

GERMAN ARMY, WWI

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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As to why the German Western Army was less susceptible to disintegration than the Eastern and Home Front Armies, consider these ideas:

- 1) Perhaps from an order of battle compiled by Entente intelligence one could measure the battle experiences of the units transferred to the West in 1918.
- 2) Compare the career patterns and biographies of the Western and Eastern Front officers and reveal perhaps in the former a stronger Junker background, a more in-bred allegiance to the Kaiser? To what extent were officers large property owners and economically threatened by a new social order?

-3) Compare the German situation in November with the experiences of other armies faced with revolutions at home, such as the White Army in South Russia in 1917, the French Army in 1870, D'Annunzio's risorgimento movement in Italy at the end of the Great War.

-4) Control of information and propaganda. To what extent was the front line soldier closed off from access to information in comparison to the zone of interior soldier? How freely were newspapers circulated--especially those of the Social Democrats and Spartacus movement--and were letters from home censored? How much more easily did Russian Revolution news infiltrate on the Eastern Front? It was more obvious to the Eastern Front soldiers, looking across the lines, that the enlisted man could wrest control of his environment and take unilateral action to end the war. Since the lines were not so static, the Eastern soldier, as part of an occupying force, was more exposed to civilian political currents.

-5) Was the soldier in the Western trenches caught between the enemy to his front and a relatively well-run slacker control system in the rear, a vise that could squeeze more effectively than the one in the East where the enemy was no longer so visible a menace?

-6) In 1918 Germany, blockaded by the Allies, families of soldiers were virtually starving. As shocked witnesses, returning soldiers emotionally reacted and remained at home, and the number of "unattached" soldiers at home at the end of the war was huge. With discipline and social values crumbling, soldiers' conduct would be governed by personal values. Allegiance to the Kaiser's state, rather than to one's hungry children, may not have been a deeply held personal value in a mass army. Seemingly, desertion was socially quite acceptable in the fall of 1918.

-7) Finally, was the influenza pandemic more or less virulent on the home front than in the Western trenches?