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# Health, Education, and General Conscription: Chilean Social Policy and the Military in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

*Delia González de Reufels\**

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**Abstract:** »Gesundheit, Bildung und Allgemeine Wehrpflicht: Chilenische Sozialpolitik und das Militär in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts«. The following article argues that young physicians working as army doctors played an important role in the development of public health and social policy ideas in Chile, proposing a number of social policy measures. Their experience in the armed forces provided them with deep insights into the health conditions and education of the less privileged Chileans, some of which raised serious concerns. The War of the Pacific served to heighten the doctor's awareness that inertia on part of the Chilean state in all matters concerning health and education set the Chilean army, and by extension the country, at a great disadvantage. Here, the examples of Imperial Germany as well as other European countries were also important. Finally, the article revises some of the arguments used in Chile in favor of universal military service that were closely connected to social policy issues.

**Keywords:** Chile, army doctors, social policy ideas, health conditions, physical exercise at schools, small pox, venereal diseases, alphabetization.

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## 1. Introduction

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Chile is one of the pioneers of social policy in Latin America. Together with its neighbors, Argentina and Uruguay, it was one of the first countries to implement comprehensive occupation, health, and safety legislation.<sup>1</sup> It also introduced social security programs at an impressive pace between 1917 and 1930: by 1924, all social laws for workers effective in Chile had been compiled in a huge volume (Poblete Troncoso and Álvarez Andrews 1924). Health insurance and insurance against invalidity were already mandatory, and even mechanisms for solving workplace conflicts had been established.<sup>2</sup> Finally in 1925, social

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<sup>1</sup> Cp.: Código del Trabajo. Decreto con Fuerza de Ley No. 178, publicado en el "Diario Oficial" de 28 de Mayo de 1931. Conforme a la Edición Oficial, Santiago de Chile: Editorial Nascimento 1932.

<sup>2</sup> See: Ley No. 4056, 1.0 de diciembre de 1924 sobre Tribunales de Conciliación y Arbitraje.

policy was taken one step further when it became part of the new constitution which also acknowledged the willingness of the state to intervene in matters of health (Zarate Campos 2008, 15). Article 14 of the new Chilean constitution guaranteed workers “a minimum level of well-being adequate to their personal necessities and those of their families.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the value of such constitutional stipulations can be debated, article 14 remained unaltered for the next 48 years (i.e., until the constitution was suspended following the military coup of 11 September 1973). Then, the *junta militar* set out to reorganize the public sector and began to redefine the relationship between the state and its citizens. This process included changes in Chilean social policy, which was dismantled so quickly that the military was perceived as being responsible for a general rollback in this field (Huneus 2005, 98f.; Castiglioni 2001).

However, has the Chilean military always been hostile to social policy measures? Whether or not it was a favorable or a deterring force in the history of the development and introduction of Chilean social policies has not been studied so far. Thus, the position of the military remained unclear until 1917. This is mainly because the histories of the Chilean welfare state and the military had not yet been connected. This article will advance some plausible reasons for this omission before assessing the interest and possible influence the Chilean armed forces exerted on social policy. The focus will be on the army, an obvious choice, as it represented the largest part within the Chilean armed forces. It was furthermore the body politically advocating for and working towards establishing general conscription that was finally introduced at the onset of the 20th century.

The focus of this article will be on the fields of health and education, seeing as they both became increasingly important to the growing Western armies of the 19th century. The Chilean army in turn recruited men on a regular basis and would continue to grow steadily over the 19th century. Thus, it would develop a specific interest in measures capable of providing it with healthy recruits, who were also able to read instructions and study manuals. This analysis thus ventures to bring together the aspirations of the Chilean army and its representatives as well as the involvement of specific social policy discussions and instruments. In this context, the writings of army doctors and military reformers who became more outspoken after 1884 will be especially important. This was the time when the Chilean victory in the War of the Pacific strengthened the position of the armed forces in Chilean politics and society. Both the victory and a possible push of the military for social policy will have to be thought of as part of the same process because they were intrinsically connected. In sum,

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<sup>3</sup> This constitution replaced the first, which had been established in 1833. For article 14 cp.: Constitución Política de la República de Chile Promulgada el 18 de Septiembre de 1925, Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria 1925, 11.

this article is about assessing whether the Chilean army exerted any influence on the development of state controlled social policy and, if so, how and when.

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## 2. On the State of the Question

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Historical research has dealt with the establishment of social policies and the Chilean welfare state on the one side, and the rise of the military as a collective actor in Chilean politics on the other. Both topics have been part of different historic narratives and possible connections between these developments have not been discussed. Given the strong dependency of any armed forces on the availability of healthy and well-prepared recruits to win wars, it is very likely that the Chilean military took an interest in discrete measures and in social policy in general. Furthermore, the transnational nature of social policy development itself may have turned the military into a “natural” actor in the field. Daniel T. Rodgers has convincingly argued that transnational actors and institutions were important for the development and progress of social policy ideas in the United States (Rodgers 1998, 5f). If Rodgers’ argument can claim universality, such actors and their institutions must have been important for Chile, too. Additionally, in the years that were decisive for the establishment of social policies, Chile did not have many transnational actors, let alone institutions. The National Chilean University, with its many international professors, certainly was one, and it has been shown to have been decisive for the reception of European ideas and the transfer of knowledge (Serrano 1994). But then, within the very same time frame, the armed forces were equally transnationally oriented because military progress was happening at a rapid pace in other parts of the world and needed to be watched closely. Therefore, Chilean armed forces hired European military instructors, bought and translated European military publications, and started their own military journals from 1885 onwards (Ejército de Chile, vol. VII, 81ff). These journals chronicled and circulated the latest developments in Europe and other Latin American countries and served as a mirror for Chilean military advancement and its relation to other armed forces. At a time when the average Chilean would not travel much abroad, high-ranking Chilean officers were furthermore remarkably mobile, travelling to take tours of military observation, enroll at European military schools, visit barracks, and observe European theaters of war. Thus, Chilean officers were not only in touch with European ideas on warfare, but were also well informed on other fields of political and societal progress.

This fact may have been forgotten because it clashes with an established opinion on social policy and the armed forces in Latin American in general. According to scholars such as Miguel Ángel Centeno the military did not intervene in the field of social policy, and it was obvious that “[u]nlike their European and North-American equivalents, the Latin American militaries appear

not to have played an important role in developing welfare states to provide them with better recruits” (Centeno 2002, 257). Soldiers were in sum, according to Centeno, treated as “cannon fodder.” This picture is not entirely convincing however, seeing as even the author himself makes concessions for the Chilean military in the fields of health and education (*ibid.*, 258).

In the same vein, historian Brian Loveman stresses the importance of the Chilean military not only for the development of national identity, but also for the diffusion of knowledge of Chilean history. To Loveman, the contributions of military service to national Chilean education are more than obvious (Loveman 1979, 237). Even if history lessons imparted by the military may have been self-serving in the sense that they were thought to teach recruits and officers alike the glory of the armed forces, they contributed to spreading national history. In light of this, it seems shortsighted to dismiss the importance of the military for education in general.

Chilean historians have provided insightful histories of the Chilean army based on a broad range of archival material. They have focused on its role in national politics, its reforms, its importance for the development of other South American armies, and have analyzed some of its publications (Arancibia Clavel 2002, 2007; Brahm García 2003; San Francisco and Soto 2006). While Chilean historians have also published autobiographies of army generals, they have not analyzed the possible impact on social policy debates and measures. This is surprising because, in light of the comprehensive military reforms mentioned before, such effects are very plausible. The reforms, which occurred right after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), built new professional self-esteem and were aimed at proposing a new relationship between the military, Chilean society and the state. Also, these reforms were connected to other national reforms that were underway in Chile at the time (Alarcón 2014). Although historians know that things never happen for just one reason, this can hardly be a coincidence. Therefore, this article assumes that the timing of social policy development and state formation in Chile is crucial.

The first decades of the 20th century were decisive years for the evolution of Chilean social policy. It was then that the Chilean state struggled to counter the severe socio-economic crisis following World War I (Rinke 2017). The ‘social question’ emerged and the relationship between the Chilean state and the political historical actors of Chilean society were reshaped (Yáñez Andrade 2003). The Great Depression had hit the country hard and almost unexpectedly (Vergara 2014). Strikes and political confrontations were occurring on a daily basis, unemployment soared, and poverty increased dramatically, at the same time endangering the stability of the country and its social peace (DeShazo 2007).

In spite of the existence of such a decisive moment in Chilean history, the beginnings of social policy development can be traced back even further. Developments in Chilean educational policy for example began right after the

country's independence, while measures in the field of public health were set in motion in the second half of the 19th century. Social policy and the Chilean welfare state did not suddenly emerge during the first decades of the 20th century but can be conceived of as the result of a complex process characterized by specific historic elements, which distinguish the Chilean case from others (Rengifo 2017).

Chile's possible claim to these specific historic characteristics may also be due to specific historic actors. Historians and political scientists alike have increasingly paid attention to these (Mesa-Lago 1978). They have, however, not included the Chilean military in their observations, despite the decades in question being those that witnessed the military's aspirations to meet the standards of modern armed forces (Sater 2003), such as that of France, England, and in particular, Imperial Germany.

In this context, it is also important to remember that the Chilean military had an important historical standing. It had been vital to the expansion of the national territory to the South and the North, and it was decisive for its integration. For example, the army had barracks built, and thus provided the Chilean state with a presence in remote places. These were the territories where, 40 years after independence, the nation state still held only a very limited control over the land and people. In addition, Chile has also been described by some historians as a "land of wars" in whose history military conflict has loomed large.<sup>4</sup> It has furthermore been called the 'strong man' of the Southern Cone, feared by neighbors for its military strength. Last but not least, after the War of the Pacific, the Chilean military wielded considerable power beyond the barracks, and increasingly got involved in national politics. When it joined in the so-called Civil War of 1891, it became very clear that the Chilean military had a political agenda of its own, and that it was not a monolith but made up of various factions with different interests and political affiliations. While the navy staged a revolt against president Balmaceda in 1891, the army and its four divisions remained loyal to the government. Nevertheless, this conflict marked a decisive moment when "one power of the State rebelled against the other" and the armed forces broke with their tradition of non-intervention in national politics (San Francisco 2010, 73). By then, the army had already embarked on its highly ambitious program of reform, which has also been labelled a process of "prussianization." It was to set the stage for the army's larger interest in social policy measures (Sater and Herweg 1999).<sup>5</sup> After 1924, the armed forces

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<sup>4</sup> Cp. the verdict of Góngora who called Chile "tierra de guerra": Góngora 2003, 63ff. Indigenous groups on the Southern border, which were deemed hostile and incompatible with the Chilean national project, were fought all through the 19th and early 20th century. Other historians have disagreed and seen a different trajectory of nation and state: Villalobos 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Others have doubted this view: Ibarrola Zamora 2006.

even officially became a part of Chilean national government because from then on, the president invariably named a high-ranking army officer to the post of secretary of war. Consequently, the military became ever more important for Chilean politics.

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### 3. Chilean Military and the Health of the Average Male Chilean: The Organization of Military Medicine and the Report of 1867

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For many decades, the Chilean state considered health issues to be the private affair of its citizens. As such, health neither required state action nor direct intervention. This attitude can be seen as in accordance with the traditional neglect of the population's health under Spanish colonialism. It is thus not surprising at all that the three factors that had characterized the lives of ordinary Chilean men and women under colonial rule would still be very present during the early period of the nation's independence: high infant mortality, lack of knowledge in all matters of hygiene, and unhealthy conditions of life were still ubiquitous (Salinas 1983, 108). City boroughs back then were as unhealthy as the housing conditions, the common type of dress, and the food. The military, which very much depended on the health of its recruits, did next to nothing to preserve it so that the attitude of the armed forces of the Ancien Régime persisted. Furthermore, it was not until the last decades of the 19th century that the health of prospective recruits was examined by trained doctors. Until then, the decision whether a Chilean was fit to serve was made by individuals who the trained doctors later on referred to as "quacks." Whether a man could be recruited or not was exclusively decided by factors such as height and age.

If state funding for health improvements marks the beginning of health care, then, in the Chilean case, it began in the middle of the 19th century. President Manuel Montt, and in particular the new secretary of the interior Antonio Varas, designed new measures to recollect public funds which then enabled the Chilean state to invest in health care institutions and the training of health care providers. Montt, who had previously been secretary of education, continued to favor his previous field (Serrano 1984, 81), yet acknowledged the need to invest in public health. According to his secretary Varas, the Chilean hospitals had been neglected for too long and could not meet the demands of the population (Mac Clure 2012, 35f.). Better funding also made the incorporation of foreign doctors into the medical faculty at the university in Santiago possible. There, French doctors in particular trained new generations of Chilean physicians (Cruz-Coke 1995, 183). The graduates of the medical faculty would in the years to come advocate for numerous improvements in the provision of medical services; some of them would work for the Chilean military and in

particular the army. They started their careers as physicians there, and their experiences as army doctors would prove to have a lasting influence on them.

It is remarkable that all through the 19th century the Chilean armed forces would hire but not integrate doctors into their ranks. Instead, a clear difference between medical science and military structures was maintained. This may have been due to a variety of factors, one of them certainly being the small number of physicians living in Chile (Rayo 2016, 196). During Chile's struggle for independence as well as in later conflicts, the number of physicians working for the military had been very low, and their lack of medical knowledge had been frequently criticized. These old military doctors were furthermore ridiculed by the new generations of university-trained doctors who looked down on them, especially when they joined the army and worked side by side with them (Murillo 1869, 3). Usually however, the new university graduates would only work for the military for a few years. Then, they would either try to set up a practice, join the medical faculty, or go into national politics. This had a direct negative effect on the ability of the armed forces to reform their medical services in general, but it did not diminish the chances of the army to raise consciousness for the health issues of the troops, as we shall see. Quite on the contrary, especially in times of military conflict, the army could draw on professional doctors who were called to serve. This recurring hiring of civilian doctors then gave the army a certain public and political presence through the medical profession.

Working as plain employees without military authority, rank, career options, or benefits, these doctors were mainly responsible for providing basic health services at the barracks and military camps where they not only tended to the troops, but also to the Chilean population in general. In remote areas of the country especially, the army did not only represent the Chilean state, but would also provide the most tangible experience of state services, a result of the military conflicts the army had engaged in during the 19th century. Historians of Chilean medicine have stressed that the wars the army fought resulted in palpable progress in terms of the availability of medical services. The Wars of the Araucanía in the South (1861-1883), which were waged to fully include the lands of the indigenous Mapuche into national territory, and the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) against Bolivia and Peru may not have yielded much progress in military medicine, but they led to the establishment of hospitals. These would take care of the troops and the local population in hitherto neglected locations (Cruz-Coke 1995, 432). The hospitals in the cities of Arica, Iquique, Antofagasta, and Pisagua were built right after the War of the Pacific, while two military hospitals in Angol and Traiguén, with a hundred beds each, were established in 1882 during the conflict. Although we know very little about their services and quality, these hospitals seem to have been welcomed by the population. At the forts (*fuertes*) in Collipilli, Victoria, Temuco, and Nueva Imperial, small *enfermerías* offered basic health care, and counted 20 beds each



until they were enlarged to become the general hospitals of these cities (Cruz-Coke 1995, 432). In the years to come, the army was not only able to get state support for better health care at the barracks, receiving government money to this end, but would also become a provider of health services in the broadest sense. It thus filled the void the Chilean state had left: in 1871, only ten general hospitals existed nationwide; they were derelict, provided only very poor service, and all dated back to Colonial times (Cruz-Coke 1995, 431). Furthermore, these hospitals were notorious for their inefficiency and level of deterioration, especially because they were not treating the patients properly (Illanes 2010, 23). This was also the result of a general lack of medical development and progress in the country at the time (Mac Clure 2012, 35f.).

In 1912, national law number 2644 finally established that physicians working in the military sanitary service would become officers (Ejército de Chile, vol. VIII, 110). This must have been due to two factors which echo the development of European countries as well as that in other parts of Latin America (Hassenteufel 1997, 23f.): first, the medical profession had managed to establish an exclusive professional profile of its own, increasingly become specialized and acquired social prestige; second, the military acknowledged the need for professional health care providers who would exercise the profession as part of the military, could receive a decent remuneration and have access to pensions, and last but not least would identify with the institution.

All throughout the 19th century, the Chilean army did not just provide services, it increasingly started to demand them. Through its doctors, the army began to engage in more general debates on the state of the of Chilean citizens' health in general. It is important to note that at a time when national health studies and hospital statistics did not yet exist, the only information available on the health of the Chilean population was compiled by civilian doctors working for the army. National statistics in these fields began to be recorded after the second half of the 19th century, while the first real national census was held in 1865 (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas 2009). Unlike other national institutions of the time, the army had a very clear picture of the state of public health, thanks to the reports of its doctors. Adolfo Murillo, a graduate from the Universidad de Chile, was one of them. He began his career as an army doctor and surgeon and would eventually become one of the most influential doctors of the country – his time in the military proved highly important for his future propositions concerning public health. Murillo's report on the health of Chilean soldiers is a remarkable document. It was published in 1869 and consisted of 46 pages (Murillo 1869). On them, Murillo charted the diseases from which Chilean soldiers most frequently suffered. He also used this empirical data to call attention to the precarious health of soldiers, many of whom proved unfit to serve (Murillo 1869, 3f.). They, he believed, represented a vital part of the national population, and although he only had the chance to examine the health of men and admitted to many shortcomings, he thought that his findings were

speaking “in a loud voice,” and were of general value (Murillo 1869, 4). This was particularly the case because Murillo not only listed diseases, but also proceeded to propose measures to prevent these conditions. Thus, he was presenting possible solutions for the poor physical conditions of soldiers as much as for the health of all Chileans belonging to the “*clases populares*,” i.e., the rural and urban poor. His findings about the proliferation of certain diseases and their consequences furthermore enabled Murillo to provide the public with a more general picture of Chilean health issues at the end of the 1860s. When he subsequently called attention to the army’s great dependency on the health and the life style of its recruits, he could also point to the grim reality that was the health of the entire Chilean population.

According to Murillo, the vast majority of Chilean men who had been assisted at military hospitals suffered, in order of importance, from a variety of venereal diseases, in particular syphilis and its many symptoms, soldiers also presented infections which had become chronic, such as sinusitis, and they suffered from different cases of fever, typhus, rheumatism, pneumonia, otitis, hepatitis, dysentery, and diarrhea as well as diseases of the skin that had become endemic in many parts of the country and were mostly the product of poor and unhygienic living conditions. These diseases seriously diminished soldiers’ military abilities, one of the reasons why the study meant to bring the lack of existing measures improving the general health of the population to the attention of doctors and the military establishment. About half of all Chileans, Murillo calculated, were suffering from syphilis, which, he claimed, was enough to demand that the government took measures to contain this disease (Murillo 1869, 44). Syphilis was cutting the lives of men and women short, and Murillo claimed that because the ‘liberal’ Chilean government had avoided repressive measures, the numbers of infections were still rising. This was all the more serious as there were no cures for syphilis, or for any other sexually transmitted disease.

For doctors like Murillo, health problems had a medical (i.e., scientific), and a social dimension, and the latter in particular demanded political action. Doctors working for the military played an active role in ‘discovering’ medical and social problems and assessing the damage they were doing to the armed forces as well as to the nation as a whole. Thus, Murillo underlined that “prostitution is the shadow of the military” and pointed out that it “marches wherever the soldiers march,” stressing the dangers of venereal diseases and what he called immoral ways of life (Murillo 1869, 7f.). These habits called for superiors to set a good example, as much as they called for the state to take measures to control prostitution, a feat which was only achieved at the end of the century (Murdock 1995, 557). A paternalistic middle-class attitude and the wish to ‘educate’ the lower classes became visible here, as does the assumption that the military had the potential to improve national “morals.”

Long workdays of ten hours, fatigue, bad food, and unhygienic and unheated barracks were also apt to destroy the precarious health of soldiers (Murillo 1869, 12f.). Using his knowledge of the treatment and training of young English recruits, Murillo highlighted the shortcomings of the Chilean system and criticized the lack of attention that the question of public health and nutrition in general received, much to the detriment of the armed forces (Murillo 1869, 15f.). To the doctor, the connections between a neglect of health on a national level and the miserable health conditions of army recruits were obvious. Thus, Murillo asked for nothing less but what we today, following Foucault, would call a biopolitical intervention, a direct intervention in the bodies of the Chilean people (Foucault 1999, 284f.). Yet the state of the medical profession, the lack of medical services, and the lack of government interest made such demands unfeasible. Less unrealistic was Murillo's demand that soldiers have access to education because it would benefit their health. He believed in the importance of schooling for the health of soldiers who, he claimed, would then be able to understand that they were responsible for their own body and had to become active to maintain its strength (Murillo 1869, 23).

From then on, health and education were closely connected in the propositions of army doctors, although not yet in the thinking of the military institution itself. If the history of health, as Soto Laveaga and Agostoni maintain for Mexico (Soto Laveaga and Agostoni 2011, 561), truly allows us to assess the needs and aspirations of the decades we are examining, then in the case of the Chilean armed forces, the military leaders aspired to have better recruits, but they did not have any other vision and fairly low aspirations. In fact, Murillo's demand that the military refrain from recruiting very young boys as their bodies were still changing did not result in new practices (Murillo 1869, 27). To him, this was about "reconciling the interests of the country with the interests of the citizens"; yet the army did not follow his advice to recruit young men of at least 20 years of age, but instead continued recruiting very young boys for the next decades.

In the years to come, the proposals for improving public health and the health of soldiers resonated with those of Murillo's: doctors would invariably address the same diseases, health issues, and problems. In fact, the soldiers who fought the War of the Pacific ten years after Murillo had published his observations, suffered from the very same infections he had listed (Sater 1973, 151). The survey published in 1869 then not only summed up the state of health at this time, but also foreshadowed the problems the Chilean army was to encounter in the future. Murillo's complaints about the health conditions of soldiers and about the general neglect of public health issues were fruitless however, because "the health of the Chileans did not figure among the first priorities of

the state” (Cruz 2011, 11).<sup>6</sup> Important changes would come via the field of education instead.

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#### 4. Health at Chilean Schools: Enthusiasm for Physical Education

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The lack of physical education and exercise as well as the lack of knowledge of hygiene were two of the fields the Chilean state addressed in 1872. After much thought, exercise and hygiene were made mandatory subjects at public schools, although in the beginning the corresponding curricula were yet undefined. Whether hygiene would consist only in teaching pupils to wash their hands, and what physical education exactly meant still had to be specified. But both the exercise and the training in hygiene were to be essential components of a new field of educational and medical intervention soon to be called “school hygiene” and covering a wide array of fields related to school, schooling, and health. “School hygiene” as an educational topic certainly merits more scholarly attention, as an upcoming article will point out, especially as it was a transnational issue and of great importance in the Cono Sur. Right across the Andes in Argentina, physical education was discussed and implemented as part of school education in the 1880s, while at the beginning of the 20th century, schools were discussed as a place to give children a physical and moral education and to provide them with knowledge in all matters of hygiene (Armus 2011, 146f; Rodríguez 2006). The same happened in Uruguay, which prided itself on being a pioneer in the social policy field of health.

By the time the new subjects were established at Chilean primary schools, Adolfo Murillo had already left the army. In 1872, he was addressing the medical faculty of the University of Santiago to present a plan to end what he called “the vicious direction education has taken up until now” (Murillo 1872, 6f.). Murillo stated that it was about time that its tendency to “forget the physical in education and to take care only of the intellectual development of youth” was counterbalanced, and education reformed. This neglect of the physical aspect of education was the more surprising because, according to Murillo, much effort had gone into the improvement of different breeds of Chilean animals and livestock, while nothing had been done to “lift the strength of the present generations, nothing to cultivate the development of physical strength and human form” (Murillo 1872, 7). So, in other words, if the Republic of Chile was doing

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<sup>6</sup> This is stressed by Nicolás Cruz (2011). *Los Anales de la Universidad de Chile y la salud de los chilenos en el siglo XIX*, in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile. Selección de textos médicos*, Santiago de Chile: DIBAM, 11.

so much to improve the bodies of its farm animals, why was it ignoring the bodies of its people?

Seemingly unaware of the implications of equalling, or at least comparing human beings to cattle and other productive animals, Murillo gives proof of his eugenic way of thinking. This was very much in line with that of many other Latin American doctors of the time, and with the convictions of militaries of the region in the years to come (Stepan 1996). Murillo was thinking about modelling the ‘national race,’ which explains why he warned that unless action was taken quickly, the former beautiful and, as he put it, “virile nation” would be turned into a death house, marked by the progressive decay of the young. Again, this was about male bodies and about the Chilean men of the future, while women were conspicuously absent from these deliberations. Public health care via schools to this former army doctor equaled male public health. Additionally, although Murillo never mentioned it, he was exclusively concerned with male Chileans on whose fitness the country depended. This was when health also became a matter of national security.

Offering references to classic Greek and Roman writers and citing various French authors, Murillo centered his argument on the dangers of decay and decline that could only be prevented by a thorough program of physical exercise. The constant focus on intellectual faculties which Chilean education had provided so far, according to Murillo, only served to produce nervousness, bad digestion, and diseases of the lungs; the last of these probably being a sign of tuberculosis (Murillo 1872, 9f.).

Murillo then, as historian Sol Serrano points out, conceived of school as a space of health and as a requisite of social reform in general (Serrano, Ponce de León, and Rengifo 2012, 228). He believed that school as an institution had the capacity to change the bodies of young male Chileans and thus undo the harm caused by, for example, poor living conditions. At the same time, Murillo seemed to be convinced that school could be turned into a place for the prevention of disease proliferation and for bio-political intervention; if schools were responsible for the decay and death of the young, they had to be changed.

It is interesting to note that the solution which Murillo proposed for the ‘modern’ disease of “nervousness” stemmed from his experiences as an army doctor. Other physicians of his generation shared his views, such as José Joaquín Aguirre who in 1879 would become president of the Sanitary Commission of the Army. In the 1880s, Aguirre published a highly influential manual on physical exercise which was widely read and determined how physical exercise was practiced in schools all over the country (Aguirre 1886). Again, the impact of his military experience on his interest in physical education is obvious, as his vision of physical exercise was clearly indebted to military drill and its routines.

But unlike Aguirre, Murillo did not only have military experience, he also claimed to have precise first-hand evidence of the benefits of military physical

exercise from his time as an army surgeon. He stated that he had the opportunity to witness the progress two students of the military school had made who were languishing because of serious illness (Murillo 1872, 13). After they had started to practice gymnastics the way the military taught it, their health had rapidly improved and finally been restored. This particular training, according to Murillo, furthermore explained the positive development of France, the success of Imperial Germany, and that of other nations committed to stopping the “weakening of the races” by introducing physical exercise (Murillo 1872, 13).

What Murillo had in mind was a military drill focused on the male body. Here, the influence of the movement initiated by the German Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in response to Napoleonic invasion became visible. The movement had found its way into military manuals of the contemporary armies of France and of Imperial Germany, to which Murillo and others referred. In this thinking, the perfection of humanity consisted in harmonizing the functions of the body (i.e., in the perfect use of its “organic apparatus”), and the European countries set the example (Murillo 1872, 8). Direct state action in the field of education thus promised to harmonize medical questions and the needs of society. This explains why the Chilean state was called upon to provide the means, and to design the program which public schools could then use to impose gymnastics. The state was also to provide the ropes, rings, and parallel bars the students would use, while more advanced exercise would be reserved for the military academy and the school for teachers.

Clearly, all of Murillo’s propositions echoed the necessities of the Chilean army, which was seeking physically stronger recruits. They were also in line with a process of educational reform which would take off as the result of a top down approach in the 1880s. It is remarkable that Murillo as a civilian very openly advocated for the reception of military concepts of education by non-military institutions, insisting that the “blatant ignorance in all fields pertaining to matters of hygiene” had to be stopped once and for all, while the “art of how to prolong life and to keep healthy” had to be taught to every Chilean at school (Murillo 1872, 22f.). This would not only reduce infant mortality but also lift the morals of the country. Again, school was a space to be used by the state to improve not only the health of the Chileans but the population and its moral standards. Finally, Murillo expressed his hope that to teach workers and pupils alike about the fatal effects of ebriety would do them good (Murillo 1872, 25). Here, the doctor was hinting at yet another ‘plague’ of the Chilean lower classes, revealing once again his position as a member of the elite, which would not have to be warned against the abuse of alcohol. Instead, he sought to teach the *clases populares* who also, very clearly, made for the majority of the population. The entire discussion was an argument of the few on how to ‘improve’ the many. In the years to come, this majority would be affected by the various epidemics such as smallpox and cholera. Because these epidemics also claimed

many deaths amongst the elite, they fostered a climate of insecurity to which the Chilean state eventually reacted.

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## 5. The Military and the Quest for Compulsory Vaccination

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The heated national debate on vaccination was only in part the result of the epidemics themselves, which have been called “one of Chile’s few egalitarian experiences” because the rich and the poor perished at the same rate (Sater 2003, 517). These debates doubtlessly also resulted from the professionalization of medicine and the rise of the medical profession in Chile. By the middle of the 19th century, a new generation of Chilean physicians was graduating from the medical school in Santiago, but the numbers of Chilean health care providers were comparatively low and by the last third of the century, Chile continued to lack doctors. In 1881, there were only 350 of them practicing in Chile, serving a population of about 2 million, which generally had little or no access to medical services (Sater 2003, 513). Nevertheless, the medical profession felt that it was on the rise, and in 1889, Chilean medical doctors proudly organized their first national congress on the happy occasion of the inauguration of the medical school’s new building in Santiago, the conference proceedings and individual papers were published in 1893 (Primer Congreso 1893).

Again, a large number of the newly graduated doctors were working for the army. They increasingly demanded that the Chilean government take action in the field of disease control and disease prevention, and advocated for one biopolitical measure in particular: vaccination. The immunization of Chileans was demanded in reaction to various epidemics, which occurred during the second half of the 19th century (Cruz-Coke 1995).

The epidemics are of interest for two reasons: first, because they exposed an alarming lack of preparedness of the Chilean state in all questions of public health; and second, because they made state intervention in the field of personal health more pressing. The outbreaks of smallpox, which continued to plague the country until 1923, had become a raging pandemic in 1864, and again in 1871. In 1872, the illness killed almost 15,000 people in Santiago alone (Mac Clure, 81). This was considered especially dramatic because Chilean demographic development was deemed precarious. The fifth general census of the Republic of Chile, raised in 1875, stated that the national population was roughly over 2 million. Within a decade, it would only grow to 2.4 million (Mamalakis 1980, 13, 18). This slow population growth was attributed to the return of smallpox in 1876, and then again in the 1880s. Smallpox, or viruela, was accordingly responsible for a broad discussion on the responsibilities of the Chilean state, which then forged a debate on the vaccination of all Chileans.

Doctor Ramón Allende Padín, grandfather of later Chilean president Salvador Allende Gossens, had called for a national vaccination scheme as early as

1876 and was named commander of the medical service of the army in 1879 (Cruz-Coke 1995, 400). He had furthermore daringly argued for a special treatment of the sick, such as isolation, and risked being severely criticized for it. Another of Allende Padín's demands was the preventive vaccination of certain groups of the population, among them all the members of the armed forces, students, and Chileans living in close quarters such as penitentiaries, cloisters of religious orders, and institutions of the insane. He also went on to demand that all individuals under the age of 18, whom he considered to be the most vulnerable members of society, should be vaccinated without exemption. His proposal called for the Chilean state to make vaccination of children mandatory, called for a fine on parents and teachers who failed to comply with this new public health policy, and proposed to bolster the authority of the state in all matters concerning public health and its emergencies. This explains why Allende Padín argued for the right of the state to force citizens to be vaccinated against their own will and called to enforce the principle that the well-being of the many justified the sanctioning of the few (Allende Padín 1876, 15-18).

Unsurprisingly, this proposal encountered much opposition, especially because Allende Padín conceived of health as being no longer the private concern of an individual, but of the Chilean state. Collective interests would be embodied by the state and overrule the objections of the individual, whose rights would be cut back for the sake of the health of the community. This was a new way of thinking about health and about measures apt to conserve it. As commander of the military's medical services in the War of the Pacific, Allende Padín would witness the great number of soldiers suffering from smallpox, which broke out among the troops during the conflict. This easily could have been avoided by vaccination. Due to the fact that almost all the important doctors of Santiago joined the military to serve in the campaign during the War of the Pacific, they all witnessed the devastating effects the lack of immunization had caused and experienced the army's lack of preparedness in that and many other respects (Cruz-Coke 1995, 402). It is not therefore surprising that a special commission was created to assess the sanitary service of the army and that some of these doctors would write about their experiences during the war in the Chilean medical journal *Revista Médica de Chile*, which was first published in 1872.

The importance of these army doctors was not restricted to military or to professional circles. As a member of congress, Allende Padín and others would become part of the legislation process which had the power to pass the law of vaccination he had called for in 1876 (Cruz-Coke 1995, 412). Adolfo Murillo also joined congress in the 1880s, and then went on to use his political position to propose compulsory vaccination in a speech held during a congressional session (Murillo 1883). Murillo asked what countries such as England, France, Germany, or Italy would do when faced with such catastrophic outbreaks of smallpox as Chile was. Recent epidemics had been as deadly as those of early



colonial times. He pointed out that such elevated death rates were unknown in Western countries because they practiced vaccination. By citing figures from France, referencing the procedures of the United States, and summarizing the practices of isolation used in Germany, Murillo stressed the shortcomings of Chilean measures to combat the smallpox outbreaks. It was this lack of measures, he surmised, which had condemned so many citizens to their deaths. According to Murillo, the “free countries of Europe” very successfully practiced compulsory vaccination. He then pointed out that “military service also is obligatory in most civilized countries,” thus establishing a surprising connection between certain practices of public health and general conscription (Murillo 1883, 26).

If all Chilean men were to be drafted and vaccinated, a high percentage of the population would be immunized and hence the country as a whole could be resistant to epidemics. In addition, Murillo’s experiences as a doctor of the army and his knowledge of the armed forces’ necessities prompted him to propose public health measures, which would benefit the general population, but would also be in the interest of the military. The doctor maintained the “despotism of the lancet” to be Chile’s only hope (Murillo 1883, 27). Again however, the project was opposed by liberal congressmen. In spite of more regional initiatives, a national vaccination scheme would not be established until June 1918, when national law 3385 called the Dirección de Sanidad into being. This institution, as national law 3385 clearly stipulated, would be responsible for the vaccination of the Chilean population.

Unfortunately for Chile, smallpox was not the only epidemic raging in the country. Shortly after the outbreak of smallpox during the War of the Pacific, cholera broke out on the other side of the Andes in Buenos Aires. Within a short span of time, it manifested itself in Chile (Recalde 1993). Known as one of the deadliest diseases of the time, cholera quickly took its toll on the Chilean population (Puga Borne 1886). To stop the propagation of the highly infectious disease, the government called for the army to close the border with Argentina on December 4th, meaning to control the mountainsides and the main passes together with the National Guard. Though applauded by physicians such as Adolfo Murillo, who once again looked to France as an example of how to deal with cholera, such measures nevertheless proved inefficient (Murillo 1886, 8). The province which was most affected was Valparaíso, although others like Araucanía were also experiencing a severe outbreak and many casualties (Martín Moraga; Ejército de Chile, n.y., vol VII, 77). The helplessness of the Chilean state was once more obvious, but this time, it put the army at the center of attention as it assumed the task of controlling the territory. It was also called upon to help with the makeshift hospitals (called *lazaretos*) and centers of first aid and in addition, was asked to maintain public order and to keep the population from panicking and from further propagating the disease by taking flight to other parts of the country thought to be safer (Ejército de Chile, n.y., vol. VII,

78). The army was obviously needed to fill in positions of health care providers while it also took on the role of a police force. While fulfilling these new tasks, the members of the army supposedly showed a high degree of abnegation and self-sacrifice, but these accounts make today's reader wonder as to how much of their actions was by choice. The army had many reasons to complain and reason to demand that the state develop efficient institutions to deal with epidemics. The creation of the Comisión de Higiene Pública, which would evolve into the Consejo Superior de Higiene Pública in 1889, can be understood as a direct outcome of these epidemics (Rayo 2016, 201). At the same time, the Consejo Superior de Higiene Pública marks an important touchstone in the development of sanitary institutions in Chile (Molina Bustos 2010, 39.)

This development aside, most of the time the Chilean military had exercised little influence on the speed and dynamics of the progress the country as a whole made in all matters concerning health and health care. The outbreak of cholera had undoubtedly added a dynamic to the creation of institutions, and in particular, of centralized institutions which stressed the role of the Chilean state as an actor. It was in 1886 when the creation of the Comisión de Higiene Pública was witnessed, and just a few weeks afterwards, the Junta de Salubridad, which were shortly followed by the institution of the Comisión Directiva del Servicio del Cólera. None of which counted even a single member that was also in the armed forces (Martin Moraga 2016, 50). Nevertheless, questions of health were receiving more military attention. In 1886, the Chilean armed forces published a list of diseases most commonly found among Chilean troops in its yearly report, the *Memoria de Guerra*. The list seemed to be a detailed copy of the one Murillo had compiled 17 years earlier. In it, the armed forces openly admitted that military success hinged on the eradication of those diseases which were very common among recruits such as alcoholism, syphilis and other venereal diseases, as they made the men unfit for service.<sup>7</sup> The army had very obviously not succeeded in improving the health of the Chilean men who joined its ranks. Therefore, it sought for a solution by introducing general conscription, the idea was presented as part of an effort to reform primary education. In essence, the army aspired to be a school for the nation which would “produce” better citizens. It was thus planning to serve its own interests while selling them to the public as being for everyone's mutual benefit.

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<sup>7</sup> Memoria de Guerra, 1886, Intendencia General del Ejército del Sur, 283.

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## 6. The Army as School of the Nation: Primary Education and General Conscription

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Right after its independence, the Chilean state had taken on education as one of its most important responsibilities (Serrano 1994, 187). Unlike the field of health, education had received much attention, and the state had devoted money and effort to break with the educational traditions of Spanish Colonialism. Although Spanish educational institutions continued to exist, the state was seeking a “reform of society through the educational system” with the explicit aim to build the republican state and instill new thinking in the minds of Chileans (Yeager 1983, 150). The ‘new citizen’ was needed, as historian Ana María Stüven has put it, for “national progress and the organization of the State” (Stüven Vattier 2000, 170). Consequently, the constitutions of 1828, and of 1833 conceived of the national state as the *estado docente*, the “educator state,” which promoted the gradual expansion of the Chilean educational system over the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s (Yeager 1983). This “remarkable investment in education” continued throughout the Montt presidency and the decade from 1851 until 1861 (Hentschke 2016, 62). Thus, the differences between the fields of health and education could not have been any bigger. Advances in education were considered to define the progress of the nation, and they even justified the existence and expansion of the state at a time when health was still considered to be a private issue. But, as has convincingly been pointed out, while the value of education was obvious from the point of view of the state, it was less so from the point of view of Chilean families. About 40% of the Chilean children did not go to school because they were needed elsewhere (Serrano, Ponce de León, and Rengifo 2012, 16f.). Thus, it is hardly surprising that according to the national census of 1875, the Chilean population’s levels of illiteracy were stagnating at 74.26% (Oficina Central de Estadística 1876, 61ff.).

After a long time of indifference, this lack of education began to interest the Chilean armed forces; most probably because the changing nature of military conflict finally had become apparent during the War of the Pacific. Even though the recruits involved in the conflict may have performed much better at reading and writing than other nationals, or so Méndez Notari claims (Méndez Notari 2004, 28), it was clear that the wars of the future would require soldiers with more and better skills than the military conflicts of the past. During the war with Bolivia and Peru, Chilean officers and soldiers alike experienced the fury of a military conflict, which included industrial firepower and sophisticated logistics for the first time. The War of Independence and the Guerra de Arauco against the indigenous Mapuche in the South had mostly been waged by illiterate men, but the soldiers of the future needed to be able to read written orders, military manuals, and textbooks. Or, as an article in the *Revista Militar* put it in 1886: “The real truth is that the modern wars will be won mainly with

calculus and study” (Revista Militar 1886, 746). Warfare now was not only about manpower and technology, but also about knowledge.

This insight into the fundamental changes in warfare was new to Chileans. So far, they had not been in close touch with the European “revolutions in military affairs,” as Knox and Murray call them (Knox and Murray 2001), but they became increasingly aware of them in the 1880s. The Chilean officers discovered what Murray and Knox have acknowledged for the European context, namely that “military revolutions recast society and the state as well as military organizations” (Knox and Murray 2001, 7). The use of new rifles and cannons and the introduction of new tactics would require reading skills and basic knowledge of mathematics, knowledge of physics, and chemistry. In consequence, Chilean officers called for European-style military education, training, and organization for its officers while they also began to demand improvements in primary education. These demands were voiced in particular in the newly founded military journals, which had not existed before the War of the Pacific.

An article in the first volume of the new *Revista Militar de Chile*, which also happened to be the first military publication of the country, suggested that officers take “pleasure in the intellectual work in favor of the profession” and called its readers to broaden their horizons and familiarize themselves with a new vision of the military (Revista Militar 1885, 1). In 1886, the Chilean War College, the Academia Militar, was established. The Chilean state supported military reform and paid for the college (Loveman 1979, 195f.). In time, its students would publish a military journal of their own, *El Ensayo Militar*. They meant for this journal, they wrote, to help its readers shake off “the intellectual lethargy” afflicting the army (San Francisco 2006, 29). The new publications in particular enabled specific groups of officers within the army to communicate with others, while also serving as a space to voice new ideas, interests, and to reach beyond strictly military circles. Topics as varied as new military tactics or nutrition were written about because, as one of the army officers put it, “war no longer is a trade as it was in primitive times, nor is it properly speaking an art form, but it is a positive science with unchanging fundamental principles” (El Ensayo Militar 1888, 35). As such, the topic appealed to civilian readers as well. Teaching Chileans to understand these principles would decide the fate of future military conflicts, which was certainly one of the reasons why the army insisted on educational reform inside and outside of the barracks. At the same time, I believe that the improvements in the field of education enabled the military to frame its plan to introduce general conscription in a way which would be accepted in Chilean politics. The future strategy of the Chilean army would be based on general conscription.

Apart from bringing the army this valuable insight into the importance of knowledge and education for the wars of the future, the War of the Pacific had secured Chile a victory, given it new self-esteem, and “provided the financial

resources to cure some of the more pressing health issues” (Sater 2003, 514). The decades after this war provided the armed forces with unique opportunities and resources because victory enabled the state to take over the monopoly on nitrate and provide money for the creation of military hospitals and new military infrastructure. Chile had won two military conflicts in the years before: The Chilean armed forces had fought Bolivia and Peru from 1837 until 1839, and Spain in 1865; in addition to this, the army had also battled against the indigenous population in various campaigns. However, it was the victory of 1883, which turned the Republic of Chile into “the leading power on the Pacific Coast of South America” (Nunn 1983, 50). Furthermore, the Chileans had won, although “none of the belligerent nations were prepared to go to war” (Loveman 1979, 189). They were also very well aware that Chile had only triumphed because, as one officer later put it, they “[had] faced a weak enemy who was as poorly prepared as we were,” pride in the victory was omnipresent (Barros 1992, 57).

Nevertheless, the war had exposed many deficiencies of the army and the society it was a part of. Ironically, the victory of the present warned of military failures in the near future. To avoid these foreseeable difficulties, high-ranking officers pressed for a quick reform of particularly problematic fields. This was also the time to recast the relationship the army had with national politics and society.

The idea of general conscription, or universal military service, was based on the French *levee en masse* (mass mobilization), and it was enabled by industrial production and by consumption, which has been characterized as “the acquisition, flow and use of things” (Trentmann 2017, 1). The Chileans sought to introduce the “Prussian system” which the Prussians had copied in reaction to the devastating experience of the Napoleonic Wars. The French, in turn, had adapted their model to the German method after the war of 1870/1871, trying to emulate the way in which Imperial Germany practiced universal military service. Thus, general conscription can be regarded as a classic example of an idea that travelled from one nation to another, going back and forth, and evolving in a transnational fashion. The Chileans continued to favor the “Prussian” concept of a “nation under arms”; it became their model of choice (von der Goltz 1883). This may have been the case in part because the concept involved introducing general education into the field of military training. It also certainly appealed to the German army instructors who had been hired in the years after the War of the Pacific. They had been called upon as representatives of military modernity and were happy to apply their own familiar models of army organization to the Chilean system.

While general conscription was not yet practiced in Chile during the 19th century, according to General Indalicio Téllez, it had already been introduced into law on 29 October 1811, when “every free man, of secular state between 16 and 60” was called to present himself within 20 days to the unit of the

armed forces which suited him best. In 1814, yet another law called for all men between 14 and 50 to defend the nation (Téllez 2005). Writing in 1910, Téllez referenced particular moments during the War of Independence to remind his readers that the obligation of all Chilean men to fight for their fatherland had not been invented recently but during the foundational years and thus was already part of the Chilean way of thinking about military service; it was everybody's business. Nevertheless, during the second half of the 19th century, general conscription had increasingly become associated with the so-called "civilized nations," meaning advanced and progressive Western countries. Not only the army but other actors as well thought of universal military service as modern: former army doctor Adolfo Murillo for example saw a connection between national progress and general conscription, and in 1882, he had thought general conscription to be at the heart of a successful national vaccination scheme (Murillo 1883, 26f.).

But while the *levee en masse* of revolutionary France had, as Prussian Carl von Clausewitz pointed out, turned war into "the business of the people – a people of thirty million, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens" again (Clausewitz 1984, 592), the experience of Chileans had been quite different. It was generally known that the War of the Pacific had been fought by those Chilean men who were either poor or had been forced or tricked into military service (Sater 1973, 138f.). Moreover, at the barracks, according to a common saying, soldiers only picked up filthy tricks and did not learn anything useful. This at least was the point of view of an elderly Chilean woman, determined to save her grandson from serving in the army (Téllez 2005, 29). Not surprisingly, the recruits deserted in large numbers. Army service had little to offer, even to the poor: Pay was low, food was scarce and bad, and most of the barracks were in need of repair and dreadful places to live. Additionally, because the war had secured access to the nitrate industry in the North, new opportunities opened up to men looking for work, meaning former soldiers would rather sign up with nitrate companies than remain in the military. The armed forces were thus losing to the competition and, as one historian put it, were "silently defeated by the surf of modernity" (Ibarrola 2006, 166).

Desertions continued to pose a serious problem. In the year 1888 alone, the army counted 1,158 soldiers who left the troops without permission.<sup>8</sup> While an officer's position was attractive, being a soldier was much less so.<sup>9</sup> In view of such discrepancies, the military journal *El Ensayo Militar*, whose readers were officers, would not inquire into ways of making the army more appealing but asked instead for the introduction of general conscription. An article published in 1888 stressed the importance of universal military service as an 'institution'

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<sup>8</sup> Memoria del Ministerio de Guerra y Marina presentada al congreso de la nación, 1888, VII and ss.

<sup>9</sup> Memoria de Guerra, 1888, X.: Cuadro de oficiales del ejército.

much needed to harmonize the continuous progress of the nation with its democratic political system (Brahm García 2003, 44).

Making all male Chileans serve was presented as being truly egalitarian, yet the armed forces were not considering breaking with the long standing inequities of Chilean society, which were characterized by a remarkable lack of social mobility, especially in comparison to neighboring Latin American countries. Additionally, it has been pointed out that the hierarchical structure of the armed forces very much resembled the societal power structures of the day (Méndez Notari 2004, 19f.), and because its’ “discipline was outwardly solid” after the War of the Pacific, neither the army nor the navy viewed itself as an institution propagating societal change (Nunn 1983, 50-51). On the contrary, the Chilean military was a hierarchical institution with strong links to the ruling elite and had a great interest in maintaining them. The officers continued to advocate for hierarchy, for tradition, and for “knowing one’s place,” which explains why military service had nothing to offer to the male Chilean who was hoping to improve his situation and rise in society. For a very long time, Chilean officers came from leading rural families, while the rest of the troops’ background was either urban poor or middle class and the rural Chilean male population continued to work in agriculture (Cordero 1992, 85f.). One of the main problems of Chilean warfare thus had always been the recruitment of troops, and after 1883, the methods used were increasingly subject to criticism.

In 1886 for example, the distinguished Chilean officer Jorge Boonen Rivera demanded that the army reform its practices. He claimed, in the *Revista Militar de Chile*, that “elements with the lowest abilities and skills” had traditionally joined the troops simply because they were “unable to earn their living in professions which are better paid, or [...] of better standing” (*Revista Militar* 1886, 792-793). Only a different form of recruitment, Rivera argued (i.e., a one-year military service, mandatory for all abled-bodied men), would increase the military’s strength. The late 1880’s was the time when officers were beginning to demand a large standing army, the likes of which only general conscription would provide (*Revista Militar* 1886, 795).

By 1888, an alternative to general conscription was also being discussed, the so-called quintas de reemplazo. Under this system, soldiers would be enlisted for no less than three years, the idea being to have soldiers replaced at regular intervals. The decision on this question was delayed by the Civil War, but in 1892, the Chilean *Revista Militar* once again pressed for adoption of general conscription. An article published in said journal presented the new plan of the Estado Mayor General del Ejército, the general staff of the army, and called attention to the unique possibilities that general conscription would offer Chilean men who served the nation for one year. During their time in active duty, they would also attend primary school so that the year of military service would not only provide military but also educational training. This would guarantee the modernization of a country in desperate need of a literate population.

The army also promised to return the irresponsible young men it was handed as conscientious citizens (Revista Militar 1892, 365ff.).

The article in question is remarkable for at least two reasons: its author was Emil Körner, the German captain who had been hired by the Chilean army in 1885 as a military instructor. Trusting his political instincts and his Chilean friends, Körner had sided with President Balmaceda during the Civil War, only to be rewarded for his attitude afterwards. Körner's Chilean mission had played out differently, but it nevertheless proved a very successful continuation of his career (Schaefer 1975, 21-74, 114-24). The article also very openly argued for the adoption of a foreign system of recruitment by stressing its social policy gains. Military interests were thereby sold to national politics, the public, and the institution of the armed forces itself as social policy advancements in a field in which Chileans had always taken pride. General conscription came with the promise to provide extra schooling, at least to half of the Chilean population. The men would furthermore be provided with basic knowledge of hygiene, national history, and, thanks to physical training and the intervention of army doctors, would be in excellent health. The sacrifice, which general conscription imposed on all male citizens, was balanced by the increase in order, cleanliness, and reliability Chilean society was promised in return (Revista Militar 1892, 37).

Again, this was, as Doctor Adolfo Murillo had put it, about reconciling the interests of the country with the interests of the individual citizens. In sum, the introduction of universal military service was meant to be to everyone's benefit as well as a turning point in national security. Additionally, education policy and health measures would finally merge, at least rhetorically. General conscription was thus to become an easy, efficient, and enduring solution to various pressing national problems at once. The idea of general conscription, however, did not gain momentum until military conflict with the neighbor and rival Argentina seemed unavoidable (Brahm Gracia 2003, 83f.). Finally, national law 1362 dealing with "recruitment and replacements at the army and the armada" was passed on 5 September 1900. It stipulated that every Chilean man would serve in the armed forces for a year (Anguita 1913, 535). The army was required to hire new personnel, so as to meet the demands of its new role as school of the nation. It rapidly complied and, by 1903, all main barracks had at least one teacher with the rank of a staff sergeant at their disposal (Ejército de Chile, n.y., vol. VII, 207).

The new teachers would not use the teaching materials designed for the national primary education but translations of the material, which Valentín Letelier, a lawyer and politician who was diplomatic secretary at the Chilean Legation in Berlin, had sent in 1885. Letelier would continue to have a remarkable career and be the rector of the Universidad de Chile in Santiago and one of the country's most famous intellectuals in the near future (Ruiz Schneider 2012). From 1882 onwards, Letelier had been stationed in Berlin to study the



German educational system and report his findings to the Chilean government. Personally, he considered himself a radical, interested in strengthening the role of the state in national education and weakening the Catholic Church's influence. The teaching material he had identified as especially valuable consisted of four courses in reading and writing, used to alphabetize the soldiers in Imperial Germany. It was complemented by material on grammar, geometry, geography, and Chilean history to provide more thorough schooling (Ejército de Chile, n.y., vol. VII, 208). Soon enough, however, the army began to complain that one year did not allow for much training and education and began a debate on the extension of universal military service.

Even though the war with Argentina never materialized, the Chilean armed forces continued to anticipate this imminent danger and went on to prepare themselves for it. Their attitude was not a recent development; Emil Körner had prepared a plan for the preemptive invasion of the neighboring republic as early as 1898. It had not been put into action because it hinged on the acquisition of war material to arm all the soldiers deemed necessary to win the ensuing military conflict (Brahm Gracia 2003, 143f.). As the estimated needs of the army exceeded the possibilities of the Chilean state, the standstill continued. Nevertheless, it was this menace, be it real or imagined, which allowed the army to establish universal military service and use national education to justify the implementation.

On a different level, the introduction of general conscription in 1900 can be read as proof of the influence of German military thought, imported by the Chilean army via German military manuals, officers, and textbooks. Chile's military elite received this knowledge and these ideas with great enthusiasm and also celebrated the introduction of general conscription as proof of the progress of their country's army and its increased importance for the nation. In 1910, Officer Indalicio Téllez very tellingly pointed out that general conscription was introduced at the right moment because it provided the German military instructors residing in his country with real conscripts and prevented them from having to work with "old and tricky front-line soldiers," apparently unwanted relics of the past (Téllez 2005, 27).

Nevertheless, the Chilean reception of concepts such as general conscription was guided by national preferences and established interests. Universal military service had been developed and transformed transnationally, the Chilean version showcased education, including health measures, as one of its main goals. It also seemed to solve one of the nation's most pressing social security problems by providing the armed forces with a reliable method of recruitment.

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## 7. Conclusion

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In 1910, ten years after the publication of national law 1362, general conscription was celebrated by military circles as a great success. The nature of this success was aptly summarized by Officer Téllez who would write that, as an army doctor once had said, soldiers would be taught at the barracks how to be useful for the fatherland (Téllez 2005, 29). They would also learn to take care of themselves and, as an old Chilean woman remarked, they would come home with the habit of washing themselves “so often that it [was] almost a vice, and even wear underpants” (ibid.). Clearly, personal hygiene and the use of underwear were meant to represent civilized and even cultured modes of behavior, which the *clases populares* would either learn during military service, or never learn at all.

Those who had been considered *tonto* (i.e., stupid), and useless before their conscription would be smart and would understand what orders and duties meant after successfully completing their military service (ibid., 30). Thus, the army would mold young men into trustworthy and complying citizens that the Chilean state could not only rely on, but also be proud of.

It is remarkable that Téllez neither wrote a single word about the benefits to national security, nor admitted to the many difficulties the army had in securing conscripts. Once again, young and rich Chileans successfully evaded military service, as did many of the very poor.<sup>10</sup> The praise of general conscription was focused on the advancement it represented in the fields of knowledge and health because, like any other army in the world, the Chilean forces depended on men who were healthy and had a minimum level of education to win the wars of the future. For most of the 19th century however, the army had been unable to guarantee either. Both health and knowledge could only be secured through the intervention of the Chilean state which, for a very long time, lacked the necessary funds and structures to answer the needs and demands of the Chilean army and Chilean society. These concerns were voiced by the military itself but also by the physicians it hired.

Young and ambitious graduates from Chilean medical school, these doctors would continue to advocate for certain social policy measures in the field of health whose importance they had witnessed during their time in the army. Those who moved on to become members of the Chilean congress proved to be more influential than the military leaders themselves. This points to the importance of civilian actors for the implementation of social policy measures from which the Chilean military would eventually benefit. These doctors, many

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<sup>10</sup> See the letter of the Chief of the General Staff to the War Department, dated July 7th, 1901, in: Archivo del Ministerio de Guerra, Archivo Siglo XX. Correspondencia del Estado Mayor General, segundo semestre 1901, vol. 2973.

of whom joined congress or became directors of important national institutions, provided the army with a powerful voice and presence in Chilean national politics and society at a time when its influence was still limited. It grew when the army managed to present itself as an important actor in the social policy fields of health and education.

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