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Up from the farm: a global microhistory of rural Americans and Africans in the First World War[†]

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Abstract

Were the effects of First World War truly similar globally? A comparison of how the conflict was perceived by two extremely different groups of rural people – southern Americans of the Jackson Purchase region of far western Kentucky and Africans in the small British Protectorate of Nyasaland in south central Africa – makes their microhistories significant rather than trivial by placing them a global context. In the early twentieth century, both groups were not only rural, but removed, decidedly disconnected from each other. Yet, drawing on documentary evidence, especially interviews with the last generation of First World War survivors in both regions, offers a significant perspective on how similar their experiences actually became in the crucible of a global war. The call to arms, their recruitment and resistance to service, combat adversities and cultural experiences, post-war disillusionments and triumphs, and especially the economic consequences of their war provide penetrating insights into the wide-ranging ordeals and opportunities that this first truly global event offered peoples worldwide.

Keywords: Jackson Purchase; Kentucky; Malawi; microhistory; Nyasaland; oral testimonies; veterans

‘Reuben, Reuben, I’ve been thinking’,
Said his wifey dear;
‘Now that all is peaceful and calm,
The boys will soon be back on the farm’.

Mister Reuben started winking,
And slowly rubbed his chin.
He pulled his chair up close to Mother,
And he asked her with a grin:

‘How’ya gonna keep ’em down on the farm
After they’ve seen Paree?’¹

[†]The author greatly appreciates the *Journal’s* anonymous reviewers for suggestions which have improved the article, in addition to those mentioned in the notes below.

¹Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young, ‘How’ya Gonna Keep ’Em Down on the Farm’ (1919), in *Songs That Changed the World*, ed. W. W. Whitman (New York: Crown Publishers, 1969), 190–1.

Introduction

It was certainly a widespread expectation in 1919, and remains a common view, that the impact of the First World War would, and did, reach right down to the farms and villages of rural America.² Indeed, a similar impression applies to a variety of rural outposts throughout the world, even among the rural peoples in relatively isolated parts of Africa.³ The global conflict directly involved more people than any war before and, along with the worldwide influenza pandemic which followed in its wake, swept up more communities and touched the lives of a greater number of individuals than any previous event in world history. Such assertions, however, frequently offer little help in understanding the similarities – or indeed the differences – in the experiences of diverse peoples caught up in the shared ordeal of that war and its aftermath. Finding commonalities in the wartime experiences of rural peoples worldwide, despite the uniqueness of their communities and cultures, as well as the particularities of their encounters with the horrors that were the First World War, requires more than a side-by-side reading of general histories or even efforts at side-by-side narrative juxtaposition. A much more fruitful approach would be to seek direct, point-by-point comparisons of smaller groups of people whose experiences may be typical of others. On the surface, such global microhistory comparison might appear to be elevating the trivial to an unjustified level of importance. Yet the world historian Diego Olstein has pointedly argued that the First World War offers ‘a meaningful global context for the study of the local’, suggesting that the conflict is indeed an ideal framework for a comparative global microhistorical study.⁴

Inspired in part by the recent discussions regarding centennial celebrations of the 1918 armistice,⁵ this study attempts to seize on that context and make such comparisons by looking at how the First World War was experienced and perceived in two extremely different locations and by the groups of individuals who lived in each: Africans in the small British Protectorate of Nyasaland in south central Africa; and southern Americans of the Jackson Purchase region of far western Kentucky. Indeed, as the Africanist historian Michelle Moyd recently argued, ‘if we want to understand the war as global, we must demonstrate the extent to which ordinary people living in diverse locations shared certain experiences even as operational and political patterns diverged during the war years and their immediate aftermath’. Moreover, she continued, ‘Africa has to be a part of that project if it is to be at all meaningful.’⁶

Methodology

At the core of this present analysis are two separate research projects, both collections of interviews with survivors of the war period, most recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. Each is a source of ‘telling examples’, which taken together open ‘a useful evidentiary paradigm’ for comparative analysis.⁷ At first glance, these two regions may seem far removed from the main concerns of

²David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 38–44.

³For example, see several of the essays in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin E. Page (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1987); also William K. Storey, ‘War in Africa – 1914–1916’, in *The First World War: A Concise Global History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 60–7.

⁴Diego Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 159.

⁵A very preliminary draft of this article was presented as History and African Studies Seminar Series paper no. 3 at the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa on 4 March 1998. Comments and suggestions made at that time indicated additional research and revisions were necessary. Subsequent review of recent First World War scholarship, as well as the emerging field of global microhistory, provided further incentives to revisit the topic; see particularly Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel, ‘Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History’, *International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011): 573–84.

⁶Michelle Moyd, ‘Centering a Sideshow: Local Experiences of the First World War in Africa’, *First World War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 115.

⁷A method suggested by Lara Putnam, ‘To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World’, *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 618. The Nyasaland materials come from more than three hundred oral histories, both complete interview transcripts and briefer questionnaire responses, recorded during research commissioned for and described in

the war; indeed, that is one factor making the people of these two areas at least potentially ideal candidates for such scrutiny. In addition, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, neither had been as affected by the encroaching demands of an increasingly integrated world as had many of their contemporaries in the United States or even the colonial outposts of southern Africa. But surely comparisons must be extraordinarily strained, if not impossible, for two such divergent places with vastly different cultures and outlooks! A closer examination and careful analysis, however, may dispel this concern. Though nearly on opposite sides of the world, there are some broad, general similarities in both the geography and economy of the two regions.⁸ And within the apparent differences between them, some 'functional similarities' in the operation of their sociopolitical systems may be found which are also of value in the application of a comparative historical approach.⁹

The first obvious similarity is that these two relatively small and compact areas were dominated – geographically and to a lesser extent economically – by their links to critically important bodies of water. Nestled alongside Lake Nyasa and astride the Shire river, which flows south from it, Nyasaland was tied not only to the East African interlacustrine zone, but also to the extensive network of the Zambezi river and its tributaries. That historic tie was intensified with the effects of British imperialism in the late nineteenth century, as virtually all communication with the outside world depended on the Shire/Zambezi route. Similarly, the Jackson Purchase was bounded on all but the south by three of the great rivers of mid America – the Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee – with another, the Cumberland, a scant 20 miles to the west. From the time of American westward expansion, these rivers similarly dominated the communication links of their region.

As well watered as these two regions were, they both remain overwhelmingly agricultural, even today. During the early years of the twentieth century, one of the main crops was essentially the same: maize in Nyasaland, corn in the Jackson Purchase. But both also had a considerable cash crop base, with tea the chief export for Nyasaland, followed by coffee and tobacco. In the Jackson Purchase, tobacco was easily the most important cash crop, although it was grown by small, independent farmers rather than the large colonial estates which were the mainstays of Nyasaland's export agriculture. And in both cases, the value of those crops was greatly influenced by links downriver to wider markets, a fact not lost on the peoples of either region.

Perhaps most striking of the similarities, however, was the relative isolation of both. Despite the readily available river and lake routes to the outside, the peoples in each only reluctantly joined in the cultural and political life of the wider world. The African peoples of Nyasaland were constrained by the British declaration of a Protectorate over their lands in 1891, and even those

Melvin E. Page, *The Chiwaya War: Malawians and the First World War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 235–46. (Interviews and questionnaires from this project are cited as 'Malawi Collection'.) The Jackson Purchase interviews come largely from the three dozen complete interviews making up the World War One Veterans Series of the Jackson Purchase Oral History Project, undertaken by the Forrest C. Pogue Oral History Institute at Murray State University. The author was an adviser for this project, which is described in [James W. Hammack Jr], *World War I Memoirs: A Catalogue of Oral History Interviews from the Jackson Purchase Region of Kentucky* (Murray, KY: Forrest C. Pogue Oral History Institute, 1984), 1–7. (These interviews are cited as 'Pogue Collection'.) The author is grateful to Dr Sean J. McLaughlin, currently Director of Special Collections at the Pogue Library, Murray State University, for assistance in accessing these interviews.

⁸The summary introduction to the Pogue Collection concludes that body of interviews 'represent a diversity of social, economic, and racial backgrounds', with farmers and some small-town residents, as well as both blacks and whites, a mix which 'lends itself to comparative analysis': [Hammack], *World War I Memoirs*, 4. The much larger number of interviews in the Malawi Collection, drawn 'from all but three of Malawi's twenty-four current districts plus Mozambique', provides a similar level of confidence for meaningful comparisons: Page, *Chiwaya War*, 239.

⁹Expressing 'a dissatisfaction with . . . the historiography of the First World War . . . [especially] the paucity of comparative studies of the impact of the war', the distinguished First World War historian Jay Winter proposed 'comparative study of units which have structural or functional similarities' as a means of remedying that lacuna: J. M. Winter, 'Cities At War: Aspects of the Social History of Paris, London and Berlin, 1914–1919', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 167 (1992): 149.

British colonials who had made the Union of South Africa their home found Nyasaland far from the beaten track. Indeed, the Protectorate was such a backwater of empire that it came to be seen as an ‘imperial slum’.¹⁰ Of course, none among its African population saw themselves in such terms, yet from early days the small number of European settlers – with a nod to their imperial isolation – referred to Nyasaland as the ‘Cinderella amongst the Protectorates’.¹¹ Almost equally isolated from the centres of power where decisions were made regarding its future, the Jackson Purchase was, not least physically, more removed from the cultural heart of Kentucky and its politics than the renowned and also isolated eastern Appalachian communities of the Commonwealth.¹² Only formally becoming United States territory – and thus officially part of Kentucky – upon ratification of the Treaty of Tuscaloosa with the Chickasaw people in 1819, the Purchase region was home to considerable Confederate sympathies during the American Civil War. Subsequently it was widely considered to be ‘the most “southern” part of the Bluegrass State’.¹³

These historical similarities suggest that both areas were rural and removed, each a distant outpost far from the centres of events which dominated the First World War. Yet being so removed they are thus ideal subjects for attempting to understand whether there were similarities in the impact of that global conflict on peoples worldwide. To accomplish this, though, requires a focus on the functional similarities within the two regions; in this way, what may appear to be differences can be seen as having the same practical application in both areas. For example, the awareness of both populations about the war and the availability of news concerning the conflict might at first appear to provide evidence of marked differences. In Nyasaland, despite an early attack on the Protectorate’s northern frontier launched from German East Africa, there really was little basis to expect news of the war to spread widely. Literacy was low and newspapers not widely available; other sources of news were very limited. In contrast, the Jackson Purchase, despite its isolation, had a number of news outlets and several newspapers which were widely circulated. Throughout the area people were generally aware of the war, especially by the time of direct United States involvement.

Perhaps surprisingly, there actually was a similar awareness throughout Nyasaland. It was ‘difficult not to know there is war somewhere’, one veteran later insisted, adding that ‘even the children heard about it’.¹⁴ Despite the obvious differences, such as the lack of newer communication technologies, the justly famous ‘bush telegraph’ and the associated ‘village or community “talking-place” ... [found] in every part of native Africa’ functioned as purveyors of current information almost as effectively as any newspaper or the post office did in rural America during the early twentieth century.¹⁵ Thus, by relying on well-documented oral historical evidence and using it to make functional comparisons, the literal truth of the assertion that the First World War (or at least news of it) spread to the farthest reaches of the globe can be confirmed. Similarly, an emphasis on several other functional comparisons is useful in discovering what similarities the

¹⁰See H. L. Vail, ‘The Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and Its Railways, 1895–1935’, *Journal of African History* 16 (1975): 89–112.

¹¹Peter Charlton, *Cinderella’s Soldiers: The Nyasaland Volunteer Reserve*, 2nd ed. (Rickmansworth: Great War in Africa Association, 2018), 1.

¹²The historical basis of this regionalism is considered by Hughie G. Lawson, ‘Geographical Origins of White Migrants to Trigg and Calloway Counties in the Ante-Bellum Period’, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 57 (1983): 287 and *passim*.

¹³Patricia Ann Hoskins, ‘“The Old First is with the Union”: The Civil War, Reconstruction, and Memory in the Jackson Purchase Region of Kentucky’ (PhD diss., Auburn University, 2002), 2.

¹⁴Maulidi Mwina, interviewed 15 August 1972 by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf Juwayeyi at the Old Soldiers’ Home, Zomba, Malawi Collection, I-11.

¹⁵T. Cullen Young, ‘The “Native” Newspaper’, *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute* 11, no. 1 (1938): 63–72. A missionary and anthropologist, Young worked primarily in Nyasaland from 1904 to 1931. His unpublished writings include a typescript, ‘Nyasaland Operations During the World War, 1914–1918’, [1930?], held by the Society of Malawi Library, Blantyre.

war's impact may have had on these distant, diverse regions as they were drawn into what began as a European war.

Evidence and analysis

In both regions, the role of spiritual and political leaders in attempting to shape opinions about the news of war proved to be somewhat similar. In Nyasaland an American Baptist-trained pastor, John Chilembwe – whose Providence Industrial Mission at Chiradzulu had become a focal point of millennial expectations – preached publicly against the war. A letter he penned to the European editor of the *Nyasaland Times* newspaper in November or December 1914 – but which was suppressed and never published, under orders from the government censor – explained the basis of his preaching:

We have been invited to shed our blood in this world's war. . . . If it were a war . . . for honour . . . let the rich men, bankers, titled men, storekeepers, farmers and landlords go to war and get shot. Instead the poor Africans who have nothing to own in this present world . . . are invited to die for a cause which is not theirs.¹⁶

Stridently anti-colonial, Chilembwe's opposition only grew as demands for African manpower increased, especially for labourers as well as soldiers. He sent one of his followers, Yotam Bango, to German East Africa with a letter appealing for assistance in an uprising against British rule. German authorities crafted a noncommittal reply, and, though he never received it, Chilembwe forged ahead with his plans to resist, organizing his followers for a violent rebellion.¹⁷ Chilembwe and his 'army' killed three Europeans in January 1915 before a hastily organized response scattered the rebels, with European members of the Nyasaland Volunteer Reserve and a few King's African Rifles *askari* (soldiers) chasing Chilembwe himself into neighbouring Mozambique, where he was killed.¹⁸

It was another Baptist preacher – H. Boyce Taylor, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Murray, Kentucky – who spoke and wrote openly against the war, causing much consternation in at least some Jackson Purchase circles. He was known as 'an outspoken pacifist, on public record against all war' and virulently opposed to the new conflict.¹⁹ Writing in 1917, Taylor used his nationally circulated *News & Truths* newsletter to denounce religious appeals encouraging military service, especially what he saw as the US government's attempts 'to speak for God or put the call of country above the commands of God. . . . War is anarchy against international law as truly as mob violence is anarchy against state law.'²⁰ Taylor's reading of scripture – focusing on the 'render unto Caesar' injunction in the book of Matthew – led to at least one fiery sermon which aroused suspicions that he was 'very pro-German' as well as 'anti-conscription'. Denounced as such to federal and state authorities, the pastor became the subject of two serious criminal investigations, though never charged with any specific offences during the war. However, his refusal to shutter his church during the ensuing influenza pandemic did lead to his being jailed for a brief

¹⁶His original letter, as well as discussion of its authorship and the intervention of government censors in preventing its publication, can be found in George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958), 233–6.

¹⁷George Simeon Mwase, *Strike a Blow and Die*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 51–2. The actual text of Chilembwe's appeal is unknown, but paraphrased in General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's war diary, an English translation of which is in the manuscript collections of the Imperial War Museum Library, London, LBY 49538.

¹⁸The most recent full account is D. D. Phiri, *John Chilembwe* (Lilongwe: Longman Malawi, 1976), 80–90; the most thorough, however, remains Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*.

¹⁹R. Charles Blair, 'H. Boyce Taylor and the 1918 Flu Epidemic', *Baptist History Homepage*, 31 August 2015, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/taylor.h.b.by.charles.blair.html>.

²⁰Quoted in David J. Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 66, 68.

period, though he was scarcely deterred by such an inconvenience.²¹ The preacher ‘held church services through a barred window’ from his ‘dingy front cell’ with a ‘handful of faithful’ parishioners ‘kneeling in prayer’ outside the Calloway County Jail.²²

The first news of the conflict brought political reactions in both regions as well. For the newly elected Jackson Purchase Congressman Alben Barkley it actually meant supporting President Woodrow Wilson’s insistence on American neutrality after the start of hostilities in Europe. His greater concern, as it was throughout his first congressional term, was to protect western Kentucky farmers from British, and then German, embargoes on cotton and, most importantly, tobacco exports. After his first re-election – and following increased German military provocations in early 1917 – Barkley shifted his position, supporting President Wilson’s call for a declaration of war, as well as wholeheartedly endorsing conscription, chiding some reluctant fellow Congressmen, saying bluntly ‘every soldier must follow his commander in chief.’²³

In northern Nyasaland, another prominent political leader, Ngoni Paramount Chief Chitunga Jere, responded somewhat differently. Thinking that his people would believe he was joining with British colonizers – who only a decade before had enforced colonial rule upon them – Chitunga simply ignored requests to supply men for the war effort. His further defiance reaffirmed long-held colonial distrust of Ngoni power and quickly resulted in his banishment to the southernmost reaches of the Protectorate, prompting reactions from his Ngoni people.²⁴ An *ngoma* dance song (a form of expression relatively safe from British disapprobation) first performed after his removal expressed well the disaffection:

Inkosi Chitunga Jere
Has been publicly humiliated!
The chief of the land!
...
We publicly denounce it!
This desecration of the land.
We publicly denounce it!²⁵

Ironically, in becoming such a widely praised public symbol, Chitunga Jere inspired not so much continued resistance, but a greater willingness among his people to join the ranks of soldiers and military labourers, hoping that their chief would soon be returned to live among them again.²⁶

Coming on the heels of John Chilembwe’s full scale rebellion, the Ngoni chief’s non-cooperation incentivized a marked reluctance on the part of the British to call upon Nyasaland’s African population for increased military manpower, even to defend the Protectorate’s northern frontier with German East Africa. Instead, white troops from South Africa were rushed to Nyasaland, and into 1916 their numbers actually exceeded the total number of locally recruited African *askari* on the border. It was only after May 1917 that ‘the campaign was dependent almost entirely on the endeavours of African soldiers’.²⁷ In strikingly parallel fashion, it was only ‘after the United States entered

²¹*Ibid.*, 66–73; Blair, ‘H. Boyce Taylor’.

²²Dorothy and Kerby Jennings, *The Story of Calloway County, 1822–1976* (Murray, KY: privately published, 1980), 229. The authors were also first-person wartime observers.

²³James K. Libbey, *Alben Barkley: A Life in Politics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 72–89 (quotation at 88).

²⁴Page, *Chiwaya War*, 41–3.

²⁵Recorded by Lupenga Mphande, “‘If You’re Ugly, Know How to Sing:’ Aesthetics of Resistance and Subversion”, in Hervé Maupeu and Kimani Njogu, *Songs and Politics in Eastern Africa* (Nairobi: L’Institut Français de recherche en Afrique, 2007), 395–6.

²⁶Paulos Nthengwe, interviewed 1 April 1973 by Haskard Mhoni at Sazu School, Mzimba District, Malawi Collection, MZ/1; Jakopa Ngoma, interviewed 9 April 1973 by Haskard Mhoni at Engalaweni, Mzimba District, Malawi Collection, MZ/9.

²⁷John McCracken, ‘Malawi & the First World War’, in *A History of Malawi: 1859–1966* (Woodbridge: James Curry, 2012), 147–50.

the Great War in April 1917' that most residents of the Jackson Purchase, like their fellow 'Kentuckians banded together in enormous efforts to support' a wide variety of wartime undertakings, including 'registering for the draft'.²⁸ But, in an uncanny analogue, those demands from the US government also sparked a protest reaction to recruitment in the Jackson Purchase, though nothing even approaching the violence set off by John Chilembwe.

None of these attempts to rally dissent, though well known locally, directly deterred Americans or Africans from participating in the military effort. It is possible, though, that an indirect effect of anti-war preaching filtered through to some men in both regions, who remained decidedly uncertain about the act of killing which war required. Ruben Longwe, a Nyasaland veteran from Nkhata Bay on the lakeshore – a short boat ride from the influential Universities Mission to Central Africa outpost on Likoma Island – rejected the whole idea. Likely influenced by Christian teaching, he remained convinced that killing 'was in the power of the devil himself; there was no sorrow, no mercy in killing',²⁹ while in the Jackson Purchase, H. T. Waldrop reluctantly accepted the need for his participation, remembering that 'we didn't want Germany to take over'. But the Murray native may also have been aware of Boyce Taylor's pacifist pronouncements, since he was hesitant about 'going to the front line because I was – actually, I wasn't wantin' to kill anybody'.³⁰

In fact the men of Nyasaland and the Jackson Purchase alike were often ready, if not altogether willing, to join the army. 'The disinclination of southern white men to fight' may actually have been less pronounced in the Jackson Purchase.³¹ Overall, 'anti-war sentiment in Kentucky paled in comparison with other states', with fewer such concerns in its far western counties.³² Yet in Calloway County, once the wartime Selective Service Act was signed by the President, 'the rush for matrimony set a fast pace', with draft-age men seeking 'a shelter from active military service in most instances'.³³ Nonetheless, most western Kentucky men registered for the draft and reported for duty in the US army. In Nyasaland, many African political leaders – prompted to do so by colonial officials – cajoled young men to join the King's Africa Rifles (KAR). Typical of their efforts was this praise song lyric from the period:

News was heard
From Karonga:
Take your irons [i.e. guns], soldiers,
Kneel down, war has come.³⁴

Such appeals had limited effect, however, as even some who later did enlist initially 'lost confidence in the chief . . . [who] would make us die in the war'.³⁵

Realizing such difficulties, Nyasaland military authorities became more proactive, famously sending the KAR marching band into many nooks and crannies of the Protectorate, encouraging

²⁸Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 24.

²⁹Ruben Longwe, interviewed 8 September 1973 by C. M. Manda in Sanga village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-132.

³⁰H. T. Waldrop, interviewed 20 October 1979 in Murray, KY by Kathryn Pasco, Pogue Collection, OH026.

³¹Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South During the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 68.

³²Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 106, also 301. None of the examples of disaffection, culled from state and federal records, are from the Jackson Purchase; the Pogue Collection, although admittedly a small sample, provides only a single example, of a draft evader who absconded to Mexico.

³³Jennings, *Story of Calloway County*, 224.

³⁴Quoted in Steve Chimombo, *Malawian Oral Literatures: The Aesthetics of Indigenous Arts* (Zomba: Center for Social Research, University of Malawi, 1988), 234. Karonga was the northernmost colonial government outpost in Nyasaland, where an attack by invading troops from German East Africa in early September 1914 marked the beginning of the Protectorate's protracted war effort; T. Cullen Young, 'The Battle of Karonga', *Nyasaland Journal* 8, no. 2 (1955): 27–30.

³⁵Sam Kamanga, interviewed 4 August 1973 by C. M. Manda in Chitungulu village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-107.

young men to fall in line, leading them to waiting recruiters who would sign them up for war duty. The result, acknowledged widely and explained by James Mbalazo, was that ‘the band was parading tricks to coax young men to join them’.³⁶ And since ‘the band’s marching was really thrilling, it was irresistible for brave young men to join the army’.³⁷ Disgusted missionaries of different denominations occasionally condemned the ‘drums and trumpets’ as diverting disinclined men into military service.³⁸ With a sense of regret, Issa Lipende recalled ‘the beauty of the parading band would blind us to the real issues of war’.³⁹ In an ironic juxtaposition, Americans who volunteered rather than await being drafted, were sometimes similarly disappointed, as a nationally ‘popular’ poem revealed their ‘mixed emotions’:

Why didn’t I wait to be drafted?
And led to the train by a band? . . .
Why didn’t I wait to be cheered?
For the drafted men get the credit,
While I merely volunteered!⁴⁰

But what prompted men – both in the Jackson Purchase and in Nyasaland – to volunteer? While their motives seem divergent, such as those Ngoni who hoped that their service might hasten the return home of their exiled chief Chitunga, a functional analysis shows that many more in both regions were perhaps inspired by appeals to some of their greatest fears. In the Jackson Purchase, for example, most ‘understood that the Germans was rapin’ all the French women’. Ellwyn Coffman believed that this was ‘general news, how terrible the Germans were’, no doubt carefully spread through the news media ‘to get the Americans riled up’. The effort certainly worked, especially with men who had grown up in the racially charged culture of the post-Civil War American South. Propaganda playing upon the spectre of women violated by outsiders motivated many, like Coffman, who ‘wanted to go over and put a stop to it’.⁴¹ For Nyasalanders the fear was just as palpable, if focused somewhat differently: a long-held belief that Europeans, and especially the ‘cannibal Germans’, harboured a special taste for Africans. ‘This is what the Germans were talking about in Europe’, a Nyasaland village headman, Makumba, asserted, no doubt remembering the fears of foreign slave traders who, only a generation before, had inspired similar accusations of cannibalism as they sought to remove Africans from their homes to distant markets for sale. The news of this latest cannibalism ascribed to German colonizers was no doubt carefully planted, for it ‘reached us through the British’, the same headman recalled, prompting him and other African leaders to aid in British wartime recruitment; ‘naturally we helped them because we didn’t want to die’.⁴²

Nonetheless a strong undercurrent of reluctance remained for men of both regions. In Nyasaland it was frequently expressed directly, undoubtedly encouraged by an existing and

³⁶James Mbalazo, interviewed 1 September 1973 by Sigele Chilole, at the Mangochi Boma (district headquarters), Malawi Collection, I-169.

³⁷Chionda Alidi, interviewed 1 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Malindi, Malawi Collection, I-72. A fuller consideration of this and other successful recruiting efforts in Nyasaland are considered in Page, *Chiwaya War*, 27–54.

³⁸Eustace Malisawa, Lungewa station notes, *Nyasaland Diocesan Chronicle* 53 (October 1916), 24; Ntaka-taka station diary, 11 July 1916, quoted in Ian Linden, with Jane Linden, *Catholics, Peasants, and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 115n. Despite any sectarian differences, the missionaries used exactly the same words, expressing similar sentiments.

³⁹Issa Lipende, interviewed 14 September 1973 by Sigele Chilole at the Mangochi Boma, Malawi Collection, I-170.

⁴⁰Quoted in Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 15.

⁴¹Ellwyn Coffman, interviewed 22 October 1982 in Fulton, KY by Ted Belue, Pogue Collection, OH007.

⁴²Village Headman Makumba, interviewed 3 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Makumba village, Mangochi District, Malawi Collection, I-75.

growing hostility to both colonial labour policies and land alienation. People feared that the 'war would bring about sad things', especially the prospect of general 'desolation [and the] break up of families'.⁴³ It was no wonder, then, that young men 'fled when the [British] recruiting parties came in the respective villages',⁴⁴ sometimes hiding in nearby hillside caves or sacred graveyards, or digging holes in the ground as hiding places.⁴⁵ Near Nkhota Kota, Vmande Kaombe was so desperate to avoid the recruiters that he 'escaped and hid in a river and my parents . . . secretly brought food to me'. Yet when his parents were interrogated by colonial officials, they 'said they did not know what had become of me. They even accused the whites for my disappearance!'⁴⁶ Though he avoided service, Kaombe's strategy was seldom replicated, leading others to flee across international frontiers, especially into the neighbouring Portuguese colony of Mozambique.

The hesitation of men in the Jackson Purchase was perhaps more muted, although the Fulton County agricultural extension agent Morris Gordon reported in late 1917 hearing complaints about 'the unpatriotic farmer' – opposed to war – in discussions with businessmen and bankers.⁴⁷ When questioned, some drafted veterans admitted their reticence. 'No, I didn't volunteer', Carl Hainline insisted; 'Anxious to go? Heck no!'⁴⁸ The reasons that Kentuckians offered for wanting to escape wartime military service were strikingly similar, with family concerns topping the list. 'I didn't want to leave my daddy by himself. That's how I come to be drafted in', Carl Milam remembered, emphasizing that he 'didn't want to go'.⁴⁹ Others relied on religious objections to 'protest against registering for the draft because they were conscientious objectors', as was the case for some acquaintances of Jesse Flowers.⁵⁰ However, nothing in the Selective Service Act of 1917 exempted men from registering with local draft boards, who were left to determine those deserving of 'status as a conscientious objector. Obtaining such status did not, however, exempt men from the draft.' Rather, on conscription they were assigned to military units 'where their officers were supposed to find some sort of non-combatant work for them to do'.⁵¹

Perhaps because such a system was open to abuse, nationally there 'were not very many conscientious objectors' in the United States.⁵² Yet the prevailing sociopolitical climate in the Jackson Purchase seems to have encouraged such pacifist tendencies, in some extreme cases leading men to flee the country, not unlike a few of their central African counterparts. Noble Cox recalled one young man he knew in the farming community of Kirksey in Calloway County who, rather than registering, left home, heading south of the border.

One boy, he was in to be drafted and he went off and he went to Mexico and he stayed down there and he never did come back. . . . [His parents] didn't want him to go [to Mexico], but they didn't want him to go to war either. . . . They didn't believe to send anybody to war. They wasn't Quakers; they're just ordinary people.⁵³

⁴³Karonga Nkhata, interviewed 10 August 1973 by C. M. Manda in Tukumbu village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-126.

⁴⁴Mister Kili, interviewed 12 April 1973 by Solomon Liwewe in Mtenje village, Nkhota Kota District, Malawi Collection, I-68.

⁴⁵Melvin E. Page, 'The Great War and Chewa Society in Malawi', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1980): 176–7.

⁴⁶Vmande Kaombe, interviewed 9 April 1973 by Solomon Liwewe in Makuta village, Nkhota Kota District, Malawi Collection, I-64.

⁴⁷Quoted in David B. Danbom, 'The Agricultural Extension System and the First World War', *The Historian* 41, no. 2 (1979): 319.

⁴⁸Carl Hainline, interviewed 22 October 1982 in Fulton, KY by Mark Fuller, Pogue Collection, OH012.

⁴⁹Carl Milam, interviewed 28 October 1982 in Fulton, KY, by Ted Belue, Pogue Collection, OH022.

⁵⁰Jesse P. Flowers, interviewed 30 June 1983 in Paducah, KY by John Watson, Pogue Collection, OH010.

⁵¹Keith, *Rich Man's War*, p. 66.

⁵²Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, reprint ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 74.

⁵³Noble Cox, interviewed 18 October 1979 in Kirksey, KY by Sandra Hoover, Pogue Collection, OH005.

Despite such occasional desperate attempts to avoid service, great numbers of the ‘ordinary’ men in both regions did join the colours of either the King’s African Rifles and its associated labour contingents or the American Expeditionary Force and its many support units.

Though by no means all the Americans actually made it ‘over there’, those who did frequently found that ‘the people treated us royally everywhere in France’. A Calloway County native, Felix Holt – who served as a reporter for the American forces newspaper *Stars & Stripes* – wrote that ‘the French kids are very generous with their time . . . teaching us the lingo. Also the young damsels do their share and I must say there are some swell lookers’ among them.⁵⁴ Extremely few Nyasas shared such experiences, as almost all of them served in the East African Campaign. A very small number who had travelled to South Africa before 1916 enlisted in the South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) for duty in Europe. The missionary Donald Fraser, on the way to Nyasaland shortly after the war, met one Nyasa SANLC veteran in Cape Town, writing that the man had received ‘an intensive education . . . in Flanders’.⁵⁵ And at least one young Nyasa, Frederick Njilima, actually served in the British army despite a laxly enforced policy of discouraging black recruits. Claiming that his home before moving to London was in Mississippi – where in fact he studied for a time – and enlisting under his adopted Christian name, Frederick N. Gresham, he served three years, most of it in a Machine Gun Corps regiment. ‘Struck by war-fever, I decided to join the White war’, he wrote; ‘I also did so because I am a brave man and for fun.’ Severely wounded in action on the Soissons–Rheims front in May 1918, his actual bravery under fire resulted in his receiving the Military Medal before being discharged and returning to Nyasaland.⁵⁶

Although in decidedly different ways, matters of race played outsized roles for Americans – both white and black – and even for Africans who coped with fighting both for and against Europeans for the first time. As a young African American assigned to a mostly black infantry unit, Andrew Carmen found the atmosphere in France refreshing, a far cry from the stifling racism he had grown up with in the Jackson Purchase.⁵⁷ Being personally familiar with ‘segregation and prejudice’, which he had experienced even in the army, he recalled ‘I didn’t see any of that’ among the French.⁵⁸ But the same feature of French life struck Ellwyn Coffman – albeit a white Kentuckian from Fulton – very differently:

The first thing I saw when I got over there was a nigger [*sic*] about 7 foot tall walking along with one of the prettiest French girls you ever saw and I wished then I was back in Fulton, Kentucky.

I met a lot of French people, farmers and country people, their morals was low . . . they didn’t mind mixing races at all. They didn’t mind the colored and whites mixing.⁵⁹

As had been true before the war, the racial attitudes that some of the Kentuckians encountered in France were certainly far from the norm in western Kentucky. Despite being lauded in his hometown *Hickman Courier* after winning a bronze star for valour ‘under heavy shell fire’ at the front near Pont-à-Mousson, Rufus Atwood was awaiting discharge in February 1919 when his father advised him in a letter to ‘take your bonus money and buy an ordinary suit and wear it home. That

⁵⁴Quoted in Richard G. Stone Jr, *Kentucky Fighting Men* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 44. Holt’s later historical novel of frontier life in the Jackson Purchase, *The Gabriel Horn*, was the basis for the movie *The Kentuckian*.

⁵⁵Donald Fraser, *The New African* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1928), 1–2.

⁵⁶David Stuart-Mogg, ‘Fredrick Nijilima (Gresham) M.M.’, *Society of Malawi Journal* 60, no. 1 (2007): 25; John McCracken, ‘“Marginal Men”: The Colonial Experience in Malawi’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 4 (1989): 554.

⁵⁷See Patricia A. Hoskins, ‘The Freedmen’s Bureau in the Jackson Purchase Region of Kentucky, 1866–1868’, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 110, no. 3/4 (2012): 530–1.

⁵⁸Andrew Carmen, quoted in Berry Craig, ‘WWI Soldier Battled Prejudice, Too’, *Paducah Sun*, 18 October 1981, A14.

⁵⁹Ellwyn Coffman, Pogue Collection, OH007.

way you won't have no trouble.' The elder Atwood was likely recalling an 1866 incident in Hickman County when railroad employees assaulted a uniformed Union soldier aboard a train, leaving the man all but dead while also nearly fomenting a riot. Arriving home in Fulton County without incident, his uniform safely packed in his bag, Rufus Atwood soon learned why he was wise to have heeded his father's advice.⁶⁰

Only a month after the armistice, Fulton County was the site of the first lynching in the United States of a black soldier returned from the war. Private Charles Lucas, after receiving his demobilization orders on 14 December in Camp Sherman, Ohio, boarded a southbound train expecting to be reunited soon with his family in Alabama. During a stop in Fulton, Kentucky local police came aboard the train and made their way to the compartment where a number of uniformed soldiers were riding. As an honourably discharged veteran, Lucas objected to an order he empty his pockets and open his bags for inspection. Confronted with a belligerent police order – 'Shut up nigger [*sic*], and open your baggage' – he bolted from the train. Despite finding no contraband in his abandoned luggage, police followed and subsequently arrested him, ultimately taking him to the county jail in Hickman. All this activity aroused a mob, who proceeded to drag him from the jail, kicking and fighting, to a grove outside the town. There Private Lucas was brutally lynched while still in uniform. Although lynchings had been all too common there since Reconstruction, this incident marked the Jackson Purchase as the site of the first of many such acts of racial violence which scarred the nation following President Wilson's war to 'make the world safe for democracy'.⁶¹

The symbol of wartime violence in Nyasaland – the rebellion of John Chilembwe – when coupled with the recruitment resistance of Chimtunga Jere, symptomatically suggests increasing racial tensions during the war. But widespread evidence supports a more nuanced conclusion, that any such conflicts were born more from the legacy of colonial conquest. The coming of war, however, did somewhat change the dynamic of racial relationships. After the 1914 battle of Karonga, the KAR corporal Eleija Kimu confessed in a letter written to his wife:

I may as well tell you that I killed one German [European] myself. . . . I am afraid because I killed him and I got my head muddled when I think of it. . . . I am a soldier and delight in war. I have killed many black men and not felt like this, but that one white man I killed has made me afraid.⁶²

Though he need not have feared that action itself – KAR officers frequently praised their men for similar conduct in battle – his mere admission of fear was of more concern, as military censors seized his letter. It was never delivered. Indeed the second most senior white colonial official in the Protectorate, Hector L. Duff, even suggested that *askari* might have started 'boasting eagerly among themselves of the number of white men who had fallen to their rifles'.⁶³ That was not the case, however. In the heat of battle, Europeans were no more important than any other enemies.⁶⁴ In fact, the prevailing impression that Nyasa soldiers formed of European officers, German or British, was that they possessed the same qualities of fortitude and frailty as did their fellow *askari*.⁶⁵

⁶⁰Gerald L. Smith, *A Black Educator in the Segregated South: Kentucky's Rufus B. Atwood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 24–5; the 1866 incident is described in Hoskins, 'Freedmen's Bureau', 1–2.

⁶¹Vincent Mikkelsen, 'Coming from Battle to Face a War: The Lynching of Black Soldiers in the World War One Era' (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2007), 99–108.

⁶²Corporal Eleija Kimu to his wife, 23 October 1914, translation included as appendix 1/B in Hector L. Duff, 'Nyasaland in the World War, 1914–1918', [1919?], unpublished typescript, Library of the Imperial War Museum, London, LB5 36498.

⁶³Hector L. Duff, *Africa Small Chop* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 193.

⁶⁴Page, *Chiwaya War*, 104–5.

⁶⁵Kaulalo Ngozo, interviewed 18 April 1974 by T. William in Chingwalu Kusasa village, Dedza District, Malawi Collection, DZ/25; and Zikalindaine Katawala, interviewed 28 September 1973 by Paul Kshindo in Kachinga village, Kasupe District, Malawi Collection, KS/5.

Whether African or American, once transported to the front the usually reluctant soldiers often encountered the appalling conditions which have widely become associated with the First World War. Struggling to make his experience understandable to civilians afterwards, one of those veterans recalled simply,

Think of lying on the ground when the hot sun is beating directly on your backs; Think of yourself buried in a hole, with only your head and hands outside, holding a gun. Imagine yourself facing this situation for seven days, no food, no water, yet you don't feel hungry. Only death smelling all over the place. Listen to the sound from exploding bombs and machine guns, smoke all over and the vegetation burnt. . . . Look at your relative getting killed, crying and finally dead. These things we did, experienced and saw.

Such an image was likely common to many American soldiers fighting in France, but this particular picture, framed by Fololiyani Longwe of his wartime experiences in the East African Campaign, concluded simply: 'War itself is bad.'⁶⁶ His eloquence is a reminder that men in war – even those engaged in what was then called, and is remembered still, as 'a sideshow' fought in the East African savannah and 'a distraction from . . . the Western Front in France'⁶⁷ – often found in the horrors of combat some constants which united their experiences with those campaigning in more familiar theatres.

The Jackson Purchase Congressman Alben Barkley – dissuaded from enlisting by President Wilson himself – actually spent 'enough time in the grungy, vermin-infested trenches to appreciate the grim process of war from the perspective of the common soldier', during a privately arranged August 1918 congressional fact-finding mission to Europe. Though naturally loquacious, Barkley – like many who experienced the horrors of that war – seldom spoke of those details, simply remarking later 'you wonder if anyone really wins a war'.⁶⁸ And Andrew Carmen, a farm boy from Graves County, had hardly spent a full day in those same trenches when he caught a glimpse of 'no man's land' which appeared to him a landscape not unlike 'an old broom sedge field. Nothing was growing. The ground was all tore up.' He was soon ordered 'over the top' with his mates from the 369th Infantry, rushing across that torn-up field in attack; Carmen described the experience years later as 'like chasing rabbits back home'. He was soon wounded, finally transported to a field hospital, and on volunteering to return found no-one from his former squad still at the front. 'I never did know what happened to them – if they were killed or wounded or transferred or what.'⁶⁹

Indeed, survival was perhaps the greatest challenge facing all those timorous troops, whether Nyasas or Kentuckians, in the killing fields of the First World War. As a frightened twenty-one-year-old, Fritz Metzger had one overriding memory of his combat experience in France: 'All I remember is that I was trying to keep alive.' Few other details of the fighting were etched in his memory. 'The main thing is trying to keep alive.'⁷⁰ This became much more basic than merely avoiding death in battle; frequently it was purely a matter of finding enough food for survival. As a sailor assigned to a naval air station being built on the Gironde estuary in south-west France, Hughie Butler had a miserable three-day train ride after disembarking in the country: 'We had some canned tomatoes and a few things to eat', he recalled, including 'some good, stringy horse meat, . . . but we were really hungry. I thought I'd been hungry before, but I hadn't.' His was a quiet resignation, however, born of a realization that the local authorities were overwhelmed

⁶⁶Fololiyani Longwe, interviewed 23 August 1973 by C. M. Manda in Kuwirwi village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-112.

⁶⁷McCracken, 'Malawi & the First World War', 147.

⁶⁸Libbey, *Alben Barkley: Life in Politics*, 94.

⁶⁹Andrew Carmen, quoted in Craig, 'WWI Soldier Battled Prejudice, Too', A1, A14.

⁷⁰Fritz Metzger, interviewed 3 December 1982 in Paducah, KY by Mark Fuller, Pogue Collection, OH021.

with ‘so many of us they had no place to put us and they didn’t have supplies for that many people’.⁷¹ And not even the diligence of many residents of the Purchase in support of the nationwide Food Administration conservation programme seemed actually to have made a difference for some of the troops it was intended to support.⁷²

For the Nyasaland *askari* the situation was all too similar, but the response became more an open declaration, often expressed through their exuberant marching songs in similar, yet frequently variable lyrics:

When I die, bury me at Zomba
So that my heart should pain.
Hunger,
Hunger is painful,
Hunger.
Yes, when I die, bury me at Zomba
So that my heart should pain.
Hunger.
Bury me, bury me.
Hunger is painful.⁷³

* * * * *

When I die, when I die,
Bury me in Zomba.
There rest my soul.
Hunger, I feel hungry.⁷⁴

So pervasive were the food shortages experienced in East Africa by the Nyasaland *askari*, their campaign became widely known as simply ‘the hungry war’.⁷⁵

Not even the armistice of 1918 brought an end to the peril and suffering that the diffident recruits – American or African – experienced. In significant measure, the pain actually intensified for soldiers from both regions as they were also caught up in the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 sweeping the post-war world. Kazibule Dabi simply could not forget: ‘It got us when we were in the bush; many people were dying’, including some of his friends from Nyasaland.⁷⁶ One of them, Disi Katita, like his comrades, had seen a good deal of disease sweep through their ranks during the war,⁷⁷ but quickly realized that this latest outbreak ‘was a very bad one indeed’. As men died, ‘bodies were just burned in trenches by soldiers’ to prevent the affliction from spreading still further.⁷⁸ Yet the influenza tracked them home, carried by demobilized soldiers through the bush

⁷¹Hughie Butler, interviewed 28 October 1982 in Fulton, KY by Mark Fuller, Pogue Collection, OH002.

⁷²Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 148–53.

⁷³Maulidi Mwina, Malawi Collection, I-11. The small town of Zomba served as the capitol of Nyasaland’s colonial government and as regimental headquarters of KAR units recruited in the Protectorate.

⁷⁴Kildon Wajiusa, interviewed 2 August 1973 by C. M. Manda in Chiywila Village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-106. While campaigning with KAR soldiers in East Africa, Arnold Wienholt heard other versions complaining that officers had plentiful rations while their men remained underfed: Arnold Wienholt, *The Story of a Lion Hunt* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1922), 249.

⁷⁵Brian Gardner, *German East: The Story of the First World War in East Africa* (London: Cassell, 1963), 148; see also Page, *Chiwaya War*, 91–124.

⁷⁶Kazibule Dabi, interviewed 15 September 1972 by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf Juwayeyi at the Old Soldiers’ Home, Zomba, Malawi Collection, I-31.

⁷⁷During the East African Campaign, ‘deaths in battle were proportionately much lower than in Europe, [but] the opposite was true of sickness’. Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign, 1914–1918* (Stroud: Spellmont, 2004), 296.

⁷⁸Disi Katita, interviewed 13 August 1972 by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf Juwayeyi at the Old Soldiers’ Home, Zomba, Malawi Collection, I-25; his testimony remained consistent nearly two decades later when interviewed on 28 June 1991 by Lt-Col. James Njoloma and Melvin E. Page, also at the Old Soldiers’ Home, Zomba, Malawi Collection, I-201.

and across the sea.⁷⁹ Ellwyn Coffman was aboard the USS *Mount Vernon* coming back to the US when the epidemic became a graphic reality, as he watched while many of his comrades ‘died like flies on that boat because of the flu’. Medical officers tried to curtail the outbreak: ‘They would scrub the decks down and these boys would lay down before they would get dry, and I saw one die right out there.’ But he was well aware that many others also succumbed, since ‘they had the whole top of that boat covered up with caskets’.⁸⁰

The influenza soon struck at home in Kentucky, too, with unexpected ferocity. First detected in the crowded confines of Camp Zachary Taylor near Louisville, the disease ‘spread across Kentucky from east to west’, reaching the Jackson Purchase just in time for massive Liberty Loan promotional parades in all of the small towns, unfortunately attracting some of the largest crowds seen during the war. ‘Within a matter of days, the eight counties of the Jackson Purchase were swept with a tremendous influenza attack’, resulting in reports of several hundred cases throughout the region. ‘Fewer cases of influenza were reported in the countryside’, whereas large concentrations of population were more vulnerable. But ‘perhaps the most disease-ridden community’ in the entire Purchase area was ‘the tiny village of Hazel in southern Calloway County on the Kentucky–Tennessee border. Of its population of less than two hundred inhabitants, over one-hundred and fifty reported ill effects from influenza.’ The best that local and state public health officials were able to do was insist that stores, schools, and even churches remain closed. In their frustration, many western Kentuckians turned to ‘a “rural textbook” for folk medicine: . . . old family cookbooks, diaries, journals, and even Bibles’, at their wits’ end to find a cure for ‘the dreaded symptoms of influenza and pneumonia’.⁸¹ Their efforts, too, seemed futile. ‘So many died’, the survivor J. M. Bumgarner of Mayfield recalled; ‘It’s a wonder it didn’t kill me.’⁸² And in Murray, ‘deaths were so numerous it became an impossibility to record their demises’ in the local newspaper.⁸³ All told, however, only a little more than 800 in the entire Purchase region perished from the flu and its complications. Yet the total number of cases was considerably higher, perhaps accounting for remembered impressions of the epidemic’s severity.⁸⁴

In Nyasaland – indeed throughout Central Africa – local residents were simply overwhelmed by the seemingly new disease; in some places they ‘called it “bombom” because it hit them like machine-gun fire and took terrific toll’ in lives.⁸⁵ The disease, once ‘brought back to the Protectorate by the people who had been to war’, created – as Diamond Chirwa experienced it – ‘an additional battle to fight’, brought on by ‘the diseases brought back to the Protectorate’.⁸⁶ Despite the best efforts they could muster at the time, colonial medical officials were able to do little to ease the crisis. Some Africans remembered being advised to dissolve ashes from their cooking fires in water, pour the resulting liquid through a cloth, then drink the solute. While such alkali treatments to combat influenza were not unknown elsewhere to European and American physicians, such an approach likely seemed similar, in the minds of many Nyasas, ‘to infusions . . . prepared to cure colds, coughs, and pneumonia’, and may have appeared as well in the ‘rural textbooks’ consulted by western Kentuckians during the pandemic.⁸⁷

With a far less developed public health infrastructure than even the government-service-neglected Jackson Purchase, the desperation felt by many afflicted Africans was reflected in

⁷⁹Page, *Chiwaya War*, 163–9.

⁸⁰Ellwyn Coffman, Pogue Collection, OH007.

⁸¹Gregory K. Culver, ‘The Impact of the 1918 Spanish Influenza Epidemic on the Jackson Purchase’, *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1991): 490, 492–3, 495, 500.

⁸²J. M. Bumgarner, quoted in Berry Craig, ‘1918 Flu Killed 40 in Paducah’, *Paducah Sun*, 26 January 1986, C1.

⁸³Jennings, *Story of Calloway County*, 230.

⁸⁴Culver, ‘Impact of the 1918 Spanish Influenza Epidemic’, 504 and *passim*.

⁸⁵Marius Forte, *Black and Beautiful: A Life in Safari Land* (New York, 1938), 167.

⁸⁶Diamond Caswell Chirwa, interviewed 1 August 1973 by C. M. Manda, Mdyaka village, Nkhata Bay District, Malawi Collection, I-105.

⁸⁷Page, *Chiwaya War*, 173.

the symbolic actions of the Nyasaland nationalist Levi Mumba's father, who also functioned as 'the family priest':

One evening he . . . stood shaking in front of his chief house [to] appeal to his ancestral spirits. . . . He took a sip of beer . . . and spued [*sic*] it to the right and then to the left. . . . 'Why have you forsaken us? Here is beer – we give to you. Look on us compassionately, let the sick get better, peace be on us.'

The son later wrote: 'my father . . . showed great faith, and his appeal was effective'.⁸⁸ Yet, in general, mortality from the disease was considerably higher in Nyasaland than in the Jackson Purchase – perhaps exceeding 50,000 deaths – leading to widespread public frustration.⁸⁹ One Nkhota Kota resident, Amos Isaac, concluded simply that 'God was angry from 1918 to 1919'.⁹⁰

The influenza visitation certainly affected victory celebrations in both regions. In Murray, Kentucky, an unintentionally fake national news story announcing the war's end set off celebrations by 'the largest throng to ever assemble in the town', and the resulting 'salvos, hurrahs, and thundering explosions lasted on into the night'.⁹¹ When the same false report spread to the more removed Ballard County on 8 November 1918, the county seat of Wickliffe prematurely 'went wild with celebration'.⁹² After official word of the armistice broke three days later, Mayfield's *Daily Messenger* – like many newspapers nationwide – featured a banner headline 'War ends, country wild with joy'. Even in the most rural reaches of the Jackson Purchase, people 'could hear the sounds of whistles, fireworks, gunfire and the hoarse shouting' accompanying a host of spontaneous celebrations.⁹³ But the euphoria was short-lived, as a second wave of influenza soon rocked the region. Kentucky's state historian noted that victory observances 'were often muted [as] the flu epidemic's close more accurately reflected the ending of World War I than did the November armistice'.⁹⁴

In Nyasaland, celebrations were also delayed, first because the local German commander, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, had to be informed by British officers of the general armistice signed in Europe. Only then could *askari* at the KAR base camp at Fort Johnston on the southern lakeshore mark the occasion 'with bugles blowing and rifles, machine guns, Lewis Guns, and Stokes Mortars firing'.⁹⁵ Elsewhere in the Protectorate, victory demonstrations were further delayed for several months, only coming on 16 July 1919, in concert with those planned in the United Kingdom. Recognizing the necessity to symbolically signal the end of hostilities for the African population, government officials 'just lit fire all over the highest hills in the world!' as Madi wadi Selmani remembered.⁹⁶ Since fire had long been a positive indicator of transition to many of Nyasaland's peoples, the well-planned synchronous government bonfires throughout Nyasaland suggested to Mlekano wadi Kalisinje 'happiness and success on the side of the

⁸⁸[Levi Mumba], 'The Religion of My Fathers', ed. T. Cullen Young, *International Review of Missions* 19 (1930): 375–6.

⁸⁹G. Coleman, 'The African Population of Malawi: An Analysis of the Censuses between 1901 and 1966: Part 1: The Level of Population', *Society of Malawi Journal* 27, no. 1 (1974): 32.

⁹⁰Amos Isaac, interviewed 14 July 1973 by Solomon Liwewe in Chimbwande Villege, Nkhota Kota District, Malawi Collection, I-106.

⁹¹Jennings, *Story of Calloway County*, 232.

⁹²Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 284.

⁹³Culver, 'Impact of the 1918 Spanish Influenza Epidemic', 497.

⁹⁴James C. Klotter, *Kentucky: Portrait in Paradox, 1900–1950* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky and Kentucky Historical Society, 1996), 240.

⁹⁵Twaya Namonde, 'The Story of Twaya Namonde as Told by Himself', *Nyasaland Journal* 16, no. 1 (1963): 54.

⁹⁶Madi wadi Selemani, interviewed 12 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Mzikizi village, Mangochi District, Malawi Collection, I-89.

British',⁹⁷ though for many others – despite the government's commemorations – 'the end of the war was not a complete peace'.⁹⁸

To be sure, evidence of racial enmity remained in both Nyasaland and the Jackson Purchase after the war, but the euphoria of victory did lead to some marked initial softening of positions. Phillip Mitchell – who later became colonial governor of both Uganda and Kenya – as a young colonial official seconded to the KAR and in command of Nyasaland *askari*, believed that what 'the war did for many hundreds of Europeans and thousands of Africans was to introduce them to each other, so to speak, in a way and with a completeness hardly to be achieved otherwise'. But, as an ever paternalistic colonialist, he also conceded limitations to any war-induced changes in attitudes: 'I do not think many of us reached that remarkable unconsciousness of race or colour.'⁹⁹ However, in western Kentucky, the black American veteran Leslie White was pleasantly surprised by the homecoming welcome he received, remembering that 'nobody bothered you', despite the legacy of racism to which he returned. 'Everybody be glad to see ya and shake hands with you . . . go down[town] every night and have a good time . . . free of charge for soldier boy.'¹⁰⁰ His delight, experienced for the most part within the expanding African American community of the Purchase, must have matched that of some returning Nyasaland *askari* who 'were treated as if they had risen from the dead' when they returned to their home villages.¹⁰¹

For a few, in both Africa and America, the celebrating sometimes went too far, as former soldiers spent their meagre wages, bonuses, and gratuities recklessly – 'so we could forget about what had happened at the war' – leaving little to show for their service and suffering.¹⁰² Nyasaland veterans squandered money on gifts to attract women, or more often drank away their modest new-found wealth: 'after spending the money uselessly, then we began to realize how stupid we had been in not thinking of doing something really constructive'.¹⁰³ They were not alone. Too many Jackson Purchase veterans 'came back from over there with a letdown', not only having lost their wages while in uniform, but also having 'lost respect for themselves. They got to be alcoholics . . . and one thing or another that hurt as bad as anything'.¹⁰⁴ Even disabled veterans, who had a continuing source of income from small pensions, often spent it freely and frivolously; a youth at the time observing such behaviour, Leon Phillips attributed it to their knowledge that 'next month they would have more'.¹⁰⁵ As disturbing as such behaviour was to their homefolks, there were other causes for concern in the conduct of returned veterans in both regions.

Perhaps because they were primarily rural and insular, residents of the Jackson Purchase and Nyasaland generally adhered to what they believed were high moral standards, while – as the Canadian historian Modris Eksteins writes – 'the war acted like a battering ram' before any 'fixed moral code'.¹⁰⁶ Too often, returning veterans seemed to challenge existing social conventions based on their wartime experiences. Jackson Purchase observers frequently blamed such disturbing actions and attitudes on 'the morals of the French [who] were so loose . . . [about] the boundaries of moral

⁹⁷Mlekano wadi Kalisinje, interviewed 4 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Mbewe village, Mangochi District, Malawi Collection, I-79.

⁹⁸Diamond Caswell Chirwa, Malawi Collection, I-105. For a fuller discussion regarding the symbolism of Nyasaland victory celebrations, see Page, *Chiyawa War*, 169–71.

⁹⁹Sir Phillip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 40, 47.

¹⁰⁰Leslie White, interviewed 27 September 1979 in Paducah, KY by Bill Payton, Pogue Collection, OH028.

¹⁰¹Filimoni Batileti, interviewed 12 August 1974 by Solomon Liwewe in Chioza village, Dowa District, Malawi Collection, DW/14.

¹⁰²Amos Isaac, Malawi Collection, I-116.

¹⁰³Disi Katita, Malawi Collection, I-25.

¹⁰⁴Ellwyn Coffman, Pogue Collection, OH007.

¹⁰⁵Leon Phillips, interviewed 27 November 1986 in Calloway County, KY by Melvin E. Page. This interview is privately held and not a part of either collection.

¹⁰⁶Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 225. Professor Eksteins' analysis focuses primarily on Europe, although the evidence in the present studies suggests that his conclusions apply more broadly.

conduct'. The problem arose when 'men brought that notion back here', and it led to a kind of moral 'restlessness' which was disturbing to many in the rural communities of the Purchase.¹⁰⁷

The Nyasaland equivalent was equally stark, often involving complaints that 'most of the soldiers contracted diseases . . . such as syphilis and gonorrhoea' during their war service because 'we did not have these sort of diseases before the war; all these came after the war'.¹⁰⁸ Even more striking was an assumption that interracial contact was the culprit, that it was white South African soldiers – referred to locally as *majoni* – who, while deployed to bases on the lakeshore, infected Nyasa women. Some of the women were naturally curious about those European strangers, although monetary temptations also drew some of them to the comparatively wealthy South African newcomers.¹⁰⁹ No such specific complaints appear to have been voiced in the Jackson Purchase, perhaps because of unusually extraordinary measures taken by the American military to prevent its First World War soldiers from returning home similarly infected,¹¹⁰ even though sometimes 'black soldiers suffering from venereal disease went untreated' by white doctors.¹¹¹ This common 'double standard . . . based on race' likely contributed to 'higher proportions of black troops . . . [being] infected with venereal disease' during the war, although nothing in the available evidence suggests a greater prevalence of such infections among the African American veterans of the Jackson Purchase.¹¹²

Despite some differences in this functional comparison, moral changes did disrupt both societies. But it was economic change brought by the war that actually proved to be the most profoundly troubling of the post-war effects felt in both regions. As rural areas with high proportions of farming people, the costs of basic goods were critical, and that is where the economic problems seemed to strike hardest. In Nyasaland, Africans both complained at the time and long remembered the increased cost of basic goods. Iron hoes – the essential implement of agriculture – which were once cheap, after 1918 became very expensive, if available at all. Calico cloth was also in short supply, resulting in threefold price increases over pre-war levels or sometimes more. The cost of grain moved upwards similarly, while the price of fish on Lake Nyasa dramatically increased during the five years of war, rising at Nkhata Bay from twenty small fish for a penny to only six or seven for that same penny in 1919.¹¹³ The problems had become so severe by August 1919 that the Governor, Sir George Smith, reported directly to the British Colonial Office that 'excessive prices [were] causing unrest among [the] native population'.¹¹⁴ Despite the implied spectre of festering discontent, his government, ignoring evidence of commercial profiteering, also raised taxes in the belief that increasing African wages would be commensurate with the increasing cost of living. But 'only the tax section of the government got strict', as Petro Mbwana, a medical orderly during the war, angrily remembered.¹¹⁵

The problem of rising prices was similar in the Jackson Purchase, where before the war, and even into 1917, 'everything was just as cheap as dirt', with, for example, seed corn about 50 cents a bushel. By 1919, however, 'everything had gone up. We had prices I remember very well', according to the veteran Hugh Gingles. 'When I came back and was gonna make a crop that year; I paid

¹⁰⁷Charles Farris, interviewed 18 September 1979 in Calloway County, KY by Kathryn Pasco. This interview is privately held and not a part of either collection.

¹⁰⁸McPhail Issa Kadawere, interviewed 3 February 1973 by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf Juwayeyi at Cobbe Barracks, Zomba, Malawi Collection, I-62.

¹⁰⁹Page, *Chiwaya War*, 146–7.

¹¹⁰Coffman, *War to End All Wars*, 132–3.

¹¹¹Keene, *Doughboys*, 90.

¹¹²Christina Simmons, 'African Americans and Sexual Victorianism in the Social Hygiene Movement, 1910–40', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 64, 57.

¹¹³Page, *Chiwaya War*, 135, 161, 178.

¹¹⁴Smith to Colonial Office, 18 August 1919, in Colonial Office–Nyasaland correspondence files CO 525/83, The National Archives, London.

¹¹⁵Petro Mbwana, interviewed 12 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Kwisimba village, Mangochi District, Malawi Collection, I-86.

\$12.00 a barrel for [seed] corn, that's \$2.00 a bushel.' Prices on other goods also increased, 'everything in proportion',¹¹⁶ with the asking prices for farm stock – particularly cattle, sheep, and pigs – going up by as much as 45% everywhere in the Commonwealth. Any gains experienced by Jackson Purchase farmers during the war, however, were largely outpaced by the market performance of tobacco – by far their most important crop – since 'after the war overproduction finally began to outstrip demand, and prices tumbled'.¹¹⁷ Throughout western Kentucky, 'business came to a near standstill in the post-war years'.¹¹⁸ The result, as happened elsewhere in the country, led to shifting concerns, with 'veterans focused on the financial, rather than the physical, hardships of military service'.¹¹⁹

The plight of America's war-weary veterans sparked national concern, including calls for a Soldiers' Land Settlement Scheme backed by the newly chartered American Legion veterans' organization. The Kentucky Governor, A. O. Stanley, named a prominent Purchase political figure, Paducah lawyer, businessman, and banker, William F. Bradshaw, to an executive committee charged with developing just such a plan for the state. The choice of Bradshaw was unfortunate and not in keeping with the region's agricultural interests. Farmers throughout the nation – including the Jackson Purchase – firmly opposed the resettlement proposals, believing them, however well-meaning, to be detrimental to the long-term interests of rural areas and more likely beneficial to financial speculators – such as Bradshaw – rather than farmers.¹²⁰ In the end, a determined national opposition won the day, and land settlement schemes for veterans – while popular in the British empire¹²¹ – were doomed in the Jackson Purchase, elsewhere in Kentucky, and throughout the United States. As the historian Bill G. Reid observes, 'The fact was that Americans were moving away from the land, not toward it', noting that 'throbbing assembly lines meant fewer farmers, not more' in rural areas such as far western Kentucky.¹²²

While some Jackson Purchase veterans, like Hugh Gingles, remained steadfast in their determination to continue work on the farms they had left behind when becoming soldiers, many others did not. H. T. Waldrop perhaps exaggerated slightly when he said that 'they all wanted to get to town', but recalled explicitly, 'these boys comin' back they had a feelin' that they could do better in town'.¹²³ But their escape from the land did not generally take them to the very small towns in the Purchase. Some were no doubt attracted to the region's only small city, Paducah, 'which emerged from the turmoil of the First World War with a sound economy'.¹²⁴ One Purchase resident, Charles Farris, recalled that 'a good many of the local people sold out their farms and went up there to [Kansas City]', contemplating further that they 'did all right, I guess'.¹²⁵ But Kansas City was not the only destination; many veterans picked up on small, earlier migration patterns and moved to larger cities in southern and border states, in addition to northern urban centres such as Chicago, Detroit, and elsewhere, in attempts to make a better life for themselves.¹²⁶

¹¹⁶Hugh Gingles, interviewed 18 September 1979 in Murray, KY by Kathryn Pasco, Pogue Collection, OH011.

¹¹⁷Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 208.

¹¹⁸Jennings, *Story of Calloway County*, 233.

¹¹⁹Keene, *Doughboys*, 171.

¹²⁰Bettez, *Kentucky and the Great War*, 287–8. On Bradshaw's background, see *Memorial Record of Western Kentucky* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1904), 456–7.

¹²¹Alec Tritton, 'Empire Settlement Schemes After WWI', 2 July 2013, <https://www.exodus2013.co.uk/empire-settlement-schemes-after-wwi/>.

¹²²Bill G. Reid, 'Agrarian Opposition to Franklin K. Lane's Proposal for Soldier Settlement', *Agricultural History* 41, no. 2 (1967): 179.

¹²³H. T. Waldrop, Pogue Collection, OH026.

¹²⁴John E. L. Robertson, *Paducah, 1830–1980: A Sesquicentennial History* (Paducah, KY: Image Graphics, 1980), 79.

¹²⁵Charles Farris, interviewed 18 September 1979 in Calloway County, KY by Kathryn Pasco. This interview is privately held and not a part of either collection.

¹²⁶'An estimated 5,000 former residents from [Calloway] County could be counted at one time in Detroit': Jennings, *Story of Calloway County*, 212.

This was not unlike a similarly shifting labour situation developing in rural Nyasaland after 1919. The colonial government wanted to encourage African farmers, so declined opportunities to sponsor resettlement programmes for British veterans, even restricting potential independent European settlement in some parts of the Protectorate. Nevertheless, the number of white farmers more than doubled after the war – to a total of almost 400 – encouraged by the British South Africa Company's private scheme for settling ex-officers on land it had already claimed before the conflict began. Africans living on those Company lands were understandably concerned, with government officials in Nkota Kota district reporting a widespread rumour that 'Europeans are coming . . . to take away all their gardens', while, further south, officials conceded great resentment regarding 'wholesale evictions of 1920–21' depriving Africans of their farms on lands transferred to soldier settlers by the Company. Sadly, many of the new white settlers – absent any real knowledge or skill required for their new occupations – were unable to sustain their initial enthusiasm, abandoning newly claimed farms to the detriment not only of themselves but also of their former African neighbours.¹²⁷

That result did nothing to encourage African agriculturalists facing war-induced inflation as well as pent-up demands for consumer goods. Their economic frustrations were further exacerbated by pressures of understandable population growth, plus the effects of prolonged drought, first in the north and later further south.¹²⁸ Seeking the best and most lucrative employment possibilities in response, many thousands of men left the Protectorate for jobs, most in Southern Rhodesia or South Africa, following patterns of labour migration which pre-dated the war. Not an inconsiderable number were veteran *askari*, although military labourers who had been impressed into wartime service also calculated that their absence would free them from any further such government demands for their service. Some are likely even to have been goaded by their wives into such actions.¹²⁹ Ironically, a post-war uprising against Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique, disrupting well-established migration routes, actually *increased* the number of Nyasas trekking southward for work, as the migrants preferred the safety of larger groups travelling together on such journeys.¹³⁰ The growing numbers leaving home seeking better prospects after the war reset the paradigm for twentieth-century, large-scale labour migration from Nyasaland to South Africa. In the process, earlier patterns were stretched far beyond the bounds of previous experience, just as the migration away from the farms of the Jackson Purchase reshaped population movements in western Kentucky.

Despite all the evidence of changes wrought by the First World War, when the current millennium dawned the received wisdom of the Kentucky Historical Society seemed to be that 'World War I . . . had a limited impact on the state', at least compared to the Second World War, which followed only two decades later.¹³¹ Yet contemporary observers appear to have had a much more

¹²⁷Quoted in Robin Palmer, 'White Farmers in Malawi Before and After the Depression', *African Affairs* 84 (1985): 222, 223–4.

¹²⁸John McCracken, 'Planters, Peasants & Migrants: The Interwar Years', in *History of Malawi*, 178–92.

¹²⁹Kapawike Mwaliino, interviewed 7 April 1973 by Austin Mbisa at Nthora village, Karonga District, Malawi Collection, KR/5; Binton Kaiya, interviewed 9 April 1973 by V. Mbewe in Joni village, Ncheu District, Malawi Collection, NU/5; Chikhutu Nkhwazi, interviewed 16 April 1974 by E. C. Malangwasira in Chikhutu village, Lilongwe District, Malawi Collection, LL/7; Robert B. Boeder, 'The Effects of Labor Migration on Rural Life in Malawi', *Rural Africana* 20 (1973): 40–1. Although never mentioning specifically the effects of the First World War, Margaret Read's careful assessment of Nyasaland labour migration – undertaken before major recruitment began for the Second World War – acknowledged that a return to 'village life' had little appeal 'to men who have known the excitement' of a military campaign: Margaret Read, 'Migrant Labour in Africa and Its Effect on Tribal Life', *International Labour Review* 45, no. 6 (1942): 605–31.

¹³⁰E. P. Makambe, 'The Nyasaland African Labour "Ulendos" to Southern Rhodesia and the Problem of African "Highwaymen", 1903–1923: A Study in the Limitations of Early Independent Labour Migration', *African Affairs* 79 (1980): 556–7.

¹³¹James Russel Harris, 'At War, 1776–1999', in *Our Kentucky: A Study of the Bluegrass State*, ed. James C. Klotter (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 150. Both author and editor were then associated with the Kentucky Historical Society.

expansive view regarding the importance of the First World War to the Commonwealth. The *Louisville Post*, for example, on just the second anniversary of the armistice, wrote approvingly of ‘the glorious part played by Kentucky men and women in the great war for civilization, . . . achievements of which we are justly so proud’.¹³² In the small Purchase town of Mayfield, which had been occupied by both Union and Confederate forces at different times during the American Civil War, a semi-official history published only four years after the 1918 armistice described the conflict just ended as ‘the greatest of all wars’.¹³³ And if another Kentucky historian, David Lee, is correct that ‘the sense of a changing perspective was a hallmark of southern life during the Great War’, then surely the Jackson Purchase – the most ‘southern’ area in all of Kentucky – was actually very deeply affected by the First World War.¹³⁴

The recognition of a similar fate in Nyasaland, however, has been long acknowledged, both by participants and by historical observers since. Indeed, in the memory of Nyasa *askari* theirs had been a momentous campaign, because ‘they were fighting for the world’.¹³⁵ The most recent national history – John McCracken’s 2012 *History of Malawi* – is unequivocal: the First World War not only marked a ‘high point of colonial violence’, but also proved to be ‘exceptionally disruptive’ throughout Nyasaland.¹³⁶ Even a half-century earlier the premier historian of the country, George Shepperson – who served as a KAR officer commanding Nyasaland *askari* during the Second World War – acknowledged that ‘the coming of the 1939 war did not hit Africans [of the Protectorate] with the same force as the 1914 war which brought “deep and fundamental” change’.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Wise old Mister Reuben may have been correct to question his dear wife’s assumption – that after the Treaty of Versailles was signed the soldier boys would be back on the farm – even though almost none of them actually laid eyes on the sights of Paris. While a select few veterans from the Jackson Purchase might have marched victoriously down the Champs-Élysées, it is all but certain that none from Nyasaland did so. But those Kentuckians and Africans both saw a good deal and experienced considerably more which impacted not only their lives but also the rural farms they had left behind. The historian Michelle Moyd has written that ‘the centenary of the war’s end reminds us that the ordeal of the war for Africans should not obscure the opportunities . . . that emerged from it’.¹³⁸ In a similar vein, David A. Davis, a scholar of the American South, recently observed that ‘the war changed the region by exposing provincial southerners to modernity’ after 1919.¹³⁹

By employing an analytical strategy recently endorsed by the historian Sebouh David Aslanian – approaching ‘primary source documents’ using ‘a multioptic lens’ with ‘a microfocus and attention

¹³²‘Kentucky’s Part in the World War’, *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 19 (January 1921): 121–3. This reprinted article originally appeared in the *Louisville Post* on 11 November 1920.

¹³³D. Trabue Davis, *The Story of Mayfield Through a Century, 1823–1923* (Paducah, KY: Billings Printing Company, 1923), 20. One page in the front matter claims that the book was ‘endorsed by the City Council as a True history of Mayfield’.

¹³⁴David D. Lee, ‘World War I’, in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 3:261.

¹³⁵Bamusi Awasi, interviewed 9 April 1973 by Sigele Chilole in Chiponda village, Mangochi District, Malawi Collection, I-83.

¹³⁶McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 147.

¹³⁷George Shepperson, ‘External Factors in the Development of African Nationalism, with Particular Reference to British Central Africa’, *Phylon* 22, no. 3 (1961): 209, specifically quoting the earlier observation of the ex-Nyasaland KAR officer Phillip Mitchell.

¹³⁸Michelle Moyd, ‘Ordeal and Opportunity: Ending the First World War in Africa’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 43, no. 1 (2019): 151.

¹³⁹David A. Davis, *World War I and Southern Modernism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 1.

to detail', while also adopting 'a macroview of global connections and comparisons'¹⁴⁰ – we can see that there is little doubt that the First World War had notably similar effects in both the Jackson Purchase of Kentucky and the British colonial Protectorate of Nyasaland. Former *askari* from the latter, and their civilian countrymen alike, for long after continued to sing, voicing a question about the conflict which had no answer:

At Karonga
People perished there.
Why did they perish?¹⁴¹

In the Jackson Purchase, such concerns found more declarative expressions, such as Ellwyn Coffman's assessment that the entirety of his war 'was one of those things I wouldn't take a million dollars for having done, but wouldn't do again for a copper cent'.¹⁴² Those observations, drawn from two far removed regions whose microhistories reflect strikingly similar experiences, offer confirmation yet again of the truly global impact of the worldwide conflict of 1914–18.

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¹⁴⁰Sebouh David Aslanian, in an *American Historical Review* conversation 'How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History', *American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (2013): 1467.

¹⁴¹Several similar versions were recorded: Amos Isaac, Malawi Collection, I-116; Olivia Tambala, interviewed 1 August 1973 by Solomon Liwewe in Chimwendo village, Ntchisi District, Malawi Collection, I-122; F. K. Cheketeni, interviewed 18 September 1974 by J. N. Chikhungu in Matidza village, Ntchisi District, Malawi Collection, NC/22.

¹⁴²Ellwyn Coffman, Pogue Collection, OH007.