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H-France Review Vol. 21 (September 2021), No. 167

Sylvain Bertschy and Philippe Salson, eds. *Les mises en guerre de l'État: 1914-1918 en perspective*. Lyon: ENS Éditions ENS Editions, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, 2018. 361 pp. Tables, maps, illustrations, diagrams, bibliography, and index. €29.00 (pb). ISBN 879-10-362-0045-8.

Review by Elinor Accampo, University of Southern California.

The book is the result of a symposium organized by the Collectif de recherche et de débat international sur la guerre de 1914-1919 (CRID 14-18) that met in the Fall of 2014. CRID formed in 2005 as a counterpoint to the previous two decades of scholarly production from the research center associated with the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne. Underlying much of the Péronnist school's work is the notion that a prewar culture prepared civilians and soldiers for their consent to the unprecedented scale of state violence and deprivation, and for the unprecedented demands of "total war" in general. According to its critics, the cultural methodology underlying this research—largely based on eyewitness accounts—has ignored the complex social contexts that informed wartime human behavior. The researchers associated with CRID advocate a return to social scientific history and quantitative analysis. [1]

To its great credit, this excellent collection takes us beyond an unnecessary and artificial binary of consent versus coercion and unearths a far more complicated reality. Fewer than half the contributors are affiliated with CRID, but all the essays reflect the original call for proposals that specified a focus on social history and empirical and materialist methodologies. One primary goal of the symposium was to move historiography beyond the concept of mobilization, a term the editors find inadequate because it normally refers to the military realm at the outbreak of war, ignoring on-going State intervention through the war's unexpected prolongation. Rather than concerning themselves with why populations participated in a long-term regime of violence and deprivation, these authors look to how, in the processes of adapting to war, the State, local institutions, and individuals succeeded or failed in meeting immediate needs. The idiom "*mises en guerre de l'Etat*" thus replaces the concept of mobilization in seeking to understand "comment l'État fait la guerre et la guerre fait à l'État" (p. 10). As used here, the "State" refers to the "ensemble des agents et des institutions qui luttent pour et travaillent à la concentration des ressources organisationnelles, matérielles et symboliques" (p. 10). It is not a single homogeneous entity, but rather a social space with actors that have diverse resources and oppositional interests.

Part one includes contributions related to State-supported or State-regulated institutions. Nicolas Mariot investigates the wartime paths of alumnae from the École Normale Supérieure of the rue Ulm. Under the patriotic directorship of Ernest Lavisse, the school began preparing its students mentally and physically for war ten years prior to its outbreak through rigorous

patriotic and military training. Those who went to war under the influence of that training paid an especially high toll. As the war dragged on, patriotism among the school's leaders declined and they used private networks to keep former students out of the infantry and seek less dangerous posts for them, thus demonstrating a dramatic change of sentiment over time. Jean-Francois Condette's study of instructional missions in schools close to war zones in the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais provides another instance of institutional diversion from the State's aims, as well as autonomous improvisation. Older men, women, retired teachers, and even refugees fleeing the occupied areas of France and Belgium stepped up to fill the gap left by mobilized teachers, making it possible to reopen schools. The State demanded a new curriculum that was infused with explanations about the "guerre juste" against the "barbarie germanique," and history lessons were to emphasize how France had always "relevée après les heures plus sombres."<sup>[2]</sup> But local schools could not afford the new manuals, and instructors preferred traditional pedagogy as a means of ignoring war and calming the children. Local needs also undermined the State's agenda. Many children had to perform farm work and others left school to earn money digging trenches, producing high absentee rates. This chapter highlights the limits of the State's reach as well as the resilience, ingenuity, spontaneity, and independence with which local populations met their own needs.

In its treatment of citizens and soldiers on the margins of society, the State demonstrated negligence and incompetence. Marie Derrien reveals how the war exacerbated opposition between the State and local powers around the issue of mental asylum management and highlights the State's abnegation of responsibilities toward veterans damaged by their service to the nation. Though the State exercised administrative control, local governments funded the asylums. The number of soldiers needing care for mental illness grew rapidly after the outbreak of war, and finances for their care became ever more strained. The State refused to provide aid because the military believed the war had not caused soldiers' mental illnesses. Derrien's findings point to a deeper problem however: hospitalized mental patients in general were categorized as *incurables* not worthy of financial investment. They were regarded as *morts-vivants*, and their wives were considered widows, although ineligible for pensions.

Unlike the mentally ill, the penal population posed a wartime dilemma the State could not ignore. What was to be done with soldiers and potential soldiers who viewed prison a better fate than the front lines? Valéraine Miloz's contribution shows that managing this population became unwieldy as cases of desertion, refusals to obey commands, verbal assaults, and other infractions increased with the war's outbreak and worsened as it went on. The growing need for frontline soldiers provoked the War Minister to apply a nineteenth-century article in the Code of Military Justice that allowed suspended sentences for criminals incarcerated prior to the war, as well as for soldiers subject to military tribunals after its outbreak. Some officers resisted compliance because they viewed combat as an honor rather than a form of punishment, and because convicts among the ranks undermined discipline. Their deployment in public works also had disastrous results. Miloz describes the army's penitentiary plan as a chaotic failure. The mass use of suspended sentences defied all logic of the penal system meant to remove disorderly soldiers.

Marie-Bénédicte Vincent provides another example of limits to, if not failure of, the *mise en guerre de l'État* in her case study of civilian recruitment in the German city, Fulda. A 1916 law ordered all men between the age of 16 and 60 who were not already in the military or working in war-related industries to register with their municipalities for work assignments in vital sectors of the war economy. A provision allowing workers to change employment for higher salaries clearly

attenuated the coercive nature of this law and created a convenient loophole as well. In Fulda, workers, employers, and the mayor united to defy the law. The municipal council cooperated by providing a list of men, but it included those who were too old, too frail, had moved away, or were already employed in the arms industry. The law failed in its effort to recruit civilians and deepened the already-existing bureaucratic crisis.

Irene Guerrini and Marco Pluviano investigate how the *mise en guerre de l'État* operated in Italian soldiers' use of their leisure time. In their hope to combat moral degeneration, priests organized meeting centers for soldiers. After the disastrous retreat at Caporetto in the fall of 1917, the centers expanded as sites for raising troop morale, providing instruction, and instilling national and patriotic sentiment. The State eventually took over, and the centers became important tools to combat pacifist and socialist propaganda. They promoted a nationalist culture for postwar Italian citizens that was intended to repair political and social divisions of the past. While these centers had little influence on the mentality of soldiers who took advantage of their offerings, postwar fascists used the same organizational techniques to force Italians to participate in the l'Opera nazionale dopolavoro (OND, National Organization of Recreational Activity). This case again highlights autonomy and initiative on the local level, but also reveals continuity in a wartime institutional structure that gained traction after the war.

Peggy Bette's contribution offers a case of successful State intervention that resulted in permanent change. In July 1915, the Minister of Finance approved a project to employ female war victims in State-regulated industries--in this case, tobacco. Employment was reserved for any non-remarried widow of a serviceman "mort pour la France," followed by unmarried or widowed war orphans. The policy of preferential hiring in tobacco overturned a generations-long practice of family dynasties supplying employees. The law reflected the State's perceived debt owed to the war's female victims. Bette analyzes its application in Morlaix (Finistère) and discovers an unintended consequence: the tone in women's requests for employment transformed from that of dependent supplicants begging for charity to entitled citizens demanding rights, "fortes de leur statut de créancières de la nation" (p. 161).

Part two of this volume comprises essays that reveal how, in the urgent need to address war-related crises, the State, local governments, and individuals with private interests could advance their own competing agendas. Stéphane Le Bras's and Pierre Chancerel's contributions analyze State intervention into, respectively, the wine and coal industries, where merchants vehemently opposed interference in the free market. Government monopoly over transportation everywhere interrupted distribution and caused shortages. State requisitions of wine for the frontline soldiers severely disrupted the wine market and State incursion grew deeper over the course of the war, benefiting some producers but causing unrecoverable losses for others. The government centralized distribution and then placed taxes on all "extraordinary" profits resulting from the war. State intervention in this case led to some permanent changes, such as cooperatives and public regulation of distribution circuits.

Coal production was severely reduced because mines were located in German-occupied territories, and the war cut off importations from Germany and the U.K. Coal merchants strongly opposed State takeover of their wholesale commerce, arguing that the lack of expertise among government functionaries would only produce chaos. The government managed to silence opposition by creating the Bureau National des Charbons (BNC) and staffing it with talented experts. Chancerel attributes the BNC's success to the ingenious leadership of Louis Loucheur,

Undersecretary of State for Armaments and War Manufacturing, whose innovative methods won the collaboration of adversaries. Merchant support, however, was contingent on the assumption that the BNC would disband after the war, which it did in 1921.

The *mises en guerre de l'État* also created opportunities for medical science to advance. Sylvan Bertschy and François Buton use the newly available private papers of Claudius Regaud, Director of the short-lived Groupement des services chirurgicaux et scientifiques (GSCS), to open new perspectives on his and the association's activities and their impact on the military health services. Working in two frontline hospitals, doctors in the GSCS sought to integrate new scientific tools such as radiology and bacteriology into their work and diffuse best practices by integrating hospital treatment, laboratory research, and instruction to military doctors. Though the reconciliation of military priorities with a scientific approach to patient treatment formed the core of Regaud's project, in actuality, he abused his power, challenged military hierarchy, and prioritized scientific advancement to the detriment of military and patient needs. While the GSCS failed to reform the Military Health Services, its teachings in the frontline hospitals eventually influenced postwar developments in medical science.

The *mises en guerre de l'État* also opened opportunities for municipal governments, political parties, social reformers, and individuals to take autonomous action that sometimes had a permanent influence on the State. Gérard Bodé's essay recounts how Édouard Herriot, Mayor of Lyon, created a technical school for the re-education of injured and disabled veterans in December 1914, precociously addressing the need to prepare those who had sacrificed their bodies for a dignified future instead of dependence on charity. But the mayor had another agenda, one conceived prior to the war. Inspired by German technical training, he set up his school for long-standing artisan trades, hoping it would become a national model. Such training would allow working-class children to "échapper au servage de l'ignorance et à la brutalité de la machine."<sup>[3]</sup> Although funded by private donations, Herriot's school fell under the administration and supervision of the Minister of War and the city of Lyon. Herriot subsequently proposed schools for girls and women to prepare them for postwar employment.

In German-occupied territories, local agents had no choice but to take action--particularly in managing crises of poverty and food provision--as French State officials (prefects and sub-prefects) fled the invading armies. Philippe Salson compares municipal responses in the cities of Laon and Saint-Quentin, both located in the Aisne. Rather than carrying out pre-war Third Republic policies for equitable administration of welfare to the poor, local notables reverted to less expensive traditional forms of charity. Both municipalities ignored the law of 5 August 1914 stipulating allocations of 1.25 francs per day for wives of mobilized men and offered far less relief. Fortunately victims of the occupation benefitted from the assistance of the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), instigated by Herbert Hoover from the United States, but notables in both cities reverted to traditional practices of the nineteenth century for its distribution, basing judgment on moral assessments of private life, rather than on need. But the two cities also manifested stark differences. Saint-Quentin, occupied for thirty months, spent three times as much per inhabitant than did Laon, which was occupied for fifty months. Pre-existing geographical, sociological, and political situations of each city account for the differences. Both cases illustrate the independence municipalities exercised in occupied territories, as well as a local "parenthesis" in the progressive pre-war evolution of the State's welfare policy.

Bologna, Italy offers another example of how war created opportunities for local politics that the State would have otherwise impeded. Favio Degli Esposti's essay shows how food shortages enabled Socialists, who had won municipal elections just prior to the war, to implement their agenda. They quickly established a municipal bakery, and distributed bread, flour, and milk. They also established a municipal oven. The war had created such a climate of emergency that Socialist policies received neither local opposition nor suppression from the State. They succeeded in part because of the party's national policy that its adherents would "ni adhérer ni saboter" the war effort (p. 265). Socialists of Bologna embraced this stance by refusing to demonstrate patriotism in the belief the masses wanted peace, but they also deployed their municipal power to protect the local population against costs of war. Initially successful—to the point of providing a national model—Bologna's municipality fell victim to opposition from both left and right because of the war's duration. Young militants eventually accused the party of cooperation with State authorities. In collaboration with the local prefect, military authorities assumed policing powers to repress the militants' anti-war propaganda as nationalists spread their own. The seeds of fascism, Esposti concludes, were well in place prior to the war's end.

Alex Dowdall also investigates the food crisis and its political ramifications, in this case among cities along both sides of the western front where shortages were chronic and populations subject to bombardments and military occupations. Municipal authorities, the State, and the army on the Allied side collaborated to guarantee stable food provisioning, reduce social inequalities, and prevent social unrest. Public intervention on a grand scale became the only means of survival for populations threatened by bombardments. The same was true for those on the German-occupied side of the front line: municipal power expanded in unprecedented ways. The action of local agents was particularly urgent because the Germans refused to comply with the Hague conventions dictating the supply of food to populations in occupied territories since the Allied naval blockade prevented food from entering Germany. Here again the CRB provided sufficient rations to prevent mass famine, and local governments intervened more aggressively in controlling markets. As in other examples in this volume, the war modified the role of local authorities in managing citizens' conditions of material life, resulting in a major increase of their power.

The final part of the book offers responses to the essays' major themes. Blaise Wilfert-Portal argues somewhat acerbically that a focus on individual nations perpetuates an "organisation tubulaire du récit historique" (p. 295) that limits our understanding to the internal logic of power only within each nation. He insists that the *mises en guerre de l'État* must include attention to the transnational and global fields of power that drove or impeded State logistics. Such an approach would take historiography beyond the confines of diplomatic history, comparative national accounts, and a "mentalisme panique de l'histoire culturelle" (p. 320). Jean-François Chanet, among other points, notes that an important theme emerging in recent World War I historiography is the "state of exception" that explains national governments violating sovereignty and bypassing the rule of law, thereby setting the stage for interwar totalitarianism. Originally a concept of the Nazi political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), current historians risk teleology in their use of the term by grounding its roots in the war itself. Use of the concept *mises en guerre de l'État* avoids deterministic history because it opens new areas of inquiry and uncovers realms of the possible: opportunities, initiatives, and innovations independent of the State. The final essay by the volume's editors, Sylvain Bertschy and Philippe Salson, reiterates the investigation at a micro-level to nuance "totalisation de la guerre dont le seul moteur serait un inexorable déploiement de l'État" (p. 328). In keeping with Benedict Anderson's concept of

“imagined communities,” the national “identity revolution” occurring with the consolidation of nation-states in the last third of the nineteenth century integrated a rhetoric of rights and duties into daily life. The war itself further promoted the process with a profusion of military and civilian identity papers and cards for purposes of surveillance and provision of benefits. The war thus multiplied national norms that penetrated private lives of citizens—one of the many topics worthy of future research.

The space limitations of this review cannot do justice to the rigorous research methodologies—qualitative as well as quantitative—and the detailed content in these diverse and generally excellent essays. As a whole, the volume offers an invaluable contribution to our understanding of micro-level processes of the Great War. The editors concede that the parameters of their call for papers limited the topics it yielded. One obvious gap is the relationship between the State and the family, as well as gender—Bette’s is the only contribution that touches on the latter. Her essay ends with a reference to women’s value as creators of the nation. How do the *mises en guerre de l’État*, for example, advance our understanding of State policies toward women and children, particularly with regard to encouraging procreation and reducing infant mortality? Another surprising omission is the absence of any consideration of colonies, particularly given Wilfert-Portal’s strong insistence on the global turn. This volume will surely inspire new research approaches to the warfare State. The call for “scientific” history and quantifiable data is, of course, not new—the Annales School paved the way, but its own methodological limits helped lead to the sort of cultural history that CRID counters. One hopes that each historiographical turn will build on the former ones rather than dismiss them.

## LIST OF ESSAYS

Sylvain Bertschy, Philippe Salson, Blaise Wilfert-Portal, Introduction

Part One Encadrer, réguler

Section 1.1 Écoles en guerre

Nicolas Mariot, « La mobilisation normalienne et le « service de l’État »

Jean-François Condette, « Une mise en guerre de l’État enseignant ? Les structures scolaires de la zone non occupée des départements du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais (1914-1918) »

Section 1.2 Discipliner

Marie Derrien, « L’administration face à la prise en charge des « aliénés militaires » internés : une renégociation des rôles entre l’État et les pouvoirs locaux ? »

Valéraine Milloz, « Que faire des soldats condamnés ? Ajustements et modifications du dispositif pénitentiaire militaire »

Section 1.3 Main gauche et main droite de l’État : contrôle et assistance aux populations

Marie-Bénédicte Vincent, « Le renforcement du contrôle étatique sur les civils en Allemagne : le service auxiliaire patriotique à Fulda (1916-1918) »

Irene Guerrini and Marco Pluviano, « L'organisation du temps libre : les foyers du soldat en Italie »

Peggy Bette, « D'assistées à ayants droit : les effets de la mise en oeuvre des politiques d'emplois réservés aux veuves de guerre à la manufacture des tabacs de Morlaix (1914-1923) »

## Part Two Opportunités

### 2.1 Entre quête de profit et quête de protection

Stéphane Le Bras, « Le négoce des vins languedociens face à la mise en guerre de l'État. Opportunités, résistances et engagements (1914-1920) »

Pierre Chancerel, « L'administration du marché du charbon par l'Etat : l'action du Bureau national des charbons »

### Section 2.2 14-18, l'autre temps des réformateurs ?

Sylvain Bertschy and François Buton, « Mise en guerre de médecins et réforme de la médecine militaire. L'expérience du Groupement des services chirurgicaux et scientifiques (1917-1918) »

Gérard Bodé, « La municipalité de Lyon et l'enseignement technique durant la Grand Guerre »

### Section 2.3 Des notables à l'initiative

Philippe Salson, « L'assistance aux démunis dans les comunes occupées : un terrain d'expérimentation municipale ? »

Fabio Degli Esposti, « Un raccourci pour le socialisme ? Une commune socialiste durant la Grande Guerre : Bologne, 1914-1918 »

Alex Dowdall, « Entre improvisation et intervention : le rôle des autorités locales dans ravitaillement en nourriture des villes du front français »

Blaise Wilfert-Portal, « Contrepoint: première mondialisation, internationalisme gouvernemental et champ du pouvoir transnational »

*Jean-François Chanet, « Propos conclusifs sur les logiques ordinaires d'un temps d'exception »*

Sylvain Bertschy et Philippe Saison, « Perspectives sur l'étatisation des sociétés »

## NOTES

[1] For a brief, but helpful summary of the Péronne vs. CRID controversy, see Peter Farrugia, "A Small Truce in a Big War: The Historial de la Grande Guerre and the Interplay of History and Memory." *Canadian Military History* 22/2 (2013).

[2] *Bulletin de l'enseignement primaire du département du Nord*, n°8-9 août-septembre 1917, p. 100-101, as cited on p. 65.

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[3] V. Viet, *La santé en guerre, 1914-1918. Une politique pionnière en univers incertain* (Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2015), pp. 363-368, as cited on p. 227.

Elinor Accampo  
University of Southern California  
[accampo@usc.edu](mailto:accampo@usc.edu)

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ISSN 1553-9172