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AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE DES

Emily Hobhouse is not a household name, but neither has she been entirely forgotten. Sister of the New Liberal writer L. T. Hobhouse, she is perhaps best known for her investigations into conditions in the British concentration camps during the Boer War (1899–1902). She is less well remembered for her activities fifteen years later in the Great War, but she succeeded again in stirring up controversy. **David S. Patterson** recalls her role in attempting to reveal the facts behind the German destruction of the Belgian city of Leuven in 1914.



HOBHOUSE

CONSTRUCTION OF LEUVEN IN WORLD WAR I

HOBHOUSE CAME from a prominent and wealthy family, which was associated with advanced, even radical views on political issues.¹ The Hobhouses were British Liberals, and her younger brother, Leonard T. Hobhouse, was a prolific journalist and author of many books ranging from moral philosophy to metaphysics to political sociology. He became a pervasive intellectual force in the Liberal Party, and his progressive views contributed to the party's new social reform programmes in the early twentieth century. Emily's humanitarian efforts during the Boer War contributed in turn to his anti-imperialist outlook and his maturing interest in international reform, including the creation of a permanent league of nations, and the two siblings would remain close even after Leonard firmly supported British military participation in the Great War and came to disagree with his sister's more radical actions during the conflict.²

Another relative, a cousin, converted to the Society of Friends and became a conscientious objector in 1916, taking an absolutist position against serving even with a Quaker medical unit, because he considered it an appendage of the British army. A more distant relative was the pacifistic Lady Catherine (Kate) Courtney, who was married to the well-known anti-war Liberal,

Lord Leonard Courtney; both Courtneys sympathised with Emily's peace endeavours and remained her special friends.

Born in East Cornwall in 1860, Emily Hobhouse was the daughter of an Anglican vicar; and although she apparently never converted to the Quaker faith, as did her pacifist cousin, she came to follow its persuasion in accepting everyone as part of common humanity, even in wartime when people were driven apart. She did not publicly articulate her personal religious views, but they clearly influenced her activism.

In Hobhouse's early years, she worked with the poor and infirm in Cornwall and as a missionary to Cornish miners working in the United States. Back in England at the end of the century, she found the Boer War very disturbing. She travelled to South Africa during the conflict and was shocked by the British authorities' harsh treatment of native civilians in concentration camps. Greatly concerned about the diseased, destitute, and ragged inhabitants of the camps, especially the women and children incarcerated in them, Hobhouse organised humanitarian aid for the victims. She wrote scathing exposés of the deplorable conditions in the camps, which made her a well-known and controversial figure.

The Boer War experience pushed her toward peace advocacy. As she later commented, 'war is not only wrong in itself,

but a crude mistake ... My small means are devoted entirely to help non-combatants who suffer in consequence of war, and in supporting every movement making for Peace.'³

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Hobhouse's many pacifistic activities during the Great War comprise a series of fascinating adventures. Their outlines will be recounted here, but only as they provide broader context for her journey to Germany and especially German-occupied Belgium in June 1916, which is the focus of this story. It began as essentially a year-long cat-and-mouse game with the British Government, with Hobhouse always managing to stay one step ahead of the British foreign affairs departments which, because of different perspectives and inefficiency in the government bureaucracy, could never quite catch up with her.

The British authorities already suspected her because of her long-standing activism, her support of early private initiatives looking for a mediated peace in the war, and her involvement, in the summer of 1915, as a temporary secretary in the Amsterdam headquarters of a newly founded transatlantic group, the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP), which had already promoted neutral mediation of the war, including the sending of women envoys to all

Emily Hobhouse
(1860–1926)

European capitals. They were also acutely aware of her earlier efforts with peace advocates in Italy to resist that nation's entrance into the war on the side of the Allies. Hobhouse's familiarity with Italy derived from her extended pre-war visits to sunny Rome each winter as treatment for a serious heart condition and various other ailments, including arthritis and arteriosclerosis. She was in fact a semi-invalid.

When she applied for a visa to travel via neutral Switzerland to Italy again for the winter of 1915–16, the military departments, supported by the Foreign Office, wanted to deny her request. But the Home Office oversaw British citizens' travel to neutral countries, and Sir John Simon, its Liberal secretary of state in the Asquith coalition government, argued that she should not be denied travel to Switzerland en route. The Italian authorities, he added, could then decide whether to admit her to their country. Simon was aware of his government's earlier efforts to restrict Hobhouse's travel to the continent in 1915 but was more inclined than the leadership of the foreign affairs agencies to approve her request. He may have sympathised with her in part because he knew members of the Hobhouse family, and may have known her personally. But more important was his own scepticism over British involvement in the Great War (he would soon resign his position in protest over the introduction of military conscription in Britain in early 1916), which made him willing to tolerate, if not openly support, her peace endeavours.

Emily Hobhouse also used her good connections with Arthur Ponsonby, a pacifist Liberal in Parliament, to her advantage. After arriving in Berne and finding that the British consulate was still waiting for the Foreign Office's decision on a visa for her entry into Italy, she sent a message to Ponsonby saying she was in 'weak health', could not afford to stay in Berne much longer and had to get to Rome to stay in her apartment and wind up her affairs there. Ponsonby immediately appealed to the Foreign Office, vouching for her uncertain health and modest means. His intervention

may have had some effect, as the Foreign Office granted her the visa, but only after she promised the British government that she would refrain from peace activities in Italy. She adhered to that restriction, but en route back to England in the spring of 1916, she stopped in Switzerland and told the startled German minister there that she wanted to visit Germany and German-occupied Belgium; she asked him to forward her request to Berlin for a decision.

In some ways, her desire to visit enemy territory was a continuation of her earlier activism and had elements of *déjà vu*, as her purposes were somewhat similar to those she had pursued in the Boer War. Just as she had then reported on the terrible conditions in the camps in South Africa, a primary objective in the Great War was to investigate Germany's military treatment of the welfare of enemy civilians in a detention camp at Ruhleben outside Berlin. But visiting and inspecting Ruhleben formed only a part of her plans for a broader peace mission. 'I wanted as far as any one individual may to begin laying the foundation of international life,' she confided to her journal, '... to say "Here I come, alone, of my free will into your country to bear you, even while our Governments are at war, a message of peace and good will".'⁴ Thus during her stay in Berlin at the end of her trip, she would arrange for a long interview with German Foreign Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow, whom she had befriended before the war when he was Germany's ambassador in Rome. Their discussion was a continuation of her interest in peace talks, and she would bring back to England Jagow's unofficial feeler for peace talks between the warring sides.⁵

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Hobhouse's desire to visit Belgium was another part of her proposed peace mission. The controversy over German behaviour in Belgium had begun as early as the enemy occupation of much of that country in August 1914. In the English-language press, it had early generated contentious discussion. James O'Donnell

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Bennett, an American correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, had reported, for instance, that during his tour through Belgium in late August 1914, he found, contrary to almost daily reports in British newspapers, no German atrocities, and he claimed that four other American journalists then in Belgium also found no outrages. Bennett did acknowledge that Leuven, 'the ancient and renowned university city of northern Europe lies in ashes ... The halls in which so many American priests of the Roman church are proud to tell you they have studied are level with the ground.' But accepting the German view, he blamed the local citizens for the disaster. Leuven, he wrote, 'lost its head. It went mad. Its citizens fired from [an] ambush upon German soldiers;' and the German destruction in response 'was awful but it was war'.⁶ An inquiry by the Belgian government-in-exile, however, soon published a report detailing many German excesses which, it claimed, were perpetrated on unresisting and unarmed Belgian citizens.⁷

In early May 1915, the German government responded to these charges with the release of its 'White Book' on the Belgian occupation, which strongly denied the Belgian findings. It minimised its army's offences in Belgium and justified those that occurred as legitimate responses to a 'revolt' – a veritable 'People's War' – waged by the Belgian civilian population in ongoing 'cowardly and treacherous attacks' against the German army. More specifically, the German White Book focused on Belgian *franc-tireurs* (un-uniformed civilian militia) who, it asserted, carried on ongoing guerrilla warfare against the German military. The German report included over 220 affidavits and reports of alleged civilians' 'bestial behaviour' and hostile actions toward the German occupiers.⁸

Hobhouse may have been familiar with the initial contradictory claims only in a general way. But the publication of the British government-sponsored Bryce report on the German occupation of Belgium, which was released only two days after the German

one, caught her attention. The British commission, headed by James Bryce, Britain's venerable and respected scholar-diplomat, expanded on the evidence presented in the Belgian report. The Bryce commissioners collected more than 1,200 depositions, mostly from Belgian refugees who had personally witnessed the German army's behaviour in Belgium. Because the research methodology of the commission was careful and restrained, its findings could be viewed as reliable, even authentic, by objective readers.⁹ Nonetheless, the Bryce report came down hard on the German army's behaviour in Belgium, and it documented, sometimes in chilling detail, German war crimes and destruction. Overall, its conclusions contributed to the British mindset of the evil 'Huns' ruthlessly trying to subjugate Europe.¹⁰ The Belgian government's commission also responded in April 1916 with the publication of its own 500-page 'Grey Book', which included a detailed critique and refutation of the German White Book.¹¹

As a pacifist, Hobhouse tried to reconcile differences among enemies, and the Bryce report, which only served to drive Britain and Germany farther apart, troubled her. She apparently was unfamiliar with the Belgian Grey Book, but the German minister in Berne had given her a copy of his government's account on her way to Rome in late 1915. The British censor had banned publication of the German White Book in Britain, so unlike her fellow Britons Hobhouse had a fuller perspective of the two sides' evidence and official assertions.¹² Because she had found British rule in South Africa cruel and oppressive, she was prepared to believe that the German occupation of Belgium might also have involved excesses. In any case, having seen written accounts by both sides, she was motivated to see the conditions herself, hoping, as she later wrote to a senior British diplomat, that her own investigations 'would have a softening influence and be a link to draw our two countries [Britain and Germany] together.'¹³

While awaiting clearance from Berlin for her proposed visits, Hobhouse met with the Swiss

section of the ICWPP to discuss women's peace propaganda. When news of these pacifist contacts appeared in the Swiss press, the alarmed British officials in Berne decided to impound her passport and to give her a new one only for direct passage back to Britain. They had difficulty finding her, however; and when they finally caught up with her and summoned her to the legation, they were too late, for just then Berlin had given clearance for her visits to Germany and Belgium. She replied to the legation that she was leaving Berne but would call upon her return.

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When the German authorities consented to her requested visits, they told her only upon her departure from Switzerland into Germany that she would always be in the company of a German military escort and would not be permitted to talk to Belgian citizens. The curbs on her movements in Belgium also included returning to Brussels each night. Hobhouse protested against these restrictions in vain and later said that if she had known of them in advance, she probably would have decided not to visit Belgium.

Once on German soil, her escort took her straight to Brussels. Over the next ten days (or more than one half of her seventeen-day visit, from 6 to 23 June, to Germany and occupied Belgium), she toured the capital as well as many other Belgian cities and towns. Despite the restrictions, she managed to see a lot. Among the many places she visited, Hobhouse took a particular interest in the German destruction of Leuven. She spent only one full day in Leuven but gained a first-hand look at most of the large university town. 'I walked and drove about the town for several hours,' she wrote upon her return to England, 'and believe I saw it pretty thoroughly'.¹⁴ It is well to remember that her later comments on the conditions in Leuven formed only one aspect of the controversy she sparked when she returned to England and publicly reported her observations.

The contention over the events of late August 1914 in Leuven

was of course a part of the larger question of Germany's behaviour in Belgium. The Belgian inquiry had featured allegations of the German military's excessive behaviour in Leuven as a prime example in their general indictment of Germany's actions. The German response in turn had devoted one-third of its report to flatly denying the Belgian charges regarding Leuven and offered a defence of its army's activities there. It denied any 'mistake' of friendly fire incidents among retreating German troops as the catalyst for their atrocities in the town, as suggested in the Belgian report, and instead asserted that 'a deluded population, unable to grasp the course of events, thought they could destroy the returning German soldiers without danger.' It added:

Moreover, in [Leuven], as in other towns, the burning torch was only applied by German troops when bitter necessity demanded it ... [t]he troops confined themselves in destroying only those parts of the city in which the inhabitants opposed them in a treacherous and murderous manner. It was indeed German troops who took care, whenever possible, to save the artistic treasures, not only of [Leuven], but of other towns ...¹⁵

In the Bryce report discussion of the German offences in Leuven had comprised six pages, and thirty-two pages of depositions in an accompanying appendix, more coverage in both parts than of any other Belgian town or city. Its full account of the German army's violent actions in Leuven was presented in vivid contrast to the town inhabitants, who were portrayed throughout as respectful and peace-loving.¹⁶

The Bryce commissioners may not have deliberately focused on Leuven, but the university town was revered as a historic repository of ancient manuscripts and centre of learning in the Low Countries; the German destruction of university buildings was already widely known in Europe. Universities in Britain and Holland kept alive the memory of Leuven's cruel fate in their public

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appeals for books and funds for the re-building of the library.¹⁷ The attention on events in Leuven also benefited from the literate Belgian refugees from Leuven, including professors, who articulated their unpleasant recollections in writing or orally to British lawyers taking down their testimony. The Leuven academics were also particularly quick in rebutting accounts that excused or minimised the German army's outrages there.¹⁸

Following her return to Britain, Emily Hobhouse helped to revive a still smouldering controversy. She did not comment on the Germans' brutal actions against Belgian civilians, which she could not verify directly – and indeed the Belgian and Bryce commissions, while providing truly graphic eye-witness accounts of numerous horrific incidents, and cumulatively a clear indictment of the German army's extensive atrocities there, did not give estimates of the total Belgian casualties in Leuven.¹⁹ Instead, Hobhouse focused on the physical destruction and general condition of the citizenry, which she had witnessed on her visit. It began when she felt compelled to counter a *Times* report in early October 1916 that mentioned the 'destruction' of Leuven; it went on to assert that this 'nursery of Belgian piety and learning ... was wantonly destroyed, and the library, which was its especial pride, reduced to ashes.'²⁰ In a letter published in the newspaper, Hobhouse rejoined that of these claims 'only the destruction of the library was accurate.'²¹ She then summarised her observations of the town:

I spent a day in [Leuven] and was somewhat astounded to find that, contrary to Press assertions, it is not destroyed. Indeed out of a normal population of 44,000, 38,000 are living there today. It is computed that only an eighth of the town has suffered. The exquisite town hall is unscathed. The roof of the cathedral caught fire, the bells melting and crashing into the nave, but the flames were extinguished before too great damage was done to the main structure. It has been re-roofed, perhaps temporarily, and the nave boarded off, but

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meanwhile Mass is celebrated in the choir and transepts, where, indeed, I saw many at worship, both invaders and invaded. The other churches are uninjured. The library is, of course, a sad sight, for, in spite of great efforts, only the walls remain. It is whispered in [Leuven] that some of the more valuable volumes were removed to a place of safety, and should this rumour prove to be well-founded they will form the precious nucleus for the new collection of books now proposed in your columns.²²

Hobhouse's account set off a short-lived media frenzy in Britain. Commenting on Hobhouse's letter, *The Times* wrote that when the German military occupation ended, outsiders could see the damage themselves. In the meantime, the paper quoted some revelations in the Bryce report, which had reported that the Germans' 'burning of a large part' of the town was 'a calculated policy carried out scientifically and deliberately'. It also cited the Belgian inquiry's findings that 'the greater part of the town of [Leuven] was a prey to the flames. The fire burnt for several days.'²³ *The Times'* report also referred to a letter from a Leuven professor who said that the librarian at the university had told him that the library had been locked since the onset of the war, and the German army had deliberately set fire to the building with explosive chemicals and prevented anyone from trying to save the library or to enter it to retrieve manuscripts or books. (The 'rumour,' which Hobhouse repeated in her letter, apparently arose from Jesuit fathers removing books from a nearby library and taking them in carts to the railway station. Seeing the books going through the streets, some Leuven citizens mistakenly imagined they were from the university library.)²⁴

On the following two days, *The Times* published separate responses from Henri Davignon, secretary of the Belgian inquiry, and a Leuven professor. The latter criticised Hobhouse's acceptance of the German version of events in Leuven, which bore 'a striking resemblance' to Bennett's article published more

than a year earlier, which he had already rebutted in print. Moreover, he insinuated that Hobhouse, in writing that 'the roof of the cathedral caught fire,' implied, as did Bennett, that the Germans had not deliberately set fire to the structure.²⁵ Davignon also cited 'echoes' of this German influence in Hobhouse's description and reiterated 'facts' that the Belgian and Bryce commissions had well established. He particularly stressed the systematic torching of several parts of the town, including the library and the cathedral, which 'was set on fire by the roof ... and in the interior by means of piles of chairs.' The town hall, he noted, was spared only because the German military authorities were staying there. The fires, lasting three days, destroyed 1,120 houses because the German authorities prohibited any efforts to save them.²⁶ When Hobhouse replied that Davignon's figure of 1,120 houses destroyed amounted to about one-eighth of the town and thus substantiated her own figures,²⁷ he responded in turn that a Catholic cleric had asserted that 'a third of the built area was destroyed'. In any case, he continued, 'the burnt, destroyed, and pillaged [section] was the most prosperous of the town'.²⁸

From her experience in the Boer War, Hobhouse understood that her first-hand impressions casting doubt on Allied perceptions would not suffice by themselves to convince readers and might even result in more vigorous denials, so she intertwined her remarks with expressions of her humanitarian motives and sympathy for the suffering Belgians. Indeed, her first published comment about her Belgian adventure was a long letter to the *Daily News*, which explained the critical food shortage in Belgium and implored Britons to contribute funds to Herbert Hoover's relief commission, which was distributing food to the unfortunate Belgian citizenry.²⁹ She subsequently lamented how bad the German occupation of Belgium was and how British citizens should support financially humanitarian aid to that country. These sentiments may have made her sound more reasonable but did not seem to soften the strong objections to her reporting.

However, Hobhouse had supporters who rallied to her side. *The Herald*, a prominent anti-war Labour Party-supporting newspaper, reprinted her account of her visit to Belgium and declared it a direct refutation of the Bryce report.³⁰ The escalating controversy reached the halls of Parliament in the early autumn of 1916, with her detractors claiming that she had obtained her passport under false pretences, since her purpose from the outset was always to try to visit German-occupied lands. More seriously, they charged her with actions bordering on treason. They publicly expressed concerns only about her excursion into Germany, but they were surely aware and disapproved of her visit to Belgium too, and her subsequent reports on conditions there. Her supporters claimed, however, that her trip was not premeditated but had been undertaken on the spur of the moment and that she had broken no laws.³¹ Surmising that the evidence against her was not watertight, the Attorney General, Sir Frederick Smith, did not indict her. He may have believed that the prosecution of a well-known woman who had

influential political friends might make her a *cause célèbre* in Britain. The early autumn of 1916 was a very tense time, with the staggering and still escalating French and British military losses at Verdun and the Somme, and a sensational trial might undermine the nation's commitment to the war effort. Instead, in November 1916 the British government hoped to prevent further private peace missions by issuing an amendment to the Defence of the Realm Act, which henceforth prohibited citizens from entering enemy territory without official permission.

Hobhouse, for her part, denied that she had had any intention of visiting Germany and Belgium until she reached Switzerland on her way back to Britain in mid-1916, and she went on to assert that she had gone there 'quite simply and openly, contravening no law; I went under my own name with a "humanitarian pass", in the interests of truth, peace and humanity; and I am proud and thankful to have done so.'³²

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Was Hobhouse's reporting on Leuven accurate? Since the Great

The ruins of Leuven in 1914

War, much more has been written about the events of late August 1914 in that town, but until World War II, Germany mostly continued to deny atrocities by its army in Belgium in 1914. Finally, however, in 1958, a Belgian-German committee of historians exposed the selection and suppression of evidence on Leuven presented in the German White Book.³³ Then, thirty years later, a German historian contributed a monograph focused specifically on the destruction of the university library in both world wars as well as the rebuilding efforts after each one.³⁴

The fascination with the German actions in Belgium continued in 2001, when two historians published a compelling study of German atrocities and destruction throughout Belgium. They argued that the White Book was an attempted cover-up of German war crimes, and they provided evidence that Leuven's citizens offered no resistance to the German occupiers, who nonetheless proceeded to go on a rampage, terrorising, even summarily executing, many innocent citizens. These historians advanced various reasons for the German



behaviour: stories of French *franc-tireurs* who had severely harassed the occupying German troops in the earlier Franco-Prussian War and the German soldiers' easy (though erroneous) assumption in August 1914 that the Belgians must have similar guerrilla units in place; very jittery (and sometimes drunken) German soldiers retreating to Leuven from a counter-attack by the Belgian army; the hostility of the German Protestant-dominated units to the university, a Catholic institution run by prominent clergy and professors; and friendly fire incidents, which the Germans interpreted as coming from Belgian guerrillas. 'Everything points to a major panic,' they wrote, 'in which the German soldiers ran riot.' They also concluded that the German army deliberately set fire to parts of Leuven, including the university library, and that about one-sixth of the city was destroyed.³⁵ (For her one-eighth estimate, Hobhouse had written, 'I use, of course, approximate figures.'³⁶) More recently, at least two other books have focused on German atrocities in Belgium, one specifically devoted to the destruction and rebuilding of Leuven.³⁷

Hobhouse's account of the physical destruction of Leuven was mostly accurate; what was controversial was her interpretation of its causes and consequences. Predisposed to believe in reconciliation, she downplayed explanations that would depict German behaviour at its worst. In writing that the fire had spread to the cathedral, for instance, she implied that the Germans had not deliberately set it ablaze. Indeed, after the war she would relate with approval the explanation a young German army captain had given her during her visit to Leuven that it was a Belgian citizens' uprising that had set in motion the events leading to the destruction of the library and cathedral.³⁸ The evidence is very strong, however, that the destruction of both the library and cathedral were deliberate, calculated actions undertaken by the German army, which also resisted residents' attempts to extinguish the raging fires.³⁹ And if the flames did not irreparably damage the main part of the cathedral, as she wrote, the

reason was that a stone structure with very high ceilings was difficult to burn to the ground. She may have actually witnessed the 'invaders' and 'invaded' worshipping together in the re-roofed and boarded-off part of the cathedral, but after nearly two years the occupied residents would probably have come to an uneasy accommodation with their occupiers. In any event, it is hard to accept the implication of Germans and Belgians living together in a reconciled community.

She was also not forthright in revealing the restrictions Germany placed on her visit. In particular, since the German military officer accompanying her seemed to enforce the prohibition against her speaking with the local residents, one wonders about the sources and veracity of the 'rumour,' 'hearsay,' and 'stories' she recounted that seemed to mollify the worst effects of the German presence in Belgium.⁴⁰ Only years later, for example, did she relate to her friendly biographer that a young German officer had been a principal source for the destructive events in Leuven.⁴¹

Hobhouse's participation in the controversy over the destruction of Leuven, though relatively brief, offers a small window into the larger question of 'war guilt,' which the victorious Allies imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the war. Just as post-war German governments never really accepted that verdict in the treaty, so did they continue to deny excesses by German troops in Belgium. Some of the Allied claims against German behaviour in Belgium were indeed exaggerated, however, and Hobhouse's reporting was a useful admonition against quick acceptance of the most vitriolic condemnations of Germany's actions. At her best, she wanted to know the truth, but some of her assertions made her seem an apologist, if not an outright propagandist, for the German position.

Emily Hobhouse died in 1926, and it is interesting to speculate about what she would have thought if she had lived to see the post-World War II confirmation of Germany's culpable behaviour in Belgium in August 1914.

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- Biographical details of Hobhouse and her family and her wanderings in 1915-16 for this paper are drawn from A. Ruth Fry, *Emily Hobhouse: A Memoir* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929); John Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971); Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love One's Enemies: The Work and Life of Emily Hobhouse Compiled from Letters and Writings, Newspaper Cuttings, and Official Documents* (Cobble Hill, Canada: Hobhouse Trust, 1994); and John Hall, *That Bloody Woman: The Turbulent Life of Emily Hobhouse* (Truro: Truran, 2008). Also see John V. Crangle and Joseph O. Baylen, 'Emily Hobhouse's Peace Mission, 1916,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14 (October 1979), pp. 731-44. Except for quotations from these sources, they are not cited below. Some of my conclusions are in David S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 241-55, *passim*.
- See in particular John E. Owen, *L. T. Hobhouse: Sociologist* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974).
- Quoted in Fry, *Emily Hobhouse*, p. 267.
- Quoted in Balme, *To Love One's Enemies*, p. 546.
- Hobhouse did not publicly identify Jagow by name; but he was the 'high official' in the German government in her article, which summarised her interview with him. See Hobhouse, 'A German Official's View of Peace,' *The Nation* (London), 26 (October 21, 1916), pp. 113-14.
- Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 17, 1914, p. 1. An Associated Press account, presumably by Roger Lewis and mostly corroborating Bennett's report, is *ibid.*, p. 5.

- Leuven was the Flemish name for the town, while the French name was Louvain. Bennett's quotation above and all subsequent ones herein used the French name, but I have changed the spelling to the Flemish Leuven, putting it in brackets to show the substitution, since Leuven is the commonly accepted name today among its residents.
- 7 *La Violation du Droit des Gens en Belgique* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1915). An English translation is Official Commission of the Belgian Government, *Reports on the Violation of the Rights of Nations and of the Laws and Customs of War in Belgium* (2 vols., London: Harrison [1915]).
 - 8 *The German Army in Belgium: The White Book of May 1915*, translated by E. N. Bennett (London: Swarthmore Press [1921]), *passim* (quotations on p. xvi). The foreword to this postwar edition gives the impression that it was a rebuttal to the Bryce report. That was easily believed – and Hobhouse may have assumed that was the case too – because the Bryce document supported many of the findings of the Belgian commission. But neither the German nor British report contained any references to the other. An abridged English version was published in the United States under the title, *The Belgian People's War: A Violation of International Law. Translations from the Official German White Book, Published by the Imperial Foreign Office* (New York: John C. Rankin [1915]).
 - 9 The Bryce commission's careful methodology included discounting emotional witnesses who might be prone to exaggeration and distortion, interviews of presumably more objective witnesses from neutral countries, and descriptions from the diaries recovered from German soldiers.
 - 10 *Committee on Alleged German Atrocities: Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages Appointed by His Britannic Majesty's Government* (London: Harrison [1915]). Hereafter *Bryce Report*. The appendix is titled *Evidence and Documents Laid Before the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (London: Harrison [1915]). Hereafter *Bryce Report, Evidence and Documents*.
 - 11 *Réponse au Livre Blanc Allemand du May 1915: 'Die Völkerrechtswidrige Führung des Belgischen Volkskriegs'* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1916).
 - 12 Hobhouse probably received the German text of the White Book, as the abridged English version published in the United States (see footnote 8 above) was probably not yet available. She could not read German but could have had parts of it translated for her, and she may have read reports of it in the Swiss press.
 - 13 Quotation in Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse*, p. 248.
 - 14 The fullest report of her Belgian visit is Emily Hobhouse, 'Belgium Today,' *The U.D.C.*, 1 (October 1916), pp. 132–34 (quotation on p. 133). *U.D.C.* was the newsletter of the Union of Democratic Control, a British group promoting neutral mediation of the war and post-war international reform. Hobhouse was probably a member and in any case knew many of its Liberal and Labour leaders. Her *U.D.C.* article did not seem to stir up public controversy, perhaps because it was read almost entirely by Britons who sympathised with her anti-war views, and it is cited here and in other footnotes below on occasion to amplify her views that were published in British newspapers.
 - 15 *German Army in Belgium*, pp. xviii, 192–282 (quotations on p. xviii); and *Belgian People's War*, pp. 91–135.
 - 16 *Bryce Report*, pp. 29–36; *Bryce Report, Evidence and Documents*, pp. 130–61. The report also featured German excessive actions in other Belgian towns – for example, Dinant and Tamines. Another interesting eye-witness account was that of Hugh Gibson, secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, who visited Leuven on the afternoon of August 28, 1914, or three days after the fighting and destruction began in the town. Besides recounting the continuing 'reign of terror' there and his own harrowing experiences, he suspended judgment of how the violence started, but cited several examples of the Germans' systematic destruction of parts of the town and their violent actions, which they freely admitted to him and continued long after the row started. These facts, in his view, 'would seem to place the burden of proof on them rather than on the Belgians'. His account was subsequently published in *A Journal from our Legation in Belgium* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1917), pp. 154–72 (quotations on p. 167).
 - 17 *New York Times*, January 17, 1915, p. 4, and May 18, 1915, p. 3; *London Times*, October 3, 1916, p. 9.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, March 29, 1915, p. 5; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 11, 1915, p. 2; *New York Times*, June 4, 1915, p. 10.
 - 19 For that matter, none of the later secondary sources (see footnotes 33–35 and 37 below) ventured to provide even approximate figures on the number of casualties. Part of the problem was that many of the Leuven citizens became refugees who died elsewhere in the course of their exodus from the town or were picked up by the Germans and shipped to German prison camps. And the German army was not motivated to keep an accurate tally of their Belgian victims.
 - 20 *The Times*, October 3, 1916, p. 9.
 - 21 In the *U.D.C.* publication, she responded: 'That the *Library* was destroyed is true; that it was wantonly destroyed is almost certainly untrue; that [Leuven] itself was destroyed is false.' 'Belgium Today,' p. 133 (emphasis Hobhouse).
 - 22 *The Times*, October 18, 1916, p. 7. In the *U.D.C.* article, she added that 'The 6,000 absent included men serving in the Belgian Army.' And regarding worshippers in the cathedral, she effused, 'Here I drew aside and watched while Belgian citizens and German soldiers knelt side by side in prayer. I came across many similar instances of good feeling elsewhere between the German common soldiers and the Belgian peasantry. That sight bore within it the germs of the future, and I felt it would live longer in my memory than anything else I had seen in Louvain. I gathered a few jewels from the dust here also, and stole away feeling that the possibility of universal brotherhood still lives.' She also reiterated, 'One hopes there may be foundation for the rumour that some of the more precious manuscripts were put in safety.' 'Belgium Today,' p. 133.
 - 23 *The Times*, October 18, 1916, p. 7.
 - 24 The Leuven professor's letter had been earlier published, *ibid.*, November 18, 1915, p. 11. In her *U.D.C.* report, Hobhouse wrote, 'Stories abound as to the origin of this fire [that destroyed the library], a disaster not at all surprising with burning houses near at hand, and a pile of tents and canvasses belonging to the booths of the market folk.' Her implication that a single fire spread to the library because of flammable materials and structures nearby spared Germany of direct responsibility. She also withheld judgment on the cause of the fire until the end of the war when 'evidence can be brought by eye-witnesses from each side.' 'Belgium Today,' p. 133.
 - 25 *The Times*, October 20, 1916, p. 9.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, October 19, 1916, p. 9.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, October 20, 1916, p. 9.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, October 21, 1916, p. 11.
 - 29 *Daily News and Leader*, September 15, 1916, p. 4. Fry, *Emily Hobhouse*, p. 274, quotes from an article by Hobhouse on Hoover's commission, which she says was published in the *Daily News* on September 4, 1916, but this earlier article was not found there.
 - 30 *The Herald*, October 21, 1916, p. 3. Moreover, in a preface to her report in the *U.D.C.*, the editor complained that the British people were not allowed to see Germany's publication of the Belgian events and touted her 'clear and impartial narrative,' which showed that there could be 'another side' to the horror stories presented in the Bryce report.
 - 31 For the discussion in the House of Commons, see *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, 86,

- cols. 1270–71, 1493–94, 1697, 1745–47; and *ibid.*, 87, col. 942. Generous quotations from the debate are reproduced in Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse*, pp. 254–59.
- 32 *The Times*, November 13, 1916, p. 9. A biographer who was a friend of Hobhouse later wrote, however, that she had ‘long determined’ to visit Germany. Fry, *Emily Hobhouse*, p. 276. Lord Leonard Courtney tried to make the best of a delicate issue when he remarked in the House of Lords that ‘the intention of going to Germany did not exist in her mind at all when she started for Italy. If it did exist it lay there very dormant all the winter and through the early spring months.’ It is probable that she long envisioned such a visit, but did not see how it could be done until she reached Switzerland on her way back from Italy. Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse*, pp. 257–58 (quotation on p. 257).
- 33 The German committee members agreed that the events in Leuven would suffice as representative of German actions in Belgium in 1914. The result was *Der Fall Löwen und das Weissbuch: Eine Kritische Untersuchung der Deutschen Dokumentation über die Vorgänge in Löwen vom 25. bis 28. August 1914* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1958), by Peter Schöller, an assistant to the German committee chairman. This history exposed the German White Book as a cover-up, and the introductory essay by another German member concluded with an apology to Leuven and its citizens. The Belgian members found the book complete and requiring no further study.
- 34 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Bibliothek von Löwen: Eine Episode aus der Zeit der Weltkriege* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1988). I am grateful to Peter van den Dungen for this reference.
- 35 John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 38–42, *passim* (quotation on p. 40).
- 36 *The Times*, October 20, 1916, p. 9.
- 37 Marika Ceunen and Piet Veldeman, eds., *Aan Onze Helden en Martelaren: Belden van de Brand van Leuven (Augustus 1914)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), which contains much illustrative material (posters, documents, photographs); and Jeff Lipkes, *Rehearsals: The German Army in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), which offers some revisions of the Horne–Kramer interpretations. Interestingly, none of these post-World War II books mentioned Hobhouse’s descriptions of Belgium in 1916 or the controversy surrounding them.
- 38 In the officer’s account, a rocket was fired as a Belgian signal to begin firing on the German troops. During the ensuing fighting, the library caught fire and the Germans, upon entering the building, could find no fire extinguishers or the custodian. In consequence, ‘[t]he books caught quickly and nothing could be done,’ she concluded. And from his recounting, she continued, ‘Unfortunately as the flames streamed into the sky the wind blew the sparks across to the roof of the Cathedral, which also caught.’ She also accepted his explanation that he ordered a few adjacent houses blown up to prevent the fire spreading to the town hall and personally rescued a valuable painting from the cathedral. Fry, *Emily*
- Hobhouse*, pp. 272–73.
- 39 In her *U.D.C.* article, Hobhouse had written in a parenthetical aside, as if only hearsay: ‘(Strenuous efforts were made to subdue the flames, in which Belgians and Germans worked together.)’ ‘Belgium Today,’ p. 133.
- 40 Only in her *U.D.C.* article (*ibid.*, p. 132) did she mention her ‘escort’ and then without further identification. In her writings about her trip, she reported two conversations she was able to have with Belgian residents. One was with a verger in a church in Malines (Mecherin) about the fate of a Rubens painting displayed there before the war. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Another was with a manager of a soup kitchen in Brussels when she was accompanied by another German guide who was not fluent in English and did not enforce the prohibition. *London Daily News*, September 15, 1916, p. 4 (recounted with additional details in Fry, *Emily Hobhouse*, pp. 274–75). She apparently never made public the restrictions on her speech, which were first revealed after her death in Ruth Fry’s biography of her.
- 41 See footnote 38 above.

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