Cromie, defending the British Embassy, "resisted the intrusion and, after killing a commissar, had been shot down at the top of the staircase."<sup>155</sup>

Both Reilly and Hill were able to go underground and remain free. Bruce Lockhart was arrested and denounced as "the arch-criminal" with Reilly rating as "his chief spy."<sup>156</sup> Reilly discussed with Hill "the advisability of surrendering himself to the Cheka in the hope that by doing so he would be able to clear Mr. Lockhart [sic] and his Mission from the charges which the Bolsheviks were making against them."<sup>157</sup> Hill persuaded him not to try, as

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<sup>155</sup>Bruce Lockhart, British Agent, 318.

<sup>156</sup>Bruce Lockhart, Ace of Spies, 79.

<sup>157</sup>Hill, Go Spy the Land, 244-5.

the Cheka would undoubtedly hold them both. Bruce Lockhart was later released in an exchange of prisoners<sup>158</sup> and arrived in Britain on October 18. Reilly returned from Russia in early November and Hill, after being asked to blow up some bridges on his way home, returned on Armistice Day.

Despite the fact that his mission resulted in failure, Sidney Reilly received the Military Cross. Earlier, when he and Hill had parted company to follow their separate routes out of Russia, Reilly had received a personally greater prize -- one of Hill's hair brushes:

These brushes had particularly long and strong bristles and Reilly had always admired them. One day when we had been discussing his plans for the overthrow of the Bolsheviks he said to me, "Hill, the morning I turn the Bolsheviks out you will give me as a present your brushes."<sup>159</sup>

Hill agreed, as long as Reilly's government would give him Dzerjinsky's Rolls-Royce.<sup>160</sup> Though Hill never got Dzerjinsky's Rolls-Royce, he did give Reilly his prize.

I told him that I thought he had come so near to achieving his purpose that he deserved, anyway, one of the brushes. It was the only time during these four days that he showed any emotion.

When Reilly and Hill met up in London later, Reilly presented Hill with two

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<sup>158</sup>The British government arrested the Bolshevik government's London representative, Litvinov, and offered to trade him for Bruce Lockhart.

<sup>159</sup>Hill, *Go Spy the Land*, 246.

<sup>160</sup>Feliks Dzerjinsky was head of the Cheka at this time.

engraved silver brushes in return. Dzerjinsky's Rolls-Royce, like the Russian government, remained in Bolshevik hands.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Lament for Vanished Days and Manners

The Richard Hannay books represent a time of change. The old codes of honor and conduct would not survive in the Modern Age, and these books reflect this reality.

Only in Mr. Standfast, written toward the end of the war, are any of our heroes lost. In previous books, even the minor characters usually managed to survive -- as long as they were on the side of the good. In Mr. Standfast, one minor character is killed (Lancelot Wake, the honorable pacifist) and one major character, Peter Pienaar, dies. Pienaar had been a constant throughout all three books -- he is mentioned several times in The Thirty-Nine Steps even though the reader does not meet him in person until Greenmantle. He is older than Richard, and he does not adapt to spying as easily as Richard does. Mary Lamington calls him "the best of us." He dies at the end of the book -- heroically, of course, but he is nonetheless dead.

In the book, his death on the Western Front is portrayed as a sacrifice, a symbolism that has been applied to many who died in the trenches of World War I. But as Pienaar is older than the other characters, his death may be said to symbolize much more -- the destruction of pre-war ideas and idealism, and the dawning of a new youth-oriented culture. In the Roaring Twenties, those

young people who had not perished in the war would do their best to forget it. Women, as "Flappers", would cut their hair and dress in clothes which emphasized boyishness or pre-pubescent youth. Modernity ushered in "cigarette smoking, short skirts, obscene dancing, one-piece bathing suits, jazz, psychoanalysis, birth control, and Bolshevism."<sup>161</sup>

Over the course of the Great War, modernity changed the old rules by which society had lived. Battle was no longer glorious. British soldiers came to identify themselves with the individuals in the trench next to them rather than with the amorphous ties to their state. Individualism replaced nationalism. Propaganda became an industry of its own, which could be organized and directed at one's own citizens as well as at any enemy. Games would no longer be used as sensible ways to fight -- whether it was soccer in the trenches or schoolboys confronting Bolshevism.

In John Buchan's novels, as already mentioned, the main characters do not complain about the changing of their world. Any "lament for vanished days and manners" is left up to the peripheral characters. The main characters must adapt to their new philosophical surroundings or perish. As the title Mr. Standfast comes from a character in Pilgrim's Progress, it is ironic that our heroes, having completed their journey, do not find the Pilgrim's

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<sup>161</sup>Lois W. Banner, Women in Modern America, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 149.

heaven; they enter instead the modern age. Perhaps John Buchan was being terribly optimistic. Or perhaps, as irony is one of the hallmarks of literary modernism, that very irony confirms the arrival of modernity.

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## VITA

Susanne Leigh McCaffery, writer and world traveller, has been interested in history ever since she read her mother's copy of Treasure Island. Her subsequent devotion to Robert Louis Stevenson led her to watch Kidnapped -- both movie versions -- as well as read the book. This story, and its sequel Catriona, inspired her fascination with the history of the Jacobite Rebellions, which led her to become a history major and to study abroad at Stirling University in Scotland.

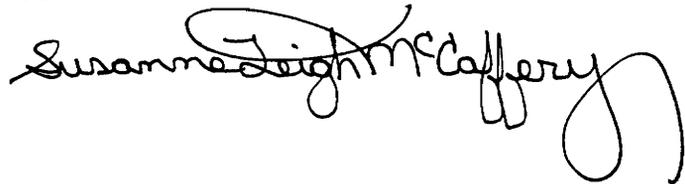
What, pray tell, does this have to do with World War I? Nothing really, but let us not be limited by linear thought. Susanne stumbled across the Robert Powell version of The Thirty-Nine Steps during a middle-school slumber party. Other than a distinct interest in the story (yes, she has seen all three movie versions), and an appreciation of the aesthetic value of Powell and David Warner, nothing of note to her history career occurred. A similar effect can be seen in her viewing of Reilly Ace of Spies (and the extremely aesthetic Sam Neill). Little did she know....

Susanne has always found the posters of the Great War to be extremely evocative, and likewise the poetry. She has tremendous respect for Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and Robert Graves, among others. She desired to come to Virginia Tech to expand her knowledge of these subjects, and to do more research on the Live and Let Live system, which she learned of as an

undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Having enjoyed both her classes and her research, she is thrilled to have completed her thesis and her second Master's Degree. As she has now obtained her B.A., M.L.S., and M.A., she one day hopes to add Phd. and collect the full set. For now she must be content to migrate to Georgia, where her husband -- another recent acquisition she is thrilled to have received from Virginia Tech -- is impatiently awaiting her, and providing AT&T with the majority of their profits.

Having already thanked her husband and family in the acknowledgements, and tiring of referring to herself in the third person, Susanne will close this essay by declaring that her husband is as cute as a pugtail. "Smoke me a kipper. I'll be back for breakfast."<sup>162</sup>

Pax Vobiscum.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susanne Leigh McCaffery". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative flourish at the end.

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<sup>162</sup>Grant Naylor, Red Dwarf: Primordial Soup, (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 51.