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Review of *For King and Country: The British Monarchy and the First World War* by Heather Jones

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fortifications. It also covers information of unit sizes, leadership and troop quality. Chapter seven covers the experience of soldiers and sailors and has excellent sections on backgrounds and the motivation both officers and common soldiers and sailors. The chapter goes into the detail of both life at sea for common sailors as well garrison life for soldiers. Chapter eight covers the relations between civilian society and the military, making the valid point that the military does not operate within a vacuum. The chapter opens up with details of the criminality of soldiers, but also the numbers of soldiers marrying into the civilian population. The chapter confirms that army and navy had a large presence in large parts of the country and had significant impact on local communities and industry.

The format of this book works exceedingly well and results in an impressive usable text that will be of use to anyone interested in the military history of the Netherlands between 1648 and 1813. Where this book excels is in its use of Dutch sources that are not normally available to non-Dutch speakers. The authors and translators need to be commended for producing an informative work that would benefit both military and social historians

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Heather Jones, *For King and Country: The British Monarchy and the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Xiii + 576pp. ISBN 978-1108429368 (hardback). Price £29.99.

In this very impressive work Heather Jones examines the ‘social and cultural functions’ of the British monarchy during the Great War. One function, performed especially in the events leading up to the war, was to provide a (sometimes less than ideal) channel of communication between the British government and other European states. During the first two years of the conflict, the Crown’s major function was to support military mobilization by encouraging the voluntary enlistment of soldiers and by strengthening their resolve and courage. At the same time, and increasingly over the course of the war, the monarchy was used as a source of motivation for the unprecedented war participation of the wider civilian British population. In the final years of the war and subsequently, the socially constructed role of the king became that of conciliator – sharing the collective grief that consumed the population and holding the country

together as divisions and tensions escalated, most of all labour unrest and the struggle over Irish independence.

Jones's interest is primarily in the status and cultural power of the monarchy. She contends that the conscious and unconscious strategy for performing its functions consisted primarily of reconfiguring the traditional role of the monarchy. In her view tradition was to some extent invented but was mostly revived and adapted to 'modern' processes. These 'modern' processes included more egalitarian and democratic beliefs, less respect for traditional hierarchies, and advances in science and medicine, but also structural and technological changes, the most important of which was the arrival of 'total war', that is, the unprecedented military mobilization of the British state and society.

The tradition that was adapted for meeting these pressures on which she places the most explanatory weight was the 'sacralisation' of the monarchy, by which she means that a more modern version of the belief in the divine power of the monarchy was constructed by generating reverence toward certain royal activities. The king and queen followed or instituted various religious practices from the very first years of the war. Even more to the point, royal visits to wounded soldiers were imagined as modern versions of the royal gaze and touch. In 1922 a personal visit of George V to war cemeteries on the Continent was referred to as a 'pilgrimage'.

Military mobilization was promoted by creating a modern version of the Medieval royal military leader or warrior. George V wore his military uniform throughout the war; he was photographed working in a tent at Buckingham Palace; and he carried out a large number of troop inspections, including six on the Western Front during the conflict. Two of his sons participated in the war effort. Albert, the future George VI, served in the Royal Navy and fought in the Battle of Jutland although his participation after 1916 was limited owing to ill-health. The yearning of his elder brother David, the Prince of Wales and future Edward VIII, to assume the role of an ordinary soldier and to share their risks – though impeded by the authorities – was well received by many soldiers and in the press, thus helping to reinforce the royal military image that was being constructed. And, of course, war service was imaged as a duty to 'King and country'. Throughout the book, Jones repeatedly calls our attention to the social construction of a personal relationship between the king and the average soldier.

George V and Queen Mary adopted a more parsimonious lifestyle during the Great War, eating more frugally, abstaining from alcohol, and giving up grandiose pastimes. They also visited hospitals and middle- or working-class communities more frequently than had previous monarchs. These and other similar practices served to accommodate more egalitarian beliefs in British society, to demonstrate their sympathy with the hardships of the general population, and to avoid living in high style

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while their subjects made enormous sacrifices. In addition, the numerous hospital visits were obviously spurred by the vast number of casualties of total war and by the enormous increase in medical facilities for their care.

None of this meant lowering the status of the monarchy in the British social hierarchy. As Jones notes, the functional effectiveness of expanding contact with subjects depended on maintaining the position of the monarchy at the pinnacle of this hierarchy. While some conventional taboos were broken, traditional norms of interaction between the royals and subjects were for the most part maintained. Efforts to accommodate more egalitarian beliefs were framed as a reconstruction of the longstanding claim to legitimation by monarchies that all subjects were equally subordinate to the king.

While forced to accept the limitations of its constitutional powers, the British monarchy expanded its direct cultural power over the population, a power that arguably became greater than the direct cultural power of any other state institution. This was certainly the case during the reorganisation of the British Empire during and after the Great War. This cultural power should not be exaggerated. George V's efforts to act as mediator during the Irish War of Independence did not prevent the creation of a separate Irish government or the political division of the island. Yet it was not a complete failure. Indeed, whereas the link between the British government and most of Ireland was virtually severed, the link between the British crown and the new Irish Free State was maintained in attenuated form until 1937.

In any case, Jones firmly believes that the British monarchy not only survived but actually became stronger during the reign of George V. She does not deny the existence of a measure of anti-monarchism during the war, especially after the Russian Revolution and during the growing war weariness of the population. But she maintains that the evidence of anti-monarchism in Britain is very limited, in contrast with the all-too-real anti-monarchism in Ireland. She believes that the British public bought into the constructed image of George V and the myth that the British monarchy and its democratic institutions were superior to the institutions and cultures of other countries. She insists, however, that this myth cannot be dismissed as immanent arrogance. 'Myths succeed best', she contends, 'where they address a social function'.

For King and Country advances our understanding of the way in which institutions can be reconfigured to meet new social and political pressures. It makes a significant contribution to the large literature on the evolution of institutions. Thus, its relevance is not limited to the Great War and the British monarchy, substantial and worthwhile as her contribution to these subjects certainly is.

In some places she seems to accept what she elsewhere treats as myth, but her wonderfully written and engaging book is an outstanding piece of scholarship.

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Ronan McGreevy, *Great Hatred: The Assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson MP*. London: Faber & Faber, 2022. xxii + 442pp. ISBN 978-0571372805 (hardback). Price £20.

On 22 June 1922 Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson unveiled a memorial at Liverpool Street Station in London to Great Southern and Western Railway men who had died in the Great War. Soon afterwards he was shot dead on the doorstep of his Belgravia home. The two assassins, who were chased through the streets by a baying crowd and wounding two policemen and a civilian before being apprehended, were members of the London Irish Republican Army (IRA). Ronan McGreevy's book explores this sensational killing and its wider ramifications for Ireland in 1922.

Two days after Wilson's large and widely attended state funeral, the provisional government of the Irish Free State ordered that fire be opened (with artillery supplied from London) on opponents of the recently-signed Anglo-Irish Treaty, then encamped in the Four Courts in Dublin. The British government, which blamed the Four Courts faction for Wilson's killing, had demanded action though the provisional government was also motivated by events in Dublin, not least in avoiding the impression of being led by London. A different spark would likely have been found elsewhere eventually, but Wilson's death certainly hastened the outbreak of civil war in Ireland.

Following his lively description of the events of 22 June, McGreevy provides a wide-ranging survey of Wilson's family background and military career. From a middling Protestant gentry family in Currygrane, County Longford, Wilson failed the Sandhurst entrance exam three times and the exam for Woolwich twice, but entered the army through the Longford Militia and proved himself a capable officer. He ended the Great War as Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The Wilsons were staunchly unionist, but not unpopular landlords in a majority nationalist community and Wilson's brother Jemmy, who remained in Longford, even earned grudging respect from local republicans. Henry Wilson's own unionism was uncompromising, and he considered the Irish unsuitable for self-government.