Chapter 1

Demobilization and Remobilization in the Shadow of Victory and Defeat

In early 1918, twenty-five-year-old Franz Lechner, from the village of Obertrum in the province of Salzburg, was serving on the South-West Front as a blacksmith in the 41st Field-Cannon regiment of the Austro-Hungarian army on the upland plain of Folgaria (Trentino). After rumours had been circulating for days, he noted in his diary entry for 15 February: 'At last there's peace after all with the Russians, may the general peace follow too'.[1] Although Lechner's information was somewhat confused (at this stage, the Central Powers had only signed a peace treaty with Ukraine), his simple desire for an end to hostilities was one frequently expressed by combatants and civilians alike throughout WWI. Indeed, given that historians have substantially revised earlier notions of 'war enthusiasm' sweeping the whole population in August 1914, it is fair to say that there were many who wished the war to end just as soon as it had begun.[2]

Yet, despite the hopes fostered by various peace proposals and repeated propaganda announcements from all sides about a 'decisive breakthrough', it was only from late 1917 onwards that the deadlock really began to be loosened.[3] There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, the second revolution to occur in Russia in 1917, in the month of October, began a process that led to Russia's withdrawal from the war, once the Bolsheviks had seized power.[4] Secondly, the combined offensive of the Austro-Hungarian and German armed forces in the twelfth Battle of the Isonzo in late October 1917 resulted in a clear breakthrough, which – for a while – threatened to bring about Italy's collapse and potential withdrawal from the war, too.[5]

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The repercussions of these events were manifold and, especially in the case of the communist takeover in Russia, of global importance. Of immediate significance for our analysis are two consequences, connected to the different outcomes of these events, but with both unleashing a new dynamic within the war as a whole. In the first place, the end of hostilities on the Eastern Front, confirmed by the Treaty of Brest Litovsk on 3 March 1918, opened up the possibility for hundreds of thousands of POWs to return home. In the period up until November 1918, 670,508 captive members of the Austro-Hungarian army did so. Only 185,680 of these passed through the official repatriation channels, while the rest made their own way back.[6] Secondly, the eventual failure of the Central Powers to follow through on the initial victory at Caporetto / Kobarid and to deal a knock-out blow to Italy led to instability and a weakening of Austria-Hungary's war effort. Among many soldiers, the desire to return home grew ever stronger. Although the defensive line on the South-West Front continued to hold until early November 1918, cases of desertion – including failure to return from leave – became increasingly numerous.[7]

In this sense, we can speak of the late autumn of 1917 as the start of a complex process of repatriation and homecoming that would last until around 1922 (though some POWs from Russia would return home later still). Yet, interwoven with this process was a second thread, characterized by remobilization as well as demobilization. Once soldiers were back in Austria-Hungary and had undergone a vetting process (intended to weed out sympathizers with Bolshevism), considerable numbers were reassigned to service on the frontline.[8] At the same time, many Czech and Slovak POWs transferred from captivity to the Czechoslovak legions, some in the name of national independence, others simply as a way of fighting their way home through the turmoil of the Russian Civil War between 1917 and 1921. With similar motivations, a number of Czech and Slovak soldiers on the South-West Front deserted to fight with Italy and other Allied Powers against the Habsburg regime.[9] With the armistice there coming into effect on 4 November 1918, the great surge of demobilization in the Austro-Hungarian ranks began. However, while the majority left service in the military for good, large numbers were drafted into the armies of the new states or enlisted voluntarily in home defence militias, in order to maintain internal order and secure the borders of disputed provinces, such as in the south of Austria or in the east and north of newly established Czechoslovakia.

This chapter analyses these two related processes and considers what the return meant for ordinary soldiers coming back to Austria and Czechoslovakia. To place these developments in context, we begin with a brief summary of the events surrounding the breakup of the Habsburg Monarchy and the formation of the Austrian and Czechoslovak Republics. We then look in turn at the two cases, in view of the intricacies specific to each country in this decisive period of state formation. Beginning with Austria, for both countries we explore the themes of

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disorder and political conflict, state authority and legitimacy, and the issue of how border conflicts shaped the emerging landscape of veterans movements at the local level.

The End of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Foundation of the New Republics

In June 1918, the Habsburg army's High Command drew up plans for a renewed attack against Italy, in a desperate attempt to change the course of a conflict that had turned firmly against the Central Powers following the failure of the German army's spring offensive on the Western Front. The resulting Battle of the Piave began on 15 June, but soon ran into the ground against well-embedded Italian positions, bolstered by French, British and American troops. Already on 20 June, Emperor Karl approved the retreat and the battle was lost, at the cost of over 11,000 dead, 25,000 missing and more than 80,000 wounded.[10] Utterly exhausted, the army was a spent force from this point on, although it mounted a rearguard action to hold the line.

As the military situation deteriorated and sections of the army began to peel away from the late summer of 1918 onwards, the government in Vienna struggled to maintain control of the situation.[11] Since its recall in May 1917, pressure in the Austrian parliament for constitutional reform had intensified. Yet, many national politicians, while calling for change, began playing a double game, speculating on more radical change and making plans for the eventuality that the Emperor's days as ruler were numbered. In short, there was still some residual willingness to stay as part of a reorganized federal state under Habsburg rule, but the prerequisite was a clear plan from the government. On 14 September, Emperor Karl sent a note to the Allies, seeking peace, only to receive the answer that they would not engage with the offer before Germany capitulated.[12] This showed how much Allied policy had hardened since the Sixtus affair in the spring of 1918 and the renewed offensives by the Central Powers. Whereas the Fourteen Points by US President Woodrow Wilson in January 1918 had been carefully worded to retain the possibility of reforming Austria-Hungary, there was no longer any hiding the fact that the Allies were now willing to allow its break-up.

With the imperial elite dithering over the question of federal reform, national politicians in the various Habsburg-ruled territories took matters into their own hands. Over the course of October 1918, a series of national proclamations came, beginning with the South Slav national council in Zagreb on 6 October and the provisional council of state in Warsaw (declaring the restoration of Polish independence) on 7 October.[13] A provisional national assembly for 'German-Austria' (*Deutsch-Österreich*) constituted itself in Vienna on 21 October, and a Hungarian national council, four days later, in Budapest. On 28 October, the

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equivalent body in Prague proclaimed the Czechoslovak state; two days later, the state of 'German-Austria' was likewise declared. All these developments rendered Emperor Karl's manifesto to his peoples on 16 October redundant, with few paying attention to the vaguely formulated promise of reform. After the Austro-Hungarian army's final defeat at Vittorio Veneto on 24 October, the armistice of 3 November, effective from the day after, sealed the fate of the monarchy. In the face of this rapid sequence of events, Emperor Karl renounced his involvement in the affairs of state (without formally abdicating).

While the Czechs and Slovaks had already made their rejection of Habsburg rule clear, this move paved the way for the Social Democrat Karl Renner, acting in the name of the provisional national assembly, to declare formally the foundation of the Republic of 'German-Austria' on 12 November 1918. In a sign that many ordinary citizens greeted this declaration as a form of political victory after the years of fighting and deprivation in the war, Hubert Traxler, a metal worker from Lower Austria, but at the time still near the Italian front, recorded the same day in his diary: 'At half-past nine: thank God! End of the war. Proclamation of the German-Austrian Republic! Three cheers for the German-Austrian Republic! Down with the murderous Habsburg state Austria-Hungary!'[14] Or, as the later Social Democrat politician, Theodor Körner, then serving as a colonel in the General Staff, put it: 'Without weapons, without priests, youth will make a future for itself'.[15]

In the case of Austria, the key developments in the consolidation of the republic occurred at the start of 1919.[16] Building on the work of the provisional national assembly, which in November 1918 had voted in favour of the vote for all adult citizens, female and male, elections were held for a constituent assembly in mid-February 1919. The Social Democrats won 72 seats, just ahead of the Christian Socials with 69, while various German-National parties gained 26. Until 1920, the two largest parties worked together in a grand coalition to consolidate the new state. Particularly important was the pioneering social legislation introduced by the conservative Josef Resch and his social democratic counterpart Ferdinand Hanusch, covering areas such as collective bargaining, the eight-hour working day, paid holidays and the first measures for employment of war invalids. On the initiative of the Social Democrats, the new parliament passed the so-called Habsburg law on 3 April 1919, which prohibited the former ruling house from returning to Austria and expropriated its property.

Considerable social and political instability marked this early period of the republic, as well as desperate economic hardship. Starvation was a widespread problem in the cities, above all Vienna. While the social revolutionary momentum ebbed considerably after August, the national question dominated the second half of 1919, as the population awaited the outcome of the Paris peace conferences. The resultant Treaty of Saint-Germain of 20 September 1919 had immediate repercussions for the young republic, where there was strong senti-

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ment in favour of some form of closer union with Germany, particularly in the western provinces. However, the treaty forbade any union with Germany, as well as use of the name 'German-Austria', meaning that the state was now known as the Republic of Austria (see map 0.2). Furthermore, the document ended aspirations about acquiring German-speaking areas in Bohemia and Moravia and confirmed the loss of German-speaking South Tyrol to Italy and South Styria (predominantly Slovene-speaking, but with some German-majority towns) to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The situation elsewhere remained open, with plebiscites eventually deciding the situation in Carinthia and what became Burgenland (see further below).[17]

With the latter question settled in 1921, the Austrian Republic assumed the territorial shape it would retain until 1938. In the meantime, its constitutional framework had also been confirmed. Although the coalition between the Social Democrats and Christian Socials ended in July 1920 due to a dispute about the role of shop stewards in the new army, Social Democrats continued in the proportional government presided over by Christian Social Chancellor Michael Mayr until new elections in mid-October. This meant that parliament could complete its work of approving the new constitution, promulgated on 1 October. A progressive document, it established Austria as a federal state, initially with eight provinces (with the accession of Burgenland already anticipated). Of particular political significance was the fact that Vienna then became a ninth province, separate from Lower Austria, in 1922. Although the Christian Socials won the 1920 elections and thenceforth built coalitions with independent deputies and the various German-National parties, Vienna was able to follow its own policies with regard to schools, housing and so on, until 1933/34. In short, parliamentary democracy and the constitutional system established in 1920 survived until Dollfuß' 'Austro-Fascist' government prorogued parliament in 1933 and published a new constitution in 1934 (see Chapter 4).

In Czechoslovakia, the early phase of post-war state building unfolded in many respects in similar fashion.[18] The official proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918 was quickly followed by the establishment of a provisional constitutional assembly on 14 November 1918. Political parties nominated members for the assembly in proportion to the results of the last elections held for the imperial Austrian parliament, back in 1911. Special seats were added for representatives of the Slovaks, but other nationalities within the emerging state were not explicitly invited to the assembly and they thus decided to boycott the new body. At its very first sitting, the assembly elected Tomáš G. Masaryk, who was at that point still in exile, as the first Czechoslovak president. The assembly quickly passed a number of basic laws, such as the law on the eight-hour working day and a ban on the use of aristocratic titles. The main result of its work, however, was the Czechoslovak constitution of 29 February 1920, which defined the state throughout the interwar period.

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The first elections were held on the basis of equal suffrage for all men and women in April 1920 and resulted in a significant victory for Czechoslovak Social Democracy, which gained a quarter of the votes cast and 74 seats out of a total of 281. The social democratic dominance was further underscored by the gains of the German Social Democratic Party, which received another 31 seats. In addition, the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party received 28 seats, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party 24, the conservative Czechoslovak People's Party 21, and the right-wing National Democratic Party 19. The remaining seats were distributed among a large number of small parties, representing the German-speaking political spectrum, the Slovak nationalist people's party, as well as a handful of Hungarian-speaking political groups.

In political terms, the electoral outcome of 1920 confirmed the strong position of the provisional left-right coalition between Czechoslovak Social Democracy and other Socialists on the one side and the Agrarian Party on the other. This coalition, which was headed by Social Democrat Vlastimil Tusar, had already governed the country on a provisional basis since 1918, but the April 1920 elections enabled the Social Democrats to gain even more influence. As in Austria, however, this early governmental continuity did not prevent significant instability from characterizing the initial phase of Czechoslovak statehood. Due to the ongoing provisioning crisis, the government had to maintain the wartime rationing system until July 1921.[19] The social revolutionary momentum accompanying these economic difficulties climaxed in December 1920, when the radical left wing of the Czech-speaking Social Democrats proclaimed a general strike, resulting in armed intervention by the police and army. The long-term consequence of suppressing this attempt at revolution was the foundation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, as left-wing radicals broke away from the socialists. The split subsequently shattered the dominant position of Czechoslovak Social Democracy, which was never able to win another election. In its place, the Agrarian Party became the leading political force throughout the interwar period.

At the same time, the 1920 election results demonstrated the multi-party pluralism within the new republic, as well as the social and ethnic diversity of the electorate. While Austria, too, contained national minorities (principally, Slovenes in Carinthia, Croats in Burgenland, and Czechs in Vienna and Lower Austria), the population – totalling 6,534,742 in 1923 – was overwhelmingly German-speaking.[20] In Czechoslovakia, by contrast, the multinational inheritance of Austria-Hungary was far more visible, with the population of 13,874,364, according to the 1921 census, comprising 6,818,995 Czechs, 3,123,568 Germans, 1,941,942 Slovaks, 745,431 Hungarians, 461,489 Ruthenes (Ukrainians) and 75,853 Poles.[21] Undoubtedly, the ethnic diversity of the new state constituted another source of early tensions. The German-speaking regions initially proclaimed their allegiance to 'German-Austria' and their full

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incorporation into Czechoslovakia lasted well into 1919, helped in part by the clear stipulations in the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Czechoslovak officials and the army needed even longer to extend state control over the territories of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus. Here, Czechoslovak territorial claims were contested not only by the Hungarian-speaking minority, but above all by the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which waged a regular war with the Czechoslovak army in the first half of 1919.

With the gradual dismantling of provisioning constraints and the new state's territorial stabilization from 1921 onwards, Czechoslovak society experienced its own version of the 'Roaring Twenties' amid a significant economic upswing and relative political stability. The participation of the German Agrarian and Christian Social parties in the conservative government headed by Czechoslovak Agrarian Party leader Antonín Švehla between 1926 and 1929 (his third term as Minister-President), constituted the most visible sign of the successful inclusion of a significant part of German-speakers within the state. However, this cohabitation experienced significant fissures in the wake of the Great Depression from 1929 onwards. For a number of reasons, Czechoslovakia was hit more severely and for a longer period than many of its neighbours and the growing economic hardships of the 1930s put significant pressure on the democratic nature of the state, as well as on the hitherto functioning ethnic cohabitation. The resulting drift of sections of the German population towards the rising National Socialist movement, combined with growing discontent on the Slovak side about the uneven relationship between Czechoslovakia's two 'core nationalities', began to unsettle the stability of the state. Both these trends were to play a central role in the final crisis of 1938, which led to the ultimate dismantling of the 'last democracy in Central Europe'.[22]

Austria: Demobilization, Political Instability and Regional Security

Although the Austro-Hungarian army had already begun drawing up plans for an orderly demobilization in 1915, they remained a work in progress. The plans were revised in 1917, this time containing a clear conception of a new military system for the period after the end of the war. Austria-Hungary's last War Minister, Rudolf Stöger-Steiner, expressed concern about potential problems: an over-burdening of the army's transport capacity to move all the troops and material, the danger of epidemic disease, and notably, a sudden wave of mass unemployment. With the revision of their plans still incomplete, these were precisely the challenges that army institutions had to confront in 1918.[23]

Having mobilized nine million men over the course of the war, by October 1918 the Austro-Hungarian army disposed over 2,560,000 soldiers and civilian

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auxiliaries in the field. Emperor Karl ordered demobilization on 6 November 1918, one day before the 'German-Austrian' provisional national assembly issued a communiqué to the same effect.[24] At war's end, however, inadequate military structures hindered orderly implementation of the plans, along with the fact that several institutions were involved, whose areas of competence overlapped (the former War Ministry undergoing a process of liquidation, and the two new State Offices for Military Affairs and Material Demobilization). Hence, the process of demobilization presented an enormous challenge to the fledgling 'Republic of German-Austria' because of political instability and economic uncertainty, the need to achieve order and security internally, and the role regional border conflicts played in delaying mobilization.

From early on in the war, the hinterland suffered from economic deprivation and hunger. By 1918 at the latest, there was unrest in the army, including mutinies among Czech and South Slav regiments after the proclamation of the Czechoslovak state and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.[25] After the armistice, the landscape behind the old front was soon filled with blocked roads and seemingly endless lines of retreating soldiers. Rapidly improvised temporary supply posts along the routes back home were barely able to cope and only alleviated the soldiers' situation to a limited extent (see figure 1.1. for an example of returning soldiers on the journey home). As General Siegmund Knaus reported on the retreat from the South-West Front:

> It was a shocking homecoming on the part of the dispersed army. In the Etsch valley, for example, there writhed a long, thickly matted mass of people, horse-drawn carts and motor vehicles . . . of the 10th and 11th Armies, heading north. The troops, released prisoners-of-war or local inhabitants plundered supply depots for food and clothing and even frequently set them on fire. Plentiful consumption of rum and wine set the mood, rifle shots cracked and hand-grenades exploded almost without interruption. People hung like limpets from fully crowded train carriages. They sat on the roofs, running-boards and buffers, just to get out of the war-zone and reach home as quickly as possible.[26]

Yet, Knaus' view was very much that of a dismayed commanding officer facing final defeat. Ordinary soldiers took a different view, defined by exhaustion and relief. Anton Hanausek, who grew up in impoverished circumstances in Vienna, later recalled a similar scene from within:

> It took hours, before the train left. Meanwhile, the carriages were so full, . . . that everyone could stand, but not move a single step. We realized, from the racket above our heads, that the carriage roofs were already fully occupied, too. . . . At last, at last, the train began to move. The consciousness, that the war is over, we're going back towards home, made the men crazy with joy. Songs in all the languages of the monarchy rang out, schnaps and wine bottles were emptied, and those who had a weapon with them shot in jubilation out the window, without any thought of the consequences.[27]

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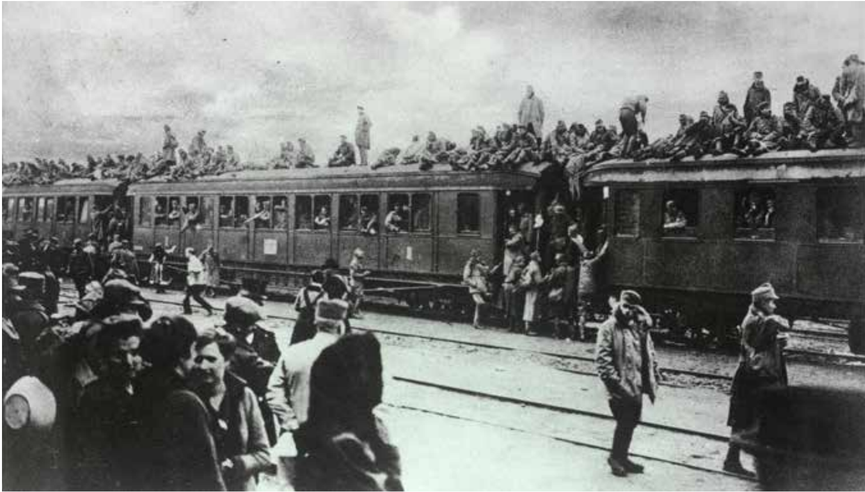

Figure 1.1. The journey home: demobilized Austro-Hungarian soldiers in trains at Marchegg station, Lower Austria. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv, No. 00043005, reproduced from *Wiener Bilder*, Vol. 23, No. 47, 24.11.1918, 11.

Among the civilian population in areas further away from the front who experienced this passing through of homecoming troops, there were mixed feelings. One local paper in the Upper Styrian Mur valley sketched a vivid picture of the situation in the town of Judenburg in November 1918:

> Since the start of the month the town has taken on a changed appearance . . . Only now that the war is as good as over, do we really notice it and see the troops coming back from the front. One automobile after another whizzes through, the odd one stopping. Convoys enter and populate the main square . . . At the railway station, the scenes are even more agitated. The trains are overflowing with soldiers, who are lying on the running boards, buffers and wagon-roofs.[28]

On the Carnic stretch of the front, the Carinthian Defence Committee warned at the start of November 1918 about possible 'acts of violence by exhausted people', if the troop withdrawal and transportation of goods and hardware did not occur in orderly fashion.[29]

Part of this demobilization process were confrontations between troop contingents of different nationalities, who in the meantime had become citizens of different states. At railway junctions and larger stations, violent skirmishes or incidents frequently occurred, and the Austrian administration often associated these with returning Czechoslovak soldiers (perhaps not solely, but certainly in part, reflecting the animosity of Austrian German officers and civil servants). For example, Wörgl, in the eastern Inn valley in Tyrol, was one such hub for soldiers passing through on their way back from the front. At the start of November

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1918, trains filled with Hungarian and Czech troops were stuck in the station due to a temporary lack of locomotives, and wide-scale looting and plundering followed.[30] A month later, another incident occurred, when Austrian soldiers on duty at the station intervened against a train containing Czechoslovak soldiers. Contrary to all instructions, they disarmed a number of officers travelling separately from their units and distributed the soldiers' equipment and belongings among the Austrian troops.[31] In the Styrian capital of Graz, Slovak and Polish soldiers got caught up in a similar incident at the town's freight station, when officials inspected a train carrying returnees.[32]

In the light of such episodes, the authorities tried to separate national groups, where possible. Colonel Viktor Lorx reported on the embarking of returning units from the 6th Army, citing the positive effects of separating out nationalities at the border station Tarvis / Tarvisio: 'South Slavs go through Carniola; Hungarians, who refuse to enter South Slav territory, are sent up the line via Klagenfurt, Germans and Czechs via St. Veit, and a few troop formations via the Tauern railway'. He nevertheless considered such practices uneconomical.[33] Lorx's report demonstrated the concerns among the higher echelons of the military, who reckoned with a further overloading of the system the following year. At the end of March 1919, Colonel Oswald Eccher von Ecco, military commander in Tyrol, echoed War Minister Stöger-Steiner's concerns regarding food supplies and the labour market in view of the thousands of soldiers returning from POW camps in Italy.[34]

From late 1917 onwards, the return of former POWs was already attracting much public attention in Austria, but the migratory flood at the end of 1918 was of an entirely different dimension. Ultimately, the great heterogeneity of the mass of ex-soldiers determined the social and political course of demobilization. While regional politicians and significant parts of the population protested against the territorial claims on various provinces (principally, Tyrol, Carinthia and Styria), ex-soldiers banded together in order to demand recognition of their rights, a secure livelihood and a certificate confirming their wartime service (*Kriegsdienst-Legitimation*). Other homecomers simply switched uniforms, joining a militia or registering for the newly formed republican army (*Volkswehr*). Men such as these thus maintained their military habitus and secured their means of existence or embarked fully on a soldierly career.

In dealing with this situation, the federal provinces all aimed to provide sufficient supplies and to exercise military control over the process. Military instructions pertained primarily to former POWs, who were supposed to pass through homecomer reception and holding stations specially set up for them.[35] The stay in these camps and the attendant 'quarantining' was 'ordered purely out of fear of Bolshevism', as one ex-soldier's letter stated in the social democratic workers' newspaper at the end of December 1919.[36] In addition to negative experiences of this kind, state provision for homecomers generally left much to be desired.

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Once they arrived in the hinterland, for example, welfare committees run by the provincial authorities had the job of helping the demobilized soldiers through so-called 'Homecomer Clothing Campaigns'. Yet, this by no means reached everyone in need and only offered temporary support.[37]

Regarding the pressing issue of accommodation shortage, the provincial authorities made recourse to the substantial infrastructure of camps that had been erected during the war to house enemy POWs and domestic refugees from the war zones (indeed, this usage had already been factored into wartime planning).[38] Nevertheless, the enormous numbers placed a heavy burden on provincial budgets, including the specially allocated homecomer funds. Tensions thus arose, as provinces sought to avoid taking on additional obligations. For example, in 1919 the provincial government in Salzburg flatly rejected a request from the Aid Committee for Austrian soldiers returning from Italy, based in Villach in Carinthia. In doing so, it argued that Salzburg itself was a transit land for masses of returning soldiers and was severely stretched by the rapidly exploding costs, yet it did not receive subsidies from any other part of 'German-Austria' for its activities.[39] In a sign of the lack of trust, the authorities in Salzburg looked to associations outside the country for reliable information, as an exchange of correspondence with the German-Austrian People's Union in Munich showed.[40]

Looking back on this period fifteen years later, retired Colonel-General Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein, an officer during WWI and later the holder of important political posts under the Dollfuß and Schuschnigg regimes, wrote a contribution in May 1929 for a veterans periodical, *Der Kamerad*, the organ of the Styrian Provincial Comradeship Union (*Steiermärkisch-Landes-Kameradschaftsbund*). Schönburg-Hartenstein reflected on the establishment and significance of the veterans union and penned a description of the situation in 1918:

> After the end of the World War a period of the greatest pessimism engulfed those who had given their all for the fatherland during four-and-a-half years, those millions of nameless heroes who returned home from the Great War and were suddenly confronted not just with political upheaval at home, but the downfall of all their assumptions and sentiments . . . After the war, they became jobless and were without means. For years, all these good men had restrained themselves, but found themselves neglected, and they could not understand the new era or the people around them. With the greatest effort and in the face of severe hardship, they had to find new jobs, but ones that did not correspond to their old ideals.[41]

In practice, however, these lines spoke primarily to ex-officers, for whom the altered circumstances and ideological change of direction after 1918 were hardest to absorb.[42] In 1914, around three-quarters of active army officers were classified as German-speaking or 'German-Austrians' according to military statisticians, although American historian István Deák suggests that this figure should be

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revised downwards.[43] This left open the question of what options were available for these men, including the numerous reserve officers, given that the Treaty of Saint-Germain expressly forbade a militia army. Instead, it only allowed for a professional army, with a maximum contingent of 1,500 officers. While part of this social group voluntarily left service, out of 16,000 former Austro-Hungarian army officers initially registered in 'German-Austria', there remained between 8,000 and 10,000 who wished to remain in post.[44] Tensions increased regarding the issue of personnel within the new army because considerable numbers of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) rose up the ranks with the support of the Social Democrats.[45]

By way of contrast, many former rank-and-file soldiers had little time for the professional concerns implicitly voiced by Schönburg-Hartenstein. The fraught socio-economic circumstances and the fact that the vast majority of homecoming soldiers were in a much more desperate economic situation immediately after the war only served to strengthen the resentment against the officer class that had been evident in the war.[46] Alois Rezac, a junior officer from a military family, recalled how, as the dissolution of the army began, a soldier threatened to lay waste to him, as he led his company on the march home. His men vouched for his decency and dispersed the threat, but he noted, 'many soldiers had shot their officers'.[47]

The recollections of Josef Püchler, a metal worker resident in Wiener Neustadt in Lower Austria, describe how these tensions were reflected in a local context. Püchler served at the front and played a key role in maintaining order as the war ended; later on, he helped develop the social democratic Republican Defence Union (*Republikanischer Schutzbund*) in the town. Particular concerns in Wiener Neustadt were the presence of large numbers of Italian soldiers in a POW camp and the possibility of Bolshevik agitation in the town's metal-working industries. Püchler took responsibility for setting up a self-defence militia. Although there was a large 'movement for peace' at the turn of October 1918, few volunteers were forthcoming. Eventually, Püchler managed to gather around thirty workers, who successfully demanded arms from the local garrison, arguing that these were necessary for them to maintain order.[48] This proved symptomatic of the incomplete nature of disarmament and material demobilization amid the prevailing political uncertainty and the situation at the borders. Many weapons found their way to defence militias or paramilitary groups, who established informal arsenals of arms and ammunition, which the state authorities had difficulty in discovering and confiscating, despite a clear awareness of the problem.[49]

At the behest of the local army commander, Püchler sought to 'quieten all those soldiers enraged by the events of the war, who wanted to avenge themselves against their superiors'.[50] Püchler thus exercised executive power in the name of the yet to be declared republic and sought to counter the agitation of communist speakers, such as Elfriede Friedländer, at public gatherings where

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the participants were 'mainly angry, hungry people, many homecomers among them, who had no prospect before them'.[51] Püchler countered Friedländer's arguments by pointing to the already extant takeover of power by the social democratic workers' movement and by making disparaging remarks about her well-manicured finger-nails, jewellery and 'well-fed' appearance. The workers' militia did not disband over the next few months and eventually transformed into a *Schutzbund* unit, thereby seeking to maintain order. In short, while the army was dismantled as an institution, Püchler and other former soldiers now asserted their own authority and maintained a state of armed readiness to keep an insurrectionary drive against representatives of the old order in check. Elsewhere, by contrast, popular violence and looting occurred at Groß Gerungs in Lower Austria, when local gendarmes were outnumbered after coming under attack from a group of war returnees seeking revenge for their actions in wartime, especially during requisitions.[52]

At the wider level, until the formation of the new federal army (initially, the Austrian *Wehrmacht*, and from 1922 the *Bundesheer*), there existed a popular defence force, known as the *Volkswehr*.[53] A provisional institution, it functioned as a kind of reception camp for returning soldiers at the federal level, in effect becoming an 'administrative instrument of demobilization'.[54] A law of 6 February 1919 on the 'Provisional Stipulations for the Armed Forces' created the basis for this new system. Politicians had been considering the latter's establishment since October 1918, with the Social Democrats putting concrete plans on the table. In order to reinforce the break with the old army, the main building block of the new arrangement was soldiers on short-term service paid for a limited period. A comparatively generous wage of six crowns per day sought to guarantee rapid and effective recruitment, given that those responsible doubted its success amidst widespread war-weariness.

Through the substantial influence of the Social Democrat Under-Secretary in the State Office for Military Affairs, Julius Deutsch, who had served in the war as a reserve officer in the artillery, the *Volkswehr* emerged in parallel to other armed bodies and voluntary militias that were founded on a different (non-socialist) basis, even though the provisional national assembly had expressly instructed against the formation of armed groups. Above all, these comprised the numerous home defence militias (*Heimwehr*) that arose in the immediate aftermath of defeat (around fifty in number, though some were only short-lived). As Florian Wenninger has argued, these groups fulfilled five basic functions: the protection of peasant and other landed property; defence of the socio-economic interests of status groups especially affected by the collapse of the monarchy (civil servants and intellectuals, small businesses); armed defence of borders threatened by neighbouring states; the establishment of contacts to radical right movements in other countries; and the attempt to set up an 'internal front' against social democratic predominance in state institutions and the army.[55] Given that the

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latter purpose was in many respects these militias' most important function, the *Volkswehr* arose in direct competition with those former members of the imperial army who were struggling to come to terms with its demise and their accompanying loss of purpose and status.[56] In practice, however, it was not possible to do completely without returning members of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian army. Leadership structures in the new institution showed evident borrowings from the former system, while Lieutenant-Fieldmarshal Adolf von Boog was named Commander-in-Chief of the new force, bringing with him years of experience as a General Staff officer.[57] This somewhat contradicted Deutsch's attempt at disempowering the old officer corps in line with the Austrian revolution's goal of 'destroying the old militarism'.[58]

In the circumstances of early 1919, the substantial influence of Social Democracy and soldiers' councils (formed in November the previous year) meant that the *Volkswehr* possessed 'less the characteristics of a firmly led army than an internal political institution'.[59] It maintained security and order against political subversion and served to ensure domestic stability by acting as an important reservoir for the unemployed and penniless homecomers. As leading Social Democrat Otto Bauer reflected in September 1919, 'people said that in this way we had created a party force. I don't wish to deny that at all'.[60] At the same time, by allowing the incorporation of the Red Guard formed by Egon Kisch, Leo Rothziegel and others as a troop formation within the *Volkswehr*, the Social Democrats sought to lessen its revolutionary potential.[61]

The *Volkswehr* units initially established on the territory of 'German-Austria' differed substantially in terms of their composition, with some possessing adequate personnel, but in other districts being barely extant due to lack of soldiers as well as recruitment difficulties.[62] Accordingly, the numerical strength of this army fluctuated greatly. At the start of December 1918, for example, the infantry units comprised approximately 46,000 men, but by July 1919 only 27,600. Part of the reason for this was that around 200,000 members of the Habsburg army changed their employment status, either through retirement, a change of job, entry into the new army, or – in numerous cases – becoming unemployed. Of the around 16,400 officers and military officials who avowed themselves to 'German-Austria' in November 1918, roughly half came into consideration for the new army, after a wave of retirements and dismissals in December. Around a third eventually joined the *Volkswehr*, which contributed to the political tensions surrounding it. As already indicated, this was an issue of particular importance for the Social Democrats, who sought to counter the influence of former officers through the election of shop stewards from the socialist dominated Military Association (*Militärverband*). This sharpened the simmering conflict over the army with the Christian Socials, who sought to provide a counterweight to the *Militärverband* by forming a new Defence League (*Wehrbund*) under their leadership from 1920 to 1921.[63]

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Undoubtedly, these ideological differences were influenced by the rapid spread of communism in the years 1918–19 and especially the foundation of Soviet republics in neighbouring Bavaria and Hungary. In the eyes of the regional elites and considerable portions of the population, these developments constituted a significant threat. Even if the political reach of the self-proclaimed Bavarian Soviet Republic did not extend much beyond Munich and its environs, *Volkswehr* troops in the northern areas of Tyrol and Salzburg took up positions on the border with Bavaria. Irregulars from a Half-Battalion led by Captain von Dragoni actually transferred from Carinthia to the region around Ehrwald-Reutte in Tyrol specifically for this purpose. The events in Bavaria greatly alarmed bourgeois and conservative groups in Tyrol, and the war returnee, Richard Steidle, who in the meantime had become head of the Tyrolean Defence Committee, was tasked with founding new Home Guards and coordinating the activities of existing militia groups. In the course of a debate in the Tyrolean Provincial Assembly at the end of August 1919, Steidle even described the presence of the federal government's *Volkswehr* as 'the occupation of a foreign power' (at a time when Italian Alpine regiments were formally occupying North Tyrol after the end of the war).[64] The impact of ideological polarization was also evident in Styria, albeit without the same degree of polemic adopted by Steidle. Here, *Volkswehr* units secured the border with West Hungary between April 1919 and May 1920 in view of the political activities of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.[65] Ultimately, however, the government in 'German-Austria' was not really interested in de-stabilizing the communist regime in Hungary, because it calculated that its chance of acquiring German-speaking areas of West Hungary were greater under its rule than possible alternatives.[66]

If these transnational concerns about the spread of communism led to the physical remobilization of many war veterans in Austria, the heated atmosphere in the democratic, constitutional state ensured their widespread political mobilization as well. In particular, many groups and civic associations used the already tense mood among ex-soldiers to reinforce complaints about a lack of recognition for their sacrifice and a 'disappointing' welcome home. In short, the political instrumentalization of war veterans had long since begun and German-National groupings were particularly vociferous, not to say rhetorically aggressive, in this respect. For example, the German Studentship (*Deutsche Studentenschaft*) repeatedly stepped forward whenever such matters were debated, particularly regarding returned POWs. In mid-December 1918, it accused the Styrian provincial government: 'Concerning the homecoming of our warriors, the German Studentship notes with deep regret that everything is lacking which they have earned on a daily basis over four years in outrageous circumstances, namely gratitude and an animated commemoration of their service'.[67] The Defence League for German-National War Participants struck a similar tone in December 1918 when appealing to homecomers at a meeting:

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> Soldiers! German-National participants in the war! Back home after the most loyal and sacrificial fulfilment of duty, without a greeting or welcome, we ask ourselves: Where have the thanks of the fatherland got to? . . . The German-National war participants – men and officers – will bring their common claims to bear in the election campaign for the provisional national assembly as real comrades, unified and with one accord, via the watchword of the united German-Nationals.[68]

A Social Democrat speaker at the meeting later had to leave the meeting hastily, in order to guarantee his own safety.

In practice, however, the authorities did make an effort, as a report on an appeal by the Upper Austrian Homecomers Aid Office for POWs returning from Italy demonstrated in September 1919: 'The Provincial Government published an appeal for donations of food and money for homecomers, in order to make the first days they spend back home as nice as possible . . . The return to the homeland should be organized as lovely and friendly, the initial reception should be a pleasant one and the first impression is also the one that remains'.[69] In this instance, the financial response to the appeal proved disappointing, but such was not uncommon given the dire economic circumstances and deprivation in many areas. Work by Oswald Überegger on Tyrol has shown that notions of the 'homeland's ingratitude' are too simplistic. Particularly in homecomers' villages or towns in rural areas, locals organized welcome festivals, sometimes spontaneously, as far as the often limited means allowed.[70] As Christa Hämmerle also maintains, the 'ingratitude legend' derived, above all, from former officers and constituted part of their repertoire for dealing with the political and military collapse.[71]

Where homecoming festivals of varying shapes and size initially grabbed media attention, from the start of 1919 onwards public meetings of returnees and war veterans of differing political complexion attracted growing interest. As the federal capital and seat of government, Vienna stood in the spotlight, with participants hoping to gain a better hearing from the authorities. Moreover, untold thousands of homecomers were 'processed' through Vienna, helping to create a critical mass for the ex-combatants to articulate their demands. In doing so, veterans made frequent recourse to the topos of 'community' among all members of the army, which grew in popularity as a term of political discourse. Thus, the Defence League for German-National War Participants appealed in December 1918 to 'officers and rank file' to present their demands 'all together' as 'real comrades'.[72] For a memorial service in the Saint Charles Church (*Karlskirche*) on 5 January 1919 organized by a number of ex-soldiers' lobby groups, posters appealed expressly to all 'those who had come home – men and officers alike – among whom the feelings of innermost togetherness deriving from the common days of desperate struggle are still alive'.[73]

In this respect, different categories of homecomer – war invalids and the mass of 'normal' ex-soldiers – contributed to this discourse, as well as political

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groupings.[74] At the start of January 1919, for example, one public commemoration ceremony drew representatives from a plethora of groups, including the Economic Association of non-active Professional Soldiers, the German-Austrian Soldiers' Council of the *Volkswehr*, the Central Association of German-Austrian Military Professional Soldiers, the Central Association of the War Injured, and the Viennese Central Office of the German-Austrian Soldiers' Council.[75] Similar kinds of gatherings occurred frequently in the following months as veterans sought to make themselves heard, as with the Free Union of Demobilized Soldiers and Homecomers holding a meeting in mid-April.[76] In June 1919, members of the Viennese District of the Economic Association of non-active Professional Soldiers demonstrated in front of the city hall, along with returnee university graduates, to demand financial support for participants in the war who were returning to or just starting their studies.[77] In some cases, former rank-and-file soldiers and ex-officers came together in a new show of harmony, as regimental associations formulated their own specific concerns, just as war invalids and former POWs did earlier in the year, each garnering over 2,000 participants.[78]

Although these meetings were, in most respects, about social and economic concerns, political aspects also came to the fore, as when former POWs accused the government of deliberately delaying repatriation from Russia because of fears about strengthening the Bolshevik movement in Austria.[79] On other occasions, ideological elements were more openly on display at veterans' meetings, such as at a rally by revolutionary Socialists in Vienna in January 1919. Supporters of the Socialist International were much in evidence, among them many members of Vienna's Czech community, who were a significant presence among the city's working-classes.[80] More conflictual was the involvement of members of the Red Guard, the radical wing of the *Volkswehr*, which led to disturbances at several meetings, including at a gathering of Catholic Homecomers in February 1919.[81] This also indicated how the Communist Party initially proved quite successful in gaining support from disoriented homecomers who saw no clear economic future for themselves after the end of the war. A number of associations of the unemployed, homecomers or invalids joined the party in 1918/19, mainly because the latter supported their demands for compensation and severance pay. Veterans thus helped to swell party membership between February and June 1919, which increased from 3,000 to 40,000, its peak during the First Republic. This increase was also strongly influenced by the simultaneous strength of the Soviet movements in Hungary and Bavaria, as well as the financial and organizational support received from Budapest (also in terms of personnel).[82]

The demise of the Red Guard led to a loss of support for the Communist Party, but the post-war ideological radicalization left its mark on the veterans movement, too. Unrest and interference became a regular pattern accompanying the numerous gatherings of returnee soldiers, with different sides contributing to the escalation. As Gerhard Botz has argued, an aggressive, radical tone and

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low-level violence was an endemic feature of the First Republic, and the younger generation of ex-soldiers, above all officers and NCOs, formed 'a significant reservoir for perpetrators of violence'.[83]

Aside from political differences, a further cleavage line was confessional in nature, as the above example of the Catholic Homecomers suggests. Above all, this aspect was relevant to Jewish soldiers, who were already subject to sporadic hostility within the Habsburg army during the war (albeit not in terms of systematic discrimination on the part of the army leadership).[84] Despite establishing a range of associations, primarily for invalids, such as the Union of Jewish War Participants and Injured (1917), the Jewish Union of War Invalids and Homecomers (1919), and the Union of Jewish Invalids and Homecomers in Vienna (1920), Jewish returnees were generally pushed to the margins of public debate over recognition, welfare and memory. Jewish veterans did not establish their own statewide organization – the Federation of Jewish Front Soldiers – until 1932, in reaction to general political and social tensions at that time, including rising antisemitism.[85]

Yet, Jews living in Vienna had already become the renewed target of hostility and attacks since the republic's foundation.[86] In particular, the Jewish community feared the spread of violence and pogroms similar to those taking place in Galicia as the Habsburg state collapsed, with the result that they set up a Jewish militia to protect property and institutions in November 1919. Within days, around 3,000 demobilized Jewish soldiers were recruited and the force helped to maintain order before being later incorporated into the city guard (once their proposal to join the *Volkswehr* had been rejected).[87] Nevertheless, the Jewish community still had to defend itself staunchly against ideological attacks from the Union of Front Fighters (*Frontkämpfervereinigung*, FKV), an ideologically anti-Marxist and antisemitic movement of returning soldiers founded in 1920 by two former officers who had fought in the war, Hermann (Ritter von) Hiltl and Emil Fey.[88] In their initial efforts to revive the collapsed idyll of the Habsburg Monarchy, Fey played a particularly prominent role, because he also functioned as director of the Association of Military Professional Soldiers, from whose early circles the FKV emerged.[89] Fey later gained notoriety as a leader of the protofascist *Heimwehr* movement.[90] From 1920 onwards, the FKV made common cause with German-National oriented associations, such as the German-Austrian Antisemitic Union.[91]

Such was evident at a meeting in Vienna's city hall in June 1920, attended by members of the FKV, alongside delegates from the League of Antisemites, and Christian Social and German-National associations. The head of the Soldiers' Union, Colonel Zeiß, argued that a union of all 'Aryan front-line soldiers' could end 'ongoing Jewish despotic rule'. Of itself, he continued, simply 'eliminating Jewish predominance in Austria' would enable the 'reconstruction of the homeland'. Walter Riehl, a deputy to the Lower Austrian Provincial Assembly

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(*Landtag*) and an early leader of the National Socialist movement in Austria, claimed that Jewish railway employees from Eastern Galicia and Bukovina had entered into state service in 'German-Austria', whereas German-speaking railway employees who had been 'expelled' from the Slavic successor states had applied unsuccessfully for the same positions. Among other things, participants at the gathering further agreed on the 'immediate internment of all Eastern Jews' (i.e. from Galicia), 'the ongoing removal of all Jews to their place of origin', as well as the 'appropriation of the property stolen by them here'.[92] Such sentiments were not confined solely to German-Nationalist former officers, as Richard Steidle, Christian Social deputy in the Tyrolean Diet and head of the *Tiroler Heimatwehr*, proclaimed in May 1919: 'Only a thorough reckoning with the spirit of Jewry and its helpers can save the German Alpine lands'.[93]

Electoral competition widened the gap between political camps, as each sought greater visibility ahead of the first elections (see figure 1.2. for a sample election poster). In this sense, veterans immediately formed an important electoral constituency, but the struggle to gain their support also reflected a certain fluidity, and even uncertainty, as to their precise profile in the months following the war's end. It was a hotly debated question as to who counted as a 'homecomer' and who could thereby lay full claim to social recognition and support from the state.[94] This issue had arisen during the war already, at the latest in March 1918, when members of the Austrian House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*) – Count Thun-Salm, the Duke of Beaufort and others – presented a proposal for a new law on subsidies for homecoming reservists and POWs. In his proposal, which was handed on to the House's social policy committee, Thun-Salm emphasized: 'Whenever one hears the word 'war-damaged', one thinks in the first instance of the wounded, people who have lost an arm, a leg or their eyesight, I mean, one thinks of war-damaged in the old sense'. However, Thun-Salm and his supporters were more concerned about the 'war-damaged' more broadly understood, including those whose economic existence was endangered.[95]

At the end of the war, the discussion returned with renewed force because the Army High Command denoted former POWs as 'homecomers' (*Heimkehrer*) and other former soldiers as 'frontline homecomers' (*Frontheimkehrer*). The debate continued into 1919 and beyond and consumed a lot of time and energy on the part of veterans and other associations, both internally and with regard to their communication with public authorities. As a result, a process of differentiation between ex-soldiers began, as was visible in the varying terminology employed: war participants (*Kriegsteilnehmer*), 'front-men' (*Frontler*), front fighters (*Frontkämpfer*), 'comrades from behind the lines' (*Hinterlandskameraden*), and 'servicemen from the staging area and behind the lines' (*Etappen- und Hinterlandskriegsdienstleistende*). For officers too, distinctions were made according to rank and place of service. Hence, the space in which military service was carried out during the war became a key criterion for defining war

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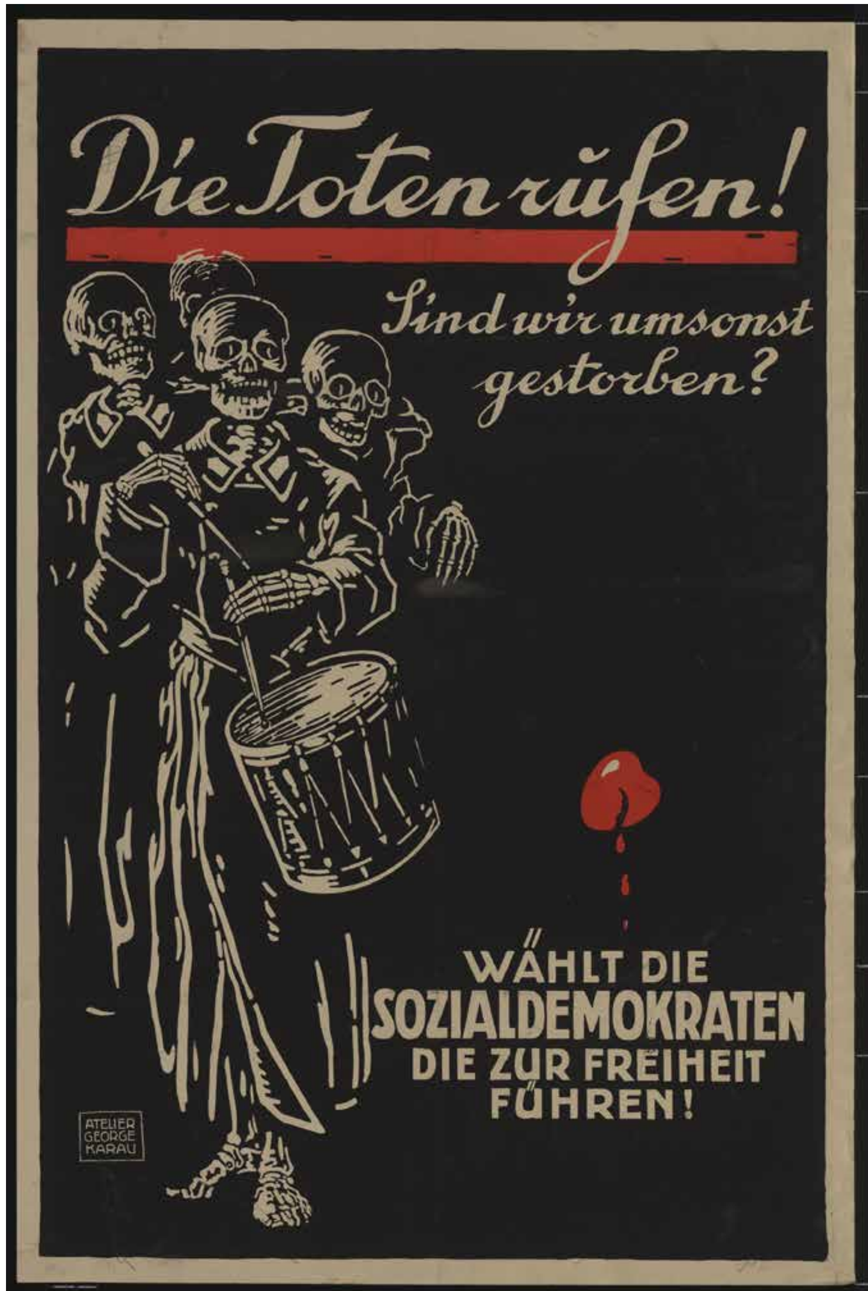

Figure 1.2. Social Democrat poster for the 1919 parliamentary elections in Austria: 'The dead are calling! Did we die in vain? Vote for the Social Democrats, who lead to freedom!'. Wien Bibliothek No. AC10568477.

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experiences and deciding on the type and extent of social benefits provided by the Austrian state.[96]

The question of nationality and state citizenship further complicated the debate. For example, it was an open question as to how compensation tariffs might apply to German-speakers from western Hungary, as a meeting in the Office for POWs discussed heatedly at the end of September 1919. It was difficult to decide how far these people – before 1918, citizens of Hungary – could be treated equally to German-Austrians before the peace treaties were fully ratified and the situation of Burgenland (as it became) was settled. Perhaps not surprisingly, the meeting closed without coming to a decision, even though the matter was of pressing concern to those affected, almost a year after the end of hostilities.[97]

In turn, this uncertain status echoed back into the political arena, where accusations were traded in different directions. On the one hand, some homecomers serving in the *Volkswehr* found themselves the subject of criticism from political opponents, as the social democratic *Arbeiter-Zeitung* complained at the start of 1919. These veterans were not being recognized as 'battlefield soldiers', but were being abused as 'displaced workers, who are suddenly pleased to throw on a uniform'.[98] On the other hand, the Carinthian Homecomers Union sought to assert the status of its members as 'upright front-soldiers' vis-à-vis the government. The latter, so the Union claimed, had not yet given the ex-soldiers the care and attention that their contribution merited.[99] With such feelings widespread, in 1919 and 1920 numerous Homecomers Unions were created on the basis of already existing associations of former POWs.[100] In turn, many of these joined the Alpine Association of War Participants (*Alpenländischer Verband der Kriegsteilnehmer 1914–1918*), which thereby became one of the leading veterans associations in Austria.[101] In the following years, the activities and demands of homecomers and veterans associations grew in importance in the different regions of the Alpine republic, helped in part by the coincidence of interest between their own resentment towards the federal government and the anti-Vienna hostility of many of the provinces.

This formation of rival associations formed part of a wider process in which soldiers returning from the war joined a range of defence organizations. As well as the question of internal order, the national defence of provincial territory was another prime factor in the simultaneous remobilization. Frequently, former soldiers established these groups in regions where the question of national borders still had to be settled. Thus, at the end of January 1919, Willibald Brodmann, a former regimental doctor in the 4th Dragoon Regiment, founded a so-called Peasants' Commando in Straden in Styria, which subsequently received support from the *Volkswehr* in fighting against troops from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Elsewhere, one border patrol comprised former officers and telephone operators, with around 10 percent of the group even originating from

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non-Austrian provinces of the former monarchy.[102] Already, this showed how regional conflicts would shape the remobilization process, as units from the *Volkswehr* made a show of strength in upholding Austrian territory against claims from its new neighbour to the south.

Indeed, 'German-Austria' had to deal with border conflicts or disputes in most of its provinces. Although the regular army participated, this was mainly without direct intervention from Vienna and more on the initiative of provincial commanders. Likewise, the majority of defensive militias were established on a local basis.[103] In such areas, therefore, the state-level demobilization rapidly mutated into a regional remobilization, and military units established outside of the formal structure of the new army played a decisive role in this process, with former officers often to the fore. Carinthia and Styria were the two provinces affected by the conflict with the emerging South Slav state, with the Carinthian home defence war (*Kärntner Abwehrkampf*) of 1918–1919 turning into the lengthiest border fight undertaken in Austria in this period.[104] Alongside the various militia formations, the *Volkswehr* battalions included many former members of imperial army regiments, even if they had only served for a short time on the frontline.[105] In neighbouring Styria, regional politicians initially hoped that the dispute over territories in the Mur valley and the town of Marburg / Maribor could be solved at the negotiating table, rather than by force of arms. However, once South Slav troops occupied the village of Spielfeld on 25 November 1918, and then later Leutschach, Marburg, Unterdrauburg and the railway station in Radkersburg, the Styrians built up their border defence from the start of 1919 onwards.[106] On both sides, therefore, former Austro-Hungarian soldiers faced off against each other.

At the same time, the conflict over southern Carinthia drew support from other Austrian provinces, showing how the border conflicts were viewed as a common fight for the preservation of 'German' territory against the claims of other nationalities. Thus, units from the *Volkswehr* in Tyrol and the above-mentioned Dragoni Half-Battalion fought in the neighbouring province.[107] In Tyrol itself, home defence units were mobilized at the prospect of the secession of South Tyrol, which also implied territorial separation between North and East Tyrol. Nevertheless, faced with a strong Italian army presence in the region, there was little possibility of a sustained battle along the lines of what was happening in Carinthia because confrontation with an Allied army would have been seen as a breach of the armistice.[108] Hence, the Tyrolean *Volkswehr* was initially confined to the area in and around the regional capital, Innsbruck. Again, clear continuity with the old army was visible in one of the democratically organized units, as the battalion commanded by Captain Samen was a direct successor to one of the *Kaiserjäger* battalions (an elite mountain regiment of the imperial army recruited in Tyrol). Although the sources are somewhat sporadic, it seems that 'a little over 2,000' members of the *Volkswehr* were active in Tyrol at this time.[109]

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Unease of a different kind was present in the far West of 'German-Austria', where calls for a union with Switzerland were growing ever louder. Noticeably prominent among the protagonists of this movement in Vorarlberg were homecomers concerned about the region's economic future, such as Ferdinand Riedmann from Lustenau, who had served on several fronts during the war and had experienced the proclamation of the republic in Linz (Upper Austria), on his way back from Ljubljana.[110] The pro-accession campaign initially met with few counter-arguments, but from the start of 1919 onwards provincial governor Otto Ender opposed Riedmann and his supporters in increasingly firm tones.[111] By contrast, the situation was fairly calm in the federal provinces of Salzburg and Upper Austria. Aside from the short period of concern arising from the Bavarian Soviet Republic, neither province was affected by border conflicts or the significant communist agitation evident in the federal capital.[112] Hence, these provincial authorities were able to busy themselves with the care of war returnees to an extent that others were not.

For the eastern parts of the nascent republic, the looming establishment of new borders accentuated the unfavourable economic starting-point. Lower Austria felt the separation from the German-speaking areas of Bohemia and Moravia particularly hard, given the longstanding flow of goods and migrants between the two areas and the fact that northern Bohemia was one of the economic powerhouses of the old monarchy. From this point of view, an interesting dynamic emerged, whereby Austria needed Czechoslovakia economically more than the other way round.[113] At the same time, the question of the Czech / Czechoslovak minority in Austria remained an open issue as the two states went their separate ways. In 1914, Vienna was home to around 200,000 Czechs, of which around half moved back to Bohemia and Moravia after 1918. Nevertheless, the Czechs remained the largest national minority in Austria. Equally, almost half a million 'Bohemian-Germans' (*Deutschböhmen*) lived in Vienna, with their numbers bolstered by the exodus of members of the old political and administrative elite from Czechoslovakia to Austria.[114]

These changes undoubtedly influenced the political climate in the transition period, yet without leading to serious conflict. A 'Circle of German Southern Moravians' was founded shortly after the establishment of the *Volkswehr*, but the likelihood of wide-scale armed protest against the new boundaries seemed slight. As the German Consul in Prague, Fritz Freiherr von Gebsattel, reported at the end of November 1918, 'people who know the situation assure that there is not the least desire for serious opposition among the Germans. Such war-weariness and exhaustion predominates among German-Bohemian circles that the calls for the building of civic guards would have only minimal success'.[115] On the Czech side, the establishment of local militias was more successful and, partly as a result, violent confrontations between German and Czech homecomers were limited in number, although one incident did occur early on at the railway station in

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Lundenburg / Břeclav in southern Moravia. Czech soldiers had taken control there in the first days of the monarchy's collapse, but on the night of 30 October 1918 German-speaking railway workers tried to retake the station and bring it under the influence of the 'German-Austrian' Republic. The attempt failed after the station-commander was able to hold the position with the help of Czech soldiers returning from the front.[116] The *Volkswehr* command centre in Vienna reported on concentrations of troops in the northern border districts of Upper and Lower Austria, as well as the German-speaking parts of southern Moravia, at various moments between November 1918 and March 1919. Generally, however, the presence of Czech patrols on the Bohemian-Bavarian border in December 1918 was noted with scant concern, while the February 1919 report for Vienna and its hinterland read: 'Quiet, unchanged'.[117]

To the south-east, however, the situation was less settled and clashes occurred between gendarmes on the Austrian side and paramilitary units recruited from Hungarian war returnees, student volunteers, local gendarmes and the army on the other side.[118] The situation remained tense in this region and, consequently, Béla Kun's activities in Hungary were closely watched. The question of German-speaking districts in western Hungary being added to Styria or Lower Austria was already under discussion in 1906, but the issue became a matter of state for the new republic through the formal claim to areas of 'compact German settlement' in the Declaration on the Extent, Borders and Relations of German-Austria on 22 November 1918 (see map 0.4.).[119] Therein, Vienna laid claim to the former Hungarian counties of Moson / Wieselburg, Vasvár / Eisenburg, Sopron / Ödenburg and Pozsony / Preßburg / Bratislava. Irregular troops and paramilitaries were mobilized in the region at various points over the next two years, above all as the post-Kun right-wing government in Hungary sought to put pressure on Austria in negotations over the region. Although violent skirmishes accompanied the handover period under the auspices of the inter-allied military commision in late August and early September 1921, a plebiscite at the end of the year confirmed Austria's possesion of most of the disctricts claimed (with the exception of the Bratislava region and the town of Sopron).[120]

Thereafter, relations between Budapest and Vienna improved, not least because conservative governments were now in place in both countries. Diplomatic rapprochement went hand in hand with the consolidation of the border. The traditional urban centres in the region, such as Sopron and Szombathely / Steinamanger, remained under Hungarian sovereignty. Consequently, the small rural Magyar minority in Austria had no strong political representation and only one newspaper, the weekly *Hétfő* (*Monday*), was published for the districts around Eisenstadt. Its moderate-conservative standpoints mirrored the general tendency towards de-escalation. *Hétfő* adopted a loyalist, pro-Austrian tone, as did WWI veterans. Reports described 'unpolitical events' organized by ex-serviceman, such as

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regimental days and the erection of war memorials. These occasions emphasized the shared experiences of soldiers from both parts of the Danube Monarchy and ignored almost completely Hungarian revisionist rhetoric or the paramilitary units of the immediate post-war period.[121]

Repatriation, Demobilization and Foundational Myths in Czechoslovakia

Similarly to Austria and other parts of Central Europe, the autumn of 1918 did not bring an immediate cessation of hostilities to Czechoslovakia.[122] The act of physically bringing soldiers home from the war and making them Czechoslovak citizens was a daunting task for the new government, given that Czech and Slovak soldiers had fought not just in the Austro-Hungarian army, but also in the Czechoslovak legions on the South-West and Eastern Fronts. While the bulk of soldiers was still returning from the disintegrating imperial army and hence experienced similar difficulties to those returning to the Alpine lands, the approximately 60,000 Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia had to be transported out of Siberia with the help of Allied ships. Some travelled via south-east Asia and the Suez Canal to ports in northern Italy, while others sailed to the west coast of the United States and then journeyed across the entire continent of North America, from where a lengthy transatlantic voyage awaited them. Over the course of 1919 and 1920, legionnaire veterans continued to trickle into the country from Russia.[123]

Government repatriation efforts paid particular attention to the legionnaires from Russia, because they constituted the central building block in the Czechoslovak narrative of war victory.[124] Their battles with the German and Austro-Hungarian armies on the Eastern Front quickly became the primary motif of Czechoslovak republican identity, with the date of the first major involvement of legionnaires in the war – the Battle of Zborov on 2 June 1917 – becoming one of the official holidays in interwar Czechoslovakia.[125] Hence, the legionnaires' protracted return home formed the first major obstacle not only to the physical demobilization of the soldiers themselves, but also to the broader cultural demobilization of Czechoslovak society.[126] With many of those designated as the main war heroes still away from home, public discourse deemed the Czechoslovak state incomplete and thus in grave danger from its external and internal enemies. Leading newspapers regularly reported on the situation of 'our boys' in Russia and often printed letters from legionnaires who were still abroad, but supported the ongoing state-building effort. For example, the main Agrarian Party paper reported in April 1919: 'Our boys in Siberia sent the following greetings to us in Hradec Králové: We feel very happy that our nation is free and that the Czech Lands became a republic! . . . Eventually, the thousand times cursed

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Habsburg Empire crumbled and disappeared from the map of Europe and the Czechoslovak republic stands on firm, granite foundations'.[127]

While legionnaires were cast as physically absent, but mentally and symbolically present in the new Czechoslovakia, considerably less attention was paid to those who were demobilized from the imperial army. Although these soldiers constituted the majority of all homecomers, their service for the – now despicable, 'thousand times cursed' – empire did not fit into the victorious narrative. The state authorities thus concentrated on assisting the hundreds of thousands of ex-servicemen from the Habsburg armed forces as fast and efficiently as possible, by ensuring their handing in of arms and easing their passage back into civilian life. In light of the duress on the state treasury, both civil servants and the political left put the government under pressure, stressing that a state with a budget deficit of several billion crowns should not maintain one of the biggest armed forces in the region.[128] The state's financial difficulties further played an important role in determining how demobilization measures unfolded. For example, demobilizing soldiers not only had to hand in their weapons, for swift reuse by the new armed forces, but also had to return any military decorations, medals, ceremonial sabres, and even officers' silk ribbons and leather belts, because all these items 'could be remade into various usable things'.[129]

The principal concern, however, was how to demobilize large numbers of ex-servicemen without damaging the already strained labour market and exacerbating rising social tensions. Army headquarters liaised closely with civilian authorities and private businesses in order to provide as many ex-servicemen as possible with new employment immediately. Military commanders, together with officials from civilian ministries, established labour exchanges where demobilized soldiers could register and be instantly available for job offers from private employers. Those who refused such offers were quickly stripped of any military subsistence or, in some cases, were even barred from re-entering civilian life.[130] At the same time, the facilitation of job placements produced a vast amount of information about the demobbed soldiers, their former regiments and current place of abode, which enabled the authorities to contact them rapidly in case certain units needed to be remobilized at short notice.

In practice, this was indeed necessary, in order to deal with a number of threats, both internally and externally, in particular to the south and east. Internally, one source of unrest was the so-called 'Green Cadres' (or 'Green Guards') that had formed in several rural, often wooded or mountainous, areas of Austria-Hungary from late 1917 onwards.[131] Formed of army deserters and radicalized local peasants protesting against reenlistment and requisitioning, these groups were most numerous in Croatia-Slavonia, but significant numbers were also evident in parts of Moravia and western Slovakia. Having caused difficulties for the Habsburg authorities, they added to the general potential for rioting and violent plundering in the period of transition. For example, one such group was active in southern

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Moravia, where former deserters were involved in train robberies. Other groups long evaded military police and gendarmes. In sum, the collapse of the Habsburg state posed a substantial threat to the restoration of order. One gendarmerie commander in central Bohemia noted in late November 1918 that, after the political revolution, 'riots occurred in many places owing to a poor understanding of the situation, particularly in the sense that some citizens considered the existing system and order to have been abolished, so that it was possible to eliminate individual functionaries, authorities etc., and for each to behave as he wished'.[132]

Immediately after the armistice, conservative politicians in Moravia sought to channel this anti-establishment dynamic into support for the 'holy cause' of building the new nation state, but elsewhere, such as in Slovakia, the impetus towards revenge retained the upper hand. Violence against Jews and notaries erupted in the village of Veselé in the Lower Carpathians, foreshadowing the violence accompanying the later incorporation of Slovak and Sub-Carpathian territories by the Czechoslovak army in 1919 and 1920.[133] With time, and the consolidation of the Czechoslovak state, the unrest gradually dissipated. Moreover, some Green Cadre members, such as Jozef Ferančík, did identify with the struggle for independence and he and his supporters helped hoist the first 'Slovak flags' in the south Váh valley and even joined in repulsing armed attacks by Hungarian units.[134]

Thus, remobilization was a question of both internal order and the staking out of national territory. In this respect, the situation was partly similar to Austria. In both cases, the border conflicts postponed the demobilization process and many homecomers just changed sides from the imperial army into the new republican one and continued fighting in the provinces of the new states. In Czechoslovakia, however, the central state exercised much greater control over the restoration of order, and it was able to act more decisively because of its economic resources and more advantageous international position.[135]

Above all, this was evident in the question of delineating the borders between the two neighbours themselves, as armed Czechoslovak units were first mobilized to secure possession of areas with substantial German-speaking populations in the areas bordering Lower and Upper Austria.[136] As mentioned above, the 'German-Austrian' Republic initially laid claim to these territories (as well as areas in North and East Bohemia), supported by delegates of all the German-Bohemian parties. While representatives of the bourgeois German-National parties sought to establish a district administration to run German-speaking regions, the Czechoslovak army acted rapidly to take possession, without any major conflict emerging. Leading German-Bohemian politicians sought support from Vienna for the recruitment of defence militias, and the radical nationalist Oskar Teufel, originally from Znojmo / Znaim, called for the deployment of 1,000 men from the *Volkswehr*, as well as artillery and machine-guns.[137] However, Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner and Foreign Minister Otto Bauer ignored such

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calls in view of the parlous economic situation in Austria, especially Vienna, as well as the diplomatic repercussions of entering into conflict with its neighbour. In short, although the odd skirmish occurred (as at Břeclav, above), the Czechoslovak government exerted economic pressure by threatening to withhold coal and other supplies and was thus able to save military resources for much greater threats elsewhere.

Hence, the border wars against Poland and Hungary required remobilization on a much more substantial scale than the dispute with Austria. Given that the majority of legionnaires were still abroad, in Czechoslovakia these conflicts had to be fought mainly by volunteers and imperial ex-servicemen already earmarked for demobilization. While the prolonged return of the legionnaires was the main obstacle to the country's 'mental demobilization' in the immediate post-war period, the war with Poland over Cieszyn / Teschen / Těšín Silesia in January 1919, and more especially, the conflict with Hungary over Slovakia, which ended in the summer of the same year, made demobilization impossible in the military sense.

At the height of the war with Hungary, over 100,000 men fought on both sides of the struggle and Czechoslovakia continued to maintain a relatively large and combat-ready army, consisting mainly of former Austro-Hungarian soldiers born between 1882 and 1898, who were not allowed to demobilize, volunteers and a few legionnaire units that had already returned home.[138] In particular, the latter units were retained after their return to Czechoslovakia. Generally, these tightly knit groups, which had formed strong bonds during the foreign campaigns, were not split up. The government's decision to leave the experienced military units intact derived from the fact that they were practically the only armed forces the state felt it could rely on.[139] In contrast to the young Austrian republic, the strong involvement of central governmental ministries characterized this remobilization, with a far lesser role for provincial actors.

However, the military conflict proved unsuccessful for Czechoslovakia and the partial occupation of Slovakia only ended when the Romanian army invaded Hungary, forcing its forces to retreat. For much of 1919, the ongoing border wars kept military units deployed and the general population mentally mobilized. In the public sphere, the conflicts with Poland and Hungary were deemed a necessary continuation of the world war, through which the fruits of its sacrifices had to be reaffirmed. As a leading Czech newspaper urged in December 1918:

> It's not over yet. Today, the greedy Hungarian-German beast rises up against the freedom we have acquired, against the young state, and against the weak and defenceless in Slovakia! Czech blood flows to this very day! But we must be there. The Czechoslovak soldier won't return home to his nearest and dearest until he has secured freedom for his homeland . . . The Czechoslovak volunteer knows that if he were to return home today, his mother, father, wife, and children would receive him with pain in their hearts, only to weep in shame.[140]

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Hence, the ongoing battles on the state peripheries propelled the remobilization process in the hinterland. The government sought to mobilize the wider public in a cultural sense by emphasizing the symbolic role of the legionnaires who had fought for the new republic in faraway Russia and were continuing to fight in Slovakia, even though they were actually quite small in number. Crucially, however, the propaganda campaign helped encourage tens of thousands of volunteers to enlist in the period 1918–1920. These men were deployed in the emerging Czechoslovak army, thereby supplementing the returning veterans.[141]

The narrative of both Slovakia and Těšín Silesia being places of national oppression for Czechoslovaks was developed primarily in the centre of the country, in contrast to Austria, where the remobilization for border conflicts stemmed predominantly from the provinces themselves. The Prague offices of various organizations and associations passed resolutions supporting the territories' annexation to the new state and organized collection drives to help equip military units. Occasionally, this mobilization could go even further than the officially proclaimed goals. For example, one year after the resolution of the conflict with Poland, the Prague headquarters of the largest legionnaire organization still strongly objected to the establishment of the Czechoslovak-Polish border in Těšín Silesia, which, they believed, was drawn up 'without any regard for the efforts by our nation dedicated to a new and just Europe'.[142]

Thus, the full demobilization of a large portion of returnees, as well as of the Czech and Slovak-speaking public, could only begin to take place from the second half of 1919 onwards, once the border disputes were resolved. Especially in the case of returning legionnaires, this process was complicated by problems arising from their sometimes difficult reintegration into peacetime conditions (notwithstanding their symbolic importance as the embodiment of the Czechoslovak 'victory' in the Great War). The return of thousands of organized, armed men with extensive experience of frontline violence, which – in the case of many legionnaires – was compounded by their deployment during the Russian Civil War, quickly disrupted the idyllic vision of a smooth transition from war to peace. While the bulk of demobilized regular ex-servicemen eagerly left the army, given that additional service had greatly extended their frontline deployment after the end of the world war, many legionnaires became a significant factor within the ongoing political struggle between left and right over the future of the new republic.[143] In other words, legionnaires were not only the object of political instrumentalization, but themselves became an active and driving force of agitation. Their enhanced symbolic capital gave them considerable public visibility and sometimes enabled them to articulate radical demands for the post-war order. As one of the Russian legionnaires wrote in a letter printed in the leftist press as late as the summer of 1920:

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> We read about . . . a ceremony to welcome the arriving legionnaires. What is the point if it does not feed our families . . .? We, the legionnaires, are proud of our work for the freedom of the nation, but we don't care about the various welcoming parties nor do we want garlands placed around our necks . . . Do the leaders of our republic have the ability to understand and appreciate what the legionnaires in Siberia have done for the republic and for Czechoslovak families and children? . . . When we continue to read and hear the groans and desperate cries of our mothers, wives, and children, then we consider it our duty to settle our accounts upon returning.[144]

Radical statements of this kind, often formulated as threats, were by no means unusual in the immediate post-war landscape and carried all the more weight when backed up by an organizational structure. In 1919, almost immediately upon returning home, legionnaires set up two associations that became significant players in the public arena – the Association of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Družina československých legionářů*, DČL) and the Union of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Svaz československých legionářů*, SČL). While both organizations sought to represent all military returnees who had fought on the side of the Allied Powers, each of them nevertheless aligned with a different political camp. The SČL drifted politically towards the Czechoslovak democratic left and sided with Social Democracy, while the DČL was tied to the Czech nationalist right (see Chapter 2).

The involvement of legionnaire returnees in the immediate political struggle over the fate of the new state considerably exacerbated existing tensions and destabilized the overall situation in the years 1919–1920. The initially enthusiastic reception of the returning 'heroes of the republic' soon waned and was replaced by moral panic over the tangible threat that some of them posed to democracy. At the very beginning of 1919, for instance, the newly established Ministry of National Defence received a strongly worded warning from the military police, according to which a number of local social democratic organizations 'are just waiting for the arrival of people from Russia in order to stage a coup d'état with the help of the legionnaires at home'.[145]

Homecoming soldiers thus posed a threat to post-war state building in both cases, but each in a different manner. While in Austria homecomers joined the wider dispute about the future shape of the republic, in Czechoslovakia some of them were seen as a danger to the already shared vision of a parliamentary democratic state. As in Austria, political violence was indeed part of the repertoire of many Czechoslovak returnees, and some left-leaning as well as right-leaning legionnaire groups saw a violent putsch as a genuine political option.[146] When legionnaires back from Russia violently attacked a social democratic meeting in Olomouc in June 1920, it led to a series of strikes, as well as parliamentary hearings.[147] Newspapers on the right approved of these aggressive actions against their left-wing opponents. In October 1920, the leading Czech nationalist dailies announced an unspecified 'purge' that was to be carried out in the autumn by

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legionnaire returnees associated with the SČL. In response, the rival DČL rallied its supporters with a call for resistance against 'White Bolshevism'. As the main Czech social democratic daily commented:

> Yesterday, the bourgeois papers printed a speech by the DČL that mysteriously hints at a kind of legionnaire purification 'event' that is to be carried out between the 5 and 15 of October . . . Ever since our republic was founded, this group has been trying at all costs to provoke a conflict that would lead to a civil war . . . This is 'White Bolshevism'. Extremes and dictatorial games from the right are as dangerous to the people and the state as those from the left. We are therefore issuing a warning against these actions.[148]

In October 1920, the tense situation between the two legionnaire camps resulted in violent clashes that ended in the severe wounding of a DČL leader, Captain Maixner.[149]

However, the biggest threat that some of the radical legionnaires posed to the young state in the early post-war years was the organized mutiny in July 1919 led by the '1st Battalion of Czechoslovaks from Russia', which was assigned to guard the sensitive Czechoslovak-Bavarian border in Železná Ruda / Markt Eisenstein. On 22 July 1919, most of the soldiers from this unit abandoned their posts on the border, looted the ammunition depot, and imprisoned their officers. An ever-increasing mass of soldiers then occupied the local railway station, aimed their weapons at the station-master, and forced him to send a special train to Plzeň / Pilsen. Along the way, the rebels were joined by other units stationed in western Bohemia, who had occupied railway stations, telephone and telegraph junctions, and other strategic infrastructure, and installed 'revolutionary commanders' in the towns along the railway line. The few police officers in each town were quickly disarmed. Moreover, with each occupied town, the number of rebels continued to rise. Eventually, some 500 legionnaires arrived in Plzeň, accompanied by civilians who joined them in demanding the establishment of a 'purifying dictatorship' and an authoritarian government. From Plzeň, the soldiers, armed with heavy machine guns and grenades, wanted to proceed directly to Prague, where a violent takeover was to take place.[150]

The local army garrison, alerted by the High Command in Prague, managed to stop the rebels in Plzeň. The army also organized a team of negotiators, composed of local social democratic leaders, legionnaire officers, and representatives of the Ministry of National Defence. In the end, the mutineers returned to their posts. Shortly thereafter, the rebellion's leaders were arrested and handed over to a military tribunal. However, their originally harsh sentences were subsequently amnestied by the President of the Republic in 1920.[151]

Although not a single life was lost, such a wide-scale and extensively organized uprising posed a significant challenge to the nascent Czechoslovak army and the entire state. What is more, the spread of the insurrection throughout western

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Bohemia was not easily attributable to either the political left or the right.[152] The fact that it was able to attract many civilians to its side significantly undermined the trust that the government had hitherto placed in the legionnaires as one of the putative pillars of the armed forces.[153] Nor was this to be the only alarming incident for the authorities. In March 1920, for example, the erosion of leadership authority even began to spill over beyond Czechoslovakia's borders, when a group of former legionnaires from the Italian front crossed into Germany to 'control' the meetings of left-wing party organizations in the adjacent Saxon town of Sebnitz. Violence, not to say an international scandal, was seemingly only prevented by the local population's utter shock at seeing foreign uniforms in the middle of town, as well as skilful negotiations between town leaders and the Czechoslovaks responsible for the incursion.[154]

The restlessness in many legionnaire units thus highlighted the need for a systematic demobilization in the country as a whole. In the winter of 1918 and during 1919, some war returnees had already left the army, but the process was driven primarily by the economic situation rather than a specific plan for the build-up of the new armed forces. As of 31 January 1919, soldiers from the conscription classes of 1882–1886 were demobilized, but the next wave was postponed until September 1919, when the 1887–1891 classes were released from service. In June 1919, the government announced the demobilization of the classes of 1892–1893. However, while most of these soldiers did in fact return to civilian life, a significant number were soon reconscripted in July 1919 due to the unstable situation on the borders. These classes were finally discharged from the army in May 1920. In short, the first wave of demobilization in 1919 was by no means a linear, continuous process. Soldiers left the army in a disorganized manner, and, due to the confusion and postponement of subsequent waves of demobilization, junior classes were sometimes discharged earlier than senior classes. Rumours and chaos accompanied the entire process. In November 1919, for example, the press had to set the record straight about the demobilization of men between twenty-three and thirty years of age: 'there have been reports in the daily press that on 1 December of this year, men between the ages of 23–30 shall be demobilized. These reports have no basis in truth. By decree of the High Command of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces . . . five classes (1887–1891) have been demobilized . . . Since then, no further official demobilization decree has been issued.'[155]

Alongside this rapid demobilization, however, the army was also recruiting volunteers. Just like in Austria, it was not unusual for individual soldiers to report to the conscription office as volunteers the very next day after being released into civilian life.[156] Although enlistment of German- or Hungarian-speaking soldiers was officially accepted from autumn 1919 onwards, the bulk of the new recruits were Czech and Slovak speakers.[157] The primary reason for accepting volunteers was economic rather than military. The Ministry of National Defence admitted

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that the goal of the recruitment drives was to relieve the rising unemployment rate since, from the army's point of view, it placed more of a strain on the armed forces as it provided 'often idle, inferior elements with the opportunity to choose the comparatively more comfortable and profitable military life'.[158]

The declining combat capability of Czechoslovak troops, clearly demonstrated by the failure of the campaign against Hungary and the growing problems with the legionnaire units, accelerated these efforts to carry out a systematic demobilization across the whole army. The purpose was two-fold: on the one hand, to remove the conflict potential evident among certain legionnaire units and to purge the armed forces of 'unreliable' volunteers and officers, who were deemed to be too closely connected to the Austro-Hungarian army. On the other hand, the government aimed to increase the involvement of a younger generation who had not fought in WWI, but should form the backbone of the Czechoslovak army in the future.

Before this demobilization could begin, however, it was necessary to resolve the fundamental question as to what form the armed forces should take. At the end of WWI and shortly afterwards, some of the political parties and a proportion of the public even disagreed with the premise that the new state should have an army at all. The highest moral authority in the state, President Tomáš G. Masaryk, interpreted the non-violent declaration of independence in October 1918 as proof of the inherent peacefulness of the Czechoslovak nation, the very existence of which reflected the humanitarian ideals of anti-militarism and pacifism. In the early post-war years, therefore, there was considerable support for the idea of civilian militias, which would embody republican values and replace the traditional conscript army. In the end, however, the supporters of the classic conscription model won the day. With strong backing from France, they argued that the supposed lack of loyalty to the new state on the part of German- and Hungarian-speaking citizens ruled out the formation of armed civilian militias.[159]

Moreover, the unpleasant surprise of military defeat against Hungary in the summer of 1919 showed that the existing situation was highly unsatisfactory and that the army would have to be built on completely new foundations. Thanks to the well-developed arms industry inherited from the Habsburg era, Czechoslovakia was able to supply its army with weapons without any problems. For the government, the main issue was the loyalty and discipline of its soldiers, because – as the campaign against Hungary had also shown – they were too often prone to unnecessary violent excesses against civilians and high rates of desertion when faced with combat.[160] Hence, the first step towards the establishment of the new army was to stop dividing soldiers into legionnaires and 'the rest', a process that had fully started at the beginning of 1920. The intention was to merge the originally unified and separate legionnaire units with soldiers who had served in the Habsburg army and volunteers who joined the army after the end of WWI – a complicated issue that Austria did not have to solve at all.[161]

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The key moment in this reorganization process was a brand new conscription law, which was unanimously adopted by the Czechoslovak parliament on 19 March 1920.[162] Compared to the situation in the Austro-Hungarian army, the legislation reduced active military service from three years to fourteen months. However, due to 'the period of unrest in Europe' caused by the neighbouring 'old states with imperialist traditions', the law made provision for the extension of military service for up to ten months, so, in practice, Czechoslovak soldiers only began to serve for fourteen months in 1926.[163] Other laws passed on the same date set the peace-time strength of the Czechoslovak army at 150,000 men and regulated the process of transferring former Austro-Hungarian officers to the new army, as well as the treatment of those who had 'committed offenses against the Czechoslovak nation' during WWI.[164]

Contrary to Austria, Czechoslovakia was, as an official war winner, not internationally constrained in building its armed forces, but creating a large military force entailed much greater financial costs and required a substantial administrative apparatus. The core of this agenda lay with the Ministry of National Defence, which gained a free hand regarding the establishment of the new armed forces, including the recruitment of officers. Officers with Czechoslovak citizenship who had fought in the Habsburg army during WWI could enlist on exactly the same terms as officers who had not fought in the war. Those Habsburg officers who were not accepted into the army received financial compensation from the state. However, this severance pay did not apply to officers deemed to have harmed the Czechoslovak nation or any of its members by conduct 'indicative of their resentment towards the Czechoslovak nation' (see Chapter 2).[165]

This vaguely worded phrasing gave the Ministry of National Defence considerable latitude in deciding which former imperial soldiers would be allowed to transfer to the new army and who could be dismissed without any form of compensation. Almost immediately after Czechoslovakia was established in October 1918, the continued service of former Austro-Hungarian officers became a pressing issue.[166] Denunciations circulated among Czechoslovak army units accusing specific officers of either being merely 'pro-Austrian' or – more seriously – of carrying out offences against ordinary soldiers and Czech and Slovak political leaders. Special complaints commissions were therefore attached to military units in order to investigate the various allegations. They then sent their findings to the ministry, which subsequently decided on the status of the accused officers or dismissed them from service.[167] However, the work of the commissions did not follow a uniform logic and they were often the target of public criticism, being accused of too great a laxity in their assessment of individual cases and thereby of not 'unshackling' the new army.[168] At times, the government was subjected to very sharp criticism from the daily press, which bitterly commented on the numerous transfers of former Austro-Hungarian officers:

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> Ultimately, one cannot be surprised if one considers who is sitting in the Ministry of National Defence. Most are gentlemen who simply hopped over from Vienna . . . Just as they once enthusiastically rattled their sabres and shouted their sympathy for Austria at the top of their lungs, so now they are enthusiastic Czechs – if there would be a new coup d'état and Tatars held the reins of power, there would be no greater Tatars than these Tatars.[169]

Nevertheless, the law on the transfer of former Austro-Hungarian officers streamlined their transition to the new republican army and ushered in a vetting system. Complaints commissions continued to exist and made recommendations on hundreds of cases of ex-officers with Czechoslovak citizenship who applied for a transfer. The new Conscription Act, together with other laws regulating the size of the army and the recruitment of former Habsburg officers, established the basic framework for an organized demobilization of war returnees, which began in the spring of 1920 and ran in parallel with the conscription of new classes to replace the discharged WWI veterans.[170]

If the hasty demobilization and remobilization drives of 1919 were motivated more by efforts to mitigate the effects of an economic crisis on an already suffering society, the large-scale demobilization from March 1920 onwards reinforced this aspect. Unlike the previous year, the process was relatively well managed, so there was no longer any confusion as to who should be discharged and when. However, as the number of demobilized war returnees grew, it became apparent that their transition back into civilian life would be an enormous challenge, especially in terms of its social costs, both for the individuals themselves and for the state.

Even before 1920, various organizations representing sub-groups of former front fighters began to emerge in Czechoslovakia, leading to a kind of 'struggle for visibility' with the public and the government, and they tried to obtain the best possible conditions for their members during the demobilization process. Next to the legionnaires, it was primarily war invalids who were able to attract the intense attention of the media, politics and the state. The first associations of war invalids had already started to form before the end of the war in 1917 and 1918 (see Chapter 2).[171] These invalids associations angrily entered the public space through organized demonstrations or, in some cases, even wild and violent riots. Their undeniable and visible suffering, as well as their sheer numbers, made it hard for official bodies to intervene against them. Hence, a new discourse of justice emerged, which – in a way, similar to Austria – emphasized the 'moral debt' that the new Czechoslovak state owed to its war heroes. While in Austria this discourse contained strong regional inflections, the shared feeling of victory among Czech and Slovak-speakers in Czechoslovakia placed the task of repaying this moral debt firmly at the level of the whole state. In both cases, the central authorities made some effort in providing relief, but the expectations and, arguably, the potential frustrations were more substantial in Czechoslovakia.

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Since the Czechoslovak state had yet to develop its own system of welfare for war returnees and their families, the public sphere was flooded with reports of military returnees who had fallen into dire poverty upon returning home.[172] While at pains to help them, the relevant authorities were not always successful in doing so, in many cases offering former combatants an official permit to beg instead of granting them aid. Invalids ended up on the street or in municipal poorhouses. As a result, many veterans organizations became radicalized, sometimes leading to an erosion of trust in the new government. 'We have done and are doing our very best for our republic. If, while doing so, we read about and hear the groans and desperate cries of our mothers, wives, and children, then we see it as our duty . . . to settle our accounts and to win for our families what is rightfully theirs. And if we are forced to take radical steps. . . the blame will be on those who . . . have let our families starve', threatened a representative of former legionnaires in Russia during the summer of 1920.[173]

That this radicalization was not confined to the purely verbal level was demonstrated by a number of incidents in which returning soldiers satisfied their moral claims by themselves, often through acts of physical violence. In particular, the housing crisis was a pressing social problem in the immediate post-war years. The large number of war refugees still remaining in Czechoslovakia (many of whom had fled Habsburg-ruled Galicia), together with the returning soldiers, overwhelmed the housing market. Accommodation became a scarce commodity, especially in larger cities, even for the privileged legionnaires, who then frequently took matters into their own hands. In January 1920, for instance, they evicted two Galician Jewish families in Prague while several hundred people watched and cheered them on. In April 1920, twenty legionnaires attempted to evacuate forcibly another Prague apartment: a single room with a kitchen into which eight Jewish orphans from Galicia were packed.[174] This was part of a broader pattern of anti-Jewish actions in the period of transition, which included violence across Czechoslovakia. Although rarely ending in the fatalities witnessed in Galicia, there were numerous beatings and widespread plundering of property, with members of different ethnic groups involved, whether Czech, Slovak or German.[175]

Countless incidents of legionnaires satisfying their material needs at the expense of others fed into an existing moral panic that saw not only them, but potentially all homecoming soldiers, as a danger to the social order.[176] As the authorities warned, returning soldiers could be 'a very temperamental element, the poverty and suffering they were forced to endure in the trenches and hospitals has left permanent marks on their souls'.[177] Hence, both on the left and the right, families' enthusiastic reception of men returning home from the war was mixed with fears about their future behaviour. At the same time, events abroad confirmed the urgent necessity of satisfying, at least in part, the social demands of war returnees. The most striking incident, which received huge attention

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in Czechoslovakia, occurred in Dresden, when a mob of war invalids attacked the building of the Saxon Ministry of War and lynched the Social Democratic Minister, Gustav Neuring, whom they tossed into the Elbe River. As he struggled to reach the riverbank, veterans shot at him and he died in the water.[178]

Hence, the early Czechoslovak governments scrambled to meet at least the basic material needs of as many ex-servicemen as possible, as the next chapter discusses in detail. Meanwhile, partial measures were put in place, aimed at selected groups of war invalids and with the intention of immediately improving their situation. For example, men who had been blinded in battle and then cared for in institutions and hospitals were provided with a sum of money to cover their basic needs, in addition to their daily meals. Other groups were given free clothing when necessary and the army also offered temporary shelter to war invalids if they needed it.[179] Although these measures improved the social situation of specific war returnees, they did not systematically address their claims as a whole. Hence, a comprehensive solution to the social question logically became one of the main issues in the campaigns leading up to the first elections for the Czechoslovak parliament in April 1920. As in Austria, returning invalids and other soldiers constituted a significant social group within the electorate and accordingly received special political attention. The Agrarian Party, for example, launched a massive leaflet campaign focused on war invalids, pointing out the possibility of favouring war returnees in the ongoing land reform bill, which angered the left in particular.[180] The first elections in April 1920 and the political campaigns that preceded them thus confirmed that the 'veterans question' would play an infinitely more important role in Czechoslovakia compared to the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy before 1914.

Conclusion

The return of former Habsburg soldiers from World War I to Austria and Czechoslovakia presents a varied and complex picture. The process actually began well before the end of the war, when former POWs began to return in late 1917. However, the great wave of demobilization following the end of hostilities in the autumn of 1918 was of a magnitude unforeseen by the crumbling empire's demobilization plans. Moreover, in both states, a large number of soldiers did not have the opportunity to demobilize immediately. Due to conflicts over new borders, these men did not lay down their arms, but remained in uniform – or simply changed it. Especially in the affected regions, but also nationally, a large part of the population remained mentally mobilized, a situation that lasted throughout 1919 in Czechoslovakia and until 1920–1921 in Austria, paralleling developments in other regions of Europe.[181] Such men thus maintained their military habitus and some of them pursued full-time military careers well into

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the 1920s, although this was strictly limited in Austria, where the Treaty of Saint-Germain expressly forbade the building of a large army. Once the border issues were settled by 1921, the political tensions between the Austrian left and right channeled substantial numbers of homecomers into party-affiliated paramilitary groups. In Czechoslovakia, by contrast, many more men were able to join the regular army of the victorious state. After the internal debate over the nature of the new army was resolved, it offered a suitable option for those who wished to pursue a military career.

In both countries, riots and disturbances accompanied the numerous gatherings of returning soldiers, with different sides participating in the escalation. Returning soldiers became frequent actors in street clashes and acts of violence, contributing to the political instability of the early post-war years. The formation of various veterans organizations associated with particular political camps fed into a broader process of political polarization. This was much more visible in Austria, where there was no clear, unifying narrative about the shape of the new state. In Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, foreign legionnaires soon occupied a privileged social and cultural position that significantly influenced the establishment of the new republic and its narrative of national victory. Despite these differences, both societies faced political instability in the early post-war years. Nevertheless, especially in comparison to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, this was limited to specific episodes and did not pose a revolutionary threat to the respective governments.[182]

An orderly transition of ex-combatants from the military to the civilian sphere was further hampered by the inadequacy of military and state structures, especially in the area of social policy. This made it extremely difficult to meet the basic material needs of the returnees. Very soon, political parties began to take up the issue, and the question of social welfare and, more broadly, the general status of war veterans in the new states became one of the main issues in election campaigns and in the wider political sphere. As a result, these issues became part of the political conflict and in many ways widened the gap between the social and political milieus. In Austria, the German-National parties, in particular, used aggressive slogans, aiming to win the support of homecomers who were trying to digest the effects of defeat and the collapse of the empire. In Czechoslovakia, veterans became an object of political mobilization by the social democratic and communist left, drawing some of the larger emerging veterans associations into the broader universe of interwar leftist political camps. Thus, in both states, war veterans constituted a diverse group of central importance for the attainment of political and social stability. The issue of integrating them into the new post-war order constituted an ongoing challenge once the transitional period of constitutional change, state formation and demobilization was over.

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Notes

1. Salzburger Wehrgeschichtliches Museum (Schwarzenberg-Kaserne Wals-Siezenheim), Archiv Wehrgeschichtliche Forschung: Franz Lechner, *Kriegstagebuch aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, 235.
2. Laurence Cole, Jan Rybak and Marlene Horejs, 'When the Music Stopped: Reactions to the Outbreak of World War I in an Austrian Province', *Austrian History Yearbook* 52 (2021): 147–65.
3. David Stevenson, *With our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918* (London, 2011).
4. Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London, 1997), 62–80.
5. Nicola Labanca, *Caporetto: Storia e memoria di una disfatta* (Bologna, 2017), 83–129.
6. Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (New York, 2002), 192–93.
7. Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914–1918* (London, 2014), 506–13.
8. Leidinger and Moritz, *Gefangenschaft*, 453–86.
9. Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Basingstoke, 2000), 373–87.
10. Manfried Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 2013), 945–61.
11. Hannes Leidinger, *Der Untergang der Habsburgermonarchie* (Innsbruck, 2017), 263–97.
12. Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, 1021–22.
13. A People's Republic of Ukraine had already been declared in January 1918, following the October revolution in Russia. Coming under German and Austro-Hungarian occupation following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the republic was proclaimed again in December 1918.
14. Cited in Gudula Walterskirchen, *Mein Vaterland zertrümmert: 1918 – Kriegsende und Neuanfang in Briefen, Tagebüchern und Erinnerungen* (Salzburg-Vienna, 2018), 138.
15. Cited in Rauchensteiner, *Unter Beobachtung*, 24. The original phrase rhymed: '*Ohne Waffen, ohne Pfaffen wird die Jugend sich die Zukunft schaffen*'.
16. For this and the following two paragraphs, see Peter Berger, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 2007), 54–82; Rauchensteiner, *Unter Beobachtung*, 27–76.
17. Hellwig Valentin, 'Föderalismus-Gesamtstaat: Das Verhältnis der österreichischen Länder zum Gesamtstaat und die neuen Grenzen der Republik', in *Die umkämpfte Republik: Österreich 1918–1938*, ed. Stefan Karner (Innsbruck, 2017), 99–105.
18. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, 45–65.
19. Rudolf Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life, and Working-Class Politics in the Bohemian Lands, 1914–1918* (New York-Oxford, 2016), 170.
20. Gerhard Baumgartner, 'Doppelzüngiges Österreich – Zur Geschichte der Sprachminderheiten 1918–1939', in *Die umkämpfte Republik*, ed. Karner, 327–35.
21. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York, 1995), 158.
22. General overviews of interwar Czechoslovakia in: Zdeněk Kárník, *Malé dějiny československé (1867–1939)* (Prague, 2009); Hájková and Horák, eds, *Republika československá*. For a critical (and criticized) view, see Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven, 2009).
23. Wolfgang Etschmann, 'Die "verunglückte" Demobilisierung 1918', *Truppendienst* (December 2018): 1–16, here 2–3, 6–7. https://wwrv.truppendienst.com/themen/beitraege/artikel/die-verunglueckte-demobilisierung-1918 (accessed 13 October 2021).
24. Ibid., 5.
25. See the still valuable standard works: Richard Georg Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner and Arnold Suppan, *Innere Front: Militärassistenz, Widerstand und Umsturz in der Donaumonarchie 1918*,

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2 vols (Vienna, 1974); Wolfgang Etschmann, *Theorie, Praxis und Probleme der Demobilisierung in Österreich 1915–1921*, PhD thesis, University of Vienna 1979; Ludwig Jedlicka, *Ende und Anfang Österreich 1918/19: Wien und die Bundesländer* (Salzburg, 1969), including the chapter by Anton Staudinger, 'Die Ereignisse in den Ländern Deutschösterreichs im Herbst 1918', 62–88.

26. Cited in Wolfgang Rebitsch, *Tirol Land in Waffen: Soldaten und bewaffnete Verbände 1918 bis 1938* (Innsbruck, 2009), 15.
27. Cited in Peter Eigner and Günter Müller, eds, *Hungern – Hamstern – Heimkehren: Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1918 bis 1921* (Vienna, 2017), 49.
28. Cited in Roland Schaffer, *Die Volkswehr in der Steiermark 1918–1920* (Salzburg, 2012), 15.
29. Kärntner Landesarchiv (KLA), 834 (Wehrausschuss), box 1, I.2. Sign. 4 Se, Sign. 1, Fasz. I, Abt. II, 1. Truppendurchmarsch, Bericht no. 7, 2.11.1918.
30. Rebitsch, *Tirol*, 20.
31. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Archiv der Republik (AdR), LV, Staatsamt für Heerwesen (StAfHW), box 370, A. 18, 1919: 45-5/2, Plünderung eines tschechoslowakischen Transportes in Wörgl, gerichtliche Verfolgung, January 1919.
32. Schaffer, *Volkswehr*, 14.
33. KLA, 834 (Wehrausschuss), box 1, I.2. Sign. 4 Se, Sign. 1, Fasz. I, Abt. II, 1. Truppendurchmarsch, Sign. 396, Wehrausschuss Besprechung, 10.11.1918.
34. Compare Rebitsch, *Tirol*, 27.
35. At the end of 1920, stations of this type still existed for homecoming soldiers near Villach in Carinthia, at Sankt Michael in Upper Styria and in Eggenberg, just outside Graz. See Julia Walleczek-Fritz, 'Rückführung und Heimkehr: Kriegsgefangene, Flüchtlinge und Heimkehrer in Salzburg nach dem Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges', in *Salzburg 1918–1919: Vom Kronland zum Bundesland*, eds Oskar Dohle and Thomas Mitterecker (Vienna, 2018), 233–48.
36. *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31.12.1918, 5.
37. Compare Salzburger Landesarchiv (SLA), Verhandlungen der Salzburger provisorischen Landesversammlung, 7.11.1918–18.3.1919, Salzburg 1919, 2. Vollsitzung der prov. Landesversammlung, 13.11.1918, 34; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31.12.1918, 5.
38. SLA, Geheime Präsidial-Akten, box 100, Fasz. 73, 1919 VI J, PB 4590 Wohnungsfürsorge im Barackenlager Niederalm, 28.2.1919.
39. SLA, Landesrat Sitzungsprotokoll, 5.8.1919, Referat Schernthanner, Pkt. 9, Zl. 11044.
40. SLA, Landesrat Sitzungsprotokoll, 20.9.1919, Referat Rehrl, Zl. 12736.
41. *Der Kamerad: Organ des Steiermärkisch-Landes-Kameradschaftsbundes*, May 1929, No. 1, 9–10.
42. Melichar, 'Die Kämpfe', 51–84.
43. István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (Oxford, 1990), 183–85.
44. Among prominent examples of former officers who switched career were Thomas Klimann, head of the Carinthian Industrial Association, and Eduard von Baar-Baarenfels, who went into politics, joined the *Heimwehr* and later became Austrian Vice-Chancellor (from May to November 1936). See Lothar Höbelt, *Die Erste Republik Österreich (1918–1938): Das Provisorium* (Vienna, 2018), 118–19.
45. Wolfgang Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend noch die Schande: Das altösterreichische Offizierskorps am Beginn der Republik* (Vienna, 1988), 23, 26.
46. Überegger, *Erinnerungskriege*, 49–56; Martin Schmitz, *"Als ob die Welt aus den Fugen ginge": Kriegserfahrungen österreichisch-ungarischer Offiziere 1914–18* (Paderborn, 2016).
47. Cited in Eigner and Müller, *Hungern – Hamstern – Heimkehren*, 60–61.
48. Walterskirchen, *Mein Vaterland*, 197–99.
49. In detail: Etschmann, *Theorie, Praxis und Probleme der Demobilisierung*.

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50. Cited in Walterskirchen, *Mein Vaterland*, 199.
51. Ibid., 201.
52. Ota Konrád, 'Two Post-War Paths: Popular Violence in the Bohemian Lands and in Austria in the Aftermath of World War I', *Nationalities Papers* 46 (2018): 759–75.
53. In overview: Stefan Kurz, 'Die Volkswehr: Provisorium zwischen Politik und Landesverteidigung', in *Ende und Aufbruch: Die politischen Folgen des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (Vienna, 2020), 43–82.
54. Melichar, 'Die Kämpfe', 56.
55. Wenninger, 'Dimensionen organisierter Gewalt', 494–502.
56. Manfried Rauchensteiner, 'Landesverteidigung und Sicherheitspolitik 1918–1934', in *Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreich. Vol. 1, Erste Republik 1918–1933*, eds Emmerich Tálos, Herbert Dachs, Ernst Hanisch and Anton Staudinger (Vienna, 1995), 602–17, here 604.
57. See M. Christian Ortner, 'Volkswehr und Bundesheer bis 1933', in *Österreich: 90 Jahre Republik*, eds Stefan Karner and Lorenz Mikoletzky (Innsbruck, 2008), 471–80, here 472–74. The connection to the old army was also reflected in the uniforms. Due to textile shortages, the imperial army uniforms remained in use, with the service rank being added as a cloth stripe on the upper or lower arm. Newly added were an insignia on the chest, bearing the name *Volkswehr*, and red-white-and-red cockades in the caps.
58. Cited in Kurz, 'Die Volkswehr', 50.
59. Ortner, 'Volkswehr und Bundesheer', 475.
60. Cited in Everhard Holtmann, 'Die Organisation der Sozialdemokratie in der Ersten Republik 1918–1934', in *Die Organisation der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie 1889–1995*, eds Wolfgang Maderthaner and Wolfgang C. Müller (Vienna, 1996), 93–167, here 101.
61. For internal views on the Red Guard, see Norbert C. Wolf, *Revolution in Wien: Die literarische Intelligenz im politischen Umbruch 1918/19* (Vienna, 2018), 120–44.
62. Schaffer, *Volkswehr*, 25.
63. Peter Broucek, 'Heerwesen', in *Österreich 1918–1938: Geschichte der Ersten Republik. Vol. 1*, eds Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik (Vienna, 1983), 209–24, here 211–14.
64. Rebitsch, *Tirol*, 28–33. On the Italian occupation, see Andrea Di Michele, 'Besatzungszeit', in *Katastrophenjahre: Der Erste Weltkrieg und Tirol*, eds Hermann Kuprian and Oswald Überegger (Innsbruck, 2014), 529–46.
65. Kurz, 'Die Volkswehr', 69. Some Styrian *Volkswehr* members also manned the internal border with Lower Austria, fearing a possible communist incursion from Hungary via Vienna; see Schaffer, *Volkswehr*, 63–87.
66. Thomas Edelmann, 'Der Konflikt um das Burgenland 1919–1921', in *Ende und Aufbruch*, ed. Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, 113–46, here 120.
67. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (StLA), Statth Präs, box 999, A.5.B., Zl. 41-1919 Schreiben der Deutschen Studentenschaft an die Steiermärkische Landesregierung, 23.12.1918.
68. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 4613-1918 Schutzverband deutschnationaler Kriegsteilnehmer, Versammlungen, Dezember 1918.
69. Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv (OÖLA), Statth Präs, Kriegssammlung 1914–1918, box 39, Heimkehrerhilfe 1914–1924, Teil II, 23b, Zl. 78 Schreiben der Oberösterreichischen Heimkehrerhilfe Linz an Redaktionen, 4.9.1919.
70. Überegger, *Erinnerungskriege*, 187.
71. Christa Hämmerle, '"Vor vierzig Monaten waren wir noch Soldaten, vor einem halben Jahr noch Männer . . .". Zum historischen Kontext einer "Krise der Männlichkeit" in Österreich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg', *L'Homme. Krise(n) der Männlichkeit*, 19, no. 2 (2008): 51–73, here 70.

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72. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 4613-1918 Schutzverband deutschnationaler Kriegsteilnehmer, Versammlungen, Schreiben an das deutschösterreichische Staatsamt des Innern, 28.12.1918.
73. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 1076-1919 Gedächtnisfeier für die gefallenen Krieger am 5.1.1919, Schreiben an Staatsamt des Inneren, 2.2.1919.
74. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, AAng, NPA, box 178, Liasse Österreich 2/4, Zl. 3357/2-1919 Versammlung der Heimkehrer vor dem Rathause, April 1919; Zl. 2890/1 Versammlung von Heimkehrern und abgerüsteten Soldaten, April 1919.
75. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 547-1919 Gedächtnisfeier der Heimgekehrten für die gefallenen Krieger, Jänner 1919; Zl. 1076-1919 Gedächtnisfeier für die gefallenen Krieger am 5.1.1919, 10.1.1919.
76. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 14577-1919 Versammlung der Heimkehrer und Kriegsinvaliden im Zirkus Busch, 19.4.1919.
77. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 21075-1919 Wirtschaftsverband der nichtaktiven Gagisten und Gleichgestellten Deutschösterreichs, Versammlung, Juni 1919.
78. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 1075-1919 Versammlung von Militärpersonen – Sicherheitsvorkehrungen, January 1919; Zl. 1252-1919 Soldatenversammlung am 5.1.1919 im Grossen Konzerthaussaale; Zl. 2104-1919 Versammlung von Kriegsinvaliden, Jänner 1919.
79. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2435, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 6924-1919 Versammlung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener, Februar 1919.
80. The roughly 200 participants, including many Czechs, appropriately met in a pub named after the Bohemian capital (*Gasthaus 'Zur Stadt Prag'*). The police reported that the meeting occurred without incident. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, box 2435, Inneres, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 477-1919 Föderation revolutionärer Sozialisten 'Internationale', Versammlung, January 1919.
81. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, box 2435, Inneres, 15/3, 1918–1921, Zl. 4251-1919 Begrüssungsfeier der katholischen Heimkehrer, Februar 1919.
82. Compare Gerhard Botz, *Krisenzonen einer Demokratie: Gewalt, Streik und Konfliktunterdrückung in Österreich seit 1918* (Frankfurt a.M.-New York, 1987), 30; Leidinger and Moritz, *Gefangenschaft*, 577.
83. Botz, *Krisenzonen*, 27. For examples, see Konrád, 'Two Post-War Paths'; Robert Gerwarth, 'The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War', *Past and Present* 200 (August 2008), 175–209.
84. Gerald Lamprecht, 'Jüdische Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg – eine Minderheit?', in *Minderheiten-Soldaten: Ethnizität und Identität in den Armeen des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. Oswald Überegger (Paderborn, 2018), 177–95.
85. See Gerald Lamprecht, 'The Remembrance of World War One and the Austrian Federation of Jewish War Veterans', *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 9 (2016): 122–43, here 132; Pawlowsky and Wendelin, *Die Wunden des Staates*, 275.
86. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I* (Oxford, 2001), 150–61; David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War* (Oxford, 2001), 93–100.
87. Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna*, 173–79.
88. The *Frontkämpfervereinigung* was also named *Frontkämpfervereinigung Deutsch-Österreich* and existed until 1935. Unlike other veterans associations, Hiltl intended to involve rank-and-file soldiers in its organization, but the leading positions were nevertheless in the hands of ex-officers who perceived their role to be the defence of 'war participants' interests'. According to the statutes, they planned to unify all 'Aryan' frontline soldiers from all branches of service, foster comradeship, pay tribute to fallen soldiers, and contribute to the rebuilding of the fatherland.

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See Julia Walleczek-Fritz, 'Staying Mobilized: Veterans' Associations in Austria's Border Regions Carinthia and Styria during the Interwar Period', *Zeitgeschichte* 47, no. 1 (2020): 59–80, here 60; Mario Strigl, *Vom Legitimismus zum Nationalismus: Die Frontkämpfervereinigung in Österreich*, MA thesis, University of Vienna 2000; Clifton Earl Edmondson, 'Heimwehren und andere Wehrverbände', in *Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreichs: Erste Republik 1918–1933*, eds Emmerich Tálos et al. (Vienna, 1995), 261–76, here 263.

89. Wenninger, 'Dimensionen organisierter Gewalt', 524.
90. Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend*, 58–59. See also Konrád, 'Two Post-War Paths'.
91. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, AAng, NPA, box 178, Liasse Österreich, 2/4, Zl. 2357/1a-1920 Versamlung des deutschösterreichischen Antisemitenbundes und der Frontkämpfervereinigung am 7.6.1920 in der Volkshalle des Neuen Wiener Rathauses.
92. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 8.6.1920, 5.
93. Cited in Gerwarth, 'Central European Counter-Revolution', 201.
94. Compare: Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden*; Millington, *From Victory to Vichy*; Newman, *Yugoslavia*; Ángel Alcalde, 'War Veterans as Transnational Actors: Politics, Alliances and Networks in the Interwar Period', *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire* 25 (2018): 492–511.
95. Stenographische Protokolle des Herrenhauses des Reichsrates 1861–1918, 32. Sitzung der XXII Session, am 22. März 1918, 934–36. Erste Lesung des Antrages der Herrenhausmitglieder Grafen Thun-Salm, Herzog von Beaufort und Genossen, betreffs Vorlage eines neuen Versorgungsgesetzes für heimkehrende Reservisten und Kriegsgefangene. https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=sph&datum=00 22&page=1104&size=45.
96. Walleczek-Fritz, 'Staying Mobilized', 70–71.
97. ÖStA, AdR, AAng, BKA, NPA, box 321, Liasse Österreich 21/1–21/2, Fasz. 21/2, 1919 Heimkehrer aus Westungarn, 28.9.1919.
98. *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1.1.1919, 8.
99. *Freie Stimmen*, 29.2.1920, 2–3.
100. Walleczek-Fritz, 'Staying mobilized', 65.
101. A typical example in this respect was the Carinthian Homecomers Federation (*Kärntner Heimkehrerbund*), which in March 1921 changed its name to the Carinthian Provincial Association of the Alpine Association of 1914–1918 War Participants (*Landesverband Kärnten des Alpenländischen Verbandes der Kriegsteilnehmer 1914–1918*). See KLA, 13-C-3158 Ak, Nr. 3341, Fasz. 10-1/2277, Zl. 6078 Kärntner Heimkehrerbund Klagenfurt 1920.
102. Schaffer, *Volkswehr*, 37 and 74.
103. Ortner, 'Volkswehr und Bundesheer', 475–76.
104. On this issue, see Damijan Guštin, 'Die Formierung der Streitkräfte und die Reaktion der Bevölkerung auf die Bildung von Nationalstaaten: Das Gebiet des Landes Kärnten', in *Die Kärntner Volksabstimmung 1920 und die Geschichtsforschung: Leistungen, Defizite, Perspektiven*, eds Hellwig Valentin et al. (Klagenfurt, 2002), 259–74.
105. Tamás Révész, 'For the "Freedom and Unity" of Carinthia? New Perspectives on the Military Remobilization in the Carinthian Borderland War (1918–1919)', *First World War Studies* 7 (2016): 265–86, here 270–75.
106. Schaffer, *Volkswehr*, 30–33.
107. *Volkswehr* units from Vienna, Lower Austria and Upper Austria were only active for a short time in Carinthia.
108. See Oswald Überegger, *Im Schatten des Krieges: Geschichte Tirols 1918–1920* (Paderborn, 2019).
109. On 18 November 1918, the units were renamed *Volkswehrbataillon* I and II, respectively. See Rebitsch, *Tirol*, 23–27.

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110. Meinrad Pichler, 'Ferdinand Riedmann – Der Prophet vom gelobten Land Helvetia', in *'Kanton Übrig': Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz gehören wollte*, ed. Tobias G. Natter (Bregenz, 2009), 44–52, here 49.
111. In an unofficial (i.e. not approved by the federal government) popular referendum in May 1919, 80 percent of the population in Vorarlberg declared themselves in favour of pursuing accession discussions with Switzerland. However, the start of discussions was delayed until the peace treaties were agreed.
112. Höbelt, *Erste Republik*, 27.
113. Compare: Roman Sandgruber, 'Österreichs Wirtschaft 1918–1938: Überblick und Weichenstellungen', in *Die umkämpfte Republik*, ed. Karner, 235–45; Stefan Eminger and Ernst Langthaler, *Niederösterreich: Vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gegenwart* (Innsbruck-Vienna, 2013), 18–22; Ivan Šedivý, 'Der Einfluss des Ersten Weltkrieges auf die tschechische Politik', in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918. Vol. XI, Teilband 1/2: Vom Vielvölkerstaat Österreich-Ungarn zum neuen Europa der Nationalstaaten*, ed. Helmut Rumpler (Vienna, 2016), 711–34.
114. Höbelt, *Erste Republik*, 19.
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116. Ibid., 101.
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121. Tamás Révész, unpublished research report, *Hungarian sources*, 8.
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123. In English, see Kevin J. McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation: The Mutinous Army that Threatened a Revolution, Destroyed an Empire, Founded a Republic and Remade the Map of Europe* (New York, 2016); Brent Mueggenberg, *The Czecho-Slovak Struggle for Independence, 1914–1920* (Jefferson, 2014), 246–67.
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