

GLOBALISING AND LOCALISING THE GREAT WAR

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ABSTRACT: This article is intended to suggest an approach to the global history of the First World War that can provide a method of managing the potentially unwieldy concept of global conflict by understanding it through the war's impact on localities. By concentrating on four relatively small but significant cities; Oxford in England, Halifax in Nova Scotia, Jerusalem in Palestine and Verdun in eastern France, which experienced the war in very different ways, it looks at both the movement of people and things and the symbolic interconnectivities that made the war a 'world war'. This local focus helps challenge both the primacy of self-contained national history and the focus on the violent interaction of the opposing sides which are the more normal ways of narrating the war. It does not deny the usefulness of these traditional structures of narration and explanation but suggest that there are different and complementary ways the war can be viewed, with create different emphasis and chronologies.

There could be few things more 'global' in 1914 than an Indian student studying in Europe. There could be few things more self-consciously 'local' than a Pals battalion. Jogendra Sen was born in Chandernagore in 1887. He studied for a Bachelor's degree in Engineering in Leeds from 1910 to 1913. After graduating he worked as an engineer at the Leeds Whitehall electrical station and continued extension studies. He sang at the Mill Hill chapel and developed a relationship with Miss Mary Cicely Newton. In September 1914, at the age of 28 he joined the Leeds Pals with some of his friends and became a lance corporal in D company of the 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. The regiment trained in North Yorkshire and was shipped to Egypt in December 1915, and then back to France in March 1918. On 22nd May 1916 Sen was killed in action on the Western Front. According to a letter from a comrade rediscovered in 2001, he was apparently hit in the neck by shrapnel.¹ He is buried at Sucerie cemetery. Two months later his comrades came close to being wiped out on 1 July 1916 on the Somme and most of those who had enlisted with him were dead. As a result his story was largely lost until it was rediscovered in the early twentieth century.²

¹ The best summary account of Sen's military service can be found on the Leeds Pals website produced by Stephen and Sam Wood which also includes a letter from Harry Burniston to his father describing Sen's death in some detail: www.leeds-pals.com/soldiers/jogendra-sen; www.leeds-pals.com/soldiers/harry-burniston. Consulted 27th September 2016. Burniston was himself killed on 1 July 1916.

² Most of the story was pieced together after Professor Santanu Das gave a lecture at Leeds University mentioning an exhibit of Sen's possessions in the Chadernagore museum. See *Yorkshire Post*, 6 March 2015. I am indebted to Professor Das for bringing this story to my attention.

Sen's story throws light on many issues. It illustrates structural racism in the British Empire. As a Bengali he wasn't considered one of the 'martial races' and would have found it hard to enlist as an infantryman in the Indian Army. Yet at the same time, despite being highly educated, he was blocked from becoming an officer in the British Army on account of his colour. Despite this experience of prejudice, he enlisted and was killed, and his family proudly preserved his memory which was displayed to the public in India. That his story came fully to light during the centenary period also tells us much about the interactions between academic history and public memory today.

This story then is one of two local histories, one in West Yorkshire and one in Bengal, and also of the global history of the British Empire. It is also a story within two 'national' histories, of the UK and India, but it fits only awkwardly into those, which is one reason that it was marginalized for so long. In a further twist, Chandernagore in 1914 was a tiny enclave in the suburbs of Calcutta that was actually part of French India. Technically Sen was killed in action in 1916 on what was defined at the time as his 'home' soil. Does this story also belong to the history of France?

The 'Glocal' is a popular concept in certain academic circles. The origins of this idea are apparently in studies of Japan which suggested that global cultural and material forms became adapted in their use at a local level.³ The term begins in the literature as descriptive although today it tends to be more prescriptive as an approved response to the pressures of globalization.⁴ Still, early use of the term which stressed the co-presence of universal and particularizing tendencies may be useful to historians and even more so the suggestion that 'globalizing' tendencies may not simply be best understood in their local manifestations but may in fact *only* be comprehensible in that fashion.

Global history hasn't generally dealt explicitly with world wars. Examining *The Journal of World History* reveals very few articles. The awkward relationship between global history and 'globalization' has perhaps muddled the waters; the latter term is still somewhat freighted with unacknowledged 'Manchester School' assumptions about peaceful interactions.⁵ By contrast, the historiography of the First World War has recently begun at least a modest global turn. There have been important articles by Hew Strachan and recently by Oliver Gagnon and Pierre Purseigle.⁶ Two major synthetic overviews by William Storey

³ For a useful overview of the emergence of the term see C. K. Sharma, 'Emerging Dimensions of the Decentralization Debate' *Indian Journal of Federal Studies* 19 (2009), 47–65.

⁴ Globalization is itself a deeply problematic concept. See M. Veseth, *Globaloney: Unravelling the myths of globalization* (Lanham MD, 2005).

⁵ See some scathing comments by David Bell, 'This is what happens when historians over use the idea of network', *New Republic*, 26 October 2013. In the generally excellent J. Belich et al (eds.) *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford, 2016) the only index entry for 'war' is 'and market integration'.

⁶ H. Strachan, 'The First World War as a Global War', *First World War Studies* 1 (2010), 3–14; O. Campagnon and P. Purseigle, 'Geographies de Mobilisation et territoires de belligerence durant la Premiere Guerre Mondiale' *Annales* 71 (2016), 39–63.

and Lawrence Sondhaus have emphasized the global dimension.⁷ There are also an increasing number of edited collections which are explicitly global in outlook.⁸

This article will approach the global differently, by viewing it through the ‘local’ lens of four medium size cities. These cities are Oxford, Halifax in Nova Scotia, Jerusalem and Verdun. These were typical urban centres of the early twentieth century comparable in terms of size (Oxford had 53,000 population in 1914, Halifax about the same, Jerusalem 80,000 including suburbs, Verdun had a small civilian population in 1914 – about 13,000 – but a significant garrison of more than 25,000 and the Verdun fortified zone also included a dozen villages). They form opposed binaries. Two of these cities were well behind the lines as usually conceived and two were within the main theatres of operations, two were physically devastated by the war and two were mostly unscathed, two experienced traumatic suffering on the part of the civilian population and two less so, two were in Europe and two outside it. All of them have good documentation and were large enough to have interesting stories connected in multiple ways to the global history of the war.

I Oxford

The story of Jogendra Sen finds multiple mirrors in the experience of Oxford. This should not be surprising in a university town that saw itself as the intellectual hub of the Imperial project. Non-white students seeking to enlist found themselves negotiating imperial prejudice with varying results. The New Zealand-educated Fijian Lala Sukuna studying History at Wadham was told that the enlistment of Pacific islanders into the British army was not considered responsible. As a result, he enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. After being wounded in combat and winning the Croix de Guerre he returned to Fiji where he was allowed to join a Fijian labour battalion in 1916.⁹

Hardit Malik Singh, who had read History at Balliol, served with the French Red Cross in 1916 and then applied to join the French air service; his Oxford tutor, embarrassed by the situation, pulled strings for him to be allowed to join the British Royal Flying Corps. The Balliol archives have a picture of him in uniform visiting the college in 1918.¹⁰ He won six victories and became the only Indian ‘ace’ to survive the First World War. He went on to be Indian Ambassador to France after independence.

Perhaps most famous of all is Norman Manley. A Jamaican Rhodes Scholar studying law at Jesus he enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery at Deptford with his younger brother Roy.

⁷ W. K. Storey, *The First World War: A Concise Global History* (Lanham, 2009); L. Sondhaus, *World War I: The Global Revolution* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁸ J. Suchoples and S. James (eds) *Re-visiting World War I* (New York, 2016); M. Latkitch, S. Reitmar and K. Seidel (eds), *Bellicose Entanglements 1914: The Great War as Global War* (Zurich, 2015). The new three volume *Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014) edited by Jay Winter has also been at least partially configured as global history.

⁹ D. Scarr, *Ratu Sukuna, Soldier Statesman, Man of two worlds* (1980).

¹⁰ H. S. Malik, *A Little work, a little play: The autobiography of H. S. Malik* (New Delhi, 2010).

Roy was killed in action in front of Norman at the battle of Passchendaele; Norman went on to become the first Prime Minister of Jamaica.¹¹

Of course in crude numerical terms the overseas white scholars were far more significant. No less than nine of the Rhodesian Rhodes scholars were killed in the First World War out of a total of 57 Rhodes scholars killed serving on both sides, including eight of the 59 Germans. Of the US Rhodes Scholars in 1914, 19 would join Belgian Relief, 18 the American Ambulance service, 6 the YMCA and 2 the Red Cross. More than 300 US Rhodes scholars served in the war either in the armed forces or civilian service or both.

Just as Oxford students from around the world enlisted to participate in the European struggle, so Oxford University students, past and current, participated in a global war. The first seven pages of the University Roll of Service list graduates serving at Gallipoli, Salonika, Italy, Mesopotamia, India, Egypt and Palestine and others serving in South, West and East Africa, Persia, Malta and the Hijaz. This is only A-C for a single college. Furthermore, whilst over 70% of Oxford graduates did serve on the Western Front a significant number did so serving with foreign, Imperial and Dominion forces.

Two Oxford graduates were linked together in a murkier affair. In 1916 Prince Felix Yusopov, who had read English and Forestry at University College, and who had founded the Oxford University Russian Society prior to the First World War, claimed responsibility for the murder of Grigory Rasputin as a patriotic act to prevent Rasputin in conjunction with the Tsarina from undermining the Russian war effort. Yusopov was certainly in regular contact in Petrograd with his friend from Oxford Oswald Rayner (Oriel College) who was there with the British Secret Intelligence Service. Rumours that Rayner instigated or possibly even carried out the killing of Rasputin are undocumented but the Oxford connection is unquestionable.¹²

The most famous of all Oxford graduates in the global struggle was Thomas Edward Lawrence. Whilst planning operations in the Jordanian desert he mused, 'The special arts of tribal raiding and the details of food halts and pasturage ... division of the spoils, feuds and march order were much outside the syllabus of the Oxford School of Modern History'.¹³ This was only partly true: his undergraduate thesis on crusader castles had been what had first brought him to the region and begun his relationship with the Arabs. The wartime Arab Bureau was a very incestuous Oxford affair. David Hogarth, the acting director from 1916, was the Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Kinahan Cornwallis, his deputy, had been President of the University Athletics Club, Gertrude Bell was a graduate of Lady Margaret Hall, and Aubrey Herbert belonged to a circle of prominent Balliol men.

T. E. Lawrence had additional Oxford credentials: he was not only an alumnus of the university, he was a son of the town. His name appears on the Oxford Boys School Roll of Service, alongside the names of his two brothers who were killed in the war. This grammar school had been founded by T.H. Green as a service to the town. By 1914 it had become a vital part in the life of the Oxford bourgeoisie and even the aspiring working class. The Roll of Service traces the imperial and international destinations of the school's alumni in their

¹¹ S. Bourne, *Black Poppies: Britain's Black Communities and the First World War* (Stroud, 2014), 56–62.

¹² Chris Danziger, 'The Oxford Alumnus who helped to assassinate Rasputin', *Oxford Today*, 12 December 2016

¹³ T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Privately printed 1926; reprinted 2000), 368.

wartime manifestations: nine old boys served as Indian army officers, eighteen in the Canadian forces, nine in the Australian, three in the South African and one each in the New Zealand and Rhodesian. There was also a major in the British West Indies Regiment and a lieutenant in the South African Native Labour Force. One old boy served as a doctor in the American army, two in the Belgian forces and another in the French Air Service. Two more were in the Calcutta local defence force and one in the Nigerian. And of course Lawrence served as a 'Colonel of the special reserve' attached to the Hashemite Arab army.¹⁴ Together these services in non-British forces made up just under 10% of the total, similar overall to those who had served in the most local forces, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars. But the 'Ox and Bucks' itself had a global war with battalions serving in Salonika, Mesopotamia and in the intervention in Russia. There are 51 men of the 'Ox and Bucks' buried at Kut el Amara where the 1st Battalion passed into captivity and many more would die without known graves on the subsequent death march.¹⁵

The school Roll of Service also includes those from the school who had served in a civil capacity. The most intriguing story is that of J. Arthur Salter. Salter was a figure embedded in the very heart of Oxford; his father was head of the prominent local boat building firm and had served as Mayor of the city. Salter took a First in Literae Humiores at Brasenose in 1903. He joined the civil service and was posted to the transport department of the Admiralty and at the outbreak of war was recalled to become director of ship requisitioning. With the creation of a Ministry of Shipping he became the key civil servant in managing a crucial part of the British Empire's global effort and in 1917 he was sent to Washington to advise on the expansion of US merchant ship building. He ended the war in Paris where he chaired the Allied Maritime Transport executive, assisted by a young Jean Monnet.¹⁶ Salter's global significance continued through the Peace Conference and beyond in helping to organize the maritime transport for the massive humanitarian efforts of 1919–1920 and becoming the first head of the economic secretariat of the League of Nations. In Paris he would have found himself potentially reunited with the younger OBS alumnus, Lawrence, who was present at the peace talks as an advisor to the Hashemites.

The existence of educational spaces and their underutilization due to the enlistment of students prompted other developments. For example, Oxford became home to No 2 School Military Aeronautics in 1916 in part because the University Museum on Parks Road was available for classrooms and colleges could accommodate cadets. Best of all, it was in the vicinity of a suitable landing field on Port Meadow near Wolvercote. The initial cadets were from the UK and throughout the Dominions. Whilst billeted at Brasenose, Wilbert Gilroy from Winnipeg wrote to his sister on 9 October 1916 that 'the old colleges certainly have

¹⁴ The Roll of Service is today in the George Street building that houses the Oxford History Faculty.

¹⁵ In total 541 men of the 'Ox and Bucks' are listed on memorial registers in Iraq, many without known graves. <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx>

¹⁶ D. Rickett, 'Salter (James) Arthur, Baron Salter', www.oxforddnb.com; J. A. Salter, *Allied Shipping Control: An experiment in International Administration* (Oxford, 1921).

their peculiarities, all nooks and corners, one has to stoop to get thru the old passage ways ... I am not terribly keen on it'.¹⁷

In September 1917 the Royal Flying Corps flyers were joined by 53 American cadets from the air branch of the National Guard who became the 1st American detachment; the 2nd American detachment, 151 strong, arrived a month later. In the second group were Laurence Callaghan, John McGavock Grider and Elliot White-Spring who would be immortalized in the classic interwar publication *War Birds*.¹⁸ Perhaps less famously a small number of cadets had been sent by Tsarist Russia for training in the UK, these men continued their training on behalf of the Provisional Government in 1917–1918 and then ultimately were returned to Russia as aviators for the White forces.¹⁹

Even more significant was the use of university buildings as medical facilities. At the start of the war the University Examination Schools were commandeered for use as a military hospital, the 3rd Southern General. The first wounded began to arrive before the end of 1914, not only British soldiers but also wounded Belgians, and by 1916 with the start of the battle of the Somme the hospital, by this point expanded to include Somerville College and the Town Hall, began to accommodate soldiers not just from the UK but from all of the British Dominions.²⁰ For example large numbers of New Zealanders arrived in the aftermath of the battles of September and October 1916. An interesting relic of this Dominion presence can be found in the autograph book of Nurse Lily Green – several pages are the work of Dominion troops including a picture of a Kookaburra drawn by C. J. Macdonald of New South Wales in January 1917.²¹

Those who succumbed to their wounds or disease in the Oxford hospitals were buried at Botley cemetery just outside the city boundaries. The cemetery holds the graves of thirteen Canadians, nine New Zealanders, eight Australians, one South African, five Belgians and four Germans, these non-British graves making up nearly a quarter of all those buried in the cemetery. This is not a fully reliable guide to the proportion of those who were treated in the hospital or died there; the British dead were more likely to be claimed for burial by relatives. Nevertheless, it is still clear that a large and visible proportion of the wounded in Oxford were from overseas.

It was not only foreign soldiers but civilians who were swept by the tides of war to the banks of the Isis. As early as October 1914 200 Belgian refugees had arrived in the city. More unusual was the presence of a large contingent of Serbians from May 1916. Survivors from the harrowing 1915 retreat across Albania were housed in Oxford due to the intervention of Sidney Ball of St John's College, head of the Serbian Relief Committee, housed at St John's, Wycliffe Hall and Lady Margaret Hall. In 1918 the Anglo-Catholics of St

¹⁷ www.canadianletters.ca/content/document-1437 W. H. Gilroy to Em. 9th October 1916.

¹⁸ J. MacGravock Grider, *War Birds: Diary of an unknown Aviator* (New York, 1926).

¹⁹ P. Wright, *RFC in Oxfordshire* (pamphlet privately printed, Oxford 1985); I have benefited from conversations with Peter Smith of the Wolvercote WW1 Aerodrome Memorial project on this subject.

²⁰ M. Graham, *Oxford in the Great War* (Barnsley, 2014), 48–56.

²¹ www.oxfordatwar.uk/items/show/3

Stephen's house supported the establishment of a seminary there to train teenage Serbians for the Orthodox priesthood.²²

The latter years of the war saw significant numbers of American and Dominion officers and soldiers attending training courses in the city. In the immediate aftermath of the war an influx of American officers was allowed to study at the university before returning to the USA, amongst them the future novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald. The global nature of Oxford's war continued through to memorialization. The largest donation for the funding for the Christ Church War Memorial Gardens was provided by King Vajiravudh of Siam. He had studied history and law at 'the House' between 1899 and 1901 although he never took a degree. The king had gone on to Sandhurst and served as an officer in the Durham Light Infantry. He subsequently played a crucial role in thinking through the kingdom's effective contribution to the allied war effort. His £500 gift in 1920 was more than four times that of the next nearest donation and one eighth of the total raised. It was crucial in allowing the project to proceed.²³

II Halifax NS

The story of Oxford at war is in some respects undramatic: there is no single day that dominates the experience or the memory. By contrast the wartime story of Halifax, Nova Scotia is dominated by a single event. The Halifax Harbour explosion of 6 December 1917 literally transformed the city. One of the largest nonnuclear explosions in human history, it generated shock waves, fires which destroyed a third of the city and a tsunami, which between them claimed 1,800 lives in a matter of minutes and left thousands more injured and homeless. Global history, perhaps betraying a residual Braudelianism, can have a weakness in dealing with 'events'. Yet treated correctly events can be incredibly revealing of global connections and significance.²⁴

The cause of the great explosion shows the significance of global maritime transport to wartime Europe. The ships that collided were two different examples of this. One, SS *Mont-Blanc*, was a French munition ship owned by the French state shipping service the CGT, loaded with a lethal quantity of volatile explosives. The other, SS *Imo*, was a Norwegian vessel that had been chartered by Belgian Relief and was still in ballast as it awaited permission to sail on to New York to pick up its cargo. Whatever individual decisions led to the fatal collision, the underlying cause was the increasing congestion of

²² J. M. Winter, 'Oxford in the Great war' in B. Harrison (ed.) *The History of the University of Oxford; Volume VIII The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1994) 1–25.

²³ I am grateful to Charles Bertlin of Balliol College for the reference to a letter from the Siamese Legation dated 1 March 1920, Christ Church Archives, BR/1/1 GB XV. C3. It was accompanied by the king's personal cheque.

²⁴ W. H. Sewell, *The Logics of History* (Chicago 2005). For an eccentric but clever use of 'events' to make 'global' points, see J. MacDougall, *Let the sea make a noise: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to Macarthur* (New York, 1993).

Halifax harbour as the U-Boat threat enforced the requirement of convoy assembly on Atlantic shipping.²⁵

The victims of the explosion included the very local and the global as befitted a significant Atlantic port. Illustrating the local, the post explosion tsunami obliterated the impoverished indigenous Miqmaq village on the Dartmouth shore, the last distinctive remnant of the First Nation presence in the area. On the global axis, amongst the dead was Matteo Ciccione, a 25-year-old stevedore from Italy. Correspondence with his illiterate father, conducted in all probability through the good offices of the parish priest, revealed that Matteo had been sending remittances to his family in the old country and that they were therefore entitled to a share of the compensation.²⁶

The explosion was briefly a global news story and this was reflected in a genuinely global outpouring of sympathy and charity. The Australian government donated \$250,000 dollars to the relief effort, *The Times* in London raised the equivalent of 600,000 Canadian dollars and George V sent a personal donation of £5,000. Donations came from the West Indies and Latin America as well as all the Canadian provinces. Perhaps the most striking support came from the USA. The city of Chicago donated \$125,000 but it was the city of Boston and the state of Massachusetts that led the effort with \$750,000 in donations and a large volunteer effort by medical staff. Within a day of the explosion medical teams were setting out from Boston for the city and the Governor of Massachusetts had pledged all possible support.²⁷

The explosion dramatically illustrated the importance of Halifax as the hub for a reconfigured network of Atlantic and global communications. On that same day RMS *Olympic*, the sister ship of the *Titanic*, was further back in the Bedford Basin planning to load some 5,000 Chinese members of the Labour Corps. It was standard practice for the Chinese labourers recruited in Shandong to be shipped across the Pacific to British Columbia and then moved across Canada by train before embarking at Halifax for Europe. The total number moved in this fashion was 85,000, more than half the total of those sent to Europe.²⁸

This in turn was one part of a far larger human movement. Halifax was a major port of embarkation for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, many of whom were returning migrants, and it was occasionally an assembly point for US forces. Estimates of the total number sent to Europe passing through the port are in excess of 350,000. Halifax was also infamously the inadvertent and disastrous destination for a contingent of Jamaican soldiers. In March 1916 the SS *Verdala* carrying over 1,000 men of the 3rd Jamaican contingent of the British West Indies Regiment bound for the UK was diverted north to Halifax after a U-Boat sighting. The men were wearing light tropical uniforms and by the time they arrived in Halifax hundreds were suffering from severe hypothermia.²⁹ One of them, Eugent Clark,

²⁵ J. Kitz, *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion and the Road to Recovery* (Halifax NS, 2004). For context see Salter, *Allied Shipping*, 122–7, 144–7; M.B. Miller, http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/sea_transport_and_supply.

²⁶ Kitz, *Shattered City*, 184–5.

²⁷ Kitz, *Shattered City*, 82–95.

²⁸ Guoqi Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front; Chinese workers in the Great War* (Cambridge MA, 2011).

²⁹ The official report by the Colonial Office from 29 June 1916 is TNA, CO 318/338/32.

described the shock at arriving in a snow covered port. 106 of the Jamaicans ended up having amputations caused by their frostbite.³⁰

Whilst curtailed, civilian Atlantic travel did not cease. In April 1917 Halifax briefly played a part as an off stage locale in the unfolding Russian Revolution. Leon Trotsky, his wife and his two sons were sailing from New York exile to Norway with the intention of returning to Russia when he was stopped and interrogated by agents of the British security services when his ship put in to Halifax. Trotsky was sent to an internment camp in nearby Amherst whilst his family were held in the city. According to Trotsky in his memoir even his two sons, nine and eleven years old, were kept under surveillance. The request to detain the well-known agitator on the far side of the Atlantic had come from the new Provisional Government, but it quickly backfired when the Petrograd Soviet, which idolized Trotsky for his role in 1905, began to publicly protest the British action and demand that the government act on his behalf. George Buchanan, the British Ambassador in Petrograd, initially responded that it was a lack of shipping that prevented Trotsky from returning but was allegedly swayed by the growth of anti-British feeling in the city, including threats to British businessmen, to pass on Miliukov's request for the release of Trotsky and his family.³¹

Perhaps the most striking contingent to pass through Halifax on their way to the theatre of war were the volunteers of the 39th Royal Fusiliers: the second battalion of the 'Jewish Legion'. Recruited in the USA and Canada they also included a small number of Zionist settlers from Palestine who had travelled to the USA in 1915. One of these, David Ben Gurion, had initially intended to raise a Jewish Legion to fight on behalf of the Ottomans but had changed his plans after US entry into the war and the Balfour Declaration. The unit had originally been earmarked to train in Halifax but after the explosion the training camp was transferred to Windsor. Nevertheless, they spent some days pre-embarkation at the Halifax citadel in spring 1918, from which the Russian born settler Ben Zvi wrote to his wife:

The hills and the bay remind me of the Bosphorous, near Constantinople, a multitude of ships go back and forth ... whenever I see the ships my heart expands within me, I gaze towards the East, across the ocean and in my mind's eye see my homeland, half of it redeemed and half of it enslaved.³²

Within a few months he would arrive in the half redeemed 'homeland' along with other soldiers from every corner of the world.

III Jerusalem

³⁰ Bourne, *Black Poppies*, 66–69 citing a TV interview. Eugent Clarke survived to 108.

³¹ A. D. Harvey, 'Trotsky at Halifax April 1917' *Archives* 22 (1997), 170–174 presents key British government documents; <http://ns1758.ca/quote/trotsky1917.html> gathers the main memoir sources including Trotsky and Buchanan.

³² Cited in G. J. J. Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish community* (Hanover, NH, 1993), 194. Ben Zvi was born in Poltava and emigrated to Jaffa in 1911 but studied in Istanbul from 1912 to 1914. He was expelled from Palestine in 1915 and joined Ben Gurion in New York. He went on to become the second President of Israel.

The first man to fly the Star of David flag in Jerusalem was not a member of the Jewish Legion but a New Zealander serving in an Australian medical unit. Corporal Louis Isaac Salek, from a Jewish family in Wellington but enlisted in Melbourne, had commissioned a flag to be made whilst stationed in Alexandria from an Egyptian Jewish tailor. The flag only flew for a very short time from David's Tower before taken down by British troops in order not to provoke the population.³³

Jerusalem had a double existence as both a real and symbolic space at least as far back as St Augustine. The First World War did nothing to reduce this duality and in fact intensified it. Jerusalem is a particularly well documented case study for the interaction of the local and global due to the superb work of Abigail Jacobsen, Roberto Mazza and Salim Tamari.

The permanent population of Jerusalem in 1913 was about 80,000, of which nearly two thirds were Jews, many of whom had been born outside Palestine. The Arab Muslim and Christian population of the city were roughly equal parts of the remainder. The city also played host annually to upwards of 40,000 pilgrims, perhaps a third of whom were Russian subjects, and some 7,000 secular tourists. There were also perhaps a few thousand permanent foreign residents connected to the consulates, businesses, education and above all the churches.³⁴

The first impact of the war on Jerusalem was a conscious 'deglobalisation' of the city. Even before the formal outbreak of war, on 1 October 1914 the Ottoman governor announced the end of the capitulations, the formal agreements that had given the British, French and Russians substantial power and influence in the city and which played an important role in the local provision of health care and education.³⁵ This was soon followed by the expulsion of enemy aliens including 'foreign Zionists'. A city that had its rationale as a pilgrimage hub could not avoid social and economic damage from isolation. In 1915 the Spanish Consul Ballobar noted in his diary that the procession of the Holy Fire was not as lively as normal due to the absence of foreign pilgrims.³⁶

A particularly sad local effect was the requisition of the Anglican St George's College by the Ottoman military; the closure of the college playing fields removed what was the only real playground in the entire city from the children of Jerusalem.³⁷

Yet by 1916 new outsiders were beginning to come to the city. Haggard survivors of the Armenian genocide were taking shelter in the Armenian quarter, doubling the Armenian population of the city, and German and Austrian troops arrived to support the Ottomans on the Sinai front. But it was the capture of the city by British Imperial forces in December 1917 which did most to reconnect the city to the wider world.

³³ Louis Salek's official war record can be found at australiaremembers.net.au/anzacstories. For the flag, see *Haaretz*, 11 December 2014.

³⁴ R. Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (2014), 37, 78–81.

³⁵ R. Mazza, 'Churches at War: The Impact of the First World War on the Christian Institutions of Jerusalem 1914–20', *Middle East Studies* 45 (2009), 207–227.

³⁶ Mazza, 'Churches at War', 214.

³⁷ Mazza, *Jerusalem*, 59.

Although the idea that the capture of Jerusalem as a ‘Christmas present to the British people’ preserving morale in the terrible winter of 1917 is overplayed, Justin Fantauzzo’s survey of opinion on the capture of Jerusalem around the British Empire shows some very strong responses. In Toronto, Canon Gould lectured that the capture of Jerusalem, along with British control of Sinai and Mecca would give the Empire unprecedented prestige as the protector of the Holy Sites of the Abrahamic Faiths, whilst in New Zealand the canon of Otago looked forward to the conversion of Jerusalem’s Muslims. Opinion in Ireland was divided: the moderate nationalist Freeman’s journal rejoiced in the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre from the Turks and remarkably suggested that this one act would go a long way to erasing England’s crimes, whilst the *Connaught Telegraph* shuddered at the idea of the Holy City falling to the Protestant heirs of Cromwell.³⁸

The British control of the site did indeed cause some concern for the Papacy. The capture of Jerusalem had been briefly marked by the ringing of church bells and *Te Deums* in Rome, perhaps a required gesture towards Italy’s ally (notably St Peter’s was an exception). But the Balfour Declaration triggered a good deal of hostility, notwithstanding the clause about not interfering with existing religious rights. Benedict XV was deeply concerned that all existing Catholic privileges be upheld, but was ambivalent to the extraordinary proposal from Cardinal Mercier of Belgium that the best way to protect these would be for that devoutly Catholic nation to be awarded the League of Nations Mandate over Palestine.³⁹

The sense of symbolic importance of the conquest of Jerusalem was not limited to the Christian nations. The *Hindustan* newspaper in Lahore described it as ‘the greatest event in the history of the world’ before taking aim at local Muslims who were calling for Palestine to be put under Muslim rule.⁴⁰ American Jewish opinion was galvanized by the combination of the recent Balfour Declaration with the extraordinary coincidence that Allenby had entered Jerusalem on the last day of Hannukkah, the Jewish festival dedicated to the liberation and cleansing of the city by the Maccabees

The war brought the world to Jerusalem but also took Jerusalem residents to far flung places. Aref Shehadeh, the middle son of a Jerusalem merchant family, had left prior to the war to edit a Constantinople newspaper. Just before the war he had enlisted as an Ottoman military cadet. He was then captured by the Russians after the Ottoman defeat at Erzerum and sent to a POW camp in Krasnayorsk, deep in Siberia. Whilst in the camp he was able to stay in touch with his family in Jerusalem courtesy of the Red Crescent. From them he was kept informed about the deteriorating conditions in the city and he also became aware of the Arab revolt. In the camp he helped edit an Arabic language paper *Naqatu Allah* which served to increasingly differentiate Arab from Turkish Ottomans and after the Bolshevik Revolution he set out with other Arab prisoners to join the Shariffian forces by a complicated Hejira via Manchuria, China, Japan, India and Egypt. Having literally travelled half way around the

³⁸ J. Fantauzzo, ‘The Finest Feats of the War? The Captures of Baghdad and Jerusalem during the First World War and Public Opinion throughout the British Empire’, *War in History* 24 (2017), 64–86.

³⁹ J. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism 1914–1958* (Oxford, 2014) 88–89.

⁴⁰ A. Jarboe, *The War News in India: The Punjabi Press during World War I* (2016), 173.

world he was able to return to his father's shop in Jerusalem, now under British control in 1918.⁴¹

From 1915 until 1918 Jerusalem was caught up in a wider humanitarian crisis in the region. One of the earliest major humanitarian interventions in the war was the shipment to Palestine of relief supplies by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Responding to an urgent appeal from the US Ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, a committee organized by the banker Jacob Schiff raised \$50,000 in November 1914. In April 1915, just as famine conditions were first starting to emerge in the Ottoman Empire, the relief ship *Voulcan* arrived at Jaffa with 900 tons of food. Through a deal with the Ottoman authorities the relief was distributed to each of the main communities, 55% to the Jewish community and the rest to Christians and Muslims. 60% of the aid to Jews and a significant amount of that to the others was delivered to Jerusalem where the American consul Dr Glazebrook oversaw the distribution.⁴² American Jews were not the only Americans providing crucial assistance. The Orthodox churches had been cut off from their principle support from Russia and again it was Americans who stepped into the breach.

The conquest of the city by the British in December 1917 changed the international humanitarian landscape. The American Red Cross were able to re-emerge as a major force and the Syrian and Palestine Relief Fund was finally able to operate in the territory for which it had been founded more than a year earlier.⁴³ The SPRF was a new, interdenominational relief fund with support across the British Dominions, as this extract a New Zealand Diocesan Magazine from February 1918 makes clear:

Our warmest sympathy must go out to our fellow Christians of the Greek Orthodox Church, the oldest church in the world. The Relief Fund administers relief to all of the oppressed utterly irrespective of creed...Apart from our sympathy and support from the point of view of Christian love and duty it is also to be considered what a great effect Christian charity and British charity will have upon the those Moslems and Jews who will be the recipients of it.⁴⁴

Jerusalem would become a test case for the propaganda value of enlightened 'humanitarian imperialism' but rapidly became an embarrassing failure.⁴⁵

IV Verdun

The Ottoman army group commander forced to abandon Jerusalem to the British in 1917 was Erich von Falkenhayn. He had found himself exiled to this perceived secondary theatre of

⁴¹ S. Tamari, *The Year of the Locust. A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley Ca., 2011), 68–77.

⁴² A. Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY, 2011) 41–52.

⁴³ W. Canton, *Dawn in Palestine* (London, 1918).

⁴⁴ *Waipu Church Gazette*, Volume VIII, Issue 8. 1 February 1918, 63. Digitized by NZLNA.

⁴⁵ See for example Jacobson, *From Empire*, 145–7.

war as a result of strategic failure in his post of Chief of Staff of the Imperial German Army. Verdun, the battle that doomed him is my final site.

The classic locus of military history is the battlefield. In some ways this is a highly obvious focal point for an attempt to globalize and localize. Battle lay at the end of the chains of global connections where they came into contact with local conditions. Some battlefields of the war had a very obviously global appearance: Ypres in particular saw almost every element of the French and British Empires pass through and the Salonica front was notoriously polyglot. But it is perhaps more interesting to test the concept on a less obvious case, to deliberately take a case that is generally understood through a strongly 'national' prism. Verdun was perhaps the most nationally mythic battle of the war, for France initially, then increasingly also for Germany and then ultimately as a site of Franco-German reconciliation which gave it a centrality in a Franco-German idea of Europe.⁴⁶ Despite its designation as a 'world capital of peace' Verdun is rarely considered as a global rather than a European battlefield.

The 'whitewashing' of the battle remains a live issue in French politics: the belated creation of a Muslim memorial on the battlefield met with resistance from the *Front National*. So did the proposal to include the French rapper Alpha Diallo 'Black M' in the centenary memorial programme. His performance was cancelled due to the perception that his 'anti-French' attitudes might 'offend veterans', even though he had greeted the original invitation by pointing out that he was proud his African grandfather had fought for France in the Second World War.⁴⁷

Verdun was a battle which did draw in men (and some women) from vast distances. The final recapture of Fort Douaumont in October 1916, was achieved in large part by the Moroccan Colonial Infantry Regiment, Tirailleurs Senegalaise, and even a small number of Somalis from Djibouti.⁴⁸ The aftermath of this attack was recorded by a member of another significant non-French contingent, the English nurses at the Red Cross urgent cases hospital at Revigny, 56 km behind the line. In their house magazine, *Faux Mirroir*, Sister S.M. Edwards described the casualties, 'from far off Brittany', 'from the heights of Savoy', 'from the sunny skies and orange groves of the Cote-Azure' but also 'Abdallah from far away Tunis and Bamboula from still farther Senegal'.⁴⁹

Combat troops represented only one part of the equation. Verdun represented a global logistical revolution, the first time a major field army had been maintained by road transport and this itself represented an achievement made possible by globalization. Horses and fodder, trains and coal could be provided from Western European resources but petroleum and

⁴⁶ For the mythic nature of Verdun for France see I. Ousby, *The Road to Verdun: France, Nationalism and the First World War* (2002). For Germany, B. Hüppauf, 'Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after the First World War', *War and Society* 6 (1988), 70–103. For insight into the politics of the famous Mitterrand/Kohl hand holding at Verdun in 1984, see <http://www.mitterrand.org/Verdun-le-geste-Mitterrand-Kohl.html>. For a long view see S. Barcellini, 'Mémoire et Mémoires de Verdun 1916–1996', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 182 (1996), 77–98.

⁴⁷ www.lefigaro.fr/musique/2016/07/13, 13 Juliet 2016.

⁴⁸ M. Bekraoui, 'Les Soldats Marocains dans la Bataille de Verdun', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 182 (1996), 39–44; J. Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, NH, 199), 121.

⁴⁹ Cited in M. Brown, *Verdun 1916* (Stroud, 1999), 154.

lubrication for the internal combustion engines and rubber for tires could not. On 8 July 1916 *Scientific American* published an article on 'supplying Verdun' illustrated with a picture of an 'American-made' truck being loaded with beef carcasses.

'Neutral' Americans were deeply involved at Verdun. The American Field Ambulance service served right up to the front lines. One of the volunteers, Henry Beston, had visited the 'sleepy provincial city' before the war. In 1916 he vividly described the scene a few kilometres outside the citadel as the last civilians fled: 'Refugees tramped past in the darkness. By the spluttering light of a match I saw a woman go by with a cat in a canary cage ... a smouldering in the sky told of the fires of Verdun'⁵⁰

The Lafayette Escadrille, the squadron of American volunteers in French service was committed to the battle in May 1916 and it was at Verdun they suffered their first death in action. James McConnell in his 1917 memoir recounts how Horace Balsey was badly wounded and forced to crash land just behind the front line and was then rescued and treated in a hospital in one of the forts. Victor Chapman then flew on patrol with a bag of oranges to bring to Balsey, only to be jumped by a German patrol and shot down and killed near Douamont.⁵¹ Another of the original volunteers Norman Prince would die later in the battle. Chapman's letters to his father were published in 1917 and became important propaganda at the time of the American entry to the war. The elite members of the Escadrille and the Ambulance were not the only Americans at Verdun. The African American boxer Eugene Bullard had enlisted in the Foreign Legion early in the war and in March 1916 was wounded at Verdun serving with the 170th infantry in the Moroccan Division. Subsequently he would transfer to the Escadrille.⁵²

As well as global participants the battle also had immediate global consequences. In particular, the French mobilization of colonial labour and troops from Indochina to West Africa intensified oppression and galvanized resistance from Annam to Algeria and on to Benin.⁵³

The global nature of the battle at Verdun from the French side functioned in terms of men and materiel but on the German side it is more connected to the issue of strategy. The German decision to attack a fortress complex in eastern France in 1916 might not have occurred if the war being fought was purely a Franco-German one.

The problem Germany faced in late 1915 was that its most dangerous medium term enemy was an off shore island controlling access to global resources. Battlefield successes in the East had to date led nowhere decisive and were subject to diminishing returns as the German army advanced into the under developed territory of the Baltics and Belarus. Falkenhayn's decision to attack Verdun in order to break France was the key element in a consciously *global* strategy to deal with the problem of fighting a war against the British Empire. It was based as much on assumptions about the British (and to a lesser extent about the Russians) as about the French. One does not have to accept the dubious and possibly

⁵⁰ H. Sheahan, *A Volunteer Poilu* (Boston, 1916)

⁵¹ J. McConnell, *Flying with the American Escadrille at Verdun* (New York, 1917), 42–4.

⁵² J. Martin (ed.), *African American War Heroes* (Santa Barbara, Ca, 2014), 33.

⁵³ C. Koller, 'The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia in and their deployment in Europe during the First World War', *Immigrants and Minorities* 26 (2008) 111–33; Lunn, *Memoires of the Maelstrom*, 46–9. For Algeria, see H. Strachan, *The First World War: To Arms* (Oxford, 2001), 764–6.

retrospective version of strategy presented in the unverifiable 'Christmas Memorandum' to recognize the larger context in which the defeat of France (and the British armies in France) was intended to combine with the pressure of U-Boat warfare to force the British to accept a German victory.⁵⁴

It was also the international dimension which derailed German strategy. The Habsburg plan to mount an attack against the Italians was kept from Falkenhayn. This in turn weakened their front against the Russians, creating the conditions that allowed Brusilov to mount his famous offensive, which was in turn enabled by the success of the Russians on the Caucasus front in spring 1916. Similarly, the turn to unrestricted submarine warfare was swiftly undermined by American protests after the sinking of the liner SS *Sussex* in the spring. Even before the Somme Offensive finally put paid to Falkenhayn's strategy its failure had been determined by these distant forces.⁵⁵

The sense of the battle as an epic struggle resonated globally. American involvement had created a particular interest there but it could be found much further away. In New Zealand a boy born on 31 July 1916 was christened Verdun John Scott. He subsequently played test cricket for his country.⁵⁶ The town of Grunthal in South Australia, just outside Adelaide, was renamed under the South Australian Government Nomenclature Act of 1917 as Verdun.⁵⁷ Rue Verdun was a name that proliferated not only in France: the establishment of the French Syrian Mandate saw the name adopted for a main boulevard in Beirut.

The global resonance continued after the war. Whilst visiting France in September 1919 the Chinese Foreign Minister Lu Chengxiang authorized a donation of 50,000 French francs to the rebuilding of Verdun's schools.⁵⁸ Individual Americans played a central role in funding battlefield memorialization. The memorial bell at the Ossuary was paid for by Anne Thornburn Van Buren in 1927 whilst George Rand had funded the memorial at the 'Trench of Bayonets' in 1920.

The last extraordinary twist in the global nature of the Verdun battle can be found in a long term legacy. In 1919 under the aegis of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, British and American pacifists were able to meet their German counterparts at Bilthoven in Holland. At the end of the meeting one of the German delegates mentioned that his brother was killed at Verdun and that he felt that the monument he wanted to raise would be the rebuilding of the ruins. This idea would resonate and in 1920 the Swiss international secretary of the FOR, Pierre Ceresole, began to organize an international team to go to the battlefield to help with rebuilding. In November a dozen Frenchmen were joined by Swiss, British, Germans, Hungarians and Austrians at the village of Esnes on the battlefield. The mayor welcomed

⁵⁴ Erich von Falkenhayn's problematic memoir *General Headquarters and its critical decisions* (Trans. Anon London, 1920) provides this wider context for the battle. See also R. Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun* (Cambridge, 2005); H. Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn. Politische Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (Munich 1994); H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria Hungary* (1997), 180–1.

⁵⁵ Herwig, *The First World War*, 206–211. See also Foley, *German Strategy*, 253

⁵⁶ *Wisden Cricketer's Almanac* (2017), 445. I would like to thank Professor Graham Loud for drawing this to my attention.

⁵⁷ Officially announced in the *South Australian Government Gazette*, 10 January 1918, 37. I would like to thank John Horne for alerting me.

⁵⁸ P. Bailey, 'The Sino-French connection and World War One' *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies* 1 (2011), 16.

them and they were able to rebuild the road and some homes. They also met hostility from the local head of a French relief organization who objected to the presence of ex-enemies and after five months the international volunteer relief camp was disbanded. But Ceresole would not let the idea die and through the 1920s he began to organize other international volunteer work camps to provide aid after national disasters. In 1930, with the support of international contacts, including the Swiss Quaker and pacifist Jean Inebnit, Professor of French at Leeds University, he founded the international Association of Service Civil which in turn would give rise to Voluntary Service Overseas and the entire international volunteer youth service worldwide.⁵⁹

V On metaphors and narratives

The dominant narrative of the First World War is still structured around the idea of the front. This suits a narrative which is linear and binary, focused on discrete and opposed units of analysis, above all nations and their armies. This isn't wrong, but it is a partial description, as all descriptions have to be. The front does have the virtue of reflecting a language that emerged during the war, but it was also weighted with a whole set of assumptions rooted in the power relations and norms of the early twentieth century which we can today recognize as concealing as much as they reveal. If we move away from the dominant metaphor of 'the front' and instead consider nodes and networks, we may gain new and different insights. Nodes and networks do not need to be invoked in the scientific and quantified a manner of fashionable network theory. Each of these cases can be considered a node in a different sense, Oxford as a node of education and intellectual activity, Halifax as a transport node, Jerusalem as a diplomatic and religiously symbolic node, Verdun as a strategic node. The type of networks they generated naturally differed in style and significance. But interestingly all of them develop a second shared nodal quality during the war as centres of international humanitarian networks; refugee reception and philanthropic activity in Oxford, disaster relief in Halifax, famine relief in Jerusalem and medical assistance during the war and reconstruction after the war at Verdun.⁶⁰

On the face of it this has been a picaresque ramble through the war, with Oxford archaeologists and Serbian seminarians, Italian stevedores and Russian revolutionaries, Chinese labourers and West Indian infantrymen, a New Zealand Zionist and a Palestinian POW in Siberia, assorted American aviators and even the King of Siam. But at the same time the use of these places has shown that simultaneously that the description of the war as a 'world war' was meaningful in these places and that at the same time what that meant was fundamentally framed and defined by local particularities. The war was everywhere a global event and everywhere the *way* in which it was global differed.

⁵⁹ A. Gillette, *One million Volunteers. The Story of the Volunteer Youth Service* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 15–33; <http://www.swiss-quakersd.ch/ge/history/doc/LetTheirLivesSpeak>

⁶⁰ See for example B. Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism* (Cambridge, 2014).