

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

The literature on trench journalism is well established for Britain and France during the First World War, but this book is the first systematic study in English of German soldier newspapers as a representation of daily life and beliefs on the front. Printed by and for soldiers at or near the front line, these newspapers were read by millions of 'ordinary soldiers'. They reveal an elaborately defined understanding of comradeship and duty. The war of aggression, the prolonged occupation on both fronts and the hostility of the local populations were justified through a powerful image of manly comradeship. The belief among many Germans was that they were good gentlemen, fighting a just war and bringing civilisation to backward populations. This comparative study includes French, British, Australian and Canadian newspapers and sheds new light on the views of combatants on both sides of the line.

ROBERT L. NELSON is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Windsor. He is editor of *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present* (2009).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War
Robert L. Nelson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare

General Editor
Jay Winter, *Yale University*

Advisory Editors
Omer Bartov, *Brown University*
Carol Gluck, *Columbia University*
David M. Kennedy, *Stanford University*
Paul Kennedy, *Yale University*
Antoine Prost, *Université de Paris-Sorbonne*
Emmanuel Sivan, *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*
Robert Wohl, *University of California, Los Angeles*

In recent years the field of modern history has been enriched by the exploration of two parallel histories. These are the social and cultural history of armed conflict, and the impact of military events on social and cultural history.

Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare presents the fruits of this growing area of research, reflecting both the colonisation of military history by cultural historians and the reciprocal interest of military historians in social and cultural history, to the benefit of both. The series offers the latest scholarship in European and non-European events from the 1850s to the present day.

A full list of titles in the series can be found at: www.cambridge.org/modernwarfare

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

University of Windsor



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521192910

© Robert L. Nelson 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Nelson, Robert L., 1971– author.

German soldier newspapers of the First World War / Robert L. Nelson.

p. cm. – (Studies in the social and cultural history of modern warfare)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-521-19291-0 (hardback)

1. World War, 1914–1918 – Press coverage – Germany. 2. World War,
1914–1918 – Social aspects – Germany. 3. Soldiers – Germany – Social
conditions – 20th century. 4. Soldiers – Germany – Attitudes – History – 20th
century. 5. Fellowship – History – 20th century. 6. Male friendship –
Germany – History – 20th century. 7. Germany. Heer – Military life – History –
20th century. 8. German newspapers – History – 20th century.
9. Journalism, Military – Germany – History – 20th century. 10. World War,
1914–1918 – Journalism, Military – Germany.

I. Title. II. Series.

D632.5.G3N45 2011

070.4'49940343–dc22

2010048114

ISBN 978-0-521-19291-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of tables</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Soldier newspapers: a new medium	12
Men, women, family: gender in Wilhelmine Germany	13
Fathers in the frontier: Germany's superiority over its neighbours	15
1 Authorship, censorship, readership	16
A brief history of German soldier newspapers	18
Soldier newspapers: authorship, censorship, readership	21
Production: creation and distribution	31
Censorship: apparatus, propaganda, audience	36
Reading newspapers	40
Excursus: comparative history	49
2 National culture, national cohesion	55
Songs and theatre	57
Humour	70
Sport	76
Everyday life	80
Soldiers' homes	82
National culture, national cohesion	85
3 Comradeship	88
Soldierly comradeship	93
Friendship	98
'Front community'	103
Workers and shirkers	107
The enemy	115
Colonial soldiers and comradeship	124
Technology, war and comradeship	133
Manly justification	151

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi	Contents	
4	German comrades, Slavic women	153
	<i>Kameradinnen</i> – the women at home	155
	Nurses	168
	Women of the occupied western front	171
	Women of the occupied eastern front	179
	Loyalty	186
	Crisis at home, or German impropriety?	189
5	Occupation and justification	192
	‘From “our” France’	193
	The languages of the occupied	198
	Allied armies and local populations	202
	‘Our issue is the East’	204
	Languages and the East	223
	Excursus: <i>Ostjuden</i>	224
6	Conclusion	237
	<i>Appendix: German soldier newspapers</i>	245
	<i>Bibliography</i>	250
	<i>Index</i>	266

Figures

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1.1. 'Hurrah! The Latest Newspapers are Here', <i>Zeitung der 10. Armee</i> , 10 August 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | page 30 |
| 2.1. 'Pourvu qu'ils tiennent!' ('I hope they hold up!'), <i>Tac à tac teuf-teuf</i> , 15 April 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Nanterre | 75 |
| 3.1. 'Unfit for Duty', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 28 April 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 108 |
| 3.2. 'Strike – a Lost Battle', <i>Der Drahtverhau</i> , February 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 111 |
| 3.3. 'Bravely "forward!"', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 19 October 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 116 |
| 3.4. 'Peace Dream of a French Soldier', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 19 February 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 118 |
| 3.5. 'Greece under the Protection of the Champion of Culture', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 16 July 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 129 |
| 3.6. 'Papa has gone to Europe in order to protect the English from the Barbarians – if you're good and brave, he'll bring you a German beefsteak', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 10 February 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 130 |
| 3.7. 'You guys drop from the tree?', <i>Der Drahtverhau</i> , June 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 131 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii List of figures

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 3.8. | ‘Winter in Flanders’, <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 24 December 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 132 |
| 3.9. | ‘Welcome Brother Jonathan! The German machine-gunners await you!’, <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 1 August 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 135 |
| 3.10. | Untitled, <i>La Bourguignotte</i> , November 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Nanterre | 136 |
| 3.11. | ‘Fritz, on leave: “No! No! . . . Not the tanks! Not the tanks!”’, <i>Tac à tac teuf-teuf</i> , 15 January 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Nanterre | 142 |
| 3.12. | ‘Siegfried’s Battle with the Dragon’, <i>Die Wacht im Westen</i> , 15 July 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 144 |
| 3.13. | ‘Firm and true stands the watch / The watch at the Rhine!’, <i>Die Sappe</i> , 21 December 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 145 |
| 3.14. | ‘After the Battle’, <i>Die Sappe</i> , September 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 146 |
| 3.15. | ‘The German Michel’, <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 12 September 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 147 |
| 3.16. | ‘Hagen and Volker on Watch’, <i>Zeitung der 10. Armee</i> , 1 January 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 148 |
| 3.17. | ‘On the Defence’, <i>Kriegszeitung der 4. Armee</i> , 15 August 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 149 |
| 4.1. | ‘The Soldier Cousin on Leave’, <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 16 February 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 158 |
| 4.2. | ‘Women’s Auxiliary Service’, <i>Der Drahtverhau</i> , August 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart | 163 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of figures	ix
4.3. 'Farewell', <i>Zeitung der 10. Armee</i> , 21 July 1917. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	164
4.4. 'Washing of the Wounded', <i>Bellica</i> , January 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Nanterre	170
4.5. 'The Wonder', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 24 July 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	172
4.6. 'The Beautiful Girl from Lille', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 30 July 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	174
4.7. 'Hey, look Emil, everything's possible when it comes to French relationships', <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , 16 October 1916. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	175
4.8. 'Lithuanian Girl', <i>Zeitung der 10. Armee</i> , 5 January 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	180
4.9. 'Lithuanian Women's Bath', <i>Zeitung der 10. Armee</i> , 15 June 1918. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	181
4.10. 'In Flanders and in Poland', <i>Die Vogesenwacht</i> , n.d. [1917]. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	183
4.11. 'Morality Sermon', <i>Kriegszeitung für das XV. Armeekorps</i> , 22 September 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart	188

Tables

1.1a. Military ranks of 166 editors of German soldier newspapers, 1914–18	<i>page</i> 22
1.1b. Specialisations of thirty-four privates listed as editors, 1914–18	23
1.2. Specialisations of nine editors of soldier newspapers based at field hospitals, 1914–18	23
1.3. Civilian occupations of thirty-two soldier newspaper editors in the publishing industry	23
1.4. Civilian occupations of eighteen soldier newspaper editors in the arts	24
1.5. Professional occupations of twenty-four soldier newspaper editors	24
1.6. Civilian occupations of ten soldier newspaper editors in other services	24
1.7. Civilian occupations of sixteen soldier newspaper editors in business and technology	25

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

In the fall of 1995, during the final year of my undergraduate degree at Simon Fraser University, I was a research assistant working at the *International History Review*. The editor, Professor Edward Ingram, asked me what topic I wanted to pursue for my (intended, hoped-for) PhD. I said ‘the cultural history of the Great War’. He turned to the shelf containing the recent book arrivals for review, and quickly pulled out one that had exactly that phrase as its subtitle. It was Jay Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. ‘This is the person with whom you should work, there’s no one better’, said Edward. ‘And lucky for you,’ exclaimed this Englishman, ‘he’s at Cambridge.’

Not knowing whether or not this Cambridge professor was technologically ‘up to date’ or not, I refrained from sending an ‘electronic mail’ and instead ‘faxed’ him, stating that I spoke German, French and English and was interested in social and cultural history, and asking whether he would supervise me should I be accepted at Cambridge, and, by the way, did he have a dissertation project in mind for me? Professor Winter emailed back (indeed, very ‘with it’) and suggested I research and write about the German soldier newspapers of the First World War. In the modern history of dissertation writing I do not believe any student has ever had an easier time identifying a both fascinating and do-able dissertation project. Further, I am quite certain no other student has ever had a more generous, sage and supportive supervisor than I have had in Jay Winter. I have yet to meet another PhD student who had every dissertation chapter returned complete with comments and suggestions within twenty-four hours . . .

Among the many helping hands along the way, I would like to thank the courteous librarians and archivists of the Cambridge University Library, the British Library, the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine at Paris-Nanterre, the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg, the Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv in Dresden, the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig and especially Professor Gerhard Hirschfeld, Ms Irina Renz and the wonderful staff at the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte in Stuttgart.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19291-0 - German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War

Robert L. Nelson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii Acknowledgements

In addition to Jay Winter, there are a few scholars who deserve the special accolade given to those who read and commented on entire drafts. For this, I most humbly thank (in chronological order) Richard Evans, Alan Kramer, Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, Ute Frevert, Michael Geyer, Thomas Kühne, Kathryn Elgee and David Elgee. A very special thank-you to those who read many, many drafts, Gary Edmond and Kim Nelson. A gracious thank-you to those who read sections of the manuscript at varying stages: Kathleen Canning, Roger Chartier, Peter Fritzsche and Karen Hagemann. For help with German translations: Aribert Reimann and Till von Rhaden. And a final thank-you to the last reader of the manuscript, my copy-editor Fiona Little, who did an incredible job and found more than one mistake which had lain hidden since the early drafts of the dissertation! Of course, any and all errors that remain are my responsibility alone.

The entire endeavour would never have been possible without the lifelong, unconditional support of my parents, Lorraine and Milton Nelson. Additionally, I have received the generous support of the German Academic Exchange (DAAD), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Cambridge University Trust and the Killam Trust. One also receives support in the form of editors of volumes and journals taking interest and publishing early versions of one's project. For this, and for their subsequent permission to republish in revised form what originally appeared in their publications, I would like to thank: Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum for publishing parts of Chapters 3 and 4 in their edited volume *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berg, 2002), a work that also appeared as *Heimat – Front: Militär und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Zeitalter der Weltkriege* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002); for publishing a version of Chapter 5, I thank Eduard Mühle, then editor of the *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung*; and finally thanks to Hew Strachan for publishing parts of Chapter 1 in *War in History*.

In January 2000, not far from the battlefields of the Somme, Jay Winter and I shared a bottle of *vin blanc* late one evening. We were at the Historial de la Grande Guerre to remember and celebrate the great historian whom we had recently lost, George Mosse. This time, I needed a different sort of advice. A family was getting started, and Jay kindly shared tips from his early career, but not before raising his glass with a heartfelt *mazetof*. Hagen arrived later that year, and Ella and Clio followed. This book is dedicated to them, and to the one who has been my greatest supporter of all, Kim.