

John Cerullo, *Minotaur: French Military Justice and the Aernoult-Rousset Affair*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. Pp. 298. \$40.00 (ISBN 978-0-875-80433-0).
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In early twentieth-century France, antimilitarists challenged the jurisdictional encroachment of military courts into civilian society. Spearheaded by the Committee for Social Defense and the newspaper *La Guerre Sociale* of Gustave Hervé, antimilitarists protested a perceived increase in the severity of punishment of conscripts found guilty of insubordination against officers, especially within the *Bat d'Af*, France's North African army battalions. Antimilitarist groups proposed solutions to address military justice's over-reach, including: the elimination of a standing army advocated by the extreme Left, limiting military jurisdiction, democratizing military justice through reform, and extending the reach of the civilian High Court of Appeals (*Cour de Cassation*) to hear challenges to military verdicts. The debate about military jurisdiction and military juridical methods broke out in a context of growing working-class opposition to the French government's suppression and arrest of strikers and their conscription in 1910 into the military.

Albert Aernoult and Émile Rousset, two initially insignificant French working-class civilians, entangled themselves in this web of intersecting military, political, and economic power. John Cerullo's *Minotaur* uncovers the crimes and punishments of these two men caught in the conflict between French militarists' defense of military discipline and the inviolable insularity of military courts and antimilitarists' charge of the militarization of civilian justice. *Minotaur* chronicles key episodes and aspects of the extension of French military jurisdiction from the French Legislative Body's adoption of the *Code de Justice Militaire* (CJM) on June 9, 1857 during the Second Empire, through the Dreyfus Affair, to the resolution of the Aernoult-Rousset Affair in 1912. The CJM sparked civilian opposition on two main points. Cerullo emphasizes that the CJM had always maintained jurisdiction over civil offenses committed by soldiers while in service. The 1857 revision however, extended *rationae personae* whether a soldier was acting in service or out of it (40). What was worse from opponents' perspective, was the innovation that now required civilians claiming mistreatment at the hands of military personnel to bring suit in military tribunals rather than in civilian courts (54). George Lhermitte, one of the original critics of the 1857 CJM, further charged that as the military extended its reach over the soldier-citizen, it toughened punishments against enlisted men and protected officers from charges of abuse of power. The Aernoult-Rousset Affair, which only began to unravel nearly 50 years after the adoption of the CJM, made visible to a broad public all the abuses of the CJM revisions portended by Lhermitte.

The story of Aernoult and Rousset may interest current legal observers, particularly of current United States military justice, for several reasons. Career military personnel would have found both Aernoult and Rousset rather undesirable candidates for soldiering. They were conscripted in the French army to remove them as threats to French civilian society. Albert Aernoult had been a labor activist. Rousset was a petty criminal. In 1905 Aernoult participated in the attack of a scab laborer, working against a Paris Metro construction workers' strike. He fled Paris to avoid arrest and took a job as a miner in Courrières. On March 10, 1906, Aernoult was at the mine when an explosion killed 1300 miners, provoking a strike. Without a job, Aernoult returned to Paris and turned himself in to authorities in the hopes of serving time, clearing his name, and returning to work. He was sentenced to a 2 year imprisonment. Visited by an army recruiter, Aernoult received promises of rehabilitating his reputation and accelerating his departure from prison if he enrolled in the grueling Battalion of Africa, stationed in Algeria at Beni-Ounif. Engaging in insubordination, Aernoult soon received punishment detail. He went into Birbi, a military prison for disciplinary infractions. In Birbi at Djennan-ed-Dar Aernoult fell ill while digging roads. His superiors accused him of faking. They ordered him to solitary confinement, and hanged him by his arms from the ceiling. Aernoult was beaten and died. A fellow inmate, Émile Rousset, claimed to have witnessed Aernoult's death at the hands of officers. Escaping from Djennan-ed-Dar to Beni-Ounif, Rousset mailed his brother and the Paris daily, *Le Matin*, a letter. The letter accused French military officers of killing Aernoult. The complicated "Aernoult-Rousset Affair" soon broke to France's public.

Rousset's accusations provided fresh fodder for antimilitarists, who opened parliamentary debate on French military jurisdiction. Cerullo deftly details the ensuing military trials and legislative initiatives that revealed the problems of military juridical procedures as well as the weakness of antimilitarists to legislate reform. Perhaps most importantly, we learn how, located in the peripheries of the French Empire, well beyond the accountability of the institutions of oversight, the impulses of abuse went ultimately unchecked by military jurisdiction or political reform. Cerullo shows that Birbi birthed its only possible offspring, more crime and punishment.

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