

Another history of Europe at war.

Gendarmeries and police facing the First World War (1914-1918)

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Le Centre de recherche de l'École des officiers de la Gendarmerie nationale and
Le musée de la Gendarmerie,

in cooperation with :

Université Paris-Sorbonne
the Centre d'histoire du XIX^e siècle
Labex EHNE

Université catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve

Le Pôle d'attraction interuniversitaire « Justice et populations : l'expérience belge en
perspective internationale »)

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The history of Europe into the First World War is still to be written from the police's point of view, in spite of the frequent claim of "constraint"¹ in the conflict's historiography. Classically marking the break between the 19th and the 20th centuries, the First World War is more than a separation between two periods. It is a deep historiographic void on both national and European scales. From a Europe-wide perspective, while the comparative approach carried out by Jonas Campion and confronting the cases of the Belgian, French and Dutch gendarmeries focuses on the end of the Second World War², the book published under G. H. Blaney's supervision covers the inter-war period³. Mainly dealing with the first worldwide conflict, the recent study of military justices⁴ – in spite of its essential character – is but one part of a far larger whole. The same goes for the extensive collection on crime and violence in the modern period⁵. In the French history of the gendarmeries, the books focusing on the 19th century often stop in 1914, while most of the research works carried out on the 20th century primarily deal with the Second World War. It is only in recent years that pioneering research have shown a specific interest for this intermediary phase (these research works were mainly carried out at the University of Paris-Sorbonne in relation with the research seminar entitled "Acteurs, pratiques et représentations de la sécurité. Gendarmes, policiers, pompiers, soldats, magistrats et société, XIX^e-XXI^e siècles" (Actors, practices and representations of security. Gendarmes, police officers, firemen, soldiers, magistrates and society, 19th-21st centuries) led by Jean-Noël Luc and Arnaud Houte, among which the comprehensive study by Louis-Napoléon Panel⁶), as a short but intense period which was very different from the one that

1 See François COCHET, *Survivre au front (1914-1918). Les poilus entre contrainte et consentement*, Saint-Cloud, 14-18 Éditions, 2005.

2 Jonas CAMPION, *Les Gendarmes belges, français et néerlandais à la sortie de la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, Bruxelles, André Versaille éditeur, 2011. About the impact of WWII on policing, see also Cyrille FIJNAUT (ed.), *The Impact of World War II on Policing in North-West Europe*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2004.

3 Gerald BLANEY (ed.), *Policing Interwar Europe, Continuity, Change and Crisis, 1918-1940*, London, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007.

4 Jean-Marc BERLIÈRE, Jonas CAMPION, Xavier ROUSSEAU, Luigi LACCHÉ (eds.), *Justices militaires et guerres mondiales (Europe 1914-1950) (Histoire, Justice, société)*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2013.

5 Ephē AVDELA, Shany D'CRUZE, Judith ROWBOTHAM, Jeffrey S. ADLER (ed.), *Problems of Crime and Violence in Europe, 1780-2000: Essays in Criminal Justice*, Lewiston, N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.

6 In this list, except specific mentions, all the theses and dissertations have been supervised by Pr. Jean-Noël Luc (Paris IV Sorbonne) : Cécile BLANCHEMANCHE, *La Gendarmerie en Algérie pendant la Première Guerre mondiale*, mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de Jacques Frémeaux, 2005, 150 p. ; Olivier BUCHBINDER, *Les missions de la prévôté pendant la Grande Guerre*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2002, 187 p. (prix littéraire de la Gendarmerie 2003), published as *Gendarmerie prévôtale et maintien de l'ordre : 1914-1918*, Maisons-Alfort, Service historique de la Gendarmerie nationale, 2004 ; Soazig DELEBECQUE, *La Garde Républicaine durant la Grande Guerre (1914-1918)*, mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de Jean-Louis Robert et Claude Penetier, université Paris I, 2002 ; Élodie DETRAIT, *Les Gendarmes et leurs administrés dans les départements frontaliers avec l'Italie et la Suisse pendant la Grande Guerre*, mémoire de master II, 2007, 187 p. ; Marie-Laure FÉRY, *Prévôté et lutte contre l'alcoolisme dans le Groupe d'armées du Nord pendant la Grande Guerre*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2000, 151 p. ; Valérie JUVE, *Rôle et dysfonctionnement de la prévôté pendant la Grande Guerre*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2001, 150 p. ; Louis-Napoléon PANEL, *Gendarmerie, prévention des suspects et lutte contre l'espionnage (1914-1918)*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2001, 236 p. (prix littéraire de la Gendarmerie 2002), published as *Gendarmerie et contre-espionnage : 1914-1918*, préf. de Jean-Jacques Becker, Maisons-Alfort, Service historique de la Gendarmerie nationale, 2004 ; *id.*, *La Gendarmerie dans la Grande Guerre*, DEA, 2003, 220 p. ; *id.*, *La Gendarmerie pendant la Grande Guerre, sur le terrain des opérations et à l'arrière*, 2010, published as *La Grande Guerre des gendarmes : forcer, au besoin, leur obéissance ?*, Paris, Nouveau Monde éd., 2013 ; Mélanie PESLERBE, *La gendarmerie et le renseignement durant la Grande Guerre*, master I, 148 p. ; Isabelle ROY, *Un ordre français au carrefour des nations ? La prévôté française à Salonique et en Macédoine occidentale pendant la Première Guerre mondiale (1915-1920)*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2001, 243, published as *La Gendarmerie française en Macédoine (1915-1920)*, Maisons-Alfort, Service historique de la Gendarmerie nationale, 2004.) ; Carine SAADA, *Le colonel Béringuier, acteur et théoricien de la gendarmerie, de la Belle Époque aux années 1920*, mémoire de maîtrise, 2000, 143 p. ; Laura SCHMITLIN, *Les yeux et les oreilles de la France ? La gendarmerie et*

preceded it and the one that followed it. In spite of their substantial contribution, these research works cannot possibly provide a comprehensive view of such a rich and complex topic. Besides, they do not fit in the more global framework of the plurality and interaction of police forces. Studied for the 18th and 19th centuries in the framework of the ANR project entitled SYSPOE (systèmes policiers européens (police systems in Europe)), this framework and the related practices have been little analysed, up to now, for the first part of the Third Republic, except for a few rare research works⁷.

Therefore, the comparative history of the police forces as a whole during the First World War still needs to be written. As peace economy became a war-focused production system, the order-keeping forces as a whole had to adapt to these new conditions, as emblematically exemplified by Jules Sébille: head of the mobile brigades before 1914, he reported to generalissimo Joffre during the conflict, then became the head of the police general services (*services généraux de police*) in Alsace and Lorraine in order to reorganise and frenchify them after victory. A comparative approach is necessary, not only because the First World War imposed comparable activity conditions to European countries at war, and to some extent, to neutral countries, but also because it enables to highlight the great similarities between police systems from the perspective of "police circulations", which led the institutions to observe one another, to create hybrid organisation and working methods and to influence one another. This process, which has already been studied for civil forces⁸, has also been observed by studying the case of the French model of gendarmerie, which can also be found – for instance – in Germany, Belgium or Italy. This model's propagation and adaptation, in Europe and beyond, have already been discussed in the framework of an international conference entitled *Les gendarmeries dans le monde, de la Révolution française à nos jours*⁹ (Gendarmeries in the world, from French Revolution to present day). The broad comparative approach in a European perspective, aimed at establishing transnational characteristics, can only reach its goal by taking into account the singularities that existed between several countries (for instance, the *gendarmerie prévôtale* was a full-fledged part of the gendarmerie in France, Belgium and Germany, whereas this body was an autonomous force in the United Kingdom, known as the *Royal Military Police*), but also within the same state, for example within the French gendarmerie, between the departmental gendarmerie, the *gendarmerie prévôtale*, the maritime gendarmerie and the Republican Guard. As a matter of fact, the organisation and employment conditions of these forces were different during the war. Besides, the study of European police bodies and gendarmeries should not be restricted to Europe only. Indeed, the conflict had a global dimension, as some of the warring powers had colonial empires that suffered from the consequences of the conflict, one way or the other. This integration of the colonial sphere is all the more interesting as it corresponds to a surge in studies on colonial police forces in European historiographies¹⁰, as testified to by Sven

le renseignement dans les 2^e et 6^e légions pendant la Grande Guerre, mémoire de master II, 2006, 134 p.

7 Laurent LÓPEZ, *La Guerre des polices n'a pas eu lieu. gendarmes et policiers, co-acteurs de la sécurité publique sous la Troisième République (1870-1914)*, Paris, PUPS, 2014.

8 Catherine DENYS (dir.), *Circulations policières (1750-1914)*, Lille, Presses universitaires du septentrion, 2012.

9 Conference organised in 2013 by the Université Paris-Sorbonne and the Société nationale Histoire et Patrimoine de la Gendarmerie ; book to be published in 2015.

10 See also : Jean-Pierre BAT & Nicolas COURTIN (eds.), *Maintenir l'ordre colonial : Afrique et Madagascar (XIX^e-XX^e siècles)*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012 ; Michael BROGDEN & Graham ELLISON, *Policing in an Age of Austerity: A Postcolonial Perspective*, Oxon, Routledge, 2013 ; Vincent DENIS et Catherine DENYS (dir.), *Polices d'Empires : XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012.

Schepp for the German part with the Territorial Police in German South-West Africa¹¹.

The aim of this conference is to open new perspectives rather than to bring complete and final answers in a particularly wide, complex and recent historiographic field. The reflection axes on this topic could include the following questions: to what extent did the war change the organisation, the activities and the priorities of police forces? What was the role played by European *ex officio* police officers and gendarmes, such as the Italian *carabinieri*¹², or on an individual level, such as many French gendarmes, in the battles of the First World War? What was the part played by the police forces and the gendarmeries in the disorders and protests (for instance, the police strike in the United Kingdom¹³) or in the crimes of the time (participation to the Armenian genocide¹⁴)? To what extent did the gendarmes and the police become more militarised at the end of the conflict, as suggested by the example of the Italian *carabinieri*¹⁵? To what extent did the war, through the contacts among the Allied forces or between the occupants and the occupied, favour the police circulations? Did the war become a catalyst of trends at work before the war, or on the contrary, did it undermine them?

Paper proposals (maximum 1500 words) with a short CV (1 page) are to be sent to guillaume.payen@paris-sorbonne.fr, jonas.campion@uclouvain.be, laurentlopez8@gmail.com before June, 1st, 2015.

11 Sven SCHEPP, *Unter dem Kreuz des Südens : auf Spuren der Kaiserlichen Landespolizei von Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Frankfurt am Main, Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2009.

12 Filippo CAPPELLANO & Flavio CARBONE, « I Carabinieri Reali al fronte nella Grande Guerra », in Nicola Labanca, Giorgio Rochat (dir.), *Il soldato, la guerra e il rischio di morire*, Milano, Unicopli Edizioni, 2006, p. 167-214.

13 David ENGLANDER, « Police and Public Order in Britain 1914-1918 », in Clive EMSLEY & Barbara WEINBERGER (dir.), *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism, and Public Order, 1850-1940*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 90-138.

14 Glen W. SWANSON, « The Ottoman Police » », *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7, janvier-avril 1972, p. 243-260.

15 Flavio CARBONE, « The Military Impact of Victory or Defeat on the Political and Social Structure of a Nation. The First WW Victory's Impact upon the Royal Carabinieri in Italy, 1919-1922 », in Miloslav ČAPLOVIČ, Mária STANOVÁ & André RAKOTO (eds.), *Exiting wars*, Bratislava-Vincennes, Vojenský historický ústav & Service Historique de la Défense, 2007, p. 150-166.

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