

BOLTON AND THE OUTBREAK OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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On the eve of Britain's declaration of war on Germany in August 1914, a leading Liberal Radical Minister, Lord Morley, pleaded with his Cabinet colleagues for the Government to take a neutralist stance in the spreading conflict, asserting that important centres of public opinion including the great industrial centres of the north of England were 'averse' to involvement.¹ As he was speaking on that last Saturday of peace, in Bolton Lancashire some six thousand people were marching through the streets behind banners, bands and floats from the non-conformist churches in the town's annual Temperance Festival. The main speaker, the ex-labour M.P. and Wigan miner Henry Twist, addressing an audience only made aware within the previous two days by the local press that there was a strong possibility of Britain becoming involved, spoke passionately and to acclaim of a conspiracy afoot to gull the people into war and of the need for the Temperance Movement, Labour Movement and Peace Movement to stand together for peace.²

Two days later on bank-holiday Monday evening a rally of some two thousand people of all political persuasions meeting in front of Bolton's Town Hall passed, with a few Conservative dissenters, a motion to the Government demanding that it maintain British neutrality, 'departing therefrom only in case of dire and extreme necessity'.³

But already at the railway station a few streets away the first reservists, after being told by the town's leading Anglican churchman that they were 'made of the right stuff', were leaving for their depots to the accompaniment of patriotic songs and cheers from a considerable crowd of

relatives and friends.⁴ And in London the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, after receiving overwhelming support from the Commons that afternoon for his policy, was drafting the ultimatum to Germany. It was too late to stop Bethmann-Hollweg's 'iron dice' rolling or, as a Conservative councillor pointed out at Bolton's Town Hall neutrality rally, for an *ad hoc* meeting in the north of England to influence the British Government.⁵

Bolton, not being privy to the secret diplomacy of the European Chancelleries since the assassination of the heir to the Habsburg throne a month earlier or to the anguished debates in the British Cabinet, was stunned by the twist of events which had suddenly pitch-forked the townspeople into war. Their initial response was naturally volatile and confused as they began to digest what the war would mean for them and their families. The Bolton press recorded their mood as sober and anxious, not elated at the prospect.⁶ Castigated initially by patriots in the town's newspapers for not taking the war seriously enough, the people of Bolton were to contribute as much blood, treasure and effort to the cause as any other part of the kingdom.⁷

I

In the congenial weather of early August 1914 the war crisis brought the working people of Bolton on to the streets as never before.⁸ War talk obsessed them for weeks.⁹ Before radio and television it was the local press and heated discussions on doorsteps, street corners, pubs and in the mills led by the more dominant, articulate or thoughtful of their peers which probably helped to crystallize the opinions of the working people of Bolton. People's emotions became engaged in the war because they recognised the gravity of its implications for Britain and also simply because it was exciting; this did not necessarily mean that they were enthusiastic about it.¹⁰ In the drab, uneventful, hard-working lives of most residents the crisis was a piece of theatre unfolding before them based on a four day cliff-hanger of whether or not their country would join the Continental war.¹¹ They wanted to be part of this drama and were evidently prey to conflicting emotions – excitement and anxiety about the future were focussed into a positive reaction by the stirrings of moral conscience defined by the notions of patriotism and duty propagated by

their social superiors and the establishment.¹² Personal involvement for some could result in dramatic transformations of their lives thrusting them into peril and adventure, liberating them (or so they thought) from deadly routine or arduous jobs, or from an unhappy family life – all validated by their country's need.¹³ For the dependants left behind, many even before living very close to the margin of poverty, and therefore without reserves, this decision could plunge them at least momentarily into abject poverty until Army pay and allowances came through from an overburdened military bureaucracy and before relief agencies could be cranked into action.¹⁴

Pre-war conditioning also played its part in moulding the way people reacted to the outbreak of the war.¹⁵ The influences can be pinpointed but it is more difficult to gauge their impact. To the modern mind people during these years seem to have been subjected to many more direct imperialistic exhortations and militaristic stimulants than they are today; Seeley and Kipling were *de rigueur* in the schools and people of most shades of political and religious commitment took pleasure in the possession of Empire.¹⁶ Militarism which might be seen as translating that pride along aggressive channels was suspected by members of the Labour movement in this highly unionised industrial town, and deplored by the non-conformists who had a powerful presence in working-class areas.¹⁷

It has been suggested that as a result of the less-than-glorious Boer War the people of the north-west of England lost some of their taste for imperial adventure.¹⁸ Simple latent patriotism, however, could always be awoken if the right chord was struck. The most memorable event of 1913 was the first visit of a reigning monarch to the town, when tens of thousands turned out on a brilliant July day to welcome George V and Queen Mary. The Empire waxed considerably in the minds of Bolton's editors. Looking ahead in January 1914, the *Journal* mercenarily admitted that Bolton was more 'imperial-minded' than most other parts of England because its prosperity was bound up with such links (six-sevenths of its industrial output went abroad, probably two-fifths of this to India).¹⁹ The Conservative *Chronicle* struck a more high-minded and smug note in claiming that the Empire

had made for liberty of thought and action; it had stood against tyranny; it has made progress. No nation has been brought into contact with us without being the better.²⁰

European affairs figured less prominently in the local papers. Contradictory images of Germany appeared in the press and elsewhere and were to surface again in August and September 1914. More of the townsmen than ever before were visiting the Continent on the eve of the War. Skilled workers were scattered over Germany and Russia helping to install and run textile plants and salesmen were seeking orders (there was much anxiety for their fate when the War broke out).²¹ There were students and also tourists in Europe in August 1914, not all of them were affluent. The national Co-operative Holidays Association, with a membership of over 15,000 working people (500 from Bolton), organised reciprocal visits between holiday centres and members' homes in Britain and Europe. At its 21st A.G.M. in Bolton in January 1914, the chairman noted that though the number of visits in general was gratifyingly rising this did not include Germany, which he regretted, for

nothing could be more helpful for the high cause of civilisation than a good feeling between the two leading countries of the world. If (they) could pull together nothing could stop the march of social civilisation!²²

The *Bolton Journal* in February 1914 echoed these sentiments: whilst acknowledging earlier friction with Germany, it claimed that diplomatic co-operation during the Balkan War had fostered a closer relationship for 'both have a supreme interest in world peace, and neither could hope to gain anything by a great war'.²³ The *Conservative Chronicle* was less sanguine. The editor gave space to a letter in January 1914 which in the light of the Zabern incident warned against the menace of German militarism and himself picked up the theme a little later when defending existing naval expenditure as a necessary guard against 'the German firebrands who force their own Government to increase the navy altogether beyond ordinary needs'. He went on to quote the *Liberal Westminster Gazette's* view that the Royal Navy 'is the special guarantee to the country that it will not be involved in the militarism which afflicts Europe'.²⁴ One contemporary recalled in the 1960s that the journals in his local branch library, such as the *Illustrated London News*, *The Graphic*, *Strand Magazine* and *Review of Reviews*, were full of anti-German cartoons and remembers seeing a film at this time portraying an unsuccessful invasion of Britain by men in spiked helmets.²⁵

Modern historians have suggested that pre-First World War British society was itself infested to a degree with the prevailing Continental militaristic spirit,²⁶ but how significantly is another matter. In Bolton, although it was not a garrison town (the nearest was Preston twenty miles to the north west), military and quasi-military formations loomed larger in public view than today. The establishment of the local Territorial Army volunteer units was about 1,800, compared with 350 in a larger town today. Further, there were some 1,500 veterans actively involved in the National Reserve often to be found in the ultra-patriotic Veterans Club or the Conservative Workingman's Association. There were also flourishing Church Lads' Brigades (Anglican and Roman Catholic) and a Boys' Brigade who drilled, paraded, had mock battles at their summer camps and who were regarded as natural recruiting sources for the Army.²⁷ The image of the thousand strong Boy Scout movement in the town was more ambiguous. It was stoutly maintained by Baden Powell's deputy, Colonel de Burgh, at a Bolton rally in May 1914 that the scouts were non-military, but nonetheless he went on to acknowledge soldiering as one of the possible outlets for a scout.²⁸ The day's events included a firearms display and when the War broke out three months later the scouts eagerly offered their services as runners for the Territorials and patrolled the town's reservoirs.²⁹ One or other of these military or quasi-military organisations was invariably to be seen in pre-War years parading somewhere in the town on a Sunday before marching off behind its band to church.³⁰

A higher military profile in the town, though perhaps indicating that military forms and images were more important in popular culture, did not necessarily have a deep impact on people's consciousness.³¹ Press accounts give the impression that military-style parades and marches merely entertained the spectators rather than infected them with militaristic fervour. Even the men in the Territorial Army were fairly relaxed about their duties; their commandant at one formal social deplored the fact that so few were in uniform and on another occasion he criticised many in the corps for not taking their musketry practice seriously enough.³² Although it was claimed that some men became so keen on the T.A. that they greatly exceeded the required 45 drills a year, it was also admitted that others defaulted and frequently serious offenders were brought up before the Bench.³³ One indication of the lack of esteem in which the

Army was held was its recruiting problems in pre-War days. In 1913 the British Regular Army was some 19,000 below strength and the Territorials 65,000 deficient in their establishment of 350,000.³⁴ Bolton's shortfall was 300 men in the Territorials despite vigorous promotion in the local press.³⁵ Recruitment for the Regular Army was clearly seen in Bolton as a national responsibility, but much civic pride was invested in the town's Territorials because their complements were totally local, they had depots in the town and their commanding officers were prominent figures in local politics and social life. Weekly battalion orders were published amongst the advertisements on the front pages of the local papers and all the 'Terriers' social and formal functions were fully covered.

Two major recruiting events in the first half of 1914 demonstrated the anxiety of the authorities and attracted the interest of a large number of Bolton citizens. In February a War Office film, 'The British Army at Work', was shown for a week at the Electric Theatre. A band and a detachment of regulars were added to Bolton's T.A. units to play in the Town Hall Square before each performance and to march to the theatre where recruiting officers capitalised on the enthusiasm generated by the film.³⁶ Three months later the T.A. staged a grand review, including veterans of the Crimean War and contingents from the Boys' Brigades. The salute was taken by the national Director General of the Territorials, which was followed by a march through Bolton described as a 'display unparalleled in the town's history . . . witnessed by thousands and thousands of people'.³⁷ Bolton 'should feel proud of (her) citizen army' said the *Journal*.³⁸ But the *Chronicle* doubted whether such an event would have a similar impact another year, as some had suggested, because the novelty would have worn off.³⁹

Although this campaign brought in a lot of recruits, there was still a net loss of men because more who had finished their terms took discharges, so the Territorial units went into the First World War under strength. The reasons for the failure were debated at the time. Want of patriotism did not feature strongly either in the debate or in recruiters' appeals, which stressed the benefits to mind and body and the virtues of 'citizen soldiering'.⁴⁰ Perhaps this was because despite the popularity of fictional invasion literature,⁴¹ the danger of Britain being invaded was not taken seriously, particularly in the north west far from the likely landing points.⁴² People had been fed on the idea that the

Navy was an adequate guardian of Britain's shores. And the War Office's scheme for a major involvement in France in the event of war with an inevitable demand upon the Territorials for replacements or reinforcements could not be publicly revealed because of its political sensitivity.⁴³ So, since the role of the Territorials was supposed to be to defend 'hearth and home' only, a powerful patriotic imperative could not be invoked in peace-time.⁴⁴ Territorial recruits were assured that they would only have to serve overseas if they volunteered and that they would never be used to break strikes, a particularly sensitive issue among Bolton's working classes who were no doubt well aware that soldiers had recently been deployed against strikers.⁴⁵

The relative failure of the recruitment drive was locally ascribed to the bad social and moral image of the Army in general, and to poor conditions of service in the Territorials in particular. The C.O. of the local artillery corps sought to reassure parents, 'that whatever the character we may have had in the past, today I know of no finer training for a young man, both morally and physically'.⁴⁶ His Anglican chaplain tried to enlist the support of the non-conformist ministers along similar lines, claiming that service in the Territorials would make men 'better citizens'.⁴⁷ The chaplain felt that poorer men were deterred from joining up by a fear that they might lose their wages or even jobs during the annual camp and, with the example of the aftermath of the Boer War before them, that their dependants would not be properly cared for if they were maimed or killed in a future war. Insufficient incentives and lack of promotion prospects were what put off lower-middle-class men.⁴⁸ Local Labour and Liberal politicians gave the T.A. active public support because they feared the shortfall of recruits would bolster the National Service League's case for compulsory universal service. Labour preferred the T.A. because it was integrated with civil society, a citizen army, whereas they believed conscription would create a 'military autocracy'.⁴⁹ Local Liberals liked the voluntary principle enshrined in the T.A. and rejected the pleas of two speakers from the Liberal League for Home Defence, who had argued for compulsory national service as imbuing the young with 'proper discipline and obedience' and of improving 'the morale of the nation'.⁵⁰

Despite occasional patriotic and military displays in pre-War Bolton, it cannot be said that these created a powerful nationalist and militaristic ethos which would

burst into flame in a crisis. The working classes were far more dominated by personal economic considerations. They were passively patriotic when they thought about it, but the more active, massive commitment required after August 1914 had to be generated and orchestrated by fairly frenzied campaigning through the newspapers, in meetings, in the pulpit and on the streets.

II

Bolton people were ill-prepared by their local newspapers for the catastrophe which overtook them at the beginning of August 1914. The developing international crisis was hardly noticed during July. Joseph Chamberlain's death crowded the assassination of the Archduke and his wife off the news pages and Ulster affairs continued to dominate them to within a week of Britain's declaration of war on Germany. The Conservative *Chronicle* believed that Austria's demands in the ultimatum to Serbia on the 24th would 'be peacefully settled',⁵¹ and the Liberal *Evening News* urged the British Government to organise Great Power mediation in the dispute.⁵² By the 29th July the papers acknowledged that a continental war was now likely and speculated about its economic impact on Bolton assuming that Britain would remain neutral. The following day, four days before Britain's actual declaration of war, the *Evening News* warned of her likely involvement in what it described as 'a deep disgrace to our modern civilisation', but it accepted that the defence of Belgium and France was imperative to Britain's interests.⁵³ The interests of the working man were more in the mind of a senior member of the Bolton Co-operative movement when in a speech on the last Saturday before the War he declared that war had 'always made the poor poorer and put the poorest in a position of tragic impotence',⁵⁴ sentiments rhetorically echoed by a leading Unitarian minister in a letter to the press: 'It is the worker who will suffer . . . In the name of Christ let us remember the horrors of war: on the battlefield slaughter and pestilence; at home famine, misery and death!'⁵⁵ The dire economic repercussions of a war upon Bolton's economy, so dependent was it on European and overseas trade, was not lost on the local press nor no doubt on the townspeople and probably was the main factor accounting for the pervading gloom in the town as the crisis developed.⁵⁶ Two nights before Britain's

declaration of war, a growing crowd, as big as on election night, gathered outside the local newspaper offices where the latest telegrams were pasted up. Elsewhere in Bolton 'the usual careless crowd' is described as 'jostling and skylarking in the usual Sunday evening manner . . . [but gradually] the spell of a serious crisis spread over the town'.⁵⁷ News of war between Germany and Russia was announced which 'added to the general feeling of depression'.⁵⁸

As time ran out there was a heated debate among Bolton's politicians on the intervention issue. Ironically, the town's Conservatives had no difficulty in backing the Liberal Government without reservation. But it was only after much anguished soul-searching that the Liberals and Socialists came round resignedly to accepting British participation in the War. On August Bank Holiday evening the Labour Party convened a 'Non-Party Mass Meeting of Bolton Citizens to declare for Neutrality'.⁵⁹ The platform group seemed to have been dominated by pacifistic and neutralist members of the Labour movement and the non-conformist churches. However, its motion charging the Government to stay neutral unless 'British interests are jeopardised or attacked by Foreign Powers' (meaning Britain or British property) was subtly changed because, seemingly fearful of being branded as 'peace-at-any-pricers', they accepted an amendment from someone in the crowd which added the word 'honour' to 'interests', which implicitly extended the commitment to go to war to defend Belgium and perhaps even France. Even this compromise, discomfiting for the platform, was not acceptable to some Conservatives present who held a second meeting immediately after which they got a leading Labour councillor, Robert Tootill to chair, and which offered the Government unqualified support for any action it chose to take.⁶⁰

The following evening, as the British ultimatum expired, at a stormy meeting of the Liberal Party the Liberal Imperialist, Colonel Winder (retired) likened the Germans to burglars and declared that it was essential that the British should:

stop them plundering and robbing and [that] if they did not they were nothing but arrant cowards . . . it was our bounden duty in the face of the world to maintain the splendour we had won.⁶¹

But another speaker deplored fighting with 'the most tyran-

nous and oppressive nation in the civilised world' against a people (the Germans) 'who next to ourselves were the most advanced, the most progressive and . . . the most religious'.⁶² The town's Liberal M.P. recognised that the balance of Bolton Liberal opinion was still for neutrality but argued that Germany's lawless behaviour had to be stopped.⁶³ The wordy motion which was passed gave the Government backing in its policies to maintain Britain's honour and interests.

Bolton Labour Party, meeting on the first night of the War, reflecting the ambiguous position adopted by the national party that day, offered no support to the Government, blamed the War on secret diplomacy and vaguely called upon all workers 'to realise that their only salvation is by standing together throughout the various countries on a democratic basis'.⁶⁴ But the Labour councillor, Robert Tootill, earlier at a municipal meeting had urged that 'they ought to be as one man in this battle and they were going to fight it to the finish'.⁶⁵ Within a few weeks Tootill was to become the town's second M.P. when the sitting Labour member died. His election was unopposed but the Conservatives had made it clear they would field a candidate if Labour did not choose a moderate from the three contenders.⁶⁶ Tootill clearly met their requirements, though as a spinner, J.P. and one of Bolton's four Labour councillors he was not an unnatural choice anyway. His interventionist stance did not draw any criticism from his party colleagues at his adoption meeting, so evidently the bulk if not all of the Bolton Labour Party had come by mid-September 1914 to accept British participation in the War.⁶⁷ Even the Bolton Socialist Party, affiliated to the British Socialist Party (the old Marxist S.D.F.) was divided on British participation, perhaps confused by the pro-War sentiments of Robert Blatchford in his Manchester-printed socialist *Clarion*, a thousand copies of which were taken by the Bolton Socialist Club each week.⁶⁸ Socialist activists were also probably disarmed locally as nationally by the wide public acceptance of the war. The Conservative *Chronicle* published a letter signed 'Trade Unionist', which lambasted Labour for a policy which 'has disgusted every honest and patriotic working man'.⁶⁹

III

The calling up of regulars, reserves and T.A. marked the first phase of mobilisation all of which had been planned ahead by the War Office. The next stage was improvised and far more engaged local municipal and voluntary services. Two major problems were to dominate the minds of the Bolton establishment: relief and recruitment. Over the next month or two while there was much applause for private initiatives there was muted criticism led by the press of the muddled and sluggish municipal response to the novel problems thrown up by the war. There was also an underlying current of irritation that not all sections of society seemed to be contributing equally and altruistically to the war effort.

Crowds thronged the streets and surroundings of Bolton in August and September not only because of the military drama enacted there as men trained and marched off to war but also because a recession, as many had foreseen, hit the town almost immediately on the outbreak of the War. Mills and foundries shut down as Central-European markets closed to Britain, as world credit facilities fell into confusion and as shippers refused to venture out until the situation on the seas had clarified.⁷⁰ Many, but not all, mill owners did what they could to cushion the shock: stock-piling in anticipation of a brief war or work-sharing.⁷¹ Nonetheless, by 15th August a conservative estimate put the number out of work in Bolton at 5,000 overall and 7,500 on short-time in textiles alone.⁷² Encouraging articles appeared in the local press urging Bolton's entrepreneurs to go out and seize German and Austrian markets and even those of their distracted allies.⁷³ But the textile industry though it had picked up a little by the end of 1914 was still running at well below the full capacity it had achieved on the eve of the War.⁷⁴ Bolton was later to thrive economically as war contracts came its way and a munitions industry was established in the town,⁷⁵ but for the first year times were hard for the working class. Adding to the distress were the privations of the dependants of men summoned to the colours. Government allowances and deductions from the men's pay were tardy in coming through and by the end of August some 574 dependants in Bolton had made claims on the Prince of Wales Relief Fund.⁷⁶ School attendance was exceptionally high in September because school children received free meal tickets, while a columnist in the *Journal*

noted that there were far more pedlars than normal knocking at doors, many by their diffident manner showing that they were not accustomed to selling on the streets.⁷⁷ Even when Government allowances were received, families of servicemen were probably worse off in the early days. A labourer got on average eighteen shillings per week; if he joined the Army and had a wife and two children, he got six shillings and they received seven and sixpence.⁷⁸ By the end of the year the Government had sufficiently raised pay and allowances to make the lowest paid workers such as labourers actually better off when they joined the services, but the combined pay and allowances of twenty-four shillings and sixpence was still far short of the average Bolton industrial wage of fifty shillings a week.⁷⁹

The evident distress in the town galvanised the middle classes into efforts to relieve it. Women were particularly active, mobilising the Primrose League for charity work, joining the Red Cross and doubling the numbers in the Guild of Help, a local charity which before the War had done all sorts of practical things to help the poor; in the first six weeks of the War it helped more families than it had in the whole of 1913.⁸⁰ There were sometimes misunderstandings between the helpers and the helped; the Guild had to rebut criticisms that they were making poor women sell their furniture and even their wedding rings before giving relief.⁸¹ Another group of enthusiasts who were forming sewing and knitting circles to provide clothing for the wounded were rebuked by the local Labour Party for contributing to unemployment: 'You may clothe the soldier and be starving his children'.⁸² Perhaps other actions which today would raise comment were not at the time regarded as particularly insensitive, such as donating all the exhibits at a baking contest to the poor or saving vegetable peelings so that the needy could make nourishing soup from them.⁸³ All this activity drew the jaundiced observation from the leading independent socialist in the town, James Wallace, that the problems of poverty had existed before the War and little had been done then. The governing classes had suddenly discovered a social conscience he said because they feared invasion and revolution.⁸⁴ Criticism of Bolton's initial relief effort came from other quarters too. The *Evening News*, at the end of the first month of the War, its civic pride affronted, castigated Bolton which claimed to be the richest, most self-sufficient town in the north-west for contributing less to the Prince of Wales Relief Fund than smaller, poorer

boroughs such as Preston and Rochdale.⁸⁵ The Conservative Council appointed a local Distress Committee as required by the Government to administer the Fund but the *News* criticised it for not taking on the role of co-ordinating all the town's relief agencies which, it said, were 'a mass of unorganised individuals'.⁸⁶ And the Left claimed that the Committee was unrepresentative and was refusing to consider all cases of distress occasioned by the War.⁸⁷

In fact the social and economic upheaval engendered by the War helped Bolton's Left to sublimate its differences over British entry. A local suffragette shrugged off the assertion of her regional movement that women with the vote would have kept Britain out, by declaring almost with relish:

There is a noble battle for us to fight at home now; the work nearest and dearest to the heart of the suffragist, the care of less fortunate sisters and their children.⁸⁸

At the end of the first week of the War the Bolton branch of the I.L.P. organised a public meeting to demand the establishment of a citizens' committee, especially to include women, to control food supplies and prices in the town.⁸⁹ Two months later the Labour and Socialist Parties came together in a United Committee to campaign for higher pay for servicemen and more thorough and generous welfare measures for their dependants, while the Bolton Trades Council formed yet another committee with wide left-of-centre membership to monitor unemployment and distress.⁹⁰ It was officially claimed that none of the dependants of patriots who had gone off to war had had to resort to the ultimate degradation of the Poor Law, but 300 or so thrown out of work by the war did end up at the workhouse during August and the number might have been far greater as in other Lancashire towns had the textile unions not dug deep into their reserves to help their members.⁹¹

The town's other major public war duty was to assist in recruiting. Doctors provided their services free to give applicants health checks; dentists offered free treatment to men rejected for bad teeth.⁹² The press, politicians and the churches drummed up recruits.⁹³ The initial assumption in Bolton had probably been that further recruits would only be needed to keep the T.A. and the standing Regular Army up to strength,⁹⁴ but on 6th August Parliament agreed to Kitchener's demand for half a million more men to create an

additional new army. The implications of this were clearly not understood in Bolton at first where recruitment went on in a little pokey back-street office until the municipal authorities were shamed into offering a major civic building for the purpose.⁹⁵ In the middle of August it was said recruiting was going well in the town, but by the 25th only 320 (in addition to those already in the T.A. or Regular Army) had been signed up whereas it was by then estimated that a town Bolton's size should be able to provide 5,000.⁹⁶ Most of the early recruits were from the lower classes, often labourers or carters thrown out of work by the recession with no rich union to cushion them.⁹⁷ Later, the coal miners from little communities around Bolton began to enlist in considerable numbers (one mine lost half of its work force); they were not driven by unemployment but, it was said, by patriotism.⁹⁸ On the other hand, textile workers and middle-class men were hanging back.⁹⁹ The National Service League prompted Bolton employers, as they began to re-open their works, to re-engage women and men of non-military age first and to urge fit younger men to enlist instead, which provoked bitter protests from a local Labour M.P. and the Spinners' Union that they were introducing the very militarism which Britain was supposed to be fighting against.¹⁰⁰ Less controversially, but still exerting indirect moral pressure, the press started to print the names and addresses of those who did volunteer, and the churches, led by Bolton's Methodists, began to read them out in a 'roll of honour' each Sunday.¹⁰¹ Recruitment did in fact pick up at the end of August in line with national trends to an average of 200 a day.¹⁰² This seems to have been in response to the country, particularly the north, at last waking up to the gravity of the situation: much of Belgium lost to the Germans and the British retreat from Mons beginning on 24th August.¹⁰³ Perhaps an even more important stimulus in Bolton and other industrial towns was that employers responded to patriotic appeals and now began to offer bounties to their men who enlisted, supplementary allowances for their dependants to make up army pay to their peace-time wage, and a guarantee of their jobs back at the end of the War.¹⁰⁴ With these assurances men could respond more readily to the exhortations to 'do their bit' and to the recruiting bands which toured the mills at lunch-times offering a glamorous uniform and an escape from drudgery.¹⁰⁵

One of the embarrassments for the patriotic middle-class

writers in the Bolton press was that it was the middle classes in the town who were most dilatory in coming forward. They were not subject to the economic imperative as were many of the working classes; shops were doing well and industrial and commercial offices did not seem to lay off clerks as they did workers in the recession.¹⁰⁶ Early in September 1914 the clerks began to respond to the call, but they were clearly reluctant to serve with the workers enlisting in Kitchener's New Army. Instead, the clerks proposed the formation of a Bolton 'Pals' battalion which they could all join with their own friends.¹⁰⁷ The idea was put to the Council but turned down. The town would have had to put money into it as sponsors and it was said this could be better spent elsewhere; the proposers thought it was disgraceful that a wealthy town like Bolton should jib at the cost when much poorer towns in Lancashire were supporting 'Pals' battalions. But it was also claimed to be a socially divisive scheme. Kitchener's Army or the T.A. should be seen as an honourable enough service for any patriot whatever his class, maintained a retired colonel.¹⁰⁸ For some in fact a solution offered itself when the C.O. of the town's T.A. rifle battalion returned from Gloucestershire in early September 1914 to recruit a further 250 men to fill up places of those who did not wish to serve overseas. The depot was thronged, it was reported, next day by 'chums' eager to enlist, among them professionals such as solicitors, surveyors, architects as well as clerks and shop assistants.¹⁰⁹ So, no doubt, 'pals' companies were formed within Bolton's 5th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment giving it overall a very well-balanced social mix and later bereaving every class in the town as it was terribly mauled in the notorious battles on the Somme and at Ypres.¹¹⁰

IV

As early as the end of October 1914 the Bolton press was beginning to educate the townspeople that this was going to be a long, bloody war not the short, sharp conflict they had been led to expect.¹¹¹ Writers in the papers were still worried that Bolton's men were not showing sufficient patriotic fervour and put it down to natural reticence.¹¹² Recruiting in January 1915 was still deemed to be below what should be expected from a town Bolton's size though the earlier target of 5,000 had nearly been met.¹¹³ Uniforms

were once again seen in the streets, not this time of the fit and 'eager for the fray' but of the convalescents and those already crippled by the War. The papers were puzzled and disconcerted that these returning heroes would not talk of their experiences;¹¹⁴ it was a silence that was to be deepened by the trenches: a psychological chasm between those who had stayed at home and those who had 'marched away'.

NOTES

- 1 A.J.A. Morris, *Radicalism Against War 1906-1914: The Advocacy of Peace and Retrenchment* (1972), p. 394.
- 2 Bolton Reference Library, *Bolton Chronicle* [hereafter cited as *BC*], 8 Aug. 1914, p. 8, *Bolton Journal* [hereafter cited as *BJ*], 7 Aug. 1914, p. 5. Twist claimed to have talked to delegates just returned from the crisis meeting of the Executive Committee of the International.
- 3 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 6.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 5 Bolton Reference Library, *Bolton Evening News*, [hereafter cited as *BEN*], 4 Aug. 1914, p. 5. In fact, the Cabinet had decided on intervention two days earlier, K.M. Wilson, *The Policy of Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904-1914* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 136-7.
- 6 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 12.
- 7 Lord Derby, Director of Recruitment, was later to remark that the Bolton district ranked third in the country for the proportion of its young men volunteering for the armed forces: *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1914.
- 8 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, pp. 3, 12, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 6. *BEN*, 24 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 9 Bolton Reference Library, Diaries of Dr. Johnston (an independent Bolton socialist), 15 Nov. 1914.
- 10 Alice Foley, *A Bolton Childhood* (Manchester, 1973), p. 61; *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 9.
- 11 Albert Williams, *36 Stewart Street, Bolton: An Exercise in Nostalgia, 1901-1914* (Manchester, 1983), p. 29.
- 12 'One thing only can really sustain us in manly rectitude, and that is a sense of duty.' Fishing correspondent, *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3; '... it's hard, but I couldn't like for him not to do his duty', interview with soldier's wife with two young children, *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 12; 'tis none of our quarrel but we mun keep us word. Eh, they do deserve all they get, making trouble like this 'ere!' reported remark of man in the crowd outside newspaper office, night of 2nd Aug. 1914, *ibid.*
- 13 Report of attitude of men on mobilisation of Bolton Territorial Army units, 5 Aug. 1914, *BEN*, 5 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 14 *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 12; *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 6; *BEN*, 31 Aug. 1914, p. 2.
- 15 K.G. Robbins, 'Public Opinion, the Press and Pressure Groups' in F.H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 72.
- 16 Anti-war letter from Rev. Edward Morgan, *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1914.

- 17 Preston Record Office, CUB/t, 1/3, Derby Street Congregational Church, Bolton, Minute Book, 2 Aug. 1914, Foley, *A Bolton Childhood*, p. 61; P.F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 53–55; R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899–1902* (1972), *passim*.
- 18 Robbins, 'Public Opinion', p. 74; Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 347.
- 19 *BJ*, 2 Jan. 1914, p. 7, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 12; Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, pp. 78–9.
- 20 *BC*, 3 Jan. 1914, p. 5.
- 21 *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 22 *BJ*, 9 Jan. 1914, p. 2; *BC*, 10 Jan. 1914, p. 2.
- 23 *BJ*, 6 Feb. 1914, p. 6.
- 24 *BC*, 3 Jan. 1914, p. 8, 31 Jan. 1914, p. 5.
- 25 Williams, *36 Stewart Street*, p. 28.
- 26 Robbins, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
- 27 Appeal for recruits by C.O. 3rd East Lancs (Bolton) Brigade (Royal Artillery) in *BC*, 14 Feb. 1914, p. 6. A.G.M. of Lads Club, *BC*, 21 Feb. 1914, p. 11.
- 28 *BC*, 16 May 1914, pp. 8, 11.
- 29 *BC*, 14 Feb. 1914, p. 6, 11 April 1914, p. 2.
- 30 *BEN*, 11 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 9 Oct. 1914, p. 6; *BC*, 18 April 1914, p. 1.
- 31 In the six months before the War only one play in any of the town's three theatres had a military theme, though they were more common once war broke out.
- 32 *BC*, 31 Jan. 1914, p. 11; 21 March 1914, p. 6.
- 33 *BJ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 10, 13 March 1914, p. 5; *BC*, 10 Jan. 1914, p. 2, 4 April 1914, p. 3, 25 April 1914, p. 2.
- 34 'Daniel', *The Writing on the Wall*, (London, 1913); *BC*, 7 Feb. 1914, p. 3.
- 35 e.g. *BJ*, 13 Feb. 1913, p. 10, 'Joining the Territorials: Why Recruitment is Booming'.
- 36 *BC*, 21 Feb. 1914, p. 2, 28 Feb. 1914, p. 11.
- 37 *BC*, 23 May 1914, p. 6.
- 38 *BJ*, 22 May 1914, p. 9.
- 39 *BC*, 23 May 1914, p. 6.
- 40 *BJ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 10.
- 41 I.F. Clarke, *Voices Propheying War, 1763–1984* (London, 1966), pp. 65–114 and *passim*.
- 42 *BC*, 29 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 43 Morris, *Radicalism Against War*, *passim* but especially pp. 74, 87–92. J. Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought 1918–1940* (1965); M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (1972).
- 44 Bolton's T.A. units were designated for service in Ireland in the event of war in order to relieve regulars: *BEN*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 45 Speech of Colonel Johnstone of East Lancs Territorial Association at annual prize-giving of 3rd East Lancs (Bolton) Brigade, R.F.A. *BJ*, 13 March 1914.
- 46 *BC*, 14 Feb. 1914, p. 6; *BJ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 10.
- 47 In 'Church Notes', *BJ*, 23 Jan. 1914, p. 12.
- 48 *Ibid.*; *BC*, 10 Jan. 1914, p. 2. Report of Meeting of Bolton Liberal Association on 'Voluntary Versus Compulsory System', *BJ*, 20 March 1914, p. 7.

- 49 Report of Meeting of Bolton Labour Party on 'Compulsory Military Service!', *BJ*, 20 Feb. 1914, p. 9.
- 50 *BJ*, 20 March 1914, p. 7.
- 51 *BC*, 25 July 1914, p. 2.
- 52 *BEN*, 27 July 1914, p. 3; Morris, *Radicalism Against War*, p. 387.
- 53 *BEN*, 30 July 1914, p. 2, 31 July 1914, p. 2.
- 54 *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 5.
- 55 Rev. E. Morgan to *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 56 *BC*, 1 Aug. 1914, p. 5; *BEN*, 4 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 57 *BJ*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 12.
- 58 *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 59 Probably cued by a similar meeting in Trafalgar Square the previous evening.
- 60 *BEN*, 4 Aug. 1914, p. 5.
- 61 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 6; M. Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 54-9, 70-2.
- 62 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 6.
- 63 Report of address by Mr. T. Taylor, M.P. to Bolton Liberal Association, *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 64 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 6.
- 65 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 66 *BEN*, 1 Sept. 1914, p. 3.
- 67 *BEN*, 13 Sept. 1914, p. 1.
- 68 N. Duffield, 'Bolton Socialist Club', in *Bolton People's History*, Vol. 1, (Bolton, n.d.), p. 6.
- 69 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 9.
- 70 *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 6; *BEN*, 4 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 16 Oct. 1914, p. 4.
- 71 *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 3, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 7; Bolton Reference Library, *35th Annual Report of Bolton and District Operative Cotton Spinners' Provincial Association*, 19 Dec. 1914, p. 7.
- 72 *BC*, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 6; *BJ*, 14 Aug. 1914, p. 8.
- 73 *BJ*, 14 Aug. 1914, p. 8.
- 74 *BJ*, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 8, 1 Jan. 1915, p. 4; Bolton Reference Library, *Annual Report . . . Bolton Cotton Spinners' Association*, Dec. 1914, p. 7; *ibid.*, 1915, p. 3.
- 75 *BEN*, 13 Nov. 1918, p. 2; Foley, *A Bolton Childhood*, pp. 84-5; Williams, *36 Stewart Street*, p. 129; *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1984.
- 76 *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 6, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 7; *BEN*, 16 Sept. 1914, p. 2.
- 77 *BJ*, 23 Oct. 1914, p. 4, 21 Aug. 1914, p. 8.
- 78 *BJ*, 28 Aug. 1914, p. 8, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8.
- 79 Bolton Reference Library, Ministry of War Leaflet, Army Form B 218N, 10 Nov. 1914, 'Rates of Pay'.
- 80 Annual Report, 'The Guild of Help', *BJ*, 16 Jan. 1914, p. 9; *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 6, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 7; *BJ*, 25 Sept. 1914, p. 4.
- 81 *BJ*, 9 Oct. 1914, p. 6.
- 82 Letter to Editor from Bolton Labour Party, *BEN*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 2. A Bolton cloth shop offered guilds engaged in this kind of work special terms on 'Army Greys, Army Shirtings, etc.', while a jeweller urged people to bring in their repairs to help the Government's campaign of 'Business as Usual': *BC*, 29 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 83 *BC*, 12 Sept. 1914, p. 1, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 84 Bolton Reference Library, Diary of Dr. Johnston, undated entry [1914-1915]; P. Salvesson, *Loving Comrades: Lancashire's Links to Walt*

- Whitman (Bolton, 1984), p. 4. Letter to Editor from J. Clayton, *BC*, 29 Aug. 1914, criticised clergymen too for not doing enough.
- 85 *BEN*, 18 Aug. 1914, p. 2, 31 Aug. 1914, p. 2.
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 7; *BEN*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 88 Letter to Editor from 'Militant Suffragist', *BC*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 9; A. Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War* (1968), p. 51.
- 89 Report of I.L.P. meeting in the Town Hall Square, *BEN*, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
- 90 *BEN*, 3 Oct. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 23 Oct. 1914, p. 5.
- 91 Report of meeting of Bolton Poor Law Guardians, *BC*, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 8, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 7, 12 Sept. 1914, p. 6; Bolton Reference Library, *Annual Report . . . Bolton Cotton Spinners' Association*, Dec. 1914.
- 92 *BJ*, 11 Sept. 1914, p. 7.
- 93 Account of Recruiting Meeting, *BC*, 17 Sept. 1914, p. 7.
- 94 'Primarily the issue rests with our Navy - "In our Fleet our Fate" . . . The actual defence of our coasts will rest upon our land forces and forts.' Leader in *BEN*, 5 Aug. 1914, p. 2.
- 95 *BEN*, 1 Sept. 1914, p. 3.
- 96 *BC*, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 7; *BJ*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8; *BEN*, 23 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
- 97 *Ibid.*
- 98 *BJ*, 9 Oct. 1914, p. 6.
- 99 *BEN*, 25 Aug. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8.
- 100 *BC*, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 7, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 6, 12 Sept. 1914, p. 7.
- 101 *BJ*, 2 Oct. 1914, p. 8. The support of mothers was exhorted in the local press with the classic line: 'Other women can only send socks to the front. You can send a son.' *BEN*, 1 Sept. 1914.
- 102 *BEN*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 2.
- 103 'The people here seem to appreciate the seriousness of the war far more than our kin Bolton way . . .': letter from soldier with Bolton's T.A. battalion training in Gloucestershire, *BEN*, 23 Aug. 1914, p. 1; *BC*, 29 Aug. 1914, p. 4. ' . . . the sturdy youth of the town has not been carried away upon the wave of enthusiasm found everywhere along the south and east coasts where daily incidents of inspired animation are to be witnessed.' *BJ*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8.
- 104 *BEN*, 2 Sept. 1914, p. 3; *BJ*, 18 Sept. 1914, p. 8.
- 105 Reminiscence of Bill Horrocks in *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1984.
- 106 *BJ*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 8.
- 107 *BJ*, 4 Sept. 1914, p. 8. A Bolton Territorial noted with amusement the shock of the men of the 'Preston Pals', with white collars and suitcases, having to mix with tough Wigan colliers in the West Lancashire Division: *BEN*, 13 Sept. 1914, p.2; *BC*, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 8.
- 108 *BEN*, 5 Sept. 1914, p. 3.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 Col. H.C. Wylly, *The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment* (2 vols; London, 1933). Over 1,000 names appear on the battalion's war memorial in Bolton.
- 111 For the Allies, 'the campaign is one of attrition', *BJ*, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 6.
- 112 *BEN*, 16 Aug. 1914, p. 2; *BJ*, 2 Oct. 1914, p. 8, 16 Oct. 1914, p. 8.
- 113 *BJ*, 1 Jan. 1915, p. 4. In fact *before* the introduction of conscription Bolton and district raised about 50,000 men, the third best in the country! *BEN*, 3 Aug. 1984.
- 114 *BJ*, 16 Oct. 1914, p. 8.

