

REVISIONISM AND REMOBILIZATION



To a certain extent, the 1930s were an inverted picture of the values and expectations of the 1920s. Mainly as a consequence of the Great Depression at the turn of the decade, democracy and collective security gradually ceased to be a framework for prosperity and peace in numerous countries. Even if a trend towards authoritarian regimes in Central Europe was evident from the mid-1920s, it became the norm across most of South and Central Europe in the following decade, with right-wing dictatorships pursuing foreign policies that sought to revise the Paris peace treaties. After 1933, Nazi Germany became a key international player. Hitler's government assured its neighbours and the international public of its interest in maintaining peace, while violating provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and secretly preparing the country for war. The threat of a new conflict forced other states to rearm, at the same time as striving after ways to avert it. International revisionism of the once defeated and dissatisfied states set in motion a spiralling trend towards remobilization.¹

These trends altered the importance of WWI veterans on both national and international levels. Instead of being socially respected, but practically 'superfluous' participants in the previous war, they had the opportunity to present themselves as bearers of war experience, which the new threat rendered potentially useful again. Aside from their knowledge of combat, veterans could be utilized as a unifying political symbol, thereby opening up possibilities for the reformulation of relationships among veterans themselves, and between veterans, society and the state. By celebrating veterans as a model of hegemonic masculinity, right-wing dictatorships, in particular, were able to exploit them for their own legitimacy as well as to promote their interests internationally.²

The significance of war veterans also changed in states striving to maintain the international status quo, such as Czechoslovakia and Austria. In Czechoslovakia, the continuity of democratic politics between 1918 and 1938 curbed fundamental change in the veterans landscape and state policies towards them. Nevertheless, there were noticeable shifts in comparison with the 1920s, as a result of feverish war preparations in the late 1930s. Neighbouring Austria likewise faced an acute threat from the expansion of Nazi Germany, which endangered its existence as an independent state. In 1934, after a short civil war, an authoritarian ‘corporate state’ (*Ständestaat*) was established with the purpose of exerting greater governmental control and defending itself against German interference. The new regime brought profound changes in Austria’s policy towards war veterans.

This chapter initially traces the transformation in the international veterans landscape arising from the new configuration of international forces. It then follows the different remobilization trajectories of WWI veterans in democratic Czechoslovakia and non-democratic Austria, before dealing with the disruption to veterans after the *Anschluss* of Austria with Nazi Germany and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938/39, which turned former victors into the defeated and vice-versa.

International Veterans Revisionism

At the start of July 1934, at an event to mark the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of WWI, Reich Minister Rudolf Heß gave a speech in Königsberg, East Prussia, one of the few areas in Germany where fighting had occurred during the war. The speech was not just intended for the local audience, but primarily for veterans in Western Europe, especially in France.³ In his speech, which was filmed, Heß appealed to veterans abroad to work with their German counterparts to build ‘real peace’.⁴ He emphasized the ‘veteran spirit’ as the common essence of the soldiers’ experience, which would lead to better understanding between nations that were once enemies. Heß further argued that veterans had shown discipline, loyalty and courage, and therefore, unlike others, had earned the moral right to influence their nation’s future. At the same time, however, he vividly depicted the suffering, pain and death that soldiers had gone through, giving veterans a sincere interest in maintaining peace and making them better qualified to do so than diplomats and politicians, who had irresponsibly led the world into war in 1914. For Heß, Hitler’s Germany provided the first practical evidence of peaceful ‘veterans diplomacy’, along with Mussolini’s Italy and Piłsudski’s Poland. In his view, it was the ‘frontline fighters’, Piłsudski and Hitler, who had succeeded in making a bilateral declaration of non-aggression in January 1934.⁵ He thus called on veterans to allow Germany the ‘dignified’ existence that other states enjoyed.⁶

In fact, the latter agreement was the first step towards the disintegration of international collective security, and Heß's speech constituted an unexpected move during Germany's ongoing international isolation after the Nazis came to power. It also took place soon after the notorious 'Night of the Long Knives', the violent purge of the SA leadership.⁷ With this speech, the Nazis were flying a kite for veterans associations abroad to re-establish relations, which they had severed in the spring of 1933 after the Nazis imposed control over German veterans organizations.⁸ In stylizing government members as 'frontline fighters', the Nazis were simulating a desire to put this war experience at the service of international peace. In short, veterans functioned as a means to break Germany's isolation: the rhetoric about peaceful intentions created a smokescreen for a regime that, in reality, needed time to prepare for war.⁹ At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took over the coordination of contacts between German veterans and foreign veterans associations, whose activities were now closely monitored by a ministerial department for 'frontline fighters'. To this end, a new organization was established in October 1936, the United German Front Fighter Associations (*Vereinigte deutsche Frontkämpfer-Verbände*), under the leadership of Charles Edward, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.¹⁰

Initially, neither Czechoslovakia nor Austria were much concerned by the Nazis' veterans diplomacy. The official press in Austria discussed the issue in its international reporting, but without reference to veterans or political decision-makers at home. Heß's speech came across as diplomatically inept because he appeared to be inciting French veterans against the government in Paris, as the *Grande Nation* reacted with a mixture of disquiet, distrust and undisguised outrage.¹¹ The Czechoslovak legionnaire newspaper, *Národní osvobození*, considered Heß's speech a transparent manoeuvre to divert attention away from the political violence inside Germany and attributed it scant significance.¹² Nevertheless, these new developments induced the legionnaires to respond, by strengthening contacts with similar kinds of veterans within the framework of the – originally, anti-Habsburg – Little Entente of Volunteers (comprising Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania).¹³ *La Petite Entente des Volontaires* (PEV) officially came into existence in 1923, but did not lead to any significant activity for a long time, partly due to the Romanian government's lack of interest. It was not until 1929 that PEV adopted statutes, at a meeting in Bratislava, when the joint defence of the inviolability of peace treaties was the most important item on the agenda.¹⁴

In August 1933, representatives of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav war volunteers met at a congress of the Union of Former Romanian Volunteers, together with Polish veterans, who were not otherwise part of the Little Entente. The meeting opened in northwestern Romania, in the city of Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár / Klausenburg, before moving to the capital Bucharest and the Black Sea port of Constanța. The itinerary was designed to show unified resistance to the growing revisionist

ambitions of neighbouring states. The organizers did not choose Cluj-Napoca by chance, but because it was the largest city in Transylvania, where large Hungarian and German minorities lived. In their speeches, delegates reminded one another of having fought on the same front against a common enemy and warned of the current danger. Lev Sychrava, the Czechoslovak delegate and ČSOL official responsible for foreign policy issues, set out the importance of PEV as a guarantor of national freedom, territorial integrity and social progress. For him, the Little Entente states had been redeemed by the blood of volunteers and he affirmed that they and their Western allies would oppose revisionist demands.¹⁵ The concluding resolution from Constanța proclaimed a willingness to defend national freedom and the ‘fruits of our victory’ against the ‘vengeful ill will of the defeated oppressors’, who subjected the Little Entente to ‘lies and defamation’ regarding the alleged oppression of national minorities and the economic non-viability of the successor states.¹⁶

Half a year on, in February 1934, a meeting in Starý Smokovec-Hrebienok in the Slovakian High Tatra mountains sought to develop PEV’s activities. The simultaneous founding of a League of Friends of the Legionnaires Little Entente promoted the idea of mutual defence to a wider public. The League of Friends planned to issue a monthly magazine and hoped that the accession of its members to CIAMAC would open up another avenue for international cooperation.¹⁷ However, despite indications of increased activity, this programme did not materialize. Even within the Little Entente, different national interests prevailed and the leaders of the revisionist bloc, Hitler and Mussolini, exploited these by completing bilateral agreements with Romania and Yugoslavia.¹⁸ PEV legionnaires continued to demonstrate ceremonially their mutual respect, to commemorate celebrated episodes from the recent past within the respective ‘cultures of victory’, and to oppose rhetorical attacks from the defeated states. Yet, they did not receive governmental support in their efforts to strengthen the alliance from below. Disunity was also evident among the Czechoslovak legionnaires themselves. The right-wing Independent Union of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Nezávislá jednota československých legionářů*, NJČSL) rejected the idea of joining the ‘pacifist’ CIAMAC and thereby the whole approach of PEV.¹⁹

These developments occurred at precisely the moment when Austria was under shock from the fighting between the Dollfuß regime (with its paramilitary allies) and the Social Democrats. Overshadowed by the events surrounding the violent suppression of the organized labour movement, the press found little time to discuss either PEV or CIAMAC. Only a few newspaper articles pilloried the ‘betrayal’ by the legionnaires during the war. In doing so, they unpacked a familiar set of stereotypes that had been circulating for years in the conservative and nationalist media about the conflicts between the ‘groups of volunteers’ and the ‘loyal’ POWs among the armed forces of the Central Powers held captive in Russia.²⁰

In the meantime, the ČSOL stood alone in another international effort to confront revisionism. While the Little Entente continued to dwell on Europe's division into winners and losers, a new dividing line in international politics arose between fascism, which sought to revise the international order by arbitration and war, and anti-fascism, which brought together many diverse political orientations and national interests in a bid to halt fascist expansion. The International Peace Campaign (*Rassemblement universel pour la paix*, RUP) was one body that emerged from this new cleavage, and its activities culminated in the International Peace Congress in Brussels on 3–6 September 1936. Around four thousand delegates from thirty-five countries took part, the Czechoslovak delegation being one of the largest.²¹

In Austria, the authorities established a special 'Committee for the Preparation of the World Peace Congress', which nominated a delegation that travelled to Brussels under the leadership of the administrative lawyer and university professor Karl Brockhausen. The latter was already seventy-seven years old and had served in several ministries under the old monarchy. Having initially composed a number of patriotic texts after the outbreak of war in 1914, he later decisively rejected 'atrocious propaganda and incitement to national hatred', dedicating himself entirely to the pacifist cause and making an important contribution to the meeting in Brussels. The conference, which involved meetings between parliamentarians, trade unionists and delegations of farmers, placed a particular emphasis on the participation of 'clerics from all confessions'. The clericalist 'corporate state' gave special praise to this aspect of the meeting, while the old liberal Brockhausen – invoking the spirit of the pioneering Austrian pacifist, Bertha von Suttner – argued for the establishment of a 'Central Office for Peace Propaganda' in Vienna. The Austrian committee expressed its satisfaction with the conference's outcome, while the Viennese press generally did likewise, not without critical observations about the absence of delegations from Germany and Italy.²²

Like numerous other interest groups, veterans also had a section within RUP, which was chaired by Lev Sychrava in his capacity as president of CIAMAC.²³ Nevertheless, RUP constantly struggled with the fact that, in order to attract as much support as possible, it had declared itself non-political.²⁴ At the same time, it was criticized for being a covert communist platform, and the participation of well-known communist officials, communist organizations and representatives from the Soviet Union appeared to give credence to this accusation. However, the communists, who had only recently changed their international strategy from undermining the 'bourgeois state' and unconditional opposition to war to 'popular front' government and armed defence of peace, were still seen in much of Europe as an anti-system opposition; they were even proscribed in some countries, including Austria. RUP itself was reluctant to oppose fascism openly and denounce fascist governments because numerous states maintained relations with them.²⁵ Not wishing to deprive itself of a wider audience, RUP laid

down four broad principles for maintaining peace: adherence to international treaties, disarmament, strengthening the League of Nations, and creation of an effective instrument for the latter to prevent the outbreak of war.²⁶ Thus, among Czechoslovak veterans, such initiatives appealed predominantly to the left-wing section of the ČSOL, which saw RUP as a vehicle for the international promotion of the interests of small states and the validity of existing treaties (rather than as a disguised communist threat).

Neither PEV nor RUP were able to resist the new mainstream in international veterans politics, which in the second half of the 1930s was embodied by the fascist-controlled *Comité International Permanent* (CIP). CIP followed on from the success of German bilateral veterans diplomacy in the years 1934/36, which had managed to convey to masses of foreign veterans a positive image of Nazi Germany, namely, that of a regenerated, but peaceable state.²⁷ The next step in Nazi foreign policy was the dismantling of the existing international veterans platforms, which were considered relics of the 1920s. In their place, they aimed to create a new elite platform that served the interests of Germany and its allies.²⁸

In the case of CIAMAC, the crushing of the Social Democratic Party by the Dollfuß regime entailed the imprisonment of Maximilian Brandeis from February to September 1934. In the following months, the now censored press registered CIAMAC's dwindling influence. In February 1935, for example, the Viennese daily, *Der Wiener Tag*, published a short article about the CIAMAC board meeting in Prague, which Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš also attended.²⁹ Although the association passed a resolution expressing its satisfaction with the ex-soldiers' endeavours to improve international relations, another comment showed its concern about the continued arms race.³⁰ Invoking the importance of the League of Nations as a patron of peace, the 'representatives of the war disabled and the former front fighters' repeated their pleas with ever less effectiveness throughout the 1930s. The *Österreichische Wehrzeitung* and the *Salzburger Volksblatt* came to similar conclusions in autumn 1937, when CIAMAC delegates convened in Paris.³¹

Interestingly, before the full establishment of the dictatorship, the social democratic *Arbeiter-Zeitung* made identical points in September 1933. With the disarmament conference in Geneva from 1932 to 1934 as backdrop, CIAMAC leaders spoke of the increased danger of war, and Hitler's seizure of power clearly overshadowed the negotiations in Switzerland. Thus, the paper suggested, it was an impotent gesture for Maximilian Brandeis to describe Nazi Germany as 'morally isolated', the more so as he simultaneously felt compelled to admit that prominent figures in the German *Reichsbund* of war invalids and the predominantly social democratic *Reichsbanner* had been arrested by the new regime.³²

With the consolidation of the Austro-fascist system, the media subsequently proclaimed CIAMAC's decline, not without satisfaction. Rapprochement between Berlin and Vienna in the 1936 July Agreement influenced the situation,

too. In August 1936, the *Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt* almost triumphantly declared that Austrian war victims were no longer members of CIAMAC. The paper added, the 'voices from Vienna' felt in good company, because the Hungarian war disabled had never joined and the Italians also withdrew (invalids from Germany had done so shortly after the Nazis took power).³³ Indeed, the withdrawal of these national sections meant CIAMAC lost a significant number of members and thereby a large part of its income.³⁴ Although these losses did not destroy CIAMAC, they significantly weakened the organization. Moreover, the enforced withdrawal of the German and Austrian associations meant that it ceased to be a platform for veterans from both victorious and defeated countries.

By contrast, FIDAC proved a trickier question for Nazi policy. As the largest and most influential veterans organization, it formed an exclusive club of victors that rejected equal rights for the defeated countries. However, German diplomats realized that FIDAC was divided on the issue of cooperation with veterans from defeated states, and that the proponents of cooperation – the Italians, British and some Belgians – could be exploited to further German interests. According to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this was already apparent at the Luxembourg congresses of 1927 and 1928, which had no clear outcomes, but still indicated the possibilities for asserting German influence.³⁵ FIDAC was aware of the problem, but its congress in Brussels in September 1935 again refused to change its character from 'inter-allied' to 'international'. Nevertheless, it agreed to establish permanent cooperation with Germany and other defeated countries outside the framework of FIDAC.³⁶ Drawing on an unrealized proposal from the last Luxembourg congress in 1928, FIDAC indirectly offered to establish a 'permanent joint committee' of veterans, with three representatives from each country.³⁷

The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and veterans in Germany seized upon this initiative in order to mould the platform into a form favourable to international fascism. After the first meeting between German and allied veterans, who stopped off in Berlin on their way to the FIDAC Congress in Warsaw at the end of August 1936, CIP was officially established in early November 1936 in Rome. There, fourteen national delegations took part in grandiose celebrations to commemorate Italy's victory in 1918.³⁸ Nonetheless, in comparison to CIAMAC or FIDAC, CIP was from the outset a simple organization, without its own budget, permanent secretariat or periodical. Its programme remained rather vague and its activities mainly consisted of ceremonial gestures, use of symbols and lyric speeches rather than the practical work for the benefit of veterans embodied by CIAMAC and FIDAC.³⁹ In short, CIP's primary aim was the manipulation of the discourse on veterans in order to foster the perception that the interests of German veterans and the regime were the same as those of other countries.

In this sense, the CIP congress in February 1937 represented a great success for the Nazis. Delegates were welcomed in Berlin by repeated assurances from

Prussia's Minister President Hermann Göring, Minister of Defence Werner von Blomberg and Rudolf Heß that peace comprised a fundamental tenet of German policy. The culmination of the trip was an audience with Hitler, who received the delegates at his private residence near Berchtesgaden in Bavaria. Hitler stated that, by inviting foreign guests into his home, he considered them fellow veterans, who, like him, had experienced life in the trenches. During the meeting, Hitler smiled a lot, willingly posed for photos with delegates and signed autographs. The regime's propaganda office thus ensured that an image circulated around the world of Hitler as a 'fascinating' dictator who wanted to resolve political conflicts solely by peaceful means.⁴⁰

Newspapers in Austria joined in the positive reaction, thereby helping Nazi propaganda. The *Salzburger Chronik* and *Tiroler Anzeiger* informed their readers that fifty delegates from fourteen countries including England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the United States and Czechoslovakia attended the gathering.⁴¹ The *Salzburger Volkszeitung* focused on the 'good relations' between Vienna and Berlin in the wake of the July Agreement, publishing a front-page picture of Göring shaking hands with the Austrian deputation led by Karl Czapp von Birkstetten, former Minister for Home Defence under the monarchy.⁴² The press coverage stressed the endeavours by Mussolini und Hitler to shape the new CIP and gave a summary of the conference, which was permeated with pacifist rhetoric. However, those who read more closely would have noted that front fighters had the 'noble duty' to 'bequeath the soldierly spirit' to 'new generations'.⁴³

Public pronouncements during the Berlin congress reflected this ambivalence. Thus, Göring sharply criticized the existing orientation of veterans associations: 'Men from the trenches have not always played the same role in their countries' politics and sometimes it seemed to be the case that the front fighters' ideal threatened to become an end in itself, either as a simple embodiment of tradition or as the expression of social interests'. Surveying declarations of pacifism and the soldier's obligation to obedience, Göring paid lip service to the ideals of international reconciliation, urging participants: 'put everything behind you that once divided the peoples of Europe!' However, his peroration left little doubt as to the regime's ultimate intentions: 'Think about the fact that history has moved on! Shut out all sentiments that have been based on false assumptions and have created divisions between peoples. Let's not speak about victors and the defeated, but about the ideals of the front fighters: comradeship to the utmost, fulfilment of duty to the bitter end and readiness for sacrifice until to death!'⁴⁴

Regardless of this martial rhetoric, the congress made a positive impression on the Czechoslovak delegation. According to their German guide, the personal meetings with senior German politicians had convinced them that the Nazis were not violent criminals or warmongers. He felt sure that the head of the delegation, legionnaire and career diplomat Miroslav Lokay, would disseminate a favourable image back home.⁴⁵ Upon his return, Lokay did indeed give a lecture

to legionnaires, in which he stated that the delegates had set out for Berlin ‘with very mixed feelings’ and ‘fears’. However, these had dissipated thanks to the attention lavished on the guests. Aside from the accompaniment by a Czech-speaking German officer, this included accommodation in a luxury Berlin hotel and an honorary procession of German troops in front of the Czechoslovak flag during the laying of wreaths at the tomb of the unknown soldier in the centre of the capital. Moreover, Hitler had assured them in a personal audience that, instead of war, negotiated agreements were always essential.⁴⁶

For CIP to succeed, it was important that the widest possible spectrum of veterans be represented in its national sections, but this presented a ‘problem’ for the Czechoslovak section, as stated in a memorandum to the Office of the President of the Republic in March 1937.⁴⁷ Until then, only representatives of the legionnaires and post-war volunteers from 1918/19 had participated on the country’s behalf. Now, involvement of veterans from the Austro-Hungarian army was on the agenda, not just Czechs and Slovaks, but also Germans and Hungarians. For German-speaking veterans from Czechoslovakia, it was relatively easy to establish contacts with former comrades in Germany, even without the authorities’ consent. Yet, the German Foreign Ministry feared a negative reaction from the Czechoslovak government and therefore discouraged them from undertaking direct contact.⁴⁸ If CIP was to fulfil its role of promoting Nazi Germany as a pillar of European peace, its activities had to be transparent and needed the support of national governments. Therefore, in April 1937, the German-speaking POWs association officially requested permission to participate in the Czechoslovak section of CIP, not only to forestall any potential repression by the state, but also to demonstrate their credibility.⁴⁹

Another of the German Foreign Ministry’s trump cards was the use of British veterans as intermediaries in promoting its agenda in Central Europe.⁵⁰ Instead of Germans, whose zealous defence of CIP might have seemed suspicious, a British Legion delegation visited Prague in summer 1937 to convince veterans of the benefits of mutual cooperation. As a result, leaders of Czech and German-speaking veterans associations met – most likely for the first time – on the luxurious premises of the Social Club in the centre of Prague. There, Sir Francis Goodley and George Crosfield argued for internal cooperation within the Czechoslovak section and joint representation at CIP’s international conventions.⁵¹ The two issues were closely connected. Zdeněk Fierlinger, a ČSOL legionnaire, diplomat and personal friend of Crosfield, welcomed the idea of international rapprochement among veterans with the aim of strengthening peace, provided that CIP remained under the control of democratic states. Fierlinger was also a keen proponent of a ‘nationwide federation of ex-combatants’ like the British Legion, but, in his opinion, the ČSOL should play the leading role in this organization because it was the ‘most representative and by far the most important component’ of the veterans landscape.⁵² However, this statement discredited the idea in

the eyes of other associations, because they saw it as a new effort to secure the hegemony of the ČSOL.⁵³

All the same, the British mission resulted in the expansion of the Czechoslovak section, including thirteen Czech or Czechoslovak groups and two associations of Czechoslovak Germans, which comprised a substantial portion of the veteranship.⁵⁴ Subsequently, at the CIP congress in Paris in November 1937, Gustav Kirsch represented German-speakers within a three-member Czechoslovak delegation. For the Sudeten Germans, the CIP became a prestigious platform for promoting their interests to a European audience: Kirsch was reputedly the first Sudeten German to meet leading politicians such as French Prime Minister Camille Chautemps. He took advantage of the opportunity to inform foreign partners of the unequal standing of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia, which he illustrated with veteran-friendly examples, such as the prohibition on wearing decorations from the Austro-Hungarian army in public.⁵⁵ However, the primary purpose of Kirsch's participation was not to address minor issues, but to be seen as a credible partner in negotiations and not to appear too subversive. This was also the impression he made on the head of the Czechoslovak delegation, Lokay, who afterwards described him as 'a completely loyal colleague', 'fully deserving of trust'.⁵⁶

At the next CIP congress in London in May 1938, this development was gradually reversed. In spite of meticulous preparations by the British Legion, which arranged an audience with Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester and Defence Minister Thomas Inskip, the recent *Anschluss* negatively affected the general mood. Also, an open conflict erupted over the election of a new chairman.⁵⁷ The Germans succeeded in having Charles Edward, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (a Nazi Party member since 1933), take over from the Italian Carl Delcroix. The former received eight votes, but four delegations – the Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs, French and Belgians – abstained because they considered a German chairman inappropriate just after the annexation of Austria. French veterans subsequently withdrew from CIP. This was the organization's first setback, yet it continued to operate because the Germans calculated that it could still be a useful tool and they aimed to exert pressure on the French to return.⁵⁸

Czechoslovak legionnaires likewise came to realize the problematic situation when, in June 1938 in Stettin, Rudolf Heß spoke again about the role of 'front-line fighters'. As Lev Sychrava noted in an editorial for *Národní osvobození*, Heß's speech reiterated the idea articulated four years previously in Königsberg about the predestined role for 'frontline fighters' in senior government positions to shape international peace. Now, on behalf of these 'frontline fighters', Heß attacked Czechoslovakia, which was supposedly a threat to peace because of its oppression of the German minority. For Sychrava, this laid open Heß's demagoguery, because politicians like French Prime Minister Daladier had also fought during the war and did not support Nazi policies. He believed CIP would address the



Figure 5.1. Meeting of CIP representatives in Coburg in 1938 (Charles Edward, Duke of Saxe Coburg and Gotha in the foreground). Vojenský ústřední archiv-Vojenský historický archiv, Prague.

issue of German propaganda against Czechoslovakia, given its proclaimed goal of combatting false reports.⁵⁹ In practice, however, CIP only strove to maintain the image of fascists as peacemakers. Having been soothed by the usual promises, Miroslav Lokay thus returned from a meeting of CIP Executive Committee in August 1938 in Coburg, Germany, with a positive impression (see figure 5.1).⁶⁰

During the culmination of the Czechoslovak crisis the following month, while the Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei*, SdP) was preparing an uprising and the government was initiating a general mobilization of the armed forces, the Czechoslovak CIP section issued a declaration calling for a non-violent solution.⁶¹ Some British and Greek veterans even offered Germany their assistance as an international police force, if a plebiscite were to be used to resolve the territorial dispute.⁶² However, the ships with over 1,200 British veterans never left the UK because the Munich Agreement was signed. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs viewed the whole episode as a positive signal that CIP was instrumental to their political goals: Czechoslovak veterans had been forced into a position they had rejected throughout the interwar period. Although the latter continued to receive support from the Little Entente, international left-wing pacifism, and sections of CIAMAC and FIDAC, this was not enough to counter the shifts in attitude among the large powers, who accepted Hitler's offer to maintain the peace, even at the cost of revising the post-war treaties according to Nazi Germany's wishes.

Czechoslovakia: The Double Remobilization of Austro-Hungarian Army Veterans

At the end of 1937, not long after the visit from British Legion members to Prague, the former Austro-Hungarian, and later Czechoslovak, officer Rudolf Kalhous published his reflections on the importance of ‘soldiers from the front’ (*vojáci z fronty*) for the defence of the state. Kalhous was convinced of their usefulness and argued that the government should mobilize all available resources, regardless of whether soldiers had served in the Czechoslovak legions or the Austro-Hungarian army. In his view, the state should expand Czechoslovak military traditions and memory culture to include events that the largest possible number of former soldiers could identify with. Without rejecting the legionnaire tradition, he advocated the inclusion of famous battles that had preserved the territorial integrity of the Bohemian lands, such as the Battle of Kolín in 1757 against Prussia.⁶³ Kalhous did not refer to any WWI battles, but suggested replacing Austro-Hungarian medals for bravery in combat with equivalent Czechoslovak decorations, in order to inspire soldiers in the future. Furthermore, he envisaged organizational support for former Austro-Hungarian ‘front soldiers’ through local branches of a new ‘Union of Frontline Fighters’; membership would be voluntary, but the material benefits on offer would motivate veterans to join.⁶⁴

Kalhous’s idea was never realized and did not even spark a debate on the organizational unification of veterans across Czechoslovakia. However, it did highlight a key dilemma: how to motivate as many men from the last war as possible to fight for a state that had so far only been willing to acknowledge the legionnaires (both symbolically and materially). At the same time, fascist forces in Czechoslovakia and abroad were seeking to recruit ‘frontline fighters’ from the Austro-Hungarian army for ‘anti-system’ politics. As revisionism increased threats to international security, Czechoslovakia quickly needed to build up its defence capability through armament, military training and civil defence education. In this volatile atmosphere, Habsburg veterans were remobilized along ethnic lines: Czechoslovak ex-soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army were willing to defend the republic, yet step by step the SdP won over German-speaking veterans in opposition towards it.

For Czech veterans who had been involved in regimental associations under the umbrella organization of the Comradeship of the Central Union of Czechoslovak Military Associations (*Kamarádství ústředního svazu čs. vojenských spolků*) since 1936, increased demand for soldiers and military skills presented an opportunity to strengthen their organization and raise its public profile through defence education and patriotic displays.⁶⁵ Instead of the tired image of the Czech soldier resisting the monarchy through idleness and a Švejk-like approach to his duties, Comradeship activists emphasized the timeless military virtues of the Czechoslovak soldier, such as manly bravery and dutifulness, whether under

Austria-Hungary before 1918, for Czechoslovakia thereafter, or in the event of a future war.⁶⁶ It propagated this reappraisal of veterans in publications, exhibitions and even in a theatre play.⁶⁷ Moreover, Comradeship activists aimed to play a leading organizational role, acting in 1935 as co-founders of the Union of Czechoslovak World War Combatants and Members of the Czechoslovak Army in Reserve (*Svaz čsl. bojovníků ze světové války a příslušníků čs. armády v záloze*), which aimed to unite all of the 'Czechoslovak' (in an ethnic sense) veterans from both the Austro-Hungarian and Czechoslovak armies. Within Czechoslovakia, it sought to become the privileged partner of the Ministry of National Defence for defence education and to create a Czech counterweight to the German-speaking veterans landscape.⁶⁸

Just a few months later, however, there was a split within the newly founded Union between former soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army represented by Polda Kumburský and a group of ex-legionnaires and Czechoslovak army soldiers, among whom former Russian legionnaire and military press publisher Otakar Vaněk was influential. Articles both defending and condemning former Austro-Hungarian soldiers appeared in the Union's magazine *Naše obrana* (*Our Defence*) in March 1936. The 'Comrades' insisted that a good Czech did not have to behave like a 'Švejk' by slacking off and committing acts of sabotage; they believed that being Czech and a good soldier were not mutually exclusive within the Habsburg army. Vaněk and his supporters vehemently rejected this notion. 'In my opinion', wrote Vaněk in one of his many polemics, 'the Austrian soldier and good Czech used to be a bad soldier, and for this he was tied up, imprisoned, and even shot. An Austrian soldier – a good soldier – could not possibly be a good Czech, and he certainly cannot claim to have participated in the revolution as well'.⁶⁹ Despite some positive responses from the public and wider press, the Comradeship was unable to establish its more positive image of the Czechoslovak soldier in the face of such criticism or to assert itself as the main organizer of Czechoslovak veterans. Moreover, its active involvement in defence education ended after a few months when it broke with the 'Reservists', who renamed the Union and its magazine.

In response, the Department of Defence Education within the Ministry of National Defence attempted to prevent the political instrumentalization and organizational fragmentation of Czechoslovak veterans of the Austro-Hungarian army. In mid-1937, it began to negotiate with veterans' representatives about a unified organization. Although these men were less important to the army's mobilization efforts due to their advanced age and outdated military expertise, they could still help implement the Defence Education Act (No. 184/1937) with regard to pre-military training for young people or with teaching the civilian population about anti-aircraft defence. In January 1938, representatives from four veterans organizations met for this purpose. There were no German veterans present and, seemingly, the Ministry did not consider inviting

any. Right from the start, Colonel Kudláček, head of the Defence Education Department, made no secret of the fact that the Reservists were closest in spirit to the Ministry's intentions, probably because they never referred to the Austro-Hungarian military past and constituted a younger generation who served in the Czechoslovak army after 1918. According to Kudláček, unification could occur either by founding a new association or by restructuring the Reservists.⁷⁰ Disputes then broke out about the amount of influence each association would retain in the new organization. Numerically larger associations were in favour of proportional representation, while smaller associations wanted equal representation.⁷¹ The Ministry subsequently ended negotiations with a couple of small fascist associations and continued to work with the Reservists, the Comradeship and Czech MVAs from the Habsburg era.⁷² Finally, in August 1938, the Central Union of Czechoslovak Reservists and Former Soldiers (*Ústředí svazu československých záložníků a bývalých vojáků*) was founded as an umbrella organization, within which the original associations maintained their autonomy. Under the leadership of a retired general to be appointed by the Ministry, they agreed to put aside disputes over the past and to direct their energy towards promoting Czechoslovakia's current defence needs. Thus, although a broad federation of all veterans in Czechoslovakia did not materialize, the Ministry cooperated with those it considered loyal to the state and still to have some military worth.

Nevertheless, the Comradeship achieved mixed success with regard to obtaining recognition for serving in the 1918/19 border wars.⁷³ In 1935, with the support of ČSOL, the Czechoslovak Community of Volunteers (*Československá obec dobrovolníků*) was founded and began to promote the concept of the 'volunteer from 1918–1919'. With roughly 16,000 members by 1938, it was joined in this effort by the Association of the Brethren of the Guard of Freedom Regiments, Sokol Battalions and Centurions from the years 1918–1919 (*Sdružení bratří pluků Stráže Svobody, sokolských praporů a setnin z let 1918–1919*, founded in 1936, with about 3,000 members in 1938), and the already existing Association of Slovak Volunteers (*Sdruženie slovenských dobrovolníkov*, founded in 1928, with roughly 7,000 members by 1938).⁷⁴ The lobbying proved successful and the government introduced the status of 'Czechoslovak volunteer from 1918–1919'. This did not involve a legislative change, as had been the case with the veteran status promulgated shortly after 1918, but was based simply on a government resolution from 1937 and a directive of the Ministry of National Defence one year later.⁷⁵ The new category applied to volunteers who helped the army to consolidate the Czechoslovak state between the revolution of 28 October 1918 and the end of armed hostilities on 31 July 1919.⁷⁶ Primarily, these comprised domestic volunteer units, but the Ministry also included within this category members of the Czechoslovak Home Guard in Italy, whose battalions were formed out of POWs in the autumn of 1918 and then deployed to fight in

Cieszyn Silesia, Slovakia and elsewhere. Also included were legionnaires not yet recognized by law who had volunteered to serve in the legions in the weeks after 28 October 1918, mainly in Russia. This status also applied to former members of the Austro-Hungarian army who had been demobilized but then volunteered for military service in the Czechoslovak state.⁷⁷ In short, the somewhat complicated definition of categories constituted a belated attempt by the state to restore legal clarity to the chaos that followed the declaration of independence in autumn 1918.⁷⁸

Applicants granted volunteer status in this way received a ‘Commemorative Badge of the Czechoslovak Volunteer of 1918/1919’ and a newly ‘invented’ historical uniform that combined various elements of the improvised outfits used at the time.⁷⁹ They were also entitled to preferential rights when seeking employment, similar to legionnaires. Nonetheless, they were only the third-ranked group in the status hierarchy, behind legionnaires and long-serving NCOs in the Czechoslovak army.⁸⁰ Still, recognition of Czech and Slovak post-revolution volunteers as a form of ‘junior legionnaires’ gave these veterans a sense of satisfaction, while creating renewed disappointment for conscripted soldiers. In other words, the state’s veterans policy divided men who had fought for the same cause in 1918/19 into volunteers and conscripts. Moreover, in effect, it by-passed a petition submitted by the Comradeship at the end of 1937, which had called for reconsideration of what constituted a volunteer and the introduction of a medal for all who had fought in 1918/19. The petitioners argued that, in practice, all soldiers had served voluntarily, guided by their conviction to defend Czechoslovakia; they had not been coerced into doing so, something that the weakened state was incapable of enforcing at the time. They further emphasized the greater sacrifice involved for those who had already served in the world war, when compared to volunteers with little or no military training.⁸¹

Although the petition was unsuccessful, this did not alienate Comradeship veterans from the state, nor send them scurrying into the arms of Czech fascists, who tried to attract ex-soldiers disappointed with contemporary political developments. To this end, the Union of Soldiers from the Front (*Svaz vojáků z fronty*) was founded in 1937, along with a journal, *Právo občana* (*The Right of the Citizen*). The same year, the group split after the Union’s Secretary Bohumír Cetkovský, from the fascist movement *Vlajka*, quarrelled with vice-chairman Jan Hájek, who was a member of the National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*). Aside from belonging to different strands of Czech fascism, they differed over whether legionnaires should be accepted as members. The smaller faction around Cetkovský opposed the admission of legionnaires and kept the Union name, while starting their own periodical, *Stráž vojáků z fronty* (*Guard of Soldiers from the Front*). The majority of members supported Hájek and formed an association named Executive of Former Soldiers for the Czechoslovak Republic (*Exekutiva bývalých vojáků pro ČSR*); they continued to publish *Právo občana*.⁸²

Despite the split, both associations recast fascist ideology using political metaphors about Czech war heroes as the most valuable portion of the male population, but who had been humiliated by long-standing neglect from the ruling 'malingerers'.⁸³ Hájek claimed that the misfortune of 'God's warriors perishing in shame and humiliation' was caused by the 'non-Slavic Judeo-Marxist politics' of the contemporary establishment.⁸⁴ The political remobilization of 'front soldiers' would put an end to this sad state of affairs and the immoral rule of the 'Švejsk'.⁸⁵ However, neither group was able to win over a significant number of Austro-Hungarian veterans, even though the Executive claimed to have over 80,000 members.⁸⁶

Apart from the cooperation of leading Czechoslovak veterans in CIP, which derived more from foreign pressure than the veterans themselves, neither Czechoslovak former soldiers nor the state actively tried to win over Czechoslovak German-speaking veterans to their side in the way suggested by Rudolf Kalhous. Instead, the SdP reached out to them after becoming the strongest party in Czechoslovakia in the May 1935 elections, with 15.18 percent of all votes.⁸⁷ The party used the image of the 'frontline fighter' as a means to forge 'national togetherness' under its leadership, but also to unite German-speaking veterans. As early as July 1934, SdP chairman, Konrad Henlein, declared that 'men from the trenches' were one of the three social pillars of the Sudeten German movement, at a meeting in Šluknov / Schluckenau in North Bohemia.⁸⁸ Subsequently, his followers saw the war as the source of the Sudeten German nation's spiritual awakening: 'In the trenches, under attack, and during the night watch, we were becoming new men'.⁸⁹ For them, 'frontline fighters', as well as women on the home front, did not emerge from the war humiliated and defeated; rather, they were strengthened by the valuable experience of self-sacrifice for the whole, the courage shown when facing the gravest hardship and mortal danger, and a firm sense of 'comradeship'.⁹⁰

At the same time, the Henlein party was aware of the limits of society's shared memory of WWI, since it had occurred under the Habsburgs. Its goal, however, was not to revive the monarchy, but to create a new order, which was initially inspired by Austrian authoritarian corporatism and Italian fascism, and later by Nazi Germany.⁹¹ Thus, the experience of war was not presented as historically unique, but as one of the common spiritual tenets of Sudeten German political identity.⁹² For Henlein's political aims, celebration of past battles and the cult of veterans served as inspiration by showing how the 'ordinary man' was willing to be part of a greater whole and make sacrifices whenever called upon. Rudolf Staffen, one of the organizers of Sudeten German veterans, suggested that a true frontline fighter could be recognized not through personal recollections of the war and his old decorations, but by willingness to fight on the present frontlines. Military virtues, such as the 'courage, determination, endurance, dedication, and valour' applied in the battles of yesteryear were necessary in the current struggle

for national rights.⁹³ This conformed to Henlein's own thinking. In his official biography, he did not prioritize his war experience over other parts of his life, which he presented as an organic whole whose logical outcome was the political leadership of the Sudeten Germans.⁹⁴

However, in trying to infiltrate veterans associations and unite them under its leadership, the SdP collided with their principle of remaining apolitical, which hitherto had been a valuable asset. In the second half of 1935, the SdP estimated the total number of German-speaking 'frontline fighters' to be between 250,000 and 300,000, 75 percent of whom were not affiliated to any association. Of the remaining 25 percent, the largest association was the League of War Wounded (*Bund der Kriegsverletzten*, comprising 15 percent of German-speaking veterans), followed by veterans from the Habsburg monarchy (6 percent), Sons of the Homeland (*Der Heimat Söhne*, 5 percent), and the POWs (3 percent).⁹⁵ The SdP considered the *Bund* and the POWs to be particularly hostile to their cause (despite their apolitical status, both were close to the German-speaking Social Democrats).⁹⁶ Veterans rejected the initial efforts at unification under Henlein's political leadership in August 1935, but a working group was formed to coordinate activities.⁹⁷ The SdP continued to pressure veterans into joining the proposed Union of Sudeten German Frontline Fighters, which would replace the existing associations. Among the promoters of this idea were SdP senator Ludwig Frank and former officer Alois Grillmayer from Cheb / Eger. By contrast, the leadership of *Der Heimat Söhne* under Franz Tittelbach insisted on autonomy and non-interference from party politics.⁹⁸

In view of these difficulties, it was not until April 1938 that the Sudeten German Soldiers Union (*Sudetendeutscher Soldatenbund*) was founded in Česká Lípa / Böhmisches Leipa under the auspices of the SdP.⁹⁹ By consciously using the term 'Sudeten German soldier' in its name, the union made it clear that the national struggle was not yet over.¹⁰⁰ The party's success in instrumentalizing the myth of 'frontline fighters' led to public oaths of allegiance to Konrad Henlein and his party in Mědenec / Kupferberg and in Benešov nad Ploučnicí / Bensen in North Bohemia in the summer of 1938.¹⁰¹ The numerically smaller League of War Wounded remained in opposition to these efforts, reflecting its rejection of the war's glorification.¹⁰²

During the culmination of the Sudeten German crisis in late September 1938, the Czechoslovak authorities actually discovered armed groups styling themselves as 'frontline fighters' among the Sudeten German rebels and some veterans association leaders were preventively detained.¹⁰³ However, there is no evidence that veterans associations were being transformed into paramilitary units to fight against Czechoslovakia, contrary to what the government feared. Also, it remains unclear what the composition of personnel was in the so-called Sudeten German Free Corps, which was formed on German soil just over the border with Czechoslovakia, and what role veterans may have played in it. In short, veterans

were more useful to the SdP as a symbol of political struggle than as a paramilitary fighting force. After all, the outcome of the Czechoslovak crisis was decided neither by the rebels nor by regular armies, but by politicians.¹⁰⁴

Diversity under the Guise of ‘Austro-Fascism’

With the forced closure of parliament in 1933, Austria embarked on the road to the authoritarian ‘Christian German Federal Corporate State’, as it was termed in the new constitution decreed on 1 May 1934. This step marked the final abandonment of democracy, and the oppositional forces were gradually marginalized and eventually silenced.¹⁰⁵

Significantly, veterans groups who did not glorify the war were targeted by the executive and ultimately banned, while the new regime sought to bring more closely under its control those whom it considered ‘loyal’ ex-soldiers. Early signs of this two-pronged strategy were moves against the left-wing militia and veterans suspected of sympathy with socialism. Having inaugurated the authoritarian regime using the War Economy Enabling Act of 1917 to rule without parliament on 7 March 1933, Christian Social leader Engelbert Dollfuß formally outlawed the republican *Schutzbund* at the end of the same month (although it continued to exist underground). Subsequently, the authorities acted against veterans groups who deviated from the government’s intentions. In October 1933, for example, a group of ex-servicemen calling themselves the Soldiers’ Reunion Association (*Verein Soldaten-Wiedersehen*) were planning a get-together, but came into conflict with the powerful, pro-government ÖRK. Although the allegations against it lacked credibility, their association was nevertheless prohibited at the end of the month.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, invalids associations came under particular pressure because of their close relationship to social democracy. In another instance where the details of supposed misdemeanours were vague, the Headquarters for the Welfare of the Blind (*Hauptzentrale der österreichischen Blindenfürsorge*) was charged with fraudulently misappropriating funds, as the *Salzburger Volksblatt* reported in mid-November the same year.¹⁰⁷

However, the most important step in the regime’s attempts to exert control over veterans followed the foundation of the Fatherland Front (*Vaterländische Front*, VF) on 21 May 1933. This came just over a month after a meeting between Dollfuß and Mussolini in Rome, during which the latter had declared his intention to protect Austrian independence, as well as urging the former to strengthen his grip on power. Robert Kriechbaumer has suggested that, in numerical terms at least, the regime was more successful in mobilizing Austrians than previously thought, with the VF incorporating 2,992,752 members in its various organizations (in a population of 6,760,233 inhabitants).¹⁰⁸ However, much of this membership was obligatory in the public administration and

numerous occupational sectors, while many individuals were simultaneously members in different organizations (i.e. accounting for multiple memberships, the VF did not actually encompass 44 percent of the population). It thus remains open to question how far the population really identified with the aims of the regime, and the case of veterans indicates the problems involved. The establishment of the Austrian Imperial Comradeship and Soldiers Front (*Österreichische Reichskameradschafts- und Soldatenfront*, ÖRSF) in the second half of 1933 formed an integral part of the nascent dictatorship's attempt to mobilize ex-soldiers in line with the Austrian patriotic programme of the VF; it constituted an affiliated movement known as the Fatherland Front Fighter Movement (*Vaterländische Frontkämpferbewegung*, VFKB).¹⁰⁹

The fact that some veterans groups refused to join the new movement illustrates the difficulties that the government faced. Initially, there was some confusion as to whether associations should join the VF as a corporate entity.¹¹⁰ The kind of residual suspicions about loss of autonomy that had accompanied state efforts at controlling MVAs since the 1890s played a role, but the main issue was resentment at their treatment since 1918. At a meeting of the Styrian Provincial Union of the ÖRSF in Graz on 15 April 1934, eight out of fourteen speakers spoke out against membership in the VF, stating that the veterans 'lack the necessary confidence, they have been betrayed since the collapse of the monarchy'. Besides, they argued, members of militias, whom they called 'three days-a-week soldiers' from the regime's Voluntary Protection Corps (*Freiwilliges Schutzkorps*, founded in 1933), were always given preference when looking for a job. Furthermore, veterans would no longer be allowed to vote for their own management committee, because this would be appointed 'from above'. The arguments had a clear impact on the audience, with 206 members voting against joining the VF and only 183 in favour. Confronted with this 'democratic opposition' and the veterans' dissatisfaction at insufficient social support amid a backdrop of mass unemployment, the regime's security director for Styria ordered the dissolution of the association four days later.¹¹¹

Around the same time, the Styrian section of the Alpine Association of War Participants was likewise banned. The authorities had monitored its meeting in Deutschlandsberg on 25 March 1934, where the association's acting leader, retired First Lieutenant Karl Krall, denounced the manner in which the provincial government had been appointed only a few days previously. The new constitutional regulations strengthened the provincial governor's authority, but even proponents of the authoritarian course criticized the chaotic decision-making surrounding the foundation of the 'corporate state'. Krall went further and condemned Dollfuß' foreign policy towards Italy and, above all, Germany. With a view to the tensions between Berlin and Vienna following the imposition of the so-called '1,000-Mark barrier' (a minimum payment required of German tourists wishing to visit Austria), the spokesman of the Alpine veterans lamented the

'fratricidal struggle among Germans', reminding his audience of trade ties with the 'large neighbour in the north' and the economic importance of tourism. The longer Krall spoke, the more his sympathies for the 'nationally minded' became clear. Without mentioning the National Socialists by name, he referred to their incarceration in the regime's detention camps. Yet, he also attacked the way in which Jewish small business owners were seemingly obliged to fire employees in order to make room for regime favourites from the *Schutzkorps*. For the police officer present, there was no doubt that the anti-government statements contradicted the purposes of an association which was classified as unpolitical, which meant its fate was sealed.¹¹²

The above example illustrates how the regime had to confront nationalist as well as ideological opposition from veterans, which laid open the weak points in its efforts to standardize the associational landscape and to control society in general. In particular, it shows how competition for secure jobs and influential positions proved divisive in a period of acute economic crisis. This even affected the demeanour of ex-servicemen who otherwise tended to be loyal (ÖRSF members acted as local guards during the Nazi coup attempt of July 1934).¹¹³ The Upper Austrian Provincial Union of the ÖRSF provides a good example in this respect. In 1934, it complained about administrative chaos in veterans policy, with areas of competence inadequately defined. The leadership pleaded for a division of responsibility, suggesting that the ÖRK take care of welfare and social affairs while the ÖRSF deal with political questions and state interests.¹¹⁴ The following year, the association leadership still felt that the welfare question had not been satisfactorily resolved. The veterans accepted the privileged treatment accorded those who had risked their lives twice 'for the good of the state' in 1934 (in the February battles against the Social Democrats and in July against the Nazis). Yet, they objected to the preference given to members of the quasi-state militia because this came at the expense of ex-servicemen from the Habsburg army. WWI combatants continued 'to suffer from the ingratitude of the state', although most of them – family fathers over the age of thirty-five – 'badly need official support'.¹¹⁵

By contrast, several ÖRSF associations in Carinthia stated in March 1934 that they were reluctant to join the VF because they viewed their activities as 'unpolitical', being focused solely on maintaining the traditions of their former army units.¹¹⁶ In practice, however, many veterans did not tend to ideological impartiality: 'apolitical' above all meant being non-Marxist. Hence, open conflict with the regime was avoided, no matter how fractious matters became. The fact that corporate accession to the ÖRSF was possible also kept some friction in check. In this sense, the broad roof of the VF served to conceal problems beneath the surface.¹¹⁷

Following the Christian Social dictatorship's victory in the brief civil war of February 1934 and confirmation of the regime's survival after the failed Nazi

coup attempt in July (despite the murder of Dollfuß), the government strove to impose tighter control over veterans associations. This meant more vigorous action against the fragmented socialist movement. In July 1934, for example, the government dissolved the Society of former Military Men of the Austrian Republic (*Gesellschaft ehemaliger Wehrmänner der Republik Österreich*) on the grounds that the majority of its functionaries were ‘radical socialists’ or even communists.¹¹⁸ Officials continued to root out further leftist currents: when the Imperial Union of War Victims (*Reichsbund der Kriegsofper*) announced the formation of a branch in Salzburg-Maxglan at the beginning of September 1935, the regional security director intervened immediately, claiming that most members of the prospective association were adherents of prohibited political parties.¹¹⁹ The organization had been under observation for several months at least. A report to the General Directorate for Public Security (*Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit*) in May 1935 referred to serious accusations against the police by a former communist during the course of the war victims’ meetings in Salzburg. Although the speaker, Ludwig Wanner, apologized for these verbal attacks, the officials remained suspicious. After all, Wanner had criticized the union’s new leaders and their expensive headquarters in Vienna, which left fewer resources for local branches in the provinces. Indeed, the debate shed light on the volatile feelings among the war disabled. While Wanner opposed the new leadership, he had to defend himself against criticism of his time as erstwhile chairman of the influential *Zentralverband* in the immediate post-war period. The latter was accused of having done nothing in these years.¹²⁰

The generally hard line against the war disabled persisted until the end of Schuschnigg’s government. Only a few days before its downfall in February 1938, the federal chancellery forbade the constitution of a Support Association for Jewish War Invalids, Widows and Orphans (*Unterstützungsverband der jüdischen Kriegsinvaliden, Witwen und Waisen*). The relevant documents do not indicate an antisemitic motive for the decision, although a private message to the Vienna city magistrate’s office called all the proponents ‘frauds’. Rather, the General Directorate of Public Security stated that there should only exist a single representative body for invalids, according to the regulation of 1936 on the establishment of a unitary association.¹²¹

What happened in the case of war victims underlines the great impact of the events of early 1934. As briefly mentioned (see Chapter 2), the majority of invalids associations ceased to exist, including the formerly dominant *Zentralverband*. Emil Fey, *Heimwehr* leader, Security Minister and Vice-Chancellor in Schuschnigg’s cabinet, ordered the creation of a new unitary organization within the framework of the corporate state, the Austrian War Victims Association (*Österreichischer Kriegsofperverband*), which published a journal, the *Österreichische Kriegsofperzeitung*, from May 1934 onwards.¹²² Here, too, subliminal ideological controversies hampered the regime’s consolidation of

the new system, with several accredited organizations competing for influence. In June 1935, for instance, the police in Linz registered tensions between the Imperial Union of War Victims and the Austrian War Victims Association – a sign, perhaps, that Fey was gradually losing influence from this point onwards.¹²³

All this highlighted the government's dilemma in trying to force through the unification of veterans without alienating groups whose outlook overlapped in many respects with that of the regime, but still prized their organizational independence. In practice, the authorities struggled to settle satisfactorily the relationship between the VF, ÖRSF, FKV and ÖRK, as sources from the mid-1930s suggest.¹²⁴ While the ostensible aim was to integrate veterans and paramilitary organizations into a 'front militia' (*Frontmiliz*), which would assist regular troops within a renewed military system based on general conscription, implementation proved problematic and the organization was eventually integrated into the army in July 1937.¹²⁵ Tensions between many veterans and members of the *Heimwehr* persisted, while the latter had splits in their own ranks and also faced disputes with other paramilitary units and the regular federal army. Military reports from Nazi Germany attributed economic reasons to some of these clashes, but the expectation of recompense for loyalty in the twin crises of 1934 may also have been a factor.¹²⁶ Whatever the motives, the authorities struggled at times to keep the rival veterans groups under control. The new voluntary *Schutzkorps* consisted mostly of FKV members, 'Christian-German gymnasts', the Freedom Union (*Freiheitsbund*, a paramilitary formation of the Christian Social trades unions), *Heimwehr* units and the so-called Eastern March Storm-troopers (*Ostmärkische Sturmsharen*, a Christian Social paramilitary group recruited primarily from the Catholic youth movement that had been established under the leadership of later Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg in late 1930).¹²⁷ Reports within the Ministry of National Defence confirmed a state of discord within the *Schutzkorps*, and the well-known Christian Social politician, Leopold Kunschak, witnessed turmoil at first hand while giving a speech in May 1935. Fighting broke out between groups of the *Heimwehr* and the Storm-troopers and the brawl resulted in one fatality.¹²⁸

Not surprisingly, such animosity weakened the potential effectiveness of the *Schutzkorps* as an auxiliary force of the executive. Notwithstanding appeals for reconciliation and fraternization, the regime's attempt in the spring of 1935 to create greater clarity regarding the organization of military forces did not yet defuse tensions (it perhaps even accentuated them).¹²⁹ In line with the remobilization occurring in many European countries, especially in neighbouring Germany, at the end of May Schuschnigg set out a new organizational framework whereby the federal army was incorporated into the VF, private armies were dissolved, and veterans consolidated. In May and June 1935, the regime decreed the formal merger of the ÖRK with the ÖRSF, which – using the already established name of the VFKB – was now integrated in its entirety into the VF, led by Vice-Chancellor Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg. This was explicitly intended as

a preliminary stage in the reintroduction of general conscription. If necessary, the VFKB could also be used militarily.¹³⁰ A monthly newspaper, *Die Österreichische Soldatenfront*, began publication at the start of 1935, with the government employing the language of comradeship within an Austrian patriotic framework to try and rally support. As one of the movement's slogans urged, 'Help your comrades – You help Austria!'¹³¹

As the reorganized official veterans movement took shape, a provincial network was set up in order to smooth the integrative process across the country. On 5 May 1935, delegates of provincial comradeship groups assembled in Vienna under the tutelage of the ÖRSF, chaired by Prince Alois von Schönburg-Hartenstein (formerly State Secretary for the Army from September 1933 to March 1934). Reporting on the ÖRSF's recent activity, Schönburg-Hartenstein mentioned the fighting with the Nazi insurgents in July 1934 and highlighted the participation of WWI veterans in the military counter-measures (alongside the mobilization of the *Heimwehr*). Following on, the organizers replied to a question from a Salzburg delegate about cooperation with the Ministry of National Defence (*Ministerium für Landesverteidigung*) by confirming that joint weapons exercises still had to be financed by the movement itself, but that the forthcoming re-introduction of universal, compulsory military service would bring with it annual manoeuvres, just like before 1914.¹³² If Schönburg-Hartenstein thereby struck an optimistic note about the regime's plans, others expressed concerns. In particular, *Heimwehr* members considered a military draft risky because they feared Nazi or Marxist sympathizers could gain entry into the regular army.¹³³

Having already publicly questioned the private armies' further right to exist, in 1936 Schuschnigg moved forward with his plan to reorganize the army and paramilitary forces. The influence of *Heimwehr* leaders had been waning since 1934 and Schuschnigg formally disempowered them in the spring by forbidding the existence of any military formations outside of the VF. As partial compensation, Starhemberg's deputy, Heinrich Wenninger, set up a nation-wide organization for *Heimwehr* 'veterans', based in Linz, the Comradeship and Support Association of former Homeland Defenders (*Kameradschafts- und Unterstützungsverein ehemaliger Heimatschützer*).¹³⁴ Schuschnigg's government re-introduced universal military conscription the same year and in October the Front Militia (*Frontmiliz*) was officially established in place of the various paramilitary forces.¹³⁵ Schuschnigg himself now bore the title 'Imperial Leader' (*Reichsführer*) of the VF and Front Militia, alongside that of Federal Chancellor (in other words, the two offices were combined in personal union). In legal terms, the organizational restructuring of veterans, paramilitaries and the armed forces was thereby completed and there are indications that some ex-servicemen accepted the changes. For example, Carinthian veteran Alois Maier-Kaibitsch (a participant in the 1920 homeland defensive war) reported his group's satisfaction at cooperation with the regular army in late September 1936. In the weeks to come, he continued, special train-

ing for former officers, reservists and NCOs would take place in consultation with divisional headquarters, and Maier-Kaibitsch enthusiastically affirmed that the Front Militia required the commitment of every single veteran.¹³⁶ In this particular case, however, the statement was laced with ambivalence. Maier-Kaibitsch was a NSDAP member, so his support for military training had potential implications contrary to those of the regime.¹³⁷

After the simmering criticisms of the previous years, such statements were not yet sufficient to demonstrate the popularity of the new system, but Schuschnigg's regime had altered the balance of power away from the paramilitaries. In the final analysis, two factors contributed to a lessening of tensions over this area of policy. In the first place, the importance of power political struggles between private armed groups such as the *Heimwehr* and the government, which had characterized the period between 1927 and 1933/34, was overtaken by the altered foreign political situation and the threat from the underground National Socialist movement. As Hans Schafranek has shown with regard to the 'Austrian Legion' of Nazi sympathizers who fled to Germany from 1933 onwards, this movement drew primarily on a younger generation than that of WWI veterans (almost 82 percent of the members of this group were under thirty years of age).¹³⁸

Secondly, what we can call the 'Front system' (the VF and the Front Militia) remained an empty shell to a considerable extent.¹³⁹ ÖRSF associations remained more or less autonomous within the VFKB and many associations continued to advocate diversity. Thus, the longstanding FKV, which had emerged in the early days of the republic, still possessed a considerable degree of independence right up until the end of the Schuschnigg regime.¹⁴⁰ While left-leaning veterans (mainly, invalids groups) were, for the most part, quashed, the already mentioned list of associations drawn up by the occupying Nazi regime (see Chapter 3) confirms the multitude of conservative and German-national leaning organizations still extant in spring 1938. These included BEÖK, eighteen branches of an association of naval veterans, fourteen sections of the Khevenhüller Union, twenty-six local and regional branches of Schönburg-Hartenstein's ÖRSF and roughly twenty sub-groups of the Confederation of Bearers of Bravery Medals. In addition, there were a number of mixed associations, which brought together ex-servicemen from the Habsburg army and the fighting forces of the Austrian Republic and the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime. Finally, there were separate unions of gunners and cavalrymen, former soldiers of the Austrian federal army, provincial marksmanship clubs or specific regional associations, such as men from the Carinthian homeland defence war.¹⁴¹

After their seizure of power through the *Anschluss*, the National Socialists sought to end this persistent heterogeneity in the veterans landscape, but initially the differences between various groups were accentuated by the internal discord among Nazi functionaries and their sympathizers. On 24 March 1938, Alfred Krauß, leader of the National Association of German Officers and long-time

supporter of Hitler, was tasked with transferring the 'old soldiers' associations into the unitary German veterans organization, the German Imperial Soldiers Union 'Kyffhäuser' (*Deutscher Reichskriegerbund 'Kyffhäuser'*).¹⁴² Intrigues and power struggles emerged immediately, with the provisional heads of veterans groups, collaborators of Krauß, party and state representatives all accusing each other of incompetence or corruption.¹⁴³ Only the relatively quick completion of the Austrian veterans' integration into the Kyffhäuser Union by July 1938 prevented more severe escalation.¹⁴⁴ Krauß died in September of the same year, while some supporters of the corporate state and the 'old Habsburg order', such as Maximilian Ronge, stayed aloof or even tended towards an oppositional stance.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, many WWI veterans were already too old and of limited use for Berlin's policy of expansion. Although comradeship unions and official commemorations had held up the heroic warrior as an ideal, few ex-servicemen viewed their wartime experiences between 1914 and 1918 as a lesson to be repeated.

Marching Forwards, Looking Backwards: The Habsburg Revival

Notwithstanding the discussions among veterans and the frictions between different interest groups supporting the Austro-fascist dictatorship, the bulk of their members shared at least one joint conviction, in wanting to deal with the recent past in a different way. Following Dollfuß' declaration of the regime's desire to remove the 'revolutionary rubble' of 1918/19, nearly all of its supporters agreed upon the promotion of a pro-Habsburg memory culture, accompanied by a positively laden interpretation of WWI. In reaction to the ethos of the democratic republic, Habsburg revivalism was designed to provide a firmer sense of 'Austrianness' to legitimate the regime internally and to develop a foreign political profile for Austria as an independent state, even if this was not free of contradiction and risk.¹⁴⁶ On the one hand, the 'Austrianist' ideology still conceived of Austria as a 'Christian-German' state. On the other hand, the conscious, open embrace of the Habsburg dynasty constituted an implicit rebuke, both to the 1919 Habsburg Law passed by parliament and to the Paris peace treaties (with potential implications for Austria's neighbours, not least Czechoslovakia with which tensions rose).

Within this broad framework, veterans and the army played a key role in linking the immediate past with the dictatorship's programme, looking back to the Habsburg army and the war as a fount of inspiration for the future. As the eponymous organ of the Soldiers' Front proclaimed on every title page: 'Comrades! Wear at all times and with pride the [Front badge] as a sign of the honourable attachment of all old soldiers to the glorious old army! Our battle-cry: Forwards! Our watchword: Austria!'¹⁴⁷ Editions of the paper carried regular reports about successful battles fought by the Austro-Hungarian army during the



Figure 5.2. Heroes commemoration ceremony of the Austrian Soldiers in Vienna, 6 May 1934. Army Minister Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein laying a wreath for fallen soldiers at the monument to Archduke Karl on the Heldenplatz. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv, Vienna. ÖNB, BA, No. 00291882.

war (such as the breakthrough at Gorlice in May and June 1915, on the Eastern Front) or heroic rearguard actions (such as the defence of Monte San Gabriele between August and October 1917, on the South-West Front), with a respective emphasis on emerging as ‘victor’ or ‘undefeated’.¹⁴⁸

Such reports followed a line of interpretation perpetrated by conservative and nationalist veterans groups in the 1920s, heavily influenced by former officers and developed, in particular, by those working in the state’s war archive in Vienna.¹⁴⁹ However, it was only under the dictatorship that this understanding of the war was enthroned as a central feature of state ideology. Comradeship associations cooperated with the Austrian Union of Officers and the federal army to erect a monument to commemorate the ‘heroes’ from the imperial fighting forces, which remembered the ‘glorious days’ from the Thirty Years War onwards, but with a firm emphasis on WWI.¹⁵⁰ The design competition was launched in July 1933 and the jury chose the plan by Rudolf Wondracek in February 1934. Located in the outer castle gate, next to the Heroes Square (*Heldenplatz*) and imperial palace in the centre of Vienna, the Heroes’ Monument (*Heldendenkmal*) fitted in seamlessly to a site laid out during the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph as a public celebration of Habsburg military culture (see figure 5.2).¹⁵¹ In an elaborate ceremony

on 9 September 1934, which also paid homage to the recently assassinated ‘martyr’ Dollfuß, the regime’s political and military elites witnessed Schuschnigg inaugurating a monument that worshipped the ‘achievements’ of the fighting forces under the ‘double-headed eagle’.¹⁵² In the crypt below the monument, an altar was consecrated to the ‘dead soldier’, where all the fallen from the war were to be remembered. As such, it formed a stark contrast to the pacifist monument lamenting the fate of the war’s victims that the city council had erected in the central cemetery, on Vienna’s outskirts, in 1925. There, sculptor Anton Hanak had depicted a grieving mother, her arms outstretched in suffering.¹⁵³

The invocation of the ‘double-headed eagle’ was also significant, because it had recently become the heraldic symbol of the ‘corporate state’. A deliberate echo of the dynastic coat-of-arms, it unmistakably demonstrated the direction of the regime’s history politics under Dollfuß and, above all, Schuschnigg, both of whom were hailed as the bravest and most prominent front fighters in the authoritarian ‘veterans’ state’.¹⁵⁴ In this respect, the regime built on initiatives from various institutions and associations across the country that had already cultivated a heroic understanding of the war, in which the extent of suffering was not necessarily obscured, but ultimately was transfigured by the ideals behind the valuable sacrifice that had been made. Such was evident in various sites of ‘war musealization’ across Austria, in which veterans, but especially ex-officers, were involved.¹⁵⁵ Although more research is needed on the topic, we can identify three types of context in which this took place: firstly, the Army Historical Museum in Vienna, which functioned as the main site for exhibiting WWI and as the official depository for material objects relating to the war. Secondly, there were regimental museums and other museums relating to units within the army, and lastly, local and municipal museums, where aspects of the war were exhibited and memorialized.

Originally opened in May 1891, the imperial and royal army museum was housed in the arsenal in Vienna and embodied the military culture and dynastic representation of the late Habsburg Monarchy – a veritable temple to the army that contained an extensive weapons collection, portraits of famous generals, and a ‘hall of fame’. After 1918, the Army Museum found itself in a republic permeated by the impact of defeat and there were initially doubts about its continued existence. Nevertheless, the core staff continued its activities of collecting war objects and within a few years began making plans to extend its exhibition rooms to accommodate all the new material. Despite a reduced budget and the need to adapt to the new political circumstances, there was thus a considerable degree of continuity to its work.¹⁵⁶ In effect having fulfilled the function of a ‘national museum’ for the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy pre-1918, it sought to do so for the Austrian Republic thereafter, with the museum’s director, Wilhelm John, drawing up ambitious plans in the mid-1920s to move to the imperial palace (*Hofburg*) in the centre of Vienna. These were keenly pursued

as Dollfuß dismantled the democratic republic; after 1934, John's key argument was that the war museum would be in the vicinity of the newly inaugurated Heroes' Monument.¹⁵⁷

Although these plans were rejected for financial and other reasons, this did not prevent the museum from forming a very close symbiosis with the dictatorship. A telling example is an exhibition on the Isonzo Front, which took place in 1934. The catalogue's opening paragraph illustrates the nature of the commemorative discourse fostered by the ex-officer class:

Isonzo! – The Thermopylae of the Austro-Hungarian army, two-and-a-half years in a gigantic defensive struggle of a greatness comparable to ancient times, in which a never subjugated wall of people of all nations from a once happy and powerful empire stood against a dangerous, tenacious, hard-bitten, dextrous and over-mighty enemy. In a final stand against fate, this army protected its borders and the core of its maritime trade in an unequalled, sacrificial manner. After a defensive struggle of eleven battles, a twelfth battle, crowned by a victory of overwhelming military dimensions in which the 'miracle of Caporetto' was achieved jointly with our brothers-in-arms, was indeed not able to avert destiny.¹⁵⁸

Here are several key elements in the cultural remobilization of the 1930s: imperial nostalgia, heroism, sacrifice in vain, comradeship with the German armed forces, role reversal (defence against an over-mighty enemy) and the circumlocution of ultimate defeat.

The unwillingness openly to acknowledge defeat was also evident in regimental museums, such as that of the Tyrolean *Kaiserjäger* in Innsbruck. First opened in 1880, it was reopened in the 1920s, with a series of rooms dedicated to the fallen warriors of WWI. In 1927, a Heroes' Book of Honour inscribing the names of all Tyrol's war dead from the Wars of Coalition onward was placed there.¹⁵⁹ The museum catalogue of 1937 combined the notion of a 'stab-in-the-back' and the concept of invincibility in a way similar to the exhibition in Vienna: 'In October 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy broke up from the inside; the brave Tyrolean *Kaiserjäger* Regiments remained, however, undefeated until the end'.¹⁶⁰

A similar ethos and constellation of personnel was evident in neighbouring Salzburg, where the provincial capital was home to the 'Rainer Museum' of the former IR 59 'Archduke Rainer', recruited from Salzburg and Upper Austria. The museum emerged from a portrait collection begun in the 1870s, but the main impulse derived from the first winter of the war, when Colonel Maximilian Lauer ordered the regiment, stationed on the Eastern Front, to begin collecting war booty, trophies, drawings and photos from the front for a regimental museum in the fortress Hohensalzburg. Driven on by the Rainer Officers Club and the Rainer Association, the project reached fruition with the museum's official opening on 6 April 1924.¹⁶¹ The exhibition placed a typically heavy focus on uniforms, weaponry and portraits, but also contained a Hall of Honour and a roll

of heroes (*Ehrentafel*), almost as a kind of altar where veterans could remember their comrades. Adhering to the tropes of loyalty and sacrifice in similar fashion to its counterpart in Innsbruck, the Rainer Museum likewise showed that heroic narratives already gained currency in the 1920s at the provincial level.

Hence, there was a ready meeting of interests when the former Habsburg Archduke Eugen, a commander on the South-West Front during the war, visited the museum in June 1935, having been allowed to return to Austria by the authoritarian regime. Before visiting the exhibition, Eugen laid a wreath at the regiment's memorial monument and praised the 'immortal heroic deeds of the courageous Fifty-Niners', who had 'set the seal on their loyalty to the Austrian fatherland with their lifeblood'.¹⁶² In the evening, a large gathering of veterans and comradeship associations completed the day's proceedings. Including a minute's silence for the fallen, the singing of soldiers' songs, and speeches full of mutual expressions of admiration for bravery and loyalty, the occasion concluded with an exchange that symbolized the changed dynamics of the mid-1930s. The former Archduke handed over a letter of thanks and a portrait photo from the pretender to the throne, Otto von Habsburg, to the head of the Prince Auersperg veterans association, which had nominated Otto as honorary patron. The head of the Provincial Comradeship and Soldiers Association then greeted Eugen's presence among the veterans, proclaiming 'the old soldiers still stand by their homeland and it is to be hoped that the period of humiliation from the year 1918 is now overcome for ever'.¹⁶³

The mood shift from the 1920s is striking, if we contrast this event with the example of the 'war museum' within the municipal museum in the Lower Austrian town of Retz, near the new border with Czechoslovakia. There, vineyard owner, local national-liberal politician and mayor from 1906 to 1912, Karl Mössmer had begun collecting material from the end of August 1914 onwards, gathering together over 3,200 objects. Like many men over the age for military call-up, Mössmer clearly saw this activity as a substitute form of public service and patriotic commitment and he sought to carry this ethos over into the post-war era. Yet, a letter he wrote to the army museum in Vienna at the end of 1923 showed that public feeling was initially sceptical of heroic narratives: 'Even if these days there is less understanding and appreciation shown for the bearers of the heroic struggle, so will a later epoch express the wish to relate itself to the great deeds of wartime and to draw on our people's heroic courage and sense of sacrifice'.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Mössmer was able to open his collection to the public in 1926 and the wide range of objects and documents relating to the economy, rationing and daily life in the trenches and on the home front ensured interest among the local public. By the mid-1930s, the collection chimed in with the Schuschnigg regime's 'Austrianist' ideology.¹⁶⁵

Although much of the initiative for the pro-Habsburg revival and the heroicization of the war in the period after 1933 came from the regime and former

members of the army elite, it was not simply a top-down process. As the example of the Prince Auersperg veterans in Salzburg shows, much of the regime's programme resonated with the population in areas that returned large Christian Social majorities in the parliamentary elections prior to the dictatorship. For example, in East Tyrol in mid-1935, the Comradeship Federation Sentry of the Dolomites likewise named Otto von Habsburg its honorary patron. In the town of Lienz, in the same region, the consecration of an Emperor Karl memorial chapel at the military cemetery in June 1936 in the presence of former Archduchess Adelheid (Otto's sister) and former Archduke Eugen confirmed the links between legitimacy and war commemoration.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, comradeship associations from across the country were among the driving forces pushing for the transfer of Emperor Karl's mortal remains back to Austria and to rescind the 1919 Habsburg Law.¹⁶⁷ Where possible, the regime responded to these requests, adjusting the legal situation to allow members of the dynasty who had not renounced their claims to the throne to enter Austria. As indicated, many Habsburg family members did indeed take part in commemorations, often accompanied by former high-ranking army commanders. Most strikingly, a number of disputed assets were also awarded to the former ruling family, some of which came from property held by the war disabled fund.¹⁶⁸

If the Habsburg revival achieved a firm resonance among the Christian Social dictatorship's core constituency, including many veterans in the Alpine provinces, legitimist currents and imperial nostalgia proved counterproductive in other respects. With regard to internal politics, it had next to no appeal for the Social Democrats and the veterans groups who rejected glorification of the war, and little attraction for the hard-line German-Nationalist constituency, even if there were many national-conservatives who felt a pull in both directions. Or to put it another way, there was an implicit German-cultural orientation among many Austrian patriots. For example, in the above-cited Isonzo exhibition catalogue from 1934, the new Army Historical Museum Director, Alfred Mell, wrote that the 'devoted heroism' shown by the troops deserved commemoration in the museum. This served a higher purpose, that of fostering love of the fatherland, 'for it was the German tribe (*Stamm*) in Austria that built up a powerful empire under a great dynasty and determined the empire's culture, with its still unbroken power of attraction'.¹⁶⁹ Even if the catalogue also spoke of 'all nations from a once happy and powerful empire', in practice there was a clear national hierarchy built into this nostalgia. For many of the old elite, Slavic independence movements were considered bands of traitors, responsible for the end of the double-headed eagle's rule. This was particularly the case among the army high command, which had perpetuated myths about 'traitorous Czechs', prone to desertion, from early on in the war.¹⁷⁰

Just as, if not more, significant were the foreign political implications, given that the Habsburg revival was mixed up with anti-Slav resentments. Despite

Chancellor Schuschnigg's personal pro-monarchist feelings, the government remained realistic regarding the unlikely prospects – whether nationally or internationally – for a restoration. Yet, there is little doubt that the possibility of this happening rang alarm bells in the capitals of neighbouring countries, who firmly opposed the idea of the Habsburgs returning to the throne.¹⁷¹ Particularly in the early phase of the Austrian dictatorship, tensions were palpable. Security fears and clashes over different understandings of the war played a significant role therein, as shown by the case of Josef Bartík, a staff captain in the Czechoslovak army who returned from the war an invalid. Bartík was arrested near the Viennese opera house on 19 July 1933 and accused of spying under the cover name 'Kukla'. Although it seemed Bartík was actually interested in the clandestine activities of transnational National Socialist networks, the regime's judges did not believe him and sentenced him to eighteen months of strict incarceration. The Czechoslovak press reacted with outrage to the trial's outcome, blaming the report by judicial expert Maximilian Ronge. The latter had previously run Austria-Hungary's military intelligence service and still viewed most Slavic politicians and officials as 'traitors'. Accordingly, 'Kukla' was insulted as a 'legionnaire', while his 'espionage' chief, Colonel Soukup, was also attacked as a sinister figure intent on dark machinations. In return, Bartík's lawyer characterized Ronge as a demon who was unable to get over the monarchy's collapse and thus sought revenge on representatives of national independence movements. Indeed, from Ronge's point of view, two of the founders of the Czechoslovak republic, Edvard Beneš and Tomáš G. Masaryk, counted as cunning, treacherous gravediggers of the monarchy.¹⁷²

The Austrian press' critical tone towards their neighbour was a further sign of smouldering resentments. In November 1933, for example, the *Salzburger Volksblatt* noted that a novel, *Comrade Victoria*, had been banned in Czechoslovakia. The book centred on an Austrian officer in Russian captivity who was blinded by Czech legionnaires. After returning to his hometown in what was now Czechoslovakia, he was given a job in a tobacco shop, but the legionnaire leader responsible for the cruelty committed in Siberia had him fired. With the support of the authorities, a legionnaire took his place, having received preference as a war hero. The *Volksblatt* remarked that readers could assume the story was based on a true occurrence, thereby implicitly criticizing the Czechoslovak national narrative.¹⁷³

Under such circumstances, it was no surprise that the whole Bartík affair strained bilateral relations. In Prague, emotions were running so high that Austrian Federal President Wilhelm Miklas felt compelled to pardon him. However, the Czechoslovak press was not pacified and in spring 1934 newspapers frequently attacked 'today's Austria' for employing senior veterans and a 'camarilla of generals' who were not willing to accept the existence of an independent Czechoslovakia. Journalists wrote in a threatening tone that the Prague government would not tolerate such provocations. Behind the scenes, Masaryk's

successor as Czechoslovak President, Edvard Beneš, came to similar conclusions with his entourage. In public, diplomats spoke of good neighbourly relations, but in reality the imperial past and substantially different understandings of the war contributed to bilateral tensions.¹⁷⁴

The issue lingered, but Schuschnigg's government sought to tread carefully. In reacting to critical comments by the Prague press on Catholicism and legitimism in the corporate state in February 1935, the Viennese newspaper, *Der Wiener Tag*, stressed that Austria's admiration for the 'splendid past' would not induce Schuschnigg to go too far. The re-establishment of monarchical rule was not a current concern, especially in view of Germany's anti-Habsburg stance and Vienna's intention to avoid confrontation with Berlin.¹⁷⁵ Subsequently, official statements confirmed this policy line. In 1937, in the presence of trustees of the VF, Schuschnigg highlighted Austria's good relations with Germany, Hungary, Italy and also Czechoslovakia. For him, there were no discrepancies: respect for 'historic values' would not result in political experiments, while monarchist propaganda occurred within the framework of the existing constitution. Yet, in saying this, he did not close the door entirely on a referendum about a Habsburg restoration.¹⁷⁶

Czech Defeat

'Our officers and officials are now going through what you Germans had to go through in 1918', is how a retired Czech major described the bitter situation of Czechs during a conversation in July 1939 with a representative of the above-mentioned Imperial German Soldiers Union 'Kyffhäuser'. The German delegate had come to Beroun in Central Bohemia to receive historic documents and a banner from the former Austro-Hungarian IR 88.¹⁷⁷ The Czech officer, who had served in both the Austro-Hungarian and the Czechoslovak armies, soberly estimated that although a great war would come, Germany would have to be utterly destroyed in order for the Czechoslovak state to be reborn. In his opinion, however, it was impossible to destroy a nation of eighty million that had such an excellent army.¹⁷⁸ His pessimism derived from the liquidation of Czechoslovakia, which Germany and its allies had managed without a war and with the consent of the international community. The dismemberment came in two stages. Firstly, the Munich Agreement, signed at the end of September 1938 by Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain, gave the borderlands with a substantial population of German-speakers to Germany. Territorial claims by Poland and Hungary followed suit in November 1938 (subsequently known as the First Vienna Award). The Czechoslovak government, convinced that it would have to stand alone in a war against Germany, accepted the agreement and withdrew its mobilized army. In March 1939, the Nazi government then forced the leaders of rump Czechoslovakia to agree to the creation of an independent Slovakia, the

occupation of the rest of the Czech lands by the German army, and the incorporation of this territory into Germany as the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (see map 0.5).¹⁷⁹

For the German government, the revised borders of September 1938 constituted one of the next steps in the dismantling of the post-war international order, thereby atoning for the defeat in 1918. Thus, many Sudeten German veterans could feel like ‘victors’, claiming their wartime service – disparaged in Czechoslovakia – would finally be recognized. ‘Now we will really mean something again’, proclaimed the editorial of the last issue of the journal of the German-speaking MVAs in autumn 1938, placed alongside a photograph of Adolf Hitler.¹⁸⁰ Czech veterans, by contrast, were swept up by feelings of anger and despair. ‘Munich’ represented a defeat that particularly affected the legionnaires. For those legionnaires living in the occupied borderlands, especially ‘colonists’ who settled there after 1918 during the land reform, the Munich agreement entailed immediate existential problems. Some resettled in the interior, while others stayed and faced the uncertain fate of being a minority in a hostile state.¹⁸¹

Many legionnaires and other veterans viewed the French and British governments as the culprits at Munich, who had simply abandoned democratic Czechoslovakia for the dictators to devour. Despite their disillusionment, however, the legionnaires did not make any dramatic gestures. For example, the Czechoslovak section of FIDAC decided not to return French honours, nor to withdraw from the organization. This was also the message given to a legionnaire officer from Přerov, who in early October 1938 sent his two eminent French decorations, the Order of the Legion of Honour and the *Médaille Militaire*, to NJČsL headquarters. He wanted them returned to the French government because they had lost their value after the French ‘betrayal’ of Czechoslovakia at Munich.¹⁸² The NJČsL tried to dissuade him, arguing that the sweeping gesture might hurt the feelings of Frenchmen who continued to wear the same decorations while disagreeing with their government’s actions.¹⁸³ Moreover, the NJČsL suggested that it was necessary to prepare to retaliate together against Germany, even if it was rather unclear in late 1938 what this might entail.¹⁸⁴

Although historiography traces the start of Czechoslovak resistance activity back to October 1938, potential resistance leaders vowed – publicly, at least – not to oppose the so-called ‘Second Republic’, the rump state existing between October 1938 and March 1939.¹⁸⁵ On 5 October 1938, Edvard Beneš resigned as President and flew as a private citizen to Great Britain, where he renounced his participation in politics.¹⁸⁶ His close associate, the journalist Lev Sychrava, assured the readers of *Národního osvobození* that underground resistance movements like the wartime *Maffia* would not be formed and that the ČSOL was not in contact with Beneš.¹⁸⁷

The shock of Munich was soon followed by the political ferment of the 1938 ‘autumn revolution’, whose goal was to form a new political system. The ‘Second

Republic' was not yet a negation of Czechoslovak statehood, but a political alternative to the 'First Republic' that had existed up until September 1938. Adaptation to the new conditions led to a right-wing authoritarian regime, which was a reaction to what were seen as the weaknesses of political pluralism, economic liberalism, the failure of Beneš' foreign policy, and the superficial roots of Czechoslovak identity.¹⁸⁸

The formation of the new regime, whose leitmotif was the 'simplification and concentration of our political and national life', led to renewed efforts to unite the legionnaires into a single organization.¹⁸⁹ Internal NJČsL documents identified the presence of ten different legionnaire associations in the Czech lands in the autumn of 1938.¹⁹⁰ Missing from this list was the Union of Slovak Legionnaires (*Sváz slovenských legionářů*), which, after the declaration of Slovak autonomy in October 1938, began to skew in a more Slovak nationalist direction as it looked towards the provincial government in Bratislava and cut ties with legionnaires in the Czech lands.¹⁹¹

The ČSOL and NJČsL did not budge from their respective standpoints. The Preparatory Commission for the Unification of the Legionnaires, which had been meeting since November 1938 under the chairmanship of General Matěj Němec, became the locus for clashes between mutually contradictory identities, personal animosities and material interests. Certainly, the new political situation was favourable to the NJČsL, which sensed an opportunity for its 'true legionnaires' to settle scores with the 'crafty politicians' responsible for the fall of the 'First Republic' and to throw the ČSOL's leadership onto the 'political scrapheap' along with other 'old junk' from the former, 'non-nationalist' regime.¹⁹² Thus, the question of who to blame for the recent defeat was now added to the old dispute between the 'front-line' legionnaires, who had wanted to oppose the German occupation with force, and the legionnaires 'from the political secretariats'.¹⁹³ The NJČsL accused the ČSOL of conflating the legionnaire movement with socialism and of appeasing 'non-nationalist and anti-Christian communism'; it also allegedly promoted 'defeatist forms of pacifism and cultural švejkovism' in its programme.¹⁹⁴ The NJČsL also exploited its close ties to Prime Minister Rudolf Beran and the ruling National Unity Party (*Strana národní jednoty*) to try and revive the legionnaire movement. NJČsL chairman, General Rudolf Medek, argued that a strong government of technocratic experts and a corporatist state would help reduce party conflicts.¹⁹⁵ The ČSOL continued to insist on democratic values, its inclination towards the Western states, as well as its sympathy for the Soviet Union. Also defending former President Edvard Beneš and his foreign policy, it nevertheless found itself increasingly in opposition and its newspaper, *Národní osvobození*, ceased publication in December 1938.¹⁹⁶

The Preparatory Commission debated the possible parameters of a new legionnaire association – whether to maintain autonomy and internal democracy or to accept government management from above – but this could not resolve

the basic problem of entrenched ideological interests. Hence, the unification process stagnated, seemingly only solvable by state intervention, an outcome most likely to play into the hands of the numerically larger ČSOL.¹⁹⁷ To forestall this possibility, the NJČsL founded a rival Preparatory Commission at the beginning of March 1939. It proposed a new organization, to be named National Legionnaire Unity (*Národní sjednocení legionářské*), in close cooperation with the ruling National Unity Party. It further hoped that this move would encourage the authorities to dissolve ČSOL by force, thereby obliging the rest of the legionnaires to join the new organization and submit to its programme.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, it was only after the occupation of the Czech Lands by Nazi Germany and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in mid-March 1939 that both preparatory commissions agreed to dissolve the existing associations and join the National Legionnaire Unity organization.¹⁹⁹ In the altered circumstances, they were primarily motivated by a desire to defend the nation in face of the German occupation. A few months later, however, legionnaire associations were banned and the members deprived of their privileged position.²⁰⁰

During the 'Second Republic', the Ministry of National Defence continued to centralize Czech veterans from the Habsburg army by uniting them with Czechoslovak reservists and former soldiers, a process officially concluded on 30 October 1938.²⁰¹ Colonel Kudláček from the Department of Defence Education called on associations that had not yet joined to band together, explaining that the military administration would not tolerate independent associations 'with almost identical tendencies'.²⁰² Under duress, the veterans associations around the journal *Mír (Peace)*, which promoted left-wing radicalism, joined the unified organization.²⁰³ The Union of Frontline Soldiers, which had refused to conform and even resorted to fascist-style attacks against the new order, was officially banned at the end of 1938.²⁰⁴ Some Czech veterans joined in the criticism of pre-1938 Czechoslovakia, especially its 'caste system and privileges' for legionnaires while Czech former soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army were considered 'inferior' and 'weren't even allowed to make a sound'.²⁰⁵ Although these veterans, with few exceptions, did not want retribution for these wrongs, they welcomed the transition to authoritarianism, associating it with their idea of non-political 'comradeship'.²⁰⁶ Rather than a fundamental revision of veterans' status, however, they continued to demand equal rights and recognition as full-fledged Czech soldiers. However, neither these views nor those of the fascists gained traction, and legionnaires continued to enjoy their privileged position. In the end, the short-lived 'Second Republic' did not afford Austro-Hungarian veterans any more recognition than its predecessor.

Conclusion

In the second half of the 1930s, revisionism and remobilization confirmed the structural deficits in the international system and the relative weaknesses of the successor states. Nazi Germany succeeded in disrupting the existing veterans platforms by creating CIP as an international organization in which German veterans played a key role. Although anti-revisionist, anti-fascist, or conservative veterans movements were also active, they did not receive the strong national backing in the way fascist states supported CIP. By using the symbol of the 'front-line fighter', the Nazi regime was able to link the issue of peace with the right to self-determination, which also won them the support of veterans in other states outside of the revisionist bloc, such as Great Britain.

During the crisis years of the 1930s, the Czechoslovak state was unable to construct a universal civic figure of the 'Czechoslovak veteran' that could overcome the deep cleavages within society and the continuing divisions emerging from the different experiences of the war and post-war periods. Remobilization partially empowered Czech and Slovak veterans of the Habsburg army, who were able to free themselves of the label of being reactionary *rakušáci* ('Austriaks') from a defeated army and integrate themselves into the discourse of republican defence. However, the experience of these veterans did not permeate deeper into national memory or become a military tradition within the Czechoslovak army. By contrast, veterans of the Czechoslovak volunteer formations of 1918/19 did receive recognition and material benefits in 1937, albeit lower than what legionnaires received in 1919. In this respect, the state's varying policies towards these different interest groups demonstrated the limits of the Czechoslovak state narrative, although few disappointed Czech veterans openly opposed the political regime. By contrast, the SdP successfully incorporated German-speaking veterans into its discourse of a revived 'national community'. While the party had to act cautiously in the face of intensified state repression and was unable to provide material benefits to veterans and their families, the updated figure of the 'frontline fighter' constituted a unified model of individual self-sacrifice for the greater national whole. This ideal found organizational expression in April 1938 in the shape of the unified Sudeten German Soldiers Association.

At first glance, the Austrian situation in the 1930s differed fundamentally, given the ethnically more homogeneous population and the establishment of an authoritarian regime. Yet, two aspects of the corporate state's trajectory were similar to the Czechoslovak case. Firstly, ex-soldiers were integrated into remobilization programmes in both countries and in accordance with a general international trend during the decade. In Austria, however, these endeavours involved interaction between the federal army, police, paramilitary units and former combatants of the Habsburg army in a remobilization that was initially directed against common internal enemies who had been declared illegal: the Marxist

labour movement on the one hand, and the growing National Socialist movement on the other. In a second phase, the unification of veterans and comradeship associations under the auspices of the VF was accompanied by the implementation of universal conscription. Regular training and coordination with the official armed forces now functioned as a means of ‘protecting the fatherland’ against external foes as well.²⁰⁷

Secondly, while it transpired that these activities subsequently had a marginal influence over strategic developments at the international level, both Austria and Czechoslovakia clearly reflected the particular weaknesses of the successor states of Austria-Hungary. This was especially evident under the Austro-fascist system, where the umbrella VF organizations failed to reconcile or unite hostile groups, even though a pro-Habsburg memory culture, anti-Slav sentiments and antisemitism found resonance among leading figures within the regime and considerable sections of the veterans movement in the Alpine provinces. While following different routes to their respective outcomes, both states struggled to deal with the complex social and national-political legacy of empire after 1918. The revisionist momentum of 1938/39 temporarily swapped the roles of the ‘victors’ and the ‘defeated’ but behind the rhetoric of peace, Nazi Germany planned a completely new international order enforced by the means of war.

Notes

1. Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History, 1933–1939* (Oxford, 2011), 9–99.
2. Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism*.
3. According to the catalogue of the German National Library, in 1934, the Berlin publishing house M. Müller & Sohn published translations of Heß’s speech ‘Die Frontkämpfer wollen den Frieden!’ in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian.
4. For an extract from the French *Pathé-Journal*, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFIz0W_c8nI (viewed 12 December 2023).
5. Klaus Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich: Deutsche Außenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler, 1871–1945* (Stuttgart, 1995), 586; Jerzy Krasuski, *Tragiczna niepodległość: Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 1919–1945* (Poznań, 2000), 189–95.
6. For the text of the speech according to the French translation, see BArch, RY 72/1183, ‘Un Mot Aux Anciens Combattants!’
7. Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich*, 578–86.
8. Alcalde, *War Veterans*, 232; Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2014), 350.
9. Konrad Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 2016), 298.
10. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA), R 48414, Der Bundesführer des Deutschen Reichskriegerbundes (Kyffhäuserbund) e. V. an das Reichs- und Preussische Ministerium des Innern, 23.10.1936.

11. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 9.7.1934, 2. See also *Österreichische Wehrzeitung*, 13.7.1934, 3; *Der Tag*, 12.7.1934, 3; *Salzburger Chronik*, 9.7.1934, 6; *Die Stunde*, 10.7.1934, 10; *Kleine Volks-Zeitung*, 9.7.1934, 1.
12. *Národní osvobození*, 10.7.1934, 1.
13. Zdeněk Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938: Její hospodářské, politické a vojenské komponenty* (Prague, 2000); Newman, 'Volunteer Veterans'.
14. *Národní osvobození*, 17.11.1929, supplement *Legionářský týden*, 1. The organization constituted a variant of the cooperation between the Association of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Československá obec legionářská*, ČSOL), the Yugoslav Union of Volunteers (*Savez ratnih dobrovoljaca*) and the Union of Former Romanian Volunteers (*Uniunea fostilor voluntari români*).
15. *Národní osvobození*, 27.8.1933, supplement *Legionářský týden*, 1.
16. *Ibid.*; see also Klaus Richter and Heidi Hein-Kircher, 'Too Small to Succeed? East Central Europe and the Historical Study of State Assessment', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 71 (2020): 519–32.
17. *Národní osvobození*, 1.3.1934, supplement *Legionářský týden*, 1.
18. Ladislav Deák, *Zápas o střední Evropu 1933–1938: Politicko-diplomatické vztahy* (Bratislava, 1986), 168–78.
19. *Legie*, 9.5.1934, 3.
20. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 3.3.1934, 3; *Grazer Tagblatt*, 3.3.1934, 9.
21. For the summary of the congress, see *Congrès universel pour la paix. Bruxelles 3, 4, 5, 6, septembre 1936* (Paris, 1936); Marie Kuklíková, 'Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix (Politické problémy mírového hnutí druhé poloviny třicátých let a jejich podoba v ČSR)', *Československý časopis historický* 17 (1969): 137–60, here 140.
22. *Der Tag*, 5.9.1936, 2; *Gerechtigkeit*, 10.9.1936, 7 as well as *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 4.9.1936, 3; 8.9.1936, 4; 9.9.1936, 2.
23. International Institute of Social History, RUP, 390, Comité tchécoslovaque pour la préparation du congrès universel de la paix; list of member organizations.
24. Rachel Mazuy, 'Le Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix (1931–1939). Une organisation de masse?', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 30 (1993): 40–44.
25. Kuklíková, 'Rassemblement', 141.
26. *Rassemblement: Organe officiel du Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*, December 1933, 1.
27. For the role of war veterans in Franco-German relations, see Roland Ray, *Annäherung an Frankreich im Dienste Hitlers? Otto Abetz und die deutsche Frankreichpolitik 1930–1942* (Munich, 2000), 109–50.
28. Alcalde, 'War Veterans as Transnational Actors', 505.
29. *Der Wiener Tag*, 12.2.1935, 2.
30. *Ibid.*; qv. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 12.2.1935, 1.
31. *Österreichische Wehrzeitung*, 17.9.1937, 2; *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 14.10.1937, 3.
32. *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 30.9.1933, 8.
33. *Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt*, 15.8.1936, 2.
34. PA AA, R 66997, Protokoll über die Sitzung des Präsidialrates der VDFV, 30.1.1938, 3.
35. PA AA, R 48414, Deutsche Frontkämpferverbände und Fidac, 14.10.1936; R 48413 AA Berlin an die Deutsche Botschaft Lissabon, 31.8.1932.
36. *FIDAC: Rapports et résolutions du Siezième congrès annuel* (Paris, 1935), 25.
37. *Luxembourg: Compte-rendu du Congrès d'Anciens Combattants de la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 1928), 29–30.
38. PA AA, R 48414, Beziehungen zwischen den deutschen Fronkämpferverbänden und der Fidac; R 66989, Antrag von Rom, 6.11.1936; *FIDAC: Revue interelliée des cinq parties du monde*, 10/1936, 21; *FIDAC: Revue interelliée des cinq parties du monde*, 12/1936, 5.

39. PA AA, R 66989, Comité international des anciens combattants (C.I.P.) – Statut du C.I.P. approuvé à Berlin le 18 février 1937; VÚA-VHA, FIDAC, box 1, Návrh stanov Stálého mezinárodního komitétu bývalých bojovníků; Příloha k návrhu stanov S.M.K.B.B. – Stanovy C.I.P.
40. FIDAC: *Revue interalliée des cinq parties du monde*, 4/1937, 5; *Innsbrucker Nachrichten*, 20.2.1937, 14.
41. *Salzburger Chronik*, 13.2.1937, 6; *Tiroler Anzeiger*, 20.2.1937, 2.
42. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 17.2.1937, 1; *Salzkammergut-Zeitung*, 25.2.1937, 26.
43. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 17.2.1937, 1; *Neues Wiener Journal*, 20.2.1937, 4; *Reichspost*, 20.2.1937, 5; *Ödenburger Zeitung*, 14.2.1937, 1.
44. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 17.2.1937, 1.
45. PA AA, R 66993, Bericht über die tschechoslowakischen Delegationen zum internationalen permanenten Frontkämpfer-Kongress in Berlin, 17.3.1937.
46. *Československý legionář*, 2.4.1937, 6.
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48. PA AA, R 61085, Bericht des Deutschen Reichskriegerbundes über seine zur Zeit bestehenden Verbindungen mit ausländischen Frontkämpfer-Organisationen, 8.12.1937, 6; R 66997, Aktennotiz über die Besprechung mit dem Herrn Reichsaußenminister, 25.5.1938, 2.
49. NA, PMR, box 85, Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener in der Tschechoslowakei an das Ministerrats-Präsidium in Prag, 10.4.1937.
50. PA AA, R 61085, Außenamt to Deutsches Reichskriegerbund, 12.8.1937.
51. *Československý legionář*, 11.2.1938, 2.
52. *Národní osvobození*, 12.8.1937, 1.
53. For a summary of the debate, see *Kamarádství*, 15.9.1937, 197–200.
54. *Národní osvobození*, 11.9.1938, 2.
55. *Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg*, March 1938, 233–34.
56. *Československý legionář*, 11.2.1938, 2.
57. The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 370/529, FO 370/530.
58. PA AA, R 66989, Oberlindober to v. Rippenrop, 3.4.1939; v. Ribbentrop to Oberlindober, 17.4.1939.
59. *Národní osvobození*, 16.6.1938, 1.
60. *Československý legionář*, 9.9.1938, 6–7.
61. See, for example, *Národní osvobození*, 11.9.1938, 2.
62. PA AA, R 66993, Aktennotiz für den Herrn Reichsaußenminister, 30.9.1938; Aktennotiz über die Besprechung mit dem Staatssekretär Freiherr von Weizsäcker, Auswärtiges Amt, 3.10.1938; Niall Barr, “‘The Legion that Sailed but Never Went’: The British Legion and the Munich Crisis of 1938”, in *The Great War and Veterans’ Internationalism*, eds Eichenberg and Newman, 32–52.
63. Rudolf Kalhous, ‘Vojáci z fronty a jejich význam pro obranu státu’, *Naše doba* 44, no. 10 (1936/37): 589–93, here 591.
64. *Ibid.*, 593; for differences in collective memory of Czech and German-speaking veterans from the Habsburg army, see Zückert, ‘Memory of War’.
65. *Kamarádství*, 1.11.1938, 211.
66. Hutečka, ‘Kamarádi frontovní’, 231–65.
67. Karel Wagner, *S českým plukem na ruské frontě* (Prague, 1936); *Kamarádství*, 10.2.1936, 37–40; 25.3.1936, 70–73 and 81–88.
68. *Naše obrana*, no. 1–2, July 1935, 1–2.
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70. VÚA-VHA, Ministerstvo národní obrany – Hlavní štáb, Oddělení branné výchovy (MNO-HŠ Odd. branné výchovy), box 342, Sloučení spolků záložníků, bývalých vojáků a vojáků z fronty – Zápis o konaném shromáždění zástupců spolků.
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79. *Legionářské hlasy*, 20.12.1937, supplement *Slovenský dobrovolník*, 5–6.
80. *Věstník pluků Stráže Svobody, sokolských praporů, setnin a ostatních dobrovolných útvarů z let 1918–1919*, 7/1937, 85–87.
81. VÚA-VHA, MNO-HŠ Odd. branné výchovy, box 343, 'Kamarádství' – petice ministerské radě R.Čs., Dopis 'Kamarádství' ministerské radě, December 1937.
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83. *Hlas vojáků*, 31.12.1937 (unpaginated).
84. *Právo občana*, 10.11.1937 (unpaginated).
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88. *Konrad Henlein spricht: Reden zur politischen Volksbewegung der Sudetendeutschen*, ed. Rudolf Jahn (Karlsbad-Leipzig, 1937), 101.
89. 'Den toten Helden der Front', in Konrad Henlein, *Heim ins Reich: Reden aus den Jahren 1937–1938*, ed. Ernst Tscherne (Reichenberg, 1939), 28.
90. 'Kameraden, Kameradinnen!', in *Konrad Henlein spricht*, 101; NA, SdP – ústředna Cheb, úřadovny Aš, Praha (1933–1938) (SdP), box 11, leaflet 'Gefahr verbindet'; compare Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft: Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2006).
91. Ralf Gebel, *'Heim ins Reich!' Konrad Henlein und der Reichsgau Sudetenland (1938–1945)* (Munich, 1999).
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109. Ibid.
110. ÖStA, AdR, Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung (BMfLV), box 3828, 15/1-15/5, 1934, Vaterländische Front österreichischer Soldaten in Tirol an Bundeskanzler Dr. Engelbert Dollfuß betr. Anschluss von Kameradschaftsverbänden, 20.10.1933; KLA, Khevenhüllerbund, box 4, Mappe 4/11, Österreichische Soldatenfront, Schriftverkehr 1935–1938, Landeskameradschaftsbund für Oberösterreich an die Reichsführung der österreichischen Frontkämpferbewegung, 24.10.1934, 1ff.
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113. ÖStA, AdR, BMfLV, box 3828, 15/1-15/5, 1934, Zl. 36.753-34 Verein: Alpenländischer Verband der Kriegsteilnehmer 1914–1918, Landesverband Steiermark – Berufung gegen die behördliche Auflösung.
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123. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Inneres, box 2449, 15/3, 1935, Zl. 336.069 Bundes-Polizeidirektion Linz an das Bundeskanzleramt, Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit, Staatspolizeiliches Büro, 3.6.1935.
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125. Wenninger, 'Dimensionen organisierter Gewalt', 519–21.
126. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau, RW 5 v. 419, fol. 141.
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130. *Ibid.*, no. 7, 1935, 2–3.
131. *Ibid.*, no. 1, 1935, 1.
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139. Moritz, Leidinger and Jagschitz, *Im Zentrum der Macht*, 266.
140. *Ibid.*
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