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**THE FIRST**    **Manfried**  
**WORLD WAR**    **Rauchensteiner**  
**AND THE END**  
**OF THE HABSBURG**  
**MONARCHY**

# The Russian Theatre of War



**böhlau**

Translated from the German  
by Alex J. Kay and Anna Güttel-Bellert

Manfried Rauchensteiner

# THE FIRST WORLD WAR

and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914–1918



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## 1 On the Eve

1. The centenary celebrations of the Battle of the Nations in Vienna, 16 October 1913. Emperor Franz Joseph in front of the flag deputations on the Ringstrasse. To his right is the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the archdukes with military ranks. In the second row, furthest to the right, is Archduke Friedrich.

Several decades ago, a semantic debate surrounded the Second World War and the power politics of National Socialist Germany. Did the war break out of its own accord, or was it deliberately unleashed? The almost unanimous conclusion was that the war was unleashed. In the case of the First World War, the answer is not so obvious. It is likely that while to a certain extent the war did break out, it was also precipitated and unleashed to an equal degree. In general, however, precisely who was responsible for precipitating, triggering or unleashing the war, and who simply failed to prevent it, is portrayed differently according to subjective evaluation and emphasis. Each point of view has been convincingly presented and supported by documentary evidence.<sup>1</sup> In the interim, the definition of the war by the American diplomat George F. Kennan as 'The grand seminal catastrophe of this century' has become a kind of unofficial truism.<sup>2</sup>

Long before 1914, numerous publications already referred to any future war in highly generalised terms as a 'World War', as if to find words to capture its scale and to act as a deterrent. Then, war broke out. In English, French and Italian literature, the phrase 'Great War' (*Grande guerre, Grande guerra*) became established, while after the war, the German Imperial Archives opted for the term 'World War'.<sup>3</sup> In Austria, the war was referred to in nostalgic terms both verbally and in writing as 'Austro-Hungary's final war'.

However, there is something to be said for the use of the term 'seminal catastrophe', since the first major war of the 20th century, while largely limited to Europe and the adjacent regions, set in motion most of the events which would lead to the second, real world war, particularly the establishment of totalitarian regimes in Russia and Germany and the involvement of countries from all six continents and all the world's seas. To a certain degree, the First World War was not fought to the end until a quarter of a century later, albeit within the lifespan of the same generation. However, while most of the powers that had already been termed the 'main warring parties' in the First World War played an even greater role in the second major war of the 20th century, there was one empire to which this did not apply: Austria-Hungary. In contrast to the German Empire, to Russia, which had become the Soviet Union, and indeed to Turkey, which by then was a neutral power, Austria-Hungary was irretrievably lost. The Danube Monarchy under Habsburg rule had been destroyed as a result of the 'seminal catastrophe'. From that point on, it became one of a number of failed states.

Many aspects have been considered in the debate surrounding the causes of the first great conflict, not least the obvious fact that an important determining factor for most of the great powers that deliberately began the war in 1914 was their strength, perhaps

simply their apparent strength and a desire to expand their territory, or merely their aspirations to attain greater power. Germany sought to increase its dominance and influence, or at least not to lose it. It has been postulated that Germany 'fled towards war'.<sup>4</sup> For France, prestige and a not insignificant desire for revenge have been cited, while recently, it has again been claimed that for Russia, the attempt to find a way through to Constantinople by the indirect means of victory in war was a key issue.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, Italy hoped by joining the coalition of the British, French and Russians that it could expand the regions inhabited by Italians, thus fulfilling its national ambitions. However, like Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, elegantly described as a 'stagnating major power'<sup>6</sup>, saw an opportunity to maintain the prevailing European order. This stemmed not from inner conviction, but from a position of evident weakness. While war may not have been a specific aim, it was this weakness, more than anything else, that led to war being regarded as a potential means of resolving problems.

The failure by the Habsburg Monarchy to pursue its state goals more resolutely has been explained by its peculiar structural features, the complex dualistic division of the multiracial empire into an Austrian and a Hungarian half, the particular problems that were primarily triggered by nationality issues, by the alliances that had been formed, and finally by the individuals who held positions of power. However, these are just some aspects of the generally unreflected opinion that the Monarchy was doomed. It may have been destroyed by its 'absolutism', which the Austrian Social Democrat Viktor Adler regarded as being 'mitigated only by sloppiness'. Long before 1914, commentators remarked that state visitors to the Danube Monarchy were travelling there to take one more look at Austria 'before it falls apart'.<sup>7</sup>

However, one further aspect must be taken into account in any attempt to explain the flight to war by the Habsburg Monarchy. The 'Fin de siècle', the mood that was being increasingly expressed, not least in the arts, was probably less one of gloom than an impatient crossing of a threshold into a new era. This sense of defiance not only reached its limits in the arts, however, but was equally reflected in the economy and above all in politics. The peoples living in the Empire were dominated by centrifugal forces. It was a later version of Biedermeier and the Vormärz except that it was kept under control by the forces of convention rather than the state. Ultimately, certain forces had been kept in check over several decades until finally, a single event triggered a chain reaction.

The view was increasingly voiced that the upcoming problems could only be solved by means of war. Naturally, this opinion was not only held by Austria-Hungary, nor was it an expression of intensified warmongering. Countries such as Great Britain, France and Russia, as well as Italy, the Ottoman Empire and the countries in the Balkan region had time and again used war as a means of settling conflicts. However, the Habsburg Monarchy appeared to be so preoccupied with its own affairs that it refrained from participating in the socialisation of violence, and was neither willing nor in a position



to use war as a political means – until it did finally join in with the European mood. Perhaps, in the view of those who were willing to mobilise their armies far more quickly, this hesitation in waging war was the reason why Austria-Hungary had no prospect of survival. Yet the death of the double-headed eagle was a gradual process.

In 1908, the world still appeared to be more or less in order, at least from a Viennese perspective. The 78-year-old Emperor Franz Joseph celebrated his 60th jubilee. It had not been his wish to hold large-scale celebrations, but after some hesitation, the monarch had succumbed to the arguments of his energetic staff committee. Here, one aspect was consciously emphasised. The celebrations and above all the parade to pay tribute to the Emperor, which ran from the Viennese Prater Park and along the Ringstrasse, were designed to demonstrate comity in diversity, and to provide an occasion for the peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy to show their shared respect and loyalty to their ruler.<sup>8</sup> The festivities were intended, therefore, as a demonstration of support for the concept of the transnational empire. The parade was held on Friday, 12 June 1908. The spectacle, displays and the paying of tributes all went according to plan. 12,000 people participated in the seven-kilometre long parade, while hundreds of thousands gathered to watch. The nationalities parade was headed by representatives from the Kingdom of Bohemia, followed by the Kingdoms of Dalmatia and Galicia divided into an east and west Galician delegation, then groups from the Archduchies of Lower Austria and Upper Austria, and the Archduchies of Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Silesia and Bukovina, including groups of Romanians, Ruthenians and Lipovans. One of the most magnificent groups were from the Margraviate of Moravia, which was followed by groups from the Margraviate of Istria and Trieste (Triest), the Princely Counties of Gorizia (Görz) and Gradisca and towards the end, groups from the Princely Counties of Tyrol and the state of Vorarlberg. All the bells of Vienna rang out, speeches were held, and the national anthem was played. The sun shone, and the Emperor was satisfied with events. However, on closer inspection, what stood out were not only the groups and delegations that were present but also those that had failed to attend. The peoples of the Hungarian half of the Empire, predominantly Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats and Serbs, had not seen fit to attend the Viennese spectacle, and while they were represented in the historic scenes, they did not take part in the parade of nationalities. The same applied to representatives of the occupied territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This could be explained by the fact that while the peoples of Austria chose to celebrate their allegiance, those of the Kingdom of Hungary did not. The Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, however, gave a hollow pretext as grounds for not attending and refused to participate in the parade side by side with Germans from the same crown lands. The Italians were also missing from the South Tyrol and Trentino delegations. The matter was disregarded, and foreign diplomats commented that: 'In the whole world there is no country where the dynasty is as stable as it is here and where such a spectacle could be accomplished'.

The Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, even claimed that 'this is more than a battle won'.<sup>9</sup> The next day, life appeared to continue as before – and yet, something had changed. No comparable parade of the nationalities would ever take place again. In this regard, the jubilee parade marked the end of an era even before it was over. However, the course already been set decades previously, and indeed from 1908 onwards, a process that had been observed over the years by contemporaries and later generations with increasing alarm was merely accelerated.

In 1867, the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy began with the division of the Empire into an Austrian and a Hungarian half, and the Imperial and Royal Monarchy was established. Although from then onwards, the processes of dissolution and stabilisation would unfold in parallel, the successful attempts by Hungary to gain independence became a model for other peoples in the Empire, resulting in periods of de facto ungovernability. After decades of continued efforts to find a long-term solution, the signs of resignation had become evident. Something had to change. This was not only the view of foreign ministers and 'pre-emptive warriors', but many others, particularly among intellectual circles. In the prevailing attitude during the July Crisis, which is described later, the intelligentsia of Europe, with only a few exceptions, welcomed the prospect of war not only for domestic political reasons, but also from a fundamental sense of conviction. This mood was also strongly felt in Austria-Hungary. Philosophy, sociology, psychology and journalism, and not least historical science, also contributed to the notion of war as a natural and necessary measure. Since the turn of the century, preliminary military exercises had already been conducted whenever war was used as a measure on the international political stage. Hardly a year had passed when there had not been a larger conflict somewhere in the world that had presented a military challenge to the powers of the Concert of Europe. As a result, the distinct expectations and conditions prevailed that ultimately led to the world war being unleashed with just a flick of the hand. Austria-Hungary, which had a 'deficit of war', finally did what it believed was necessary within its own territory.

### **The Ballhausplatz and the Deficit of War**

When analysing the pre-history of the First World War, it is natural to focus on the key role played by foreign policy. It is tempting to look ever further back into the past to explain the causes of the war, and to take into consideration events that occurred long before the outbreak. If one thing or the other had not happened, then this or that event would not have taken place.<sup>10</sup> However, among all the processes that had the most sustained impact on the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the loss of power of the Ottoman Empire stands

out in particular. Since the Habsburg Monarchy lay on the periphery of a collapsing large empire, its foreign policy was oriented towards specific regions. However, it was clear that the spoils to be won also brought with them all the problems that had beleaguered the Turks. The collapse or merely the threat of dissolution of a large empire always brings substantial fallout in its wake, since those who have a stabilising effect and who wish to retain an empire are by nature in conflict with those who wish to profit from its disintegration.<sup>11</sup> This was the case with the Ottoman Empire, as it would be later with Austria-Hungary, the collapsing major power in the Danube region. The Habsburg Monarchy made strenuous efforts to counteract its fall, but perhaps it was precisely this almost compulsive attempt to break out of the disastrous circle that gave a hectic and sometimes unpredictable quality to Austro-Hungarian policy.<sup>12</sup> The foreign policy of the Monarchy reached the limits of its effectiveness whenever a conflict of interests occurred with those countries that portrayed themselves as dynamic, imperialist major powers, in other words, particularly when Great Britain, France and the German Empire came into play. The same was also true when a rival for the Turkish legacy, namely Tsarist Russia, made its intentions clear, and when medium-sized and small states began to seek expansion and make efforts to push through their demands. This applied above all to Italy and also to Serbia. That their interaction and rivalry is one of the causes of the outbreak of war is undisputed. How else can the reactions to certain events, the alliance politics and ultimately the goals that lay behind the war be explained?

The foundations for war were laid primarily in the Balkans. While on several occasions, there were fears that war would break out against Russia, or that the Habsburg Monarchy would be drawn into a war between Germany and France, the tensions between Austria-Hungary and Germany on the one hand and Russia on the other, as well as the strained relations between Germany and France, lacked the spontaneous aggressiveness and irrational behaviour that was manifest in the Balkans. There, the situation overall was volatile and unstable. When in 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Baron Aloys Lexa von Aehrenthal bound the Monarchy to a more active foreign policy, thus revising the policy of his predecessor, the Polish count Agenor Gołuchowski, the level of disorder in the structural fabric of the Balkans increased dramatically. As presidential head at the Foreign Ministry, then as ambassador first to Bucharest and finally from 1899 to 1906 to St. Petersburg, Aehrenthal had been in a position to gather a wealth of experience and insight, and the policy that he began appeared at first sight to be neither particularly illogical nor exciting. At best, it was received with surprise.<sup>13</sup> In 1878, the Congress of Berlin had given Austria-Hungary a mandate to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. Austria also obtained the right to occupy an area known as the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, which lay between Serbia and the principality of Montenegro in the west of the Balkan Peninsula. Austria-Hungary was

permitted to station troops in the area of occupation (and to enlist soldiers for military service in Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as to make administrative adjustments and expand transport routes, while in all other matters, nominal control remained with the Sultan. However, Austria-Hungary regarded the two provinces as a type of replacement colony, and was already highly experienced in 'Europeanising' areas of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The structures of the Habsburg multinational empire were also extended to the occupied area. In 1907, work was begun on building a railway line from Vienna to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, and from there onwards to Mitrovica in the Sanjak. On completion of the project, it would then have been possible to construct a railway connection beyond Serbia to Salonika. The project provoked outrage in Serbia, since Belgrade feared that Austria-Hungary intended to consolidate its rule in the occupied territory, in which Serbia also had an interest. In this, Serbia was supported by Russia. While construction work on the railway line did begin, the project was soon abandoned.

The railway project was a further obstacle to an understanding between Serbia and the Danube Monarchy, and from then on, anyone in Serbia seeking rapprochement was accused of ingratiating. Vienna was only able to breathe more freely in 1903, when the news of the murder of the Serbian king Alexander and his wife and the massacre conducted by a group of officers was greeted with horror, and the press, including in western European countries, concluded that Serbia had no place among the civilised states of Europe. In the words of one British newspaper: 'The appropriate place for such a brutal, premeditated murder of a king would be a Central Asian khanate, but not a city in Europe'<sup>14</sup>. The rebels went on to form the core of the secret organisation 'The Black Hand'.

During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/1905, there were fears in the Russian capital St. Petersburg as well as in Belgrade, that Austria-Hungary would exploit the situation and annex the occupied territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in Vienna, no serious consideration was given to this possibility. The Foreign Minister, Count Gólurowski, had other concerns and priorities. Matters changed when his successor, Aehrenthal, again brought forward the subject of the Sanjak railway project, which he regarded as an important preliminary to full annexation. He secured the agreement of the Turks and then informed the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Alexander Izvolsky, of Austria's aspirations. While Russia did not demur, it was intent on pursuing its own goals, and was keen to retrain its focus, interrupted by the war in the Far East, on relations with Europe. It did so by taking the initiative on the issue of the Turkish Straits and pursuing the old Russian dream of control of the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles. Soundings were taken in St. Petersburg and support was requested from Austria-Hungary. At the same time, the Young Turk revolution broke out in the Ottoman Empire. A new constitution was introduced there, and it appeared likely that the Sultan would

be forced for domestic reasons to demand the return of the provinces occupied by Austria-Hungary in 1878. This would have resulted in the loss of all investments and strategic aims. Even if this possibility remained mere speculation, it was a key element of Aehrenthal's political strategy. In his view, it would be advantageous for Austria-Hungary to reach an understanding with Russia and to come to an agreement over their interests.<sup>15</sup> On 16 September 1908, Aehrenthal and Izvolsky met in the Moravian town of Buchlovce (Buchlov) in a castle owned by Count Leopold Berchtold, Aehrenthal's successor as Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Russia. There were two reasons for the remoteness of the location chosen for the occasion. On the one hand, it was possible to confer unobserved by other state chancelleries, while on the other, the degree of mutual sympathy between the two foreign ministers was hardly boundless, and it was felt that the meeting should be kept as brief as possible. Alone together in a small salon, the two men agreed within just a few hours that Austria-Hungary could annex Bosnia and Herzegovina while returning the Sanjak to Turkey. In response, the Danube Monarchy agreed to support Russia in its policy regarding the Turkish Straits.<sup>16</sup> The hesitation on the part of Tsar Nicholas II to agree to this arrangement and – far worse – the foolish ambition and rashness of the Austrian ambassador to Paris Rudolf Count Khevenhüller-Metsch, who passed on news of the Buchlovce agreement before the agreed date, led to a scandal. Naturally, there were other parties who were also interested in the Turkish Straits issue, particularly Great Britain. London categorically refused to allow Russia to sail its warships through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, having denied it free passage since the Crimean War. Izvolsky then played the matter down and claimed that his aim in Buchlovce had merely been to agree on a possible new meeting of the major European powers similar to that of the Congress of Berlin of 1878. At this meeting, Austria-Hungary would have had the opportunity to assert its claims and would have been able to count on support from Russia. Aehrenthal, however, remembered their discussion differently, and regarded Izvolsky's about-turn as a bare-faced excuse. The fact that the Russians were failing to make progress with their aspirations in the Turkish Straits was ultimately their problem. For his part, Aehrenthal wished to resolve the Bosnia and Sanjak issue entirely in the manner agreed in the Buchlovce meeting. Here, he was supported by the parliaments of Austria and Hungary, as well as by Emperor Franz Joseph and the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. On 7 October 1908, the Emperor proclaimed the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were to become 'normal' provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the future.

At this point at the latest, one could take a flight into counterfactual history and ask a series of 'what if' questions. What would have happened if the Turks had demanded the return of the two provinces and, if they were refused, had perhaps waged war against Austria-Hungary? Would the Austro-Serbian conflict have escalated without the Bosnian problem? Would anything have changed in the Russian attitude towards the

Habsburg Monarchy? Would the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne perhaps never have travelled to Sarajevo...? As it was, events took a different turn.

Soon, further agreements were reached with the Ottoman Empire, since Austria-Hungary wished to pay adequate compensation for the annexed territories. The Sanjak of Novi Pazar and its approximately 350,000 inhabitants was also returned to Turkey, and besides this, the Ottoman Empire had nothing to gain overall from falling out with the Habsburg Monarchy on a permanent basis. However, the disputes continued between Austria and Russia, and particularly between Austria and Serbia, which regarded the constitutional changes in the Balkans as a threat and above all as an obstacle to its own expansion. In the end, Aehrenthal saw reason to publish extracts of the agreements made with Russia in order to make it clear, beyond the current dispute, that Russia had already agreed to an annexation in 1876 and 1877, and that the agreement with Izvolsky was far more concrete than the Russian had subsequently wished to accept.

This step, whether or not it was justified, was regarded in St. Petersburg as an embarrassment and a humiliation. However, that was not all. Following partial mobilisation by Serbia and a highly aggressive verbal reaction in Belgrade two days after the Austrian declaration of annexation, Aehrenthal demanded an official statement from Serbia declaring its willingness to return to normal, friendly relations with its neighbour Austria-Hungary. Serbia responded with a demand for compensation for the accession of the countries by the Habsburg Monarchy. This was in reality difficult to justify, and was also not supported by the Russians. Indeed, St. Petersburg went even so far as to inform Austria that the Danube Monarchy would only have to deal with an intervention by Russia if it were to decide on a 'promenade militaire' to Belgrade.

Finally, Great Britain made an attempt at mediation, which was accepted by Austria-Hungary after a period of endless deliberation and following the intervention of the German Empire. Serbia issued a declaration stating that it undertook to return to cordial relations with Austria-Hungary. Even if no real meaning was attached to this statement, and if, as is likely, Austria-Hungary was unaware of the fact that in Serbia, another secret organisation, the Narodna Odbrana (National Defence) had been formed with the goal of unifying all Serbs, including those living in Austria-Hungary, to create a southern Slav kingdom and moreover to avenge the alleged dishonour that Serbia had suffered, on the surface at least the differences between the two states were smoothed over.

Within the Habsburg Monarchy itself, life slowly returned to normal. However, the annexation had without doubt provoked highly intense reactions. Particularly in the Bohemian crown lands, no secret was made of the fact that there was far greater sympathy for the Serbs than for the ambitions of the Emperor to become 'empire builder'. And right on the anniversary of his accession to the throne, on 2 December 1908,

Prague found it necessary to announce martial law in order to bring an end to rioting and to reinstate order.

At the end of the annexation crisis, it was evident that several patterns for action had evolved in 1908/1909 that would serve as a model time and again in later years. The Habsburg Monarchy had been given rear support by the German Empire. The Chancellor of the German Empire, Bernhard von Bülow, had clearly stated to Austria-Hungary on 30 October 1908 that the German Empire would share responsibility for any decision taken and would also offer military assistance if necessary.<sup>17</sup> However, this was only one experience which was to be gained. France and England had come to terms with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their interests lay elsewhere, and as imperial powers, they would hardly have failed to recognise a colonial impulse. The reaction from Italy was no cause for concern. Still, what did make a significant impact was the untold harm done by Austria to its relations with Russia. This matter would never be forgotten. In international relations, certain events do not assume a decisive importance merely because they have an immediate impact. Rather, humiliations or severe damage provoke a rise in hostile attitudes and a desire for revenge in support of the national interest, which while having no place in politics cannot be extrapolated from the background against which political decisions are made. In a similar way, the potential for conflict is also increased. Izvolsky was relieved of his post as minister and was sent to Paris as Russian ambassador. He subsequently played a role in the July Crisis of 1914, and was indeed least of all in favour of Russia and Serbia taking a moderate view in their assessment of the impact of the murder in Sarajevo. He did, after all, have an old score to settle.

### The Powder Keg

Ultimately, Aehrenthal's policy was a success. Emperor Franz Joseph expressed his approval by awarding his Foreign Minister an earldom in 1909. There was nothing malicious about Aehrenthal's strategy, which had already been agreed with the Austrian decision-makers and indeed with other countries. However, this does not mean that his policy was not also controversial. Neither the German parties in the Habsburg Monarchy nor the national Hungarians welcomed the expansion of the Slav territories. In spite of this, both halves of the Empire made efforts to have the new acquisitions allocated to their complex of territories. No agreement could be reached, and as a result, the annexed provinces remained the state no-man's-land that they had been since the start of the occupation in 1878. The finance ministers of Austria and Hungary, one of the three joint ministries of the Danube Monarchy, were responsible for administering Bosnia and Herzegovina, and not the government of either of the two halves of the

Empire. Even so, the real power was held by the civic and military governor, who was a general.

The evident risk of war into which the Foreign Minister had entered was subject to criticism. However, there were also those who expressed regret that the annexation had been achieved peacefully, and that no war with Serbia had resulted. One exponent of this group was General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the Chief of the General Staff of the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary. He made no secret of the fact that he would have liked to have used the annexation as a reason for waging a pre-emptive war against Serbia. Russia, he claimed, was not ready for war any more than Italy and France. England would not want a war, and Romania was an ally. This would therefore have been a perfect opportunity. However, Aehrenthal had emphatically stressed several times that there was no question of waging an offensive war and, on this matter, he was certain that the Emperor and the heir to the throne would agree. In fact, on 10 March 1909, Serbia formally declared that it had abandoned its objections to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, would harbour no hostile feelings towards Austria-Hungary, and would make every effort to foster good neighbourly relations. In so doing, it denied Austria in a very public manner all reason to initiate a war.

The relationship between Conrad and Aehrenthal worsened almost immediately. During the years that followed, Conrad simply refused to accept that those responsible for foreign policy were opposed to his urgent call for war. And in retrospect, notwithstanding the moral implications of this approach, he appeared to have been right: the defeat of Serbia would have changed everything.

Aside from politicians, diplomats and several parties, there was one other group that was vehemently opposed to the annexation: the Austrian peace movement, which under the leadership of Bertha von Suttner had become a highly influential body. Membership of the movement swelled when entire organisations such as teachers' associations and church societies joined en masse. However, in terms of their argumentation, they were performing a balancing act, since in the movement's magazine, the *Friedenswarte*, differentiations began to be made between cultured nations and backward peoples. The peoples of the Balkans, and also Russia, were unambiguously classified in the second category.<sup>18</sup> For the moment, however, von Suttner and her followers could applaud the fact that war had been avoided.

However, although a dangerous escalation of the crisis had been prevented, across Europe, reactions to matters related to the Balkans had become sensitised. Since the question of whether there would be war or peace so evidently appeared to hang on developments in the Balkans, any event or change in the status quo that occurred on the Balkan Peninsula was a trigger for alarm bells in the state chancelleries.

However, the conflict between Conrad and Aehrenthal only reached its point of culmination during the years that followed, when Serbia and Bulgaria took the surprising



step of signing an alliance and with Russian agreement and assistance set about creating a Balkan League. Serbia was clearly aiming to increase its power and received broad support for its ambitions. Conrad once again accused Aehrenthal of being opposed to a pre-emptive war in 1909. On 18 July 1911, Conrad wrote to the Foreign Minister: 'I cannot forbear, to return to the position that I have always held, that a war fought years ago would have rendered our military position regarding our undertakings in the Balkans significantly more favourable, and that a war against Serbia in the year 1909 would, with a single stroke, have brought the Monarchy to the position in the Balkans that it must assume, and which must now be achieved under far more difficult conditions than those that prevailed at that time.'<sup>19</sup> This statement, which was preceded and would be followed by numerous others of its kind, was made not only in response to the case of Serbia but was also an unequivocal reference to the deficit of war.

Several times, Aehrenthal tendered his resignation, not least due to his conflict with Conrad. The Emperor rejected his requests, and reassured his minister that he enjoyed his full confidence. Thus, Aehrenthal, who was suffering from advanced leukaemia and was already nearing death, remained in office and continued to resist demands for a pre-emptive war by the War Party with great vehemence. Even when Conrad was temporarily recalled from his post as Chief of the General Staff in December 1911 and replaced for almost a year by General of the Infantry Blasius Schemua, the 'pre-emptive warriors' intensified their criticism of the Foreign Ministry. In any case, Schemua was also of the opinion that 'an active foreign policy targeted towards expansion' was the 'best cure' for the domestic stagnation and national signs of decomposition in the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>20</sup> And yet why wage war when it could be avoided? Aehrenthal's stance also influenced his close colleagues, of whom Count János Forgách, the minister's chief of staff, Count Friedrich Szápáry, Count Ottokar Czernin, and Baron Alexander von Musulin and Count Alexander Hoyos were particularly intent on propagating the views of their superior. With little success, as would become clear in 1914. Aehrenthal's policy was also supported throughout by Archduke Franz Ferdinand, although perhaps with an even greater emphasis on the avoidance of war.<sup>21</sup>

In mid-February 1912, the cards were re-shuffled. Aehrenthal died. Due to his severe illness, a search had already been underway for his successor for some time. Someone was needed who had experience with Russia. Here, there were many candidates to choose from. However, a guarantee that Aehrenthal's policy would be continued was also required, and also that the new foreign minister, who was also minister of the imperial household, would fit well into the difficult constellation at court and in the circles of power. This reduced the number of suitable potential successors significantly. The nomination of Count Leopold Berchtold, who had arranged the meeting at Buchlovice and who had experienced the annexation crisis of 1908 as ambassador in St. Petersburg, appeared to be a logical decision in the light of these premises.<sup>22</sup> Berchtold

did not enjoy the luxury of a period of familiarisation in his new role. On 13 March 1912, about a month after his nomination, Serbia and Bulgaria agreed to the formation of a long-discussed Balkan League, which although it was primarily directed against the Turks was also pointed at Austria-Hungary. Serbia hoped to expand its territory in the south-west, while Bulgaria had set its sights on Macedonia, with Tsar Ferdinand declaring his open interest in gaining control of Adrianople and Salonica. However, as part of the treaty, Bulgaria also undertook to dispatch troops if Austria-Hungary were to attack Serbia.<sup>23</sup>

Everywhere, general staffs – in the Balkan states, Russia, Great Britain, France, Italy, and not forgetting Germany and Austria-Hungary, where the sense of alarm was just as acute – now entered a period of intense activity. If war were to break out in the Balkans, its containment within the region could not be guaranteed. Indeed, for a long time, the chorus of voices claiming that a great war would inevitably occur had been growing louder. The report written by the Russian military attaché in London in February 1912, in which he expressed the view that a war between Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy on the one side and the powers of the ‘entente cordiale’ of England, France and also Russia on the other, was ‘probably inevitable’, although its postponement would be ‘desirable’, was just one of many similar statements made at the time.<sup>24</sup> In October 1912, matters came to a head. Greece and Montenegro joined the Balkan League, and Bulgaria and Serbia began to mobilise.<sup>25</sup> Russia, which since September had been conducting mobilisation manoeuvres designed to intimidate Austria-Hungary in particular, declared its support for the anti-Turkish coalition. Turkey issued an urgent appeal to Austria-Hungary to provide assistance in its difficult situation. It also asked the Danube Monarchy directly whether it could not re-occupy the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. However, Vienna refused to help. In a series of conferences between 16 and 30 October 1912, it was decided that Austria-Hungary would only take military measures if a major power or Serbia were to settle on the eastern shore of the Adriatic or on the Ionian Sea. The opinion in Vienna was that occupation of the Sanjak by Serbia or Montenegro would not affect Austria-Hungary’s vital interests. In order to keep Serbia away from the Adriatic, however, it would be desirable, following a likely defeat of Turkish troops and the clearance of the Vilayet on the western Balkan Peninsula, to create an autonomous Albanian state.<sup>26</sup> The aim here was also to prevent Russia from potentially securing a base for its fleet in the Adriatic Sea with the aid of Serbia.<sup>27</sup>

Certainly, not everyone was happy with this position, and there was notable accord between the demands made by the top-ranking military and high officials from the Foreign Ministry, such as Counts Forgách, Szápáry and Hoyos, who were on the side of the War Party.<sup>28</sup> But the first step was to wait and see whether the military action would end as expected.

The states that began the war against Turkey enjoyed a series of easy victories, with the Bulgarians making the greatest advances. However, Serbia pushed through to the Adriatic, nurturing the hope that it would be given assistance by Russia in its efforts to occupy Albanian territory. To the disappointment of Belgrade, Russia brushed such a possibility aside, however. Great Britain and France also declared that they were unwilling to begin a war simply because Serbia was advancing towards the sea and Austria-Hungary wished to stop it from doing so. The Russian envoy in Belgrade, Nikolai Hartvig, who was regarded as the 'mastermind' of the Balkan coalition, went beyond the instructions given by St. Petersburg and suggested to Serbia that the Russians would also offer support in a war against the Danube Monarchy. The Serbs and Montenegrins therefore continued their forward march, while risking a war with Austria-Hungary. On 7 December 1912, Emperor Franz Joseph agreed to ready troops from the XVth and XVIth army corps in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia for war. This did not yet amount to mobilisation, but as a result of the measure, the number of men in the units was increased to 100,000, compared to a peacetime level of 40,000.<sup>29</sup> The following day, the famous 'War Council' took place in Berlin, which has been described in such detail by the German historian Fritz Fischer and others, and of which an American historian has commented that compared to the discussions taking place simultaneously in Vienna, it was 'beinahe bedeutungsloses Geschwätz'.<sup>30</sup> In the interim, the meeting convened by Kaiser Wilhelm II was almost entirely relativised.<sup>31</sup> On 11 December, however, Conrad von Hötzendorf was appointed Chief of the General Staff, although to Conrad's disappointment, Emperor Franz Joseph refused to take further military steps. Here, the Emperor was strongly supported in his position by Berchtold. Several days later, on 24 December 1912, the Foreign Minister faced a new onslaught from the War Party when General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, State Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the highest-ranking military and civilian official of the two provinces, demanded the conscription of reservist troops for his two corps areas, as well as troops assigned to the Landwehr (Austrian standing army) and the Landsturm (reserve forces). Potiorek enjoyed wholesale support in this demand from the Imperial and Royal War Minister Baron Moritz Auffenberg, as well as the Chief of the General Staff.<sup>32</sup>

The Joint Finance Minister responsible for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Baronet Leon von Biliński, also expressed his support for military measures. The disappointment over Austrian reticence was vented in drastic terms. The Viennese constitutional law professor Josef Redlich claimed that: 'The Monarchy has outplayed its role in Europe', adding that 'The Emperor does not even have the courage to have others lose their lives on his behalf.'<sup>33</sup> Yet once again, Berchtold quashed the demands. In Berlin, the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office, Alfred Kiderlen-Wächter, expressed the view that Germany had brought Austria-Hungary to reason and saved the peace, and in a letter to his sister even embellished his opinion with the comment that: 'we have secured the

peace [...] and the stupid Austrians, who never know exactly what they want and who unsettle the whole world' would have to manage on their own.<sup>34</sup>

For Russia, however, the matter was by no means brought to a close by the fact that no further action was taken following the replenishment of Imperial and Royal troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Just as Russia had already begun mobilisation manoeuvres along the military districts bordering Austria-Hungary, so during the following months it also continued its measures to replenish its units, ensuring that troops in the western military districts were present in sufficient numbers to enable it to wage war. In short: Russia made full use of its repertoire of threatening gestures. Although the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, claimed in an official statement that no military movement was occurring in Russia, and even denied that there had been an increase in troop numbers in the western military districts, the Evidenzbüro (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal General Staff reported otherwise, and saw itself vindicated in its suspicions.<sup>35</sup> Sazonov – and this was not known until later – had a tendency to lie unashamedly when matters came to a head, and this statement should also have been treated with caution. In St. Petersburg, an anti-Austrian mood was propagated which was only diminished in January 1913 when Emperor Franz Joseph sent the former Austro-Hungarian military attaché in St. Petersburg, Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe-Schillingfürst, with a personal letter to the Tsar. The danger once again appeared to have passed – and yet on the Balkan Peninsula, there was no end in sight. Now, Montenegro also made preparations to improve its war balance and occupy Scutari. Montenegrin control of Scutari would make the Austro-Hungarian Albania project, in other words, the creation of an independent Albanian state, impossible to achieve. Montenegro also had the support of Serbia, which Austria-Hungary wanted to prevent from gaining access to the Adriatic. In the end, the conflicting parties agreed to arrange a conference of ambassadors in London designed to reinstate peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states. At this conference, it was agreed on 11 March 1913 that in terms of their ethnic population, some of the territories claimed by Montenegro and Serbia belonged without doubt to Albania, and should therefore be surrendered to the newly created principality. The key territories in question were Scutari and Prizren, as well as parts of Kosovo, which was occupied by the Serbs.

The Russian Foreign Minister nevertheless attempted to win some benefit for Serbia. Through acts of extreme violence in the claimed territories, Serbs and Montenegrins, the latter in Scutari, also sought to swing developments in their favour and create a *fait accompli*. To put an end to the bloodbath, Berchtold consented to allow the Serbs control of Gjakova on condition that the fighting and slaughter cease immediately. The offer failed to achieve any improvement in the situation. Even so, in April 1913, Serbia withdrew its troops from Albania, since it feared a war with its former League associate, Bulgaria. On 23 April, Scutari, which had still been defended by the Turks, fell into the

hands of the Montenegrins.<sup>36</sup> The Ambassadors' Conference then made it absolutely clear that the major powers would not accept the behaviour of the Montenegrins. Reports on events in the western Balkans, not least descriptions by the Red Cross of acts of mass violence, only served to confirm the opinion that 'the Balkans' were populated by an uncivilised people. The Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) threatened to respond with violence. A plan of operation was developed known as 'war scenario M' (Montenegro), which until then had not been finalised. German support came promptly and unconditionally. Finally, the Joint Council of Ministers of Austria-Hungary decided on 2 May 1913 to begin mobilisation measures along the Montenegrin border. This proved a successful deterrent: On the same day, King Nikola I of Montenegro announced the unconditional evacuation of Scutari.

Yet the situation in the Balkans refused to quietdown. Romania, which had gained nothing from the Balkan War, demanded that Bulgaria hand over Silistria on the Black Sea, as well as providing numerous other territories and benefits, which it described as 'reparations'. Serbia, in dispute with Bulgaria over the division of Macedonia, which had been taken from the Turks, also presented a front against Bulgaria. It was anticipated that Austria-Hungary would support Romania, which was allied to the German Empire, Italy and the Danube Monarchy. Germany was already prepared to provide such support purely out of dynastic interest, since King Carol I of Romania was a prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and was related to the German Emperor.

However, at the Ballhausplatz in Vienna, further attempts were made at manoeuvring, while at the same time taking a stand against the increasingly powerful Russian influence in the Balkans. The Danube Monarchy could have no particular interest in ultimately helping Serbia by intervening against Bulgaria. The treatment of Romania was also a sensitive issue, since there were around three million Romanians living in Transylvania who were more or less openly supported by Bucharest. The view was even voiced in Hungary that the Romanians in Transylvania had no cause for complaint, since their situation had markedly improved since the signing of the military convention with Romania.<sup>37</sup> However, this did not impress Romania in the slightest, and above all failed to convince the country to ally itself unconditionally with Austria-Hungary and Germany. Romania therefore remained a loose cannon, adding several particularly colourful facets to the kaleidoscopic political landscape of the Balkans.

The failure of Vienna to provide any real support to Bucharest generated a massive degree of resentment against Austria in Romania. When the Second Balkan War broke out in July 1913, demonstrators in Romania were just as hostile to Vienna as they were to Sofia, with calls of 'Long live Serbia!'.<sup>38</sup>

The situation was just the same as it had been during the Crimean War of 1854/1855. Austria had sat on the fence and ultimately received no thanks from any quarter for its attempts to stay out of the dispute. However Bulgaria, which on the one hand had

borne the brunt of the First Balkan War while on the other making significant conquests, succumbed to a combined attack by Romanians, Turks, Greeks and Serbs and again suffered substantial territorial losses. Since Bulgaria felt let down first and foremost by the Russians – and could not justifiably feel abandoned by Austria-Hungary and Germany – It subsequently began to lean toward the large central European powers, with revenge in mind.

There was one further consequence of the Second Balkan War. Serbia, which until 1913 had had reason to assume that Serbian minorities would settle in both the north and south of its state, had now been able to absorb almost all Serbian territories (as well as a few others) located in the south. It was therefore to be expected that it would then focus greater attention on Austria-Hungary to the north in furthering its nationalist ambitions. Once more, the Balkan war had failed to provide any real solution, but rather had diverted tensions elsewhere and left the region even more volatile. And the period of turmoil during that year was still not over.

Serbia had reneged on the pledges it had made at the London Ambassadors' Conference and had not withdrawn fully from Albania. While Great Britain in particular applied pressure for the agreement to be observed, no joint *démarche* by the states that had signed the Treaty of London was made. Only Vienna made one attempt after another to put pressure on the Serbian government and to agree on a joint approach with the other powers involved. It was all in vain. Now it was Italy's turn to demur, which while benefiting from Serbia being kept away from the Adriatic also feared an expansion of Austro-Hungarian influence and wished to see this compensated. For Vienna, no alternative remained but to give in or to decide on even more far-reaching measures. Once again it was Conrad, who had been reinstated as Chief of the General Staff, who pressed ahead with his radical demands. In his view, clear conditions had to be created, particularly also with regard to Romania. He pleaded for an annexation of Serbia to the Danube Monarchy in a similar way as Bavaria had been to the German Empire. If this proved impossible to achieve in a peaceful manner, the hostilities would have to be conducted openly; in his view, the risk to the southern Slav territories of the Monarchy from an act of Serbian irredentism was so great that no other solution would be possible.<sup>39</sup> The Hungarian Prime Minister, Count István Tisza, disagreed vehemently with him. He had no desire for further territorial expansion, and certainly not in the manner recommended by Conrad. The Imperial and Royal Finance Minister Bilinski joined him in disagreeing with this proposal, although he also regarded a dispute with Serbia as inevitable: Austria-Hungary would not be able to avoid war. It would therefore be necessary to strengthen the army despite the weak financial situation. Once again, therefore, the deficit of war became a focus of interest, as did the deficit in the state coffers.

On 18 October 1913, the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* in Belgrade, Baron Wilhelm von Storck, was ordered to issue an ultimatum on behalf of the Viennese Cabinet, demand-

ing the withdrawal of Serbian troops from the Albanian territories. Should they fail to comply, Austria-Hungary threatened to take 'appropriate measures', as it chose to call them.<sup>40</sup> This could be interpreted in any number of different ways. On the same day, Berlin informed Vienna that it continued to support the Austrian policy in full. Serbia, which had eight days to meet the Austrian demands, backed down immediately and promised to withdraw its troops from the Albanian territories before the deadline set by Vienna. This put Serbia back in its place, and – from Belgrade's point of view – was a humiliation. In both Balkan wars, it had achieved almost all its goals, except for gaining access to the sea. On the other hand, Austria-Hungary had experienced for the second time that applying serious pressure to Serbia had caused it to give way.

At this point, a balance can to some extent be drawn of the pre-history of the First World War, and clear patterns of action can also be distinguished. Austria-Hungary's foreign policy was to a large degree a policy directed at the Balkans. The Balkans and their problems not only absorbed most of Austria-Hungary's attention, but also consumed the highest level of energy. There, everything was undergoing a process of change, a new conflict could break out almost every day, and it was difficult to predict who would be pitted against whom, and what the precise nature of the dispute would be. Statements given one day no longer be applied the next. Almost all of the states created by the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, most of which were very new, drew on nationalistic and above all historical evidence in order to underpin their claims and draw attention to their traditional rights. The Serbs drew attention to Stefan Nemanja (1166-1196) and Stefan Dušan (1331-1355) and their Great Serbian Empire. The Romanians not only used the Dacians and the Romans to support their claims, but also the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and the battle with the Magyars, which had lasted for centuries. The Bulgarians did the same with the Great Bulgarian Empire from the 7th century and the 'golden' 9th and 10th centuries, while Albania took pride in its successful battle against the Ottomans under Skanderberg in the 15th century. For their part, the Turks, understandably, were reluctant to simply give up their European territories, and fought to retain them. Meanwhile, Austria-Hungary, which until 1912 had bordered the Ottoman Empire directly, was involved in every conflict, either in order to maintain or gain power, or to keep Serbia's ambitions for expansion in check. Naturally, other powers such as Great Britain, France and Italy were also present in the Balkans. Italy was particularly involved, since it had an interest in gaining a foothold in Albania. Russia had become active in order to support both Serbia and Bulgaria or Romania in alternation. In this regard, the credibility of the Russian Empire was ultimately undermined, since it had let Serbia down twice, and Bulgaria once. France and Great Britain also had a whole cluster of interests ranging from economic advantages and power of influence through to a likely anxiety shared by both countries at the prospect of Germany strengthening its position in the Balkan region.

One facet of the patterns of action was also that violence was used with increasing frequency, and after two Balkan wars, the question on everyone's lips was: when would the third war break out? Russia had mobilised. The manpower for the Imperial and Royal troops had been increased and to a certain degree had also been mobilised. Threats were made, and the German Empire declared its support of the Habsburg Monarchy in order to deter the other major powers from intervening. Finally, attempts were made to broker an agreement – only to see the entire process start all over again from the beginning.

One more detail from the October crisis of 1913 deserves mentioning. Since Emperor Franz Joseph was not averse to a military solution as long as the Monarchy acted on a solid legal basis, in other words, according to the terms agreed at the London Conference, the Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, proposed an advance on to Serbian territory from Sylvania across the Sava River in order to occupy the town of Šabac, and to retain it as security until Serbia gave way. Naturally, Conrad von Hötzendorf failed to see any benefit from Berchtold's plan.<sup>41</sup> In his view: '[...] either we want war or we don't. If not, we'd do better to keep our mouths shut.' He expressed his opinion even more clearly to the Emperor: 'We would do well to exploit the current rebellion in Albania in order to take measures against Serbia, in other words: to wage war through to the very end [...] Now perhaps the last opportunity to intervene has presented itself.' What place did a security have in this scenario, he asked. And yet once again, Conrad was unable to convince.<sup>42</sup> He then issued a warning: 'The Army will not be able to tolerate another mobilisation without gaining even one piece of land.'<sup>43</sup>

It became clear how far the situation had come to a head since 1908. Whilst Aehrenthal had been able to still take the steps he wanted without the risk of war, and even without threatening violence directly, the Balkans had not quietened down since that time. No year and hardly a single month passed in which there was no war and no prospect of military deployment. Now, counterfactual history can again be considered with regard to what would have happened if the Danube Monarchy really had freed the passage to the Adriatic for Serbia. Would anything have changed? If Serbia had succeeded more rapidly in its desire to become a medium-sized power, would Albania ever have been created? Would Serbia have been satiated by reaching the Adriatic coast? Would Italy perhaps have begun to settle earlier and more permanently on the Balkan Peninsula, and would the main conflict have been between Serbia and Italy? It is almost pointless to wonder. One thing is certainly clear: Serbia would never have given up its ambitions with regard to the southern Slav territories of the Danube Monarchy.

The constant tensions surrounding the Balkans not only had a sensitising effect: conversely, they also led to a blunted reaction. As the Chief of the German General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, noted in July 1913: 'We are all somewhat deadened by events in the Balkans. Nobody knows what is to come of the situation.'<sup>44</sup> However,



hardly a single day passed in which a new incident was not reported and discussed, in which notes were not exchanged or a certain concentration of interest established. This also partially explains why during the July Crisis of 1914, the European constellation of forces appeared to play no role for the Danube Monarchy. It was simply the Balkans once again that were causing problems and for which a solution was now sought in the form of a type of Gordian knot.

When analysing the Austrian role in the Balkans, parallels can not only be drawn with the Crimean War, during which Austria, which was in principle not involved, chose to sit on the fence, as mentioned above. A further similarity was also the issue of funding. Following the measure adopted by Russia in October 1912 not to discharge 375,000 soldiers who were due for transfer into the army reserve, the Danube Monarchy also increased its peacetime troop strength from an original figure of around 415,000 men to 620,000. While for most reservists this was only a short-term measure, those in the two most southern corps areas, the XVth ('Sarajevo') and the XVIth ('Ragusa') remained in readiness for around nine months. This cost money – a lot of money. The measure consumed 309 million crowns, corresponding to the military budget for the Monarchy for nine months.<sup>45</sup> In order to gather the funds needed, a loan had to be taken out in New York in December 1912 for a period of two years and at inflated conditions.

The increase in peacetime troop strength during 1912 and 1913, and even more so the mobilisation, was therefore not only a double-edged sword because of the risk of pulling in other powers; it was also extremely costly. Measures such as these could not be afforded very often, since they were not included in the budget planning and therefore required separate sources of funding. It was also double-edged because the effectiveness of such actions wears off all too quickly. If a 'war-in-sight' attitude is adopted at frequent intervals, this type of demonstration of power soon loses substance.

However, the Danube Monarchy by no means pursued its Balkan policy in isolation from the other European powers. It sought contact with them and repeatedly reassured them that it had no interest in making territorial gains. However, it cannot justifiably be claimed that the Monarchy took any particular account of the interests of others when it came to its Balkan policy. In the Balkans especially, it felt directly affected and legitimised in keeping its sights on its own goals. For the German Empire, which was allied to Austria-Hungary, this entailed taking the calculated risk of being pulled along by the Danube Monarchy. The fact, cited by the German historian Fritz Fischer as a cause of the precipitation of the war, that Germany was seeking to gain a foothold in the Balkans,<sup>46</sup> can therefore also be explained as a result of Berlin's unwillingness to remain in this position. This raised fundamental questions regarding the relationship between Germany and Austria-Hungary.

On 14 June 1914, the Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, travelled to the chateau of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Konopiště

(Konopischt) to the south of Prague in order to discuss the situation in the Balkans.<sup>47</sup> Franz Ferdinand, who was a relatively consistent proponent of finding a peaceful solution to Balkan issues, requested that a detailed memorandum be drawn up regarding the turbulent European region, giving a precise account of the Austrian assessment of the situation. This memorandum was designed to promote an intensive exchange of views with Berlin. Work immediately began on the document in the Ballhausplatz, resulting in a comprehensive evaluation. First of all, the longstanding conflict with Serbia had to be described, stressing the role of this state as a southern Slav 'Piedmont', while at the same time taking into account that successful negotiations had just been conducted with Serbia regarding the sale of shares in the Orient Railway Company, the majority of which were owned by Austria-Hungary and of which only a small proportion were to be sold to Serbia. The memorandum further claimed that there was a risk that negotiations would be held regarding a merging of Serbia and Montenegro, while the relationship with Romania left little room for manoeuvre, since the support by Bucharest for the Romanians living in Hungary ruled out any prospect of rapprochement. The chiefs of the general staffs of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire were in agreement that Romania could not be counted on in the event of war. Conrad had already expressed the view in light of the cooling relations with Bucharest that it would be necessary to extend the railway network in the direction of Romania and to create border fortifications should a rapid deployment of troops be required. If he and his German counterpart, Helmuth von Moltke, had known that the Romanian King Carol, on the occasion of the visit by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia to Constance on 14 June 1914, had said that Romania would certainly not side with Austria-Hungary in the event of war, the matter would have been completely clear.<sup>48</sup> The memorandum concluded that it would be more appropriate to consider Bulgaria – the same Bulgaria that in the past had shown almost no sign of friendship towards Austria-Hungary. However, this attitude could change in the future. While in Germany, it was felt that Bulgaria would not be able to compensate for the absence of Romania, the view at the Ballhausplatz and in the new Imperial and Royal War Ministry on the Stubenring in Vienna was not so pessimistic. Bulgaria was in urgent need of money after the Balkan wars, and Austria decided to act as an agent in obtaining German loan assistance. To this extent, everything seemed to be running smoothly. The greatest risk, if a new Balkan League were to be formed, was that it would turn against Austria-Hungary with the help of Russian support and French funding. If Russia or Serbia were also to find supporters among the peoples of Austria-Hungary, a mood of crisis would inevitably follow. Indeed, this is precisely what did happen – and this was also by no means a new phenomenon.

## The Socialisation of Violence

A few years before the outbreak of the First World War, the equality of all nations was described as the 'strongest foundation of the Austrian imperial design'.<sup>49</sup> However, an approach that was intended to be both a statement and a programme, and also a guaranteed right, was unable to prevent the peoples in the Empire from drifting apart. After the 'Compromise' of 1867, which divided the Habsburg Monarchy into two halves that from then on, aside from the ruler in person, only shared their foreign, defence and finance ministries, a certain mood of unease had arisen, particularly in Hungary. However, for the peoples of the Empire as a whole, the situation was too little and too much at the same time. The reduction of commonalities to the person of the Monarch, the external borders of the Monarchy and the Imperial and Royal foreign, war and finance ministers caused the sense of shared responsibility to decline. A further source of endless friction was the increasing emphasis on the historical rights of the ethnic groups that sought to assert their claims domestically rather than abroad. While one side claimed to be disadvantaged, it was accused by the other of enjoying special privileges. But there could only be losers in the eternal debates of the jealous parties.

There was one dominant nation within each of the two halves of the Empire. In Cisleithania, the Austrian half, it was the Germans, while in Transleithania, it was the Hungarians. While the parliaments united the nations of these two halves, and the governments of Austria and Hungary mostly consisted of representatives from all nations, there was never a Czech prime minister in Vienna, for example, just as there was never a Croatian or Slovakian prime minister in Budapest.

Although several running metres of books had been written about the imperial reform, and leading politicians including the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, strove to achieve an end to dualism through a stronger federalist solution, by 1914, not much progress had been made. Despite several 'compensations' between individual ethnic groups, no fundamental solution had been found. It is hardly surprising that at least some of the nationalities in the Habsburg Empire felt more closely connected to those neighbouring states that were vanguards of nationalism. However, the connection between the nationalities of Austria-Hungary and their co-nationals beyond the Empire's borders almost inevitably contributed to the destabilisation of the Empire. National autonomies, which were ever more frequently sought and also achieved, developed an 'unstoppable force of impact'.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, Europe stood and watched.

For some of the European cabinets, it was certainly of significance until the outbreak of the Great War that the Habsburg Monarchy, despite all its problems, seemed to be more or less a stable entity, in stark contrast to the 'kaleidoscopic' region on the other side of the south-eastern border of the Empire.<sup>51</sup> The ruling dynasty and Austrian no-

bility were related to numerous western dynasties and aristocrats. The countries of the Habsburg Monarchy were valued for their wide, open landscapes, their richness and areas of natural beauty, their palaces and hunting grounds. The conservative circles in France saw an intactness that had long since been lost in their country. The progressive, liberal circles in the west participated in intellectual life and praised the exceptional quality of the leading newspapers of the Monarchy. The Catholics regarded the Catholic-dominated Empire as a bulwark of faith, and those who sought a balance in Europe regarded it as the counterweight to Russia and still, to a certain extent, to Germany with its ambitions of hegemony.<sup>52</sup> Yet nobody in the west, except for a few scholars, was particularly interested in the internal problems beleaguering the Monarchy, or even had any particular understanding of the peoples inhabiting the Habsburg Empire, let alone praised its tolerance and the security it offered to many small nationalities. To a certain extent, this was hardly surprising, however, since in most cases, the other powers only had a direct relationship with those countries that bordered their own states.

In fact, this already explains why Russia and Serbia followed developments in the Monarchy in a very different way from England and France, for example, and that the Tsarist Empire in particular sought time and again to intervene in political processes and to destabilise the Monarchy. Pan-Slavism was manifest in many different forms. Ideas of a Greater Russia were introduced in Bukovina and among the Ruthenians and Ukrainians who had settled in the east of Poland, and an emphasis was placed on their shared language, religion and culture. The Russian Orthodox Church made itself a custodian of political agitation, attempting to win support for Russia by the indirect means of converting members of the Greek Uniate Church to Russian Orthodoxy. In the words of Zbynek A. Zeman: 'The clergy, supported by pro-Russian priests who have been sent for the purpose – particularly in the areas close to the Russian border – have become impregnable bulwarks of the Orthodox Church.'<sup>53</sup> Time and again, priests and all-Ruthenian, Ukrainian functionaries were defendants in high treason court cases, particularly during 1914.

In Bohemia and Moravia, Pan-Slavism found a different form of expression. There, it mixed with far more complex currents that also dated back much further historically. The strongest was probably the one focussing on the discrimination against the Czechs over hundreds of years. One aspect was the affront to the Czechs, which always sounded fresh, originating with the 'renewed constitution' of 1627, which led to a form of German and Hungarian dominance that appeared to have been perpetuated by dualism and that had excluded the Czechs. To this were added anti-Habsburg tendencies, the language dispute and numerous other factors that provided fertile soil for influence from outside. The workers' parties, the petit-bourgeois and the young Czech intellectuals led the way in the national struggle. They wanted to see an end to discrimination and struggled to have their wishes and demands respected. Yet among the radicals, a

strange mixture of loyalty and sectarianism, Pan-Slavism and Russophilia was also to be observed, without it being possible to agree on a single shared goal. For example, a Czech radical such as the member of the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly), Karel Kramář, had tried many times to become foreign minister and minister of the imperial household,<sup>54</sup> which makes it clear that he wished to have influence, to create and reform, but certainly not initially to destroy. However, there was one thing that he wanted just as certainly, and that was to loosen the bonds between the Dual Monarchy and the German Empire, if possible in order to pave the way for a closer relationship with Russia. Only when he failed in all his goals did he become more radical and forged increasingly close ties to Russia and the Russophiles.<sup>55</sup> Even so, Kramář was severely critical of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, and issued a formal statement confirming his loyalty to the Monarchy which amounted to more than merely empty words. More radical and pro-Russian than Kramář were the National Socialists of Bohemia and Moravia under the leadership of Vaclav Klofáč. He not only oriented his policy towards Russia, but also maintained particularly close contacts with the radical southern Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as to Serbia. During a visit to St. Petersburg in January 1914, he agreed to a request by the Chief of the Russian General Staff to establish a network of agents and in the event that Austria-Hungary mobilised, to do all he could to disrupt the process.<sup>56</sup>

Apart from the Russophile group, there was also an opposition faction among the Czechs that was oriented towards the democratic west. Its most prominent representative was Tomáš G. Masaryk, member of the Austrian Reichsrat and Professor of Philosophy in Prague.<sup>57</sup> However, prior to the war, Kramář enjoyed far more support than Masaryk.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike the Ruthenians and Czechs, the Poles in Austria were hardly prone to Russophile currents. There were several reasons for this. First, they could expect no benefit from Russia, and in comparison with the Poles living in Russia, felt themselves to be in a 'western' state, which despite all its weaknesses was still progressive. Besides this, the Austrian Poles had learned how to utilise their loyalty towards Austria and its ruling dynasty to gain political advantages. For this reason, they were repeatedly given positions of power within the state, in contrast to the Czechs.

By contrast, numerous circles in the southern Slav countries of the Monarchy were Pan-Slavic and anti-Habsburg. There, these currents combined with those that were particularly prevalent in Serbia, where speculation on the fall of the Monarchy was sectarian in nature while at the same time being too serious to ignore. The southern Slav radicals could not simply be ascribed to Pan-Slavism and the Great Serbia ideal, however. Their ranks also included those who supported the ideas of the Russian social revolutionaries and who planned individual acts of terrorism. Here, the aim was not to destabilise a small area adjacent to the Habsburg Monarchy, but to bring the Serbs,

Croats, Bosnians and Slovenes together to create a new state. In so doing, they speculated on the downfall of the Monarchy in a targeted way, the demise of which they regarded as necessary in order to establish a major southern Slav empire. The other adjoining states were then to have access only to the bankruptcy assets. In relation to this aspect of the pre-war era, domestic and foreign policy were, therefore, intermeshed in a particular way.

The southern Slav issue was a problem for the Hungarians and Austrians in equal measure since Croatia and most Serbs in the Monarchy belonged to Transleithania while the Slovenes were part of Cisleithania. However, Hungary had also come into dispute with Romania over the Romanians living in Transylvania, and displayed a certain lack of discernment in recognising the problems. Overall, the nationalities problem in Hungary did not appear to be so serious, if only perhaps because there were fewer nationalities living there than in Austria, thus reducing the number of conflicts.

In terms of domestic and nationalities policy during the pre-war period overall, the German countries in the Monarchy certainly cannot be regarded as problem regions in terms of the nationalities conflict, or as places where signs of decay could already be seen. However, it was just as evident that there were German national groups in existence that were keen to find a solution to the nationalities issue in the form of assistance from the German Empire that would ensure the Germans became the unquestionably dominant group in the Habsburg Monarchy. Naturally, the nationalities conflict also spilled over into the German lands. One example of this was the small-scale Italian irredentism, which despite the official proximity to Italy, an ally of Austria-Hungary and Germany since 1882, dreamed of the surrender of the territories of the Monarchy inhabited by Italians, in other words, the area around Trieste (Triest) and Trento (Trent), and South Tyrol. Conflicts that affected the Germans arose from disputes with the Slovenes, such as in Celje (Cilli), Ptuj (Pettau) or Maribor (Marburg an der Drau), or in areas where Czechs and Germans mixed in the Lower Austria-Moravian, Silesian or Upper Austrian-Bohemian regions.

In Vienna, where the nationalities conflicts were expressed with particular vehemence during the sessions of the Reichsrat, a certain magnifying glass effect was added since events could be followed directly, whereas information about Trento, Moravská Třebová (Mährisch-Trübau), Celje or Sibiu (Hermannstadt) was available only from second-hand reports. For this reason, disputes were experienced at a different level of intensity than elsewhere in the Monarchy. To this were added those debates, disputes, conflicts and upheavals that characterised 'everyday' parliamentary events of the 'kingdoms and countries represented in the Reichsrat' from the Austrian half of the Empire. Developments such as these were regarded in Hungary as a symptom of too much democracy.<sup>59</sup> This impression could only have arisen from a comparison with the merely semi-democratic conditions in Transleithania.

In the Austrian half of the Empire there were around forty political parties that were merged into twenty clubs, which primarily reflected the concerns of the nationalities.<sup>60</sup> The clubs brought together parties that were keen to promote conservative, clerical, liberal, socialist or simply cultural interests. Thus, parties representing major landowners were to be found alongside parties for small business enterprises in the same club, as were left- and right-wing parties that merged together and drifted apart again.<sup>61</sup>

The situation in Hungary was different, particularly since voting rights were still less developed than in Austria, and the parties were therefore composed differently. However, the fluctuation was similar. In 1910, the 'National Party of Work' had gained a majority in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet). Prime Minister László Lukács remained in office, although the leader of the fraction representing the National Party of Work, Count István Tisza, was the man who held the reins – and who was a polariser. On 23 May 1912, the day after his nomination as Speaker of the House, there were huge riots in Budapest. Six demonstrators were killed and 182 wounded. An attempt was made to assassinate Tisza in parliament. Shots were fired in the House of Representatives and troops were called in to reinstate public order. While in terms of the intensity of the nationalities conflict and the stages of democratisation there were certainly differences between the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Empire, they did have one thing in common: the socialisation of violence.

In Austria, a noticeable relaxation had occurred in domestic policy around 1908. Two major problems appeared to have been resolved satisfactorily: the Austrian voting rights reform, which was designed to give all men an equal chance to vote, and the renewal of the 'Compensation' with Hungary, which established the quotas for contributions from the two halves of the Empire towards the state as a whole. Rudolf Sieghart, who at the time was sectional head of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, went so far as to say that a general sense of pessimism had given way to a certain degree of hopefulness. The Dual Monarchy could be regenerated after all, and a democratic, tapered political system could mark a new beginning. However, the euphoria was short-lived.<sup>62</sup> The first general elections in the Austrian half of the Empire, which resulted in a completely transformed Reichsrat in which the 516 representatives included 86 Social Democrats, failed to result in the hoped-for democratisation and relaxation. The national parties simply re-grouped, and not even the Social Democrats, a class-based party, were capable of overcoming their contradictions sufficiently to become an 'Empire party'. The language issue resurfaced, and in light of the ever increasing danger of war, nationalism, militarism and bellicosity became intertwined in a manner that would have severe long-term effects. In Austria-Hungary, militarism was certainly of lesser importance than in other European states, but here too it was growing. While it adopted a very different form to that of the German Empire or France, in Austria-Hungary, we also encounter what Franz Carl Endres called an armaments race<sup>63</sup> or Harold D. Lasswell

described in his 'Garrison State model' as the 'socialisation of violence'.<sup>64</sup> The nationalities and the parties contributed to a socialisation of violence in just the same way as the state, and became habituated to using violence as a means of resolving conflicts. Time and again, Imperial and Royal troops were deployed in order to reinstate order on the domestic front, or the military authorities were requested to take temporary responsibility for civil administration. On the other hand, the nationalities conflict spilled over into the military and time and again led to conflicts among the replacement reservists in particular, who were mustered annually for roll call.<sup>65</sup>

These developments not only affected the outer fringes of the Monarchy or the standard theatres of the 'cold war of nationalities', they could also be observed in the duchies, princely counties, etc. of the core Habsburg territories. For example, Peter Rosegger surmised that the presence of troops from Bosnia-Herzegovina in Graz was similar to 'the war against the Turks in Styria, just like in the old times.'<sup>66</sup> The practice used with increasing consistency of stationing troops outside their national settlement and reinforcement areas only led to a further escalation of the nationalities conflict. As early as 1893, the Prague 'home regiment', Infantry Regiment (IR) No. 28, had to be hastily despatched to Linz since it had become involved in national riots in Prague. The relocation of Czech troops to German lands, and from German troops to Bohemia, of Bosnians to Styria, and of Poles and Czechs to Tyrol, Hungary or Dalmatia only served to isolate the units, as well as creating friction where the troops were garrisoned. Incidents of violence that occurred in Innsbruck in 1913 and 1914 demonstrate this only too clearly.

In the Hungarian half of the Empire, too, the military was frequently called upon to settle domestic disputes. In 1906, the year in which the famous 'war scenario U' (for 'Ungarn', or Hungary) was drafted and the Imperial and Royal Danube Fleet had already received the command to steam to Budapest and, if necessary, fire into the city, the Hungarian House of Representatives was dissolved by a Honvéd battalion on the orders of the Hungarian prime minister. In 1911 and the years that followed, it became necessary to intervene time and again. In Croatia and Slavonia, which were Hungarian crown lands, a state of emergency was also imposed several times.<sup>67</sup>

Overall, it was evident that the decision to resort to the military was taken all too easily, while at the same time, its suitability for solving problems of all kinds began to be accepted unquestioningly, since it occurred on an everyday basis. Whether it was the violent food riots in Vienna in 1911, the voting rights demonstrations in Prague, obstruction in the Budapest Reichstag or any other disturbance, the use of soldiers seemed to be a panacea, and for many, the military now became the only body able to guarantee the smooth functioning of the state organs and public order. The socialisation of violence naturally threatened to tip over into an escalation of violence, and a warning to this effect was given in a book published anonymously in Vienna in 1908 entitled:



*Unser letzter Kampf. Das Vermächtnis eines alten kaiserlichen Soldaten* ('Our Last Battle: The Legacy of an Old Imperial Soldier'). The author, as was soon discovered, was a young officer of the General Staff, a captain in the General Staff Corps by the name of Hugo Kerchnawe. In this book, he summarised the symptoms of crisis in an almost visionary manner. In the novel, voting rights demonstrations and enormous political tensions within Austria-Hungary led to a state crisis, which was exploited by foreign powers. There was a war. Austria received help from the German Empire. Finally, however, German troops marched in, ending the existence of old Austria. It was a utopian novel and a vision with a very real factual basis. In some respects, it anticipated what was to come over the next thirty years. It may have been that Kerchnawe had heard rumours that in the event of large-scale domestic unrest, the possibility had been raised that German troops would be deployed to Austria-Hungary.<sup>68</sup>

The vision of the last battle of the Monarchy was ever-present, and particularly in political circles, debate now centred solely on whether Austria-Hungary was capable of fighting this battle at all, or whether it would disintegrate piece by piece without a fight. This question, posed time and again, of how Austria-Hungary might succeed or fail to continue as an entity, would however only partially lead to systematic speculation on its demise.

In November 1908, Baron Max Wladimir Beck, probably the last prime minister of Cisleithania before the war to carry any weight, was ousted. He had not only made an enemy of the heir to the throne but also of the Christian Socialist Party and had lost his laboriously held majority in the Reichsrat. Beck's successor was Baron Richard von Bienenrath. In Prague, martial law had been in force for some time, and what had initially appeared to have been brought to a halt, namely the internal collapse of the Monarchy, particularly of Cisleithania, continued unabated. Bienenrath was succeeded in office by Baron Paul Gautsch von Frankenthurn. In November 1911, he was in turn replaced by Count Karl Stürgkh,<sup>69</sup> whose strongest assets were regarded as his skills in accommodation and mediation.<sup>70</sup> However, these assets were only of limited benefit. When nobody was any longer interested in accommodation and his attempts at mediation were rejected, no amount of conciliation could help. In terms of intellectual capacity and political skill, he lagged far behind Beck, and when the nationalities conflict again escalated and the session of the Austrian Reichsrat ended in obstruction and screaming matches, Stürgkh could think of no other remedy than to adjourn the Reichsrat and rule by emergency decree. From March 1914 onwards, the laws of Cisleithania were only accomplished with the aid of § 14 of the 'December Constitution' of 1867, in other words, the emergency degree clause.<sup>71</sup> However, the suspension of the Reichsrat in Austria was by no means received with shock. It had been anticipated for a long time, certainly since 1912. The Emperor and the heir to the throne had decided to take this step since the political conditions had become increasingly chaotic.<sup>72</sup> A state of near

ungovernability had arisen in the Austrian half of the Empire, which appeared to be very different to that of its Hungarian counterpart. It was no wonder that once again, calls were made for the military to intervene, and in this regard, the newspapers in particular also played their part.

Politics were conducted with the help of the press. Parties and individuals had 'their' organs and used them as a mouthpiece. Here, German newspapers had an enormous influence, and only a few Hungarian newspapers could keep up to any degree.<sup>73</sup> However, the newspapers are not only worth mentioning because they were in effect the only continuous source of information and were the only medium as such. They were also in a position to create a general mood, to portray political trends and also to disseminate the bellicosity that was prevalent in the years leading up to the Great War. While foreign policy created the international frame of reference for living with the risk of war, violence – as has already been mentioned above – was a continuous presence within the Danube Monarchy. The newspapers disseminated the resulting mood to perfection. The future war would be a recurring theme for all newspapers, whether by discussing the probability of war, giving detailed reports of wars, or debating specific cases of war or the attitude to war in general. The latter was above all true of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* ('Workers' Newspaper'), reflecting the fact that the Social Democrat movement had also entirely succumbed to the 'war-in-sight' mood. However, this was not just an Austrian phenomenon. When a resolution was due to be passed at the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen in 1910, according to which the workforce organised by the Social Democrats would go on general strike, it was the Italian delegate who rejected the proposal and merely stated aloud what was on the minds of the others: that if war were to break out, even the Social Democrat movement could not withdraw from a national consensus, since in doing so it would be abandoned by its own base. The resolution was not passed. When the situation in the Balkans came to a head in November 1912 and the prospect of Austro-Hungarian intervention seemed real, the International Socialist Bureau looked for a way of preventing the war and making Austrian military action impossible. A conference was convened, which failed in its objectives. Several days later, the Austrian Social Democrats in the Reichsrat agreed, despite some misgivings, to pass the Law on War Contributions, and expressly recognised the right to conduct a war of defence, particularly against Tsarist Russia.<sup>74</sup>

In some ways, this legislation set a new course, and it showed that in reality, nobody could deny the fact that it was necessary to be ready for war. The parliamentary debate on the Law on War Contributions had been postponed since 1873. Its aim was not to describe in greater detail or to expand upon the curtailment of the rights of citizens in the event of war, which was already stipulated in Clause 20 of the state constitution. To a far greater extent, if war were to break out, the provision of specific services could be enforced, such as the billeting of troops, the supply of means of transport and the mili-

tarisation of factory operations. The act had been finalised, but never passed. In 1908, it would have been issued as an imperial order if general mobilisation had been necessary, but in the event, it was not required. When the act and the prepared orders had been revised in 1912 and a corresponding act had been incorporated for the Hungarian half of the Empire, one significant change was made. Until then, it had been specified that the communities would be accountable for providing the services demanded, but now the burden fell to every individual citizen. With the exception of a few groups, all civilians aged up to 50 years old who were capable of work and who were of conscription age were subject to the stipulations made in the act. Similar acts had been in force in the German Empire since 1873, as well as in France, Italy and most other European states.

Following a period of consultation lasting just a few weeks among the relevant committees in the Reichsrat and taking into account the fact that the act to be passed would have to be compatible with its counterpart currently being debated in the Hungarian half of the Empire, the Law on War Contributions was agreed at the end of December 1912. The government had successfully parried a series of attempts at obstruction, and the Social Democrats had been assured that a moderate approach would be taken when implementing the measures. In this way, agreement was reached, with relatively minor changes, that a general mandatory military service from age seventeen onwards should be introduced, and that a provision should be made for the suspension of civil and workers' rights during periods of war. In reaction to the prospect of military control of those factory operations that were important to the war effort, right-leaning socialists such as Karl Renner commented during the general debate on the act that if the Social Democrat movement suddenly wanted to abolish the right to ownership by common citizens, it would 'merely have to apply the War Services Act', and could eject any factory owner from his property. Instead, one could then employ a corporal and – in a free adaptation of Marx' words – 'expropriation of the expropriators will be completed in the smoothest manner possible.'<sup>75</sup> Renner explained the decision of the Social Democrats to vote for the act by claiming that: 'If we – regardless of who is at fault – find ourselves forced to fight a defensive war, we shall defend ourselves as a matter of course – on this, we and our comrades in other countries, including Bebel in the German Reichstag, have always been clear – and cannot disregard the fact that our people are those most threatened [...] It would be a ridiculous imposition were the Social Democrats – once the misfortune of war were to occur – to deny soldiers the opportunity to defend and feed themselves.'<sup>76</sup> This agreement by the German Austrian Social Democrats contrasted starkly with the attitude taken by their Bohemian comrades, who rejected the act to the last, albeit at the same time supplementing this rejection with a declaration of loyalty. The Law on War Contributions was designed to make it possible not only for factories that were vital to the war effort to continue operating and wherever the military was in control of the factories to subject the 'war service

providers', as they were eloquently named, to military discipline and also military penal power if necessary. The act also served to ensure that the necessary work would be completed to enable troop deployment, transportation and other services that were directly required by the troops behind the front. Since the war service providers were to have no combatant status, however, they were to be used only outside the narrow front area. Here, there was naturally also a lack of clarity in some cases, such as when Landsturm troops, who were part of the armed forces, were to be used for services covered by the Law on War Contributions, but were also classified as combatants. Then there was also a scandalous difference in wage levels, since a military worker received far less pay than his civilian counterpart. The Law on War Contributions was one of the key measures required to ensure not only that a war of longer duration and great intensity could be waged, but also to raise awareness among the civilian population, which had to be made conscious of the aims and necessities of waging war. In light of this approach, it is no longer relevant to ask whether a functioning Reichsrat in Vienna would have reacted differently during the July Crisis of 1914, and whether in a manner similar to the German Empire, the necessary loans would have been agreed or not. Since the end of 1912, it could be assumed that the Danube Monarchy was ready for war, and that this applied not only to the military, but also to civil society as a whole. If war were to be declared, all requirements had been met to ensure that the people would be bound by constraints and processes that would permit neither a general strike nor any activity that would correlate with the much-misused phrase by Brecht: 'Just think of it, war breaks out and nobody turns up.' Before the war, however, it was still possible to agitate in the parliaments, to call worker demonstrations and make use of the press. Once war had started, such measures would be obsolete in both the Austrian and Hungarian halves. From this moment onwards, only the socialisation of violence was in force.

Emperor Franz Joseph appeared to have no trouble with the notion of ruling with a strong hand. In Austria, this course was pursued unwaveringly, and after Count Tisza was elected Prime Minister in Hungary on 10 June 1913, thus taking the office that had been due to him for a long time in light of his political influence, he also very quickly made it clear that he intended to assert his will and to play a role in all areas of politics. He was more successful in achieving this than he was in gaining a stable parliamentary majority that could act as a supporting base. By contrast, the Austrian prime minister, Count Stürgkh, regarded the suppression of parliament as the only way of surviving in power, and he was clearly not of the mind to allow parliament to convene again during his period in office. To a far greater extent, a list of materials was produced to which the emergency decree paragraph could be more or less applied, resulting in rule by imperial decree.<sup>77</sup> While there was some resistance to this development, it ultimately appeared as though all parties and all the Landtage (local diets) in the Austrian half of the Empire were not so concerned about this authoritarian style. Involuntarily and unwittingly,

by suspending the Reichsrat, Count Stürgkh had set a course that allowed the Austrian half of the Empire to slither into war without being asked. Following the de facto end of parliamentarianism, the fact that the parliamentary building on the Ringstrasse in Vienna was converted into a hospital shortly after the war began was no longer felt to signify a turning point.

### Poor State, Wealthy Businesses

In order to better understand the July weeks in 1914, the economic situation of the Dual Monarchy should also be mentioned. High finance and industry had been in a critical state since the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. A weakness in capital levels and a lack of competitiveness were all too evident, and a general recession led to a mood of pessimism. By contrast, before 1912, the state of affairs had appeared to be highly positive. The Habsburg Monarchy, unlike Western Europe, had secured its base by means of comparatively high growth rates.<sup>78</sup> A growth of 1.3 percent was fully in keeping with the European average. Naturally, things looked very different when the gross national product was included in the comparison. Austria-Hungary lagged significantly behind the comparable figures of the other major powers, particularly those of Western Europe. Only Italy had even poorer figures.<sup>79</sup> The economic integration of parts of the Empire was progressing, but the contrast remained between the large agricultural regions and the industrial regions, and above all the metropolitan city of Vienna. Vienna was home to a quarter of all those liable for tax in the Austrian half of the Empire, who in turn earned a third of all taxable income. The remaining areas of the Empire that lagged behind were not only Galicia, for example, but equally the Alpine regions where whole mountain valleys had suffered from depopulation. Ernest von Koerber, who was prime minister from 1900 to 1904, had attempted to solve this problem by proposing an extensive canal and railway construction programme. The great currents of the Monarchy should be connected to each other, and the Alpine region, with its Tauern and Karawanks, Wocheiner, Pyrh and Wechsel railways should in turn have better connections with the centres. The railway programme, which was of no importance to the northern and eastern crown lands and indeed appeared to be aimed against their interests, was by contrast supported by the Alpine regions. However, the canal construction programme faced determined resistance from the agricultural associations, which feared that canals would only serve to bring cheap grain from other countries into Austria.<sup>80</sup> So it was that both projects were endlessly debated until Koerber fell from office. The economic upturn came anyway – or so it appeared – until the Balkan Wars took their severe toll.

There were numerous indications that this would happen. Tax revenues decreased, although this had little effect on wages and earnings, since these were only taxed from

an annual income exceeding 1,200 kronen, and at a maximum of three per cent. The state obtained its money through consumer taxes, which were repeatedly increased, including in 1912 and 1913. The same applied to dues and stamps. Iron consumption and iron production stagnated, while foreign trade suffered a downward trend.<sup>81</sup> The Balkan Wars brought about the ruin of entire sectors of the economy that were solely export-oriented and that had worked for the Balkans. The textile and paper industries suffered severely.<sup>82</sup> The last active trade balance had been in 1906; since then, deficits had increased steadily, already totalling 823 million kronen by 1912, corresponding to around a third of non-military state expenditure.<sup>83</sup> Among the middle classes, the opinion was therefore increasingly voiced that the recession and the apparent hopelessness of the situation at times could only be overcome by a war. Newspapers asked: 'Is Austria-Hungary not on the threshold of complete economic and financial collapse?' Specialists such as the Hungarian economist Pál Szende entitled their essays 'Collapse or War'.<sup>84</sup> The economic crisis resulted in rising unemployment levels and dramatic price increases. Since 1911, the increase in living costs had led to repeated cases of rioting. The largest demonstration of this kind took place in Vienna on 17 September 1911.<sup>85</sup> There were violent clashes on a scale never seen before, and a state of emergency was imposed in parts of the city. A feeling of desperation spread. The provisional measures and emergency decrees issued by the governments of both halves of the Empire found their equivalent in the crown lands, most of which could no longer produce an orderly state budget. In many communities, the financial economy collapsed entirely.

The overall economic figures only showed a slight recovery in 1914, although there were also further downturns. For example, it proved impossible to take out a loan in Paris. France, or so it claimed, was apparently not willing to finance Austro-Hungarian armament measures. In this instance, Austria-Hungary would anyway have been incapable of claiming particularly favourable conditions, since with a loan interest rate of 6 percent, it was already in the upper range. Other developments also stood out. Germany classified the Danube Monarchy in the same way for the economic sector as it did in the political sphere: it was a necessary trade partner and as an ally naturally enjoyed a special position, and yet at the same time, the Habsburg Monarchy occasionally had a dampening effect on a soaring German success, and time and again by necessity revealed itself to be a competitor. 50 percent of foreign investments in Austria were made by German companies, and 40 percent of foreign trade by the Habsburg Monarchy went to the German Empire.<sup>86</sup>

While the overall economic figures in Austria-Hungary were not that rosy, therefore, and crises blew up in all corners of the Empire, there was one area in which the economy was buoyant, indeed booming: the armaments industry. It was concentrated in several regions that were particularly well-developed in economic and industrial terms: the Bohemian armaments industry was situated around Pilsen and Kladno (Klattau), the

Upper Styrian in Kapfenberg, Donawitz and Mürzzuschlag and in the Wiener Neustadt region, and the Lower Austrian in Wöllersdorf, Felixdorf, Enzesfeld and Hirtenberg. These were joined by the important site in Steyr. There was also a whole series of smaller sites, which were just as important, however, and which above all also benefited from the boom. These included Trieste, or the Hungarian armaments factories around Budapest or in Mosonmagyaróvár (Ungarisch Altenburg) that were still in the process of being built. The Hungarian armaments industry even showed growth rates that were significantly higher than those in Austria, although the dominance overall of the latter remained uncontested.

The armaments industry can be taken as a classic example of a capitalist economy. It was highly dependent on capital and had international branches, and was characterised by the fact that it not only took up a sizeable portion of the available bank capital, but also made enormous profits. The armaments sector was also strongly export oriented; indeed, without the export of munitions, it could not have become established in the way it was. Just how export-dependent the industry had become is illustrated by the Steyr factory, which in 1910 received no orders from the Imperial and Royal Army Administration, and as a result had to dismiss workers immediately. However, shortly afterwards, exports increased to new record levels.

The main customers for munitions from Steyr were the Balkan states, Turkey and South America, as well as China between 1911 and 1913, which had been granted an armaments loan by Austrian banks for 7.2 million kronen. Even as late as the spring of 1914, 200,000 rifles from the *Österreichische Waffenfabriks-gesellschaft Steyr* and its partner in the cartel, the German company Mauser, were sent to Serbia.<sup>87</sup> In 1913, Greece ordered around 200,000 rifles, Romania ordered 230,000, and so on. By contrast, orders for the Austro-Hungarian army were relatively modest, totalling 324,346 rifles during the first decade of the 20th century. In 1911, around 6,500 hand guns were supplied to the domestic Army Administration, with 2,700 items sold in 1912. However in some cases, other designs were produced for export than those supplied to the Imperial and Royal Army. For this reason, the conversion to domestic requirements took some time when the war started.

As a result of the Russo-Japanese War, followed by the Balkan Wars, Hirtenberg enjoyed a boom period, too. Precisely how exports flourished can no longer be researched, since the company archives have been lost. However, the dividends of 15, 16 and finally 18 percent during the years preceding the outbreak of war (with dividends rising to 25 percent in 1914, reaching 44 percent in 1916) speak for themselves.<sup>88</sup>

While Škoda may have been based in Pilsen, it only enjoyed a revival when the company headquarters moved to Vienna.<sup>89</sup> Before 1905, Škoda, which mainly produced machinery, had made losses with its military products. Škoda had also first supplied products to the Imperial and Royal Navy. However, its fortunes then took a sharp turn

for the better. Factory employees worked 57-hour weeks to produce tank cupolas, artillery, gun carriages and other armaments. Here, Škoda had the advantage of ultimately also receiving large orders from the Imperial and Royal Army. In terms of its deliveries to the Navy, the company even achieved a type of monopoly for armouring and artillery, and precisely this was the decisive factor when Škoda was selected for collaboration with the French armaments giant Schneider-Creuzot with an order to expand the largest Russian armaments company, the Putilov Works – and this in competition against the German Krupp group. Perhaps this decision was influenced by the fact that to a large extent the banks, which were shareholders of Škoda, had French and English owners. The confusing picture therefore arose, which was highly characteristic of the pre-war period, of an extraordinary intermeshing of capital and industry, whereby those who had more money and the more aggressive export policy dominated. This was only very rarely the case with Austria-Hungary, which could ultimately only share the market with others. However, it is easy to assume that the belligerents in the First World War – as is a common characteristic of globalisation – had interests on both sides of the front. French money was working for Škoda, which did not prevent the artillery produced there, particularly the 30.5 cm mortar, from being fired against Belgian and French forts on the Western Front. The Putilov Works, which were expanded by Škoda, produced the armaments used against Austro-Hungarian troops in Galicia. The Whitehead company in Rijeka (Fiume), which built warships for the Imperial and Royal Navy and produced torpedoes, was closely linked to the English armaments company Vickers, and so on. They all had wide-ranging interests, and sought and found markets for their products. For every large armaments company, and for nearly every large-scale industrial company, there were one or more representatives in the Austrian Reichsrat or in the Hungarian Reichstag. And when a company's interests were not directly represented by a company member, it was easy to find someone else who was prepared to do the job. Lobbying was the order of the day.

It would be wrong to succumb to the temptation of interpreting this web of interrelationships as a group of capitalists who could be held responsible for the decision either to go to war or maintain the peace, or who at least had significant influence due to their view of war as a major potential business opportunity. However, it was clear that their opinions counted when it came to deciding whether their own industry would be able to survive a longer war. Even so, the major industrialists had very little leverage over events outside of their sphere of influence, or over chance occurrences. Rather, the July Crisis of 1914 and the war that followed is better summarised by the pessimistic words of the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, in reaction to a report that the outbreak of war was imminent: 'Wenn etwa vier europäische Großmächte, sagen wir Österreich, Frankreich, Russland und Deutschland, zu Kriegführenden würden, müsste dies meiner Ansicht nach die Ausgabe so gewaltiger Summen nach sich ziehen und



eine derartige Unterbrechung des Handels bewirken, dass der Krieg von einem vollständigen Zusammenbruch des europäischen Geldwesens und der Industrien begleitet oder gefolgt würde, und unbeschadet dessen, wer nun Sieger in dem Krieg wäre, würden viele ganz einfach fortgeschwemmt werden.<sup>90</sup> A similar view had been presented in the six-volume work published at the turn of the century, 'The War of the Future', by the Polish-Russian banker and state councillor Ivan S. Bloch,<sup>91</sup> and a different version of the same idea with a cross-reference to the pacifism of 1909 was published by the British entrepreneur and journalist Normal Angell.<sup>92</sup> Still, the political classes clearly found it immensely difficult to accept the quintessence of these sombre predictions.





**2 Two Million Men  
for the War**

2. On 26 and 27 June, the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, took part in the manoeuvres of the Imperial and Royal XV and XVI Corps in Bosnia in his capacity as Inspector General of the entire armed force. In front of him is the Regional Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, who led the manoeuvre. To the right is the Chief of the General Staff, General of Infantry Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf.

The same Hugo Kerchnawe, who had revealed a visionary gaze with his book about the 'last struggle', wrote an article in 1932 that to some extent took stock: 'The Insufficient Arming of the Central Powers as the Main Cause of their Defeat.'<sup>93</sup> In the article, he admittedly dealt with a somewhat hackneyed subject, although it was absolutely possible to debate the subject endlessly, namely whether it would have been sensible and possible for Austria-Hungary to do more for its military establishment, whether more troops and more modern weapons would have balanced out all other areas and whether the 'insufficient arming for war' can really be regarded as the main cause for its defeat in the conflict. One thing is certainly true: the Austro-Hungarian armed forces, after all the army of a great power in a conflict of great and medium-sized powers, was of comparatively modest proportions and lagged behind in terms of weaponry in numerous areas. This was all the more apparent because one might have thought that in view of the deficit of war and the socialisation of violence prior to 1914 particular attention would have been paid to the armed forces.

### The 'entire armed force'

The settlement of 1867 had resulted in a division of the Imperial-Royal Army into three parts. From 1868 onwards, the 'Common' Imperial and Royal (*kaiserlich und königlich*, or k. u. k.) Army was provided by both halves of the Empire. Alongside the Common Army there was the Imperial Hungarian (*königlich-ungarisch*, or k. u.) Honvéd and, in the Austrian half of the Empire, the Imperial-Royal (*kaiserlich-königlich*, or k. k.) Landwehr (standing army). For contemporaries these divisions were soon to become a matter of course; for outsiders and posterity it was always rather confusing. The three-way division also led to a tripling of political organs. The common war minister was politically responsible for the military measures in their entirety and had primary responsibility for the Imperial and Royal troops. The Imperial-Royal Landwehr was assigned to the Ministry of National Defence of the Austrian half of the Empire, whilst the Honvéd was subordinated to the Honvéd Ministry in Budapest. Thus, there were three ministers for one army, which – together with the Imperial and Royal Navy – was designated the 'entire armed force'. It was clear that the Monarch ranked above everything and possessed the 'supreme command'.

The Common Army was the epitome of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. Here the traditions of past centuries were continued and the memory of countless victories

and military successes was kept alive among the troop bodies. Above all, the feeling was conserved of being a European peacekeeping power of the first order. However, aspirations and reality were not necessarily compatible. The two territorial armies, on the other hand, constructed their own traditions, the Honvéd more so than the Landwehr.

Despite general conscription, only around every fourth male citizen of Austria-Hungary actually served.<sup>94</sup> Half of them simply fell through the cracks, as unfit or exempt. Of those among the male population of the Dual Monarchy who were then actually approached for military service, only around half received military training. In other words, of those liable for enlistment, only 22 to 29 per cent actually complied.<sup>95</sup> This corresponded approximately to the compliance rate in Italy. The rate in Russia was 37 per cent, whilst the German Empire achieved around 40 per cent and France even 86 per cent.<sup>96</sup> In France, one citizen among 65 was a soldier, in Germany one in 98, in Austria-Hungary one in 128. In France around 8 per cent of the population took to the battlefield in 1914, in Austria-Hungary only 2.75 per cent.<sup>97</sup> This imbalance was only partially the consequence of numerous exceptional regulations. The main difference resulted from the fact that the Dual Monarchy did not provide the necessary funds to exploit its military strength to a greater extent.

During the originally three-year period of service (until 1912) following general conscription, later reduced to two years except in the cavalry and the mounted artillery, around a third of those conscripts actually drafted served in the Imperial and Royal Army and in the Navy, which was also part of the Common Army. The others served in both territorial armies or were sent to the reserves following eight weeks of basic training and were counted thereafter among the 'replacement reservists', from which the Landsturm (reserve forces) were to be formed or replacements for the Common Army and the two territorial armies were to be taken in the event of war. During the last year of peace, 159,500 recruits were available to the Imperial and Royal Army and an additional 7,260 men for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian troops, who were separately counted, as well around 25,000 men each added to the Imperial-Royal Landwehr and the Imperial Hungarian Honvéd.<sup>98</sup> After completing their active military service, the soldiers were transferred for a further nine or ten years to the reserves until they reached a total service period of twelve years. At this point they were in 'reserve', were transferred to the Landsturm and until their 42nd year could be called up, at least theoretically, only in the event of mobilisation.<sup>99</sup>

The Habsburg Monarchy was divided into sixteen military territorial districts, which were simultaneously corps areas and constituted the supreme military replacement authorities. The corps commands were thus responsible for the formation of the Imperial and Royal Army and the two territorial armies within their areas of command. On the basis of this organisational framework and with the available men 110 Imperial and Royal infantry regiments and 30 Imperial and Royal light infantry battalions could

be formed, as well as 37 Imperial-Royal Landwehr infantry regiments and three Imperial-Royal territorial infantry regiments, 32 Imperial Hungarian Honvéd infantry regiments, 42 Imperial and Royal cavalry regiments, six Imperial-Royal Uhlán regiments and ten Imperial Hungarian Hussar regiments. Added to these were 56 field and ten-and-a-half mountain artillery regiments of the Common Army, heavy and light howitzer divisions, cannon divisions and regiments as well as mounted artillery divisions of all three parts of the army; all in all still a great power army that would establish in wartime seventeen army corps with 49 infantry and eleven cavalry troop divisions as well as 36 Landsturm or march brigades.<sup>100</sup> The artillery counted around 2600 guns of all calibres.

Illustration of the structure, strength and ranks of the formations and troop bodies of the Imperial and Royal Army

Army and Troop Bodies	Structure	Manning Level	Rank of Commander
Army group*	2–3 armies	over 200,000	field marshal
Army	2–3 corps	100,000–200,000	general, lieutenant general
(Army) Corps	2–3 divisions	40,000–60,000	lieutenant general
(Troop) Division**	2 brigades	15,000–20,000	major general
Brigade	2 regiments	6,000–8,000	brigadier
Regiment	3–4 batallions	3,000–4,000	colonel
Batallion	4 companies	1,000	major
Company	4 platoons	250	captain

\* The designation 'army group' existed on the Austro-Hungarian fronts only from March 1916. Until then, the common leadership used the designation 'command of the XXX front' for several armies in one theatre of war.

\*\* The original designations infantry troop division (ITD) and cavalry troop division (KTD) were simplified in 1917 to infantry division and cavalry division.

An as yet very modest role was played by army aviation. There were only few aeroplanes, above all the Lohner 'Pfeilflieger' (arrow flyer). In total, the Imperial and Royal Army possessed only several dozen aeroplanes suitable for use in war (39 at the start of the war) and 85 trained pilots. They were organised in August 1914 in nine (army) aviation companies and one naval aviation detachment.<sup>101</sup> Their weaponry was limited to the pilots' and observers' handguns as well as small bombs, which initially had to be thrown overboard by hand. In addition to the aeroplanes, there were twelve balloon detachments, which were assigned to the fortress artillery and of which more was expected than the aeroplanes, the possibilities of whose deployment had barely been recognised, due to their ability to remain for a long time in the air and to carry out continual surveillance. When adding together the military strength of the Habsburg Monarchy,

however, one cannot just look at the army. The navy should likewise be considered. The navy had enjoyed particular support over the course of decades by Crown Prince Rudolf and then the heir to the throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand and had therefore repeatedly received disproportionately large amounts of funds from the military budget. At the same time, the expansion of the fleet also consumed enormous sums. Compared with the arming of the British and German fleets, Austro-Hungarian efforts remained modest. From an organisational point of view, the navy belonged to the joint Imperial and Royal armed forces, and thus possessed no territorial component. The central authority was the Naval Section, which belonged to the Imperial and Royal Ministry of War. Its leadership was relocated to Pula (Pola) in 1913. In the navy, the period of service was four years. This was followed by five years in the reserves and three years in the *Seewehr* (territorial navy). A direct incorporation into the *Seewehr* did not take place. The size during peacetime of around 20,000 men was covered by the three naval replacement districts Trieste, Rijeka (Fiume) and Sebenico (Šibenik). Croats, Hungarians and Italians thus easily dominated the crew. It was in this way possible to man fifteen battleships, two armoured cruisers, four armed cruisers, 48 torpedo boats and six submarines, only some of which, however, were modern constructions. A further 10,000 sailors operated the harbour installations and the shipyards.<sup>102</sup> A special type of flotilla belonging to the inventory of the Imperial and Royal Navy was stationed on the Danube. With its six monitors (this number was reached shortly after the war began) and numerous other motor vessels, the Danube Flotilla was in a position above the Iron Gates to control the main river of Central and South-Eastern Europe.<sup>103</sup> There was nothing comparable on this river in other armies.

This 'military review' can be concluded with a few numbers and comparisons: with a general mobilisation the Habsburg Monarchy should have been able to place 1.8 to 2 million men under arms. The German Empire could count on 2.4 million and Russia 3.4 million.

Of course, the Common Army, just like the two territorial armies, was the subject of numerous political processes. This began with the authorisation of the necessary funds and the question of their allocation, and continued with the arming and equipment, whereby only the authorisation of the funds for the navy aroused relatively little resistance in parliamentary representations, whilst the acquisition of a new type of artillery unleashed very lively debates. And, for example, if in 1912 the only briefly incumbent War Minister Baronet Moritz von Auffenberg had not used the failure of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) and Reichstag (Imperial Diet) delegations – who decided on the authorisation of necessary financial loans – to meet by ordering on his own authority a new type of mortar from the Škoda firm in Pilsen, Austria-Hungary would have gone to war without its famous 30.5 cm mortar. It was not just the parliaments of the two halves of the Empire, however, who impeded efforts to arm. Within the army itself,



controversies among the decision-makers repeatedly prevented the implementation of changes that would have been possible in themselves or at least the acceleration of acquisition processes. This was the case in the fortification of the country and it reached its grotesque climax in the conflict between the Chief of the General Staff Conrad and the commander-in-chief of Bosnia-Herzegovina Potiorek regarding the question of introducing modern mountain artillery and reconstructions, where new expert opinions were repeatedly demanded.<sup>104</sup> Ultimately, Austria-Hungary went to war with completely outdated artillery.

The army was also the subject of political disputes, particularly where the army's role in the nationalities question was concerned. Yet for all the attention the army attracted as an instrument of politics, it was in fact never infringed as a prerogative of the crown, though frequently regarded as a 'hobby of the Monarch and his ambitious entourage'.<sup>105</sup> 'In accordance with this, it was regarded in many cases as downright patriotic to thwart the timely arming of the army [...] by denying the necessary funds or at least to use the authorisation of these funds as a means of extortion in order to achieve so-called 'national' demands', as the Imperial and Royal diplomat Emerich Csáky, who came from a Hungarian aristocratic family, summarised it.

With the reference to the financial means at the disposal of the entire armed force of the Habsburg Monarchy, Count Csáky – and he was not alone – brought up a very painful subject, and once again it was not the absolute figures that best illustrated the circumstances but rather the comparison: the expenditure for the military decreased between 1870 and 1910 from 24.1 to 15.7 per cent of the budget.<sup>106</sup> Per head of the population, Great Britain expended more than five times as much on the military as the Habsburg Monarchy, France more than twice as much, Germany two-and-a-half times and even Russia and Italy did more for their military than Austria-Hungary.<sup>107</sup>

Regardless of this, the Imperial and Royal Army saw itself as the most important pillar of state power and cultivated a feeling, which was indeed suggested to the army, of being the strongest and last unifying bond of the Empire. This feeling could be encountered in particular within the officer corps. What this expressed, however, was only partially accurate. On the one hand, it was a sentimental impulse and was most applicable to the active officer corps but not to the reserve officers; but then it could be assumed that the civil service, the majority of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie as well as the peasants were loyal to the monarchy. In general, no single social group can be accused of a lack of loyalty to the Empire. We have furthermore already established that even radical nationalist politicians scarcely speculated seriously about the end of the monarchy. However, the image that became fixed within the Common Army was accurate in one respect: the army, as it undoubtedly possessed authority, was better and more obviously suited than other pillars of state power to embody the will to unite the monarchy and a certain strength of the multinational state. Integrating tendencies ad-

mittedly came from others. Still, they were by no means in the focus of interest to the same degree and opinions were divided over them.

The attitude to the army was certainly not uniform and varied above all in place and time. Those living in the Austrian half of the Empire were almost never confronted with a problem that in the Hungarian half of the Empire was a repeated source of considerable agitation, namely the question of its own territorial army. In Hungary, in fact, the struggle over the configuration of the Honvéd into a national Hungarian army temporarily suppressed all other issues. Thus, it was not the Landwehr but the Common Army that played the most important role for the self-image of the army in Austria.

A superficial conclusion about the relationship between the army and society can be drawn from the statement of the German ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich von Tschirschky, who said in 1913 that the army was not only 'in great health' in spite of the convulsions triggered by the espionage case of Colonel Alfred Redl, but in fact the 'only healthy element of the monarchy'.<sup>108</sup> By this, von Tschirschky evidently meant that the army had not been affected by any of the short-term political developments, a claim that is very questionable. Yet the deployability of the military was not in question and the presence of the military was palpable: soldiers were part of the look and feel of most of the bigger urban locations in the Dual Monarchy. Officers enjoyed extraordinary social prestige. Every subaltern could say about himself that he wore the Emperor's uniform and had a special relationship of loyalty with the Monarch. A colonel and regimental commander already represented real power and a field marshal and corps commander, who had to be addressed as 'Your Excellency', was even accorded respect from state governors. Wherever there was no garrison, the citizenry and tradespeople often attempted to finance the treasury in advance for the construction of barracks in order to partake of the economic benefits of a garrison. Such pains were by no means taken over civil servants. The comparison with civil servants is not arbitrary because, as mentioned above, the civil service apparatus developed a similarly integrative power to the army. And for another thing, it was considerably larger. In peacetime, the Austro-Hungarian army had around 415,000 men, calculated from field marshals to raw recruits. The civil service apparatus of the monarchy, on the other hand, counted around 550,000 people.<sup>109</sup> Admittedly, it did not have the potential to mobilise further manpower.

That which was taken for granted in the German lands of the monarchy, though noted critically outside of them, was the German character of the Imperial and Royal Army. Responsible for this, however, was least of all a systematic personnel policy and much more the circumstance that the level of education of Germans in the Dual Monarchy was higher than those other – though not all other – nationalities, and that significantly more Germans therefore fulfilled the requirements for acceptance to the cadet schools and the military and naval academies. Added to this was the fact that more German Austrians strove for reserve officer training than members of other na-

nationalities. And it could not be denied that the German Austrians tended to link their own personal fate with that of the Empire and its armed forces. The Germans within the Dual Monarchy made up around 24 per cent of the total population. Yet of the 98 generals and 17,811 officers in the Imperial and Royal Army in 1911, the last year for which exact statistics are available, 76.1 per cent were of German nationality. 10.7 per cent were Hungarians and 5.2 per cent Czechs. In statistical terms, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Poles, Romanians, Slovenes, Serbs and Italians, on the other hand, did not play a particularly important role in the Common Army. Among the reserve officers it was a similar story: 56.8 per cent were Germans, 24.5 per cent Hungarians and 10.6 Czechs. Only among the non-commissioned officers and the enlisted men did a proportion of 25 per cent Germans of all ranks correspond to their actual proportion of the population. Also worthy of noting is the proportion of Jews, who did not actually constitute their own nationality but, with over 44,000 men or three per cent of all soldiers, constituted a considerably larger proportion of the armed forces than, for example, the Slovenes. Within the territorial armies things naturally looked different, as they reflected to a far greater degree than the Common Army the circumstances in the respective parts of the Empire and replacement districts.<sup>110</sup>

The German character of the army was also evident in another area, where it did not necessarily have to be the case, namely in the Imperial and Royal Ministry of War. Of the 614 civil servants who served in this ministry before the war, 419, i.e. 68 per cent, were Germans. They were followed by the Czechs as the next biggest nationality with 91 civil servants or 14 per cent. Even the Imperial and Royal War Minister in the years 1913 to 1917, Baron Alexander Krobatin, was regarded as Czech. The Hungarians were only in third place with 42 people or seven per cent.<sup>111</sup>

The disproportionately large proportion of Germans among the officers, but also among the reserve officers and in the military civil service, contributed to the other nationalities often being barely represented in command and other senior positions. A glance at the 'Schematism for the Imperial and Royal Army and Navy', for example for the year 1914, is admittedly in itself sufficient to demonstrate that neither the army nor the military administration can be confined to a single mould.

It holds furthermore true for both soldiers and officers that they cultivated an 'us' feeling that no other pillar of state power possessed to a comparable extent. Nevertheless, there were strict dividing lines. Officers associated with non-commissioned officers and enlisted men exclusively on official business. Any officer who offered his hand to a subordinate outside of work, discussed private matters with him or sat in a tavern with him, risked the loss of his reputation. Officers and non-officers embodied two social worlds that barely touched one another. And certainly many things required a lot of getting used to. Those soldiers on the periphery of the Empire sometimes came from imaginably primitive backgrounds and had to be socialised in the shortest time.

The army assumed, indeed had to assume, that the demands were the same everywhere, in Galicia, Bohemia or Bosnia. For the raw recruits, 1 October in the year of their medical examination was the date of enlistment. This was followed by nine months of hard training, not called 'breaking in' (*Abrichtung*) for nothing. These nine months were followed by a month of training as part of a battalion and three weeks in the regimental formation, during which the soldiers were prepared for autumn manoeuvres. Finally, they served actively for two more years (or one year following the curtailment of the period of service in 1912) before being transferred to the reserves.

Service continued literally around the clock and was physically and, for many, mentally demanding in every sense. Almost everything was regimented. The height of the recruits was fixed at a minimum of 155 cm. They had to carry 30 kg and be able to march 40 km per day. Hygiene was a big priority. The recruits' hair had to be seven centimetres long at the front and three centimetres long at the back. They slept as a rule in halls holding a company of 250 men, on straw mattresses filled with 22.4 kg of straw. Every four months the sacks were refilled. Non-commissioned officers slept in the same room as the enlisted men and were generally separated from them only by curtains. There were often punishments, including corporal punishment such as strokes with a stick or hour-long tethering. Theoretically, the death penalty could be imposed for crimes, though no death sentence was carried out after 1905. Nevertheless, in 1911 the death penalty was handed down nineteen times. However, the military courts repeatedly came down on the side of the soldiers. A lieutenant was sentenced in 1913 by the garrison court in Kraków (Krakau) to six weeks of provost arrest because he had used terms such as moron, bozo, fool, pig, onanist, cretin and dummy to refer to recruits. He had not, however, become physically violent. One officer received four months' arrest for pulling a recruit by his ear, choking him and hitting him on the head with his cap.

The suicide rate among the soldiers was high. In 1903, there were more than ten suicides for every 10,000 soldiers. In the German army the rate was 2.6 suicides, in the British army by contrast 2.3 suicides. Most of them killed themselves with their firearms.

For every 18 soldiers there was one officer. Even the officers slept in anything but a bed of roses and had to deploy their social prestige as compensation for low wages, torturously slow rates of promotion, forfeiture of a normal family life and often unappealing garrisons. A lieutenant in 1910 earned around 3,000 kronen a year. From his monthly salary, however, he only received 56 kronen. The rest was withheld in order to cover rations in the officers' mess, the costs of the officers' orderlies, contributions to the regimental music, the loan fund and other unavoidable expenditure. As a result, complaints were commonplace, as was the running up of debts. 30 per cent of Austria-Hungary's career officers were in debt, 5 per cent of them deeply so. The wage increases were also inconsiderable. A major earned twice as much as a lieutenant. Only from the rank

of lieutenant-colonel or colonel and regimental commander upwards was one better off. Earnings in the German army were roughly twice as much as in the Imperial and Royal Army. Around 70 per cent of subalterns were not married, as they were not sufficiently wealthy in order to pay the exorbitantly high marriage deposits demanded as security for a possible widow's pension and the provision for old age. It was an open secret that many things were in a sorry state here and one only had to look at the sinking number of officer cadets to be concerned. The number of pupils at the 19 officer academies decreased from 3,333 in 1897 to 1,864 in 1913 and at the Theresian Military Academy only 134 lieutenants were mustered in 1913.<sup>112</sup> The difficulty of obtaining the officer recruits needed led almost inevitably to the requirements being lowered. No-one wanted to admit this, but the results were visible during the war.

For a young officer who commenced his service with a regiment, the training of the enlisted men was the main focal point alongside the breaking in. This presupposed the necessary language skills. At the Maria Theresa Military Academy in the city of Wiener Neustadt and at the Technical Military Academy in Vienna, the trainee officers had to learn two languages of the Dual Monarchy aside from German, and in addition French. Around half the officers of the Common Army could speak Czech in addition to German – which may come as a surprise.<sup>113</sup> The cadet academies set somewhat more modest requirements, not least in the case of language training. Nevertheless, in Poland, for example, one could still fail in the event that one had learned Polish but the enlisted men spoke Ruthenian or a dialect or the language of a minority such as Hucul, Goral or Lemko. Occasionally, a sort of military jargon was useful. When all else failed, however, the non-commissioned officers had to take over the teaching of the lesson. In the Common Army 80 orders were given in German and the rest of the communication had to take place in the so-called 'regimental language'. An officer in a regiment using an idiom he was not familiar with had to prove to a committee within the space of three years following commencement of his duties that he was proficient in the regimental language. If this was not the case and a grace period was of no use, then the appraisal of the officer in question would contain the words 'at present not suitable for promotion'.

Officers and enlisted men also differed fundamentally in their expectations, for whilst the possibility of a war was at most on the periphery of the latter's thoughts, it took centre stage for the 'payee' (*Gagist*), for he was a career officer and could expect the opportunity to prove himself and win promotion and decorations in the event of war. War was both a career opportunity and a big adventure.

As an instrument of foreign policy, for many years the Austro-Hungarian troops only played a role where there was a potential threat. This was in contrast to domestic policy, where they were deployed. Whilst in non-German countries the use of the military during the course of political interventions repeatedly and frequently took place in the context of the nationalities problem, such operations were conducted in the Ger-

man countries primarily for the suppression of political parties and their supporters. In this form of altercation, the dispute with the Social Democrats was the most common occurrence. However, conflicts were by no means only staged in the streets, where it was also expected that suffrage demonstrations be neutralised or violently broken up, but also within troop formations and in barracks.

From 1910 onwards, anti-military leaflets appeared ever more frequently in the garrison towns. The soldiers were called on to engage in passive resistance; military training operations should be impeded, if not made completely impossible. The reaction to this agitation consisted of the military authorities ordering severe measures to be taken against the distributors of such leaflets. This was the case, for example, in Graz and Villach. This was, however, very clearly a case of overreaction, as there was ultimately no cause to intervene. Nevertheless, the conflict between the Social Democrats and the military escalated.<sup>114</sup> On the part of the Social Democrats, the military was castigated and the establishment of a people's militia was demanded in accordance with the party manifesto. On the other side, the newspaper *Danzers Armee-Zeitung* organised in 1913 a competition to debunk the 'Social Democratic heresy'. The prizes were awarded by a jury chaired by the former Imperial and Royal envoy in Bucharest, Count Ottokar von Czernin.<sup>115</sup>

It would certainly be wrong to furnish the army before 1914 merely with the dictum 'the great silent one'. It was not this at all! Admittedly, the soldiers did not, as a rule, express their views, and up to the level of the subalterns comments coming from military circles did not carry a great deal of weight. Still, among the higher ranks and above all at the top, no room was left for doubt regarding their intentions. The army lost the epithet of 'the great silent one' above all, however, when ever more officers put pen to paper and the semiofficial organ of the officer corps, *Danzers Armee-Zeitung*, increasingly stood out with its political comments. One only has to look at the issues of the army newspaper for 1912, 1913 and 1914 in order to see how anti-parliamentary, anti-socialist and pre-emptive war thoughts were being circulated. Especially the latter was actively popularised.<sup>116</sup>

Certainly, one must be careful when using the term 'militarism' in relation to the pre-war history of Austria-Hungary.<sup>117</sup> Yet the criteria regarded as mandatory for a customised notion of militarism find a whole series of equivalents in the case of the Danube Monarchy and for the period before 1914; the social primacy of the military was assumed. The army had undoubtedly taken control of a series of powerbases and insisted that it was the only instrument of the state that could guarantee the existing order. Moreover, the army repeatedly brought itself into play as the only option open to the Habsburg Monarchy if it did not want to allow itself to disintegrate.

With this version of militarism, Austria-Hungary admittedly distinguished itself from the militarism of other countries, yet the application of the term seems to be per-

missible, even if it proves nothing in itself. For the resignation encountered in the ranks of the armed forces of Austria-Hungary was much stronger than the militarism that presupposed a fundamentally dynamic attitude. Everywhere, people were greeted by hopelessness: the nationalities problem, the barely controllable difficulties of domestic policy, a lagging behind in military matters and finally the dramatically deteriorating economic situation scarcely allowed any room for great hopes. The German ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich von Tschirschky, mentioned above, summarised it all on 22 May 1914 in the following succinct sentence: 'Austria-Hungary is coming apart at the seams.'<sup>118</sup> With one exception, as we have seen above: 'The army is in great health'. Professors, deputies and diplomats such as Josef Redlich, Josef Maria Baernreither or the Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, Friedrich von Szápáry, made similar assessments of the domestic situation in the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1912, Szápáry also said that the domestic difficulties of Austria-Hungary would 'easily and happily be remedied' by means of a victorious war.<sup>119</sup> And barely two weeks before the assassination in Sarajevo, an anonymous writer in the *Österreichische Rundschau* newspaper noted: 'Our domestic situation forces us to emphasise our strength to the outside world.' The logical conclusion from these and similar statements was that the Austrian situation, which was very different in comparison with the other European great powers, was underscored: foreign policy was decisively influenced by domestic policy. Any demonstration of power had its origins in the fact that it was designed to put a stop to a further destabilisation of the domestic conditions within the Dual Monarchy.<sup>120</sup>

However, the kind of shape this strength was in, which should if necessary be directed 'outwardly', was the great unknown. For in any assessment, it is important to know from whom the strength emanated and at which point in time this occurred. Too much was then overlaid by those weaknesses that became clear during the war and, ultimately, literary and filmic portrayals have repeatedly contributed to distorting the picture. It can generally be said that the army was admittedly smaller than it might have been and exhibited many gaps in its weaponry. Yet the Imperial and Royal Army could doubtlessly do more than just issue threats. With a mobilisation and deployment time of 16 days to three weeks, the Austro-Hungarian army was certainly considerably slower, for example, than its German or French counterparts, but it was still just as rapid as the Russians and the Serbs, and perhaps somewhat more so. If there was something that constituted not just a quirk but rather a definite weakness of the Imperial and Royal Army, then it was a certain overaging and above all a too limited capability and mental flexibility on the part of the senior officers. In the absence of war, the generals evolved perforce into specialists in manoeuvres.

Having said that, one might have thought that after the extensive changes that Conrad von Hötzendorf undertook within the officer corps, it would not only have kept pace with the times but would even evince a certain superiority. The tactical and operative

exercise journeys and the numerous manoeuvres were designed to ensure the manageability of the army and also provide information on who might be best suited to leading large formations in a repeatedly sought-after future war. There appeared to be no limits to what could be achieved in the context of the war games and evidently aspirations were confused with reality. For example, it was assumed that troops would be able to march 25 km a day, every day for more than ten days, fight a four-day battle at the end of it and then go straight over to pursuing the enemy.<sup>121</sup> In fact, while a lot was expected of officers and soldiers, many things could not be simulated in training, however tough it was. For the appointment to senior functions, it was ultimately not always just what was on paper that was decisive but also a conglomeration of criteria, of which the question of whether the gentleman being proposed enjoyed the favour of the heir to the throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand was not the least important. Shortly after his re-appointment in 1913, Conrad himself was informed by Franz Ferdinand of his imminent dismissal, which was planned for 1914, as a result of some discord at the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig and several at most minor differences of opinion.

As there existed in peacetime only the sixteen army corps of the Common Army as the highest organised unit of the army, the appointment of army commanders was something that possessed a particular significance. It was chiefly the Archduke Friedrich as commander-in-chief of the Imperial-Royal Landwehr as well as generals Baronet Adolf von Brudermann, Oskar Potiorek, Liborius Frank, Moritz von Auffenberg and Baron Ernst von Leithner who were foreseen for the function of army commanders.<sup>122</sup> It was intended that they lead the operations with army general staffs that would be formed ad hoc. At the beginning of the war it would be seen whether the deployment and campaign concepts of the Operations Division of the General Staff, which were revised on an annual basis, were based on realistic assumptions. One thing was certain and was then also expressed in the crisis of July 1914: the Imperial and Royal Army was ready for battle. The words of Bismarck were repeatedly quoted: 'If Emperor Franz Joseph mounts his horse, the nations of the Dual Monarchy will follow him.'

### Dual Alliance and Triple Alliance

Now, the Emperor was already too old to mount his horse. Yet others would do so and they should be able to rely on the German Kaiser mounting 'his horse' if Austria required his help. The basis for the military-political relationship and the interplay between Austria-Hungary and the German Empire was the Dual Alliance of 1879.<sup>123</sup> The treaty had been conceived of as a defensive alliance in the event of a French attack on Germany or a Russian attack on Austria-Hungary. In this form the alliance – which had initially been kept secret – would never have had to be activated.



In the beginning, the Dual Alliance was definitely not, or at least not only, popular in Austria-Hungary. Thus, in 1888 the former Imperial-Royal War Minister Baron Kuhn, a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, was dismissed as Commander of the III Corps and retired on the orders of the Emperor for his criticism of the Dual Alliance. On the occasion of his forced retirement, however, he was treated to ovations from a large number of people, including many officers. These were from the old 'generation of 1866'. Later, Berlin's attempts to interfere in the policies of the Danube Monarchy were criticised as inappropriate, for example when the German Empire attempted to thwart a stronger consideration of the interests of the Slavic nationalities within Austria-Hungary. It was precisely the Slavs of the Dual Monarchy on whom the significance of the Dual Alliance ultimately depended: if those Slavs living in the eastern part of the Dual Monarchy saw the purpose of the treaty in stopping the Russian urge for territorial expansion, then it was they who would become pillars of the alliance. If, however, they saw no benefit in collaborating with the German Empire, then the treaty lost its meaning for them and served only to protect the non-Slavic population of the Dual Monarchy.

Still, this was only one facet of the German-Austrian relationship, which became all the more multi-layered and accident-prone when the Alliance was extended to Italy on the initiative of the Apennine state and the Triple Alliance was brought into being on 20 May 1882. Italy had for several reasons an interest in receiving support, as it had slid into a conflict with France and feared that this conflict might become a military one.<sup>124</sup> The German Empire and Italy would thus support each other in case of war with France, whilst Austria-Hungary received from Italy only a promise of neutrality in the event of a war with Russia. The Triple Alliance was nevertheless repeatedly changed. A second and a third treaty bound the German Empire and Italy yet closer together and gave them at the same time more room for manoeuvre, whilst Austria-Hungary wanted to content itself with receiving the necessary guarantees in the event of a threat to its interests, above all in the Balkans.

In the supplement to the second Triple Alliance treaty from 1887, which was important for Austria-Hungary with regard to Italy, Article I states that both states committed themselves to support the maintenance of the status quo in the 'Orient' and to inform one another, if necessary, of their respective intentions. In the event that there was a territorial change in the Balkans to the benefit of one of the partners, the other one should receive appropriate compensation in accordance with Article VII. This passage had actually been added to the treaty by the then Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Gustav Kálnoky, without any real necessity. Italy namely had initially only had the eastern coast of the Adriatic in mind, whereas Kálnoky had put up the entire Balkan Peninsula for negotiation.<sup>125</sup>

Now, it is again one of the strange twists of history that – against expectations – no complications emerged from the dangerous provisions of the German-Italian agree-

ment, which did not cloak their aggressive tendencies, whilst the 'decidedly conservative formulations of the Austro-Hungarian-Italian treaty, which warily impeded any change, should contain the seed of the collapse of the alliance'.<sup>126</sup>

When Italy wanted to take advantage of the Triple Alliance in the 1890s to support its colonial aspirations, Germany and above all Austria-Hungary distanced themselves. The Triple Alliance was no 'acquisitions company'.<sup>127</sup> The resultant loosening of the alliance led to all three Triple Alliance powers also seeking a realisation of their interests beyond the alliance. The relationship between the Danube Monarchy and Italy was characterised ever more by a palpable distrust, which led to the granting of relatively straightforward concessions to Italy in the framework of the regular renewals of the treaty becoming strained efforts or ceasing completely. This was the case above all in 1902. Following the coordination of its colonial policy with France and Great Britain, Italy focussed its interests on the Balkans. Until that point, Austria-Hungary had aroused with its Balkan policy the interest of only one external power – aside from the states of the region – namely Russia. Now, however, there was a new factor in play: Italy. With the Racconigi Bargain of 1909 Italy came to an understanding with the Russian Empire without either Austria-Hungary or Germany learning anything of this excursion on the part of their Triple Alliance partner. Italy agreed to support Russia in its policy on the Turkish Straits (similar to what Izvolsky and Aehrenthal had discussed) and received in return the promise that Russia would remain neutral if Italy were to attempt to acquire North African territories.

Racconigi was in some ways the comeuppance for Aehrenthal consciously failing in 1908 to inform his Italian counterpart Tommaso Tittoni in good time about the impending annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>128</sup> The Russo-Italian agreement, however, was just one more thin thread in the complicated mesh of relations developing in the so-called Concert of Europe. It was almost unavoidable that slights, deceptions and, ultimately, hatred played a role.

One should not overrate the tremendous number of treaties, conferences, military conventions etc., for especially in the years between 1902 and 1914 there was a huge inflation in this sector of international relations, which made it almost impossible for the state chancelleries always to clearly work out and to document the applicability of individual regulations. Furthermore, conventions, related agreements, supplementary accords and the like were generally kept secret. The coexistence and the freedom of the Triple Alliance partners to shape their own policies relatively independently of one another led, however, to the agreements being relativised in their value long before the outbreak of war and to a general wary observation of who was conferring with whom and what was being discussed. The fact that Austria-Hungary was the taker for long periods and was worried that the German Empire, but also Italy, would approach another power in the web of relationships over the head of the Habsburg Monarchy, made the

matter not only more complicated but above all more fragile, and one must repeatedly pose the question as to whether what had once been agreed on would actually hold, if need be.

Eventually, another partner sprang from the Triple Alliance, although it never formally joined the alliance: Romania. It sought dependence on the Triple Alliance due to its occasionally very fraught relations with Bulgaria and Russia, though it itself assumed relatively few obligations. And it attached particular importance to its assistance contract with the Triple Alliance powers remaining secret.

Admittedly, the Second Balkan War dramatically obscured the relationship between the Danube Monarchy and Romania, and all the ongoing attempts until mid-1914 and, ultimately, up to 1916, to improve relations were able to change nothing of substance. The most visible sign of the Austrian desire to improve relations with Romania was ultimately the despatch of a personal confidante of the heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand, Count Ottokar Czernin, to the post of envoy in Bucharest. Nevertheless, it should have been clear in 1913 that in the event of war it could be expected at best that Romania remain on the sidelines, neutral.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, the Triple Alliance was repeatedly reduced to the Dual Alliance and not only because Romania's conduct was no longer calculable but also because the third alliance partner, Italy, was sidelined or bypassed by Germany and Austria-Hungary. The alliance was thus repeatedly, and above all during decisive moments such as 1913 and then 1914, reduced to the status of the Dual Alliance of 1879.

In view of the defeat of 1918, the view was increasingly expressed in Germany that the alliance with Austria-Hungary was responsible for the German Empire taking out of 'blind loyalty' the step to go to war and thus being dragged into the abyss. It was argued that Kaiser Wilhelm I had resisted the Dual Alliance and Bismarck's signing of the treaty was blamed.<sup>130</sup> Still, this argumentation is not persuasive. Not only Bismarck but also for his successors, the maintenance and modest strengthening of Austria-Hungary weighed more heavily than all other arguments. Furthermore, in this way provision was made against a potential agreement between Austria-Hungary and Russia. And ultimately the conclusion of an alliance 35 years before its collapse is not to be blamed on those who formed the alliance but rather on those who extended it – if blame can be assigned at all. Also in the case of Italy the words applied: a country is either allied with Italy or it drifts into the camp of its opponents. Other states had also formed alliances together and were competing for partners. In this context, above all the alliance between France and Great Britain, the *Entente Cordiale* signed in 1904, should be mentioned. The Entente, to which it was then abbreviated, arose from an immediate danger of war, as Britain and the French were only at the last moment able to agree on the division of Africa and thus one of the final chapters in the history of colonial imperialism. The subsequent understanding had not only Africa as an objective,

however, but also signalised like nothing else the fact that the great colonial powers were turning their attention back to Europe and sought above all to put Germany in its place. The fact that they also aspired to get Russia on board was self-evident and it was precisely the Russian Empire that showed every interest following the Russo-Japanese War in also turning its attention to Europe. The web of relations once again became tighter. Germany admittedly interpreted this as encirclement and cultivated the bond with Austria-Hungary, initially perhaps out of conviction.<sup>131</sup>

It admittedly remained the case that the alliance partners continued to pursue their own interests and therefore bad blood alternated with periods of close friendship. The trade treaty of 1906 was criticised in Austria-Hungary because it allegedly conceded too much to the German Empire. When the German Empire unconditionally supported Austria-Hungary during the course of the annexation crisis of 1908 and endorsed its policies, this understandably triggered relief in Vienna. Terms such as 'community of fate' (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) and 'blind loyalty' (*Nibelungentreue*) were then used. And it evidently bothered no-one that in Berlin racial conflict was openly talked of.<sup>132</sup> Germanic peoples against Slavs was a slogan in the diction of Kaiser Wilhelm II. One year later, everything looked completely different again. Vienna was alarmed when Germany and Russia became somewhat closer because the Germans were not interested in Persia whilst the Russians were in agreement that the Germans would finance the continuation of the construction of the Baghdad Railway. During the course of the 'Second Moroccan Crisis' in July 1911, it was again Berlin who felt deserted by Vienna and only heard from Minister Aehrenthal in response to its complaints that he refused to listen to 'nagging complaints that are completely unjustified'.<sup>133</sup> Then it was Berlin's turn again. The well-intentioned but often overbearing advice from Berlin could result in the emergence in Vienna of decidedly anti-German sentiments, for example in the winter of 1912/13. In the opinion of the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Mikhail Nikolayevich de Giers, who can be cited in the case of German-Austrian relations as a fairly unsuspecting authority, there emerged in Vienna an increasing feeling of patronisation, which one had to accept and, in so doing, make the best of a bad job.<sup>134</sup>

Relations with the third power in the alliance, Italy, developed in an even less balanced way than Austro-German relations. During the Second Moroccan Crisis, the Italians had shown friendly restraint towards Germany, though they got involved at the end of the year in an incomparably bigger adventure when they began the occupation of Libya and attempted to force the Ottoman Empire to abandon its rule of that country. This irritated above all the French but also the British and the Germans, who did not want to accept any weakening of Turkey. Opinions were divided in Austria-Hungary. Minister Aehrenthal did not disagree with the involvement of the Italians, as he regarded them in this way as distracted by a region that was more or less uninteresting for the Habsburg Empire. For the Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf,

it was *the* opportunity to pounce on its ally and disable it militarily. In actual fact, the Ottoman troops and the Libyan rebels took care of this in any case, because Italy was forced to deploy more than 100,000 soldiers and suffered heavy losses in weapons and armaments. The Ottoman Empire did ultimately relinquish Libya, as war had broken out in the meantime in the Balkans, but this in no way reduced Italian involvement. The result was that Italy was for some time neither a full-value ally nor a full-value opponent. And this undoubtedly had consequences, about which Rome, Berlin and Vienna should actually have known.

The relationship between the allies Austria-Hungary and Italy was ambivalent across the decades. All in all, it was in fact worse and more defined by resentment than the relationship between Italy and the third partner in the alliance, the German Empire.<sup>135</sup> Yet it would be wrong to cultivate the view of the war years and to emphasise the negative judgement that above all Conrad von Hötzendorf handed down. The Chief of the Italian General Staff, Alberto Pollio, Conrad's 'opposite number', was a consistent advocate of the Triple Alliance. And Conrad knew it. For Pollio, it was inviolable that in the event of a German-French war an Italian army would deploy with the German Western Army and as such participate in the victory over France. As far as Austria-Hungary was concerned, Pollio surprised the German military attaché in Rome, Major von Kleist, at the end of April 1914 with a statement to the effect that Italy would perhaps not deploy even larger forces in the west because it might be required to come to the aid of the Austrians against Serbia with several army corps, i.e. at least 50,000 soldiers, in order that the Imperial and Royal Army would be able to field sufficient forces against Russia. Even the cooperation of the fleets of Austria-Hungary and Italy was more or less agreed on.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless: this was put to the test in July 1914 and it was not the Italian soldiers who were to play the decisive role but rather the politicians.

The Dual Alliance treaty was published in 1888 – though without the passage on the period of validity. As a result, everyone must have been aware of its significance. The Triple Alliance treaty remained secret. Parts of it were made public during the war, but the full text of the treaty was only published in 1920. Almost more important than the treaties themselves were the related agreements and accords, though above all the general staff accords and military supplement treaties.

### The Military Accords

Looking at the beginning of the war in 1914, it appears not only that everything had gone in accordance with the alliance automatism and the agreements made previously, but also that even the military strategy had been elaborated and agreed upon in detail. Nothing of the sort was the case. The military planning was the weak point of all the

alliances, for whilst the framework had been defined, there remained so much distrust that no-one provided anyone else an even tolerably complete insight. This observation also applies to the Triple Entente of France, Great Britain and Russia, to the actual Entente, in other words just France and Great Britain, and in particular to the Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance.

The German Empire allowed Italy only vague insights into the German general staff planning for a war against France. Italy received from Austria-Hungary no insight into its operative conceptions and allowed in return no insight itself. The secrecy, however, went even further. The Chief of the General Staff of the Imperial and Royal Army, for example, never got to see the Triple Alliance treaty and learnt of many details only from the aforementioned publication after the war.<sup>137</sup> Even the (old) Dual Alliance was also for a long time characterised in the military realm by considerable reticence, which meant that the two partners were only vaguely informed of each other's plans. Neither details of the deployment and war planning were announced nor agreements on operational plans reached. In particular, the Dual Alliance partners closed their eyes to reality, and this reality was no more and no less than the fact that from 1907/08 onwards strategic changes could no longer be countered with the mindsets of 1879/82.<sup>138</sup>

The rapprochement between Russia and the British Empire of 1907, which occurred in the Afghanistan question and in the disputes surrounding the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, Persia and Tibet, removed the old antagonism between the two powers at least to the extent that it was possible to include Russia in the Entente. The Dual Alliance and the Triple Alliance could therefore reckon on Russian participation in the event of a conflict between Germany and France and with British participation should a dispute arise between the Dual Alliance and Russia. Among the new factors was the presence of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, which had consequences above all for Italy. In view of British maritime power, it could be assumed that Italy would do everything to avoid becoming the opponent of Great Britain. Although the British sent part of their Mediterranean Fleet to the North Sea in 1912, whilst in compensation the French Channel Fleet was sent to the Mediterranean, this in no way reduced Italian misgivings or curbed one ambition or the other. It had to be considered in all cases how the inclusion of larger colonial empires and the control over the international sea routes would impact on a large European war. One could not respond to these questions with traditional deployment plans.<sup>139</sup> The consequence thus had to be a comprehensive strategic evaluation, which was admittedly repeatedly attempted, but particularly in Austria-Hungary was never even rudimentarily successful. Thus, Austria-Hungary remained stuck in the traditional continental mindset and was unable to do anything for the basis of its own military-strategic thinking other than in limited operational instances.<sup>140</sup> The Germans would have to take care of everything else.

This finding, however, was not only addressed to the person most responsible for the military planning of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf, but to an even greater extent to the responsible politicians, who cultivated an almost exclusively Eurocentric view and for whom the in any case rare trips of the units of the Imperial and Royal Navy beyond the Mediterranean were merely exotic excursions, just as the diplomatic presence in overseas countries was still regarded as a transfer for disciplinary reasons, similar to the post in Washington at the beginning of the 19th century.

For the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, the military problems of a war were, at least since the signing of the Franco-Russian alliance and a supplementary military convention in 1892/93, almost exclusively problems of a two-front war. During the term in office of the Chief of the German General Staff Count Alfred von Schlieffen the plan emerged that was named after him, which was designed to solve the problem for Germany by initially wrestling down France with a clear numerical superiority in the west and taking a defensive approach to Russia until the forces in the west had become available again and could be transferred to the east. This concept, which was not understood in Austria-Hungary and against which Conrad's predecessor as Chief of the General Staff, General Friedrich von Beck-Rzikowsky, was already opposed, led to an almost complete breaking-off of military contact at the highest level.<sup>141</sup> Until 1906, there were no even remotely concrete agreements, let alone binding ones, between the chiefs of the German and the Austro-Hungarian general staffs.

Only at the beginning of the new era, which was characterised in Germany by Helmuth von Moltke, the nephew of the 'old' Moltke, and in Austria-Hungary by Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, was closer contact achieved. This contact was decisively promoted by the annexation crisis. The initiative was taken by Conrad. At the beginning of 1909 he sketched out the political situation of the Dual Alliance and counted France, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro among potential opponents.<sup>142</sup> With regard to their respective behaviour, Conrad claimed that Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey were not predictable, Italy would remain neutral and Romania would enter the war on the side of the Triple Alliance, or rather the Dual Alliance. That just left Great Britain, though evidently Conrad had nothing to say on this subject.

Against whom, however, should the main strike be made? Conrad referred above all to the problem that would arise if Austria-Hungary were to become involved in a war against Serbia and Russia were to enter the war at a later date. It could also happen the other way around and Serbia could intervene in a war between the Dual Alliance and Russia. Moltke responded immediately and pointed to the current Schlieffen Plan: regardless of what happened, in a two-front war between alliances the German army would have to wrestle down France and only then turn all its forces against Russia. He added, however, that Austria-Hungary would have to be in a position to hold Russia

in check until Serbia was defeated, even if it committed its main forces to the Balkans. This was very informative. Yet Conrad was not satisfied. He proposed clarifications and achieved two things in the process: first, he signalled the readiness of the Habsburg Monarchy to bow to the Schlieffen, or rather the Moltke, Plan. Second, the alliance should be activated even if Germany or Austria-Hungary were the aggressor.<sup>143</sup> This was a decisive moment indeed.

The parallelogram of forces shifted further. On the one hand, Russia overcame its weakness following defeat in the Russo-Japanese War sooner than expected and not least thanks to considerable French financial aid. On the other hand, it became ever more unlikely that Russia would remain on the sidelines in the event that Austria-Hungary began a war with Serbia. All parties involved had to adapt to this development, for better or worse. The next necessity, to rethink what had already been thought, occurred in the context of the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. The increase in power on the part of Serbia was conspicuous, though it was assumed that the integration of the new additions would take several years and that the Serbian army would not immediately be twice as strong as before. And finally, the change in the relationship to Romania resulted at least in the loss of holding forces, those troops who, merely by means of their presence and without being actively deployed, could tie down enemy – in this case Russian – forces, in the event that Romania was not in fact to be regarded as an enemy herself. In spite of these changes, the agreements already made remained in place and the Germans only vaguely held out the prospect that a German eastern army in the event of a rapid Russian entry into the war would carry out a thrust from Galicia over the Narew River in order to support an Austro-Hungarian offensive. Ultimately, however, neither was a concrete military objective prescribed nor was a political purpose discernible, and in this way those who repeatedly invoked Clausewitz ignored the fundamental tenets of the Prussian theoretician. The Dual Alliance and the Triple Alliance suffered, however, from other, essentially more elementary problems: there was no even remotely complete knowledge of the structure, the problems, the organisation, the training or the thinking of the alliance partners' armies.<sup>144</sup>

Vienna was less informed about the prospective organisation for war of the German troops than about that of the likely enemy states. Even the German General Staff had insufficient knowledge of the peculiarities of the constituent parts of the Austro-Hungarian army and was even less aware of the annually revised operational scenarios.<sup>145</sup> The future German Plenipotentiary General in the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, General August von Cramon, summarised this lack of knowledge in two sentences: '[...] there were only very few in Germany who were even remotely knowledgeable regarding their ally and its army. Hence the surprise at discovering that there were Austrians who did not understand German.'<sup>146</sup> This lack of knowledge was of no



consequence until the crisis of July 1914. Then, however, it suddenly became a major factor.

Contact between the chiefs of the Austro-Hungarian and the German general staffs, Conrad and Moltke, remained superficial in spite of a certain rapprochement. On the one hand, neither of them was sufficiently well orientated regarding political events and, on the other hand, they cultivated the agreements in the context of a framework prescribed by the continental operational scenarios but not as a result of a truly strategic assessment or in faithful collaboration. Conrad, for example, knew nothing of the fact that Germany intended in the event of a war in the west to force Belgium to abandon its neutrality and allow troops to pass through its territory. The role of Great Britain, the repercussions of a potential Italian neutrality, the expansion of the war to extra-European territories – none of these issues was ever seriously discussed. The only concrete indication of an exchange of information, which ultimately crystallised in the contact between the chiefs of the general staffs – in, of all years, 1912, the year in which Conrad was briefly replaced by General Blasius Schemua – were the somewhat more detailed considerations regarding the Schlieffen/Moltke Plan, i.e. the German operational plan against France, and analogous to this details on the deployment of Austro-Hungarian forces in the event of a war with Russia or in the Balkans.

Since 1909 it had been assumed by Germany that Russia would intervene in a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. By virtue of the Franco-Russian agreement, this would in turn result in France entering the war. The moment would then have come for Germany to implement the Schlieffen Plan. Limited forces would be left in the east to guard East Prussia, whilst everything else would be concentrated in the west, in order to deploy with superior forces there and to crush the French in a lightning campaign. Moltke reckoned in 1909 that the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan would last only around four weeks. Later, six to eight weeks were mentioned.<sup>147</sup> Then, however, the corps removed swiftly from the western front would be turned around in order to relieve the Austrians, who would until this point have had to stave off the Russians. Moltke attempted to reassure Conrad by claiming that the Russians would focus their operations against the German Empire in order to relieve the French. And Austria would have to manage this: to keep in check for three or four weeks an admittedly respectable Russian left flank, but one that did not attack with superior forces. Looking at the German strategic planning, it is clear that it was utterly one-dimensional. That was perhaps the good, old Prussian school, according to which – adapted from Scharnhorst – only the simple things endured in war. But it was ultimately a corset from which one could not escape. For Schlieffen, like Moltke, in all imaginable scenarios in which the German Empire entered the war there was no alternative to commencing a campaign against France, regardless of whether France even assumed a threatening posture or not. The existing alliances alone led the German General Staff to conclude

that regardless of whether a war threatened in the west or in the east, the second front would have to be opened, so the only existing plan should be implemented immediately and to its full extent. As has been repeatedly established since, it was a gamble with relatively meagre chances of success.<sup>148</sup>

By comparison, Austrian planning appears not only more flexible but also much more political. Here there were at least three major war scenarios and combinations of these, as well as a series of further elaborations. And the aim was always to adapt the plans to the changing circumstances or to do what the Chief of the General Staff Conrad recommended: to remove one of the smaller potential opponents by means of a pre-emptive war.

Conrad attempted to second guess the two main war scenarios – involving Serbia and Russia – by mentally dissecting the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. He defined three parts: the first part, by and large three armies, should be available in all events for war scenario ‘R’ (= Russia). Part two, the so-called ‘Balkan Minimal Group’, should be deployed against Serbia and Montenegro. And then there was a third part, the so-called ‘B Echelon’, as a strategic reserve. It comprised approximately one army and, depending on whether there was a war against Russia or only against Serbia, should be sent to the Russian or the Balkan theatre.<sup>149</sup> Naturally, Conrad wanted to avoid a war on multiple fronts, which is why he insisted on a pre-emptive war, first against Italy, and with increasing force against Serbia. Between 1908 and 1912, he felt he had to champion a pre-emptive attack even more because he regarded Russia as not yet sufficiently ready for war to be able to intervene on the side of Serbia, but anticipated that the Russian Empire would soon catch up thanks to extensive reforms of its military and an accelerated construction of its railways.

Still, Conrad was not able to force through his arguments. Subsequently, a fundamental attitude emerged on his part that lay between resignation and last-ditch rebellion. He saw the chances of success in a war dwindling rapidly and thought he could only predict that the monarchy had a chance of survival if it embarked on a struggle of life and death. In this conviction, which had become an *idée fixe*, social Darwinist thoughts crept in, according to which the state could only survive if it accepted the struggle, proved itself to be the stronger and excluded the weaker state from political decision-making. Nonetheless, Conrad portrayed himself later in his memoirs as more far-sighted but also more pessimistic, and was depicted in the historiography far more as the embodiment of a person who accepts his own fate than reality in fact suggests.<sup>150</sup> He undeniably and repeatedly applied pressure and he certainly saw the chances for Austria-Hungary’s army dwindling. Thanks to the attitude of Berlin and the German General Staff, however, even in 1914 he still was still playing with the possibility that the Dual Monarchy might be victorious in a war on multiple fronts. German confidence was evidently contagious and tempting. The German historian Gerhard Ritter

summarised this as follows: '[...] Berlin became increasingly generous with its political promises – to the point of recklessness – but militarily the promised aid became ever more uncertain and worthless'.<sup>151</sup> And the planning for war became ever more a risky game, not least because Vienna and Berlin had to incorporate into their calculations an additional ally: Italy.

Despite all her protestations to the contrary, since her colonial adventure in Libya, which had been accepted by the other two Triple Alliance powers, Italy could no longer adhere to its promise to attack with an army from the Maritime Alps in the event of a German-French war. Germany brushed this aside, whilst Austria-Hungary had in any case not expected that Italy would deploy troops against Serbia. But the growth of Serbia as a result of the Balkan Wars was naturally a cause for concern. Territorially, the country had grown to twice its former size and had gained one-and-a-half million people. A war against Serbia would thus require additional troops, which would then be lacking against Russia. Romania had ostentatiously begun to turn away from its partners, not least due to the increasingly unfriendly attitude of Austria-Hungary. And whether Bulgaria would offset the loss remained unclear. If, however, the Romanians did join the front against Russia, then a further few hundred thousand Austro-Hungarian soldiers would be needed to compensate for the loss of the Romanian troops. It is not clear where the confidence came from that all these developments would not require any major changes to either the thinking hitherto or the large-scale planning for war. Conrad continued to grope in the dark and was not really aware of the forces planned by the German Empire for the eastern theatre of war. His efforts to obtain binding promises and precise figures were unsuccessful. The German side, however, repeatedly attempted to reassure and encourage him, because Moltke feared that if Austria-Hungary really knew about the very remote chances of success in the east, it would possibly refrain from going on the offensive and instead set itself up defensively in the Carpathian Mountains or elsewhere. An offensive approach on the part of Austria-Hungary was necessary, however, in order to tie down as many Russian troops as possible and to keep them busy until the victory in the west could be achieved. Thus, even in August 1914, Moltke told the Austrian liaison officer Count Josef Stürgkh: 'You have a good army. You'll beat the Russians.'<sup>152</sup> Conrad should go ahead with his 'offensive in the dark'.

Although the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff had distinct doubts in the years before 1914 about the ability of the German army to arrive in the east with sufficient forces, he did not fundamentally distance himself from the agreement. The only thing that was changed in the basic principles before the outbreak of war was the deployment plan for the Austro-Hungarian northern army, in that its detrainng spaces were relocated further back, deep into the interior of Galicia. This seemed both sensible and necessary, as the expansion of the Austrian rail network could hardly be accelerated and, conversely, the Russians had such efficient trains that the original assumption, to

the effect that they would be able to deploy only slowly, no longer applied. The relocation further back was also designed to enable better cooperation with the forces of the German eastern army.

Gerhard Ritter argued that Conrad would in any case not have risked a simultaneous war against Serbia and Russia without what seemed to him to be far-reaching agreements with the German General Staff.<sup>153</sup> This must, however, be questioned. Conrad was, as described above, so very convinced of the necessity of the war and so inclined to wage the war offensively that he left the Austro-Hungarian army no other alternative. The firm will to engage offensively was linked to two considerations: first, Conrad wanted by means of a swift move to offensive warfare to grasp the law of action and begin operations in such a way that his troops dictated what would happen. Second, he saw only an offensive as offering the possibility of capitalising on the hoped-for head start in mobilising and preventing the enemy from calmly completing its own deployment. The offensive approach was also designed to take the war on to the territory of the enemy. In their agreements and, finally, also in July and August 1914 the Austro-Hungarian and the German general staffs accepted a good deal that hid considerable risks: Austria-Hungary accepted that Germany would use the mass of its forces against France in the hope of wrestling France down after about six weeks. The German Empire also initially agreed to Austria-Hungary being engaged in the Balkans and thus only being able to deploy in the Russian theatre in a weakened state. If the operational planning of the Central Powers, which – and this should again be emphasised – had not been agreed on in detail, was to be successful, then the German Empire in France and Austria-Hungary in Serbia would have to achieve rapid successes. Above all, however, the Imperial and Royal Army would have to avoid being encircled in the north-eastern theatre of war by the increasingly superior Russian forces. What would happen, however, if this did not succeed?

Both armies, the German and the Austro-Hungarian, were to be led into a two-front war. Both of them should be victorious in a short time in their respective theatre of war: the Germans in France and the Austrians in Serbia, in a campaign lasting 1,000 hours. Then Russia should also be defeated. It was thus a perfect military world that had been sketched out by the two general staffs. Speed would have to replace more detailed planning. In this way, 'Plan XVII' of General Joseph Joffre in France, the concepts of Schlieffen and the younger Moltke in the German Empire, the thoughts of General Mikhail Alekseyevich in Russia and the 'Conrad School' in Austria-Hungary all resembled one another.<sup>154</sup> Even if Conrad had had doubts that the Moltke Plan would be successful, he had clung to it and, as far as it was in his power to do so, he wanted to contribute to Austria-Hungary fulfilling its part of the obligations.

If according to the general staff agreements Austria-Hungary largely subordinated itself to German plans, this was not quite so evident in the political arena and it could

even be argued that Germany in no way dominated. On the contrary: Berlin became politically dependent on its main ally, a circumstance that the German Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg also noted, though without being able to do anything about it or even wanting to try. The German Empire did not want to risk losing its only real ally and in this way end up completely isolated. Thus, Germany also wanted to interpret the Dual Alliance treaty generously, even if it hid the danger that both states would be pulled into a major war.

Admittedly, doubts could often be heard in Germany as to whether the alliance with Austria-Hungary was prudent. Austrian capital competed with that of Germany in the Balkans and in the Near East. Was it wise to chain oneself to an empire that evidently had serious domestic conflicts to overcome and that was in essence a Slav-Magyar empire, whose German population only constituted a quarter of the overall total? Was it sensible to chain oneself to a stagnant and, perhaps, dying great power?

In some respects, the dilemma of the German Empire was no less great than that of Austria-Hungary. It was the German historian Fritz Fischer who drew our attention to the considerable German ambitions vis-à-vis the Orient, for the realisation of which German capital travelled across the Balkans and Turkey to the Near East and beyond.<sup>155</sup> It was not exactly a 'grab for global power', in the words of Fischer, but it was a pronounced imperial tendency, which was then subsumed under the catchphrase 'global politics'. These German global politics intersected with Austrian policy in the Balkans, the only area of foreign policy in which the Danube Monarchy became active.<sup>156</sup> Added to these imperial interests were dynastic interests, which cannot be separated from the former and which repeatedly persuaded Germany to bind Romania more closely to the Triple Alliance. In this respect, Germany attempted to exert influence over the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery). Likewise, Kaiser Wilhelm was interested in a stronger bond with Greece and argued the case for this, as his sister was married to the Greek king, Constantine I.

Yet, by and large, it would prove to be the case that the Dual Alliance, in its more dynamic and not just defensive moments, did not function in this way, and that Berlin set the agenda. The German imperial government confirmed, supported and executed. And the German Empire recognised more or less silently that Austria-Hungary – itself a Balkan power – understood more about events in south-eastern Europe than the German Empire, or at least claimed to. One of the most important observations here is that with the decline of the prestige of the German Empire – with respect to its role compared to that of France and Great Britain – the decisive voice in the Triple Alliance was transferred to Vienna. For the Austrian historian Fritz Fellner, this was the cause of the gradual disintegration of the alliance, for Vienna had always regarded the Triple Alliance as little more than a necessary evil. Austria-Hungary nevertheless relied on its old Dual Alliance partner and entangled it ever more in the Balkans.<sup>157</sup>

The German Empire willingly allowed itself to be embroiled, for it had not achieved the long sought-after equilibrium with England, aside from the agreement on naval armaments, but on the other hand believed that, if in possession of its full military strength, it could use this strength to force through its policies. Additionally, in Germany there was a different fundamental attitude than in Austria-Hungary. The arms race, the feeling of being encircled and diverse cases of rabble-rousing on the part of the press contributed to creating tension and a feeling that a general European 'conflagration' would be unavoidable in the near future. Germany found itself – in Moltke's words – in a 'position of hopeless isolation, which was growing ever more hopeless', but believed that it had the strength to break out.

Perhaps the experience of the Triple Alliance, which, as discussed, exhibited clear weaknesses, contributed to the German Empire indulging in countless illusions regarding the sturdiness of the 'Entente Cordiale' between France and Great Britain. On the other hand, the functioning of the Franco-Russian collaboration was accepted as a certainty. A war was almost exclusively seen, therefore, as a two-front conflict, whereas Vienna continued to devote most of its thoughts to an isolated war in the Balkans.

German historians have argued in this context that Germany jumped, as it were, on the Balkan bandwagon in order either to meet its main opponents, France and Russia, via this detour or to provoke them in such a way that a war would be inevitable.<sup>158</sup> This objective, they argued, had been fixed since the famous war council of 8 July 1912, and Berlin had simply been waiting for the opportunity to realise an objective that had been planned long before. The reasons for this stance, the German historians continued, were to be found in a series of economic-strategic setbacks, as the German Empire regarded itself as having been eliminated by French capital both in the construction of the Baghdad Railway and in the granting of loans to Russia. It was reasoned from this that the German encouragement of Austrian policy in the Balkans ultimately resulted in unleashing the very same crisis whose realisation in a direct confrontation with France did not appear advisable, since it would inevitably have brought Great Britain into play. It was thus imperative that the aim should be to achieve Great Britain's neutrality in a European conflict.<sup>159</sup> This interpretation was vehemently contradicted by others because German policy, as they claimed, was not made by a few bankers and merchants.<sup>160</sup>

The feeling of gradual stagnation also led Germany to engage in thoughts of a pre-emptive war. Again, not only Germany itself but also Austria-Hungary played a role here. The Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke regarded the military strength of the two Central Powers as one whole. Considering Russian armaments, but above all with regard to the apparently so inhomogeneous Imperial and Royal Army, Moltke perceived that circumstances were deteriorating increasingly for the Central Powers. He regarded it as highly doubtful that Austria-Hungary would in the near future be in a position in the event of a war to engage in a strong offensive

against Russia. And without such an offensive he regarded German war plans and the necessary freedom of manoeuvre to develop its main strength against France as threatened. In view of the deteriorating situation, Moltke – in an immediate audience with Kaiser Wilhelm – demanded almost as an ultimatum the ‘recruitment of all Germans fit for military service’. He recommended to the Permanent Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, Gottlieb von Jagow, that he seize any opportunity to initiate a pre-emptive war if Germany wanted to have a chance of military victory.<sup>161</sup> In contrast to the political leadership, as well as to Kaiser Wilhelm, Moltke indeed expected an intervention on the part of England.

### **Pre-emptive War: Yes or No?**

It should by no means be assumed that it was merely Moltke and Conrad who fostered ideas about a pre-emptive war. The senior soldiers and some politicians of other states also entertained ideas about a pre-emptive war and worked on polishing the alliance mechanism. The consonance of the ideas and the perceptions to the effect that a war was unavoidable, as well as the willingness to wage war, and indeed better today than tomorrow, was evident across Europe. But everyone had something different in mind.

Rarely, however, has the intention of a country to project domestic conflicts outwardly and to by-pass them by means of war been so evident as in the case of Austria-Hungary in 1914. And yet those in favour of a pre-emptive war did not get their way. In Germany, Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg rejected provoking a war in June 1914,<sup>162</sup> and in Austria-Hungary Count Berchtold, like his predecessor Aehrenthal, was no less adverse towards demands for a pre-emptive war. And he at least had a powerful ally: the heir to the throne. The ambivalent image of Archduke Franz Ferdinand so often portrayed should be corrected in a number of respects. It would in particular be important not to confuse Ferdinand’s sometimes ‘iron-eating’ style and his overbearing character with his thoughts on war and peace.

Attention has already been drawn elsewhere to the fact that he indulged in the perhaps illusionary vision of a renewal of the League of the Three Emperors and thus sought to improve relations with Russia at a single stroke. His notion of cooperation between the three European empires was orientated towards the Holy Alliance and likewise towards phases of mutual understanding or at least respect during the latter part of the 19th century. The heir to the throne would only too gladly have abandoned the alliance with Italy in favour of one with Russia. Franz Ferdinand’s in any case limited plea for a war against Serbia in November/December 1912 was a rather isolated departure from both his earlier and his subsequent fundamental stance, for Ferdinand also envisaged a peaceful solution for the Balkans. During the course of 1913 it re-

quired considerable effort to obtain his agreement to the threat of violence. The reasons for this stance were certainly not pacifistic,<sup>163</sup> but lay rather in the clear recognition that Serbia would be so blatantly supported by Russia that any attack on Serbia was bound to bring Russia into play. If, however, there was an attempt to achieve conciliation with Russia and a renewal of the League of the Three Emperors, a violent attack on Serbia was not the way to go about it. In the case of Franz Ferdinand, there were also clear signs that he did not want ties to the German Empire to become too close. Again, Russia must have played a role here, for she did not want to see herself confronted by a 'phalanx' of the Germans.

During the course of 1913 frictions increased between the heir to the throne and Conrad von Hötzendorf, whom the former had for a long time sponsored. There were both personal and professional reasons for this, expressed in the Archduke's hurtful criticism of the Chief of the General Staff during the autumn manoeuvres of 1913. Conrad subsequently tendered his resignation. Yet Franz Ferdinand did not accept it, though not because he wanted to retract his remarks but rather because he claimed that it would not be a good thing if the occupant of the post of chief of the general staff changed three times in the space of two years. It was generally assumed, however, that Conrad would be otherwise employed by the end of 1914.<sup>164</sup>

It is worth asking whether following Conrad's departure many other thoughts would have flowed into the military-strategic conceptions. Conrad was not alone in his demand for a pre-emptive war, but instead a 'child of his time'. And many, if not most, of the Imperial and Royal generals in senior positions were advocates of Clausewitz's interpretation that a pre-emptive war should be waged if the state is able to resist a deterioration of its future prospects only by means of a military offensive.<sup>165</sup> A change in the post of chief of the general staff for the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary, therefore, could indeed have resulted in a man succeeding Conrad who would have incorporated the political dimension in his thinking far less than his predecessor had done. Conrad certainly only made allowance for partial aspects, but his ministerial colleague Blasius Schemua as well as Conrad's successor from 1917, General Arz von Straußenburg, embodied the deeply apolitical, narrow-minded type of officer who only attempted to apply technified theories of war, described so emphatically by Hans-Ulrich Wehler in relation to the German army.<sup>166</sup> As most politicians shied away from interfering in the innermost concerns of the military, such as operational planning, and there was moreover no attempt at such an intervention because the military resorted to the Emperor as the 'Supreme Commander', communication problems emerged between the senior politicians and the senior military leadership. The Chief of the General Staff undoubtedly wanted war, albeit limited to certain military scenarios. The state governors and the foreign ministers of the decades prior to 1914, on the other hand, had sought to avoid war. However, as they did not live in isolation from a mood of 'war



is in sight' and could not make decisions detached from the consideration that an external conflict could solve domestic problems or even from the economic problems and military constraints, they must all have been aware that the next crisis could lead to war.

During the first half of 1914, events unfolded in a normal fashion, with no major crises and no particular tensions between the Cabinets. Only retrospectively, during the course of historical evaluation, were expressions found and interrelationships not only discovered but also created that revised this image of a peaceful Europe by making it clear that it had been sitting on a powder keg. It was shown how even before Sarajevo one actor or another held the fuse on the powder keg or even lit it.

In the ups and downs of major politics, one event in 1914 was lost from sight that would become for survivors both an irony of fate and a symbol. In Vienna, after years of preparations, the 21st Universal Peace Congress was due to take place. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate and President of the Austrian Peace Society, Bertha von Suttner, who was also one of the leading figures of the German and the Hungarian Peace Societies, had allowed herself to be persuaded by the second Austrian Nobel Peace laureate, Alfred Hermann Fried, to hold the Congress in Vienna. For a long time, von Suttner was reluctant to do so, since its preparation involved too much work. In the end, however, she agreed to do what was expected of her and once more act as the engine of the movement.

It was thanks to her – and only her – that members of the House of Habsburg as well as prominent representatives of politics and science were prepared to take part in or at least assume patronage of the event. It was of little importance that the whole affair had more a declamatory than an actual value. And it was of all people Alfred Hermann Fried, who had turned pacifism into more than just a mere emotion and who had given up simple anti-war agitation and instead begun to research the causes of war, who emphasised the appeal of the Vienna Peace Congress. To hold a major peace demonstration in one of Europe's central focal cities should be at least an unmistakeable signal in a place that was home to the most important exponents of a pre-emptive war as well as the most important exponents of pacifism. In his championing of the Congress, Fried also used the argument that the multinational state of Austria-Hungary could be a model for the future cooperation of European countries. This suggestion was honoured by the fact that all the rooms of the Reichsrat building were placed at the disposal of the Global Peace Congress free of charge.<sup>167</sup> On 21 June 1914, however, Bertha von Suttner died. This was not unexpected, since she had cancer and her health had long been in decline. Preparations for the Congress nonetheless continued, until the war prevented it from taking place.





### **3 Bloody Sundays**

3. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were laid out on 28 June 1914 in the official residence of the Governor of Sarajevo. On the following day, the bodies began their journey to Metković, from whence the coffins were taken to the nearby flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy Fleet, the *Viribus Unitis*, and from there, to Trieste.

## The Assassination

While Bertha von Suttner's body was still being transferred from Vienna to Gotha for cremation, manoeuvres of the Imperial and Royal XV and XVI Corps began in Bosnia. Two divisions of the XV Corps were to defend themselves in the area of the Ivan Ridge on the border with Herzegovina, while two divisions of the XVI Corps were to attack them there. Archduke Franz Ferdinand wanted to be present at the conclusion of the exercise on 27 June.<sup>168</sup> After a meeting with the German Kaiser at Franz Ferdinand's chateau in Konopiště (Konopischt) south of Prague, the Archduke travelled with his wife Sophie to Bosnia via Vienna. The aim of his trip was not only to grant a visit by his own high-ranking person to the new province and the troops. Franz Ferdinand wanted more. As has been mentioned, since for personal rather than objective reasons, he no longer harmonised with the Chief of the General Staff Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, he wanted to observe in action the successor he had in mind for the post of Chief of the General Staff of the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary, the regional commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, as part of a larger manoeuvre. To a certain degree, this was a test to help the Archduke make a final decision. His visit to the provinces, which had been annexed in 1908, was also intended as a demonstration. Potiorek had requested that they come, since in his view something had to be done for the image of the Monarchy and to 'show our colours'. It was still not clear in the spring whether the visit would take place, since at that time, Emperor Franz Joseph appeared to be dying, and the heir presumptive was naturally required to remain in Vienna. However, the elderly monarch rallied once more, and the journey was fixed.

It was by no means the first time that a high-ranking person had travelled to Bosnia or Herzegovina. Visits of this nature had occurred relatively frequently. However, there was certainly cause, given the ever-recurring crises in the Balkans, to demonstrate the connection between the two southernmost provinces of the Monarchy with the Empire as a whole, and to pay them particular attention. There was therefore undoubtedly sufficient reason to go ahead with the journey. And the occasion itself, the observation of a manoeuvre by the Archduke, who in 1909 had taken over the role of Inspector General of the Troops 'placed at the disposal of the Supreme Commander', and who since that time had been making such troop inspection visits on behalf of the Emperor, was nothing new. The journey also did not appear to be more hazardous than other tours taken by the Archduke. However, assassination attempts against high-ranking officials

in 1902, 1906 and 1910 had already made it necessary to introduce heightened security measures.<sup>169</sup> No real objection was made to the visit from the political or military point of view. Neither Baronet Leon von Biliński, the joint finance minister who was responsible for the Austro-Hungarian central administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor the governor of the two provinces, Oskar Potiorek, who took care of political and military matters on the ground, expressed concern or misgivings at any time. Quite the opposite: they were glad that the Archduke and his wife had decided to make the trip.

Here, too, it remained for later generations to conclude that a series of warnings had in fact been given. Numerous expressions of concern had indeed been issued, and reports had been submitted of imminent assassination attempts.<sup>170</sup> The vice-president of the Bosnian National Assembly, Jozo Sunarić, had warned of a hostile mood among the Serbs, saying that the visit to Sarajevo appeared to be too risky. The Serbian envoy in Vienna, Jovan Jovanović, had apparently also heard rumours of a planned assassination. The head of the Evidenzbüro, (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal Army, August Urbánski von Ostryniec, had also voiced his concern. Even the Archduke himself needed reassurance, and ordered his Lord Chamberlain, Baron Karl von Rumerskirch, to consult the Lord Chamberlain of the Emperor, Prince Alfred Montenuovo. He also had objections, although of an entirely different kind: in Montenuovo's view, the visit by the Archduke, who would 'only' be present as Inspector General of the Troops and not as future Emperor, would not make a good impression on the population with its oriental mindset. For a visit by such a high-ranking individual, they would expect to see an appropriate degree of pomp.<sup>171</sup> When the Emperor had visited the province in 1910, there was not only a splendid display, but safety measures were also taken, with double rows of soldiers positioned along the roads through which the monarch drove. The Inspector General of the Troops could not expect the same treatment, even though he was entitled to demand it.

All in all, numerous objections and misgivings were voiced. Some were only recorded in writing in memoirs after the fact. Overall, any serious assessment of the last journey made by Franz Ferdinand will conclude that it was not without controversy, and that warnings had been given. However, visits by prominent individuals, then as now, are always accompanied by such concerns. Ultimately, the word of the Archduke held sway: '[...] I will not be put under a protective glass cover. Our lives are at risk at all times. One simply has to trust in God.'<sup>172</sup>

In his book *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, ('The Trail Leads to Belgrade') Fritz Würthle analysed the warnings and misgivings in terms of their validity and came to the undramatic conclusion that they did not exceed the usual levels for such occasions. Warnings had been issued before almost every visit, and certainly not for Bosnia alone. Of all the warnings, however, there was none that was sufficiently severe as to clearly state the extent of the risk.

Another aspect was unequivocally clarified by Würthle, for which he also provided sufficient proof: it did not matter who came to Sarajevo. In principle, any visitor travelling from Vienna of any degree of prominence was to be the target of an attack at the next possible opportunity. It also did not matter on which date they came. Only in the subsequent interpretation of events and, above all, in assessments of the particularly determined and symbolic nature of the act, was it emphasised that the visit by the heir to the throne was the sole reason for the formation of the group of assassins, and that the date chosen, 28 June, or 'Vidovdan' (St. Vitus' Day), the day on which a Serbian-Albanian army had been beaten by the Ottomans in the battle on the Kosovo Polje in 1389 and the Turkish Sultan Murad I was murdered by the Serbian knight Miloš Obilić, would have been a particular provocation. However, it is likely that these notions were just as contrived as others that arose in connection with the double murder. One thing is certain: The conspirators had been inspired by a whole series of murders and attempted murders, most of all not by the murder of Sultan Murad, but by the more recent attempted assassination by Bogdan Žerajić of the former Austro-Hungarian Governor of Bosnia Marijan Varešanin in 1910. In Bosnia, the 'Vidovdan' was not a public holiday, and the large majority of the Bosnian population, Catholic Croats and Muslims, would certainly have had no reason to join in the chorus of Serbian nationalists. The assassins themselves also only mentioned St. Vitus' Day in passing, if at all. In the official record of the event, they claimed that they would have attempted an assassination on any date. Also, they had already been planning the murder since March 1914, in other words, since the newspapers had begun reporting that the heir to the throne might visit Bosnia, without giving a specific date.<sup>173</sup> In the end, the dates for the visit were arranged to coincide with the manoeuvres by the XVI Imperial and Royal Corps, and whether or not they were conducted depended solely on the level of training of the troops, the weather conditions and the acceptance of the exercise. The visit to Sarajevo was scheduled to take place following completion of the manoeuvre. This was a Sunday and – by coincidence – St. Vitus' Day.

Last of all, there were moments that occurred during the sequence of events that made the assassination appear to be ordained by fate to an even greater degree. The manoeuvres were conducted to the full satisfaction of the Archduke. Potiorek had proven his worth, and could now hope for promotion. If Conrad, the Chief of the General Staff, were to be released from his duties as Franz Ferdinand wished, then Potiorek was the most serious contender for the post. The most important purpose of the visit had therefore been fulfilled. While Franz Ferdinand observed the manoeuvres, his wife, Duchess Sophie von Hohenberg, travelled several times to nearby Sarajevo from her temporary residence in Ilidža, opened an orphanage and took a tour of the city. It would, therefore, not have been absolutely necessary to visit the Bosnian capital. Indeed, Franz Ferdinand hesitated one last time before coming to Sarajevo. However, the lieutenant colo-

nel sent to meet him by Governor Potiorek, Erich Merizzi, advised that a cancellation of the visit at the last minute would be such an insult to the supreme head of the military and civil administration, and therefore signify such a loss of prestige, that the heir to the throne set his doubts aside. Merizzi had not only argued on objective grounds however, but also because he was particularly friendly with Potiorek, and wanted to make sure that the high-ranking visit would be fully satisfactory.<sup>174</sup> And so the heir to the throne and his wife departed from Ilidža by train, and in Sarajevo boarded their own car brought especially for the visit, a Graef & Stift that Count Franz Harrach had provided for Franz Ferdinand, and drove from the station into the city. The first attack occurred on the journey to the city hall when a hand grenade was thrown by Nedeljko Čabrinović. It fell on to the unfolded canopy of the car, either bounced off or was knocked aside in time, and exploded underneath a car driving behind. Merizzi was slightly injured and was brought to hospital. The Archduke appeared angry rather than shocked, and now it was Oskar Potiorek who persuaded him to change his plans. When the initial turmoil had died down, he suggested that they visit the hospital where his adjutant and friend Merizzi was being treated. Franz Ferdinand agreed and left the city hall with his wife and the accompanying party. A chain of events caused the car in which the Archduke was travelling to come to a standstill at the Latin Bridge over the Miljačka River, just where Gavrilo Princip, another of the assassins who were dispersed throughout the city, was sitting. He fired at the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and Duchess Sophie. Both were fatally wounded.<sup>175</sup>

That day, 28 June, began like any other, and yet it was not to end the same way. The shots on the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo made world history. Six of the seven assassins standing ready in the city were Bosnian citizens of Serbian nationality, while the seventh was a Muslim from Herzegovina. They had been influenced and radicalised by the Greater Serbia movement that had begun to be known as 'Mlada Bosna' ('Young Bosnia'), and supported its goal of destroying the Habsburg Monarchy in order to create a Yugoslav state. They referred to themselves as 'Yugoslav nationalists',<sup>176</sup> and claimed that they had wanted to set an example. They were also willing to sacrifice their own lives. Čabrinović and Princip swallowed potassium cyanide that had been given to them as a precautionary measure by their contacts in Serbia. However, the poison failed to take full effect, and only caused them to vomit. Their terrorist act was intended as an expression of protest. Some members of the group had recoiled at the last minute, saying that murder was an inappropriate way of bringing a protest to public attention. This was of no interest to its younger members, who were keen to go through with the plan. However, they would not have known that their attack and, above all, the shots fired by Gavrilo Princip would trigger a world war and indeed herald the downfall of the Habsburg Empire. They were inspired by Mazzini, Marx, Bakunin, Nietzsche and others, had at times studied in Belgrade and had ardently participated in the discussion



surrounding the 'tyrannicide'. In time, a whole list of people began to be regarded as 'worthy of assassination': the Austrian Emperor, Foreign Minister Count Berchtold, Finance Minister Biliński, General of Artillery Potiorek, the ban of Croatia, Baron Ivan Skerletz, the Governor of Dalmatia, Slavko Čuvaj and naturally the heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand.<sup>177</sup> There were cross-connections to Croatian and Bosnian exile circles in the USA, Switzerland and France, but the most stable link was to Serbia. The assassination was prepared not by the American friends of 'Mlada Bosna', but by the secret Serbian organisation 'Ujedinjenje ili smrt' ('Unification or Death') which was linked to the head of the Serbian military secret services, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević (or 'Apis'). Some of its members gave the would-be assassins necessary lessons in shooting near Belgrade, and procured the hand grenades and pistols as well as the potassium cyanide. Even Dimitrijević could admittedly not have assumed that the successful assassination of Franz Ferdinand would lead to war. His goal was more modest: to send a signal to the southern Slavs in the Monarchy and to put pressure on the Serbian government. In his opinion, any further concessions to the Danube Monarchy on the part of Belgrade would cost Serbia its influence over the southern Slavs in the Monarchy. However, he of all people must have been aware that a hardening of policy towards Vienna could at some point mean war.

### The Shock

28 June 1914 was a Sunday. Time and again, attempts have been made to capture the mood of that day far away from Sarajevo, and particularly in Vienna. It was a sleepy Sunday, but in contrast to today, when only a few people in positions of influence are likely to be found in Vienna on their day of rest, in 1914, there was a large number in the city – politicians, officials and members of the military alike. Only the Emperor and his household had already left for the royal holiday residence in Bad Ischl. On top of this, the following day, 29 June was a public holiday, offering the prospect of two days of early summer relaxation. However, shortly after midday, the peace was suddenly broken. Telegrams and telephone calls buzzed across the Monarchy. In fact, it was astonishing how quickly news of the murder of the heir to the throne and his wife was disseminated, reaching one person here and another there. Nobody was left unmoved. Shock, helplessness, anger and verbal aggression were expressed. Joyous reactions were also reported. Count Ottokar Czernin, the envoy in Bucharest at the time who would later become Foreign Minister, noted in his memoirs that in Vienna and Budapest, expressions of joy outweighed those of sorrow.<sup>178</sup> Josef Redlich, already mentioned above, whose diary is one of the most important sources for this period, since it has the advantage of being authentic rather than having been written sub-

sequently, noted the oft quoted words: 'In the city [Vienna], there is no atmosphere of mourning; in the Prater and out here where we are in Grinzing, there has been music playing everywhere on both days [i.e. 28 and 29 June].'<sup>179</sup> Joy was also reported in Hungary. And why should individuals here or there not have experienced a pleasant shock on hearing the news? The heir to the throne had certainly not only made friends. Quite the opposite! Hans Schlitter, the Director of the State Archives, who had been very close to the Archduke, noted in his diary: 'When one looks back at the catastrophe with a philosophical calm, one could conclude that as a result of the satanic act, Austria has been saved from greater catastrophes and that a difficult problem has been resolved at a stroke. But this can never be proven.'<sup>180</sup> The diplomat Emerich Csáky, who at that time was posted in Bucharest, made a simple assessment: Franz Ferdinand may have had 'supporters, although they were very limited in number, but friends he had none. Instead, his enemies were all the greater in number; in Hungary, he was literally hated.'<sup>181</sup> For this reason, no attempt was made in Hungary to hide the fact that the murder triggered a sense of relief. The aristocracy went one step further, arranging the requiem for Franz Ferdinand on the very same day as the grand wedding celebrations by members of the Szápáry and Esterházy families. No member of the upper aristocracy and top echelons of society wanted to miss the opportunity to attend the wedding, unless there was an express reason for staying away.<sup>182</sup> Ultimately, the tables were turned, and the Viennese court was subjected to a barrage of criticism for rendering it impossible for the Hungarian nobility to pay its last respects to Franz Ferdinand. A lengthier interpellation on the matter was even made by Count Gyula Andrássy in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet), demanding clarification from Prime Minister Tisza regarding the events leading to the assassination and its immediate consequences.<sup>183</sup> Crocodile tears were shed.

Rumours began to spread, soon catching up with verified information: the assassin was the son of Crown Prince Rudolf, who had killed Franz Ferdinand because he believed he had murdered his father; the Freemasons were mentioned, as well as the German 'secret service', the Hungarian prime minister Count Tisza, who was in league with 'Apis', the Russian General Staff, etc.<sup>184</sup>

However, the predominant reaction was shock and a desire for revenge. The fact that the Archduke was a symbol, and that a hope had been destroyed, which was by all means intact, that the Habsburg Monarchy would have the opportunity to shake off the rigidity of the late Franz Joseph years, provoked a sense of outrage and gave cause for hatred. For those in authority, it became clear almost straight away that the trail led to Belgrade, and that accountability and atonement must be demanded from Serbia. Conrad von Hötzendorf, who until 27 June had accompanied the heir to the throne before departing for Sremski Karlovci, where he received news of the murder, expressed a view that was widely held: 'The murder in Sarajevo was the last link in a long chain. It was

not the work of an individual fanatic, but the result of a well-organised attack; it was a declaration of war by Serbia on Austria-Hungary. It can only be answered by war.<sup>2185</sup>

No mention was made of the fact that Conrad would have known how far-reaching the effects of the murder of Franz Ferdinand would be. No mention that Austria-Hungary suddenly had no prospects. No further reference to the fact that a reorganisation at state level could have reshaped the Monarchy from its foundations upwards and made it viable. At a single stroke, everything that Franz Ferdinand had planned and prepared with the aim of reforming the Empire was no longer of interest. And the fact that in the shorter or longer term, this would have brought about an end to dualism was also in effect considered irrelevant. After all, the alternative to reform of the Empire was collapse. No mention was made of the plan to seek an understanding with Russia. Suddenly, the 'secondary rule' by the Archduke, which had been the subject of repeated criticism, also no longer existed.

The murder in Sarajevo strengthened the position of the Emperor. Not that this was what Franz Joseph had wanted, since it had been clear to him, too, that preparations must be made for the transition to his successor. Yet now, suddenly, the entire structure, so laboriously assembled, had become obsolete. The words ascribed to Franz Joseph on hearing of the double murder in Sarajevo are: 'A superior power has restored that order which I unfortunately was unable to maintain.' In this context, they took on a stark double meaning. As it quickly transpired, Franz Joseph was not of a mind to experiment with 'secondary rule' a second time. The next in line, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, who automatically adopted the mantle of heir to the throne, was neither to take over the Military Chancellery run by his murdered uncle, nor inherit control of the staff of civilian advisors that Franz Ferdinand had sought. Now, there could also be no mention of the fact that Conrad von Hötzendorf had been due to be replaced half a year later. The Chief of the General Staff was the man who in terms of military matters had the fullest confidence of the Emperor, and who had the final say. He would also certainly be needed in the very near future. Domestic policy experiments were frowned upon, and not only that: the new heir to the throne was initially to be involved as little as possible and be given the role of observer at best. Just how thoroughly this was put into practice already became evident during the weeks that followed. This was by no means due to negligence, but was entirely deliberate: Emperor Franz Joseph was making one more attempt at a neo-absolutist about-turn. The hidden reality behind this apparent fierce determination and show of power was a terrible dilemma: at the top of the Habsburg Empire, a huge power vacuum began to spread – slowly, but surely.

Even after the news of the murder in Sarajevo had lost its novelty, and attention had turned to the new heir to the throne and above all the position taken by Austria immediately following the assassination, a certain degree of international goodwill could still be felt. It is also certainly not incorrect, as has been repeatedly remarked, to say that

the community of European states would initially have fully understood any immediate action taken by Austria against Serbia. However, these simple sentiments, which were founded on a sense of solidarity, were not to be held for long.

Once the shock had subsided and emotions were superseded by rational thinking, in other words, when reactions were once again based on deliberation, everything was brought to bear that had been locked away over many years. As is so often the case, historical analogies were sought and the entire 'Serbia file' consulted. Perhaps this was due to the fact that a portion of the decision-makers were officials who were apt to draw on the 'history file' for information, or because it was simply human nature to agree with previous judgements and to replicate actions already taken. In short: in June and July 1914, the 'Serbia history file' for the period between 1908 and October 1913 was taken out of storage. Pressure was to be applied and war at least be threatened, although in contrast to earlier years, this time, force was to also actually be used. The 'security' theory also played a role. However, nothing was to be repeated from the past. Collective action was taken in the form of a range of different measures prepared by the respective groups of states that were bound together by the alliances they had created.

In Vienna, where nearly all the staff at the Foreign Ministry were already working at their desks on the day after the assassination, there was almost unanimous agreement as to what should be done: the Balkan problem, specifically the problem of Serbia, should be resolved once and for all. Minister Berchtold hesitated briefly before his advisors persuaded him to opt for a military solution.<sup>186</sup> However, in fact, this was no longer necessary, since Emperor Franz Joseph, with whom Berchtold had an audience on the afternoon of 30 July, had already more or less decided. Subsequently, what later became known as the July Crisis unfolded, during which actions that had been long deliberated over were put to the test, and long-prepared decisions were taken. The war was precipitated. Not only that: it was deliberately unleashed. And it was Austria-Hungary that loosened the fetters. The German Empire offered a guiding hand whenever Austria-Hungary lost its nerve. However, Russia also bore no small share of responsibility for unleashing the war, and all other countries either took certain steps or omitted to take others that would later lead observers to claim 'if only...'

### The July Crisis

Within the space of 48 hours, the whole picture had changed. From that point onwards, the slow, almost sedate approach taken by the Habsburg Monarchy can be followed that led to the outbreak of the Great War. However, Austria-Hungary by no means acted in isolation, since the other European states that then entered into the war neither stood and watched nor were they even surprised. They set about taking coordinated ac-

tion. The war could perhaps have been triggered and unleashed for another reason, but here one really does have to rein in one's imagination and reconsider only the specific event that led to its outbreak.

On Monday 29 June 1914, which was a public holiday, as mentioned above, attempts were still being made to recall every decision-maker of any importance back to his post. The protocol procedures had to be decided, which then led to the over-hasty and in many respects unworthy farewell to the murdered couple in Vienna and the low-key burial in Artstetten in Lower Austria. For a short period, the whole process seemed to be conducted at an extremely hectic pace. Yet the haste only applied to the treatment of the dead. On 29 June, Emperor Franz Joseph returned to Vienna. A week later, the heir to the throne and his wife were due to be buried. If proper preparations had been made, it is likely that all important heads of state and heads of government of Europe, as well as several from overseas, would have been able to attend. Hardly anyone, least of all the monarchs, would have failed to accept an invitation to Vienna if they had been made aware of the fact that the murder was an attack on the monarchic principle, or at least as something that could happen to anyone in a position of power, or who represented it. Kaiser Wilhelm II, for example, had already travelled post-haste from Kiel to Berlin, and wanted to attend the funeral in Vienna with his brother, Prince Heinrich. However, after receiving a telegram from Vienna, the German Kaiser was suddenly found to be suffering from lumbago, and shortly afterwards, it was announced that Prince Heinrich would not attend either.<sup>187</sup> The rumours began to fly – and with good reason.

The fact that no such gathering of leaders was called was an early indication that no event of this nature would be permitted to impose or to hinder the decisions that had to be taken. These measures were therefore not, as has occasionally been postulated, simply a product of scheming by the Lord Chamberlain, Prince Alfred von Montenuovo, which resulted in the excessive haste of the burial in a ceremony that hardly fulfilled the requirements specified by protocol. Ultimately, he was only empowered to fulfil the wishes of the Emperor. The Foreign Ministry was also at fault, since it wanted neither the Tsar nor the British King nor the French President to set foot in Vienna.<sup>188</sup> While the bodies of the couple were brought to Trieste (Triest) with the flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy, the battleship *Viribus Unitis*, and from there transferred to Vienna by train, at the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery), there was already talk of war with Serbia. In a letter to the principle of the Military Chancellery of the murdered heir to the throne, Colonel Alexander Brosch von Aarenau, one young employee of Berchtold, Baron Leopold Andrian-Werburg, wrote that 'very valuable fruit for the Monarchy should ripen' from the blood of Franz Ferdinand.<sup>189</sup> However, Berchtold and the Emperor did agree that it would not be possible simply to attack Serbia, as General Conrad had wanted. It would be far preferable to agree on the procedure with Germany, although the Emperor was clear that Serbia should be treated with

a firm hand.<sup>190</sup> The Austrian Prime Minister, Count Stürgkh, added his own opinion to the range of different responses by suggesting that the connection between the Slavs in the Monarchy and those outside it could only be broken by war, and that there would be dangerous consequences if this were not done.

The war atmosphere was so all-pervasive that the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Tisza, found it necessary on 1 July to make the Emperor aware of the fact and to express his consternation.<sup>191</sup> Here, it was not least the Hungarian newspapers and journals of the calibre of the *Pester Lloyd* that began a frenzied campaign to settle the account with Serbia. As on so many occasions, however, the newspapers simply captured a broadly prevalent mood and for their own part added to its intensity. However, Tisza was particularly disconcerted after having been told by the Foreign Minister on the same day, 1 July, that the murders in Sarajevo would be used as a reason for making Serbia pay, and wrote to the Emperor to inform him that something was being planned. The Emperor, however, was fully aware of the mood, as he was of the policy being pursued at the Ballhausplatz – and he also approved of it. Ultimately, the question now was merely how to put the decision in favour of war into action. In a study of the records made by journalist Heinrich Kanner, Robert A. Kann published a conversation between Kanner and the joint Finance Minister Baronet von Biliński, in which he attempted to find out when exactly the decision to go to war was made. Biliński replied: ‘We already decided to go to war at a very early stage; the decision was already taken right at the beginning.’ Kanner asked him about the precise date, and Biliński said that it was the period between 1 and 3 July.<sup>192</sup> He could of course have been mistaken as to the exact day.<sup>193</sup>

It was by no means the case that the Ballhausplatz became caught up in a frenzy of bloodlust and was motivated in its deliberations by a desire for revenge. The decision to precipitate a war with Serbia was in fact probably founded on numerous experiences, assumptions and feelings. After all, how could a state be trusted that repeatedly made promises and failed to keep them, signed agreements and then broke them, that pursued power politics without taking account of the concerns of others, and with which it was simply impossible to negotiate by means of a policy without war? Another likely factor was that the important foreign policy decision-makers – the minister, his chief of staff, the first head of the department, as well as others – had gained their diplomatic and political experience mainly in Russia, Serbia or in other parts of the Balkans, and had therefore been ground by the mill of Balkan policy for years and even decades. Berchtold had become minister due to his experience with Russia. His chief of staff, Count Alexander Hoyos, the head of the presidential department, Count Forgách, and his closest colleague, the envoy Baron Alexander von Musulin, had all been influenced by the annexation crisis. Furthermore, they were keen to repeat a whole series of actions from the annexation crisis, but without making previous errors. They also remembered particularly well that the two states had already stood on the brink of war in October

1913, and that an outbreak had only been avoided when Serbia had backed down at the last minute.

Berchtold's decisions were also based to no small degree on disappointment. He had after all hoped to be able to stabilise the situation in the Balkans, and had until June 1914 been optimistic that an agreement could be reached with Serbia. Now, he had failed, and indeed, felt that he had been humiliated. His policy to date could be interpreted as being weak. This time, he was disinclined to show weakness once again.

There were others, such as Conrad, who also brought their experiences to bear. For the Chief of the General Staff, the Balkans were associated with the only experience of war that he had been able to gain thus far, since he had been involved as a second lieutenant in the campaign of occupation in 1878. Thus, Conrad was able to draw on experiences gained at the beginning of his career. He now regarded the unfolding events as a confirmation of what he had been claiming for years: that the Monarchy must initiate a war at the earliest possible opportunity against Serbia, Italy, and – if it were to become necessary – even a civil war against Hungary. War scenario 'U' (for 'Ungarn', or 'Hungary') had in the interim been shelved, but the others were still relevant. While Conrad recognised that the ideal point in time for taking revenge action against Serbia had already passed, the problem now might still be tackled. For him, the decisive issue was whether or not Russia already felt itself sufficiently strong to enter the war as protector of Serbia. Until 1913, Conrad had hoped that an intervention by Russia could be ruled out, while in his annual memorandum for 1914, he already anticipated that the Tsarist Empire would act.<sup>194</sup> The fact that Biliński and Potiorek were in favour of war is hardly surprising, since both bore their share of the blame for the success of the Sarajevo attack. Potiorek in particular was accused of gross neglect in failing to protect the heir to the throne. For Biliński, and for the head of the civil and military administration of Bosnia, the decisions taken at the Ballhausplatz and by the Emperor on war or peace thus had an additional, highly personal quality.

Attempts have been made to study the psychological factors of the July Crisis and how they affected Austria-Hungary, and the unsurprising conclusion has been reached that those in positions of authority were suffering from unimaginable stress.<sup>195</sup> The pressure on each individual was certainly enormous, since the task they faced was not only to take some form of action, but to act correctly. They also had expectations to fulfil. And none of them was at first entirely sure of the Emperor's genuine reaction to the murders. However, it can be assumed that no unpremeditated actions were taken, or that bad decisions were taken as a result of stress. Quite the opposite: it is striking just how cool and calculated those involved were. For example, Minister Berchtold read daily press reviews in order to keep up to date with reporting trends. Ultimately, they only confirmed his views, and he had no need to alter his decisions in line with the leading articles of the daily newspapers. However, on the day after he had expressed his

condolences to Emperor Franz Joseph on the death of the heir to the throne, and in so doing had sensed the mood of the monarch, he let it be known that Sarajevo would be made 'the grounds for settling our score with Serbia'.<sup>196</sup>

On the issue of how to proceed against Serbia, it was clear from the start that the Habsburg Monarchy would show determination. In light of the messages of support and sympathy from all parts of the Monarchy, it was a safe assumption that the double murder would not be used to provoke riots. Particular care had to be taken with other foreign powers. Here, attention was paid initially not to potential enemies, but to Austria-Hungary's most important ally. The first discussions by Berchtold, Conrad, Stürgkh and Tisza already focussed on the German Empire, although the position taken by Berlin was also discussed beyond the framework of the official consultations between the prime ministers and ministers.

On 1 July, Berchtold's chief of staff, Alexander Hoyos, presented his minister with a summary of an interview with the German journalist Victor Naumann, a man with excellent connections to the German Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, as well as to the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office in Berlin, Gottlieb von Jagow. Several interesting phrases were uttered during the conversation. According to Hoyos' notes, Naumann had claimed that now, if Kaiser Wilhelm were to be asked in the right way, he would provide Austria-Hungary with every assurance and would 'this time also hang on until war', since he appreciated the risks to the monarchist principle. In the Foreign Office in Berlin, he said, nobody would oppose this attitude, since the current moment was held to be right 'for taking the big decision'.<sup>197</sup>

It should have been conspicuous that Naumann did not speak specifically of 'the Balkans', but of a 'big decision'. This was an early indication during the July Crisis that Berlin had more in mind than simply providing backing for Austria-Hungary in a war against Serbia. Naumann also added that the full seriousness of the situation must be explained to those responsible for taking decisions in Berlin, and that the conclusions that were being drawn in Vienna must be reported with full clarity. According to Naumann, nothing would be achieved in Berlin by 'tiptoeing about'.<sup>198</sup>

Alexander Hoyos was an ideal partner for a clarifying discussion with representatives of the German imperial government. He had already been sent to Berlin during the annexation crisis and had at that time brought back the news that the Germans would provide backing. Hoyos also clearly believed that negotiations could be repeated and suggested to Berchtold that he undertake a new mission to Berlin. For the Foreign Minister, this suggestion came at the right moment, since his intention to go to war had been met with disapproval in some quarters. Since on 4 July a Cabinet courier was due to leave for Berlin anyway in order to deliver to the Berlin government an updated memorandum on the Balkan situation and policy, as well as a hand-written letter by Emperor Franz Joseph to the German Kaiser, Hoyos volunteered to travel to Berlin



himself with the documents.<sup>199</sup> He intended to use the opportunity to deliver a series of personal messages in order to provide as much detailed information as possible on the current assessment of the situation by the Ballhausplatz, and for his part, to gather information on the attitude of the German Kaiser and the imperial government.

Until this point, Vienna had known almost nothing about the prevailing attitude in Berlin. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Prince Heinrich had not attended the funeral of Franz Ferdinand. The German ambassador, Baron Heinrich von Tschirschky, had shown notable reserve. He had still received no instructions, and only said to Berchtold that to begin a war without being certain that Italy and Romania would not enter on the side of Serbia 'appears to be a very hazardous undertaking'.<sup>200</sup> Von Tschirschky reported to Berlin that he had used every possible opportunity to 'warn in calm but unmistakable and serious terms against taking overhasty steps' – a classic formulation for a diplomat. Indeed, there were numerous and important individuals within Germany who were calling for moderation. However, they remained in the minority, and the criticism voiced by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper of the war hysteria in the Viennese press was an exception.<sup>201</sup> Pressure was then immediately brought to bear on the *Frankfurter*, and from 4 July onwards, all the German civilian press struck a harsh, anti-Serbian tone.<sup>202</sup>

Hoyos arrived in Berlin on Sunday, 5 July. He first delivered the documents to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count László Szögyény and gave him information. He then met the deputy secretary in the German Foreign Office, Arthur Zimmermann, who apparently claimed that war would be 90 per cent likely if the Monarchy decided to take action against Serbia.<sup>203</sup>

Hoyos assured Zimmermann that the Monarchy was by no means prepared to accept the murder of the heir to the throne without acting. To this, Zimmermann literally replied: '[...] we have in fact been rather afraid that this might be the case.' In the afternoon, the prepared documents were handed to Kaiser Wilhelm. He studied them, but instead of discussing them with only political representatives, chose to include Gustav von Krupp, who spoke for the armaments industry. When asked by the Kaiser whether German industry would be in a position to survive even a large war on several fronts, he answered with a clear 'Yes'. Count Hoyos also met with the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, as well as with the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office, von Jagow, who had apparently returned to Berlin from his honeymoon, as well as again with Zimmermann. On this occasion, the Balkan memorandum written by the Foreign Ministry in Vienna was discussed, which did not correlate with the German concept, particularly with regard to the passages relating to Romania. However, in reality, the statement that Romania would no longer side with the Central Powers in the event of war would not have come as a surprise. King Carol had even given official notice of the fact on 2 July, just a few days after the assassination, that the country did not intend

to meet its alliance obligations should an emergency arise.<sup>204</sup> For the time being, this announcement was not a source of much consternation. In Germany, the planners had however clearly already thought ahead and were agonising over war objectives. When asked what should happen to Serbia after an Austro-Hungarian victory, Hoyos allowed himself to make an unauthorised statement that was then most severely rebuked, above all by Tisza. Either Hoyos was improvising, or simply repeating the gossip circulating at the Ballhausplatz. At any rate, he told Imperial Chancellor Hollweg, von Jagow and Zimmermann that it would be advantageous to divide Serbia between Romania and Bulgaria.

Hoyos later claimed that it would not have mattered which aim he gave: the Germans simply wanted to be told of a clearly formulated goal. During the course of further discussions, he also claimed that he had left the issue open as to when exactly the war would begin, saying simply that it would be sooner or later. Bethmann Hollweg then replied that it was not a matter for the German Empire to give Austria-Hungary advice with regard to its policy towards Serbia. However, Germany would provide backing to the Danube Monarchy with all its force, and fulfil its alliance obligations in every way. In the report, he subsequently wrote for Emperor Franz Joseph, Hoyos said: 'If I had wanted his [Bethmann Hollweg's] personal opinion as to an opportune point in time, he would have said to me that if war were inevitable, then now would be better than later.' With these words, Bethmann Hollweg simply added his own version of what the German Kaiser and the Imperial and Royal ambassador Szögyény had already said.

In Szögyény's report, the decisive passage reads as follows: in Kaiser Wilhelm's view, there should be no delay in taking action against Serbia. 'Although Russia's position would be hostile, he [the Kaiser] has been preparing for this for years, and even if it should come to war between Austria-Hungary and Russia, we can be sure of the fact that Germany would with her accustomed faithfulness be at our side. If however we have indeed recognised the need for belligerent action against Serbia, it would be a matter of regret to him were we to fail to seize the moment, which is currently so in our favour.'<sup>205</sup> This statement contained two messages: Germany would provide backing, and it also regarded the earliest possible point in time for war as favourable. These agreements by Kaiser Wilhelm and Bethmann Hollweg were later described as a 'blank cheque', and were also understood as such. Hoyos returned to Vienna, as he wrote, 'in high spirits'. Once again, it seemed, the die had been cast.

Hoyos had something else to tell his German hosts in passing. On behalf of the Ballhausplatz, he had been ordered to make it clear to Berlin that Austria did not wish to inform the Triple Alliance partner Italy of its plans to act against Serbia, since there was a risk of indiscretion and, that aside, Italy was likely to demand compensation. This fear was certainly not unfounded, since Italian diplomats frequently felt the urge to talk to the Russians, British and French,<sup>206</sup> although it turned out to be a grave mistake that

not a single attempt of any significance was made to address the issue with Italy. Clearly, it was felt to be preferable to risk the prospect that Italy would invoke the Triple Alliance agreement and remain on the sidelines.

During the days that followed, discussions were held and actions were taken in Vienna and Berlin both in parallel and independently of each other before being finally interconnected. The political and, above all, military strategy in Vienna remained focussed on the problem of Serbia, and the only other area of interest was the issue of the Russian position. By contrast, in Berlin the prospect of a wider war was under consideration. This war was envisaged on a European scale, and was therefore planned with a very different approach to the isolated 'Third Balkan War' for which the policymakers in the Imperial and Royal Empire were preparing.

In the German Empire, the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, was the most influential person when it came to taking political decisions. In Austria-Hungary, it was Berchtold who played the key role, as did Tisza to a certain extent. Of course, they were all by no means free to make their own decisions, Berchtold and Tisza perhaps even far less so than Bethmann Hollweg, although they played a very active part in the process. German historians, particularly Fritz Fischer, Imanuel Geiß, Egmont Zechlin, Karl-Friedrich Erdmann and Andreas Hillgruber, have pointed to the role of the close confidante of Bethmann Hollweg, Kurt Riezler.<sup>207</sup> His diaries have been regarded as key documents in understanding the decision-making process in the circles surrounding the German Imperial Chancellor. Riezler was and still is a good example of the mode of thinking in July 1914. The German was convinced of the fateful nature of war, sounding a chord that resonated with Social Darwinist thinking. Indeed, the role played by fundamental Social Darwinist principles in both Germany and Austria-Hungary during the July Crisis should not be underestimated. In both states, the basic formula on which these principles were based, namely that the stronger consume the weaker, and that a decisive showdown was inevitable, was widely accepted.

The 'pre-emptive war club' was composed of Social Darwinists. For that reason, Riezler's views on the necessity of military armament could also have originated from Conrad von Hötzendorf, and were nothing other than a 'modern form of deferment' of armed conflict.<sup>208</sup> 'Supremacy is the goal, not so much as to be in a position to fight a successful war, but rather to conceive of it, and to have the enemy conceive of it, too'. Bluffing became the key requisite of diplomacy. Stagnating major powers in particular found it necessary to fend off their enemies through diplomatic manoeuvring and to gain time by applying the bluff theory. Accordingly, if a group that was hampered by a stagnant major power were to avoid all risk of war, those powers that were in a position to make time work in their favour, would inevitably triumph.<sup>209</sup>

However, Riezler then pursued a very different line of reasoning to Conrad or any other Austrian Social Darwinist. In his view, the dynamic of the increase in Russian

power would make a battle between the Slav and Germanic peoples inevitable. In this, he reflected an attitude held by a broad section of educated and non-educated German middle classes, and also sounded an underlying tone which would then be formulated in a very similar way by Bethmann Hollweg and Kaiser Wilhelm: the war, which already appeared to be unavoidable, would be a conflict between Slavs and the Germanic peoples; in other words, a race war. Regional successes by Germany and Austria in a war of limited scope would only delay the Russian triumph. Proxy wars of this nature would ultimately only benefit Russia. For this reason, Austria-Hungary no longer had the option of staging a conflict in the Balkans as a proxy war. Now, everything was at stake. And here, an opportunity had presented itself: a war in the Balkans would ultimately only affect Russia's interests, and not those of the west. With this in mind, why not also wage war against Russia? If, however, the interests of a western European power became involved, then it could only be France, which would then have to be forced to the ground. The war, according to German calculations, would not bring about hegemony for Germany, but would elevate the German Empire to the degree of power held by England and Russia, while at the same time consolidating the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy both domestically and with regard to the Balkans.<sup>210</sup> Was this racial fanaticism? Dreams based on real possibilities? Flagrant militarism and imperialism? Wishful thinking, wanton irresponsibility, political incompetence, the logical continuation of a path already embarked upon, inflexibility? What was it that was being expressed? In any case, a new direction was being taken in world history.

However the message brought back by Hoyos from Berlin is interpreted, it certainly provided sufficient encouragement for taking further steps – as indeed was the case. Since it had been made so clear to Vienna that the German Kaiser and the imperial government wished not only for a targeted policy, but also to see it implemented unswervingly, and also that they were by all means prepared to enter the risk of a European war, the policymakers in the Ballhausplatz felt not only supported, but also somewhat pressurised. Now, they must also be seen by their alliance partner to act decisively.

Immediately after Hoyos' return from Berlin, the next round in the decision-making process began. On 7 July, the Joint Council of Ministers convened. Before the meeting, Berchtold had one further conversation with the German ambassador in Vienna, von Tschirschky. The ambassador had originally been very cautious, and had by no means sought to inflame the mood for war. Indeed, some of his comments had indicated the need for deceleration and calm. However, in this he had incurred the displeasure of his Kaiser. He was issued with a warning, and had in the interim received new instructions from Berlin. In short: now von Tschirschky, too, argued in no uncertain terms for a 'now or never' approach.

In the Joint Council of Ministers, which Chief of the General Staff Conrad also attended for a certain period of time, there was only one person who still spoke out

against an immediate war: Count Tisza. However, he had now modified his position since 1 July, the day on which he had still warned the Emperor in stark terms against allowing the Ballhausplatz to pursue a targeted pro-war policy. As has been shown in the studies by Norman Stone and F. R. Bridge, a key factor in Tisza's gradual conversion to the line taken by Berchtold was the result of the Hoyos mission.<sup>211</sup> For all other joint ministers, for the Austrian prime minister Stürgkh and for Conrad, it was in any case now no longer a question of if but simply of when they should go to war.

Berchtold, for example, referred to the diplomatic successes achieved by the Danube Monarchy in the past in relation to Serbia – which had come to nothing. 'A radical solution to the problem that has systematically been created by the Greater Serbian propaganda operating from Belgrade, the corroding effects of which are felt by us all the way through to Zagreb and Zadar, is likely to be possible only through energetic intervention.' In the view of Count Stürgkh, a situation had now arisen 'that [...] categorically drives us towards a military conflict with Serbia'. Finance Minister Biliński added that: 'The Serb only understands violence; a diplomatic success would make no impression in Bosnia, and would rather be damaging than anything else.' War Minister Baron Krobotin also claimed bluntly: 'From a military perspective, he must emphasise that it would be more favourable to wage war now than later.'<sup>212</sup> When one analyses the record of this Joint Council of Ministers, it is noticeable that the demand for war against Serbia was quite clearly made even before Conrad had presented the information on military strategy and operations as requested, although this was prohibited from being written down. One other thing is equally clear from the minutes: after Conrad's presentation, everyone present must have realised that it was highly probable that the conflict would not be limited to Austria and Serbia, but would be a European war.

Conrad had three questions to answer. The first was whether it would be feasible to mobilise against Serbia and then later against Russia. The answer was: yes, it would be possible, if full mobilisation were to be implemented no later than on day 5 of the deployment against Serbia. The second question was whether larger troop contingents could be left in Transylvania in order to intimidate Romania. This was an issue that was of particular interest to the Hungarian Prime Minister. Conrad also replied in the affirmative. The third problem was whether it would be possible to take up arms against Russia. In response, Conrad presented his war scenario 'R'. Months later, Conrad told the acting head of the Imperial Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, that he had been 'fully aware of the difficulty of the situation, but as a soldier, he could not advise against going to war.'<sup>213</sup> The summary of the Joint Council of Ministers states that: 'On the grounds of these explanations, a lengthier debate unfolds on power balances and the likely progression of a European war.' Finally, only Tisza recommended that no overhasty action be taken, and it was he who pushed through the decision that mobilisation and later a war against Serbia should only be considered if, to quote the minutes

of the meeting: 'specific demands have been made on Serbia, these demands have been refused, and an ultimatum has been presented'. However, all participants in the Council of Ministers agreed that the specific demands on Serbia should be formulated in such a manner that only a rejection would be possible, and that therefore, a 'radical solution in the form of military intervention would be forthcoming.'<sup>214</sup>

Despite his agreement in principle on sending a *démarche* to Serbia, Tisza felt it necessary to explain his position to the Emperor the following day. Ultimately, the Hungarian Prime Minister was aware of the fact that his opinion also differed from that of his monarch. His letter, which Berchtold took with him to an audience with the Emperor in Bad Ischl on 9 July, and which he read out to him, was therefore an apology and an explanation in equal measure. The *démarche*, said Tisza, could only serve to assign blame for a war to Serbia, 'which has burdened itself with the risk of war by abstaining, even after the atrocity in Sarajevo, from honestly fulfilling the obligations of a decent neighbour.' This was meant literally, and did not ultimately contradict the procedure that the Emperor had wanted to pursue. However, Tisza went further: 'In order to avoid an embroilment with Italy, to secure the sympathy of England and to enable Russia to remain a spectator in the war, we must for our part at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner issue a declaration that we do not wish to destroy Serbia, still less to annex it. After a satisfactory end to the war, it would namely in my view be advisable to reduce the size of Serbia by ceding its conquered territories to Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, while for ourselves, to demand at the most certain strategically important border regulations. Naturally, we would have the right to claim compensation for the war costs, which would provide us with a lever to keep Serbia under firm control for a long period of time.'<sup>215</sup> Tisza, who had criticised Hoyos for the statements he had made in Berlin, ultimately said precisely the same thing as the chief of staff of the Foreign Minister. However, it was the Hungarian prime minister who prevented earlier action against Serbia, and who allowed the July Crisis to become what it remains to this day: incomprehensible. In the meantime, the Foreign Ministry was able to go on as before: purposefully and cautiously.

The Austrian envoy in Belgrade, Baron Wladimir von Giesl, was in France at the time of the assassination. Rather than returning straight to Belgrade, he headed first for Vienna in order to receive instructions before reporting his departure to Berchtold after the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 July. He was given a succinct directive: 'However the Serbs react, you must break off relations and leave the country: war is surely coming.'<sup>216</sup>

On the day after the Joint Council of Ministers, Berchtold surprised the Chief of the General Staff with the suggestion that he and War Minister Krobatin should go on holiday for a certain period of time in order to make it appear to the general public that nothing was amiss. Although the Emperor disagreed, and demanded that holidays be

deferred, the highest ranks in the military were no longer to be found in Vienna from 12 July onwards. The foreign press wrote of a 'jaunty war mood'.<sup>217</sup>

It became increasingly clear that the positions taken by the Danube Monarchy and the German Empire concurred, and that the citizens of the two states shared identical expectations. The congruence of this attitude with the views held by the elites in Germany was blatantly expressed in a letter by the legation councillor at the Imperial and Royal embassy in Berlin, Baron Franz von Haymerle. On 8 July, he wrote to Hoyos: 'Here at the Foreign Office, we are being pressured from all sides into taking action. The mood is overwhelmingly supportive of us if we get going, otherwise, I would almost say, we are likely to be abandoned as a hopeless case.'<sup>218</sup> In his letter, Haymerle also made particular reference to a man on whom in his and others' view much now depended, the head of the presidial department in the Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry, Count Forgách. Haymerle wrote: '[...] if he wants something very much, the Minister and, above all, Tisza will do it.' And there certainly was something that Forgách wanted. Perhaps this, together with his determined actions as head of the department, is partly the reason for Tisza's change of attitude. He had been the only one who had to be completely 'turned about'.

For the younger officials in the Foreign Ministry, as well as for many others, it was at any rate absolutely clear that the Monarchy would have to take a decisive step in order to secure the borders and the existence of the Empire. If this was not done, the Monarchy would dissolve and Berlin would lose its confidence in Vienna and possibly seek a new alliance partner. Those who held this view failed to understand why Berchtold took such a cautious approach, allowing so much time to pass instead of quickly unleashing the war against Serbia. However, Berchtold wanted to limit the war, and felt that the best way of doing so would be to demonstrate to the European powers the shameful role played by Serbia.

Here, there was certainly no small degree of wishful thinking involved, together with the narrowed view of power balances and interests in Europe mentioned above. This isolated view went so far that while Russia was repeatedly named as a potential war enemy, it was felt that it was at the least unlikely to take immediate action, and the chances of its intervening were put at even less than fifty per cent. Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy and whoever else it was felt to be appropriate, were to be informed of Serbia's guilt by means of a dossier, and in this way, kept at bay. The hope at the Ballhausplatz was that if participation by the Serbian government in the murder of the heir to the throne could be irrefutably proven, hardly anyone could step forward and condemn the Austrian measures as excessive. In this scenario, Russia would perhaps still provide verbal support to Serbia, but would decline to act, since France and Great Britain would of course also regard such support as inappropriate and would have to refrain from offering it. The British Empire played no real role in the Austrian deliberations, however,

and even France was only classified as being of little importance; necessary in terms of diplomatic activity but otherwise not really worth taking into consideration.

And so, work began in Vienna on compiling a dossier that was to prove once and for all that Serbia was guilty of the murder in Sarajevo and of anti-Austrian agitation in general. After all, in 1909, Serbia had expressly extolled good relations. The dossier was to include all the accusations and evidence that had been gathered in Vienna over time, as well as all the results of the investigation into the background to the Sarajevo assassination. On 4 July, the first meeting took place of a commission that subsequently became known as the 'war factory'. Essentially, there were six top officials from the Foreign Ministry who with the aid of a former state attorney, the legation councillor Baronet Friedrich von Wiesner, had the task of compiling everything that could be used as evidence to portray Serbia in a certain light. War was the only thing on everyone's minds. On the day after the Joint Council of Ministers, Wiesner was ordered to formulate specific demands on Serbia. They should not, however, be too easy to fulfil. Minister Berchtold even went one step further: he demanded that harsh terms be set that should end in a brief ultimatum.<sup>219</sup> Wiesner requested more material before travelling to Sarajevo himself on 10 July.

Belgrade was all too aware of the precarious situation and demonstrated a clear willingness to cooperate. At the same time, however, those in authority in Serbia remained deliberately superficial and noncommittal, since they neither wanted to expose Dimitrijević, the head of the secret service nor to admit that a network had been formed, literally in plain sight of the government, that was agitating with the clear goal of destroying Austria-Hungary. In light of the risk of war, it was probably of little importance that some of the attackers who had fled to Serbia had been arrested, together with Mehmedbašić, another of their number who had fled to Montenegro.<sup>220</sup> King Petar I ordered a six-day period of respect at court. King Nikola of Montenegro even decreed two weeks of national mourning. Notes of condolence were delivered to Austria-Hungary and the double murder was criticised in the severest possible terms, while celebratory demonstrations were expressly forbidden. However, this failed to have any effect on the mood in Serbia and Montenegro, which was one of profound joy in both countries. The double murder was regarded as a heroic act, something that was just as difficult to hide from the Austro-Hungarian diplomats as the fact that the Russian embassy was the only one in Belgrade that declined to fly its flag at half-mast.<sup>221</sup> Already on 30 June, the *chargé d'affaires* of the Habsburg Monarchy in Belgrade, Baronet Wilhelm von Stork, wrote in a telegram that after what he had seen, it was time to pound on the table. This, he claimed, would be the only language the Serbian government would understand.<sup>222</sup>

Baronet von Wiesner compiled his investigation report in Sarajevo and summarised the results of his research in a two-part telegram sent to Vienna on 13 July. He con-



cluded that: 'There is nothing to prove or even to suppose that the Serbian government is an accessory to carrying out the assassination, or its preparation or the furnishing of weapons. On the contrary, there are reasons to regard this as altogether out of the question [...]' This part of the dispatch was frequently cited after the war as proof of how unfounded Austria's suspicion of Serbia had been, and how maliciously it had acted. In reality, however, the situation was entirely different. After the war, the decisive passages from the telegram by Baronet von Wiesner were in fact deliberately rendered falsely or reproduced in truncated form by the new southern Slavic government. The passage mentioned came at the end of the first part of the telegram. At the beginning of the second part, he wrote that: 'From statements made by the accused, it can hardly be contested that the decision in favour of the assassination was made in Belgrade, and was prepared [...] with the involvement of Serbian state officials. The bombs originate from the Kragujevac Serbian army depot [...]' For Wiesner, the issue of the involvement of other Serbs in positions of authority, particularly members of the government and the high-ranking military, remained unresolved, as did the question of whether the bombs, Browning guns and ammunition had only recently been removed from the Kragujevac army depot or whether this had occurred some time previously. Wiesner left all those issues open for which he still had no irrefutable proof, while at the same time making a strong recommendation in the second part of his telegram for intensifying Austro-Hungarian demands on Serbia.<sup>223</sup>

The extent to which Serbian politicians and members of the military at the highest level were aware of the preparations for the assassination, however, really was impossible to prove in individual cases. The same applied to the level of knowledge held by Hartvig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade. Such information was only partially disclosed in 1917 during the 'Salonica trial'. In the interim, it has become possible to analyse the Serbian documents to the extent that there can be no further doubt that there was knowledge of the attack, as well as partial responsibility.<sup>224</sup> The Serbian government overall had no idea, however, and naturally, it had also not ordered that the assassination should be carried out. However, it has already long been proven that the Prime Minister, individual ministers and members of the military, and, above all, the head of the Serbian military intelligence service, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević, had known what was happening. Not only that: in Belgrade, it was also soon known who had procured the bombs and pistols for the attack, while clearly no reason was seen to arrest the men responsible, Major Vojislav Tankosić and Milan Ciganović, let alone take action against the extreme nationalist secret organisation Narodna Odbrana ('National Defence'). Steps such as these were only attempted after the Viennese government had presented the demands set out in its ultimatum on 23 July.

In his description of the chain of events, to which he gave the suggestive title *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad* ('The Trail Leads to Belgrade'), Fritz Würthle considered why at

that time the Austrian line of argument was not believed. Two events could have played a role here, namely the Friedjung trial and the 'Prochaska Affair'. Both shattered the credibility of Austria-Hungary, since in the first case, evidence was procured that the Foreign Ministry in Vienna had gullibly used falsified Serbian documents, while in the second, the Austro-Hungarian press could be accused of boundless exaggeration when depicting incidents surrounding the Imperial and Royal consul in Prizren, Prochaska, in 1912. Here, at best, incompetence and a targeted campaign were to blame for this loss of prestige and credibility.

However, reference was not only repeatedly made by other countries to the Friedjung case or the Prochaska Affair because it was felt that the background to Sarajevo could be assessed in a similar way. This was also a conscious ploy to deflect attention. Probably the most incontrovertible proof would have made no difference, since the aim was to contradict the Austrian arguments on principle. The fact that initially, no demands of any kind were made on Serbia by Vienna, was regarded as confirmation of the validity of this assessment. However, those who issued warnings knew different, particularly those who benefited from the work of the cryptographers. This was the case in St. Petersburg, for example, where the Italian ambassador took it upon himself to express his concerns and on 16 July let slip the deliberate indiscretion that Austria-Hungary was planning to take steps against Serbia in the belief that Russia would limit itself to a verbal response. However, the Russians were also well-served in other ways, too. They had cracked the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic code and knew at least at the same time as the Imperial and Royal ambassador what instructions Vienna had given to its representative in St. Petersburg.<sup>225</sup> There was therefore ample opportunity to prepare for what was to come, both in St. Petersburg and in Belgrade.

In the meantime, further war games were being planned. The acting Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, General von Höfer, who was representing Conrad while he was away on leave, analysed the operational plans against Serbia and feared that the Serbs could remain gathered in the southern parts of the country, 'which would be the worst possible scenario'.<sup>226</sup> (In fact, the Chief of the Russian General Staff did indeed recommend a strategic withdrawal of this nature, although this did not go down well with the Serbs).<sup>227</sup> Höfer was concerned that: 'It could perhaps be three weeks following the call for mobilisation before decisive battles are fought'. If the Serbs were to back down, however, the dilemma would be even greater, since 'having the mobilisation costs paid for and then making an about-turn would entail a vast amount of work.' And so the speculations continued.

The Archduke and his wife had been buried, and the succession arranged. Via the Lord Chamberlain's Office, Count Harrach had presented the car that he had placed at the disposal of the heir to the throne and his wife to the Emperor, who had then arranged for it to be transferred to the Military Museum in Vienna. The car arrived

at the museum on 14 August. The upper echelons of the government and the military were on holiday, and the Emperor was in Bad Ischl. Surely nothing of any importance could happen now?

The days turned into weeks, and finally, the weeks turned into a month. One could of course be forgiven for asking why a country that was so sure of what it wanted as Austria-Hungary should have waited so long. While work continued at the Ballhausplatz, the date for 'stepping forward' always seemed to be unfavourable. In the 'war factory' at the Ballhausplatz, the note to Serbia had already been produced that was to demand an explanation and atonement for the double murder in the form of an ultimatum. The envoy, Baron Musulin, had undertaken the final editing of the Wiesner paper and had been honing it for several days.<sup>228</sup> His work was monitored by the head of the presidial department, Count Forgách. Musulin was admired for the elegance of his style, regarded as linguistic expression at its most accomplished. As Emanuel Urbas, who was assigned to Musulin as his assistant, recalled in 1951 in his memoir *Schicksale und Schatten* ('Fates and Shadows'), this obsession with linguistic perfection led him to make full use of the time available to him, and he polished away at his note 'as at a gemstone'.<sup>229</sup>

In the first draft, which had been formulated before Wiesner's mission, the demands on Serbia still sounded relatively harmless. First, it stated that the Imperial and Royal government assumed that the Serbian government condemned the murder of the heir to the throne and his wife in just the same way as the entire cultivated world. However, as a demonstration of goodwill, a series of measures would be necessary. The note ended with a request for a response. Count Forgách wanted a far more harsh formulation, and Musulin then added item 6 in particular, which ran: 'The Royal Serbian government undertakes to bring to trial the accessories to the plot of 28 July who are to be found on Serbian territory; organs delegated by the Imperial and Royal government shall participate in the inquiries in relation to the matter.' The aim was not, therefore, to allow Austrian organs to participate in the Serbian judicial administration, as it then sounded from the Serbian note of response, but to participate in the inquiry. In this respect, there had even been a precedent, since in 1868, following the murder of the Serbian prince Mihailo, Austria-Hungary had enabled Serbian functionaries to make inquiries within the territory of the Danube Monarchy.<sup>230</sup> Even so: the demands had become significantly harsher, and the 'request for a response' turned into a 48-hour deadline. As Emanuel Urbas wrote so vividly decades later: 'The intention was to produce a document that through the overpowering force and the succinctness of its language must conquer the world. We were after all contemporaries of Karl Kraus [...] We had learned to believe in the autonomous magic of the word as the cradle of thought and deed.'<sup>231</sup>

Forgách had been concerned that his minister might eventually wish to back down. However, Berchtold's motivation was very different. As he put it to the Emperor, a 'fee-

ble approach could discredit our position with Germany', and in principle, the decisive factor was being able to exert control over Serbia in practice.<sup>232</sup> Everyone feared that the other could give in and 'become weak'. Thoughts continued to focus only on war, and the German Empire also persistently pressed for war. Ambassador von Tschirschky now began to issue continuous warnings and convey messages from Berlin that all, in countless variations, demanded the same thing of Vienna: war, and as quickly as possible!

In the interim, the resistance of the most prominent opponent of war, the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza, had also evaporated. On 19 July, he agreed during the next Joint Council of Ministers to the dispatch of the note of request containing the demands on Serbia, and only wanted reassurance that no territorial demands on Serbia would be made. Here, Tisza also showed flexibility, when for example he regarded the separation of Ada Kaleh, a small island in the Danube near the Iron Gates, and other minor strategic border adjustments as fully appropriate. A further proposal suggested that Serbia be divided among other Balkan states. Perhaps Romania, Bulgaria and Greece would wish to take advantage of this opportunity, and would therefore support Austria-Hungary's position and possibly also enter the war against Serbia. The Austrian Prime Minister, Count Stürgkh, also raised the possibility that the Serbian dynasty could be deposed. At any rate, there was unanimous agreement that the note of request should be sent to Serbia as soon as possible, and that it would have to be worded in such a manner that acceptance by Belgrade would be impossible.<sup>233</sup> Item 6 was intended as the trap into which Belgrade would almost inevitably walk.

In the Hungarian Council of Ministers, the modalities for conscripting the *Landsturm* (reserve forces) were discussed and a recommendation sent to the Emperor.<sup>234</sup> Again, one step further had been taken towards war, although outwardly, nothing had changed. By now, however, the opportunity had forever been lost of exploiting the shock generated by the murder of Franz Ferdinand as a chance to attack Serbia in a spontaneous reaction. In Berlin, there was an initial discussion as to whether by attacking Serbia quickly, Austria-Hungary could precipitate the capitulation of Serbia in a very short time due to its evident military superiority, with Russia and France entirely incapable of intervening. Then, it would be advantageous for Germany to act as mediator and bring Vienna to the negotiating table. In this way, the calculated risk would have paid off and a limited goal would have been achieved in the spirit of Riezler's bluff theory, without having started a major war. As a result, Austria-Hungary, the remaining stagnating major power, would perhaps have reached a point at which it could overcome its weakness and together with the German Empire make strong progress. Yet now, the moment of surprise had been missed, and with its passing, the probability of intervention by Russia and France became more likely.

However, from the moment when it became clear to Berlin that Russia had recovered from the shock and had returned to its former policy of supporting Serbia, the

old considerations regarding the relation between an eastern and a western front were again brought to bear. According to the operational plans of the German general staff, France should first be attacked with force, while the fighting against Russia would only be aimed at stalling the enemy's advance. In order to ensure rapid victory over France, a strong right wing that would spread out over Belgium towards northern France would be used. By marching its troops on to neutral Belgian territory, Germany naturally risked bringing Great Britain into play. While German policy aimed at keeping the British Empire out of the war, the Schlieffen and Moltke Plan made no allowance for this. The dilemma could hardly have been more complete. The military leadership of the German Empire calculated that the chances were good that it would be possible to fight a war on two fronts – and to do so successfully – on condition that Great Britain declined to attack. Although the political leadership was also keen to do anything that would keep England at bay, it became so dependent on the military plans that this goal became no more than an illusion.

Since the German operational plans left no room for manoeuvre in terms of policy, but rather dictated it to a certain degree with all the consequences that this entailed, developments took on a dynamic of their own and ultimately spun completely out of control. This is the true tragic role played by the German Empire during the July Crisis: not that it agreed to support Austria-Hungary and indicated its unconditional assistance, but that in a parallel reaction to the impending war, it had equipped itself from the start for a war of global dimensions. What was planned and prepared for in Berlin was therefore entirely different from the limited – and probably also somewhat parochial – view taken in Vienna. After all, the notion that it would be feasible to 'wage a bit of war' demonstrated only too clearly the Danube Monarchy's narrow, continental perspective that moreover was still focussed on just a few areas of Europe and was in no way attuned to the reality of alliance politics.

Elsewhere, too, there was a tendency to indulge in illusions. In Bucharest, for example, where there was already clear agreement that Romania would not side with the German Empire and Austria-Hungary were war to break out, a diplomatic effort was even initiated to persuade Serbia to back down. King Carol and the Romanian government appeared to favour this approach as the best way out of a dilemma that had arisen when Germany had made it clear that it would increase its support for Bulgaria, and would expose Romania by publicising its secret alliance agreement were it to be hostile.<sup>235</sup> The Romanian government sent Nicolae Cantacuzino, the Romanian chargé d'affaires in Switzerland, as an envoy to Belgrade with the remit of convincing the Serbian government 'in extremis' to accept the threatening note from Vienna in order to avoid war.<sup>236</sup>

From St. Petersburg, the Austrian ambassador reported that it was evident that Russia was not yet entirely sure whether or not a certain degree of pressure should be

applied to Serbia. This then led the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, to tell Count Friedrich von Szápáry that 'Europe should not impede Austria in its dispute with Serbia [...] Certainly, the provocations of Serbia, as a result of which Europe has now already been brought to the brink of war for the third time within the space of five years' must be stopped once and for all.<sup>237</sup> However, what statements like this actually meant in reality was difficult to assess, always on the assumption that they really were rendered correctly by Szápáry or whoever else received them. The diplomatic reports during the July Crisis clearly reflect the range of different sentiments that were prevalent: boundless pacifism and, to an equal degree, bellicose posturing, the desire to attempt a diplomatic solution at any price, and the resigned opinion that nothing more could be done. Hardly anyone held back from offering half-truths and, when no other option was available, from lying outright. It was almost as though preparations were even now being made to colour the way in which the situation would subsequently be portrayed, and to ensure that later, the blame would incontrovertibly be placed elsewhere.

Certainly, several governments in Europe were fully expecting Austria-Hungary to prepare a harsh *démarche* to send to Belgrade. The German ambassador at the court of St. James's, Prince Karl Max Lichnowsky, informed the London Foreign Office that Austria-Hungary was planning something against Serbia. France, Russia and Serbia were immediately informed. In Rome, there was an awareness that action was being planned, even though the wording of the *démarche* was not known. Again, the information came from Berlin. The British ambassador in Vienna, Maurice de Bunsen, reported to London on 16 July that on the previous day, he had learned from an informant what was being prepared.<sup>238</sup> Count Heinrich Lützow, the former Imperial and Royal ambassador in Rome, was the source of the information. However, Sir Maurice had other good sources elsewhere. The Russians knew about the Viennese 'war factory', and received from their allies any information that their cryptographers were unable to provide.<sup>239</sup> In the end, everyone knew that everyone knew. Ultimately, it also probably no longer mattered that somebody knew the exact wording of the note destined for Serbia. It was evident that in Vienna, steps were being taken towards war, and this knowledge led to a bout of shadow-boxing in London, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg and Belgrade. However, the British government still believed it was possible to avert the disaster and took up the 'pledge theory' that was clearly widely supported at the time: if Austria-Hungary were to attack Serbia, then it would be sufficient, in the view of London and subsequently also Paris, if the Imperial and Royal armies were to obtain a pledge, for example Belgrade, in order to then negotiate from a position of strength and be able to dictate peace terms to the Serbs.<sup>240</sup> The 'halt in Belgrade' became a key factor of British policy.<sup>241</sup> However, who would want to act as guarantor that Europe would stand by while Imperial and Royal troops occupied Belgrade? When was that

even supposed to happen? Ultimately, it would still have to be proven that the 'Balkan war scenario', which had been devised in the Operations Division of the Imperial and Royal General Staff in a way that contradicted tried and tested strategies, would be successful. While since the time of Ludwig von Baden and Prince Eugen, Imperial troops had always pushed through across the Danube to take Belgrade quickly, in 'war scenario B', the main forces were to attack from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in other words, from the west, initially through low mountainous terrain, with dense forest and many gorges, that was difficult to surmount. While this may have been designed to achieve the desired strategic surprise that is an integral part of all campaign plans, cutting a virtual swathe through the Mačva region, it precluded the rapid seizure of Belgrade. The 'halt in Belgrade' was not possible, since the operations plan only provided for the occupation of the Serbian capital after large parts of Serbia had already been taken. In general, however, conclusive decisions regarding operational directions and goals, as well as the numbers of troops to be deployed against Serbia, could only be reached when it became clear whether the war really would remain limited to the Balkans or whether it would also be waged against Russia. If that were to happen, then everything would change.

However, this was just one of the dilemmas facing the Imperial and Royal Army. To this was added the fact that mobilisation had not even begun to be put into operation, since the diplomatic activity that would decide whether relations should be broken off and war would be declared had still not yet fully begun. An earlier mobilisation was prohibited for a number of reasons, however, not least due to financial considerations. Following two mobilisations within a very short period of time, the underlying message was: only mobilise when war really is imminent.

The Imperial and Royal General Staff has occasionally been accused of completely failing at the start of the war, because while it had always argued the case for pre-emptive military measures and vehemently rattled its sabre,<sup>242</sup> when the time came it requested another 14 days in order to be fully ready for action. However, this criticism overlooks a number of different factors. Conrad was unable to initiate mobilisation measures on his own. While he had spoken to Count Berchtold of striking out immediately on 29 June,<sup>243</sup> this ultimately held no sway. The decision regarding the war was not a matter for the military. When matters did come to a head, the army needed its time to conscript the reservists, stock up its formations and arrange for the troops to depart for their assigned staging areas, in other words, to mobilise them. Compared to the time still needed in Russia in April 1914 for general mobilisation, the Imperial and Royal Army was much faster.<sup>244</sup> However, as it would later become evident, time was not really a decisive factor. The start of the war in 1914 cannot be measured against the standards of 1939, or any other later date.

In July 1914, some actively serving soldiers were on leave for the harvest. This may have been a particular feature of the Imperial and Royal Army, although a similar al-

lowance was also given in France. The recall of these soldiers alone would already have attracted attention and would probably have also immediately caused all potential enemies to initiate countermeasures. In the light of later events, this may not have been of much consequence, but what is certain is that with the aid of the soldiers, a harvest was brought in that would otherwise no longer have been possible to gather. As a result, no soldier was recalled and harvest leave was only cancelled from that point onwards.

Hardly had this problem been considered and a solution found when the next one surfaced. The President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, and the Prime Minister, René Viviani, who was also Foreign Minister, intended to travel to St. Petersburg on a state visit that had already been arranged some time previously. Now the issue was raised in Vienna as to whether it would not be better to allow the duration of the visit to elapse in order to deny France and Russia the opportunity of directly agreeing on the joint measures that would have to be taken at the highest level. This really was a naïve notion, since it by no means prevented the occasion of Poincaré's visit from being used to obtain all the necessary assurances that would be needed were war to break out in the near future, as well as to compare the information that had been gathered regarding Austrian preparations. Moreover, the French President may perhaps not even have travelled to St. Petersburg if Austria-Hungary had already sent the *démarche* with its fixed deadline. It was Minister Berchtold who wanted the Austrian *démarche* to be deferred. The date under discussion was 25 July, and this information was passed on in confidence by the Foreign Ministry to the governor of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, Alexander Popovics.<sup>245</sup> The Joint Council of Ministers on 19 July, at which Conrad again made a presentation, finally set the date for the delivery of the ultimatum at 23 July. Once again, time went by, and speculation was made as to whether the risk of war had perhaps passed.

By this time, it was already an open secret that Austria-Hungary was planning to present an ultimatum to Serbia. This fact was known not only by the members of the Joint Council of Ministers, but rather, it is likely that a large number of other people had been directly or indirectly informed, too – quite apart from Berlin and the major European state chancelleries. On 20 July, the finance ministers of the two halves of the Empire met with their closest advisers and the governor of the Austro-Hungarian Bank for a conference in Budapest in order to discuss the financial measures required for mobilisation. Right at the beginning, attendees of the meeting were informed under the oath of highest confidentiality that the date for the dispatch of the ultimatum had been pushed forward to 23 July. On this day, the French President Poincaré boarded the *Jean Bart*, the ship that would take him back to France. At around midday, the Austrian envoy in Belgrade, Baron Giesl, was given a sealed envelope with instructions not to open it before the afternoon. When he did so, he found inside a *démarche* that was not to be handed to the Serbian government before 6 p.m. It was the note containing the



ultimatum that had been written about two weeks previously. The Serbian government was given a period of 48 hours to fully accept the demands.

Let us take another look at the time factor. The *démarche* had been agreed on 7 July, and was in essence ready for delivery on 12 July. Directly afterwards, its contents were reported to Berlin, though not with the final wording. In the light of the calculations made regarding the date, it was already recommended at this point in time that the note should not be presented until 25 July due to the visit to St. Petersburg by Poincaré. Kaiser Wilhelm wrote a marginal note – one of his many comments – on the dispatch informing him of the delay: ‘What a pity!’<sup>246</sup> During the days that followed, the text of the note was perfected, while at the same time, diplomatic activity continued at many different levels. Naturally, the most important representatives of the press were also informed. On 16 July, the head of department, Count Forgách, called in the editor of *Die Presse*, Moriz Benedikt, explained to him the reasons for waiting, and already outlined the contents of the *démarche*. He mentioned the ‘harsh terms’, including #investigation and punishment of the guilty parties and similar demands’. Benedikt noted that according to Forgách, ‘It would have been better if we could have got going at once’, but as was the case with other countries in comparable situations, it would have been necessary to achieve mobilisation immediately and demands would have had to be made under the pressure of this mobilisation. ‘However, we did not want to start mobilising, since we have already done so twice before. Each time, the costs amounted to many hundreds of millions, and then no fighting occurred. We cannot afford to spend so much money for a third time and to disappoint the army. This is absolutely out of the question. Although this is a major disadvantage, we do not wish to do otherwise, in order not to lose sympathy, particularly in England, which until now has not been unfavourably disposed towards us.’ When asked by Benedikt whether any consultations had been made with regard to a localisation of the war, Forgách replied: ‘No. We cannot talk about it, in order to avoid admitting in advance that we may possibly go to war. We believe that Russia is not sufficiently prepared to wage a war.’ This view was also held by Germany, he said, the same Germany ‘that is very keen to take action and is already prepared, now if necessary, to liquidate the global situation. However, we do not believe that Russia will enter the war, since we cannot envisage the Tsar declaring war at the grave of the slain Archduke. France is [...] peaceable’, and anyway, ‘war is not inevitable. A peaceful end may also ensue. This cannot be precluded. They may indeed agree to all our demands. We shall not negotiate for long. Yet it is possible that they will agree to everything, and then naturally, a peaceful end will be achieved. However, the terms will be harsh.’ The ‘general opinion’, he said, was in favour of war. ‘The hope is that the matter will be cleared up, so that we can finally rid ourselves of our own timidity and show that we are still capable of achieving something.’ There was no question of territorial expansion, he said, but Serbia must ‘naturally repay the costs of the war’. Benedikt

concluded from this conversation that the Foreign Ministry was anticipating a peaceful solution after all. And he conceivably left feeling dissatisfied.<sup>247</sup>

In the days following the dispatch of the draft note to Berlin, German diplomats also believed that Austria-Hungary might be softening. Count Berchtold had also expressed his concern to ambassador von Tschirschky that Serbia might accept the ultimatum. What then? For this reason, Berlin proposed setting harsher terms that it would be simply impossible for Serbia to accept. Naturally, the German pressure for war was also linked to the fact that they wanted to exploit the situation, and in an overestimation of their own potential, regarded themselves as being by all means capable of keeping France and Russia in check. The Germans had superior artillery and German guns were better than those of the French and the Russians. In the view of the German General Staff, France had not yet overcome the transition from a two-year to a three-year period of military service. In the German Empire, the harvest had already been gathered. Why wait any longer? For this reason, concluded von Jagow, the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office in Berlin, 'localisation cannot be accomplished, and if Russia attacks Austria-Hungary, this will be a *casus foederis*.'<sup>248</sup>

The German Empire also created the impression of being lulled to sleep. The sailing weeks at Kiel were hardly over before Kaiser Wilhelm embarked on a journey to Nordland that had been planned for some time. Politicians and members of the military were on holiday, while the latter declared that besides, everything was so well prepared that military action could be started immediately at any time. They also wanted to enjoy a few peaceful days on holiday before war broke out.

However, this policy of distraction and creating a sense of calm was not the most influential factor for France and Great Britain. In both countries, so much energy was consumed with their own affairs that neither Sarajevo nor the developments during July were considered worthy of notice. In France, greater attention was paid to the politically delicate trial of Henriette, the wife of the former Prime Minister Joseph Caillaux, who had shot the chief editor of the *Figaro* and had been released on the grounds of temporary insanity. The administration in France showed disinterest in events in Austria-Hungary and emphasised particularly that the murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been extremely unpopular there. How could such a development possibly lead to a particular crisis?<sup>249</sup> The cabinet led by Viviani, which at that time was still newly formed, had not yet gained an overview of the situation, and ultimately spent most of its time handling the visit by President Poincaré to Russia, during which entertainment was to play a not too minor role. A return visit by Tsar Nicholas II to France was planned for the summer of 1915. London, meanwhile, was being challenged by events in Ireland, where there was a threat of civil war. For this reason, developments there were of the uppermost importance for politicians and the military alike, and hardly anything else seemed to matter.<sup>250</sup> However, this situation was to come to an abrupt end.

On 22 July, Berlin was informed of the final text of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum. The text met with agreement, although it was also clear that the departure of the French state visit from Braşov (Kronstadt) would have to be postponed by about an hour. For this reason, Count Berchtold was informed that he should tell the Austrian envoy in Belgrade that the time for delivery of the *démarche* on 23 July should be 6 p.m. Aside from that, there was now also no doubt in Berlin that the Serbs would hardly be in a position to accept the Austrian note.

The delivery of the Austrian note had a shock effect. Perhaps the belief really had evaporated that Austria-Hungary would act in such a manner, or perhaps the leading state officials had been bluffing. To a large extent, the ensuing comments expressed outrage. In Belgium, the note was described as 'unqualifiable'. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, spoke of 'the most formidable document that was ever addressed from one state to another'. Italy let it be known in St. Petersburg that Austria had set 'unacceptable' conditions. And the response by the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov to the *démarche* was: 'This is war.'<sup>251</sup> Clearly, every leader of every state chancellery had already chosen the fitting words for the occasion that would be passed down to later generations. After all, they had had enough time to do so. There was almost no-one who failed to offer a quotable statement as a reaction to the climax of the July Crisis. Ultimately, the whole affair amounted to a farce, however, since it had been known in advance that the ultimatum was being prepared. Many people had known that the terms would be harsh and even veritably impossible to meet, and several had also been informed of the wording.

Belgrade became a seething cauldron. Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, who had been away on an election campaign trip, raced back to the capital. A series of meetings, consultations and dispatches followed. Only now was one of the men behind the Sarajevo attack, Major Tankosić, arrested. Ciganović escaped. Romania put its special envoy to use and was probably the only party to advise Serbia to accept the Viennese *démarche* unconditionally.<sup>252</sup> However, the French envoy in Belgrade believed he could foresee the problems on the domestic front that loomed if unconditional acceptance were to be made and what risks would be borne by those in Serbia who proposed capitulation when he said that if this were to occur, the King would be summarily murdered.<sup>253</sup> France advised acceptance of as many of the Austrian demands as the honour of Serbia would allow. Otherwise, it was precisely President Poincaré who was of the opinion that in the light of German support for Austria-Hungary, no flexibility should be shown towards Berlin. Russia left no-one in doubt as to its readiness to support Serbia, and this was also communicated immediately to the Ballhausplatz. In Vienna, it was impossible to know whether or not this was a bluff. At any rate, the dominant mood was one of 'full determination to wage war with Russia as well, if need be'.<sup>254</sup>

Of all the great powers, only Great Britain showed a willingness to mediate. After the first cabinet meeting to address foreign affairs at all since the assassination in Sarajevo, the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, suggested that four powers that were not immediately involved in the conflict, namely Great Britain, the German Empire, France and Italy, should take a joint initiative. However, since Sir Edward probably knew that time was running out, he proposed at the same time that Austria-Hungary should extend the deadline for the response to the ultimatum. After none of the powers addressed reacted positively during the course of 24 July, Sir Edward made a direct enquiry in Berlin as to whether it would be prepared to accept the Serbian note of response in Vienna. However, this thought had not occurred to Berlin. Quite the opposite: on one dispatch, Kaiser Wilhelm wrote a comment regarding a meeting with Foreign Minister Berchtold with the Russian chargé d'affaires in Vienna: 'Entirely superfluous'.<sup>255</sup>

However, since Berlin had of necessity to retain an interest in keeping Great Britain out of the war, the overt reaction to British recommendations for mediation was at least positive, and it was agreed that a conference should take place. However, unequivocal rejections from St. Petersburg and Paris rendered German acceptance inconsequential. Kaiser Wilhelm repeatedly made it clear that he was now only waiting for war to break out. When a report reached Berlin that Austria-Hungary had made it clear that it had no territorial ambitions against Serbia – a demand that Prime Minister Tisza had forced through in the Joint Council of Ministers on 19 July – the German Kaiser, adding one of his famous marginal notes to the relevant passage, wrote: 'Feeble.' A shift in the balance of power 'must come about. Austria must become preponderant in the Balkans.'<sup>256</sup>

On Saturday, 25 July, the war had in effect arrived. In a note delivered just a few minutes before the expiry of the 48-hour deadline, Serbia, while not rejecting the Austrian demands outright, set out a series of limitations designed to make it clear that surrender of Serbian sovereignty merely in order to enable Austria to pursue the men behind the assassination, including on Serbian territory, was out of the question. The relevant passage in the response written by Serbia on 25 July stated that the involvement of Imperial and Royal organs in the investigation would be 'a violation of the constitution and of criminal trial law'. In so doing, it interpreted the Austrian demand for involvement in the investigation of the men behind the Sarajevo assassination as being tantamount to Austria-Hungary wishing to exclude Serbian authorities from the proceedings. Naturally, those in authority in Serbia were also aware of the fact that this was an arbitrary interpretation.<sup>257</sup> However, they were certain of Russia's support, and had as a precaution informed the Entente powers of the contents of their response in advance. They also thought that it might perhaps be possible to negotiate one or other of the items in the *démarche*.

The note of response was brought to the Austro-Hungarian embassy by Prime Minister Pašić in person. This served to underline the importance of the document to be delivered, as well as to express a certain degree of anxiety. Naturally, the note of response was not delivered mutely; instead, the Serbian position was explained using all available clichés. At this late stage in the day, Pašić was no longer concerned about his electoral campaign, and he would have been fully aware of the importance of the document.

The note of response – and this was the consistent view of nearly all state chancelleries – was extremely skilfully worded. It had been revised until just before being delivered. For this reason, it contains deletions – something highly uncommon for a document of this significance – that Prime Minister Pašić had still made at the last moment while being driven to the Austrian embassy. However, there was no question of this being an unconditional acceptance. Since the Austrian envoy in Belgrade had been given no room for manoeuvre, and he had only been given permission to accept a full agreement to the Austrian *démarche*, he was obliged in accordance with his instructions to leave the embassy, board a train and in this way to make it clear that diplomatic relations had been broken off. In Serbia, mobilisation had already begun hours before the note of response was delivered.





## 4 Unleashing the War

4. On 28 July 1914, the transportation of the mobilised Imperial and Royal troops to the Serbian border commenced. From the beginning of August, the trains rolled to Galicia. More than a million soldiers had to be transported. The deployment of the ordinary troops was carried out using freight trains. The wagons bore the inscription 'For 40 men or 6 horses'. Officers were transported with normal passenger coaches. The inscriptions were thoroughly auto-suggestive.



July 25, 1914 was a terribly hot day.' This is how Baron Wladimir von Giesl, the last Imperial and Royal envoy in Belgrade, began his portrayal of his departure from this city.<sup>258</sup> Following the handover of the *démarche* containing the ultimatum he had arranged for two variations of his personal reaction to the Serbian response to be sketched out. One of them was for an unconditional acceptance and the other was for a conditional acceptance, in which case it was irrelevant whether the *démarche* was accepted only in parts or almost in its entirety. His unequivocal instructions stipulated an 'unconditional acceptance'.

During the day on 25 July, at Giesl's behest no member of the delegation was permitted to leave the building. Events then proceeded at a breakneck pace. Following the visit of the Serbian prime minister to the Imperial and Royal delegation and the handover of the response note, diplomatic relations were regarded as discontinued. A quarter of an hour later, Giesl was already on his way to the railway station with the members of the delegation. He heard calls of abuse in the streets. At the station, all accredited diplomatic representatives in Belgrade were gathered together; only the Russian representative was missing. A Serbian officer called: 'Au revoir à Budapest!' Then the scheduled train departed. Following the crossing of the Old Sava Bridge and, with it, the imperial border, Geisl was called to the telephone at Zemun station. It was Tisza, who asked him: 'Did this have to happen?' Giesl responded in the affirmative.

The soldiers of the Zemun garrison had taken up positions along the banks of the Sava River. Aside from this, however, there were of course no other visible developments, as the Austro-Hungarian mobilisation began only three days later. During the remainder of the journey, the train containing Giesl was greeted at every station by cheering people. At three in the morning, the envoy was led from the train in Subotica (Szabadka), in order for him to hear an excited address. In Budapest he met with Tisza. The journey continued via Győr (Raab) to Vienna. Everywhere there was cheering and relief. On the 26th Giesl reported to the foreign minister and on the 27th to the Emperor in Bad Ischl. As Giesl palliatively wrote, the Emperor supposedly then said: 'You could not have acted any differently [...] I must now accept the consequences.' Returning to Vienna, Giesl reported to Archduke Friedrich, designated Commander of the Balkan Armed Forces. Here he was given his new assignment: the Baron had been chosen as the representative of the Foreign Ministry attached to the High Command.

Giesl's portrayal of his journey through Hungary as far as Vienna on the night of 25/26 July and in the hours that followed reveals only a tiny segment of what really

happened during those days. It is understandable that nothing more was felt of the convulsion caused by the murders in Sarajevo. The excitement was of a different kind, and it now gained ground and eclipsed everything else. Austrian newspapers such as the *Reichspost* had written already hours before the severance of diplomatic ties with Serbia that the latter would not accept the ultimatum. The announcement from St. Petersburg that Russia was 'not able to remain indifferent in the Austro-Serbian conflict' was correctly understood to mean that Russia would support Serbia and that as a result it would be very unlikely that the war would remain limited to Serbia and, perhaps, Montenegro. But who cared about that? On the evening of 25 July celebrations took place in Vienna and the large cities of the Dual Monarchy and even in Berlin multitudes of people gathered at the Austro-Hungarian embassy and sang the Emperor's Hymn. The tune was well-known, as it was the same as that of the German patriotic song, the *Deutschlandlied*.

'We have started this war, not the Germans, and still less the Entente – that much I know', wrote Leopold von Andrian-Werburg. He had experienced the July Crisis at the Ballhausplatz.<sup>259</sup> But years later he was still absolutely convinced that they had acted correctly in July 1914 and that it had not been possible to act differently. We can concur with Conrad von Hötzendorf: 'Besides, the World War was one of those catastrophes that are neither caused by an individual nor can be stopped by one.'<sup>260</sup> The roots of the war stretched back a long way and it could have broken out much earlier. During all the crises since 1908, Austria-Hungary had played an important role. It was always the Balkans that threatened to explode and brought about interventions on the part of the great powers. Everyone felt called upon to intervene and make clear the interests of his own country. Austria also had interests, and it also certainly had cause for greater consternation than any of the other intervening powers. The experience of a considerably longer period of time was reflected in the actions of those responsible in Austria-Hungary than just the few weeks of July 1914. The conviction was reflected of being partially encircled by opponents, or, in fact, enemies and being vulnerable everywhere and only being able to waste away, awaiting decomposition. The Sarajevo murders had been a humiliation. Yet it was the state of an actual inability to act that then entered the picture and the hope of putting an end to it all that then resulted in the decision to go to war. Ultimately, the honour of the Empire repeatedly played a role and this resulted in the saying of Emperor Franz Joseph to the effect that if the country did have to go under, it should at least do so 'honourably'.

### Franz Joseph I

One of the central questions in the context of the unleashing of the military conflict is of course the role played by the Emperor in the decision to wage war against Serbia.

Already during the journey from Ischl to Vienna he had been convinced of the incapability of war. During the first days after his return, however, matters of protocol had to be dealt with, as well as keeping foreign countries at bay. The determination to go to war hardened. The Chief of the Military Chancellery, Artur Bolfras, was received by the Monarch on an almost daily basis. On Sunday, 5 July, the Chief of the General Staff was summoned to give a lengthy presentation. The day after, the Foreign Minister and the War Minister, Berchtold and Krobatin, came and both of them were granted 20 minutes to confer with the Emperor and receive his opinion. This was without doubt too short to engage in a detailed evaluation of all aspects of the critical situation. The appointments were, in any case, no longer than the subsequent appointment with the aide-de-camp of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Colonel Bardolff, who reported to the Emperor on the last days and hours of his great-nephew. Everything else was lost in the usual daily business. The heads of the Austrian and the Hungarian Court Chancelleries, Cabinet Director Baron Schiessl and Section Chief Daruváry, arrived with files and documents to be issued, the Lord Chamberlain Alfred, Prince of Montenuovo and the Emperor's Adjutant General Count Egon Paar, also received a few minutes each. As usual, no minutes were taken; the assignments were issued verbally. Again, as usual, everything took place tête-à-tête.

During one of the appointments, probably during Count Berchtold's audience on 30 June or 2 July, the word was uttered that was understood as the monarch's consent: war! War was not to be waged at any cost, but the Monarch had resolved to put Serbia in her place. It was not until half a year had passed that Franz Joseph addressed this. Had it been the right decision? Retrospectively at least, he had his doubts.<sup>261</sup> Of course, the Emperor's vote counted and on 6 July at the latest everything necessary had been said. The next day Franz Joseph boarded his official train and travelled back to Ischl, as though Sarajevo and its consequences had been merely an irritating interruption of his annual summer vacation. This was all the more astounding, given that the session of the Joint Council of Ministers had been scheduled for the same day, 7 July. At this session the basic decision was due to be discussed regarding whether to go to war against Serbia, the consequences such a decision might have and which objectives the Austro-Hungarian monarchy should pursue in the event of war. Franz Joseph knew nothing in advance of the diverging opinion of the Hungarian Premier Minister Tisza, as the latter had only been with him for a few minutes on 30 June. Evidently, the Emperor relied on his foreign minister. And while the course was being set for war, the Emperor was sitting in his official train on his way to Ischl. If Austria-Hungary had been a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch only had a representative function, the absence of the monarch during such a fateful consultation would perhaps not have been so important. But in the Habsburg Monarchy the Emperor had much more than just a representative function and specifically decisions over war and peace were dependent on a ruling by

the Emperor. After all, he had defended his own prerogatives tooth and nail, especially in the military realm. He regarded himself as ruler by the grace of God and considered it a matter of course that every civil servant and, above all, every soldier swore a personal oath of loyalty to him: 'I swear by God the Almighty [...].'

Could it be mentioned in defence of the Emperor's absence from the Council of Ministers on 7 July that he had not expected decisive resolutions? Did he assume that he would in any case be informed on time and asked for his consent? Perhaps he first had to reach a state of peace with himself. Ultimately, all these considerations can be discarded. The fact that a lot was at stake on 7 July 1914 was beyond dispute, and, as subsequent months would demonstrate, it was not Franz Joseph's consistent intention to remain absent from the sessions of the Joint Council of Ministers, for he indeed later – admittedly only occasionally – attended such sessions. Even the argument that matters were discussed that had already been decided on, for example the question of a swift end to the war, is redundant because such a thing was never mentioned during a session of the Joint Council of Ministers during the war years of Franz Joseph, and the Emperor and King attended sessions at which far less important things were discussed but still possessed the character of Privy Council meetings. It can thus only be concluded that the old Emperor assumed that everything that was important had already been said. The joint Finance Minister, Biliński, was also certain that the Emperor had made a definite decision to go to war on the day before his departure for Bad Ischl. But the dice had already been rolled earlier. And the consequences were clear. The Emperor had demonstrated his will and assumed that actions would be taken accordingly. So he was free to leave Vienna. His absence was also designed to signalise that the Monarch was ready to defer personal considerations and rely on the judgement and the decisions of the most important representatives of his Empire. The latter was very much in fitting with a long-established practice, for Franz Joseph had adopted it as his basic principle to trust people to whom he had given responsibility and to let them bear this responsibility. Furthermore, he had contented himself for a long time with simply being informed. Another idiosyncrasy had evolved: Franz Joseph evidently shied away from conferences or even consultations that were attended by several people. The Austrian and Hungarian prime ministers were never simultaneously called to see the Emperor, even where important questions relating to the Compromise were concerned or when the consonance of political, legislative, social or other measures in the two halves of the Empire had to be ensured. Even that might have been a vestige of an absolutist notion of government; modern and, above all, in keeping with the unprecedented situation in July 1914 it certainly was not.

In Bad Ischl, away from the daily routine and yet with an only temporary link to the actual power centre in Vienna, the Emperor received reports. There he learnt of the proceedings of the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 July and received the memorandum

drafted the following day by Count Tisza, in which the Hungarian Prime Minister argued in favour of not simply attacking Serbia but rather issuing ultimatums, on the fulfilment of which the further course of action should depend. The Foreign Minister had two opportunities to inform the Emperor of developments in his summer domicile. But when the Council of Ministers next met on 19 July, the Emperor was missing once again and apparently did not have any part in the decision regarding the actual issuing of the *démarche* containing the ultimatum. And when it was a question of finalising the declaration of war and thus the formal prerequisites for the war, which was regarded by Franz Joseph as inescapable, this took place without further consultations, without one last, dramatic conference and, naturally, without direct contact with the German Kaiser, as the monarchs never telephoned each other or used a Hughes microphone. The Kaiser simply signed the piece of paper presented to him. Thus, the declaration of war against Serbia was reduced to a simple administrative act.

### The Calm before the Storm

In spite of Serbian mobilisation, the Austro-Hungarian military machinery still did not appear to bestir itself. This apparent inactivity and the sheer endless waiting led repeatedly to stinging comments: 'A war has never before been provoked with such amateurism, than the war against Serbia in July 1914', as Fritz Fellner wrote, and 'this harsh judgement should finally be explained by a military-historical investigation on the part of the Austrian authorities. It had been known since 7 July that war was desired [...] on 27 July Foreign Minister Berchtold requests the Emperor to sign the declaration of war, [...] the Chief of the General Staff, however, declares himself in fact unable to begin the war, which had been planned for three weeks, before 14 days had passed.'<sup>262</sup> Now we will examine how tenable this claim really is.

Aside from the campaign of occupation of 1878, which was truly an isolated and in military terms narrowly-defined event, the Habsburg Monarchy was preparing to wage a proper war for the first time since 1866. During the intervening period, most other states had waged bigger or smaller wars. All of them had attempted to plan ahead for a war and to prepare themselves for the demands of a major military conflict. Essentially, however, all of them were confronted within a short space of time with a very different reality. From practically the first day on, the World War burst the dimensions of anything that had come before and anything that had been planned for.

In respect of the approach to Serbia, the timing of the dispatch of the *démarche* containing the ultimatum and the expansion of the war to become one that included at least Russia, but which could potentially turn into a European and even a world war, military considerations naturally played an important role, yet they are only compre-

hensible within the overall strategic context. The Imperial and Royal Military Administration could only initiate mobilisation under certain very precise circumstances, for not only was it required that the mobilisation would result in certain developments, which would in turn trigger countermeasures from those affected or from those states tied to alliances, but also that the mobilisation had to take place on the basis of very specific war scenarios.

Conrad apparently refused to initiate preparatory mobilisation measures, as he, like many other soldiers, remembered only too well the consequences of the mobilisation of 1912. The Chief of the General Staff declared that 'the army is so bitter as a result of the abortive mobilisation of 1912 that a mobilisation can only now be ordered if war is certain'.<sup>263</sup> Regardless of this fact – as will be shown – preparations were indeed made. But only on the afternoon of 23 July was the army corps designated for the war against Serbia ordered to cease all exercises and to gather the regiments by the evening of 25 July at the latest in their peacetime garrisons.<sup>264</sup> And these were only the preparations for a partial mobilisation.

On the evening of 25 July there was a first certainty: Serbia had not conformed to Austria-Hungary's ultimatum. From this moment on, every effort was made to trigger war. But there can be no question of Austria-Hungary being unprepared. How consistently it pursued its objective and how quickly the certainty spread that there would be war can be seen with the aid of several key Austrian documents.<sup>265</sup>

Two documents, or rather two groups of documents, can be utilised here. The first document is the proclamation of the Emperor 'To My Peoples'. This manifesto was prepared parallel to the Serbian note of demands in the Foreign Ministry. It was completed prior to 20 July and was passed on in strict confidence for the information of both prime ministers, Stürgkh and Tisza, on 21 July. Stürgkh then sent Berchtold a draft of a proclamation, which had been prepared a long time in advance in the office of the Imperial-Royal prime minister. As a comparison of the two texts shows, the Foreign Ministry did not take Stürgkh's draft into consideration. This differed in the case of Tisza, who telegraphed his requests for alterations to Bad Ischl on 25 July, where Berchtold waited in order to implement all further steps with the Emperor once the 48-hour deadline granted to Serbia ran out. Tisza proposed two alterations that were then actually implemented. Finally, two further changes were made on the wishes of the Emperor. With that, the proclamation was ready. With the exception of these minor alterations, however, the proclamation of war had been prepared long before the dispatch of the ultimatum to Serbia. Even prior to 20 July 1914 the following words had been formulated: 'It was My most fervent wish to dedicate the years that might still be granted to Me by God's grace to works of peace and to preserve My peoples from the great sacrifices and burdens of war. The council of providence has decided otherwise. [...] With such forgetful ingratitude the Kingdom of Serbia, which from the first

beginnings of its official independence until the most recent times had been sustained and promoted by My predecessors and Myself, entered already years ago on the path of open hostility towards Austria-Hungary. [...] We must call a halt to this unbearable attitude, and put an end to Serbia's incessant provocations. [...] My government has in vain made one final attempt to achieve the objective by peaceful means of inducing Serbia to change its ways by issuing a solemn exhortation. [...] Thus, I must proceed to obtain the necessary guarantees by force of arms that will secure for My states inner quiet and lasting peace abroad.' In conclusion, without reference to the 'heritage of a glorious past' proposed by the Foreign Ministry, the Emperor formulated the words: 'I have faith in Austria-Hungary's brave armed forces, filled with devoted zeal. And I have faith in the Almighty, that He will grant our arms the victory.'<sup>266</sup>

Now, we can certainly view this proclamation as the desire to be prepared for the rejection of the ultimatum by Serbia. Even so, none of those who worked on the document thought the Emperor was wasting his time. The genesis of the proclamation in any case contradicts the common view that the severance of diplomatic relations did not necessarily have to mean war, and it was above all the Emperor who – according to one of the adjutants in the Emperor's entourage, Colonel Baron Albert von Margutti – had said that this did not have to be the result.<sup>267</sup> This was one of many retrospective embellishments. The Emperor was absolutely aware of this. He wanted war.

A second indication pointed unmistakably to the certainty of an impending war: on the day of the dispatch of the note of demands, i.e. on 23 July 1914, the senior military commanders began to keep a war diary. This is of interest because with the help of these war diaries we can reconstruct the course of military events in detail already from 23 July. On 25 July, Archduke Friedrich, who had already been placed at the 'disposal of the Supreme Commander' several days earlier, was named Commander-in-Chief of the Balkan Armed Forces.<sup>268</sup> The powers of the commander-in-chief and his jurisdiction had been likewise fixed several days earlier. They only had to wait for something that could result in a declaration of war.

Instead, on 26 July the German ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky passed on another British offer to mediate. It came from King George V and the British government.<sup>269</sup> They promised to provide compensation for Austria-Hungary at an ambassadors' conference and added that it would not be possible to localise a war. It would become a general war. Serbia would most certainly not submit to Austrian pressure, but undoubtedly to the united will of the powers. Once Austro-Hungarian troops set foot on Serbian territory, however, 'the world war' would be 'unavoidable', according to Ambassador Lichnowsky. London thus distanced itself from the idea of a 'halt in Belgrade'. This option had been discussed between the British ambassador in Vienna, Sir Maurice Bunsen, and his Russian colleague, Nikolai Shebeko, whereby the Russian ambassador apparently said that the Imperial and Royal troops should feel free to advance some-

what further to the south.<sup>270</sup> The German Empire immediately rejected an intervention in Vienna along the lines of British proposals for the reason that it could not prostitute itself 'to put Austria before a European court for bargaining over Serbia'.<sup>271</sup> In rejecting the British offer to mediate, it becomes clear that Berlin regarded the July Crisis just as much as a vehicle for its own policies as Vienna pursued its goals on the basis of German backing.

On the same day, 26 July, the Chief of the German General Staff, Count Helmuth von Moltke, drafted the 'warning' to Belgium, in which he demanded that German troops be allowed to march through that country in order to engage with France. Germany definitely expected a major war. Even London abandoned all hope and merely stated that it was down to Germany and Germany alone to deter Austria-Hungary from pursuing its 'great policies', as London called them.<sup>272</sup> London and Paris announced that if Berlin had a pacifying effect on Vienna, then the French and British governments would in turn exert influence on St. Petersburg. Days earlier, however, Russia had already initiated the first steps towards a mobilisation of its armies, and not only in several western military districts but, as it claimed, for 'unavoidable technical reasons' across the entire Empire.<sup>273</sup> This was hard to believe. However, there was another indication that made the Russian stance clear: on 24 July, still before the deadline set by the Austrian ultimatum, the Russian embassy in Berlin received the instruction to dissolve its assets in Germany and to transfer the 100 million roubles parked in Berlin.<sup>274</sup> Thus, it was yet again the financiers who were the harbingers of the approaching war. Russia also implemented the first mobilisation measures for its fleet, however, and this indicated even more unmistakably that Russia did not only anticipate facing Austria-Hungary. France also initiated mobilisation on 26 July and in Great Britain the concentration of the First and Second Fleets was ordered. To negotiate now was almost impossible; developments were too far advanced. Neither Vienna nor Berlin, St. Petersburg or Paris wanted to take a step back. Instead, Count Berchtold submitted on 26 July the declaration of war against Serbia for the signature of Emperor Franz Joseph. He justified this by claiming that as a result of the Serbian response an attempt at mediation might still be made.<sup>275</sup> This should be avoided by creating a *fait accompli*. The ground should be cut out from underneath any attempt to intervene. In any case, the first shots had already been fired. Franz Joseph was satisfied with this explanation. He signed the draft submitted to him and ordered the mobilisation of the corps designated for 'war scenario Serbia'. It was only the fact that this happened on a Sunday and it was believed that it would not be possible to get the message through to everywhere due to the partially unstaffed regional post offices that prevented the alert from already being issued on this day. This was to be done on 27 July, a Monday.<sup>276</sup>



### The 'Skirmish' near Temes-Kubin

The manner in which Austria-Hungary declared war can certainly serve as an object lesson in unleashing a war. On the front of the file containing the declaration of war, namely the 'Most humble presentation' by Count Bertchtold to the Emperor, is the following text: 'In consideration of the [...] note of reply from the Serbian government, which is in its contents entirely worthless, but in its form accommodating, I do not regard it as impossible that the Triple Entente could make another attempt to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict, if a clear situation is not created by means of the declaration of war. According to a report of the 4th Corps Command, Serbian troops yesterday fired at our troops from Danube steamers near Temes-Kubin and there occurred following our return of fire a substantial skirmish. Hostilities have thus indeed been opened and it appears all the more imperative to allow the army in terms of international law every freedom of action that they would have in a state of war ... I allow myself to mention that his Imperial and Royal Highness, the Commander-in-Chief of the Balkan Armed Forces, Archduke Friedrich, as well as the Chief of the General Staff, have no objection to dispatching the declaration of war tomorrow morning.'<sup>277</sup>

The reference to the skirmish near Temes-Kubin was also incorporated into the text of the declaration of war and, with these passages added, the document was approved by Emperor Franz Joseph.

But the report had been false. Near Temes-Kubin, today Kovin, a small town on the northern banks of the Danube opposite Smederevo, there had been no skirmish. Several nervous or undisciplined men had perhaps shot their rifles, but nothing more had happened. In the war diary and in the operational files of the Imperial and Royal 7th Infantry Division, the incident is described as follows: the 14th Infantry Brigade (Colonel Baumgartner) reports: 'At Kevevára [Temes-Kubin / Kovin] Serbian steamers stopped by fire from their own ranks; following investigation allowed to proceed. Our own steamers shot at from Semendria [Smederevo], though without damage.'<sup>278</sup>

That was all. The original report on this skirmish was apparently sent from the Command of the 4th Corps (Budapest) to the Imperial and Royal General Staff in Vienna. This report, however, told an entirely different story: 'Temes-Kubin: Serbian soldiers on a ship open fire on their own troops, major skirmish, unknown number of dead and injured.'<sup>279</sup> The text of the report points to a telegram that must have arrived from Budapest. Even if exact losses were not cited, it was suggested that these had been not inconsiderable. The office of the Chief of the General Staff apparently then informed the Foreign Minister. Only after the report had been passed on to Berchtold did the General Staff attempt to confirm these events, initially in Budapest, then in Timișoara (Temesvár) with the Command of the 7th Corps, to which the 7th Infantry Division belonged.<sup>280</sup> Timișoara knew nothing, however, of an engagement near Temes-

Kubin. Berchtold was then informed that such an engagement had never taken place. When this amendment took place is not entirely clear. At lunchtime on 27 July, the Austro-Hungarian Correspondence Office was also informed about the skirmish near Temes-Kubin. Yet the Emperor had already signed the declaration of war. Berchtold returned to Vienna. Was he only now informed about the bloodless shoot-out near Temes-Kubin? At the latest during the course of 27 July, he learnt that nothing had happened and expunged the passage on Temes-Kubin from the official declaration of war conveyed to Serbia.

In the meantime, however, with reference to the opening of hostilities by Serbia, politics had been pursued on a grand scale. On 27 July the Russian ambassador, Shebeko, who had called for great restraint, had received a response to the effect that this would be difficult, as a skirmish had already taken place on the Danube and Serbia had commenced hostilities. The Russian promised to immediately exert an influence on Serbia so that it refrained from all forms of violence. He furthermore stated that the Serbs would pull back in the event of an Austrian advance in order to avoid hostilities for as long as possible.<sup>281</sup> But these could no longer be avoided. Emperor Franz Joseph telegraphed King Carol of Romania on 28 July that he was forced to commence hostilities against the Serbian armed forces after Serbia had not only failed to fulfil Austro-Hungarian demands but also 'provoked a military engagement without a previous declaration of war'.<sup>282</sup> The British ambassador in Vienna was likewise informed about this, and on 28 July he called on Berchtold and was told, among other things, that Serbia did not count among the cultured nations. Aside from that, all attempts to prevent the war were too late, since, as Berchtold told the ambassador and then also dispatched to the Imperial and Royal representative in London, 'yesterday the Serbian side already opened fire on our border soldiers'.<sup>283</sup> Here, Berchtold mixed up his dates, for the skirmish near Temes-Kubin had supposedly already taken place on 26 July. Berchtold no more mentioned Temes-Kubin by name, however, than the Emperor had done in his telegram to King Carol of Romania. The Minister in fact withheld all exact dates and merged events into each another very conspicuously.

Now the question must be asked as to what exactly had happened at the 'skirmish' near Temes-Kubin. It is clear that it did not take place. It was already established decades ago that the report was mysterious because the notification of the skirmish apparently came from a corps command that was not even located in the region. Rudolf Kiszling, who has written several articles on Temes-Kubin, has provided evidence for his portrayals merely by citing one document in the Austrian War Archives.<sup>284</sup> An exact examination carried out years ago by archivists in the War Archives in Vienna came to the surprising conclusion, however, that this telegram could not be found. Neither in the files of the Emperor's Military Chancellery nor in the General Staff files, the operational files or in other record groups of the so-called New Field Files

could such a telegram be found. A corresponding entry in one of the registers does not exist either. Nothing! And this for an undoubtedly historical document from the early war period.

It is very likely that one must go a step further and cast doubt on whether this telegram ever existed. If it did exist, however, it must have been destroyed with good reason. Kiszling claims to have seen it, yet he cited neither a file nor a reference number. Gustav Hubka, one of the employees collaborating on the General Staff work on the First World War, said that the report had been passed on only by telephone.<sup>285</sup> Yet the report must have existed at some point in written form, because otherwise it would not have been possible to quote its wording. If something of this nature was ever reported from the area of the 4th Corps to Vienna, then it was a bogus report. And it did not come by chance! Perhaps it had been commissioned and was then – after fulfilling its purpose – destroyed.

The reference to Serbian troops opening fire on 26 July without declaring war was ideal for presenting Serbia as the aggressor, which was important for the stance of Italy and Romania. If the two of them were at all to stand by the Triple Alliance, then they would do so only in the event of a war that had not been started by either Austria-Hungary or Germany. Others, for example the British, were also told upon receipt of the report about the skirmish that Serbia was the aggressor.

The non-existent skirmish served moreover to make the claim to the domestic audience that the Dual Monarchy had started a defensive war. This was not only a question of outward appearances, for that would not have required such a mystification. It was far more a measure that should ensure that everyone who had perhaps not been ready to wage an aggressive war now accepted the necessity of defence. This was important with regard to the Slavs in the Monarchy, but also in respect of the political groups who, like the Austrian Social Democrats, had made it clear when discussing the Law on War Contributions (*Kriegsleistungsgesetz*) that they would only accept the passing of drastic measures in the case of a defensive war.

Evidently, during the course of 48 hours no-one in Austria had given any thought to informing the Supreme Commander that the declaration of war he had signed had been manipulated retroactively. It was not until a day after the dispatch of the declaration of war, i.e. on 29 July, that Berchtold reported the situation to the Emperor. He did so, once again, in a 'Most humble presentation', which stated: 'After the news of the military engagement near Temes-Kubin could not be confirmed and, on the contrary, only a single report about a minor skirmish near Gradište had been received, which did not appear to be appropriate for use in justifying a grave act of state, I took it upon myself in the hope of the retroactive Supreme Approval of Your Majesty to eliminate the sentence about the attack by Serbian troops near Temes-Kubin from the declaration of war against Serbia.'<sup>286</sup>

According to a remark made by the Emperor's aide-de-camp, Baron von Catinelli, the Monarch was annoyed at not having been reported to immediately by Berchtold.<sup>287</sup> Even if that is true, the Emperor was in no way so indignant to even reprimand Berchtold. He was only too aware of the necessity of unleashing the war that he had helped to prepare.

When everything already seemed to be under way, an objection came all of a sudden and from someone of whom one would never have expected it. When Kaiser Wilhelm returned from his trip to Nordland and read the text of the Serbian response, he apparently said: 'But with this any reason for war ceases to exist.' And on the edge of the report from Vienna he noted: 'Giesl could have remained in Belgrade after all.'<sup>288</sup> Suddenly, the very man who had consistently worked towards war and indeed pressed for it, who had dismissed with derisive words any Austro-Hungarian impulse to minimise the war aims, was now inclined to concede. Why he did this is difficult to say. Had he suddenly realised the full extent of the risk? Did he for the first time have the impression that Great Britain might also count among the opponents of the Dual Alliance? Or was the whole thing only designed for the benefit of the outside world and to demonstrate the German Kaiser's desire for peace? These questions cannot really be answered conclusively. But Wilhelm now suddenly found the British proposal of a halt in Belgrade worth considering. For the German imperial leadership, a peculiar situation had thus emerged. The Imperial Chancellor and the permanent secretary in the Foreign Ministry had geared their policies towards the Kaiser and had made the realisation of a war the foundation of these policies. The British proposal for a conference had been rejected. And now suddenly the Kaiser hesitated and everything seemed to be called into question. Would there perhaps really only be a Third Balkan War?

Whoever claimed to have witnessed the final act of drama would have been mistaken. On 28 July the Italian Foreign Minister Sonnino informed the British ambassador in Rome, Sir Ronald Rodd, that the Serbian chargé d'affaires had just called and reported that the Serbian government had by no means spoken its final word in points 5 and 6 of the Austrian démarche. The demand for the participation of Imperial and Royal organs had, on the contrary, been 'wilfully wrongly interpreted' by presenting therein the cooperation of authorities and the elimination of the Serbian judiciary as a massive encroachment on the sovereignty of the country, whereas Austria-Hungary had in fact wanted no more than perhaps the cooperation of criminal organs.<sup>289</sup> In any case, the chargé d'affaires stated that the negotiations could continue. But by now the declaration of war was already on its way.

On the afternoon of 28 July the declaration of war was communicated to Belgrade. As Austria-Hungary no longer had a diplomatic representative in Serbia, this was sent by telegraph and rerouted via Romania. The declaration of war was handed over, even though Russia had once more made it clear that it would not remain on the sidelines.

This resulted above all in a military problem. If there was really only to be a war with Serbia, then the bulk of the Imperial and Royal armed forces to be mobilised would have to deploy against Serbia. If Russia were likewise to enter the war, another war scenario would be triggered and the mass of the troops deployed in Galicia. Conrad had repeatedly made it clear that he would have to know by the fifth day of mobilisation whether there would only be war scenario 'B' (Balkans) or also war scenario 'R' (Russia). Until then, the transports could be stopped or rerouted without an appreciable loss of time.

The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war against Serbia was answered by Russia with the order for a partial mobilisation. Now the mechanics of the operational planning finally began to come to the fore. The alliance automatism and the deployment blueprints specified that one thing always brought about another, that actions were always automatic and that the manic compulsion of having to preempt others caused every military leader to urge for the next step to be taken at once. Berchtold, evidently influenced by Conrad, regarded it as imperative to respond to the partial Russian mobilisation, which initially seemed to be limited to the western military districts, with the complete mobilisation of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire. On 29 July, Moltke once more explained the alliance mechanisms to the German Imperial Chancellor. And he ended by saying that a German and Austro-Hungarian mobilisation would make France's involvement inevitable. If Russia adhered to its alliance with France, there would be a two-front war. Now they wanted clarity from Russia.<sup>290</sup> Bethmann Hollweg approached St. Petersburg almost with an ultimatum and demanded information as to whether Russia had mobilised completely and would intervene in the war. The Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov acted as though he were indignant at the idea of the German ambassador using such harsh words during his appearance on the Neva River. The Austrians were to blame, this was the quintessence of Sazonov's response, for it was they who had mobilised eight army corps, i.e. around half of their army. The fact that Russia had itself commenced with the mobilisation of 13 army corps as well as the Baltic and the Black Sea Fleets, was not mentioned. Furthermore, only the representatives of the Entente were told that a general mobilisation had been initiated.<sup>291</sup> It was enough, however, to make the German ambassador telegraph Berlin from St. Petersburg with the message that Russia was not prepared to back down. As a result, the German mobilisation should also be initiated. Parallel to this, it was once again attempted to reassure the British. In the process, Bethmann Hollweg suffered a first shock: London let it be known that it could not remain on the sidelines if nothing came of the conference of the powers, if the conflict escalated into a war and if France were dragged into it.<sup>292</sup>

With this, the main assumption for a war of the Dual Alliance collapsed. All plans and, ultimately, the precipitation of the war had taken place under the assumption

that Austria would take on Serbia and keep part of the Russian forces in check, whilst the German Empire wished to defeat France before turning all its power against Russia. Now, however, Great Britain came into play. Suddenly, the German dispatches evinced real concern. Austria-Hungary should under all circumstances cultivate an exchange of views with St. Petersburg. 'We are admittedly ready', telegraphed Bethmann Hollweg to Vienna, 'to fulfil our alliance commitments, but must refuse to allow Vienna to pull us recklessly and without due consideration of our advice into a global conflagration'.<sup>293</sup>

Now it was again Kaiser Wilhelm who pulled the German imperial government back on to its old course. He was disappointed that Great Britain would not remain neutral and regarded this as a personal affront against him, especially since he had been actively involved in the British case and was at pains to exploit the kinship of the two ruling houses. This now seemed to have been in vain. Thus, fierce determination was now the order of the day. On the same day, 30 July, an alliance offer was submitted to Turkey, to whom a considerable expansion of its territorial possessions was offered at the expense of the British Colonial Empire. In this way, the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire since 1878 could have been offset.

These were hours in which a great deal was promised and many territories were mentally shifted back and forth. Already on 25 July, Conrad von Hötzendorf had demanded of Count Berchtold that no effort should be spared to induce the King of Montenegro to keep his country out of a war, even if this meant making him promises or offering him large sums of money. Kaiser Wilhelm took pains over Romania and let it be known in Vienna that Romania should be promised Bessarabia in return for intervening on the side of the Central Powers. Bulgaria was also brought into play, or rather, it brought itself into play by declaring that it wanted to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers, as long as Romania did the same and did not obstruct Bulgarian wishes following the conquest of Macedonia.<sup>294</sup> Bucharest, however, did not want to allow itself to be dragged into the war. Thus, the Bulgarian offer was also redundant. Great Britain adopted another view as its own and proposed that Austria take Belgrade and its environs from Serbia and occupy them until Serbia fulfilled all its demands. With this version of the 'halt in Belgrade', Great Britain even made the Serbian capital city available. This idea also failed to ignite. The roundabout of proposals and interventions continued. Since the Central Powers hoped to persuade Italy to enter the war without any discussion of territorial concessions, Kaiser Wilhelm sent his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Colonel von Kleist, to Rome in order to describe the tremendous impression it would make if an Italian army group were to surface in the French theatre of war in conjunction with German troops.<sup>295</sup> Austria-Hungary took a different route. Instead of trying to impress the Italian press with only small sums of money, as it had until then, Berchtold now wanted to engage in bribery on a grand scale. Ten million kronen for

this purpose did not seem too great a sum to him.<sup>296</sup> However, Italy also declared its neutrality and did not want to align itself with the Central Powers.

In the night from 29 to 30 July, Vienna was certain that there would also be a war with Russia. The Imperial and Royal War Ministry sent the supreme monetary authorities a notice to that effect.<sup>297</sup> Early in the morning, the finance ministers of Austria and Hungary met with the governors of the central bank and the post office savings bank and discussed which financial measures would be necessary in order to maintain payment transactions. Consultations lasted until the afternoon, as Austria and Hungary favoured differing approaches. The discussion was then interrupted in order to await the decisions made during a session of the Joint Council of Ministers that afternoon. Even afterwards, however, the viewpoints of the financial experts continued to diverge. Agreement was only reached on the question of closing the stock exchanges for the next few days. It was still disputed, however, how they should react to the general mobilisation.

On the same day, 30 July, Moltke had Conrad urgently advised to mobilise immediately against Russia, though it was only a question of the necessary countermeasures to the partial Russian mobilisation. For it was necessary both due to the Triple Alliance as well as for the benefit of the global public for Russia to be regarded as the aggressor. This 'hanging on' through the European crisis was, according to Moltke, the last means to ensure the consolidation of Austria-Hungary.<sup>298</sup> Simultaneously, Moltke pressed for the largest possible concessions to Italy, as the Chief of the German General Staff sought to activate the Triple Alliance in its entirety. Then perhaps even Great Britain could be kept in check. At the same time, the German Empire mobilised against France. Now it was merely a question of declaring war.

But was it really important who officially declared war on whom? Everyone was mobilising, no-one wanted to fall behind and everyone wanted, if possible, to have completed their deployment a few days before anyone else. When the Joint Council of Ministers discussed the British mediation proposal on 31 July, the mood was that the mediation would be politely but firmly rejected.<sup>299</sup> Such an intervention was no longer possible. Above all, and Emperor Franz Joseph had said this explicitly to Berchtold, the deployment against Serbia and the war against this country should be carried out as arranged. The Emperor was once more absent from the session of the Joint Council of Ministers, although he had returned to Vienna from Bad Ischl on 30 July. However, on the same day he had summoned Berchtold and the next day he granted both Tisza and Stürgkh a long audience. On 1 August, it was the turn of the senior military men, Archduke Friedrich, General Conrad and finally once again Minister Berchtold. Here the question of expanding the war was at stake. And it was the Emperor who decided that an offensive should be undertaken both in the south and in the north.<sup>300</sup> It was presumably Conrad who had suggested this to him.

On 1 August the German Empire declared war on Russia; two days later, on 3 August, the German declaration of war was issued to France. Great Britain informed the German Empire the next day that it regarded itself as being at war. Austria-Hungary waited until 6 August to declare war on Russia because Conrad wanted to advance as far as possible with his preparations for mobilisation and with deployment by the time the declaration of war was issued. On 5 August, Montenegro declared war on Austria-Hungary. King Nikola let Vienna know that he intended to lay siege to Kotor and would promptly ask the civilian population to leave the city.<sup>301</sup>

At this point in time, it was no longer individual states that were at war but alliances. Whereas the Entente, however, was able to deploy its grouping in full, for the Triple Alliance both Italy and the de facto ally Romania were absent. Austria-Hungary admittedly saw no necessity to declare war on Great Britain and France, yet these two states, which were already at war with the German Empire, paid little heed to this. In spite of the almost daily assurances that the Habsburg Monarchy harboured no hostile intentions towards the Entente, indeed only demanded compensation from Serbia and, in the event that the war remained limited to Serbia, would not make any territorial demands against the Balkan state, it was above all France who was determined to expand the war to include the Danube Monarchy. On 8 August, the French Foreign Minister Gaston Doumergue accused Austria-Hungary of transporting troops along the French border. The entire XIVth Corps (Innsbruck) had allegedly taken up positions there.<sup>302</sup> Despite assurances to the contrary by the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Paris, Count Szécsen, Monsieur Doumergue declared on 10 August that diplomatic relations had been broken off. From 11 August, France and Austria-Hungary were also at war. This was logical, as alliances were after all brought into the war. The Danube Monarchy had in any case harboured little hope of avoiding war with the Entente powers, as Conrad von Hötzendorf had already promised the German Supreme Army Command on 6 August to send two batteries of 30.5 cm mortars to the western front, in order to overpower the French defensive forts. The pieces of artillery that came from Gorizia (Görz) arrived on wagons on 12 and 13 August and were first deployed on 20 August near Namur.<sup>303</sup> Thus, with the best will in the world they could not serve as a justification for the steps taken by the French.

Since direct relations had already been severed, the French declaration of war was handed to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London by the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey. Great Britain kept things brief: although the British ambassador in Vienna, Sir Maurice Bunsen, had cast doubt vis-à-vis the Foreign Office regarding the French version of the intervention of Austro-Hungarian troops in the west,<sup>304</sup> the government in London informed Austria-Hungary on 12 August that Great Britain was also at war with Austria-Hungary, as the Danube Monarchy had declared war on Russia and sent troops against France. The diplomats on all sides found positive words



for their host countries, for example Sir Maurice, who expressed his hope that the 'regrettable state of war between England and the Monarchy' would not last long, as between the two countries 'there was no antagonism that could in the least justify the conflict'.<sup>305</sup>

On 28 August, after lengthy hesitation and several plots to persuade Belgium that Austria-Hungary would remain neutral towards that country, the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Brussels, Count Clary, had to notify the Belgian government of the state of war between the two states. At this point in time, parts of Belgium had not only already been overrun by German armies but the mortars made available by the Imperial and Royal Army High Command along with their operating crews had also been transported to Liege. Shortly thereafter, these pieces of artillery destroyed the forts of Antwerp.<sup>306</sup>

The inclusion of the British Empire as well as the Western European states in the war had a further consequence, which initially affected Austria-Hungary only indirectly, namely the expansion of the war to extra-European territories. Japan came forward with its demands and requested from the German Empire the evacuation of the leased territory of Jiaozhou in China as well as the withdrawal of all German warships from Japanese and Chinese waters. The German Foreign Ministry informed the Japanese chargé d'affaires in Berlin that it did not have the intention of responding to the note. Diplomatic relations were broken off.<sup>307</sup> The same applied to those between Austria-Hungary and Japan. The Imperial and Royal War Ministry ordered the cruiser anchored near Tsingtao, *Kaiserin und Königin Elisabeth* (Empress and Queen Elisabeth), and its convoying ships to prepare for naval hostilities. Thereafter, however, it remained unclear for months whether Austria-Hungary and Japan were actually at war with one another. According to a British report from 8 November 1914, which stated that Tsingtao had surrendered to the Japanese, the Foreign Ministry in Vienna trenchantly concluded: as a result of the involvement of His Majesty's ship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* in the battle of Tsingtao, 'during which the Japanese were at all events the aggressors, there is now a state of war between us and Japan. On which day this happened, is not exactly known; By all accounts, it happened before 6 October.'<sup>308</sup> The fact that the *Kaiserin und Königin Elisabeth* had been sunk in the meantime and the majority of its crew taken prisoner and transported to Japan only filtered through gradually.

In the end, only mechanisms and interests had exerted their influence. Rationale seemed to be as good as extinguished; and a humane approach all the more so. After the war had been precipitated over the course of a month, its unleashing took only three days.

Austria wanted to remove the problem of Serbia once and for all. The war with Russia was accepted as the price that had to be paid. The German Empire hoped to become a dominant Continental European power. For France, it was a question of

Alsace-Lorraine and of weakening Germany decisively. Russia wanted to expand at the expense of the Habsburg Monarchy and become the only dominant power in the Balkans. In addition, Constantinople seemed to be beckoning. Great Britain thought about the European balance of war, though in terms of its own interests, because a German Empire dominant on the Continent would doubtlessly become an elementary threat to Great Britain and also endanger her colonies. It was a question of power, the retention of power, influence and prestige, i.e. things that had an effect on world history like nothing else and that also continue to determine today's world.

None of the governments involved, however, could be at all certain in 1914 how the decision to go to war would be received by its own people.<sup>309</sup> France was prepared for anything but the enthusiastic sending-off of its soldiers, and had made preparations to arrest left-wing politicians.<sup>310</sup> Great Britain was concerned that the seemingly almost inevitable shortages and even a brief blockade of the British Isles would lead to unemployment, food riots and revolution – they did not.<sup>311</sup> Austria-Hungary was naturally concerned about the nationalities question and aware that a proportion of those called up would refuse to serve, yet practically everyone rallied to the flag. In the German Empire, the resistance of the political left was feared – instead, the left voted for war credits. In Russia there was some unrest, but it was of no consequence. Those who had started the war were convinced that they could conclude it victoriously. For the ordinary people it was not a matter of course that a war was being fought, but it did not appear to them to be something particularly terrifying; war was part of human existence and was tremendously exciting. This was the greatest adventure of the 20th century!

### Salvation through War

If we follow the speeches given at the beginning of the war in 1914, the political and military events stand out and this has the effect of giving the entire thing the character of a decision borne by politicians and soldiers. Yet this image is doubtlessly incomplete. We can only do justice to the July Crisis and above all the unleashing of the war when we look beyond the groups already mentioned. In the process, the differences between the European states by and large balance each other out. It was essentially the same circles everywhere who thought of the war, feared it or longed for it. In fact, most of them did not care how the inevitable came about. Indeed, it was almost a relief when the war was finally triggered. Many people regarded it as a relief only because the tension was over. Simultaneously, anxiety spread. What would happen?

We can add countless almost identical remarks to that made by the Chief of the German General Staff von Moltke during the course of the aforementioned war council in December 1912 in Berlin, according to which he regarded the war as unavoidable and

the earlier it came, the better. The remarks only differed regarding the timing, for Russia, for example, wanted to finish arming only in 1917, whilst Austria-Hungary regarded the war as long overdue. Likewise, remarks can be found that assumed the war could be prevented and painted a picture of catastrophe.

In terms of what happened at the end of July and the beginning of August 1914, it was of considerable importance that not only the socialisation of violence, described above, occurred, but also that the war played a substantial role in school lessons and that military leaders, above all the senior generals, overall enjoyed considerable esteem. The war appeared to be the ideal way of engaging in politics, less in the sense of a continuation and more as a possibility for a new beginning.

The statesmen of Austria-Hungary had kept a very low profile during the July Crisis. This resulted all the more in people writing in newspapers, debating in presentations and discussing on the streets. The most respected newspapers of the Dual Monarchy, the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Pester Lloyd* adopted from the outset very harsh positions and demanded a 'clarification of relations to Serbia'. Other newspapers, the liberal *Zeit*, the *Neues Politisches Volksblatt* and the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* initially adopted a 'wait and see' attitude or partially disapproved. The *démarche* containing the ultimatum to Serbia, however, forced clear opinions to be expressed, and the newspaper publishers certainly knew the mood of their readers very well and took account of this. Now, it was a question of exhibiting a uniform and clear stance. 'The day of the great event has come', were the first words on the front page of the *Neue Freie Presse* on the morning of 25 July. Then came the imperial manifesto and, on 29 July, the feature writer of the same newspaper waxed lyrical about a people who walked, singing, through the streets of Vienna. 'Who did not or did not want to know each other, now open their arms wide, barely know the meaning of the word 'controversy' and fraternise with each another.'<sup>312</sup> A metamorphosis had taken place, as one American historian put it many years ago, from passivity via pacifism to patriotism.<sup>313</sup> Once the war had arrived, victory was invoked. Duty, inevitability, defensive war, unity and God were the slogans, which even the Hungarian opposition, for example, could not avoid using.<sup>314</sup> The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote of the Tsar's world war and of the 'holy cause of the German nation'.<sup>315</sup>

The beginning of the war was above all something that presented a challenge for the intellectuals and that ultimately became an intellectual event of the first order. Nothing would be more wrong than to assume that the people were pummelled with mainstream opinions, a manipulation of the collective mood and, above all, propaganda. Most things fell into place without any help. 'When it actually came, the war found us inwardly, so to speak, already poised to march', said the Viennese doctor Erwin Stransky.<sup>316</sup> All classes, professions and social strata were stirred up to the same extent by this event. Developments here were quickly recognised as the most important event in the lives of these generations and accordingly classified as such. And no-one wanted to be

left out. The fascination was uniform and it proved, as Raymond Aron later formulated it so memorably: humans make history and do not notice that history makes them. It was precisely the intellectual impulse for war that allowed the tremendous enthusiasm for the conflict to emerge that would become a phenomenon of the 20th century. Students, professors, artists, philosophers, writers, priests, atheists, anarchists, political activists, radicals: they all wanted to be involved when the Pax Europaea came to an end. They can be listed at random: Romain Rolland, Henri Bergson, Max Scheler, Ernst Haeckel, Frederic Harrison, Sigmund Freud, Georgi Plechanov, etc. They all saw in the war not something ghastly but change and only a very few could elude the suggestion and instead see something other than an awakening, namely the end of a European century.<sup>317</sup>

This storm on the human consciousness could not be maintained, to be sure, but during the first weeks even those people who had initially hesitated were carried along. A mixture of 'trepidation, fear, curiosity, patriotic enthusiasm and natural unknowingness' spread.<sup>318</sup> The poets, philosophers and, lest we forget, the historians were often the first to formulate central statements on the purpose of the war and its aims. The so-called 'German Manifesto' was signed by, among others, the Baden-born actor and director Max Reinhardt. The young Viennese philosopher of religion Martin Buber was a member of an Austrian committee for the liberation of Russian Jews. Chaim Weizmann, who had been born in Russia and was living in England, later to become the Israeli president, fanatically supported the Entente powers.<sup>319</sup> It was evidently impossible to elude the suggestive power of the event and to resist the collective endeavour to overcome one's own individual standpoint. Any argument was valid in justifying the conduct of war by one's own state and nation. Appeals for moderation remained half-hearted at best.

Even in the case of Stefan Zweig, who described this mood so memorably in *Die Welt von Gestern* (The World of Yesterday) and in whose biography the escape from war and to Switzerland is of course part of literary history, it must be added that he initially succumbed completely to the fascination of the outbreak of war. It was only the feeling of not being needed and a later attempt to stem what he called 'mass passion' that led to his emigration. Initially, however, he wrote to the 'Honourable Ministry of the Interior' in order to express his thoughts on a proclamation of war. It was written, according to Zweig, in a style that was no longer comprehensible in the Viennese district of Floridsdorf. It contained foreign words that the suburbanites of the imperial capital and seat of royal residence did not understand. In order to redress this grievance, namely that proclamations vital to the war effort were written using inappropriate language, Zweig offered his services free of charge for the duration of the war. His offer was rejected twice without any reasons being given. Only then did Zweig's enthusiasm for the war subside.<sup>320</sup>

A friend of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Count Harry Kessler, wrote to Zweig of a 'spiritual awakening'. He claimed there had been a transformation of the entire nation. And being in a position to experience this was regarded as the most important event in the life of this generation. The war, as Stefan Zweig wrote, had 'something magnificent, captivating and even seductive' about it, 'which one could escape only with difficulty'.<sup>321</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal sought in a letter to depict the mood of the beginning of the war with a few words: 'Believe me and tell all our friends that all of us here, right down to the last woodcutter, enter into this matter and in everything that might become of it with a determination, even a joy, that we have never before experienced, indeed had never thought possible.'<sup>322</sup>

Sigmund Freud noted: 'Perhaps for the first time in thirty years, I feel like an Austrian and would like to give it another try with this rather hopeless Empire. [...] The mood everywhere is excellent. The liberating element of the courageous act and the secure backing for Germany contribute a great deal to this.'<sup>323</sup>

In Hungary, poets and writers such as Zsigmond Móricz, Gyulá Juhász and Géza Gyóni carried the masses along with them. The Austrian poet of the working class Alfons Petzold wrote: 'It is now irrelevant whether you are black or red, cleric or comrade [...].' The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* extolled the 'Day of the German Nation' and its editor-in-chief, Friedrich Austerlitz, wrote in the 5 August issue that it was a question of the preservation of the 'existence as a state and a nation' of the German people. In doing so, he adopted part of Kaiser Wilhelm II's slogan to the effect that this was a war of Germanic peoples against Slavs. Another social democratic pioneer, Wilhelm Ellenbogen, detected a common interest among the international proletariat. And he quickly pinpointed the main enemy, namely imperialism and, above all, Tsarism. 'It makes no difference to this barbaric monster to plunge the whole of humanity into the horrid misery of a world war.'<sup>324</sup> Otto Bauer, later one of the far-left theoreticians of Austrian social democracy, rallied to the flag. Karl Renner compellingly declared that a victory for the Entente would be a victory for monopoly capitalism and imperialism, whereas a victory for the Central Powers would certainly bring victory for socialism.<sup>325</sup>

Ernst Karl Winter, later as much a Catholic as a 'left-wing' pioneer, wrote on 19 July 1914 in the periodical *Groß-Österreich*: 'Because we know that only by means of a war can the new and great Austria be born, the happy Greater Austria that satisfies its peoples; that is why we want war.'<sup>326</sup> The historian and publicist Richard Charnatz, in turn, let it be known: only our generation has been permitted to experience something so 'wonderful' and 'this great mood', this closeness, confidence and the 'awareness of one's own mission'. August Fournier, Oswald Redlich, Ludo Moritz Hartmann, Heinrich Friedjung and many other important and well-known historians wrote feature articles and treatises or began presentation tours in order to explain the background to the war. It was naturally assumed that the war was a defensive war, and thus the only war, as

Fournier wrote, that was just 'and that the great moralist and friend of peace accepts, and we must see it through, because – no-one should delude himself – it is a question of our honour, our welfare, our very existence'.<sup>327</sup>

The Viennese Cardinal Friedrich Gustav Piffl supposedly said: 'Go and battle the enemies of God.'<sup>328</sup> On 28 July 1914, a pastoral letter from the Cardinal was read out in the churches of the archdiocese of Vienna: 'Much-loved members of the diocese! These days, severe trials have descended upon our fatherland. [...] Our beloved Emperor [...], revered throughout Europe as a pillar of world peace, has had the sword of war forced upon him. [...] With complete faith in the righteousness of the cause of our fatherland, our sons and brothers go to war.' The Cardinal really struck a chord with almost all his listeners, and if one looked on the streets of Vienna, then this feeling of a just war, which had been unleashed by Austria-Hungary, was palpable. Everywhere one must have had the impression of simultaneously taking part in a carnival and being in a madhouse, because everyone seemed to be deeply satisfied about the war. Enthusiasm blazed up, and it was not only the capital cities that were filled with what was known as 'salvation through war'; the feeling reached the smallest villages. National unity was the slogan of the day. If Kaiser Wilhelm could announce in Germany that 'I no longer know any parties – I now only know Germans', then this was paralleled in Vienna, Budapest or Prague. Suddenly, the workers also felt inspired and took to the streets, but not to demonstrate against the war but rather to express their solidarity. Worries and anxiety about the future seemed to have no place here. The peace movement was almost swept away by the July mood and what was referred to in Germany as the 'August experience'.<sup>329</sup> Bertha von Suttner was dead. Her loyal assistant and the most consistent thinker of Austrian pacifism, Alfred Hermann Fried, surrendered to the difficulties that he was caused in editing the periodical of the Austrian and German peace movement, the *Friedenswarte*, and emigrated to Switzerland. There, however, he was met with the next shock, when he learnt that leading figures of international pacifism no longer even answered his letters. Baron D'Estournelle sent him from time to time newspaper articles in which particularly severe casualties for the Central Powers were marked in pencil. From another acquaintance in the French movement, Fried received a photograph without comment showing the Frenchman in a captain's uniform.<sup>330</sup>

The images that are recorded of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, St. Petersburg and, not least, Belgrade, correspond with each other to a large extent: the unleashing of the war was regarded as a liberating act, and indeed in more than one sense, for it ended four weeks of waiting and a tension from which almost no-one could escape. This feeling of 'finally the time has come' was mixed, however, with all the resentment, all the disappointment, all the frustration of years of negotiations and all the false friendliness that was part of political and diplomatic intercourse. Finally, one could give vent to

one's feelings and construct clear enemy stereotypes. Cries of 'Dole Serbia!' (Down with Serbia!) were heard in Zagreb (Agram): 'Long live the King, long live the Monarch, long live Serbia, down with Vienna!' was chanted in Belgrade.<sup>331</sup> 'Down with [...]!', 'Death to [...]' and similar formulations were now part of the vocabulary of the people in the streets and in the newspapers.

Later, and until very recently, the words that were said and written in summer and autumn 1914 were severely criticised and branded as a terrible derailment of the human spirit. Hans Weigel wrote of the 'disgrace of the spirit of Germany and Austria'<sup>332</sup> and in doing so completely overlooked the fact that the intellectual outcry of 1914 was not a phenomenon that remained limited to these countries. We must go much deeper to find the explanation here.

Attempts have been made to bring into play the human fascination with death and to make use of Sigmund Freud in order to explain this. Maybe even that is too simple or, rather, too complicated, or just wrong. It seems, instead, possible to procure a satisfying explanation using Viktor Frankl and the third Vienna School of Psychiatry. The people in question were searching for the meaning of life and for many of them this was a desperate struggle. It was a question of an awakening, a radical reorientation, liberation from deadly boredom and sterile materialism.<sup>333</sup> Therefore, hardly anyone wanted to be left out and multitudes of intellectuals volunteered to serve as soldiers or at least – like Stefan Zweig – to contribute on the home front. Trakl, Wittgenstein, the degraded doctor Arthur Schnitzler, artists, thinkers, scientists and scholars, lawyers, the rich, geniuses and fools – they were all thrilled and wanted to be involved when the world of yesterday was carried to its grave.

## The First Shot

With the report on the skirmish near Temes-Kubin, the prerequisite for unleashing the war had been provided. However, since no hostilities had actually taken place that could be classified as the beginning of an actual war of weapons, there had to be something else. The fact that it was ultimately the Imperial and Royal Navy that actually began the war and fired the first shells on to Serbian territory, bombarding the interior of Serbia with warships, is one of the many curiosities of the outbreak of the war.

As early as 9 July the first secret order was issued by the Naval Section of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry to Port Admiral Pola. It concerned the Danube Flotilla, which was part of the Navy. The Port Admiral was instructed, in the event that a strengthening of the Danube Flotilla should be ordered, 'to deploy' the necessary complementary crews 'in the quickest – not the cheapest – way possible'.<sup>334</sup> The fact that in the Habsburg Monarchy a ministerial instruction was sent to give no thought

to costs but merely to act as quickly as possible, had to not only be kept secret but could be regarded as positively alarming.

From mid-July the Danube Flotilla prepared itself increasingly for war. Action had to be taken in accordance with the 'Directives for the Initial Activity of the Danube Flotilla in the Event of an Alert or Mobilisation'. Defects on machines and other technical flaws were to be repaired 'with maximum acceleration'. Finally, a dispatch from 21 July stated: 'Strictly secret order for the commissioning of the entire Danube Flotilla can take place on the twenty-third of July. Monitor group to leave Budapest inconspicuously.'<sup>335</sup> On the same day, the cipher key was issued. And on 23 July it was stated: 'Entire Danube Flotilla to be commissioned. ... No announcement.' On this day, the first ultimatum was handed over to Serbia. Only hours later, an order was issued: 'Sail on Friday [24 July] at daybreak.' In view of the circumstance that the units of the Danube Flotilla were of course visible on the river, and the deployment of the monitors and the patrol boats down the river could be observed by many ships on the Danube, it can perhaps be assumed that the deployment of the Danube Flotilla was intended to make the gravity of the situation unmistakably clear to the Serbs and to crank up the pressure a little. Yet neither in the Marine Section nor in the Fleet did anyone seriously expect the Serbs to back down. What would happen next was ultimately fixed on 25 July: following the alert, the Fleet, which was assembled near Petrovaradin, was to leave for Zemun and make contact there with the command of the 14th Infantry Brigade. The operational order was then given to the Commander of the 7th Infantry Division, Field Marshal Baron Kasimir von Lütgendorf, to whom the 14th Infantry Brigade was subordinated. Lütgendorf was responsible for the district of Syrmia. He was to issue orders in Batajnica. From this moment onwards, the bulk of the Danube Flotilla was subordinated to the commander of the Syrmia district. The monitor group on the Sava River, which also belonged to the Danube Flotilla, was also subordinated to Lütgendorf and was to depart for the town of Brčko.<sup>336</sup>

The officers and sailors had been prepared to cooperate with army troops in the event of war. But the collaboration with the land forces and particularly with the artillery had hardly been practised.<sup>337</sup> Exercises were much more popular in which monitors simulated engagements with the enemy, although Serbia did not possess comparable river vessels. What wouldn't they do, however, to prove their affiliation to the fleet? Other things were needed now though.

On 26 July the war had practically started. It was said shortly after midnight that a state of war would exist as soon as hostilities were opened by Serbia or 'as soon as we declare war'. On 28 July the high commands on land and at sea were informed of the declaration of war. No-one mentioned the Serbs having supposedly opened fire near Temes-Kubin, because it was now not a feigned but a real measure that would mark the beginning of the actual war of weapons. The Commander of the 14th Infantry Brigade,



Colonel Emil Baumgartner, scheduled a short meeting, at which the objectives for 29 July were fixed. Three monitors were to sail just after midnight and secure the bridges over the Sava River from Zemun to Belgrade. Further details would then emerge in due course. The meeting ended an hour before midnight. Monitors and patrol boats were made ready for battle. The tugboats on the Danube delayed, however, the departure of the monitors. And the Serbs evidently had no intention of leaving the Sava bridges to Belgrade intact for the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. They had prepared the destruction of the bridges and, while the monitors of the 1st Group were still manoeuvring, Serbian soldiers on the Belgrade side of the Sava River blew up a pile on each of the bridges. Then, twenty minutes after 2 a.m. on 29 July, the monitors *Temes*, *Bodrog* and *Számos* sailing on the Danube down toward the valley had come close enough to Belgrade that from a distance of around 3.5 kilometres and opposite the so-called Great War Island, situated on the Danube at the confluence of the Danube and the Sava, they could fire the first four 12-cm shells of the war across to the Serbian side.<sup>338</sup> The commander of the lead ship of the Danube Flotilla, Commander Friedrich Grund, gave the order to fire from the two-turret monitor *Temes*. The shells were fired in the black of night more or less without aim against the darkened Serbian capital, in a south-easterly direction, as though the intention was for only a few artillery shells to hit their target. Afterwards, the monitors ceased firing, as they could not recognise the impact of the fire in the darkness. At 4 o'clock, the Serbs then shot with rifles from the walls of Belgrade Fortress and from Great War Island at the ships of the Imperial and Royal river flotilla. The monitors responded with shrapnel. They waited to be bombarded with artillery and, in order to provoke Serbian fire and thus be able to detect the Serbian positions, they reduced the distance to Belgrade Fortress and began to fire once more with 12-cm fused shells. The monitors had been informed of their objective: the radio station in Kalemegdan Park and Topčidersko brdo (meaning 'cannoneer's valley') in the south of the city, where the construction of fortifications had been observed. Once again, however, the effect could not be seen, although it was already light, so after five minutes firing was ceased.<sup>339</sup> But the Danube Flotilla had unmistakably issued its very own declaration of war. The next day monitors and patrol boats carried out 'a keen reconnaissance along the enemy border as far as Mitrovica'. The campaign against Serbia had begun.

The beginning of hostilities possessed considerable symbolism: a war had begun that from the first moment on evaded direct observation and gave no indication of everything that was destroyed. Shooting was done blindfolded. At Great War Island the Great War was unleashed. In contrast with the minor damage caused by the few fused shells and the shrapnel, however, the subsequent millions of projectiles would destroy the old Europe.

## An Empire Mobilises

It is not easy to grasp the mood of the broad strata of the population in July 1914. The newspapers reflect only part of this atmosphere, whilst the police reports reproduce another. However, these July weeks cannot be measured by today's standards. The majority of the population of the Habsburg Monarchy continued its daily routines as though nothing had happened and did not allow itself to be bothered by these external events. On 28 and 29 July, Josef Redlich described his impressions of Vienna: 'In the city there is no air of mourning.' But then the waiting started and the mood turned. Redlich wrote on 2 July: 'In Vienna apathy reigns.'<sup>340</sup> On 15 July rumours of war trickled through, but for the time being they did not reach the broader public. Redlich reported on 'three days of crashes' at the stock exchange, i.e. on slumps in prices. But the banks remained calm. On 23 July Friedrich Austerlitz from the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote that the Dual Monarchy 'must set upon Serbia'. Then there was more waiting and worrying that Serbia might be able to evade the war. In that case, according to Redlich, 'the enthusiasm of Vienna's populace would have been for nothing'.<sup>341</sup> This enthusiasm must have been hiding somewhere behind the 'apathy'. Then the tension finally dissolved. When on 28 July Redlich heard the news of the declaration of war, he ran to the telephone. When he spoke the word 'war', the young lady disconnected him in accordance with '§ 4 of the telephone regulations'.<sup>342</sup> In the centre of Vienna, there were large demonstrations. There were cheers and the national anthem was sung, whilst a large crowd of 'evidently Christian-Socialist workers are demonstrating in favour of the war' in front of St. Stephen's Cathedral.<sup>343</sup>

Since 27 July, in all towns in the Dual Monarchy posters had been put up showing the manifesto of the Emperor 'To My Peoples'. That which had been drafted in the Foreign Ministry and signed by the Emperor could be read in eleven languages. This proclamation, however, only mentioned Serbia. The fact that only a few days later the Monarchy was also at war with Russia was not imparted by any imperial proclamations. The same applies to the state of war with France and Great Britain. What was there to be said in another proclamation?

Every inhabitant of the Dual Monarchy was affected directly or indirectly by the unleashing of 'war scenario B' as surveillance and regulatory measures were applied that had consequences for every single individual. These ranged from a ban on exporting horses and the immediate censoring measures to the establishment of a rear military area. In the case of the latter, one could still persuade oneself in the interior of the Dual Monarchy that the war was taking place somewhere far away. Other things, such as the almost instant price increases for food, shortages here and there, and in particular the scarcity of currency, turned this feeling of a distant war that had begun somewhere in the Balkans and then in Galicia into an illusion from the outset. The different territo-

ries of the Dual Monarchy were not, however, affected to the same extent by military measures. The centre and the periphery had their own individual experiences. City and country, garrison town or remote hamlet, were only on a level footing to the extent that they were affected by the first wave of conscription. Initially only comparatively few of the inhabitants were conscripted, but later many would be called up. This was because for 'war scenario B' initially around only 400,000 men had to be mobilised. Only after the addition of 'war scenario R' did the complete mobilisation commence. As a result of the composition of the Imperial and Royal 2nd, 5th, and 6th Armies, which were mobilised for 'war scenario B', initially no order to mobilise was issued by the regular army and the territorial armies to the majority of active soldiers and reserves. On 20 July, however, the mobilisation of the Landsturm (reserve forces) was initiated. As a result of the imperial ordinance and the royal ordinance, respectively, the mobilisation and enlistment of the Landsturm took place in both halves of the Empire. All members of the Landsturm located abroad had to return home immediately. In Hungary, no Landsturm conscript was permitted to leave his district without permission. Even before the general mobilisation on 31 July, the Habsburg Monarchy thus resembled an anthill. Everywhere a tremendous commotion could be observed. The whole thing assumed mass psychotic features of incomparable proportions. In all countries in the grip of mobilisation, the images were so alike as to be almost indiscernible. One person pulled the next one along with him and from day to day this collective feeling and action escalated until the deployment of the regiments.

If we look at how these days were acted out in Vienna, Budapest or Prague, in Upper Austria, Slovenia or Bukovina, then these images contain at most regional or temperamental differences. Everyone surged on to the streets, the newspaper offices and telegraph desks were besieged. Coffee houses were open through the night, not due to business but in order to offer the opportunity to immediately hear about and discuss the latest news, even in the night. Groups, which quickly grew bigger, crowded the streets; marching music was played and songs were sung, for example the Emperor's Hymn and the German patriotic song, the *Deutschlandlied*. There were standing ovations in front of the apartments of the respective regimental, brigade, corps or army commanders. The homages were also paid to the allies. Thus, in Vienna, spontaneous demonstrations took place not only in front of the German embassy but also in front of the Italian embassy. In the case of the Italians, however, the Foreign Ministry apparently orchestrated things a little. The waving of hats and handkerchiefs, jubilation, cheering, excitement – such images were reported from practically every town. On 31 July, on the occasion of the general mobilisation, this mood was given an additional boost. Posters showing the general mobilisation order were put up on 31 July and 1 August. Not everyone understood them. The cheers were already interspersed with tears. In the countryside the alarm bells were ringing. Messengers on bicycle and on

foot visited even the most remote localities and farmsteads. In Hungary, over-enthusiastic gendarmes occasionally hunted the men from the fields and into the barracks, in order that they enlisted quickly.<sup>344</sup> On Sunday, 2 August, most shops were open in order to give the enlisted reserves the opportunity to purchase goods. Those being mobilised were exempted from the restrictions regarding passenger and goods trains that were introduced the same day; they had priority in being transported. From the railway stations the multitudes moved in the direction of the barracks. Some of them could not be accommodated there. All schools, theatres, halls and countless factories were turned into provisional troop accommodation. Thousands waited in the streets, on the squares and on the open ground. They were, as a non-commissioned officer from a German-Slovenian Landsturm regiment so finely formulated it, controlled by a 'feeling of elation, dynastic moods of the first class', 'strengthened by endless amounts of alcohol'.<sup>345</sup>

Those who were eligible to be mustered with their horses naturally came with their animals, since an Imperial and Royal infantry regiment following mobilisation should count approximately 270 horses, an Imperial and Royal field artillery regiment 70 horses and a cavalry regiment 1,150 horses. Field kitchens fed the reservists and Landsturm conscripts. It had been expected that 40 per cent of the Landsturm would enlist, but in fact 98 per cent came. Here and there the nationalities conflict surfaced. In Upper Austria countless Czechs were beaten up and in Linz one person was even killed and several wounded because someone claimed to have heard several Czechs cry 'Long live Serbia!'<sup>346</sup>

It was beyond dispute that victory would be theirs. They admittedly gave less thought to Russia. Some of them did not want to use the first day of mobilisation for putting their private affairs in order. They were already arranged. The day had more meaning for the active soldiers than for the reserves. The expansion of the mobilisation to all corps areas and the mobilisation of the Landsturm up to the age of 42 also proceeded as planned. Now came

- a) the recruits born in 1893, who had not yet been trained,
- b) those who were off duty and the replacement reserves of the currently active years born between 1890 and 1892,
- c) the reservists and replacement reservists born in the years 1882 to 1889,
- d) the members of the Landsturm born in the years 1872 to 1881.<sup>347</sup>

Up to 10,000 additional soldiers were enlisted in this way for an Imperial and Royal infantry regiment with its four battalions, of which approximately half were to be held back in replacement companies. The Landwehr and the Honvéd infantry regiments and, naturally, all other troop bodies also expected thousands of reservists and replacement

reservists each, as well as hundreds of horses. The men had to be briefed after showing their yellow call-up card, medically examined, assigned to units in accordance with their military service book, clothed, equipped and armed. Then drill and battle exercises began, lessons and instruction came thick and fast, in which the provisions of martial law and the use of dressing material were recalled.

All of this happened not in the least in an organised sequence, but rather in a more or less wild confusion that processed within a few days the 415,000 men of the current army as well as the 1.5 million who were mobilised.

The officers, whose families lived in garrison towns close to the front, received the order to bring their relatives to safety. In a very short space of time households were dissolved and furniture was loaded up and sent away.<sup>348</sup> At the railway stations endless farewell scenes occurred, repeated over and over. Josef Redlich wrote: 'To Vienna this morning' (he came from Hodonin [Göding]). 'In all stations there are touching scenes, the people are great, brave, willing, good Austrians.'<sup>349</sup> One of the numerous Russian emigrés who had given himself the alias Leon Trotsky, described what he had seen in Austria in an admittedly sarcastic manner, but he noticed the spontaneity and the enthusiasm for war.<sup>350</sup> Three and a half years later he would negotiate the peace between Austria-Hungary and Russia.

If another piece of evidence were required to demonstrate that the mood in Austria differed in no way from that in Germany, then it would be sufficient to follow the journey of the 30.5 cm mortar division that departed for Belgium and France in order to strengthen the artillery on the German western front. 'Our journey was everywhere a triumphal procession and a foray, but in colourful intensity', wrote Lieutenant Franz Geyer of the Imperial and Royal 30.5 cm Mortar Division No. 2 in his diary.<sup>351</sup> 'In Saxony this turned into warmth, particularly on the part of the females donating gifts. 'We Saxons and Austrians have always stood together, even in 1866. All of us have our heart in the right place. You can see that our lasses are not prudish, the Austrian women neither.' The Saxon women really weren't. Some of them immediately occupied our carriage, wanted and had to see everything, and know everything and would preferably have gone to war with us, 'there you'd surely need us'. If we were fed till we burst in Silesia, here in Saxony we were showered with flowers and confection (but not till we burst). In my train compartment I set up one luggage rack for cigars and cigarettes and a second for the flowers. [...] The Saxons have a passionate, open warmth, as far as I could tell. They remind me of children where we're from, when they were still honest, carefree, without pretence and genuinely obliging, but also without fear of venial sins. [...] The lasses had already prepared business cards or scraps of paper with their name and address on and all of them wanted to be promised a postcard from Paris or Belfort. [...] Of course, we promised them all everything under the sun, because we hoped to be in Paris and Belfort in 14 days.'

The individual examples could be multiplied endlessly, but it all amounted to one thing: these men must have been under the impression that the empires that started this war had been seized by a frenzy that allowed them to articulate unlimited enthusiasm for war. Vienna was, of course, not the Dual Monarchy. But Bohemia, Galicia, Bosnia or Hungary were just as churned up, carried away and excited by the beginning of the war. The attitude of Count Tisza had been clear. But on 28 July Count Apponyi also expressed on behalf of the opposition in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) its solidarity with the decision.<sup>352</sup> In Zagreb, the capital city of the Kingdom of Croatia, which belonged to Hungary, there were demonstrations in favour of the conflict and the war against Serbia was celebrated. In Prague, Czechs and Germans organised a joint demonstration in favour of the war and even if Governor Prince Franz Thun-Hohenstein supposedly had to help things along a little bit in order to avoid any jarring notes, the mood was clear and impressive.<sup>353</sup> Only several weeks later did hidden and also open enunciations of sympathy for Serbia and Russia emerge. In the southern Slavic territories, where there had been wild excesses directed against Serbia, above all in Bosnia, the pro-Serbian populace remained reserved, so that the impression of a unified patriotic mindset emerged. Admittedly, everything was done in Austria-Hungary to suppress remarks in Germany that attempted to characterise the war as a conflict between Germanism and Slavism. Such nonsense really did not fit with the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This state had stepped up in order to defend and consolidate its multinational structure, in which the Slavs enjoyed a prominent place. The view that this war might be a conflict with Slavism may perhaps have been held by one or two German nationalists. But the state taken as a whole now had to focus on the common ground. Nevertheless, people looked about themselves with mistrust.

Detentions and arrests accumulated. Veterans and people's militias voluntarily guarded streets and important buildings. Military patrols wandered through the localities. There were shoot-outs, in which hardly anyone was injured, but which only served to increase the excitement.<sup>354</sup> It then waned and only boiled up again when the troops marched off. Then the territories that had now suddenly become the rear area could go about readying themselves for daily life in wartime.

All provisions that had been prepared since 1867 for a state of emergency now became effective. And there could be no greater state of emergency than a war. In accordance with the law of 5 May 1869 on the 'Suspension of Basic Rights and the State of Emergency', laws and regulations on arrests, expulsions and freedom of the press were rescinded. This emergency legislation had a supplement that stipulated the transfer of the powers of the political administration to the supreme commander of the armed forces and provisions on military jurisdiction, which could be extended to civilians insofar as they had a participatory function in military operations. The provisions of the Law on War Contributions likewise came into effect. The most important conse-

quence of this was the obligation to work because it theoretically included all men not liable for military service who had not yet completed their fiftieth year. Equipment and animals, above all horses, were confiscated as state property. Automobiles, wagons, and buildings of all types at the front and in the rear areas were rented or removed, whilst companies vital to the war effort, including major industrial enterprises, were militarised. Violations of the Law on War Contributions were prosecuted in accordance with the Military Criminal Code. The state secured for itself such dictatorial rights and ensured that the rights of its citizens were as good as abolished in the event of having to enforce military necessity. Some may have regarded it as a comfort that debt claims under private law were deferred for the duration of the emergency decree.

The overreaction and the almost daily encroachments that began with the first day of mobilisation can be explained by the fact that there was almost no experience of such things, even if the Imperial and Royal Army had engaged in a series of partial mobilisations and lived through a warlike operation in 1878. But it was clear to everyone that they had entered into a very different war and that no-one was able to gauge its dimensions. In re-assessing the administrative provisions, consideration was made above all for the fact that the deployment of a large army could only take place under the condition that the transport connections remained secured and the means of communication such as telephone lines were kept intact. Sabotage was expected and, of course, the resistance of individual nationalist groups or entire nationalities. But the exceptional thing about the Austrian half of the Empire was, to quote Redlich once more, '[...]' that here the notion of a dictatorship extended from the outset beyond the technical factor of merely ensuring mobilisation and was understood from the beginning by the decisive elements within not only the army but also the civilian government and the bureaucracy as a political measure in the highest sense of the word'.<sup>355</sup>

If one is searching here for a particular culpability, one would then have to cite all Austrian and Hungarian governments since the beginning of the constitutional era, or at least since 1867, for each of them at least adhered to the emergency legislation or even supplemented it here and there. Yet it was also up to the current governments to serve and to apply the entire apparatus at their disposal. In the process, however, each and every one of them must have been aware that the measures to be applied would necessarily bring with them a clear reduction in the already limited freedoms of the state's citizenry, as well as a period of reaction for the non-German and non-Hungarian nationalities. The death of Franz Ferdinand meant that endeavours to find a trialistic solution in the framework of the constitution of the entire Monarchy became obsolete. Negotiations for a settlement, as had been cultivated with the Ruthenians, could no longer come into operation, and throughout the Dual Monarchy mistrust and spying emerged. This was the difference between the Habsburg Monarchy and other states: the state of affairs did not end with the establishment of readiness and enthusiasm

for war. Soon, distrust on the part of one individual against another arose regarding whether they had gone to war equally willingly for God, Emperor and fatherland or whether it was just for show.

The emergency regulations were only announced to the senior military and administrative organs, and secretly, in an 'Orientation Aid on Emergency Regulations in the Event of War for the Kingdoms and Countries represented in the Imperial Assembly' and in a parallel action in Hungary. The 'Orientation Aid' already envisaged the creation of a new central authority, the 'War Surveillance Office' (*Kriegsüberwachungsamt*). This was established as the executive authority for handling the emergency regulations in the Imperial and Royal War Ministry and had the task of disabling everything that could have negative repercussions for the front and the armed forces in a time of war by means of permanent surveillance of life in the hinterland. The authority assumed its duties one day before the official declaration of war on Serbia.

The rules for implementing the 'Orientation Aid on Emergency Regulations' cited in detail the objects that should be recorded by this complete – or at least that was the aim – militarisation of daily life.

The emergency regulations would be restricted in time, however, and were furthermore bound by the agreement of the Common Ministry and the approval of the Emperor. But for Austria the emergency situation became permanent. This can be explained by the actual ungovernability of Cisleithania. In Vienna, there were at least reflections during the July Crisis on permitting the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) to meet again. However, the German parties were strictly against this and even the cabinet of State Governor Stürgkh feared that the non-German parliamentarians would engage in an unprecedented level of obstructionism during a war against Serbia and Russia. The fear of anti-war rallies or demonstrations could not be dismissed. It was also to be assumed that all Slavophiles would see in the war against the Tsarist Empire an attack on their own ideals. What of the southern Slavs? Would they be prepared to march against Serbia and Montenegro? And what of the Czechs and the Ruthenians? Would they want to wage war against Russia? Now, one could of course expect that the military structure and the might of any military should be sufficient to maintain discipline and enforce orders. Elected deputies in regional diets, the Reichsrat or the Reichstag, however, would by no means be brought to heel so easily. If necessary, they could be deprived of their forum – or arrested. The decision not to convene the Austrian parliament was thus justifiable. In retrospect, however, it must be seriously doubted whether there would have been open resistance. The example of a functioning parliamentarianism in the Hungarian half of the Empire could be cited as counterevidence. Ultimately, it was established that the decision not to convene the Austrian parliament had a devastating impact, as it was understood from this that the government had no faith in the peoples of the Empire.<sup>356</sup> 'With this', as Redlich wrote after the war, 'the imperial government



and the Civil Service Ministry (*Beamtenministerium*) were given free rein to implement the state of emergency exactly in accordance with the earlier blueprints.<sup>357</sup>

On 26 July, together with the decree on mobilisation against Serbia the imperial resolutions on the suspension of citizens' rights were also signed. And on the same day by means of an imperial edict the autonomous states, districts and municipalities not ruled directly by the state were incorporated into the centralised war administration. Every municipality was thereafter obliged to contribute to implementing the emergency laws and all other laws and ordinances relating to the prosecution of the war. Every civil servant working for a business involved in prosecuting the Dual Monarchy's war had to continue his work until he was discharged from his duties by his superior authority. In this way, retirement ages ceased to apply. A special regulation existed for the railway administrations, which not only had to make all material installations available to the war administration but also their entire personnel. The management of the entire railways of the Dual Monarchy was militarised from the first day of mobilisation onwards.

Some measures applied in the actual war zone that were understandable and vital to the war effort, such as the abolition of the jury courts, were extended to the entire Dual Monarchy. For the territory regarded in the broadest sense as the war zone and its rear areas, a special imperial edict came into effect with which the civil administration was transformed into a military one. On 25 July the extension of the powers of the regional military commanders-in-chief was mandated for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia and the Banat.<sup>358</sup> Six days later, the Army High Command was issued with the authority to enforce ordinances for the protection of military interests 'within the official jurisdiction of the political state governor' within the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria including the Grand Duchy of Kraków (Krakau), furthermore in the Duchy of Bukovina, the territory of the District Commissions Bielsko (Bielitz), Fryštát (Freistadt), Frydek (Friedeck), and Cieszyn (Teschen), in the city municipalities of Bielsko and Frydek in the Duchy of Silesia as well as in the territory of the District Commissions Mistek, Nový Jičín (Neutitschein), Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau) and Hranice na Moravě (Mährisch-Weißkirchen).<sup>359</sup> The power of the Army High Command thus extended far beyond Silesia and Moravia.

All of the absolutist measures only hinted at here were designed to ensure that the Austrian and the Hungarian wartime governments could maintain inner order across the entire state territory, suppress all political and nationalist expressions and help to make the work of the War Administration, including the entire war economy, supplying and equipping of the army, a success.<sup>360</sup> Redlich claimed that no state had ever gone so far with militarisation as Austria, above all in order to ruthlessly recruit especially the non-German population for the Monarchy with all means at its disposal. A quantified comparison with other countries – with the exception of Russia – very probably turns out to the detriment of Austria-Hungary.

The measures that were designed to – and in large part did – lead to the absolute rule of the military authorities were only limited when they were met with determined resistance – above all in Hungary. The Hungarian Prime Minister successfully defied the endeavours of the War Surveillance Office to be recognised as a central authority that was also responsible for the Hungarian half of the Empire. The justification for this being a department of the joint Imperial and Royal War Ministry was formally correct, but Tisza did not help the War Surveillance Office to establish its practical effectiveness. Admittedly, this did not mean that the measures applied in the Hungarian half of the Empire were not in the final analysis identical with those applied in the Austrian half. It was only the joint authority that was rejected and not the measures themselves. Hungary established its own form of regulation and control over civil administration through military organs.

In Cisleithania, however, Prime Minister Count Stürgkh regarded the subordination of the civil administration to the military authorities and, above all, the Army High Command as a quite natural measure. In a circular letter that he sent at the end of July 1914 to the state governors in Austria subordinated to him, he wrote: 'For the actual area of the civil service, which has a particular relationship of duty and loyalty to the state, it will be your task to encourage the population, without distinction of class, nation or confession, in the spirit of the concentration of the efforts of all well-disposed, patriotic elements to demonstrate their love for their fatherland by word and deed and to spur it on to willing and eager collaboration in all measures that are designed to serve to secure the involvement and effective application of the armed forces. With similarly purposeful vigour, however, those elements will be opposed and their subversive influence destroyed that assume an indifferent or hostile attitude towards the armed forces and the state for political or whatever other reasons in such decisive and fateful times for the fatherland as these. [...] In this respect and altogether in the entire territory controlled by the state administration, all principles and considerations that, under normal circumstances, would have their independent legitimacy recede entirely into the background compared with the great ends, the achieving of which is now to be attempted with the strength of arms, and thus also the interests of the armed forces, who are deployed to execute the will of the state.'<sup>361</sup>

Stürgkh held the view that it was imperative that the government and administration were at the disposal of the Supreme Commander in this war, and he deeply regretted the fact that Emperor Franz Joseph was not in a position to personally exercise his command.<sup>362</sup> The Monarch was physically simply unable to do so. Even before the annexation crisis, Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been lined up as the Army Supreme Commander. In July 1914, a new commander had to be found. Archduke Friedrich was then selected. He was called to the Emperor on 6 July in order to prepare him for the assumption of his duties. On the evening of 25 July the handwritten imperial letter was

then issued that designated him Commander-in-Chief of the Balkan Armed Forces. It follows that this was not a spontaneous decision, but had rather been carefully thought through and prepared. Two archdukes, two brothers, were available, both of whom were eligible by virtue of their age and their military experience, Eugen and Friedrich. It was immediately apparent that it would not be the new successor to the throne, Archduke Karl, who would exert supreme command. His youth and inexperience were the initial and main obstacles. He enjoyed too little authority and would have been so obviously dependent on others that not even the fiction of a personally wielded supreme command could have been created. Above and beyond that, there were additional dynastic considerations. If the war were not to proceed as planned, the successor to the throne would automatically be associated with the failure and the defeat. This could have placed a huge burden on him. A further circumstance was the fact that the Supreme Commander of the Imperial and Royal Army would perhaps have had to demonstrate equality with the German supreme commander. As Kaiser Wilhelm II himself wielded supreme command over the German armed forces, Archduke Karl would not have been a real counterpart. Though, for that matter, neither would any other archduke.

Of the two available archdukes, Eugen and Friedrich, both grandsons of Archduke Carl, who enjoyed legendary fame as the Victor of Aspern, and adopted sons of that son of Archduke Carl who had achieved most militarily, namely Archduke Albrecht, Victor of Custoza, it was Eugen who was militarily by far the more capable. He was, however, the younger of the two. And one final consideration played a role: The Army Supreme Commander should admittedly enjoy authority but leave the management of operations to the man who was regarded as the undisputed military expert: the Chief of the General Staff for the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf. It was expected of Archduke Friedrich that he would content himself with representative duties and provide the necessary signatures but otherwise let Conrad act. The adjutant general of the Archduke and freshly selected commander-in-chief, Count Herbert Herberstein, who can certainly not be accused of lacking loyalty towards His Imperial Highness, summed up the situation as follows: '[...] the very passive and easily intimidated character of the great lord seems to offer a secure guarantee of a good understanding with the Chief of the General Staff'.<sup>363</sup> Nevertheless, it was not clear from the outset that Archduke Eugen would be passed over, but he removed himself from the running when he explained that he would not be available due to health reasons.

Archduke Friedrich was initially envisaged only as Commander of the Balkan Armed Forces. But after mobilisation was expanded and war scenario Russia arose, Friedrich was entrusted on 31 July with the supreme command of all the Imperial and Royal armed forces at sea, on land and in the air. He was not a bad choice for the reason that he possessed the necessary composure to put up with Conrad, who was impulsive, hectic and decidedly difficult to deal with, and to provide a counterweight to

him. Friedrich was tremendously rich, but was regarded personally as very modest and liked to see himself as a patron.<sup>364</sup> He appeared to be an exemplary family man and was occasionally referred to as the 'Imperial and Royal grandpa'.

Archduke Eugen was admittedly brought into play once more and was supposed to assume command at least in the Balkans. The Emperor summoned him on 1 August. The audience lasted ten minutes. But Eugen turned him down anew.<sup>365</sup> The Balkan armed forces were then placed under the command of the hitherto regional commander for Bosnia and Herzegovina, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek.

Whilst the question of the supreme command was not easy to solve, or was at least dependent on a series of considerations, there was no doubt that the Chief of the General Staff would be the actual focal point and that he ultimately held all threads in his hands. He was thus from the first moment on the hero of the day. Everyone believed in his virtues as a commander and both he and his close entourage were most convinced that he was the only man who could wield supreme command, whilst the actual Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, was regarded more or less as a 'nobody'. For Conrad and the members of the General Staff Office, it was a foregone conclusion that the Army High Command would not have its headquarters in or near Vienna, for it would then have been subjected too much to the influence of the central authorities and also the very active court camarilla. There were also military reasons for locating the Army High Command closer to the front, as it seemed impossible to conduct operations from a long distance away.

From here on in there existed the typical wartime division into two independent domains: the front and the home front. Connected to this was also the creation of new centres of power and the displacement of others. Whereas before the war Vienna had been a single power centre, in which domestic, foreign and military policies were made for both halves of the Empire and which was of course also the focal point of the administration of Cisleithania, now the existing structures admittedly remained in the imperial capital and seat of royal residence, but in the Balkans and above all at the headquarters of the Army High Command new power centres emerged in which the abuse of power played a role from the first day on.

Representatives of the Foreign Ministry and both Ministries of the Interior were attached to the Army High Command and to the Balkan High Command. The representative of the Imperial-Royal Interior Ministry attached to the Army High Command, Baron Eichhoff, described the situation as follows: 'No-one at the time knew what significance this assignment had, at least none of us civilians. The assignment was provided for in the secretive logbook for senior commanders. This logbook was the work of the General Staff, but even they didn't really know what they should do with me.'<sup>366</sup>

If Eichhoff had really not received any instructions, then it was the fault of his Interior Minister, Baron Heinold. The Foreign Minister had certainly given his represent-

ative attached to the Army High Command, Baron Giesl, comprehensive instructions. His task should be to report to the Foreign Ministry on the general military situation and the significant military events as well as significant political occurrences. He should be consulted by the Army High Command in all matters of international law and above all then, when the application of violence extended to the occupied territory.<sup>367</sup> Giesl, however, made himself very quickly and very lastingly unpopular by reporting both earlier as well as more thoroughly on military events than the Army High Command did in its reports to Vienna and the Emperor. And what caused even more problems: Giesl reported more accurately. Accurate information on what happened during the first weeks of the war was anything but easy to come by, and even less so in Vienna.





**5 'Thank God, this is  
the Great War!'**

5. The Supreme Commander of the Austro-Hungarian Army, General of Infantry Archduke Friedrich (left) and Chief of the General Staff, General of Infantry Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, with the most important officers of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command in the first headquarters of the supreme military command in the Przemyśl Fortress at the beginning of September 1914.



**U**ntil mid-August 1914, the Marienbad Spa Orchestra still played the Italian national anthem, alongside the obligatory Austrian 'Emperor's Hymn', the melody of which was the same as that of the German patriotic tune, the 'Deutschlandlied'. It was therefore an audible reply to the declaration of neutrality by Italy that its national anthem was removed from the repertoire. Instead, the political German song 'Die Wacht am Rhein' (The Watch on the Rhine) was played. There were also noticeable changes among the spa guests. Since from one day to the next, the Habsburg Monarchy now suddenly found itself at war with a number of countries, the citizens of those countries were no longer able to leave. The Serbs, Russians, French and above all English, who were particularly frequent visitors to Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad), were examined by the foreign nationals office and were finally divided into categories, depending on whether they were young and healthy, over forty years old, or ill. The latter category was permitted to leave after a brief delay, while the others were confined in and around Cheb (Eger).<sup>368</sup>

In the meantime, feverish work was being conducted in the offices of the general staffs. Although at the climax of the July Crisis, those in high office in the military had been told that they could take leave with an easy conscience since everything had been thoroughly prepared, this meant nothing in practice. At first, the order was to initiate mobilisation and to inspect the feasibility of deployment plans once more. Then from 28 July onwards, work had to begin with regard to relocation and provisioning, and an untried mechanism made to function. Now it was time to activate one or more of the war scenarios.

### **Deployment in Echelons and Packets**

Knowledge of its own military situation and information gathered by the Evidenzbüro (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal General Staff regarding the anticipated hostile powers had been a prerequisite for ensuring, year on year, that the Operations Division of the General Staff had been in a position to implement the deployment plans on a more or less realistic basis. Whenever its own informants failed to pass on the necessary news, the German General Staff delivered what was needed.<sup>369</sup> However, the aim was not only to calculate the strength of its own troops and those of its enemies. The object was also to make time estimations and, above all, to initiate the

operations in such a way that success would be achieved as quickly as possible. The most difficult task was to coordinate the war scenarios with each other.

It was not until the 1880s that work began in Austria-Hungary on driving forward the construction of the railways in a way that also conformed to military strategy guidelines. Responsible for the planning work was the railway office of the Imperial and Royal General Staff. Sometimes, its requests were taken into account – and sometimes not. Lack of money was one of the main reasons for the slow progress. Another was the geography. To the east of Lviv (Lemberg), there were hardly any more serviceable railway lines, and to the east of Chernivtsi (Czernowitz), the tracks ran close to the Russian border and in the event of war threatened to be interrupted rapidly. As far as Lviv, 108 trains could be run daily, while to the east of the city, that number dwindled to just 45.<sup>370</sup> Finally, in the decade before the First World War, updated operational scenarios were supplemented by ever more detailed railway plans. However, despite the assurances from the railway office of the General Staff that they were keeping pace with the times, in reality, there was no question of this being the case. Not least, the zealous pursuit of secrecy meant that while the officers of the railway office developed their plans, no experts were called in from the civilian area. This was also quite difficult, since the Dual Monarchy had two railway ministries, as well as the Imperial and Royal Finance Ministry responsible for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which in both halves of the Empire and in Bosnia preserved the sovereignty of the state over all railways and, as a second important task, monitored the state of construction and operation of the state and private railways. In the event of war, however, priority was in any case to be given to what was prescribed by the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, and not what was planned by the railway ministries, the Imperial and Royal Finance Ministry or any of the railway administrations. In the Austrian half of the Empire alone, there were 15 administrative bodies for the state railway, however. And the whole structure only looked orderly and logical on paper,<sup>371</sup> with eight lines extending outwards from Vienna in a star formation. The 'Westbahn' led to Salzburg and Bavaria; the 'Franz-Josefs-Bahn' led to Bohemia, with an extension to Cheb and Prague; the 'Nordwestbahn' led to Znojmo (Znaim) and Hradec Králové (Königgrätz) with a connection to Saxony and Berlin; the 'Ostbahn' led to Brno (Brünn) and Kolín and again via Prague to Dresden and Berlin; the 'Nordbahn' led to Silesia (Schlesien), Bohumín (Oderberg) and on to Kraków (Krakau), Lviv and the Bukovina region; then the route to Budapest via Marchegg and Bratislava (Pressburg); a seventh line to Budapest via Bruck/Leitha; and finally, the 'Südbahn' to Trieste (Triest) which – even though it was one of the most important connections – was still privately owned. There were therefore seven lines that led from the interior of the Habsburg Monarchy to the deployment zones in Galicia, which were single-track in their end sections, and of which two led through the Carpathians. From Budapest, a single functioning track led to Lviv via Medzilaborce (Mezőlaborcz). The

Russians had over five dual-track and four single-track lines and could send 260 trains daily to the deployment zones.<sup>372</sup>

Four railway lines led to the areas of the Monarchy bordering Serbia, on which 112 trains could transport troops, weapons and supply goods every day. Nationalisation had taken decades and – as with the ‘Südbahn’ – had been impossible to complete.<sup>373</sup> In 1914, all lines were to be used for the deployment and transportation of two million soldiers. Here, two requirements stood out. First, how would it be feasible to transport the troops to be mobilised from the interior of the Monarchy to its borders in the shortest possible time? And second, how could the transport of civilians and supplies of all necessary goods to the hinterland be maintained? It is almost superfluous to add that ultimately, finding an answer to the first question was paramount.<sup>374</sup> The Law on War Contributions of 1912 required the transport companies to uphold the respective service and employment contracts for all employees (with the exception of those who were to be enlisted), in other words, to neither dismiss nor to retire them, and to put their relevant services at the disposal of the military.<sup>375</sup> From this perspective, therefore, everything had been taken care of. However, the crucial point was that even in July 1914, it was still not clear how the transportation movements could be coordinated with each other.

The greatest care was taken in planning a war against Russia. However, significant changes were made from one year to the next. If troops were deployed right up to the border of the Empire, the fear was that the Russians could interrupt this deployment through rapid advances by Cossack detachments. The next consideration related to Romania. If this kingdom were not only to revoke its decades-long affiliation with the Central Powers, but instead, even to enter the war on the side of the Russians, there was a danger that Romanian troops could attack the flanks of the Austro-Hungarian formations. Conrad decided to set the deployment in Galicia further back to the San-Dniester line. The advantage appeared to be obvious: this ‘relocation to the rear’ would help accelerate the deployment, the armies could remain more concentrated, and the Russians would be forced to forge a path westward with heavy losses. The unavoidable consequence was the fact that initially this would necessarily entail the loss of parts of eastern Galicia. At any rate, in the view of the railway office of the General Staff, the relocation to the rear would also cause no problems. After all, this would mean that the trains would not have to be driven so far eastwards. A decisive factor for the calculations of the railway experts was only that the Imperial and Royal troops by necessity be at an increasing disadvantage compared to the Russians from the 15th day of mobilisation onwards, since the Russian forces would be superior at all times thanks to their better-developed railway network. The Austro-Hungarian railways were capable of carrying 153 trains to the deployment zones, while the Russians were in a position to run 260 trains (and more) daily. As a result, the plans were rapidly altered.

The Imperial and Royal 1st Army was assigned the region to the south of the river San and to the west of Jarosław (Jaroslau) as a detraining and mustering area. The Imperial and Royal 4th Army, which was adjacent to its right flank, was to deploy on both sides of the city and fortress of Przemyśl, and the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army was deployed in the Sambir (Sambor) area, with its front sections near Lviv. The troops were then to march in the direction of the border, covering a daily distance of 30 kilometres and, if possible, to reach the originally planned destinations at Rawa Ruska, Kamianka-Strumiłowa (Kamianka-Buska) and Sboriv (Zborów). The sections of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army that were immediately available, in other words, the divisions that were not being deployed against Serbia, were to be detrained to the south of the river Dniester at Stryj and Ivano Frankivsk (Stanislaw). Smaller formations, mainly of the cavalry, were distributed in such a way as to be able to secure the remaining border sections.

One imponderability, however, was the extent to which the divulgence of the Imperial and General Royal Staff plans to the Russians by Colonel Alfred Redl between 1907 and 1913 would affect the Russian deployment and the start of the war. In actual fact, the 'fundamental considerations for the deployment of our armed force in a war against the Triple Alliance' approved by Tsar Nicholas II were in part based on this information.<sup>376</sup> However, the Russians drew up their measures on the basis of the Austrian deployment plans produced in 1909 that Redl had sold to them. And these plans were no longer valid. Aside from all the other elements that had been altered, the Russians could also not know about the 'relocation to the rear'. However, it is unlikely that the 'blinding' of the intelligence service, which to some degree had led to a setback following the exposure of Alfred Redl's activities, would have continued for long. The Evidenzbüro of the Imperial and Royal General Staff certainly knew for its part about establishments of military relevance in western Russia, correctly interpreted the Russian test mobilisation in the spring of 1914 as a preparation for war, and was also clear about the strength and troop distribution of the Russians.<sup>377</sup> Also, the fact that the overall strength of the Imperial and Royal Army was inferior to that of the Russians was general knowledge, and certainly didn't need to be disclosed. Furthermore, it was by no means true that 75 Russian divisions remained undetected, as Count Adalbert Sternberg misguidedly claimed in the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly).<sup>378</sup> A far more serious effect of Redl's activities was that he betrayed people who were operating for the Austrian intelligence service in Russia, and that for many years, he was able to prevent further knowledge from being obtained. In this way, detailed knowledge about the Tsarist Army was reduced at least to the extent that for a time, it was not possible to acquire it through Austria-Hungary's own intelligence activities.

Clearly, in 1913 and 1914, the Evidenzbüro of the Imperial and Royal General Staff was not only working to limit the damage, but also to expand its knowledge indirectly

via Germany. However, the consequences of the betrayal could not entirely be made good. Redl had disclosed secret logbooks, mobilisation instructions, cover addresses and the documents relating to the strategic plans of the General Staff from 1910/11. To conclude that because of this, the war was lost right from the beginning is of course absurd and borders on star-gazing. Naturally, the 'Redl case' was excellently suited to a curious interplay between not always adequate investigative and occasionally sensationalist journalism and the arguments already presented in the autumn of 1914 by the Austro-Hungarian army leaders and general staff members, for whom it was convenient to present the serious defeats of the Imperial and Royal Army in the initial campaigns as a result of Alfred Redl's activities. In actual fact, much had changed by day X + 1, and what had been considered a state secret before the war was relativised during the course of the first hostile action. Equally, and probably far more convincingly, it could be argued that the Russians were finally defeated in the war because the cryptographs working for the Imperial and Royal Army had deciphered the Russian code, and were able to read the dispatches to the headquarters and staffs of the Russian Army almost from the first day of the war onwards. This amounted to around 10,000 orders and reports during the second half of 1916 alone. Despite this, even such an explanation, which does not take into account the political and operative processes, would be an impermissible simplification.

The plans against Serbia were also characterised by a series of imponderabilities. As was the case with Russia, Serbia was 'served' by Redl. And in August 1914, everything suddenly changed. Since it was not anticipated in the Operations Bureau of the Imperial and Royal General Staff that Serbia would begin an offensive across the Danube, but would be likely to control Bosnia from Višegrad and Užice, considerations of massing Imperial and Royal troops on the Danube were definitively revised in favour of deploying in southern Croatia and in Bosnia. However, time and again, there were serious objections to the plan. For example at the Imperial and Royal Military Academy, the training establishment of the General Staff, studies were discussed in May 1913 regarding the 'influence of the geographic conditions on an offensive against Serbia'. Here, the core argument was that in an offensive by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy against Serbia, the conditions for rapid success would only be fulfilled via Belgrade. 'Belgrade is the open gate to Serbia', they claimed.<sup>379</sup> This opinion was also voiced not least by Brigadier Alfred Krauss who would later be a successful military leader in the world war, and who at that time was the Commander of the Military Academy. However, Conrad and the regional commander of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General of Artillery Potiorek, had decided on a concentration south of the Sava from Mitrovica to Sarajevo. Here, the matter would have to be put to rest, and the railway deployment was also to be planned accordingly.

The notion had already begun to be popular early on that preparations must be made for a rapid strike against Serbia, while no allowance should be made for an interven-

tion by Russia or Italy.<sup>380</sup> This concept of rapidly bringing down Serbia, regardless of the development of the eastern front, ultimately came to form the basis of all specific strategies, and in the plans for 'war scenario B', as well as in those for combined war scenarios, additional troops for the Balkans were still envisaged. Naturally, extensive deliberations were also made as to what would happen when after the start of a war against Serbia 'war scenario R' were suddenly to be put into action. In this case, the 'B Echelon', which had the strength of an army, and which in the event of an exclusively Balkan conflict was to reinforce the 'Balkan Minimal Group', was to change direction and be relocated to Galicia. The railway procedures were outlined and the time calculations made. In such an event, the most advantageous option, as Conrad von Hötzendorf reported to the Emperor on 2 April 1914, would be for the B Echelon, together with the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, to be 'transported northwards prior to the 5th day of mobilisation'. However, the relocation must 'be conducted at least prior to the 16th day of mobilisation B[alkans]'.<sup>381</sup> Conrad acknowledged neither the misgivings of other General Staff officers about the direction of the operation in a war against Serbia, nor the objections made by the railway office of the Imperial and Royal General Staff regarding the actual feasibility of a redeployment in the event of a subsequent declaration of war by Russia. Here, an argument was applied that would be repeated time and again like a Tibetan prayer wheel: the B Echelon could be reorganised without any problem. This at least was the case until it was put to the test at the beginning of August 1914, and all plans were thrown into disarray.

The declaration of war against Serbia first affected those troops who counted among the 'Balkan Minimal Group'. However, since at this point in time, a war with Russia was pushed to the periphery of political and military thinking and the desire on the part of the Emperor for a war against Serbia counted as an order, the B Echelon, the strategic contingency group, was mobilised with the aim of using it in the Balkans. Overall, seven corps were mobilised, which comprised a total of 20 infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, as well as six Landsturm (reserve force) infantry brigades. With the sole aim of gaining surplus forces, the military leadership also ordered the mobilisation of the III Corps ('Graz'), particularly since there was concern that Czech troop units might mutiny. If this were to occur, the deployment of troops from the VII Corps ('Prag') or the IX Corps ('Leitmeritz'), who were intended for the Balkans, could perhaps be hampered or only be partially feasible. Conrad was also unclear about the position of Italy. He harboured a traditional mistrust of the country, which became complete following the sudden death of the Chief of the General Staff Alberto Pollio, who had been friendly towards Austria. He was therefore unwilling to take any risks. The III Corps also provided an additional three infantry divisions and two Landsturm infantry brigades.

From the forces summoned by seven corps – if the III Corps are for a moment ignored – and from troops of Bohemian, German, Hungarian, Croatian and other prov-

enance, three armies, the 5th, 6th and 2nd Armies, were formed.<sup>382</sup> They were also intended to suffice if Montenegro were to declare war on the Habsburg Monarchy, as was anticipated. However, with these large army units, a disproportionately high number of troops had already been provided for the theatre of war in the Balkans. What would happen, though, in the event of war with Russia? Now it became all too clear that the Imperial and Royal Army, as with many other areas of the state, had stagnated. In terms of absolute figures, the resources available, namely around 1.8 to 2 million men, looked highly impressive. However, the number of Russians, Serbs and Montenegrins amounted to double that of the Imperial and Royal forces.<sup>383</sup> Furthermore, clearly neither the Germans nor the Austrians had correctly estimated the mobilisation capability and strength of Russia. At any rate, they had failed to detect no less than 16 Russian divisions, with hundreds of thousands of men. In 1914, Austria-Hungary had fewer battalions than in 1866, and this despite the fact that the population had grown by around 20 million. As a result, it lagged way behind the German Empire, France and Russia in comparison. And even when the conscripts for the Landsturm aged between 32 and 42 were added to the regular troops of the Imperial and Royal Army, the Landwehr (Austrian) and the Honvéd (Hungarian) standing armies, in the event of a war on two fronts, the Imperial and Royal Army was inferior in number to its enemies.

However, the absolute figures were still no reflection of the strength, potential impact and, above all, the morale of the troops. And it was precisely with regard to the latter that there were hardly any complaints during mobilisation and departure. From a vast number of reports, there are only a few that describe demonstrations flaring up. The mass of reports sent to the Ministry of the Interior described calm, patriotic behaviour and enthusiasm. When complaints were believed to be heard, or inscriptions were found against the war, responsibility was laid at the door of southern Slav and a few Czech troops. However, the incidents remained without any significant consequences, and occurred primarily while troops were being loaded on to trains and during transportation to the front, which often lasted many days. The Imperial and Royal Ministry of the Interior knew of only nine cases of desertion in Bohemia, 124 in South Tyrol, 133 in the Austrian Littoral and, noticeably, 600 to 700 cases in Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>384</sup> These incidents in August 1914 are relativised when one compares the number of such cases with the hundreds of thousands of soldiers about whom there was nothing to report. For this reason it was of no consequence to the transportation of the battalions and squadrons to their de-training areas close to the front when perhaps 'Long live Prague' was inscribed on a carriage. On most of the carriages rolling southwards, inscriptions such as 'Serbia must die' ('Serbien muss sterbien') or a similar phrase taken from the traditional auto-suggestive rhymes commonly used by the Austro-Hungarian military. In other armies, other phrases were written, and the purpose was the same – only the target varied.

The transportation of people, weapons and materials was initially interesting for quite another reason, however, since during this process, the de facto decision regarding the military start of the war was made. The fact that the railway office of the General Staff was faced with a not insignificant task is made evident by the sober figures. For the deployment of the Austro-Hungarian Army, which was divided into three echelons – regardless of the focus – around one-and-a-half million men, one million horses, 200,000 tonnes of supplies and, furthermore, all the necessary weaponry had to be transported. What Conrad had not sufficiently taken into account in his 'relocation to the rear' of the deployment zones in Galicia, which had been agreed with the railway office, was the fact that suddenly, new detraining stations had to be found, the smaller of which presented a trivial problem: their platforms were too short for the military trains with their standard length of fifty carriages, making it necessary to shunt back and forth.

The speed of travel would also prove to be a problem. Due to the lack of uniformity of the existing rolling stock, and the fact that most of the carriages were not equipped with continuous brakes, it could be assumed that the trains could only travel at around 25 km per hour.<sup>385</sup> Even in cases where they would certainly have been capable of travelling faster, they were unable to do so, since this would have brought the timetables into disarray.

However, the problem of the condition of the railways and the logistics was in many ways superimposed by the problems presented by time deadlines. It was not enough to simply send the soldiers to the station and have them driven away. Locomotives and carriages had to be provided, only very few of which were in storage in sheds. They all had to be removed from normal passenger and goods transport. Here, every date had to be precisely calculated, since from that day onwards, civilian passenger and goods transport would have to be reduced or even discontinued. It was therefore not only the timetable that determined the deployment, but also the special features of 'Kakania' (an ironic name for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) described above.

One could be forgiven for assuming that with the initiation of mobilisation, efforts would have been made to increase the number of personnel to the level required, provide additional equipment and then to muster and depart. Yet nothing of the kind happened! The order for mobilisation for the war against Serbia was issued on 25 July, although mobilisation was not officially due to begin until 28 July. The reason for this was that a weekend fell in between. Also, prior to the conscription of the reservists, intensified monitoring of the borders and above all transport had to be introduced within what was known as an 'alarm period'. According to the regulations, such an alarm must be activated at least 24 hours before the mobilisation itself.<sup>386</sup> Instead of opting only for the briefest period of time, however, this period was in fact extended. This was exacerbated by a further factor: the first day of mobilisation was regarded as a free day, during which all soldiers to be mobilised had the opportunity of putting their private affairs in



order. This measure was no doubt highly sensible and public-spirited, but at the same time, it did cost 24 hours, and in some cases led to confusion, since the reservists already wanted to enlist and crowded into the barracks, but since they found that no accommodation had yet been prepared, they were forced to camp outside. The infantry was then ready to march relatively quickly. The cavalry had to be ready within five days and the artillery within seven days. This meant that – taking into account the times for railway transport – the large army units would only be ready for operation between the 15th and 18th day of mobilisation. Naturally, all this was no surprise, but could be read in every deployment plan, and anyone familiar with the manual would have known about such factors as the alarm period or the free day. At that time, no criticism at all was made of the fact that the Imperial and Royal armies needed so long to become ready for operation, since in comparison, they were still faster than their enemies. It is only to our eyes that the periods described appear to be long – too long. It was also certainly not in Conrad's power, or that of anyone else in the military hierarchy, to initiate mobilisation earlier. Shortening the alarm period would however have been just as possible as a more rapid completion of the railway deployment.

Initially, nothing further happened following mobilisation of the Balkan Minimal Group and the B Echelon, since the A Echelon was not yet to be mobilised. However, it was impressed upon the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army that formed the B Echelon, General Böhm-Ermolli, that he would immediately have to relocate his army from the Balkans to Galicia in the event of war against Russia. Böhm-Ermolli was already summoned to Vienna on the night of 26 July, where he was not only to take command of the army, but together with his corps commanders – Tersztyánszky (IV Corps), Hugo Meixner (VII Corps), von Hortstein (IX Corps) and Colerus (III Corps) – was also explained the fundamental operational principle that formed the basis of the campaign against Serbia.<sup>387</sup>

On 30 July, the news came ever thicker and faster that Russia had begun to mobilise. On hearing this, Conrad von Hötzendorf presented an application to Emperor Franz Josef for the general mobilisation of all parts of the Imperial and Royal Army. However, it was again necessary to sit and wait. A further wait was in fact unavoidable, since now, the railway office suddenly needed 24 hours in order to be able to process all the activities arising from a general mobilisation and the redirection of the B Echelon. On the following day, it was announced that the first alarm day for the forces intended for deployment against Russia could not be called until 2 August, with the first day of actual mobilisation not before 4 August.<sup>388</sup> What was one to think of the assurance that had earlier been repeatedly given, that at least until the 5th day of mobilisation the redirection of the B Echelon would cause no problems?

In the German Empire, however, full mobilisation was not only initiated on 31 July, but demands were also made of Austria-Hungary to do the same. This was also

promptly ordered, although precisely in the way specified by the railway office. This also made it clear, however, that it was not Serbia, but Russia that would be the main enemy, and that as a result the mass of the Imperial and Royal armies, in other words, the A Echelon and the strategic reserve, the B Echelon, would have to deploy to the north-eastern front.

Discussions were held until just before midnight, and particular heed was paid to the pressure from the German General Staff, which vehemently advocated making the Balkans a subsidiary theatre of war. Conrad had to decide. However, he was only too aware of what his supreme commander wanted – to first bring down Serbia – and also had a plausible argument to hand. According to the information given by the head of the railway office of the General Staff, Colonel Johann Straub, the railway system would no longer be able to cope if deployment to the Balkans were to be immediately broken off and the direction of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army suddenly changed. It would also be of no benefit, since the troops destined for Galicia would arrive on time despite the detour via the Balkans.<sup>389</sup> Not even those troops who were still waiting to be transported could be taken directly to Galicia, since this would cause formations and large army units to be torn apart, with one regiment of a brigade arriving in Serbia while the other was rolling towards Galicia, for example. Only more sections of two divisions could be redirected. Yet according to the railway office, the mass of the B Echelon would have to travel to the Balkans. And this is what then happened, even though by 31 July only very few transports had been made. Now, the price was being paid for the fact that the plans for the railway deployment had not been fundamentally changed since 1908, but had instead only been adjusted and updated rather than being completely re-written.<sup>390</sup> As the evidence has already long since shown, on 30 July only 31 trains departed in the direction of the Balkans, with 42 trains leaving for the same destination the following day. This amounted to roughly four divisions, in other words, slightly more than one corps.

Certainly, it is not to be expected that a regiment that had already been entrained could not be brought back to its peacetime barracks only in order to be entrained once again. This would not only have made no sense in terms of transportation. For reasons of morale and the popular mood at home it was not possible to turn around entire large army units. After all, the troops had been sent off with flags, flowers and brass bands, and with enthusiastic participation by the local population. However, it was equally certain that transports could be halted and redirected. Here, it was not only a question of completing the transports without the diversion via the Balkans and of keeping up appearances. The main aim was to be ready for operation earlier against the Russians on the north-eastern front; it was a matter of at least one week, and, as it would later transpire, of far more than that. However, no-one recommended turning back – least of all the railway office. And Conrad seemingly bowed to the judgement of Colonel Straub and

his deputy, Major Emil Ratzenhofer. He still did so under the assumption – or at least, in the hope – that Serbia could be brought down so quickly that sufficient troops would be certain to be available against Russia in good time. As a result, on 31 July, the Commander of the 2nd Army, General Böhm-Ermolli, was told to his surprise that his army was to continue to be deployed in Sylvania.<sup>391</sup> Only the III Corps ('Graz') and parts of the IX Corps ('Leitmeritz') were to be immediately directed to Galicia. Since, however, the III Corps was anyway in many ways only a contingency force with which the 2nd Army had one corps too many, for Böhm-Ermolli this meant the loss of only around 15,000 men. On 1 August, the staff of the 2nd Army arrived in Petrovaradin (Peterwaradein).

In the meantime, the holidaymakers and summer visitors had to a large extent been transported back home. The express and long-distance passenger trains had been driven in several sections. One long-distance passenger train from Salzburg to Vienna even had to be driven in 11 sections, in order to at least bring all travellers to Vienna with standing room only.<sup>392</sup> From the end of July onwards, the majority of the rolling stock was claimed by the military. On 27 July, the Orient Express trains were discontinued, and soon afterwards, all sleeper carriage and international train routes were shut down. Naturally, this only applied to civilian train passengers, since the sleeper and restaurant carriages were also needed for the deployment. As the captain in the General Staff Corps, Edmund Glaise von Horsteneu, described: 'With the blessing given by my mother in my heart, I entered a hackney carriage [...] with the two wooden cases and one sleeping bag in conformance with the regulations [...] and drove to the Nordbahnhof station, where there was an incredible to-ing and fro-ing [...] I just managed to grab a bed in a sleeper carriage [...] When I exited from the compartment the following morning, we had already left Kraków behind.'<sup>393</sup> There was no end to the farewells. 'With great ceremony, the regiments were deployed to the field', Glaise-Horsteneu reported. 'In brand new field uniforms, their dashing caps decorated with the traditional acorn leaves, they passed by the War Ministry and the Army Supreme Commander Archduke Friedrich, accompanied by the eternally stirring sounds of the Radetzky March [...] Sometimes, although not often, the slender figure of Conrad von Hötzendorf appeared behind the portly, beer-bellied form of the Archduke.'<sup>394</sup> From there, the soldiers continued to the stations.

The soldiers must have frequently had the impression that they were sent off by the cheers of the whole monarchy. They were offered presents, and evidently accepted anything that they were given. 'Yesterday, I saw a company marching, and almost every soldier had a huge pickled gherkin in his hand', wrote one person who remained at home. 'I saw a girl in the procession (the soldiers are always accompanied by their girls), arm in arm with her soldier, carrying his rifle over her shoulder to relieve him of the load; it was a moving picture. – It is also interesting to observe that almost all differences in rank have disappeared'.<sup>395</sup>

Josef Redlich, the legal scholar and member of the Reichsrat, accompanied his brother to the station and noted: 'Then accompany Fritz to the Nordbahnhof, where there were moving scenes as thousands of reservists departed in three express trains. The crying mothers, women and wives: how much more wailing is yet to come'.<sup>396</sup>

Many people, and not least high-ranking officers, believed in a short war. 'And so now soon departure from Vienna', wrote the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 1st Army, General of Infantry Baron Viktor von Dankl. 'I hope that we shall return, successful and happy, in November at the latest.'<sup>397</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm for the war, the mood was not equally jubilant everywhere. Concern and grief were also expressed in particular, since from the moment that the scale of the war between the alliance partners became evident, there was no doubt that the conflict would be widespread, and that it would lead to heavy losses. 'The mood in Vienna was more sombre', wrote lieutenant of the artillery Constantin Schneider, who came from Salzburg. 'Here also, the same jubilation from a vast crowd of sensationalist people prevailed outwardly; here in the city, it was even more intense than among the people living in the country. On a side track, the train was re-routed on to the state railway line (to Budapest) [...] General Staff officers from the War Ministry visited us here. They told us about the gloomy mood that arose among the higher-ranking circles as a result of the Russian declaration of war.'<sup>398</sup>

Clearly, the jubilation was not the same everywhere. Captain Wenzel Ruzicka, who passed through Vienna with a marching company of Infantry Regiment No. 75, arrived at the Franz-Josefs-Bahnhof station at 2 p.m. on 17 August. 'We march into a girls' school in the 2nd district, next to the NW station. The roads are almost empty of people, and there is a disconcerting silence. Only here and there are flowers and cigarettes thrown down to us from a window.'<sup>399</sup> On the following day, the journey continued by ship to Budapest.

However, some events did not fit into the picture of a modern war, quite apart from one that was to be waged with fierce determination. On the evening of 25 July, the 68-year-old Chief of the Serbian General Staff and designated leader of operations of the Serbian Army, Vojvoda (Field Marshal) Radomir Putnik, was arrested. He had travelled from Gleichenberg in Styria, where, as in previous years, he had been on a four-week health cure, and now wished to return to Serbia. However, his presence in Styria had been the cause of countless rumours, and was also anything but uncontentious. He was also said to have been the subject of death threats.<sup>400</sup> However, Putnik clearly wanted to create the appearance of an entirely normal summer by continuing his cure visit, just in the same way as Conrad had done with his holiday during the July Crisis. Only on the day of delivery of the Serbian note of response to the Austro-Hungarian *démarche* did Putnik depart. In Budapest, however, he was already awaited. The Commander of the IV Corps, General of Cavalry Carl Tersztyánszky, had informed

Prime Minister Tisza that the plan was to arrest Putnik, which would be advantageous in several ways to the Imperial and Royal Army. Tisza agreed but also wanted to hear the opinion of the Foreign Minister. The opinion was delayed. And so the Vojvoda was detained in the Budapest military casino. In this way, Austria-Hungary doubtless had a special hostage, and if the authorities had known that Putnik was even rumoured to have the keys to the safe in which the mobilisation plans were kept in Belgrade, they would have been all the keener to hold on to him (and for longer). Evidently, the assumption in Belgrade was that the Austrians would not release the Chief of the Serbian General Staff, and the safe with the deployment plans was forced open.<sup>401</sup> However, the Foreign Minister had his doubts, and surprised the political and military leadership in Budapest with the order that the Serb should be released immediately. On 26 July, the country was not yet in a state of war. As a result, it was not so easy to detain the Chief of the Serbian General Staff. A decisive reason for Berchtold's change of mind was almost certainly the attitude of the Monarch. Emperor Franz Joseph demanded the immediate release of Putnik. Not only that: he also ordered his Military Chancellery to deliver a letter to War Minister Krobatin that stated, among other things, that regardless of who issued the order for detention, 'You shall notify him at once of my utmost disapproval. I expect from all generals of high rank independent, rapid, but at all times tactful and never rash action.'<sup>402</sup>

A further example served to underline the fact that the attitude of the Monarch was bound to a particular code of honour. On 25 August, the War Ministry wanted to know whether for certain troop formations of the Imperial and Royal Army, rulers or family members of the ruling dynasties would continue to function as proprietary colonels whose states were now at war with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and whether these formations should still be known by their current names. There was Infantry Regiment No. 27 'Leopold II. König der Belgier', Dragoon Regiment No. 12 'Nikolai Nikolajevitsch, Großfürst von Russland' or Hussar Regiment No. 12 'Eduard VII. König von Großbritannien und Irland, Kaiser von Indien'. On the following day, Franz Josef made his decision known: he ordered with immediate effect that the regiments should continue to bear their names. However, the rights to ownership would be suspended for the duration of the war, and in fact, from the first day onwards, the names of the owners were omitted from the names of the regiments. The same also happened in other countries – with the exception of the names of the respective allies and armies.

To return to the railway deployment: it had been calculated that around 300,000 carriages would be needed for the full deployment of the Imperial and Royal Army. These were not available.<sup>403</sup> A process of entraining, transportation, return and renewed entraining was therefore required. There were infantry trains, cavalry trains and artillery trains, as well as medical services trains. In order to maintain an overview of the trans-

portation at all times, the trains had to travel at approximately the same speed. Even transports on very well developed, double-track routes were in principle to travel no differently to those on a narrow-gauge mountain railway. All transports had to adapt their speed to that of the weakest locomotives and the oldest brake mechanisms.<sup>404</sup> For this reason, the trains were not permitted to travel even at the calculated speed of 25 km per hour, but at just 18 km per hour – the speed of a bicycle! By contrast, the German railway deployment was conducted at an average speed of 30 km per hour.<sup>405</sup> Furthermore, no train was permitted to have more than 100 axles (equalling fifty carriages), even though on some routes, trains double that length could have travelled. Here, the detraining facilities again played a role, which were not longer, and which were certainly too short for a relocation to the rear. However, the delays to the transport were not only due to the moderate speeds and short trains, as well as the separation of trains for mountainous routes, but also to the 'food and water provision stops', which lasted six hours on average, and which were mandatory. And this was the case even though the field kitchens accompanied the troops and the 'water provision' would not have needed to take so long. The military argument for the train lengths and low speed of travel was that in this way, most of the routes could be travelled at an even speed, and a war-ready infantry battalion, an artillery battery or cavalry squadron could be entrained in the fifty carriages.<sup>406</sup> "For 40 men or 6 horses" was written on the carriage<sup>407</sup> wrote Egon Erwin Kisch. However, the carriages with which the soldiers were transported had been labelled this way long before the war. 'We laid our rifles, knapsacks, and bread bags under the bench and closed our eyes.'

Norman Stone, who has studied the deployment of the Imperial and Royal Army in 1914 extensively, calculated from the example of the 3rd Army command under General of Cavalry Rudolf von Brudermann that the journey from Bratislava (Pressburg) to Sambir in Galicia took a full five days – the same length of time that a healthy person would have needed to cover the route on foot.

The Imperial and Royal 4th Army command (under General of Infantry Baron Moritz von Auffenberg) required forty hours for the journey from Vienna to the Przemysł region, three times as long as the trains travelling according to the peacetime timetable.<sup>408</sup> And the command of the IX Corps ('Leitmeritz'), which was to muster in the Ruma region in Sarmia, also travelled on well-developed tracks and needed three days and three nights to cover the distance.<sup>409</sup> 'Wherever possible, we officers sought the railway restaurant and left our meals from the field kitchen to our servants and stablemen', noted Brigadier Zanantoni. 'Often, this was only possible with difficulty, since the trains, which were mostly very long, frequently stopped far away from the restaurant rooms [...]' In Kolín, Brno, Gänserndorf, Bratislava and Subotica, however, the gentleman officers could 'take our meals in the restaurant localities'. Even so, the staff of the IX Corps arrived in Ruma in a 'very sorry' state.

For the soldiers, the transportation was usually also a unique experience. They were saddled with vast quantities of food – an expression of helpless gratuity. ‘In the carriages, it began to stink horribly’, noted Landsturm NCO Johann Hartinger. ‘The Hungarians outdid themselves in bringing provisions. The people were so stuffed full that they vomited out of the carriages’. ‘There was drinking and singing.’<sup>410</sup> In most cases, the soldiers did not care how long the journey lasted, despite the fact that hardly anyone particularly enjoyed the days-long railway journey. Understandably, they were curious as to where they were heading, but this information was only given to them after de-training, since it had, after all, become a military secret.

If one attempts to follow the events of this railway deployment, one very quickly comes across a series of inconsistencies, and furthermore, above all a considerable exercise in deception enacted by Conrad and the two railway specialists, Colonel Straub and Major Ratzenhofer, after the war. The latter two should be exculpated, at least partially, since their vehement defence of the deployment and transport in echelons and packets, as well as the insistence that the deployment already begun should continue, originated not least from their loyalty to Conrad. He, however, had not in fact overlooked anything. Yet he could very well be accused of bending to the illusion of a rapid victory in the south, of having the desire of the Emperor for the overthrow of Serbia in mind, and of only becoming aware of the reality of the Galician theatre of war when it was already too late.

With this, we return once more to the consideration of why the deployments towards the Balkans and Russia were so uncoordinated, and why Conrad, at a point in time when he knew that war would also break out against Russia, in fact took no measures to redirect the B Echelon and to accelerate and increase the efficiency of the deployment against Russia. And that was not all: Conrad maintained priority for the Balkans. He used the information from Colonel Straub and Major Ratzenhofer, to the effect that it would no longer be possible to redirect the B Echelon, to continue with deployment as though Russia would never actually intervene in the war, or if so, then only much later. And yet to call this an illusion would be an understatement.

On 29 July, Conrad had already reported to the Emperor in writing that ‘tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow at the latest, it is to be expected that we shall enter the war against the major powers’. On 31 July, the same Conrad, however, reported to his German counterpart, Moltke: ‘Today, we are still not sure whether Russia is only making threats, which is why we shall not be forced back from our action against Serbia.’<sup>411</sup>

At the same time, from 28 July onwards, no-one who was halfway informed could doubt any longer that Russia would intervene in the war. In the early morning of 31 July, news of the general mobilisation spread like lightning, and General of Cavalry Baron Viktor von Dankl, who was the designated Commander of the Imperial and Royal 1st Army, noted in Innsbruck: ‘Thank God, this is the great war!’<sup>412</sup> This was

at least an honest reaction. During the afternoon, music already began to be played to celebrate this great war in a fitting manner. However, Conrad ordered that the Balkan deployment be allowed to run right through the middle of the Russian deployment where necessary. Thus, while the VIII Corps ('Prahá') was directed to the Balkans, the XIV Corps ('Innsbruck') was sent to Galicia. When congestion occurred and transportation difficulties arose, the 'B transports' were expressly to have priority over the 'R transports'. On the same day, 31 July, Conrad was assailed with requests not to send too many troops to the Balkans. The Balkans, he was reminded, had now become a subsidiary theatre of war. Moltke, Bethmann Hollweg and von Jagow also added their voices to the chorus. Finally, Kaiser Wilhelm sent a telegraph to Emperor Franz Joseph requesting urgently that the main force be used for the Galician theatre of war. Count Tisza came with the argument that an intervention by Romania on the side of Russia and Serbia could only be prevented if Austria-Hungary were to make its presence felt as strongly as possible on the Russian front. The German military attaché in Vienna, Colonel Count Karl Kaganeck, suggested that a delegate from the German deployment brigade should travel to Vienna immediately and see the Austro-Hungarian measures for himself. Although the suggestion was in fact an affront, it must have been made in a very firm manner, making it impossible to react with a brusque rejection. However, the visit was delayed until 7 August.<sup>413</sup> Franz Joseph demanded to see Archduke Friedrich, who was still the Commander-in-Chief of the Balkan Armed Forces, together with the Chief of the General Staff. After the audience, Archduke Friedrich divulged very little about the content of what was said, but did indicate that the Emperor intended to fulfil the wish of Wilhelm II.<sup>414</sup> However, this was by no means the case, since it was Franz Joseph in particular who was convinced that Russia could still wait a while. It will now never be possible to fully reconstruct what went through the Austrian Emperor's mind, although a statement made by Franz Joseph in January 1915 at least gives pause for thought. On 9 January 1915, Franz Joseph told his Adjutant General, Count Paar, that he, Franz Joseph, had made an error by focussing on the overthrow of Serbia instead of giving absolute priority to the north-eastern theatre of war. Also, the armies should not only be prepared for defensive action, but also attack. This – as the Emperor also realised in retrospect – was also an error. He acknowledged that this was so.<sup>415</sup>

At any rate, Conrad did nothing to halt the deployment, and clearly acted in accordance with the basic Napoleonic principle: *ordre – contreordre – désordre*. As a result, the orders remained the same, and perhaps with a superior force overall, it would be possible to quickly bring down Serbia or at least to decimate the main Serbian body to such an extent that it would become inoperative for a longer period of time. It would then still be feasible to proceed against Russia in a cohesive manner. In principle, this is the only possible explanation for Conrad's apparently consistent inconsistency, for wanting to change one thing here, and another there, for bringing something forward



in time, then bringing it back again, and for agreeing first with one person, then with another. By the time he had realised that he had made a mistake, it was too late. Ultimately, Conrad also wanted to accommodate the wishes of the German ally in a particular way. Instead of relocating the deployment back to the interior of Galicia and remaining on the defensive, as he had originally envisaged in the spring and also as late as mid-July 1914<sup>416</sup>, he bowed to German pressure and to his own doctrine, allowed at the last moment the deployment to be conducted after all, where it was still possible, in the areas close to the border, and aimed to begin the offensive in the east as soon as possible. In any event, on 31 July 1914, everything had become irrevocable: the over-complete deployment against Serbia, the delayed deployment against Russia and the intention of attacking in both Serbia and Russia as soon as possible.

### Archduke 'Fritzl' Goes to the Front

Although the deployment of the Balkan forces was already in full swing, there was still no clarity as to the highest level of command and, what is more, the mobilisation of the A Echelon, the main force, had already started and the declaration of war had been delivered to Russia, without the chain of command having really been agreed. With the creation of the Army High Command, a recognisable military leadership may have been installed, but there were still other high commands, in particular the Balkan High Command. Furthermore, a decision had to be made regarding the role of the Austrian and Hungarian governments. Should they be restricted to simply being informed occasionally, or could they also assert their influence within the framework of the command leadership? The Army High Command, however, had no plans whatsoever to allow others to participate in the higher command, and also wanted to drastically limit the flow of information. Even the Prime Minister should no longer be informed. Count Tisza then complained to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor and demanded to be given daily reports on the situation by the Chief of the General Staff or by the Military Chancellery. Conrad replied that he would rather resign than comply with this request. The task of reassuring Tisza fell to the Chief of the Military Chancellery, General of Artillery Baron von Bolfras.

As a next step, the command leadership in the Balkans was agreed, and on 6 August, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek was simultaneously given the title of Commander of the Imperial and Royal 6th Army and commander of all the Balkan forces. This was probably unavoidable. The only person who could have taken on the supreme command without being a snub to anyone was Archduke Eugen. The Emperor had even directly offered him the command. Yet Eugen consistently refused, pleading health problems by way of explanation. However, the real reason is likely to have been that the Archduke

had no desire to work with Generals Frank and Potiorek.<sup>417</sup> As a result, Potiorek was made commander of the troops designated to fight against Serbia. Throughout the years, he had been Conrad's competitor for the post of Chief of the General Staff, and was regarded by Conrad as a 'genius'. Potiorek was familiar with the future theatre of war. However, he did have several severe handicaps. He was a man to take decisions on his own, and was not a good team player. Even more seriously, although this would only come to be recognised as a real problem during the course of the following weeks, Potiorek wanted to lead a revenge campaign. He was filled with bitter hatred.

Until the beginning of August, he had been responsible for conducting the deployment measures in the Balkans, but without knowing whether and how he would be involved in the command. Nonetheless, he had already made preparations for starting the offensive against Serbia as soon as possible. The fact that the strategic reserve was also transported southwards could only mean in Potiorek's eyes that the campaign against Serbia and Montenegro should be conducted with three armies. Furthermore, a command letter on 31 July stated that: 'The arrangements made by the War Ministry for war scenario B and specifically the deployment remain valid.'<sup>418</sup> Potiorek then drafted a plan of operations with the full inclusion of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army under General of Infantry Böhm-Ermolli, which was to deploy to the Danube and in Syrmia. He passed all of this information on to the Army High Command. Potiorek gave 12 August as the date of the beginning of operations.

However, on 6 August, the day on which he was given command of the Balkan forces, the Army High Command informed him that the 2nd Army was to be diverted to the Russian theatre of war.<sup>419</sup> While Potiorek now felt a sense of satisfaction at being given the command over 'his' theatre of war, he wanted to use all three armies rather than overturning his plan of operations. Indeed, in the short term, he had no other option, since the 5th and 6th Armies, which Potiorek was to have at his disposal at all events, had deployed in the west of Serbia on the Drina and Sava Rivers, and with an immediate withdrawal of the 2nd Army, no troops would have been present on the Danube and in Syrmia. However, Potiorek could of course have remained defensive, if he had not received contradictory orders from Vienna, and – more importantly – if it had not been for his own ambition. This was to be 'his' war, his punitive campaign, and more still: his revenge for Sarajevo. After all, he naturally felt the heavy burden of guilt for his share of the blame in the murder of the heir to the throne and his wife. For him, the war was of a very different nature than for Conrad, for example, who wanted to wage it on the basis of cool calculation and who was cocooned in Social Darwinist thinking. For him, revenge had no part to play. But for Potiorek, things were different. And this is what was so problematic about the Emperor's decision – which was driven by the Chief of the Military Chancellery in particular – to nominate the General of Artillery as Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial and Royal Balkan forces.

While on the Serbian border, the first skirmishes were already taking place and the preparation of the troops for the start of the offensive was underway, the troops destined for the north-eastern front and their commanders were given a ceremonial send-off. At the stations, honorary companies also mustered, the masses thronged towards the platforms, and mayors and notables mounted podiums to hold final speeches and give goodwill messages. Long live the Emperor. 'Everyone joined in', noted the Commander of the 1st Army, Baron von Dankl. 'It was an uplifting moment.'<sup>420</sup>

On Sunday, 2 August, the commanders designated for the Galician theatre of war had met in the War Ministry for the first time: General of Cavalry Baron Viktor von Dankl, Commander of the Imperial and Royal 1st Army; General of Cavalry Baronet Rudolf von Brudermann, Commander of the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army, and the former War Minister, General of Infantry Baron Moritz Auffenberg, who was now Commander of the Imperial and Royal 4th Army. Only the Commander of the 2nd Army, Böhm-Ermolli, was missing, since he was by that time already in Petrovaradin. However, on 31 July, he had already been told by Conrad what he needed to know. Conrad von Hötzendorf gave notebooks to the commanders of the armies that were to travel north, which contained their instructions. If anything was unclear, they were to address the Operations Division of the Army High Command. They were also warned 'not to allow themselves to be persuaded' by anyone who came with suggestions for action or other opinions. Everything had been extensively thought through and was thus 'commanded by God!' The headquarters then grouped in Vienna before being relocated to Galicia. When the time came, Baron von Dankl exclaimed that this was a wonderful moment. Liège had already been taken by the Germans, Belgium had been overrun, and now the push towards Paris could be made. It was now also time to make progress in the east.<sup>421</sup>

The Army High Command arrived at the fortress of Przemyśl. The train carrying the Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, the Chief of the General Staff and the divisions of the Army High Command to Przemyśl was not particularly noticeable. It merged with the 7,000 or so carriages that were rolling to the deployment zone every day.<sup>422</sup>

Przemyśl, Austria-Hungary's most important fortress, had been selected by Conrad as it was close to the theatre of war, guaranteed secure accommodation and above all also offered the infrastructure that was of absolute necessity for the leadership tasks of the highest command. As an actual fortress, however, he had neglected it. He had a dislike of the major siege forts in the east, such as Lviv, Przemyśl and Kraków. In 1911, he had not allocated funds for the largest of these, Przemyśl, to be upgraded. It was regarded merely as a storage facility of vast proportions, from which the front should be given backup support and above all, from which personnel and materials should be sent. When work began on making the fortress ready for war, the

deficiencies became evident. As a result, 27,000 workers were brought in within a very short space of time to complete the preparations. The lines of fortifications were reinforced, ditches, entrenchments, battery positions and obstacles were erected, and depots, barracks and storage facilities were built. 1,000 hectares of forest were cleared, above all by sawing down the trees, since the heavy rainfall made it impossible to burn them down. 21 villages were razed to provide an open glacis. Within the fortress itself a massive army camp was established. Around 22 battalions of the Landsturm infantry, the cavalry, 35 companies of fortress artillery, sappers, Landsturm artillery, etc., which made up the original garrison, were joined by the troop formations that arrived in stages, and which increased the number of men occupying the fortress to over 80,000.<sup>423</sup> However, they were not to remain in the fortress, but instead depart when the advance began. The Army High Command, however, was to be permanently established in the fortress.

For Archduke Friedrich, additional headquarters, the royal military quarters, were established, which would later be relocated to Galicia. They were to be installed not at the site of the actual high command, but in Chyrów, about 35 km away. The court boarded its train during the night of 20 August. The Army Supreme Commander was to lack no comfort. The train travelled very slowly. On 21 August, an eclipse of the sun could be seen. In Jarosław (Jaroslau), a dragoon gave news of a battle 'somewhere up there on the border, rather confused stuff', as Count Herbert Herberstein, Lord Chamberlain of his Imperial and Royal Majesty, the Army Supreme Commander, noted. In Przemyśl, where they arrived after two days' train journey, there were already war-like scenes. Hundreds of Landsturm men were digging trenches, field bakeries were being erected, and troops were marching. The 'cleansing of the theatre of war' was also already fully underway. People were seized on a daily basis on suspicion of spying, and anyone who appeared to be unreliable was removed from the deployment zones. In one of the cleansing operations conducted by the police in the deployment zone of Galicia, in Poronin near Zakopane, a certain Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who called himself Lenin, was seized.<sup>424</sup> However, after Victor Adler, the Social Democrat member of the Reichsrat intervened, saying the Lenin was an emigrant and an enemy of Tsarist Russia, who 'would serve Austria well', he was released and was able to travel to Zürich via Vienna.<sup>425</sup> One can only guess what might have happened if Lenin had been hanged or at least interned like hundreds, or possibly thousands, of others who were convicted or suspected of spying. However, the hope that Lenin might one day be useful carried more weight than the initial mistrust.

Suddenly, the mood changed. Bad news arrived from the Balkans. General Frank's army, the Imperial and Royal 5th Army, had been beaten on the Drina. In the north, a Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) cavalry division had suffered a defeat after initial successes. Well-known people were named as having been wounded or killed.

Archduke Friedrich was presented with a codicil to his will, which was signed by himself and by witnesses.<sup>426</sup> Only then did they travel on to Chyrów, where the royal military quarters were housed in the Jesuit convent. All kinds of people came with them; clearly no-one wanted, or was permitted, to be absent when there was war. For example, the Lord Chamberlain of Archduchess Maria Theresia was also present in Przemyśl, and despite suffering from advanced brain disease had joined the Army High Command as a delegate of the Teutonic Knights. Archduke Leopold Salvator came with his chamberlain, Prince August Lobkowitz, together with assigned officers, servants and secretaries, as well as Prince Zdenko Lobkowitz, chamberlain to the heir to the throne, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, and many others. On 23 August, after a mass held in the Chyrów Jesuit convent, martial law was announced 'with great ceremony' in three languages: German, Polish and Ruthenian. The following day, a mass was held for Pope Pius X, who had died on 20 August, and on 25 August, a mass was finally held for the Jesuit general who had died in Rome. 'It starts to become boring, this useless existence', complained Count Herberstein, the Lord Chamberlain of the Army Supreme Commander.<sup>427</sup> Even so, quite a lot was happening. Military trains passed through ceaselessly. It was noted with surprise that so many Landsturm formations consisted of older men who were to be used on the front. The fact that Landwehr infantry regiments were carrying old Werndl and Mauser rifles also indicated that the war was not only to be waged with modern weapons. There were also other sights that were uncommon in Vienna and the surrounding areas, such as a large number of Polish Jews. They had been obliged to cut off their sidelocks, but were still recognisable by their beards. Endlessly long processions of many hundreds of country wagons with forage, field hospitals, sanitary facilities and ammunitions convoys drove past in the heat and dust, and then in the rain. Sometimes, a song could be heard. Tyrolean territorial infantry troops appeared somewhat out of place with their mountain equipment. More fitting were the Hungarian Landsturm infantry brigades: 'Older people with large beards, smoking Hungarian pipes, usually in the old Honvéd uniform.'<sup>428</sup> All in all, a confusing picture.

In Przemyśl, the Army High Command of course knew how everything fitted together. However, even there, the war had clearly not yet lost much of its character as a huge theatrical spectacle. It was also regarded as a special training ground for the nation. This was in all likelihood the reason why the heir to the throne, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, who since 25 July 1914 was a colonel in Hussar Regiment No. 1 and who came to Przemyśl 'at the disposal of the Supreme Commander'. He was then to be seen promenading with aides-de-camp, stablemen, detectives and gentlemen of the Imperial Guard mounted squadron, and waiting for news from the Operations Chancellery.

## The Mounted Engagement at Jaroslawice

According to the longer-term plans, the Austro-Hungarian armies were to provide backing for the German Empire until the Imperial Army was able to arrive in the east in force following their planned victory in the west. However, the main problem was the numerical inferiority of the Danube Monarchy. To compensate for this, attacks should be made, and the law of action be used by the Imperial and Royal armies right from the beginning. However, no-one could claim that this strategy had been born from the emergency of the hour, and that the Austro-Hungarian troops would perhaps have waited with their attack had they been of anything like the same number as the Russians. Then, they certainly would have pursued an offensive approach. The three Imperial and Royal armies that were deployed on the Weichsel and San Rivers, east of Lviv, on the Dniester River and at Chernivtsi were to be ready for operation between 23 and 26 August. Even so, there were of course only three armies available, along with two army groups (Army Group Kummer from the 1st, 4th and 3rd Armies, and Army Group Kövess). Only when the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, which was initially deployed in Slavonia, could be inserted on the southern wing of the eastern front would all the designated forces be gathered. Overall, the Army High Command in the east had more than double the number of battalions of the Balkan High Command, with the majority of the cavalry and around 2,000 pieces of artillery, and approximately 1.2 million men overall. However, in the face of the anticipated Russian forces, with an estimated 1.8 million men, no-one could fail to recognise the disadvantage. Even so, Conrad reasoned that once the Germans had first brought down France, the situation on the eastern front would instantly change.

From the first hour onwards, however, it became evident that in all the years, it had not been possible for the general staffs to reach an even halfway clear understanding in their agreements of how operations should be initiated. As late as July 1914, Conrad had still envisaged that the Imperial and Royal armies would begin their advance to Russian Poland between the Weichsel and Bug Rivers in the general direction of Lublin and Chelm, while the Germans would push forward from East Prussia towards the south, so that in a large encirclement battle, planned to take place in the Kielce area, the large Russian army units in Poland could be destroyed.<sup>429</sup> The plan looked good on paper. However, Moltke informed his Austrian counterpart on 3 August that the German troops under General Maximilian von Prittwitz and Gaffron would remain in defensive positions in East Prussia. Conrad appeared unaffected by the news, although one could in fact have been forgiven for assuming that such matters should have been agreed upon earlier. The Imperial and Royal troops were nonetheless to push forward in the direction of Lublin and Chelm. Quite clearly, the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff was inclined to put his faith in hope. Two days later, Moltke sought to

give encouragement to his comrade in arms and move him to strike out, since a defensive Imperial and Royal Army would have been no use to the Germans: 'Only when the deployment has been successful can the battle begin that will decide the course of world history for the next century. Concentrate all your forces against Russia. Even Italy cannot be so vicious as to attack you from behind. Let the Bulgarians loose against Serbia and let the pack beat themselves to death. Now, there can only be one goal: Russia! Throw the knout-carriers into the Pripyat marshes and drown them!<sup>430</sup> What tough words the German used! And yet Conrad needed no further motivation.

The persisting uncertainties regarding the Russian deployment in any case forced the Imperial and Royal Army to begin its own long-distance reconnaissance at the earliest possible opportunity, with cavalry, balloons and aeroplanes. The riders were furthermore to bring the Russian cavalry and the Russian vanguard in general to a standstill, and to keep them there until the large infantry formations arrived.

From 4 August onwards, the cavalry regiments had been incorporated into the securing of the Empire's border, and were almost constantly on a state of alert. However, they only patrolled along the border and ascertained that the Russian cavalry had also already begun its reconnaissance. Here and there, skirmishes occurred with the Austrian police and financial guards.<sup>431</sup> Two days later, the regiments, which had combined to form the cavalry divisions, received the order to ride into Russia as far as possible. On 8 August, the long-distance reconnaissance began in earnest. All cavalry divisions were involved. Directly beforehand, they were given instructions on Russian cavalry tactics. After that, they rode, and rode, and rode. Many mounted regiments had new saddles that still fitted badly, and which rubbed the backs of the horses raw. The riders were frequently forced to dismount. Yet the journey continued onwards through the hilly country streaked with large forests. When the first engagements with the Russians occurred, the Austrian horses were worn out and the riders were exhausted. Their destinations lay about 100 km away from the border with the Empire. The 7th Cavalry Division, for example, rode northwards from 6 to 13 August before running into Russians near Kielce and being forced to withdraw. Some regiments, such as the Dragoon Regiments No. 9 and No. 15, had already ridden 400 km since mobilisation. When they met up with the Russians, the skirmishes did not usually last long before the Imperial and Royal cavalry divisions turned back. Thus, while attempts were made to provide the most extensive information possible to each army, as a rule, the cavalry divisions did not make much progress. Only a few field squadrons (with 150 riders) achieved halfway useful reconnaissance results. They frequently suffered from difficulties with provisions, since they had only taken a small amount of food with them. The civilian population had fled, however, taking everything edible with them. On 20 August, the 4th Cavalry Division, commanded by Brigadier Baron Edmund von Zarembo, which had been given the task of conducting reconnaissance for the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army, rode through

a large forested area in order to find out what was on the other side. Like most of the cavalry divisions, it had also been given line infantry and artillery, although to keep the troop formations together, the riders could not take advantage of their speed. So they rode on ahead. They came upon Russian cavalry, particularly Cossacks, that had also been sent on a reconnaissance mission. The following day, a mounted engagement took place at Jarosławice, which was only prevented from ending in a severe defeat for the traditionalist Austro-Hungarian dragoon and Uhlan regiments as a result of the timely arrival of the infantry. However, the losses were significant. The rifles and, in particular, the machine guns of the Russian rear infantry raged below the cavalry regiments. They were forced to retreat as quickly as possible. The mounted engagement at Jarosławice, the largest cavalry for the Imperial and Royal troops in Austria-Hungary's final war, was not only a rout for the traditionalist cavalry; it was a clear reflection of the fact that a branch of the military service had met its end.

The cavalry, the aristocratic weapon par excellence, had a very strong class spirit, and strove like no other arm of the military to maintain traditions while refusing to adopt new developments in tactics and weaponry. All the cavalry formations of the powers fighting the war were faced with a very similar problem. However, almost none of them experienced the end of equestrian grandeur so suddenly and with such losses as those of Austria-Hungary. The previous over-exertion and long-distance reconnaissance had reduced the number of horses by half. The Russian cavalry and infantry added their own contribution. Subsequently, Conrad was to judge the cavalry activities at the beginning of the war very harshly: 'Aside from just a few exceptions, our brave cavalry divisions were destroyed at the very beginning of operations by their incompetent leaders. The entire impractical uniform and training, and the superior numbers, which were constantly more than double their own, also played their part.'<sup>432</sup> However, this insight came late, since before the war, Conrad had certainly found no fundamental fault with the cavalry. The dragoons, hussars and Uhlans preserved the art of mounted engagement, primarily practised attacking, had successfully resisted adopting modern uniforms, abhorred battle on foot and had clearly chosen to ignore the fact that automatic weaponry and rapid-fire rifles had created a different reality. Ultimately, they would only have needed to peruse the 'Drill Regulations for the Imperial and Royal Infantry' to realise what their leaders expected from the cavalry. Here, the fight against troops on horseback was presented as one that would almost always end in favour of the infantry.

While during the raids by the Imperial and Royal Cavalry in Poland, the Russians may have also suffered losses, they had at the same time neither risked nor sacrificed much. Also, their reconnaissance results were perhaps better. They had at their disposal an extensive network of confidential informers that had already long been developed during peacetime. And behind the veil of the cavalry formations, they carried out their deployment. According to their Plan 19, Version A, they formed their south-western



front, consisting of four armies, which converged on Galicia and Bukovina in a type of semicircle, with the 4th Army (under A.E. Salza) and the 5th Army (under A. E. Plevé) on the left flank, and the 3rd Army (under N.V. Ruzski) and the 8th Army (under A. A. Brusilov) to their right. This amounted to 800 kilometres of front under the control of the commander of the Russian south-western front, General Nikolai I. Ivanov. The supreme command over all Russian troops was given to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, an uncle of the Tsar. The aim of the Russian front in the north was to overcome the German forces, which were far inferior in number, and to occupy East Prussia. The goal of Ivanov's troops was to destroy the Imperial and Royal armies before conquering the Carpathians and finally advancing through to the Hungarian plains. The offensive was due to begin on 18 August, Emperor Franz Joseph's 84th birthday.

### The Initial Campaigns

While the Austro-Hungarian cavalry divisions were still reconnoitring in the east, in the southern theatre of war, the Imperial and Royal armies were already attacking. General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, who on 6 August had been named commander of all the Imperial and Royal troops in the Balkans, cut a type of Gordian knot, since time and again, it had appeared that Conrad might after all overturn his plans once again. On 31 July, he had given the troops to be relocated to the Serbian theatre of war priority over those formations that were rolling towards Galicia. On 1 August, however, he wanted to suddenly redirect not only the 2nd Army, which was to come to the Danube, but also to deprive Potiorek of parts of the 5th and 6th Armies.<sup>433</sup> Two days later, Potiorek presented his plan of operations to the Army High Command. However, on 6 August, he was told definitively that the 2nd Army would again be removed. The remaining armies were given the 'minimum task' of preventing incursions into the territories of the Monarchy. But what was the maximum task to be? Ultimately, everything was left to the judgement of the commander at the theatre of war, and he was also given permission to use the 2nd Army until it was withdrawn. The only restriction was that it was forbidden to cross the Danube. By their very nature, such vague commands could lead to nothing other than endless confusion. Indeed, they were not in fact commands, but an invitation to do this or that, unless perhaps there was some reason or other not to.

When Potiorek had still been Chief of the Operations Division on the General Staff, prior to his nomination as the regional commander of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he had already written a first draft of the Balkan operational scenario. This plan assumed that action should be taken from Bosnia and Herzegovina against Serbia and Montenegro with one army, respectively. However, another army was to pincer Serbia from the north. On the assumption that the Serbian Army would concentrate south of the Danube,

and Belgrade would not be left to the enemy without a fight, this was to result in an almost textbook military operation, in which the Serbian forces would be encircled and destroyed. Now, however, when the time came to put this plan into action, the northern army – none other than the 2nd Army – was to be removed, and would only be available until 18 August, the date on which it was to be broken up and removed. This reduced the prospects of success in the Balkan theatre of war significantly, since following the departure of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, Potiorek had not much more than two armies with which to cover 900 km of front. The number of men at his disposal amounted to around 280,000 to 290,000, together with the guards garrisoned in the various fortresses, as opposed to the 370,000 he would have had if the 2nd Army had remained in its entirety.<sup>434</sup> Of these large units, around half could be attributed to the command posts. The Serbs were in turn estimated to have between 210,000 and 350,000 men, depending on whether or not the reservists were included. To these were added the Montenegrins with between 40,000 and 60,000 men. Vojvoda Putnik, who had returned from Bad Gleichenberg via Budapest on 5 August thanks to the gentlemanly behaviour of the Austrian Emperor, set up his headquarters in Kragujevac.

Despite the fact that the situation was not entirely clear for the Imperial and Royal troops in terms of numbers, the aforementioned command letter spoke of an offensive with rapid victories.<sup>435</sup> Potiorek wanted to make his contribution and, above all, to exploit the fact that the 2nd Army was still available. It was to stage a demonstration on the Danube, and to tie up as many Serbian troops as possible in order to enable the other two armies to succeed. Furthermore, he also felt, however, that it 'would be highly desirable' if the 2nd Army were to be moved across the Danube and conquer Belgrade.<sup>436</sup> Even though this quite clearly contradicted the orders of the Army High Command, Potiorek was not overly concerned. He had no interest in the future in sending requests or making applications, 'but instead, to lead and command to the best of my knowledge and ability'. He also paid no thought to the possibility of remaining on the defensive, but intended to attack at the earliest possible opportunity. For this reason, he rejected the request by the commander of his 5th Army, General Frank, to delay the start of the offensive by two days. It had to be launched on 12 August as planned, and was clearly a gamble. However, what applied here were the words written by the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor to the Supreme Commander of the Imperial and Royal Balkan forces: 'Great enemy, great honour!'<sup>437</sup>

The law of action was initially and unequivocally on the side of the Imperial and Royal Army. After the Danube Fleet had been given a sign and the shooting war had begun, there was more to be done than simply staging a demonstration and firing a few generally harmless shots at Belgrade. Despite the destruction of the bridge over the Sava River, for the Imperial and Royal troops, Belgrade was there for the taking. Couldn't – in fact shouldn't – the formations under the Balkan Supreme Command

not simply rush forward and take the Serbian capital? The commanders were in disagreement. On 6 August, the Commander of the 2nd Army, General Böhm-Ermolli, had been informed by General of Artillery Potiorek about the planned offensive on the Drina River. Potiorek wanted to attack Belgrade quickly, and envisaged taking it by 10 August, four days later.<sup>438</sup> Böhm-Ermolli objected that it would create a bad impression to take Belgrade and then vacate the city immediately afterwards, since the 2nd Army was to go to Russia. However, Böhm-Ermolli suggested that a powerful demonstration of force could be made. This would certainly be more prudent than simply having the 2nd Army stand by and watch. Since the general and the general of artillery were unable to find common ground, Böhm-Ermolli, who was the servant of two masters and was just as bound to obey the Army High Command as Potiorek, appealed to Conrad. Conrad replied that Landsturm and march formations were already on their way, which were to take over the Danube section following the withdrawal of the 2nd Army. However, that was no answer. Instead of ordering Böhm-Ermolli to remove his army immediately, and to delay the offensive against Serbia if possible, it was left to Potiorek, and to a certain degree to Böhm-Ermolli, to decide what they wanted to do. Since the Commander of the 2nd Army was also keen to be involved in the overthrow of Serbia, and not merely stage a demonstration before leaving, a not untypical partial solution was found.

Böhm-Ermolli was given war bridge equipment and technical troops by Potiorek, and was to leave only the horses north of the Danube and the Sava. However, by the time of the withdrawal of his army, in other words, by the time 80,000 troops could be entrained again, the 2nd Army was to be effective in the Belgrade area. However, the goal was not the Serbian capital, but the 'Mačva', the area south of the Sava. There, a demonstration was to be made and, in particular, the river was to be crossed at Šabac. That now appeared to be clear at least. At the same time, Böhm-Ermolli ordered the commanders of the IV Corps and the 7th Infantry Division, who were to focus their efforts on the crossing, to make sure that they remained concentrated, since this would be no long-term occupation, and the troops could be taken out at any time.<sup>439</sup>

On 11 August at 5 p.m., the Austro-Hungarian artillery began its harassment fire and fire for effect. Now, Belgrade really did find itself under attack. On the following day, the Imperial and Royal 5th Army arrived punctually for the ordered offensive. The offensive was supported by the 2nd Army and initially succeeded in crossing the Drina and Sava Rivers above Belgrade. Two days later, the Imperial and Royal 6th Army, which Potiorek himself commanded, arrived at the upper reaches of the Drina for the offensive against Serbia and Montenegro. Now the time had come to teach the Serbs a lesson.

One should not only bring to mind the problems in terms of operational equipment and logistics of an offensive that was begun before all troops had reached their staging

areas. There were other problems, too, when it came to the leadership. The army corps that made up the Imperial and Royal 5th and 6th Armies consisted of troops who to a significant degree had been recruited from the Slav reinforcement districts of the Monarchy, with Croats and Serbs counting for up to fifty per cent. This was not the result of any deliberate policy of perhaps sending Croats to war against Serbs. To a far greater extent, it was simply due to the fact that in peacetime, the troops were replenished from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia and Croatia. However, the question naturally arose as to whether the troops would obey unconditionally. And even if this was the case, the envoy Alexander von Musulin was probably right when he pensively remarked that this was likely to be the last time in the history of the Habsburg Monarchy that Croats – let alone Austrian Serb nationals – would allow themselves to be led into a war against Serbs.<sup>440</sup>

The fact that there was also to be a Montenegrin front appeared to be no particular cause for concern to anyone in Vienna. Conversely, the obvious Austrian superiority had forced the Montenegrin King Nikola and his Prime Minister, Serdar (Commander) Janko Vukotić, who was simultaneously War Minister and Chief of the General Staff, to take the initiative. Vukotić and the Serbian Chief of the General Staff, Vojvoda Putnik, wanted to coordinate their conduct of war as well as possible. A joint war plan was presented on 6 August. Six days later, the Austro-Hungarian troops attacked.<sup>441</sup>

It was mid-August, and very hot. The troops had been given no respite after often gruelling marches. A delay of the attack by 48 hours, as had been requested by General Frank, the Commander of the 5th Army, was out of the question. His army was to attack across the Sava and take Šabac as its first target. To the south, the 6th Army had been ordered to cross the Drina and to advance against Montenegro. For the Imperial and Royal manoeuvring generals, these goals were easily achievable. The troops attacked at a right angle to the river courses and hill ridges and had an arduous task of overcoming them. The columns struggled through scrub and forest terrain and through two-metre high maize. And the Serbs were tough and clever defenders. The Commander of the VIII Corps, General of Cavalry Arthur Giesl von Gieslingen, the brother of the same Baron Giesl who had been the envoy in Belgrade until 25 July, attempted to reflect these factors in his records. However, Giesl did not put this to paper in order to glorify the campaign, but did so after the war at the request of the commission installed by the Austrian parliament for investigating military breaches of duty during the war, which was making enquiries in relation to Potiorek.<sup>442</sup> Giesl, who – like many others – was later the subject of fierce criticism, noted that the troops were tired from the long train journey, and had to undergo difficult marches in very high temperatures. Furthermore, the provisions and munitions convoys and medical facilities had not yet arrived in full. The Drina was to be crossed at two points, but transition materials were only provided for one bridge. Once the corps had taken the other bank under heavy Serbian fire, the

Army High Command and the delegate of the command of the Balkan forces ordered 'a rush forward, without taking in to account the tactical situation'. 'Order upon order was given, only to be followed by counter-orders. It was purest idiocy', noted Brigadier Zanantoni on 13 August, who shortly afterwards was given command of the 29th Infantry Division.<sup>443</sup>

The plan was to reach Valjevo by 18 August, since on this day, the corps of the 2nd Army that had deployed on the Sava and the Danube was due to depart. Aside from this, some commanders, and probably also Potiorek, had an eye on that date, since it was the Emperor's birthday. And on this day, a first great success was to be laid at the feet of the Monarch. The soldiers were driven forward. Losses counted for nothing, and neither did the fact that provisions could not be delivered quickly enough, so that the soldiers remained without sufficient food for three or four days. Despite all the harshness, it was simply not possible to make progress, however. The Serbs began a counterattack at Šabac, as a result of which the IV Corps, which belonged to the 2nd Army, had to be brought in. Indeed, in the event of a defeat due to lack of support from the two other corps, the 5th Army had even, as a precautionary measure, assigned the blame to the very corps that was in fact already due to travel to Galicia.<sup>444</sup> The orders from the army commanders and the commander of the Balkan forces contradicted each other. Individuals began to take action according to their own judgement. After several days of fighting, the 21st Landwehr Infantry Division of the VIII Corps appeared to be in disarray. Since this was the Prague ('Praha') Corps, suspicions quickly arose that the Czechs were failing in their duty. On 19 August, the withdrawal began. The failure of the 21st Landwehr Infantry Division led to an investigation and the imposition of martial law. Giesl was relieved of his duties two weeks later. Yet ultimately, he and his soldiers were the least to blame for the failures.

From the first day onwards, losses among the Austro-Hungarian troops were very high. It is a characteristic of all beginnings of wars that the troops on both sides suffer particularly high losses. This only abates during the progress of a war, and then, once it is clear who is the victor and who the loser, increases again towards the end at the cost of the latter. The high losses were reflected in the lists of casualties that were posted up on the War Ministry building in Vienna and disclosed in the newspapers. These lists very often spoke a far clearer language than the reports issued by the War Press Bureau, whose sketchy communiqués presented failures as intentional operational measures. Here, the War Press Bureau may have come rather too close to the truth now and then, since in November 1914, the War Surveillance Office, which was subordinate to the War Ministry, ordered that the newspaper editors would do well to make enquiries in the Surveillance Office even in cases when the War Press Bureau had already given its stamp of approval to a report.<sup>445</sup> How on earth were they to know about such a requirement?

The Serbs recognised the direction of attack of the Imperial and Royal Balkan forces, namely Valjevo, and began to encircle the city. This made it necessary to use an increasing number of formations of the 2nd Army, and as a result, the corps of this army were caught up in severe fighting just at the time at which they were due to depart for Galicia. However, even this was unable to save the 5th Army. It began to withdraw and was thrown back to the borders of the Monarchy. By 24 August, it had returned to its original positions. In the space of less than two weeks, 600 officers and over 22,000 men in the Imperial and Royal Army had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. The 6th Army, which was positioned to the south of the 5th Army, had only been able to take up the offensive on 20 August due to difficulties with the terrain, and was also intentionally held back by Potiorek in order to then conduct an operational attack on the flank of the Serbian Army. Yet this was not to be. The 6th Army achieved a first success on 19 August by taking Pljevlja during the advance on Montenegro. However, its offensive then came to a standstill and the Montenegrins forced the Imperial and Royal troops back out of the country. Within just a few days, therefore, the vision of a revenge campaign had come to nothing. However, a severe dispute arose between the command of the Balkan forces and the Army High Command, during which it transpired that the Military Chancellery of the Emperor was also willing and indeed keen to play a role in the parallelogram of power. Here, the question was whether the Army High Command should have unlimited authority, or whether a second and third power would be involved.

Conrad, who had already become aware of his strategic mistake at the beginning of August, had from the middle of the month sent sharp-worded telegrams urging the removal of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army and demanding that aside from the Budapest IV Corps and the 29th Infantry Division, no formation of this army in the Balkans should continue to be thrown into the battle. It was of no use. Potiorek reported time and again that it was vital that the troops of the 2nd Army be used if defeat was to be avoided. On 20 August, he finally demanded full deployment of the army. If all parts of the 2nd and 6th Armies were not to go on the offensive immediately in order to compensate for the victories achieved by the Serbs, there were likely to be catastrophic consequences for the territories of the Monarchy inhabited by Serbs. The response from the Army High Command stated succinctly that the suggestion for using the 2nd Army in the Balkans could not be considered further, and that the IV Corps and the 29th Infantry Division could also be provided only temporarily.<sup>446</sup>

However, the Army High Command was unable to assert its authority over the Balkan High Command. In Vienna, too, the vision of a revenge campaign and the rapid overthrow of the troublemaker in the Balkans had not yet been abandoned. Since the Army High Command so clearly met with resistance, however, and remained restricted in its powers of authority, while the Viennese central authorities were quite obviously

also not on the side of the Army High Command, Conrad's determination to eliminate all sources of resistance grew. And in Archduke Friedrich he found a very willing assistant. Even so, for the time being, this was not sufficient to solve the problems with the Balkan High Command.

After a vehement argument with Conrad on 21 August, Potiorek succeeded in persuading the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Bolfras, to give a letter of command to the Emperor for signature, which specified that from that point on, Potiorek would be able to take command independently. This may have been a gratification for Potiorek, but was also objectively correct, since under the leadership remits at that time, intervention by the Army High Command and the rapid reaction to developments in the Balkan theatre of war was not possible from Przemyśl. However, it is equally true that from this moment on, consistency in terms of the conduct of the war was lost, at least for a certain period of time.

Potiorek's complaints regarding the Army High Command and, above all, the Chief of the General Staff not only fell on sympathetic ears in the Military Chancellery of the Emperor. He was also fully supported by Berchtold and Tisza, who attempted to ensure that the mass of the troops of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army could continue to be used in the Balkans, and not only in parts. Tisza had a natural interest in keeping both the Serbs and the Russians away from Hungary, and if necessary, in also having forces available against Romania. However, Berchtold brought the mesh of foreign policy issues into play and instructed his representative in Przemyśl, Baron Giesl, to inform the Army High Command of the following stance on the matter: 'It is very far from my intention', Berchtold wrote to Giesl on 20 August, 'to wish to influence military operations even indirectly. From the perspective of my area of responsibility, I must however point out that, should the operations currently being conducted by the 5th and 6th Armies even merely come to a standstill as a result of the departure of the troops assigned, and were this to become known abroad, then there is reason to believe that this would have a most adverse effect on the conduct of all Balkan states – including possibly that of Italy – and that I would be obliged to decline to bear the responsibility for the occurrence of such a change, which has unforeseeable consequences.'<sup>447</sup> Giesl faithfully informed the Chief of the General Staff, who felt, however, that it would be 'irresponsible' to leave more forces in the Balkans than was absolutely necessary. However, Giesl remained dissatisfied with this response, and also went to Archduke Friedrich. He did so because, as he then telegraphed to Berchtold, he was not sure 'whether his Highness is being properly informed by the General Staff'. However, Archduke Friedrich was not able to agree to any proposal, and only raised the prospect of either assigning responsibility to the Commander of the 5th Army, General Frank, or relieving him of it.<sup>448</sup>

Conrad was torn one way and the other. He knew that he needed the 2nd Army for the Russian theatre of war. It was to march on to the south flank of the front, to the

north of the Romanian border. On the other hand, Conrad in particular could not close his mind to the argument that with regard to the Romanians, Bulgarians and Turks, success against the Serbs was necessary. If the campaign were to fail, it was likely that war would be declared by Romania, which at the start of the war had remained neutral, but which had shown a clear tendency towards joining the camp of the enemies of the Central Powers. However, the plan was not only to win Bulgaria and Turkey as allies of the Central Powers, but also to establish a connection to the two countries. And as long as Serbia lay in between, there was no possibility of the Bulgarians siding with the Central Powers. Furthermore, the alliance with Turkey, which had been concluded at the end of July, could only be put into effect once a land connection to Turkey was also provided. The idea of sending the Imperial and Royal Fleet to the Black Sea, which was aired on 6 August, had not been further pursued here, since the prospects of success were judged to be zero.<sup>449</sup>

In spite of everything, Conrad was a prisoner of himself, since it was he who had initially advocated, and with great vehemence, a rapid strike in the Balkans. This was also in accordance with the Imperial vote. However, this had come at a time when it was not yet possible to estimate how quickly the situation in the north-eastern theatre of war would develop to Austria-Hungary's disadvantage. Then, Conrad had perhaps also been convinced that the Serbs would not be able to withstand the onslaught of the Imperial and Royal 5th and 6th Armies, and would immediately retreat far back towards Serbia. The remainder should then have been no problem. However, events turned out very differently. And the political fallout was immediately evident: Romania was less likely than ever before to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers and Turkey, and the Bulgarian Tsar, Ferdinand I, blatantly told the German colonel, Arnd von Leipzig, who had been sent from Berlin to Sofia on a special mission, that following the Austro-Hungarian defeat he could no longer consider leading his people into the conflict against Serbia.<sup>450</sup> Turkey also suddenly became more reticent and in an almost demonstrative move put a halt to work on closing off the Dardanelles.<sup>451</sup> However, Conrad did not regard this as being primarily a consequence of the military events, although he lost no opportunity in criticising the way in which Potiorek was conducting the war. To a far greater extent, he telegraphed Berchtold on 25 August: 'The regrettable diplomatic failures, which allowed two allies, Italy and Romania, to fall away without bringing Bulgaria on to the side of the Monarchy, have created a military situation that obliges us to bring as many forces as possible to the main theatre of war, all the more so since the German failure in East Prussia makes our position more difficult and the stance taken by Japan has led Russia to draw on its troops in eastern Asia. General Potiorek has sufficient forces in order to meet a Serbian invasion.'<sup>452</sup>

Potiorek had a different view in that he not only wished to remain on the defensive and fend off an invasion, but to take offensive action once again. He had succeeded



in laying the blame for the failure of the first offensive on insufficient support from the 2nd Army and thus from the Army High Command. The Emperor believed him, and the General of Artillery therefore planned a second operation in the direction of Valjevo.<sup>453</sup> He sought to gain Conrad's agreement, who, after some hesitation, gave his approval to the offensive and only urgently advised that the error of the initial battles should not be repeated, and that the armies should not be left without the opportunity to back each other up. It was the last time before the year ended that Conrad intervened in the operational planning and command in the Balkans. However, just when the Austrians were midway through their preparations for attack, the Serbs first took offensive action, advancing in the Banat region at Pančevo (Pancsova) and crossing the Sava with their 'Timok' division. Even though they were forced back, Potiorek's second offensive, which began shortly afterwards, was again to prove unsuccessful.

Again, the Imperial and Royal 5th Army was unable to achieve the goals it had been set. From 12 September onwards, the bad news intensified. Potiorek reacted with dismissals and by again imposing martial law on the 21st Landwehr infantry division. In the lowlands of the Mačva district, the divisions remained stuck in boggy ground after several days of rainfall, and the soldiers became exhausted in the pathless mountain ranges on the border of Bosnia, above all on the ridges of Jagodnja mountain. They were chased from one direction to another, and by degrees were decimated by the Serbs. '[...] one imagines a war like this to be such a jolly event, and now what trials and suffering', wrote the shocked commander of Base Supply Platoon 13, Second Lieutenant of the Reserve Eduard Draxler to his father on 13 September.<sup>454</sup> The Serbs had consolidated their positions well and fought for every metre of ground, while the Imperial and Royal formations relied on their superior artillery. However, then the ammunition ran out and the troops were finally forced to dig trenches in order to be able to hold their positions in at least this makeshift way. By the end of September, the second offensive in the Balkans had also definitively failed. Even so, Potiorek's reputation had still not suffered significantly and, in Vienna, the blame was laid at the door of Conrad to a far greater extent, since he had done too little in the way of making provisions for the Balkans.

Conrad and Berchtold, who were already antagonists in peacetime, were unable to agree about the strategic goals. Berchtold was accused of having no understanding of the situation as a whole. His critics claimed that he had neglected before the war to gain reliable alliance partners in the Balkans, had focussed his attention solely on Serbia, and had not the least idea of what the consequences would be if the Russians were to break through in Galicia. Those in the Conrad faction found it necessary to point in particular to Berchtold's ignorance of military strategy. 'The age of the old Thugut appears to have returned.'<sup>455</sup> In the same way 'as in those days, when politicians issued operational commands to the different armies in the individual theatres of war, so now apparently, politicians, who themselves have limped about down erroneous paths, are

still to lead the campaigns in the north and the south. However, Count Berchtold's heart lay only in the Serbian theatre of war. He had no time for the north.' Politicians were using the war to pursue the wrong political aims. It was not the events in Serbia that were the decisive factor in terms of Austria-Hungary's existence or non-existence. It was claimed: 'This was decided near Lviv'.<sup>456</sup> There is much that could be added to this statement. Certainly, with regard to the conduct of Bulgaria and Turkey, as well as that of Romania and Italy, the decisions were not made on the battlefields of Serbia and Poland. This matter was decided in equal measure at the Battle of the Marne, and was therefore far beyond the scope of Austria's responsibility. The attack on Serbia was desired by Conrad just as much as it was by Berchtold. And neither the military nor the political planners had reckoned with its failure.

Conrad's indecisiveness was however due in part to the fact that he in particular had made deep inroads into the political arena, and it was for this reason that his decisions were not only dictated by what was currently the correct military strategy and what was required in terms of operations. For him, it was equally important what the Emperor, what the two prime ministers, particularly Tisza, what the Foreign Minister and – in particular – what his German alliance partner demanded of him for political reasons, as well as those related to the conduct of the war overall. Here, it very quickly became evident that a coalition war tends to progress in accordance with specific rules, and that in such a war, the weaker partner is in a particularly difficult position.

The war began as a war on multiple fronts, in which the Central Powers pursued their priorities. The German Empire also saw an emotional enemy in France. Austria-Hungary saw the same in Serbia. However, where the two allies could and should have acted in accord in a theatre of war, namely against Russia, there was initially nothing that indicated that the war was being waged jointly. It was, in turn, evident how vague the agreements between the general staffs had been when Conrad let it be known that the Austro-Hungarian armies would advance from the south into the Siedlce region, while on his part anticipating that the Germans would do the same from the north. This would have made it possible to cut off the Russians in Poland and to claim an impressive victory. Yet nothing of the sort could be realised. The Germans did not even attempt to make the strike that Conrad had hoped for. The Austro-Hungarian armies were also too weak to conduct such a massive encirclement operation while at the same time also fending off the Russian armies that were attacking from the east. And yet the beginning looked promising.

While the cavalry already fanned out, reconnoitred, provided a screen and was already suffering heavy losses, the last transports of the A Echelon arrived in Galicia. The headquarters moved into their accommodation and began to find their bearings. There was still concern that the Russians would be able to complete their deployment faster than the troops of the Central Powers. However, from 11 August, the level of

confidence rose. Regiment after regiment arrived, was incorporated into large military formations, and was marched to the staging areas. We could now follow many regiments to their detraining areas and during their advance. Let us again examine just one example. All four 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Tyrolean rifle regiments came to Galicia. The 2nd Regiment was deployed from Tyrol on 7 August. During the journey to Rudki, they passed through Salzburg, Linz, Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Miskolc, Sátoraljaújhely, the Łupków Pass and Sanok. Halfway between Przemyśl and Lviv, the regiment was detrained. From then on, it marched. 'Dreadful filth', wrote one of the subalterns,<sup>457</sup> 'black, sticky, and it's drizzling. – Marched through Rudki, a number of Jews, ghastly. Absolutely nothing except Jews. Onwards to Lubjenuv marsh – marched 26 km [...] Marched on along the endless, always dead straight country road.' On 20 August, Infantry Regiment No. 7 marched 42 kilometres.<sup>458</sup> Sore feet were of no consequence.

In the original plans for a war against Russia, 40 divisions had been provided on the Austro-Hungarian side which were to be divided into four armies. Instead of 40 divisions, Conrad initially only had access to around 34, and that against the 52 on the Russian side. The operational plans envisaged that two armies on the left flank, the 1st and 4th Armies, should conduct a massive strike northwards in order to penetrate Russian Poland, which extended far westwards to the north of Galicia. Since the forces of the main army were too weak, however, and, furthermore, the entire reconnaissance activity had yielded no information as to the main focus of the Russian forces, Conrad only allusively prepared his armies for a strike to the north. Instead of 30 divisions, only the 18 from the 1st and 4th Armies were used.<sup>459</sup> The 3rd Army, followed by the 2nd Army, which was to arrive by degrees, were to advance eastwards.

The Russian front reconnaissance had resulted in a relatively clear picture of the strength and troop distribution of the Austro-Hungarian armies. Surprised, and conceivably satisfied, the Chief of the Russian General Staff Yanushkevich established on 23 August that the Austrians were far weaker than had been assumed in the war plans.<sup>460</sup>

On the same day, the Imperial and Royal 1st Army under General Baron Viktor von Dankl crossed the forest zone to the north of the San River and began its advance. The advance commenced even though Conrad already knew that no German troops would push through to Siedlce from the north. Even so, this was not to be a large offensive, since as late as the evening of 22 August, Conrad ordered that the advance should be delayed until the 3rd Army had also fully deployed near Lviv. However, next to General Dankl's 1st Army on the right, the 4th Army was also to begin its advance under the command of General Auffenberg. And after 24 hours, the lines reached should again be held fast. There was nothing bold about this plan; it was simply a pushing forward of the lines. Since 17 August, Dankl had heard of Russian concentrations in the Kraśnik area. One aeroplane report in particular indicated the presence of larger Russian forces.<sup>461</sup> His troops reached the assigned target for that day, and even though the

plan was in fact to continue waiting, on 24 August, the so-called 'battle near Kraśnik' unfolded, which involved the 1st Army, and which led to victory for the Austro-Hungarian troops over the Russian 4th Army. This was nothing particularly spectacular, but still something that was very useful in helping to consign to the past the defeat of the Imperial and Royal armies in the Balkans, which had been reported a few days previously. The fact that individual regiments had lost over 40 per cent of their men, such as Infantry Regiment No. 76 ('Ödenburg') was not considered worthy of mention. Everyone had fought courageously.

However, the majority of the Russian forces was not amassed here in the north. It was located further south, and met with the 3rd Army under General Brudermann, which was situated to the east of Lviv. The army had been subjected to a particularly long journey as a result of the relocation to the rear of the detraining zones, and had only mustered in its deployment zone on 26 August, after a seven-day train journey followed by equally long marches on foot on poor roads.<sup>462</sup> The piecemeal integration of the 2nd Army into the front, and attempts to use those parts of this army that arrived to immediately support the 3rd Army, led to nothing. And while the Russians rolled out their main forces, the urgently needed Imperial and Royal divisions were sitting in trains.

Reports from the War Press Bureau claimed that Lviv was still 'firmly in our hands'. But not for long! It didn't help much that the Imperial and Royal 4th Army under the former Imperial and Royal war minister, Moritz von Auffenberg, was finally able to push back the Russians between 26 and 31 August and achieve victory over the Russian 5th Army in the Komarów area. This only led to further fragmentation of the Austrian forces, which at this precise moment should have been concentrating as far as possible. The attacking force of the Imperial and Royal armies on the north-eastern front was already flagging on 30 August. Conrad blamed the lack of German support for the situation. 'As a result', he wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, 'we bear the entire burden alone, and to the east of Lviv have a superior enemy around our necks. We do not owe the Germans any particular thanks.'<sup>463</sup> Artur Bolfras was shocked. He began to consider aloud whether a separate peace should not be made with the Russians as quickly as possible.<sup>464</sup> Clearly, the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor already wanted to cut and run just two weeks after the start of the war. However, the Emperor would hear nothing of it. He had wanted the war, and so it should be waged. Even so, it was only too evident that the military machine had come to a standstill. While the battle already raged around Lviv, Conrad sought for the first time to obtain assistance from German troops. Two corps were to be moved in the direction of Przemyśl. On 2 September, Archduke Friedrich repeated this request, and sent a telegraph on the matter directly to the Kaiser. This also proved fruitless. Ultimately, the daily requests for German support troops led to a sense of aversion among

both Germans and Austrians. On the part of the Austrians, this was already added to by feelings of deep embitterment. Clearly, the Germans had informed Emperor Franz Joseph's Military Chancellery behind the back of the Army High Command that the exceptionally high losses among the Imperial and Royal troops, which were verifiable, could be traced back to incorrect tactical behaviour and poor leadership. The Austrians, they said, had simply dashed off instead of creating advantages by smaller-scale envelopment activities and by conserving their forces. The Chief of the Military Chancellery, Bolfras, asked Conrad what this really meant. The Chief of the General Staff was now not in a position to pretend that the losses were not high, even very high, and assigned the blame to the unbridled desire for attack that caused the commanders to get carried away. Instead of waiting for artillery support, they had permitted an immediate offensive. Yet what was one to do against boldness and the thirst for victory? The German liaison officer attached to the Army High Command, Kageneck, indulged in insinuations such as: 'The causes of this can be traced back in 1866.'<sup>465</sup> For Conrad, who was naturally angered by the ally's criticism aimed indirectly at him, this was reason enough to also vent his fury himself. On 5 September, he wrote to Bolfras: 'I fully agree with your view that the Germans are winning their victories at our expense; they have [...] left us high and dry.'<sup>466</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian armies were on the retreat. Since they had advanced by fanning out and their lines had become increasingly thin, it was easy for the Russians to pierce through between the briefly victorious Imperial and Royal 1st Army and the 4th Army. Both were threatened with being circumvented, and were forced to withdraw in great haste. However, the bulk of the Russian 9th and 5th Armies was targeting the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army in the Lviv area. The surrender of the eastern parts of Galicia was a result of a strategic error by the Imperial and Royal army command, and was at least partially due to operational mistakes made by generals who had only been trained in manoeuvres. To this was added the inferiority of numbers and the lack of homogeneity of the formations. Only rarely was it possible to determine failings among local commanders or soldiers, who in most cases gave their all and fought with a formidable readiness to suffer and make sacrifices. Within the space of just a few hours, the line infantry, cavalry, artillery and other troops in the Common Army, in addition to the Imperial and Royal Landwehr and Imperial and Royal Honvéd, as well as Landsturm formations, had already undergone experiences that would leave their mark: the first dead, the nerve-shattering artillery fire that was so difficult to combat since the Russians were equipped with more modern, longer-range guns than the Imperial and Royal troops, the screams of the wounded, hunger and exhaustion. The Russians also had more machine guns. And they were superior in numbers. The fall of the Galician capital, Lviv, on 3 September was of no great military significance. And yet this event had far-reaching effects, and forced the last dreamers to wake up to reality.

Anyone could see that a war had unfolded that was not only great, but was above all costing a large number of lives. Just how many was concealed from the large majority of the people. Equally, they were not told that deficiencies in Austrian equipment, and armaments in particular, very quickly became apparent. These were deficiencies that it was the main objective of the armaments industry to rectify. The boom in this sector was unstoppable, as were the cutbacks in all other areas.



## 6 Adjusting to a Longer War

6. From the end of August 1914, the inhabitants of the imperial capital and seat of royal residence gathered in front of the Press Bureau of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry on Georg-Coch-Platz in Vienna in order to hear the latest news from the front and to study the lists of the fallen, wounded, and missing.



In 1914 it could initially be said of no European power that its industry and economy were really adjusted to waging war. There had admittedly been spurts of armaments activity and a forced expansion of strategic railway lines. Practically all states had also prepared emergency regulations in the event of war, which would ensure the transition to a war economy. But if and how this would function was just as unknown as the question as to whether any of the basic operational ideas could be realised. The British military historian John F. C. Fuller applied the following vivid comparison in his book *The Conduct of War*:<sup>467</sup> 'Wäre am 4. August ein Zuschauer um den Kriegsspieltisch herumgeschlendert und hätte sich die Karten der Spieler angeschaut, so hätte er mit zehn zu eins auf einen Sieg Deutschlands gewettet. Aber fünf Wochen danach, nachdem die Karten gespielt waren, hatten alle Spieler strategischen Bankrott erlitten.' This could be continued by asking which of the players the detached observer thought had the worst cards – and I would wager that he would have pointed to the Austro-Hungarian. In the aforementioned five weeks, however, the Austro-Hungarian player had fared better than the others. The result would be no different, were one to develop elaborate calculation models and occupy oneself with algorithms and numerical or symbolic methods instead of looking at the army budgets, troop strengths, weapons and mobilisation tempos. What had happened here can be reduced to the simple formula that the operational theories had been based on false assumptions. It had turned out that a literal and generally superficial interpretation by whomever – whether Clausewitz, Jomini, Ardant du Picq or even Archduke Carl – ended in a bloodbath. To quote once again Fuller, who occupied himself above all with Schlieffen and General Ferdinand Foch, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Northern Front and later Marshal of France: Foch resembled at the beginning of the war a 'taktisch verblödeten Napoleon' because, although his engagements were based on the weapons of his time, he ignored these weapons. With minor deviations, he followed Napoleon step for step, and, considering the automatic rifles and rapid fire cannons, he did this as though these were the muskets and cannons of Jena and Friedland. The French 'Plan XVII', comparable in its importance to the Schlieffen Plan, demanded 'marching directly against the enemy without hesitation. [...] Only the offensive accords with the temperament of our soldiers.'<sup>468</sup> After less than two weeks, the tactic of marching straight at the enemy had cost the French 300,000 dead, wounded and missing soldiers. But it would be unreasonable to just pick on Foch. Moltke, the Chief of the Russian General Staff Nikolai Yanushkevich, Conrad von Hötzendorf and countless others could be placed alongside

him, for they also felt compelled to help enforce certain operational procedures at all costs, even if the cost comprised tens of thousands of dead, wounded and mutilated.

In 1914, people appeared to be in abundance. Hardly anyone concerned himself that the reservoir of so-called 'human material' might dry out. The 'human factor' in the form of the male soldier was in any case regarded as a resource that could be optimised and whose usefulness in a conflict should be examined.<sup>469</sup> The ideal warrior type was taken for granted and then the shock came in increments when there were shortcomings. The ideal type should, of course, excel not only in his strength and military capability but also demonstrate stability in respect of his mental characteristics. A man was expected to march and fight even with little or, occasionally, no food. Horses could also be spurred on to the point of exhaustion. Machines, on the other hand, could not be operated without coal and fuel, cannons could not be fired without ammunition and the consumption of million-man armies was enormous.

### The War Economy Dominates Everyday Life

The demands on the defence economy could not have come unexpectedly, for the Russo-Japanese War had already demonstrated the importance of the industry for waging war as a matter of urgency. And the 'factory war', as André Beaufre called it, was subject to completely different laws than the 'primitive war', again to quote to Beaufre.<sup>470</sup> One Russian, the aforementioned State Councillor Ivan S. Bloch, had envisaged this and written it down in 1898 in his six-volume work *The War of the Future*. A war, argued Bloch, would deprive the powers that had instigated it the opportunity to profit from the goods of those states against whom they fought. The soldier succumbs, whilst the people's economists ascend. He continued: 'In the next war, there will be no glorious marches and campaigns along the lines of Napoleon, but an increasing carnage of such terrible proportions that it will no longer be possible for the troops to decide the battle in their favour. [...] Therein lies the future of the war: not in the killing of people but in the bankruptcy of states and in the decay of the entire social fabric.'<sup>471</sup> Clearly, no-one had believed Bloch.

As described by Bloch, in all armies the corresponding technical innovations had been introduced. There were certainly differences, but they were not so eminent that the armies were not comparable in terms of their weaponry and their level of technological advancement. One side was superior in one detailed respect, the other in another. But the problem that then arose was completely different, namely one of logistics. After the initial battles it was a question of who was better able to wage the 'factory war' and who was better able to solve the immense supply problem. An average army corps of 40,000 to 60,000 men required on a daily basis approximately 130 tons of food and feed for

their horses. An army needed around 500 tons. Food and animal feed could be obtained in Serbia and Galicia but only partially in the vicinity of the front. Most of it had to be sent to the troops. If the animal feed was lacking, the march of the artillery divisions was slowed down, as were the supplies, which were hauled by motor convoys. Even more important was that the weapons were replaced and ammunition and armaments supplied. This demonstrated that the Habsburg Monarchy was better able to meet the demands of a factory war than Russia or Serbia. But the conversion to a war economy required time and above all a considerable number of sacrifices.

The human factor played a particular role on all sides, at the front as well as back home. The outbreak of war had enraptured the Austro-Hungarian labourers just as it had the majority of the rest of the population. There was hardly any difference between the workers of Bohemia, Moravia, Lower Austria or Croatia; it was the same right across the Empire. Even between the organised and the non-organised workforce, between Christian Socialists and Social Democrats, there was no difference. Redlich depicted the demonstration of young Christian Socialist workers on the day of the declaration of war in front of Vienna's St. Stephan's Cathedral, and the Austrian Social Democratic Party made an appeal to its members 'to show that there are no cases of desertion in our ranks and that our men, who are dedicated to the class struggle, will also stand with their flag until their last breath'.<sup>472</sup>

Only on the extreme left wing had there been secession movements, above all that of Friedrich Adler, who on 8 August 1914 had set aside his party offices and editorial duties. He was deeply depressed that the Social Democrats had abandoned their internationalism without so much as a whimper and that there now only appeared to be a national socialism, for which he, he claimed, was unsuitable. He was ashamed of what the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote.<sup>473</sup> And in a memorandum for the party executive of the Austrian Social Democrats he declared: 'The seizing of the hearts has succeeded! [...] Our enemies have succeeded in placing the workers in the service of enthusiasm for the war; they shoot at their brothers and not only, as we had anticipated, as mere submissive tools of those in power. The national ecstasy has overpowered the consciousness of the international proletariat [...].'<sup>474</sup>

In this case we have a witness who is completely beyond suspicion and testifies that the national enthusiasm of the beginning of the war had spread to all groups, even those on the left of the workforce. To this was added the loyalty of the vast majority towards their country in a narrower sense as well as towards the Monarch. A more tightly organised and larger trade union organisation would have made no difference. Furthermore, the special measures applied by the government would already have nipped any burgeoning resistance in the bud. But no action had to be taken. In Austria-Hungary – in contrast to Germany, France or Great Britain – it was not even necessary to negotiate with the workforce in order to avoid unrest. Thus, there was initially no upgrading

of the status of the trade union leadership, which emerged so rarely that it was not even particularly respected by the workforce.<sup>475</sup> An inner willingness to submit to the unavoidable allowed practically all measures of the Law on War Contributions to be implemented, although this meant far-reaching encroachments on the life of millions. Ultimately, with the help of this law, all men ineligible for military service up to the age of 50 could be recruited by force for work in industry. Similarly rigorous measures did not exist, for example, in the German Empire.

Mobilisation also had an enormous impact on the labour market. Countless salaried employees lost their jobs, likewise numerous workers. The unemployment figures skyrocketed. There were mass redundancies in commercial businesses because export ceased almost overnight. In some branches of trade, but also temporarily in some areas of industry, the collapse of firms appeared inevitable. Although – or perhaps because – hundreds of thousands lost their jobs in order to join up, mass redundancies occurred. Whilst, however, the salaried employees frequently remained unemployed, it was a different matter for the labourers. In July 1914, the unemployment rate was at almost 5 per cent, in August at 18.3 per cent, in September at 17.8 per cent and in December at 8.1 per cent. Then the unemployment rate in industry sank practically to zero and yielded to a permanent labour shortage in the war industry. The consumer industry, the textiles industry and the paper industry really had to struggle and were forced in part to switch to new products, not least those that were required by the army in the field. It was as clear as daylight, however, that the crisis of the food industry would only be brief. The field army consumed from the outset far more than the troops in their peacetime garrisons.

In order to obtain the required manpower, the armaments manufacturers began to pay their workers higher wages. This had an almost instant impact on other businesses and firms, which could not compete with the wages of the armaments industry and were thus unable to find any workers. In the Wöllersdorf armaments factory, for example, the number of male workers increased five-fold from August to the end of December 1914, but a construction firm that was supposed to build new aircraft engine hangars had to appeal to the War Ministry because it could no longer find any workers.<sup>476</sup>

It was certainly a bad mistake, however, to call up so many qualified labourers at the beginning of the war. The number of workers in the metal industry shrank in some areas by more than a third. The 'Alpine Montan-Gesellschaft' reported that over 18 per cent of its workforce had been called up at the beginning of the war, whilst in Vienna alone 566 smaller manufacturing companies had to shut up shop due to bottlenecks caused by the war. Instead, however, of now giving more consideration when enlisting to those workers made redundant due to the closures and in their place exempting skilled workers in sectors vital to the war from military service, the approach applied so far was continued. A more selective approach would probably have been too time-con-

suming, as it had not been prepared, and ultimately these macroeconomic considerations would not have been met with much understanding. We should not forget that most of those assigned to the Landwehr (Austrian standing army), the Landsturm (reserve forces) and the replacement reserves thought at the beginning of the war that they were missing something. This is why they removed themselves indiscriminately from their companies. Only gradually did the attraction of the war dwindle and the military administration became more selective when enlisting. Yet those companies that had experienced a boom in new business continued to have difficulties covering their labour requirements. At Škoda, labourers apparently worked up to 110 hours a week at the height of the war,<sup>477</sup> which came to 16 hours of work, seven days a week. Working 80 hours was by no means exceptional.

Only the mentally and physically disabled, civil servants, clerics and farmers, as well as storekeepers or salaried employees were exempted from the general availability for forced work duties. Those who were unfit for military service could be recruited to work in industry, as well as Landsturm conscripts who had not yet been assigned to a battalion on the march but were intended to be deployed at the front. This 'militarisation' resulted in those affected becoming what were known as 'army labourers' and in their wages being simultaneously reduced from a considerably better level to that of military wages.<sup>478</sup>

Even here there was no resistance from the trade unions. In those areas that were placed directly under the control of the military administration, the organisation of the workers had already become impossible because they were forbidden to hold assemblies. The military leadership of a business operating under the provisions of the Law on War Contributions could alter the status of a worker from a civilian to a member of the Landsturm, reduce his wages or even encroach on his private life, for example by placing a ban on visiting taverns and coffee houses after 8 p.m.<sup>479</sup> This approach adhered to the constitution, according to which the soldiers at the front had no choice and above all no fixed service hours and their lives were furthermore constantly in danger. It must also be kept in mind here that earlier closing times and bans on the sale of alcohol were also in place in England and France, in order to reduce alcohol consumption among workers and to increase their efficiency.

The Austrian system of compulsion to work was evidently even suited to provoking the envy of leaders of German industry, who demanded from the imperial government the alignment with Austrian practices in order to stabilise levels of work performance.<sup>480</sup>

The coercive measures described above and the rigorous handling of the emergency legislation demonstrate several factors: for one thing, it becomes clear under which tremendous pressure the workforce but also the rest of the population were placed and to which they submitted themselves more or less willingly. Several phenomena of the later war years and, above all, the end of the conflict can be explained in this way. For another

thing, precisely the measures described above can be used to thoroughly revise the verdict nourished above all in Germany especially after the war about 'Comrade Lace-Up', or, as it became known some time later, the 'slack Austrian'. The Austrian war economy certainly bore comparison with others. The question was, however: for how long?

Even a cursory glance at the working and living conditions in place from August 1914 reveals the first beginnings of a total war and is faintly reminiscent of the picture that was painted in France at the beginning of the Revolutionary Wars in 1793: 'The young men will go off to war, married men will forge weapons and transport supplies; women will sew tents and clothing and serve in the hospitals; children will unstitch old washing; old men will be brought to public places in order to arouse the courage of the warriors.' But this picture was ultimately in many respects no longer accurate. Of course, in this case no 'hatred for the king' should be preached, as the French War Minister Carnot had demanded in 1793, and there were still privileged groups who at least initially thought that they would not be directly affected by the war. For most of them, however, the first emergency regulations brought deep fissures with them. It was above all the mobilisation that already resulted in a situation where much of the work quite naturally done up to that point by men could only be offset by means of it being transferred to women. This was particularly noticeable in agricultural areas, but also in industry and the services, and it ultimately affected practically all areas of life. The overload could hardly have been greater. In order to combat material hardship, millions of women carried out work that they were often not used to, albeit for lower wages than men. The early onset of food shortages meant that the women had to queue in front of stores more often and for longer periods. To this were added the household and children and soon widowhood and nursing. Strange conflicts occurred, for example, where women who wanted to earn money by sewing and knitting resented women from the aristocracy and upper middle classes for carrying out sewing and knitting work free of charge for charitable reasons. Sewers felt threatened by this competition and feared for their jobs. The existential problems were also superimposed by many social and sexual problems. A long chapter of history deserves to be devoted to 'women at war'.<sup>481</sup>

The adjustment of the economy of the Dual Monarchy from war to peace returns us to the 'Orientation Aid on Emergency Regulations in the Event of War', which we have already encountered in the description of political conditions and that of the administration at the beginning of the war. This Orientation Aid also envisaged a range of lasting intrusions into the economy. Among these was the ban on the import, export and transit of certain goods. The list of things that should no longer be imported was relatively short. It was made up of weapons, ammunition and pigeons, evidently so that no-one could invest in a stock of 'Viennese tumbler pigeons' and in this way send messages abroad. The lists of export and transit bans were very much longer and covered several pages. Animals to be slaughtered, draught animals, saddles and pushcarts were

listed, as were weapons, bridge constructions, locomotives, automobiles, pulleys, freight and passenger trains, opera glasses, saltpetre, glycerine or bran. In a second prohibited list there appeared skins, twines, furs, armatures, wrenches, oxygen, aspirin, strychnine, barbitone and many, many other things. However, the Orientation Aid stated that the ban on export and transit was only of limited duration and would be repealed to the extent that 'the first major requirements of the armed force are covered and wartime events allow for it'. The War Surveillance Office was also responsible for compliance with these provisions. Hungary, as mentioned above, did not recognise the jurisdiction of the War Surveillance Office for the Hungarian half of the Empire, though, so its activity in the framework of the Monarchy's economic measures remained limited to the Austrian half of the Empire. As a result, however, a central authority for the war economy lapsed. Hungary insisted on establishing its own control agencies and engaging in discussions with the Austrian half of the Empire at the Customs and Trade Conference, an instrument created by the Compromise of 1867.<sup>482</sup>

At the outbreak of war, the import, export and transit bans were gradually brought into effect, initially vis-à-vis Serbia and then against Russia and the Entente powers. As a result, the exchange of goods abruptly collapsed. Within the Triple Alliance no plans had been made for the movement of goods in the event of a war. There were not even agreements between Austria-Hungary and the German Empire that would have ensured the exchange of goods. Suddenly, everything proceeded only internally.

Raw materials and foodstuffs that had been obtained from other countries before the war failed to materialise, since they naturally also had export bans placed on them. Urgently required goods could only be obtained via neutral countries, above all Switzerland and Italy. Trieste played a role, above all as a forwarding port and accumulated for months on end the coffee supplies of the Dual Monarchy, for example. Neither in terms of its location nor its facilities, however, was it in a position to serve as the central collecting point. Raw materials that had already been bought and loaded but were still in Hamburg or Bremen could suddenly no longer be forwarded to Austria. The German Empire, which was made to feel the British blockade earlier and more strongly than Austria-Hungary, asserted its own personal requirements. Conversely, German firms could not initially obtain wood, skins or crude oil from the Habsburg Monarchy.

This in itself grotesque state of affairs was only ended on 24 September 1914 with the signing of an agreement on the handling of bilateral exports.<sup>483</sup> An immediate consequence of this agreement was the establishment of so-called 'central offices' for a range of strategic goods: a central office for wool, one for metal, later one for oils and fats, a central office for fodder, a brewing central office, a wartime coffee central office, a central office for malt, one for molasses, etc. It was intended that they carry out the uniformly controlled management of the individual group of goods, from the natural resource to the finished product, and above all guarantee the requirements of the army.

The possibility of overdoing it with the controlling measures was mentioned by the War Minister's adjutant, Captain Hugo von Lustig: 'One must only consider that we have one ox to thank for five separate central offices: a leatherskin central office, a meat central office, a bone glue central office, a fats central office and, finally, a commission for supplying the troops with foodstuffs.'<sup>484</sup> A further effect of these war management measures was the reduction in private consumption. It was intended that raw materials and convenience products, but also foodstuffs, be withdrawn from general consumption and made available for public purposes. Thus, as a result there was no-one who was not made to feel the many shortages.<sup>485</sup>

Even before the establishment of the various central offices, there had been other controlling measures and interventions. The first of them were in the area of pricing policy. Already immediately after the outbreak of war, fears emerged regarding a shortage of foodstuffs. The prices for foodstuffs were often arbitrarily raised; there were instances of stockpiling. An imperial decree from 1 August 1914 was intended to ensure that the people remained supplied with essential commodities. These included not only foodstuffs, but they were the main cause for concern. There were regulations on the gathering of stocks and sanctions against profiteering. But they failed to make an impact. Foodstuffs became noticeably scarcer in the weeks and months that followed, and likewise noticeably more expensive. This resulted, among other things, in stocks being made to go further and in the fixing of maximum prices. Another eminent problem exacerbated the situation even more: hardly any trains were running in the interior of the country, with which the transport of goods could have been ensured. How little thought had been given to this and how much disruption had been caused by the desire for total mobilisation, because of the attempt to be quicker than the enemy and to throw one's own troops to the front, was evident as early as 25 August 1914 from a letter sent by Berchtold to Conrad in which the Foreign Minister communicated something that had been told to him by the Imperial-Royal Interior Minister, Baron Heinold. Heinold was of the opinion that a serious industrial crisis loomed in the event that the coal and road train transportation was not soon made at least partially possible again. As a result of the shortages, the letter continued, 180,000 unemployed were expected in Vienna before long; these 180,000 would have to be provided for if the companies were not supplied again with the essentials. Added to this was the problem that the grain had been harvested but could not be brought to the mills. The supply of the major cities was endangered. In Trieste, for example, 5,000 waggons of rice worth 15 million kronen were stored, which made up the annual requirements of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>486</sup> But they could not be taken away.

The situation was particularly precarious and demanded a solution, since it had initially been assumed for both foreign and domestic policy reasons that the government should not take any action that might lead to unrest among the people due to possible



shortages in the food supply. But already a few months later it had to be acknowledged that this stance had yielded success insofar as there had truly been no panic. The side-effect, however, was that the people had stuck to their living habits and had not begun to economise more, in spite of rising prices. This could only work if the imports continued to arrive and Hungary continued to deliver all foodstuffs that the Austrian half of the Empire required.<sup>487</sup> Neither of these things was to be expected. Moreover, the justifiable yet preposterous belief that 'The King should wage the war in such a way that the peasant does not notice' resulted in the stockpiles quickly running out. From October, the effects of too few imports became noticeable.<sup>488</sup> And there were initial difficulties in obtaining foodstuffs from Hungary. There, it was said, the harvest had not been a very good one, so that deliveries to Austria were a quarter less than the Cis-leithanian half of the Empire required. In Galicia, part of the harvest was lost because by this time war was being fought there. The Military Administration bought up what it could lay its hands on and the two million soldiers ate considerably more bread than the same number of civilians would have eaten.

When, in October, signs of grain shortages began to emerge, it was attempted to buy more grain from Romania and Italy. But by this time these countries had also issued export bans. The result was that bread and grain products became scarce and expensive. In December 1914, the better types of flour were no longer available in Vienna.<sup>489</sup> Furthermore, there was no uniform price structure. In December, wheat was 47 per cent more expensive in Vienna than it had been in July, in Prague 61 per cent and in Linz 71 per cent.<sup>490</sup> From October, the Austrian Social Democrats, among others, demanded the fixing of maximum prices and a rationing of foodstuffs.<sup>491</sup> As soon as maximum prices had been set, however, the products in question disappeared from the market and were thereafter only available on the black market.

However, it proved possible to limit the food crisis to the extent that it was believed that the decrees on bread grain and flour products were initially adequate. In the case of meat, a decree was not necessary until 1915 in order to regulate the breeding of the animals and to limit the consumption of meat. Only at the beginning of 1915 was it stipulated that there should be two meat-free days each week. Nevertheless, one should not overlook the fact that in those days meat was by no means such a central part of the diet. With 29.9 kg of meat consumed annually per head, different conditions existed in Austria-Hungary in the pre-war period than in Germany, for example, where before the war 52.8 kg of meat were eaten annually per head of the population.<sup>492</sup>

The food problems also caused a considerable contrast to emerge between the Austrian and the Hungarian halves of the Empire, which ultimately broadened into serious conflicts. In order to prevent the drainage of agricultural products from Transleithania, Hungary established rigorous blockades at the border. The approval of quotas and the compensation that had to be negotiated independently of the payment provoked ir-

ritation from the outset. Whilst the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza was the subject of much approval, including in the post-war historiography, in regard to his political foresight and his skilful leadership of the Hungarian half of the Empire, he was and still is fiercely criticised for his policy in the food sector that hugely favoured Hungary. The tightening of Hungarian export restrictions for agricultural products ultimately led in Austria to the complete monopolisation of the grain sector by the state. A rigorous survey of the stockpiles had already previously been carried out because it was only possible to calculate the disposable amounts if there was awareness of what was actually available. In Linz, for example, where at the end of 1914 there were 17,000 households, 65 bakeries, 552 general stores and several shops selling flour products, the recording of the grain and flour stocks had to be carried out within three days. 400 commissions of two people each (teachers, municipal councillors, club members, etc.) were tasked with carrying out the assessment. The conclusion was that a larger city such as Linz could cover only around 50 per cent of its requirements up to the next harvest and that the calculations were made even worse since the additional requirements of military hospitals, infirmaries, prisoner of war camps and above all the demands of the treasury had to be met.<sup>493</sup> The result was a renewed reduction in the per-head quotas for flour and bread. The introduction of ration cards for bread and flour was now only a small step away.

Practically all of those in positions of responsibility were now in agreement that action had to be taken quickly. The businessmen, the state administration and especially the military authorities wanted this in order to avoid food riots or wage strikes. At the end of September 1914, therefore, deliberations were initiated by the Ministries of the Interior, Trade and Agriculture of both halves of the Empire in order to create a legal foundation for state intervention in the economic sector. This was necessary above all in Austria. Thus, an imperial decree was prepared, since a law could not be passed without convening a legislative body. Issues requiring regulation were the domestic problems, cross-border trade and economic reprisals against the enemy abroad. The Imperial-Royal Ministry of the Interior wanted to see measures on the obligation to work included in the decree, but this item was ultimately dropped. On 10 October the Emperor signed the enabling decree.<sup>494</sup> It remained in force until 1917, before it was then superseded by the war economy enabling law. The enabling decree was thus issued at a point in time when there was admittedly imminent danger but no crisis had yet broken out. What would happen, however, if the supply with essential items seriously suffered and real privation broke out? And there was another question: would it be possible to maintain the radical measures of the war administration and the militarisation of the home front over an extended period of time? What effects could be expected for the economy and the social fabric if the war should last longer and if the needs of the public had to be restricted further?

After the announcement of the enabling decree, the Imperial-Royal Ministry of Trade issued provisions on flour reserves being made to go further. Bread grain had to be mixed with cheaper types of grain such as barley, maize or spelt. Already in November attempts were made to combat the impending shortage by issuing further provisions regarding eking out reserves and the fineness of foodstuffs, but it was already clear that the winter would be severe. Symptoms of the crisis were also visible in trade, commerce and industry. However, something very different sounded the alarm bells, since now the war economy was beginning to take effect.

Industries vital to the war could no longer process their orders. Consortiums that had so far made deliveries for the army had to pass orders on, since they were soon overworked. There were agents who secured orders and then attempted, after raking in a juicy commission, to place these orders with firms that still had the capacity to process them. Soon there was a shortage of raw materials. In order to combat this, the military authorities intervened using the Law on War Contributions and confiscated everything that could be processed by the armaments industry and could otherwise no longer be obtained. The result was the forced procurement of domestic raw materials.

Afterwards, it was realised that it would have been better to take even more radical measures instead of introducing the control measures hesitantly, cautiously and step-by-step. From the first day of the war onwards, systematic controls should have commenced.<sup>495</sup> But in contrast to the safeguarding, for example, of the railway tracks and the postal traffic, which had been planned in detail and only had to be carried out, little forethought had gone into the economic sector and there was no concrete notion or even a vague idea of what kind of deep fissures could be brought by a major war. During peacetime, the Army Administration had concluded treaties with enterprises and consortiums, which secured the delivery of material goods to the treasury. The prices that were paid were made up of fixed wage and profit quotas and variable raw materials prices. Now, in war, when the treasury had urgent needs, it was prepared to pay hugely inflated prices.

In this case again, however, the Habsburg Monarchy was by no means an exception. In the German Empire, very similar measures had been taken, but they had subsequently been much more consistently applied and regimented. In Great Britain, the armaments industry and numerous other industrial companies were placed under the control of government departments. Russia attempted to establish a central economic authority. Germany and France centralised and supervised. The difference, however, was that in the countries mentioned, even in the German Empire, civilian authorities were responsible for these control and surveillance measures, whereas in Austria-Hungary it was military control that predominated by far. Yet it was not the case that the military authorities seized the surveillance functions themselves; instead, they had these functions literally forced on them above all by Prime Minister Count Stürgkh but also

by some firms. The Imperial-Royal Ministry of Trade, which had responded to the outbreak of war by applying merely ad hoc measures, only gradually obtained an overview and thus could only intervene in controlling the economy with some delay. By the time it was ready, however, the measures deemed necessary by the Ministry of Trade could be applied only to a small extent. In those places where the economy was already under the direct control of the Army High Command, the Ministry of Trade could no longer exert any authority.<sup>496</sup>

It should be noted, however, that War Minister Baron Krobatin gave precedence to the civilian organisations in the establishment of central authorities, since he was of the opinion that industry would more easily and more willingly work with a civilian than with a military department. Nevertheless, the central authorities had to coordinate everything with the relevant departments of the War Ministry. In Department 7, a controlling body was set up for the inspection and surveillance of metalworking firms. Again, this control could only be exerted in the Austrian half of the Empire.

As a result of the Law on War Contributions and the emergency regulations, a mining inspectorate was also established within the War Ministry. It regularly monitored those mining operations not under the control of the military authorities. Furthermore, mining operations that had been abandoned for a long time were reactivated, since they had suddenly become more attractive. The War Ministry even decided on the allocation of labourers and funds.<sup>497</sup> By and large, these measures consistently proved their worth and were ultimately retained in principle in 1917, when a radical de-militarisation and a reduction of military control took place.

As could be expected, the main efforts of industry were devoted to retaining the fighting power of the Imperial and Royal troops. In 1914 they had not been sent to war with the weapons and the equipment that they might have had. It makes no sense, however, to compare Austro-Hungarian troops with French, since the Austrians were not confronted with the French but rather with the Russians, Serbs and Montenegrins. And here the differences were not so great. A Russian infantry division had 59 guns, whilst a Serbian had 40. In contrast, the Imperial and Royal divisions in the northern theatre of war had between 40 and 50 and in the Balkans around 30 guns. More important was the circumstance that the material used for the guns was in some cases outdated, generally because the question of whether to introduce new guns was debated for so long. Once the decision had been made, the guns could be processed very quickly, and here the Škoda firm had the edge. It was of doubtless importance that the Russians had almost 50 per cent more guns than the Austro-Hungarian formations. They were sufficiently equipped with ammunition and at the beginning in fact very well. Many of the shortages that arose in the following weeks could be traced back to the fact that a chain reaction had set in.

At the beginning of the war, the mining and the iron and steel industries were in a state of stagnation. Therefore, there had not been any exemptions from military service

for these branches of industry; the men joined up. But shortly afterwards, when the war economy took effect, there were too few menial workers and labourers available, which resulted in shortages and delivery delays. But also in other key industries, where one might have thought that any trained worker was needed, there were substantial departures of personnel at the end of July and in August 1914, because the men had to join up. The largest ammunition factory in the Dual Monarchy, in Wöllersdorf near Wiener Neustadt, was a most eloquent testimony to this ill-conceived approach.<sup>498</sup> The lost workers could only be replaced with difficulty. Then new buildings and extensions had to be hastily built before production could be begun in earnest. All in all, however, the armaments industry succeeded comparatively quickly in offsetting losses caused by the war, above all the major loss of guns and heavy military equipment in the Russian theatre of war. The initiation of a modernisation in weaponry was just as rapid; the manufacture of new types of guns and their high-volume production was begun.<sup>499</sup> As a result, it can be said that the low personnel strengths and weaknesses certainly played their part in the Austrian failures in both the Serbian and the Russian theatres of war, and that in the case of the failed offensives and retreats a tremendous amount was lost, but that ultimately the errors in leadership weighed much more heavily than the absence of armaments, weapons or ammunition.

Industry was of course not prepared for war, which is why its capacities were insufficient. The production of weapons was concentrated primarily in the Škoda Works in Pilsen, the artillery arsenal in Vienna, the Austrian Arms Manufacturing Company in Steyr, die Manfred Weiß Works in Budapest-Csepel as well as the factories in Bratislava (Preßburg), Pest-Szentlőrincz and several smaller locations. Ammunition was produced in Enzesfeld, Pilsen, Wöllersdorf and also in Hungary. After the war began, however, the War Ministry converted many factories to purely armaments industries: Böhler in Kapfenberg, Arthur Krupp in Berndorf, the Hirtenberg Cartridge Cases and Metalwork Factory and others. Ultimately, hundreds of businesses were incorporated into the weapons and ammunition production, and this does not even include the suppliers. Since many businesses belonged to corporations, the number of major army suppliers amounted initially only to a few dozen and reached seventy only in 1915. The firms listed among the army suppliers were obligated on the basis of the Law on War Contributions to work almost exclusively for the Imperial and Royal Army Administration and had to obtain special permission for any other delivery. This militarisation of the businesses very quickly had an impact.

In August 1914 there were 2.5 million rifles in Austria-Hungary. The annual production of almost 150,000 could by no means offset the first losses, as a result of which a severe shortage emerged.<sup>500</sup> But then there was a surge in production, which reached more than 60,000 rifles a month by the beginning of 1915. The reason for this could be found for one thing in that the factories for this existed and that they produced in

high volume, although – as we know from the prehistory of the World War – this had primarily been for export, and there were differences in the system and the calibre. After the conversion to Austrian models, the capacity could be used fully for the Imperial and Royal armies. For another thing, these factories were of course the first to be placed under military management and whose requirements always had priority.

The largest backlog was in the case of machine guns, of which there had only been 2,761 at the beginning of the war. In 1914, almost 1,200 were manufactured. From then on, there was a strong increase.<sup>501</sup> From mid-September 1914 onwards, 3.5 to 4 million rifle cartridges and 9,500 rounds of artillery ammunition could be delivered on a daily basis to the armies in the field. One week later, almost 15,000 rounds of artillery ammunition were produced each day, and even this curve showed a steep upward trend. The Army High Command was initially satisfied with the supply and only criticised the fact that the armies under the Balkan High Command were equipped considerably better with ammunition than the armies of the north-eastern front. In Conrad's remarks on this subject, not only the conflict with Potiorek was reflected but also the circumstance that before the war it had been assumed that the troops in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia would have to be equipped more generously with ammunition than the others from the outset due to poor railway connections. The War Ministry openly admitted that it had not expected a long war. (This concession came after the first month of the war!) The War Ministry furthermore pointed out that a series of guns were 'discontinued models' and above all the 7 cm mountain artillery and the 10 cm field howitzer should be replaced with more modern guns. Thus, the ammunition production for these guns had already been strongly cut back. The serial production of new guns had been delayed by a year, however, since in one case Potiorek and in another case Conrad had raised objections. But that is war: it breaks out unexpectedly. Even in this case, however, the production was high-volume and the simultaneous development of new artillery models proceeded very rapidly. The constructions existed and the tests had generally been completed. Thus, everything took place almost overnight. The 10 cm field howitzer type 1914 could go into production just as quickly as the 15 cm heavy field howitzer, the 10.4 cm cannon for the heavy artillery of the field army, the 7.5 cm mountain cannon type 1915 and the 15, 24 and 30.5 cm mortars.<sup>502</sup> Trucks and traction engines were manufactured in part in new factories, of which the Daimler Works in Wiener Neustadt, which belonged to the Škoda Corporation, was the most important. Here Ferdinand Porsche constructed mortar haulers, which were designed to transport the 30.5 cm mortar but also the subsequently produced 38 cm howitzer over long distances on roads and tracks. The twelve automobile factories in Austria-Hungary likewise produced in a very short space of time almost exclusively for military needs. Finally, shipbuilding should also be expedited and the underdeveloped aviation industry expanded. At the beginning of the war the Austro-Hungarian Army had only 39

serviceable flying machines. But by the end of 1914 not only had 91 more been built but also new factories established.<sup>503</sup>

If something initially hampered the armaments industry, aside from the shortage of workers, then it was the scarcity of raw materials and basic materials as well as the considerable difficulties involved in ensuring the transport of goods. During the first two months of the war the government imposed strict restrictions on the transport of industrial goods, since the military authorities required all available railway carriages for the transport of soldiers, weapons and equipment to the deployment zones and the fronts. As winter approached, however, there arose a need for transport capacity for coal that was inevitable and no longer even remotely possible to meet.<sup>504</sup>

A particular phenomenon caused by the war was the growth in the circulation of money and a generosity with funds on the part of the treasury. In order to give the armaments industry a boost but also to improve medical provisions, to set up and operate prisoner of war camps and, above all, to cover the huge material needs at the front, enormous sums of money were required. Thrift and cameralistics got the short end of the stick and everything was approved in short order with reference to the necessities of war. It should not be overlooked that the setbacks in the Galician theatre of war gave rise to a sudden stream of refugees and that the accommodation of these tens – and ultimately hundreds – of thousands constituted an administrative and a financial problem.<sup>505</sup> In order to obtain the required sums, negotiations were very soon conducted with the German Empire over a loan to Austria-Hungary. The German loan market, however, was reluctant and the imperial government raised difficulties. Thus, in November 1914 only part of the sum solicited was granted as a loan.

It must be emphasised once again, however, that the war was begun by all sides with more or less the same fixed notion that it would only be of short duration. Hardly anyone had doubted that Austria would stroll through Serbia and rout the Serbs and the Montenegrins. There was hardly anyone in the general staffs of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire who had not believed France would be defeated in six to eight weeks, at which point it would be Russia's turn and, in the words of Kaiser Wilhelm: 'By Christmas you'll be back [home] with your mothers.' This all proved to be a mirage. However, a phase then began in which it was the Habsburg Monarchy that became increasingly strong and was not only not inferior but in fact partially *superior* to its opponents. The long war appeared after all to turn in favour of the Central Powers – had there not been different writing on the wall.

The situation within the Dual Monarchy was initially characterised by the individual parts of the Empire moving apart. Cisleithania and Transleithania had gone to war in noticeably different ways: the Hungarian half of the Empire with a functioning parliament and a prime minister who with particular skill underpinned his policies via this parliament. In this way, his steps gained a different weight, as they were backed by a

parliament and by political parties. It was a different situation in Cisleithania. Count Stürgkh had refused upon the outbreak of war to recall parliament and he furthermore gave no thought to returning to parliamentary forms of political intercourse. He led a cabinet of civil servants, the constitution of which, beginning in 1915, consistently allowed different individuals to come to prominence, but whose legitimacy became no greater in this way. He ruled by imperial decree and the Austrian wartime government of Count Stürgkh thus offered, as Josef Redlich formulated it, 'the strange image of the overall government of a state of 30 million inhabitants, which was as a government so to speak permanently "politically denaturalised"'.<sup>506</sup>

The result of a legitimacy derived exclusively from the crown was that the Austrian ministers only felt obligated to the Emperor. Thus, in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) debates took place regarding war aims, whilst in Austria a comparative discussion was omitted and there was nothing that might have indicated the views of the overall government, much less that an audible vote in favour of ending the war could have been cast. If a minister sought to declare himself not in agreement with the leadership of the Dual Monarchy during the war, his only choice was resignation 'in order to evade personal responsibility and perhaps by means of such an action to ultimately influence public opinion', as Redlich said.<sup>507</sup> But resignations occurred only when the minister in question had anyway been under fire for some time and, above all, if the military leadership turned against him. Thus, nothing demonstrative was associated with the resignation; it was instead regarded as long overdue.

This reflected a very particular notion of the measures and forms of conduct necessary in wartime: Count Stürgkh and his ministry, but also the senior bureaucracy and the generals, regarded the suspension of basic rights and partially even of personal freedoms as a matter of course. And initially this view of things and the corresponding methods were by no means questioned. Only very few deputies of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) objected to the permanent deactivation of the parliament. They were initially content to be occasionally notified in person and to meet informally with the Prime Minister or with individual ministers.

Stürgkh outlined in confidential letters to the deputy state governors of the Austrian half of the Empire the wartime tasks: 'Considerations of administrative expediency, deference to the moods of the parties, allowance for current or future circumstances in politics; all this has come to an end. There is now only one thing: the orientation of all forces in the state to the certain, swift and complete attainment of the war aims.'<sup>508</sup> The press had adjusted itself to censorship. Domestic proceedings were barely touched and, if this happened on occasion, it was not commented on. Everyone had learnt to live with the emergency ordinances: the civil servants, the salaried employees, the labourers and peasants. It was in fact uncanny how quickly the war and the emergency situation caused by it became routine. People subordinated themselves to it.



Similarly, not all that much was known about developments within the states and the municipalities. Those Landtage (regional diets) of the Austrian half of the Empire that had still functioned up to July 1914, namely in Dalmatia, Carniola (Krain), Gorizia (Görz), Moravia, Upper and Lower Austria, Silesia and Styria, had then been suspended like the others. The consultations of the communal bodies took place behind closed doors. At least at this level, however, there still existed something like pluralism, since the municipal councils still held regular meetings and here not only was the business that occurred at the lowest level taken care of; there was also at least a minimal co-ordination of interests. Here the divergence of opinions and class antagonisms merely covered up by the necessities of war could also partially be felt, for example when the absorption of war gains, a particular tax burden on the rich, the abolition of censorship or measures targeting food profiteering were discussed.<sup>509</sup> The axis from the Ministry of the Interior via the deputy state governors to the state governors also functioned to a certain extent. Yet the emergency legislation and the decrees were superordinate to this. In some ministries there was a considerable proliferation of agendas; on the other hand, the central administration did not remain untouched by the direct impact of the war because a considerable number of the lower and mid-level civil servants were called up, the administration devolved on older civil servants and these were often no longer able to cope with the increased accrual of paperwork. In this way, a deceleration of the entire administrative process occurred,<sup>510</sup> which truly had nothing to do with laziness but was instead a result of the war that could be observed after only a few months.

It would thus be appropriate to understand the term 'total war' as something that is also applicable to the First World War and, indeed, from the outset of this conflict. For the home front, the fundamental threat to life did not exist as it would do later in the Second World War, but precisely in Austria-Hungary, whose existence was ultimately more threatened by the war than that of the German Empire, no-one could say from the first weeks onward that the war had not had any effect on his life.

When people then saw the wounded arrive and the first cripples surface, daily life on the home front was put into perspective to a certain extent, though only as long as they were prepared to open their eyes not only to their own but also other realities.

### **Wounded, Sick and Dead**

The war had embraced the entire territory of the Dual Monarchy not only in the sense that industries produced above all for the requirements of the army in the field; restrictions of every kind could be observed and shortages emerged. Even more evident was the circumstance that ultimately everyone was affected and everyone suffered when they came into contact with the wounded, the sick, the crippled and the dead.

The medical treatment of the army and the civilian population could barely be mastered in the two halves of the Empire. At the start of the war, in the Common Army and in the two territorial armies there had been a total of 1,500 military surgeons.<sup>511</sup> Despite the almost immediate enlistment of most of the physicians from the reserves and the Landsturm conscripts, there was a shortage of doctors at the front. As a result of the considerable need for military surgeons, already at the beginning of the war a shortage of doctors had arisen on the home front. For this reason, the older doctors among the Landsturm conscripts and those who had been released from the army again had to remain at home so that the entire system of medical care did not collapse.

The willingness of highly regarded doctors and professors who were in no way eligible to be called up to promptly volunteer for the medical care system in the field army was ultimately just a drop in the ocean and in addition a more than two-edged sword, which could be explained not just by the Hippocratic Oath but far more so by the enthusiasm for the war on the one hand and a widespread basic attitude of Darwinism, to which the doctors had a particularly close affinity, on the other. Now it was a question of selection. The doctors would also be given ample opportunity to extend their experiences and knowledge. The war was a 'great, highly informative teacher', as Surgeon General Paul Mydracz wrote;<sup>512</sup> from a scientific standpoint it was 'an experience that was genuinely creative for research purposes' and 'a highly interesting mass experiment'.<sup>513</sup> 'There were certainly enough subjects of study.' Doctors were scarce, however. An infantry regiment was supposed to have five doctors, but it had generally only three, and at least temporarily there was often no doctor available at all.<sup>514</sup> It was not only the case that the number of wounded soon exceeded the capacity of the dressing stations, the garrison infirmaries, the troop infirmaries and the reserve infirmaries; the doctors themselves were also subject to injury and death or they ended up in war captivity.<sup>515</sup> The war of movement repeatedly called the intricate system of the first and second 'auxiliary line' into question, where the wounded should be moved from the auxiliary stations in the immediate vicinity of the front via the dressing stations of the divisional medical hospitals in ramshackle field houses or in the case of serious injuries in field infirmaries, mobile reserve infirmaries and, ultimately, with 'permanent sick transports' to the 'stables' and the 'voluntary medical hospitals'.<sup>516</sup> Contrary to the Geneva Convention of 1906, it frequently happened that the medical hospitals were shelled. If serious setbacks occurred and the front was precipitously withdrawn, the provision of orderly medical services was out of the question.<sup>517</sup> Furthermore, for the huge increase in the number of operations, ever more surgeons were required. There was no shortage of pharmacies and even the medical material that was passed on to the base command from the Imperial and Royal War Ministry definitely corresponded to the level of medical and pharmacology of the time. The amounts requested by the Military Medication Directorate in Vienna appeared even to the medical chiefs to be 'abnormal'.

And there was another problem: Austria-Hungary had not succeeded in establishing its own pharmaceutical industry and was thus largely dependent on imports from the German Empire, with the exception of chloroform, mercuric chloride and bandaging material. As the import was only possible after 24 September 1914, when the import, export and transit bans that also applied to Germany were repealed, a temporary restriction was decreed for the civilian sector. Then the import was again possible. The pharmaceutical wholesalers admittedly demanded a fifteen per cent supplement to the list price.<sup>518</sup> Why shouldn't they make a profit from the war?

Even though it had been assumed before the war that troop formations that had lost 25 to 30 per cent of their men to death and injury were then no longer capable of combat, already in the first year of war, regiments and divisions that had lost more than 50 per cent still remained in the front lines.<sup>519</sup> Ways had to be found to deal with injuries that until the war barely had to be treated, above all shots to the head and the stomach. The war was indeed a 'highly informative teacher'.

According to the mobilisation plan, the military medical hospitals had envisaged only 16,708 beds in 191 military hospitals. That was ridiculously few if one looks at the number of wounded and sick in the field armies. Therefore, an almost instant increase in the number of infirmaries and similar facilities had to take place. They were increased bit by bit to 567 and, ultimately, 874 institutions with a total of almost 95,000 beds. A large proportion of the infirmaries behind the front and the clinics across the entire Dual Monarchy were called on for the care of the wounded and the sick in the Imperial and Royal Army. In addition, large makeshift infirmaries arose. The fact that the building of the Reichsrat in Vienna served as a reserve military hospital, however, had a more demonstrative character. With this expansion of the military medical and care facilities, it was no wonder that civilian requirements had to increasingly take a back seat. The main focus was on the soldiers. They should, if possible, be healed and redeployed; everything else was less important. Even the social charitable establishments worked first and foremost for the front.

The nursing staff constituted a further shortage in medical care. At the beginning of the war, medical orderlies had only been provided for the permanent infirmaries in the base area. With the 'army sisters', who were assigned to the field formations, the field medical hospitals also received helpers and orderlies who were at least surgically trained.<sup>520</sup> The bulk of the nurses, however were non-trained women and girls who had volunteered to serve, initially out of enthusiasm for the war, for charitable reasons and ultimately from the necessity to earn their living. Numerous private aid organisations, above all the Red Cross, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Teutonic Knights contributed to the provision and care of the wounded and the sick and also made their infrastructure and facilities available. Each Maltese group had three automobiles, which collected the seriously wounded from front positions.

The transports of wounded, who had to be accommodated in the reserve infirmaries and in the hospitals claimed by the state, were – alongside the list of casualties – a most eloquent testimony to the fact that the war did not only take place somewhere ‘out there’. It was literally omnipresent. Men with crutches, prosthetic limbs and mutilations increasingly became part of the streetscape. The establishment of orthopaedic infirmaries in Vienna and homes for invalids was designed to allow the war invalids to get used to having a life again under altered circumstances that could often hardly be coped with.<sup>521</sup> Yet neither the physical nor the psychological damage could really be overcome. New operational techniques, more effective medicines and improved treatment could only help to alleviate part of the suffering. One of the biggest problems, however, was how one should heal the mental damage that the war called forth in a short space of time. The ‘war of nerves’ already had its own meaning. ‘Since it was no longer the rattling of a tram, a street blocked by traffic, reading an exciting book or late nights out’ that crumpled the nerves, but the infernal noise of one’s own artillery and the impact of enemy shells, the din and the screaming, the burning and the shooting and the sight of mutilated people and the dead. They were a shock and a horror for every individual. And not everyone could deal with them. The military surgeons close to the army and in the rear areas of the front were generally helpless. They only knew one thing: ‘Neuropathic soldiers were unusable; an anxious, trembling hand on the trigger, a bundle of nerves plagued by tinnitus, paralysis and convulsions’ was no good at the front.<sup>522</sup> These soldiers were shunted off and filled the sanatoria.

Other features of the war also spread far and wide and across the home front. As early as autumn 1914 the so-called ‘army epidemics’ broke out: cholera, dysentery and other epidemic diseases.<sup>523</sup> This occurred first of all in the north-eastern theatre of war and towards the end of the year in the Balkans too. In order to prevent a further spread, quarantine stations were set up in the base area. The ruthless crackdown by the Army High Command proved in this case to be something positive. The quarantine and observation stations fulfilled their purpose and prevented the army epidemics from spreading across the entire Dual Monarchy.<sup>524</sup> They could also be relatively quickly contained at the front, always assuming that those at risk of infection did not behave stupidly and refuse to be vaccinated.<sup>525</sup>

If the wounded, the convalescents and the cripples very soon became part of everyday life in the hinterland, one came into contact with the dead far less a long way from the front. The fallen were generally buried on the spot. Those who died of their wounds as well as those who succumbed to epidemics and other diseases were buried at cemeteries in the vicinity of the various medical hospitals. What had started as a response to an emergency situation ultimately developed into a real regime: officers were strictly to be buried in solitary graves; soldiers who had distinguished themselves by particular and proven heroics were also to be buried in solitary or single row graves; in all other

cases, the burial was to be in mass graves. As can be imagined, the fallen enemy was initially dealt with in a rough manner. No attempts were made to identify the victims; the vast majority was buried as 'unknown'. Only following the realisation that the Russians afforded the fallen members of the Imperial and Royal Army far more care, buried the officers if possible in solitary graves and allowed the enlisted men to keep their proof of identity did it come to changes and to attentive burial services that extended also to the fallen enemy.<sup>526</sup> Exhumations and repatriation were rarities during the war, but considerations began to gain ground as early as 1914 as to how to symbolise the death of countless numbers and, above all, enable the relatives to commemorate them. With this the moment had come to redefine the importance of war memorials and their erection was begun.<sup>527</sup> The first projects for war memorials were initiated. In accordance with the enormity of the war, architects plagued themselves with drafts for gigantic fortresses for the dead on Kahlenburg near Vienna, in the Wachau and in other places. Since the war memorials were also regarded as substitute graves, it is no wonder that in 1914 the first smaller memorials for this war were already erected until the opinion prevailed that the construction of memorials should be postponed until after the war and that more care should be given instead to the war widows and orphans than for spending money on monuments. Emperor Franz Joseph was also of this opinion, and even without the fortresses for dead there was for the time being plenty to build.

### The Home Front Becomes a Fortress

Whoever might still have believed in July 1914 that the fighting was taking place somewhere far away was for other reasons overwhelmed by reality as early as August. The war also resulted in those structural measures being realised that had been planned well in advance for the defence of the country and served not only to secure the borders but also the home front. On 3 August Emperor Franz Joseph authorised the Army High Command to ready the Kraków Fortress and the Przemyśl Fortress, as well as the 'fortified positions' in Lviv (Lemberg), Jarosław (Jaroslau), Sieniawa, Mykolaiv (Mikolajów), Halych (Halytsch/Halicz) and Yezupil (Jezupol) for a war. Field fortifications were to be erected near Zalischyky (Salischtschyky) and near Martynów.<sup>528</sup> In this way, the most important crossings over the San and Dniester Rivers were secured. The greatest efforts were made in Przemyśl (Premissel) in order to make the main bases of the defensive belt with or without armour, the intermediate bases of the defensive belt and the permanent main and inner sites of the core zone unassailable, furthermore to dig redoubts and sniper cover, to make the batteries ready to fire, to deforest the observation areas and shooting ranges, to erect millions of metres of barbed wire obstacles and to lay minefields.<sup>529</sup> Kraków (Krakau), with its partially obsolete fortifications, was far

less elaborately equipped, and there was far more time for extensive defence preparations to be made for the other cities and fortresses. If almost 30,000 officers, soldiers and workers made Przemysł ready for war, one can surmise that the fortification works in Galicia alone must have required 100,000 men or more. For the Poles, Ruthenians, Germans and Jews of Galicia, however, the fortification works were merely one of many signs of war but also of the fear that it would not be possible to hold the enemy armies at the border.

In the south of the Dual Monarchy the situation was different to the extent that until 1914 all fortification works had enjoyed only low priority and in some places the extension had therefore completely ceased. It was at least assumed that the Serbs and the Montenegrins might perhaps succeed in advancing on to Austro-Hungarian territory. Sarajevo, Mostar, Bileća and Trebinje did not possess any defensive belt fortresses, whilst near Višegrad on the Drina River a tower howitzer site was still in the process of being built, and Petrovaradin (Peterwardein), which exhibited an old fortress, was additionally protected only by parts of a modern defensive belt fortification. The forts that had been strengthened during the Balkan Wars had since in fact been partially demolished.<sup>530</sup> This was not the case with the fortifications that served to protect the coast. In the case of these fortifications, several things came into play. They had not been set up only due to a potential threat from the Balkan powers, even if Montenegro of course had to be kept in mind or measures for all-round defence had to be planned, in the event that, like in 1869 or 1882, uprisings of the 'Bocchese' occurred, as the inhabitants of the interior of the Bay of Kotor were called. Furthermore, the fortification of the coastline and above all of the naval bases facing Italy had been carried out. The scope of modern artillery had increasingly caused discomfort. This applied in particular to the main port of the Imperial and Royal Navy, Pula (Pola), but also for Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and, above all, for Kotor, whose innermost bays lay within the scope of the artillery, which could be brought into position on the Montenegrin Mount Lovćen overlooking the bay. For this reason, particularly during the Balkan Wars the expansion of the fortifications on the land side had ultimately received considerably more attention than those on the sea side. There the mine obstacles and, above all, naval units were supposed to prevent the enemy from approaching.

Before the first offensive against Serbia, not much could be improved on the existing installations, but – as it transpired – in any case only a few fortifications and defensive barracks along the Montenegrin border were seriously endangered. All the same, the manning of the few forts and barracks off the coast required 17,800 men.

Fortifications were also built behind the front. Experiences gathered over several centuries had shown that enemy armies had repeatedly succeeded in making deep incursions, and at the latest since the Napoleonic Wars it had been known that the central operational concept of all general staffs had been to first of all defeat the opposing army

and then to march on the enemy's capital city. This knowledge regarding possible events had thus led Austria-Hungary to pay particular attention above all to the fortification of the Danube frontier. Both Vienna and Budapest, after all, are located on the Danube. Other large cities and important places on the Danube, however, were also to be fortified. Krems was to receive a defensive belt on both sides of the Danube, and likewise Tulln, for which there should also be a fortified core zone (*noyau*). As a bridgehead on both sides of the Danube, Vienna should be equipped with a *noyau* north of the river, whilst Bratislava should receive a fortified defensive belt to the north and a *noyau* to the south of the Danube, Komárom (Komorn) a northern defensive belt and Budapest a complete defensive belt but no *noyau*.

On 22 August 1914, Emperor Franz Joseph ordered the immediate commencement of field fortifications. Vienna had not waited for this order but had instead started the work even before the declaration of war against Russia.<sup>531</sup> Initially, the earthworks were to be dug, defences built and obstacles laid. Only later was thought given to installations in the manoeuvring areas. Even in the case of an expansion in stages, however, shortages very quickly made themselves felt and cuts had to be made in men and material. Russian successes in Galicia gave rise to the fear that the Tsar's armies might after all succeed in a short space of time in advancing as far as the Danube. Thus, efforts were doubled. The garrisons of the bridgeheads, labour battalions and civilian firms saw no possibility, however, of building the requested covers by mid-October 1914, which should also provide protection against the shelling of heavy Russian artillery.

It cannot be established even approximately how many people in total worked on the fitting out of the Danube frontier. If we take the Vienna bridgehead, however, with its eleven sectors, half of which were more or less well developed, and take stock of the prepared positions, the caverns, the infantry lines with overhead protection, the accommodation for the men, the ammunition depots, the observation platforms, the telephone exchanges and much more besides, we can at least estimate the extent of the work. In Vienna, up to 30,000 soldiers and military employees were occupied with this project. The artillery equipment, however, was not only uneven but also in some cases obsolete, since the artillery types 1861 and 1875 were still in use. There was a total of many hundreds of pieces of artillery. For the protection of the Danube frontier, hundreds of kilometres of telephone wires were also laid.

In the cities and towns affected in this way by the fortification of the country, one could go and 'watch the war', though not too intensively. The territories in which fortifications and military installations were built were restricted zones. It was no longer permitted to climb observation and church towers. It was of course forbidden to take photographs. Even road markings and signposts could not be renewed or re-affixed.<sup>532</sup>

There was, however, a fourth area in which field positions were being built on a long-term basis, beyond current requirements. This was along the border with Italy

and, above all, in South Tyrol (Südtirol). As doubts had arisen about the position of Italy as early as the mobilisation against Serbia, the Imperial and Royal Army Administration did not hesitate to examine the structural protective measures and, where it was considered necessary, to undertake further extensions. The blockhouses built in the 1860s were worthless; even the armoured forts from the 1880s could not withstand prolonged shelling, likewise the forts built around the turn of the century. But the defensive forts at the Tonale Pass, near Lardaro and, above all, those on the plateau at Folgaria and Lavarone, southeast of Trento (Trient), were among the most modern fortifications.<sup>533</sup> The sectors of the border with Italy were divided into six zones. The Nauders and Gomagoi barriers were located in Zone I, in the far west. In Zone II were the Tonale Fort and the Presanella Fort. It was Zone III, however, which was divided into the sub-sectors of Giudicarie (Judikarien) and Riva, that required the most attention. Trento was protected by the armoured fort at Romagnano and smaller forts. The Adige-Arsa barrier was safeguarded by the Valmorbia Fort. In Giudicarie there was a series of older forts, first and foremost the one at Carriola. In the sector of Riva, the frontier Altissimo–Corni–Zugna–Pasubio was extended in the field. In addition, the sector on the northern shore of Lake Garda around Riva was supported by the Tombio Fort, a casemate fort and smaller forts. The centrepiece of Zone III, however, were the defensive forts on the plateau of the Sette Comuni, namely Serrada, Sommo, Sebastiano, Belvedere-Gschwent, Luserna, Verle and Cima di Vezzena. They had been constructed in such a way that they were at least equal to the numerous Italian armoured forts. They had been skilfully adapted to the terrain, stretching deep into the rocks, and had been equipped in places with concrete walls several metres thick and, above all, with solid ceilings. Externally, the forts were also covered in thick stone cladding. However, the Austro-Hungarian defensive forts were relatively poorly armed with artillery. Furthermore, a fact that hardly anyone knew was that it could not be gauged how the garrisoned soldiers would behave in the event of being bombarded for several days with thousands of 21 cm, 28cm and 30.5 cm calibre shells. At this point, however, the equipping and the planning were still being taken care of.

Zone IV in the Alps around Fasan could boast only three outdated and partially disarmed forts, namely Albuso, Dosaccio and Moena (Mön). Finally, the Tyrol border was completed by Zone V, in which the Buas, Corte, Plätzwiese, Landro, Haideck and Mitterberg forts were located.

Last but not least was the Zone Carinthia, with its completely outdated forts and blockhouses in the Fella and Seebach valleys as well as at the Bovec (Flitsch) pass.

Taking all these constructions together, which the Dual Monarchy had to secure externally and which should also protect the core zones, the Empire created the impression of a large fortress set up for the purposes of all-round defence. Hundreds of



thousands were mobilised to man this fortress. As can be seen in the case of Przemyśl, however, the most powerful bulwarks could be surrounded and destroyed.

The feared breakthrough in Galicia did not happen, however, even if the fortifications in the east and the north were lost, with the exception of Kraków. Yet for the larger part of the Danube Monarchy, the danger of a battle for the central areas very soon receded. Thus, the war remained somewhere 'out there'. People attempted to find out where exactly with the aid of the army reports.

### Official Announcements

The basis for the army reports, which were compiled on a daily basis in the Operations Division of the Army High Command, constituted the dispatches from the individual sectors of the front. These dispatches were generally unvarnished portrayals and assessments of the situation. The army reports, however, were not passed on in this form. Even the 'Emperor's report', which was passed on to the Emperor, was temporally no longer entirely up to date; this repeatedly prompted murmurings of discontent on the part of the Emperor, and was above all amateurishly thrown together in terms of its message. The same applied to the reports that were sent to the War Ministry and to both Prime Ministers. A summary of the army reports was ultimately sent to the War Press Bureau, which was prudently not accommodated at the headquarters of the Army High Command but rather as far away as possible. There the Austrian, Hungarian and German journalists, as well as those from other allied and neutral countries, could put their talent to the test of reading between the lines. The writer Karl Hans Strobl, who has since been largely forgotten but worked at the time in the War Press Bureau, very vividly described in his book *Das Igelhaus* (The Hedgehog House) the work in this newsroom: 'They sat there elbow to elbow, each one endeavouring to embellish the succinct style (of the meagre draft report) with adornments of his own personal views. What emerged were intriguing details on events at the front, impressions of someone who had been there and depictions of such objective fidelity, as though they had been written directly at the scene. It was a bustling enterprise. There were virtuosi of their subject, who, equipped with nothing but the Hartleben travel guide for Galicia and a map, created a great scenario for the [...] dramatic actions delivered [by the Army High Command].'<sup>534</sup>

The editorial offices on the home front endeavoured no less to adapt to the requirements of war journalism. Almost from one day to the next references to supply shortages, the effects of the war on the stock market or other changes that could primarily be discerned from the business pages were subjected to censorship, and likewise everything that was reported on events at the front or on high politics. Thus, initially

quite inconspicuously but then more noticeably, those white gaps began to appear in the newspapers that made it clear that the censorship had demanded the removal of a block of text. But there were of course other adjustments that were most noticeable where it concerned the advertising business. It was no wonder that all firms that disposed of a suitable product range endeavoured to extol the virtues of their goods.<sup>535</sup>

Those advertisements now appeared in which 'war uniform trousers' were advertised, which were 'of inestimable value for the winter campaign, prevent all colds outdoors, [with a] double clasp at the back, opened and closed using a grip without changing position or the seat of the trousers'; or: 'Knitted gloves, knitted cardigans, knitted socks, knitted wrist-warmers, knitted knee-warmers, knitted scarves, knitted snow bonnets', or even the military winter underwear equipment advertised by the firm Wilhelm Löbl, which included blankets and abdominal bandages made from camelhair, woollen shirts and hygienic silk underwear, namely 'everything for the cold season'.

However, the war economy on the home front and in the field were also offered other things, for example, as a substitute for oats, the 'St. Marx blood meal', which, when mixed in with horse feed, was supposed to work wonders and also reduce the cost of the feed. There were no known cases of 'horse madness', or at least not as a result of being fed with blood meal. However, the war would only too quickly demonstrate that horses were capable of reacting in exactly the same way as humans when they ran into artillery fire during their first engagement, heard the blasting and the screaming and found it increasingly unbearable. This subject was also absent from the army reports.

Battles were being fought with good chances of success. 'Our left flank is currently on the offensive and is advancing strategically'.<sup>536</sup> '8-day battle. Drove of prisoners and 160 cannons captured. Dankl's attack on Lublin. Lviv in a difficult position',<sup>537</sup> etc. In its official reports, the War Press Bureau prescribed a vocabulary about which the then captain in the General Staff Glaise von Horstenau waxed lyrical in his private notes because the diction was so extraordinarily subtle. The thrust of the 1st Army in the direction of Lublin was reported, which was in fact meaningless in view of the centre of gravity of the Russian forces. At precisely the moment when the capital city of Galicia was to be surrendered following heavy losses, it was reported: 'In East Galicia, Lviv is still in our possession.' Information about major losses was passed on only with a time lag; difficulties were normally expressed by the dispatches being even shorter than usual. And when there was nothing, and above all nothing positive, to be reported about the Imperial and Royal troops, then attention was given to the German troops and it was reported how they were advancing in the direction of Paris and how General Hindenburg had defeated the Russian army under General Rennenkampf near the Masurian Lakes. Something was always suitable to be emphasised in this way, so that the impression could be created that there might be difficulties but that defeats on one front were completely offset by the extraordinary successes on other fronts. On 4 September,

one day after the city had been taken by the Russians, the *Neue Freie Presse* reported: 'Lviv was probably still held yesterday.' 'German forays already near Paris.' The next day: 'The mortars of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the French campaigns.' 'Favourable situation of the allied armies, incipient collapse of the Russian offensive, uprisings and famine in the enemy's rear and unity and confidence in the Monarchy and in Germany'.

The basic principle of the Army High Command was to allow war correspondents on to the front only if they could report successes. Those fronts on which the Imperial and Royal armies were involved in costly fighting and were on the retreat were taboo for 'strategic reasons'.<sup>538</sup> However, journalists could comfort themselves with the fact that not even many of those at the headquarters of the Army High Command knew everything that was happening at the front. Assumptions and occasional observations had to serve as a substitute for concrete knowledge.

The list of poets and writers assigned to the War Press Bureau intermittently read like a membership list of a renowned literary circle: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Robert Musil, Leo Perutz, Franz Werfel, Alexander Roda Roda, Ferenc Molnár, Karl Hans Strobl and many others worked on reports and literary exaggerations of the war. To be found in the Literary Group they set up themselves were also Franz Theodor Csokor, Alfred Polgar, Franz Karl Ginzkey, Rainer Maria Rilke, Felix Salten and, temporarily, even Stefan Zweig. At least as important as the literary section was the Artists' Group, to which painters and graphic artists such as Albin Egger-Lienz, Oskar Laske, Ferdinand Staeger, Luigi Kasimir, Fritz Schönpflug, Carl Leopold Hollitzer or Ludwig Heshaimer belonged, among others. Some time later, increased attention was also devoted to photography and film, and the latter was supervised by Lieutenant Count Alexander ('Sascha') Kolowrat-Krakowski. Finally, the War Press Bureau was expanded further to include the 'Musical History Headquarters', which dealt above all with the collection of soldiers' songs.<sup>539</sup> In Austria, Bernhard Paumgartner was entrusted with this, whilst in Hungary Béla Bartok and Zoltán Kodály did the collecting.

The war propaganda used every resource available, at least initially. An endless number of impressions assailed those waiting on the home front and many of these branded themselves indelibly on their memory. The first wounded returned home by their hundreds and thousands. The slightly wounded were generally upbeat, not because they had left the battlefield but because they hoped they would soon be well again. They were proud 'to have been there' and indulged in empty talk such as: 'We really gave it to them': the Russians had thrown their weapons away 'and put their hands in the air or walked away; they didn't put up a fight anywhere'.<sup>540</sup> Then there were the droves of refugees with whatever household effects they could carry. However, as the Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich, Count Herbert Herberstein, wrote: 'All is well. Everything is going to plan, nothing is being rushed and there is not a trace of panic-like states.'<sup>541</sup> In reality, however, virtually nothing was 'going to plan' any more.

The dispatches about defeats, the dissolution of senior command posts and, above all, of exorbitant losses, become more frequent. The XII Corps was said to have lost around 40 per cent of its officers, whilst one mountain unit had lost 32 of its 36 pieces of artillery. From Lviv, taken by the Russians, it was heard that young girls had showered the Russians with flowers. Gródek was burning. Then it rained for days and at the beginning of September it was already very cold. On 3 September the relocation of the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command started. It was to be transferred from Przemyśl to Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez); the wartime court household of the Archduke/Supreme Commander was even to be moved as far as Nowy Targ (Neumarkt). It was now a case of evading the enemy and becoming accustomed to setbacks. The army leadership had to furthermore contend with a crisis of a particular kind among the generals. Among the Imperial and Royal generals, the harvest reaped by death and by their superior authorities was plentiful.

### The Death of General Wodniansky

On 28 August 1914, when the Imperial and Royal 4th Army prepared to carry out the operation that would become known as the Battle of Komarów, the Commander of the VI Corps, General of Infantry Svetozar Borojević, sent from Tomaszów the orders for the day to his 15th Infantry Division and added: 'This is the decisive battle.' On the following day, 29 August, a map on a scale of 1:75,000 was enclosed with the few dockets, dispatches and orders that had been deposited by the 15th Infantry Division in the operational files, on which the village of Pukarzów, located around seven kilometres north of Horodok, is marked. Next to it, a small cross was added and 'MG [= Major General] Wodniansky' written next to it. The cross was evidently supposed to mark the spot where Major General Friedrich Wodniansky von Wildenfeld had met his death. Borojević wrote on this day on a piece of paper: 'Troops have fulfilled their task magnificently.'<sup>542</sup> Yet the divisional commander had killed himself.

The news of his suicide spread. The Deputy Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery Major General Marterer noted in his diary entry for 30 August: 'MG Wodniansky, Commander of the 15th Infantry Troop Division, has shot himself.' The surrounding circumstances were not mentioned, but his death increasingly conformed to the fate of many, who appeared to confirm what had initially been registered with some disbelief: during the first weeks and months of the war, the Imperial and Royal generals had suffered similarly high losses to the subalterns and the troops, though for different reasons. The 'senior leadership of the Habsburg armies', in the words of Rudolf Kiszling, one of the authors of the General Staff work that emerged after the war, was relieved of its command, suspended and declared unfit for service one after

the other.<sup>543</sup> Some of them drew the consequences in their own way and committed suicide.

General Wodniansky's death was not the first case of failure, though it was one of the most peculiar and perhaps most tragic at the beginning of the war. At least it was the first case that made it clear in a dramatic fashion that the most senior officers had also been overwhelmed by the reality of the war. It was sought, however, to draw a veil over the problem that had manifested itself and to avoid the impression, both towards the body of troops and the soldiers as well as the public, that the loss of such and such a number of senior officers was not the result of incompetence, errors in leadership, unfortunate circumstances and the enormous exertions to which the generals were also subjected, but could instead be traced back to the fact that the senior ranks also fell, died, became sick or were transferred to other posts. Merely the superior, most senior commanders, but above all the presidial section of the War Ministry and the Military Chancellery of the Emperor knew about the true circumstances. The Staff Ordinance Gazette cited the death of General Wodniansky with the lapidary words: 'dead; day and place unknown'. However, he was not included in the official casualty lists.

Thus, everything pertinent seemed to have been said about the General. This would have remained the case if the family, who did not want to accept this, had not taken action. Around a month after Wodniansky's death, Anna Freiin von Wodniansky, the widow of the Major General, his son Friedrich and his brother submitted a petition to the War Ministry in which they requested that the information on the death of the General be re-examined and the reports on the subject revised. According to the family, who made reference here to 'careful investigations and thorough enquiries with fellow combatants', the General had been 'hit by an enemy bullet near a windmill located on the field of battle' during an engagement south of Pukarzów on 28 August and had in this way died.

The War Ministry solicited additional information and within a few days a succinct message arrived from the command of the VI Corps, to which the 15th Infantry Division was still subordinated, to the effect that the family's portrayal of the death of the General was correct. At this point, Major General Baron Friedrich Wodniansky von Wildenfeld was included in Casualty List No. 24 and Staff Announcements Gazette No. 54 was amended to the effect that the General had fallen in battle on 28 August.<sup>544</sup>

The fellow combatants and subordinates knew the truth. One of the infantry brigadiers of the 15th Infantry Division, Colonel Baron Carl von Bardolff, described the events in considerable detail. On 27 August the division had arrived in the area around Tomazsów. Officers and soldiers were completely exhausted. Nevertheless, during the evening a farmhouse was stormed. The Russians fled. Afterwards, the soldiers were gripped by a 'victory panic', as Bardolff called it. It was the division's first victory. The people rejoiced and raised their officers on their shoulders, whilst the military band

played the Austrian Emperor's Hymn; then there was drumming and the blowing of trumpets. Finally, the people could be brought back to their senses. But the day was not yet over. The division still had to swing back to the east. Wodniansky resolved to lead the troops 'up to the causeway that led across the wide and deep Huczwa swamp'. By the time the entire division had carried out the manoeuvre the next day was dawning. Suddenly, Russian artillery fire began and caused terrible carnage on the causeway. 'Only a few of those on the causeway reached the southern bank of the Huczwa depression unhurt', wrote Bardolff. 'From there I saw how the harnesses with pieces of artillery plunged into the swamp, how knots of people in the hope of being able to wade through it, completely sank right in front of me. [...] Then an orderly of the divisional command, who had sneaked up across the causeway, arrived with the message that the divisional commander had shot himself before his very eyes. He assumed that the Chief of Staff, Major Count Christallnig, who had absented himself from the staff, had made the same decision.'<sup>545</sup> The orderly was right.

Away from the 4th Army, the death of General Wodniansky was branded as a glaring example of a grave error of leadership and the heir to the throne Archduke Karl Franz Josef gave considerable space to the death of the divisional commander in a very private annual balance. The Archduke claimed to have heard from Colonel Bardolff that Wodniansky had been 'a completely incapable, lethargic person', 'who only did what his chief of staff whispered to him to do'. Furthermore, the second infantry brigadier, Colonel Josef Mark, had also been 'a big wimp'. Bardolff later wrote nothing of the sort in his autobiography. The Archduke, in his version, relocated the event to a hill near the edge of a forest and had the 15th Infantry Division crossing a bridge when the Russians began to shoot.<sup>546</sup>

The death of Wodniansky was not the first suicide of an Imperial and Royal general. With some delay, rumours were circulating to the effect that the Commander of the 5th Honvéd Cavalry Division, Major General Ernst von Froreich, had also killed himself a few days after the campaign commenced. Following a cavalry attack against a Russian position, which ended in the fire of the Russian machine guns, the Major General shot herself, evidently because he blamed himself for the debacle.<sup>547</sup> Only a few more days passed before the Military Chancellery of the Emperor was informed of another incident that appeared to require explanation.

The telephone dispatch of the local command in Vienna from 13 September 1914 did not even hint at anything unusual: 'Major General Franz Paukert, Commander of the 16th Infantry Troop Division, has died. The military funeral will take place on Monday, 14 September.'<sup>548</sup> Had Paukert succumbed to a sudden and fatal illness? By no means. The Commander of the 3rd Army, General Brudermann, had requested on 4 September that he immediately apply for his removal as commander. Paukert did as he was ordered. The chief physician of the division issued him with a medical certifi-

cate and wrote: 'His Excellency Franz Paukert, commander 16th ITD [Infantry Troop Division], is suffering from chronic stomach catarrh and stomach cramps and it is not expected that he will be fit for duty in the foreseeable future.' In this way, everything happened as General Bruderemann had requested. Paukert packed his belongings, perhaps also put his personal affairs in order and boarded the train. He travelled as far as Tápiósüly, east of Budapest. That evening he left the train, allegedly to stretch his legs. What then happened is illustrated by a communication from the station commander, which – in translation – went as follows: 'I report that on the 8th of this month, at 8:15 p.m., Major General Franz Paukert, commander of the [...] Troop Division – en route to the railway station here – laid himself on the tracks, probably with suicidal intent, whereupon his throat was severed by the wheels of the train.'

The fate of one or the other of these generals became known only later and it generally was not greatly pursued. The first general to fall into captivity was Brigadier Cornelius Blaim, Commander of the Hermannstadt March Brigade, who already fell into the hands of the Russians at the end of August 1914 near Rohatyn. In mid-May 1915 he committed suicide with an overdose of barbitone, evidently not – as the official version later claimed – due to the demeaning treatment he received at the hands of the Russians, but because he regarded captivity as a humiliation.<sup>549</sup>

It was not just generals, however, who were not equal to the shock of the first battles and, above all, the sight of the dead, and who regarded themselves, moreover, as being to blame for, or at least complicitous in, the losses. Subalterns and staff officers also took their own life. Members of the Landsturm Regiment 3 were woken one night at the end of August 1914 by two shots nearby. An NCO went to check: 'Our battalion commander, Major Greisser, had shot himself. One shot through the mouth, the other through the head. [...] We buried him early in the morning.'<sup>550</sup> This was also no isolated incident.

Emperor Franz Joseph was informed. It was less the suicides that bothered him, however, than the by now numerous dismissals of generals. He wanted to put a stop to this. He informed the Army High Command that he was concerned about the number of dismissals. There had in fact not been so many and Franz Joseph was probably not informed about every single case. The most spectacular was certainly the dismissal of the Commander of the 3rd Army, General Bruderemann, on the same 4 September on which Bruderemann instructed Major General Paukert to resign his command. This was the first removal of an army commander, not even three weeks after the war in the north-eastern theatre had become a war of shooting. Bruderemann, before the war a cavalry troop inspector, had the task of containing the main bulk of the Russians in their advance over Broday and Ternopil (Tarnopol). The Imperial and Royal 3rd Army was swiftly forced back, however, and decimated in heavy encounters. Bringing up the 2nd Army from the Serbian theatre of war initially also failed to have an impact. The

withdrawals degenerated into a desperate flight; artillery and weapons were abandoned, East Galicia was lost, the Galician capital Lviv was surrounded and Brudermann was blamed for the loss of substantial parts of the crown lands. Sentence had already been passed on him well before, however: he was regarded as an imposter who had only advanced to a higher post due to his elegant appearance on horseback. The Army High Command sent staff officers time and again to the headquarters of the 3rd Army and demanded reports on the conduct of the troops and the commanders. Brudermann was eventually summoned to the Army High Command in Przemyśl. He reported and travelled back to his army feeling safe in the knowledge that his presentation had been convincing, evidently because the Army Supreme Commander did not have the courage to inform him immediately of his removal to his face. Instead, he promptly sent a letter after him, which stated: 'To my sincere regret I received the impression today – on the occasion of your personal report – that the grave strokes of fate that have impacted so heavily of late on the 3rd Army and in turn on Your Excellency have also shaken your health. [...] Knowing the high sense of duty of Your Excellency, I understand that you do not want to leave the Army of your own accord, even if your need for rest could be met to a greater extent.'<sup>551</sup> Brudermann was taken completely by surprise, but he did exactly what Archduke Friedrich had advised.<sup>552</sup> Brudermann described to the director of the Imperial Military Chancellery, General of Artillery Baron Artur von Bolfras, the – in his view – injustice that had befallen him, and at some length: 'After I had finally brought the 3rd Army behind the Wereszczyca in an orderly fashion on the 3rd of this month after 10 days of resistance against a superior enemy east of Lviv, I reported personally to His Imperial Highness the Army Supreme Commander that now the very tired 3rd Army required 1 or 2 days of complete rest in order to be able with enthusiasm and full effectiveness to launch the offensive anew with the expected 4th Army. What a terrible surprise when I was informed early on the 5th by a letter from His Imperial Highness, in which he personally stated that he found that the strokes of fate of the 3rd Army had shaken my health and I should take this opportunity to re-establish the same.

I assure Your Excellency that I was physically and psychologically quite normally unshaken and with my head held high faced further challenges with a clear and tranquil mind.'<sup>553</sup>

The causes of the withdrawal, continued Brudermann, had been the not yet complete gathering of the Army and the spatial moving forward of the deployment from Sambor to Lviv. The Russians had come together sooner than expect, so that the Imperial and Royal VII and XII Corps had to swing in and the 23rd Honvéd Division (Major General Daempf), which had been pushed across from the Balkan theatre of war, had been seized by panic for no reason. Order was lost and a withdrawal was unavoidable.



The fate of General Brudermann, to whom Emperor Franz Joseph passed on words of comfort, should not just be left uncommented. Not only had Major General Paukert served under Brudermann as a divisional commander, but also Major General Daempf, commander of the 23rd Honvéd Division, which had been 'seized by panic', according to Brudermann. Thus, Major General Heinrich Daempf was also removed.

The next on the 'hit list' of the Commander of the 3rd Army was the army's chief of staff, Brigadier Pfeffer. Differences of opinion had already arisen between Pfeffer and Brudermann during the General Staff trip in spring 1914. Pfeffer remained and Brudermann became reconciled to him. Subsequently, he could only spare reproachful words for his former chief of staff. Pfeffer's hour came without the assistance of Brudermann. Five days after the removal of the army commander, the chief of staff was also dismissed.

For the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, the matter was gradually reduced to a simple administrative act. 'Reallocations', as they were called in army jargon, were an everyday occurrence. If dismissals were ordered by the Army High Command, there was a standard letter into which the respective name was then inserted. At the end of September 1914 a whole batch was sent out, with which generals, some of whom were already dismissed, such as Brudermann, were instructed to submit their pension applications. On this day alone, this touched Generals Lothar Edler von Hortstein and Count Karl Huyn as well as Major General Count Alfred Zedtwitz, about whom it was initially claimed that he had shot himself. When the rumour proved to be untrue, those in the entourage of Archduke Friedrich said it would have been better, had he done so. Then it was the turn of Brigadiers Joseph Karres and Karl Wojtěchowský Edler von Boddenritt.<sup>554</sup> It was not just in the case of the 3rd Army, however, that the failure of the opening battles had been reflected in large numbers of dismissals. It was a similar situation with the 4th Army.

First of all, the army commander, General Auffenberg, dismissed a very prominent general indeed, namely the former Chief of the General Staff of the entire armed force and direct predecessor of Conrad von Hötzendorf, Blasius Schemua, from his command of the II Corps. Auffenberg justified this in that Schemua had suddenly and without motivation ordered the withdrawal of his corps at the height of the Battle of Komarów. According to Auffenberg, this was the 'gravest error in the details of leadership during the entire period of the campaign'. Schemua, who in turn badmouthed Auffenberg,<sup>555</sup> had to report sick and the Surgeon-General of the corps, Professor Alois Pick, wrote that Schemua suffered from 'nervousness and circulatory disorders'. This led to dizziness, swaying and a feeling of numbness in the right upper extremity.<sup>556</sup>

The next man under Auffenberg's command to be dismissed was the Commander of the XVII Corps, General Count Huyn, who lost his post on 9 September,<sup>557</sup> for health considerations, of course. It probably escaped Count Huyn's attention, however, that it

was said of him that he suffered from 'fear of Cossacks'.<sup>558</sup> Major General Baronet Friedrich Gerstenberger von Reichsegg und Gerstenberg, Commander of the 27th Infantry Division, had to report sick at the end of September. The same happened to General of Cavalry Desiderius Kolossváry de Kolosvár, Commander of the XI Corps of the 3rd Army, at around the same time.

One of the most unpleasant cases was that of the Commander of the 11th Infantry Troop Division, Major General Alois Pokorny. He seemed to quite enjoy his authority. First of all he dismissed the Commander of his 21st Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Grubić, at the beginning of September and gave his reason as: 'Brigadier Grubić, Commander of the 21st Infantry Brigade, thought it was a good idea to report sick on the eve of the decisive battle on the Gnila Lapa. I cannot allow myself a judgement on this sick note, but I believe that it is irrelevant whether this man is dispatched in the line of duty by a bullet or by an illness.'

However, Grubić did in fact suffer from severe sciatica and could barely move. He recuperated and it was perhaps a gratification that he himself became Commander of the 11th Infantry Division nine months after his dismissal from the command of the brigade. No-one cared any more about his predecessor before last, Baronet Alois von Pokorny.

It did not suffice that Pokorny had dismissed one of his brigadiers; he also applied for the dismissal of his second infantry brigadier, Baronet Alexander von Wasserthal, Commander of the 22nd Infantry Brigade. He was saved, however, by the 2nd Army High Command, which qualified Pokorny's allegations and pointed to the proven first-rate leadership of Wasserthal. At the beginning of October, Pokorny himself was targeted by his superiors. He was dismissed shortly thereafter.<sup>559</sup>

Major General Baronet Heinrich von Krauss-Elislago was removed as Commander of the 22nd Rifle Division at the beginning of September 1914. The heir to the throne subsequently described him as a 'shining example of every general staff officer and cloud-shifter', with which Archduke Karl Franz Josef delivered a judgement not only on one individual but on the entire General Staff Corps. General of Infantry (*General der Infanterie* or GdI) Otto Meixner von Zweienstamm, Commander of the VII Corps, was removed at the end of September 1914 upon application by the 2nd Army Command. The internal justification stated that 'GdI Otto Meixner may not be adequate or equal to the great challenges ahead'. He furthermore rarely took the initiative, exhibited a passive approach and was 'temperamental'.<sup>560</sup> Meixner was retired. It was reported to the I Corps in mid-September that Brigadier Godwin von Lilienhoff-Adelstein, the Commander of the 24th Infantry Brigade, suffered from intense nervous debility (neurasthenia) 'with instances of agitation'. It could hardly be expected that he would attain fitness for duty.<sup>561</sup> The General was declared unfit for service. Brigadier Miecislaus Edler von Zaleski, the Commander of the 23rd Infantry Brigade, was dismissed upon

application by the 12th Infantry Division 'because he does not measure up'. He was allegedly a severe neurasthenic and had lost his self-assurance.<sup>562</sup>

The next bomb was dropped on 29 September: the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 4th Army, General Auffenberg had reported sick. Auffenberg could not explain it; neither could others. Archduke Friedrich could, however, and he wrote to the Emperor: 'Even before his departure from Vienna, I had the impression that GdI Auffenberg went to war with little confidence.' But then there was the success at Komarów, which Archduke Friedrich claimed had been exaggerated and was in no way decisive. Subsequently, however, Auffenberg had not been equal to the task, the Army had lost faith in him and, finally, Auffenberg had 'broken down under the weight of events'. His successor would be Archduke Joseph Ferdinand.<sup>563</sup>

Auffenberg was indeed at the end of his strength and had been visibly scarred by the events that followed the Battle of Komarów. All that remained of the very well-known figure of the one-time Imperial and Royal War Minister was a picture of misery. He, whom others had certified 'a keen, critical spirit', 'which he combined with scintillating wit' and who had instilled trust in others, had changed beyond recognition. 'Now I saw [...] a tired, broken old man, who relayed his experiences and his opinions with a weary voice and a resigned countenance',<sup>564</sup> noted one of his subordinates. Auffenberg was removed and sent to Vienna. It should not be overlooked that Auffenberg had already dismissed three of his four corps commanders (Hortstein of the IX, Schemua of the II and Huyn of the XVII Corps). Only Boroević, the Commander of the VI Corps, was able to survive. The fall of Auffenberg was nevertheless tinged with intrigue. Shortly thereafter, Auffenberg had to defend himself, however, due to a completely different matter, namely dubious business connections, and was briefly imprisoned.

On 6 October, the Commander of the 49th Infantry Brigade (II Corps, 4th Army), Brigadier Robert Edler von Langer, was dismissed, whilst Brigadier Haustein von Haustenau was declared unfit for service on 12 October.<sup>565</sup> Brigadier Gustav Mallász, the Commander of the 64th Infantry Brigade (IV Corps, 2nd Army), was forced into retirement shortly thereafter.<sup>566</sup>

It was no less 'lively' in the armies in the Balkans. Army and corps commanders searched for reasons to explain the lack of success of their troops and frequently found them in the failure of the respective troop commanders. If this went hand in hand with incidents in the troop bodies, which were already under surveillance due to an assumed or even just conjectured lack of commitment, then the dismissals became more frequent. Brigadier Maximilian Csicseric, the chief of staff of the Imperial and Royal 5th Army, was transferred to the bridgehead in Vienna. General of Cavalry Arthur Giesl von Gieslingen, the Commander of the VIII Corps, was dismissed and likewise the Commander of the 41st Landwehr Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Othmar Panesch, among others. It seemed that the list would never end. At the end of the year, two army

commanders and a further corps commander of the Balkan High Command were then dismissed.

It was repeatedly attempted to conceal the true circumstances. The medical certificates cited generally harmless illnesses or accidents: fallen from horse, old ailments, coughing, sciatica, stomach catarrh, numbness in the upper right extremity [...] and repeatedly neurasthenia or a 'general nervous debility due to wartime exertions', as the doctor Brigadier Panesch willingly certified.<sup>567</sup>

The removal of a couple of dozen generals during the first weeks and months of the war has various aspects to it: in many cases, they had indeed failed to measure up. As the generals of the Imperial and Royal Army were merely generals of manoeuvre, they naturally suffered from a lack of wartime experience. Many of them could not adapt to the new challenges and simply failed. Perhaps the manoeuvres and war games of the period from 1906 also played a role, i.e. those years in which Conrad was Chief of the General Staff, since, in contrast to the period before, hardly any withdrawal operations were practised, but rather almost exclusively attacks.

With the removal of generals, the Army High Command and the subordinated senior commands attempted to get rid of people who did not measure up. Many generals were too old. The Radetzky model still appeared to be at work here, or at least the pragmatism of service, which permitted officers to reach senior ranks only late in the day, if at all. Frequently, they were not equal to the physical strains and the tremendous stress of the war. Near Delatyn, for example, when following the victory at Komarów the calamity contracted around Auffenberg's Imperial and Royal 4th Army, an old cavalry general, General Micewski, stood next to the road,<sup>568</sup> with the remainder of his 9th Cavalry Brigade. He had only 80 men and two pieces of artillery. That was everything that had survived from two regiments of cavalry, a mounted artillery detachment with four batteries and the cavalry bridge train.<sup>569</sup>

However, in the dismissals and the declarations of unfitness for service things played a role that had nothing to do with this or that necessity. A great deal of resentment took effect, ruthlessness and the attempt to conceal one's own mistakes. Culprits were sought. Added to this was 'envy, a craving for decorations, egotism, vainglory [and] pre-suppositionless criticism of the senior command in order to enhance one's own achievements'.<sup>570</sup> It was also a question here of masking withdrawals by means of a sheer gung-ho attitude. However, by no means everyone acted in the same way. There were dismissals in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Armies as well as in the Balkans. In General Dankl's 1st Army, for which there were also setbacks, there was only one single dismissal, which was very probably health-related, and the army commander in question was also not simply dismissed and sent home.

If we look at the names from colonel upwards of those who fell in battle during the year 1914, then further details catch our eye: the most dead from the senior ranks

were in the 4th Army during the course of the Battle of Komarów. Wild, headlong dashes, enthusiasm for war and recklessness formed a symbiosis. The same applied to the attempt to avert disaster with the courage of the desperate. The figures speak for themselves: during the course of the first months of the war until the end of December 1914, 40 Imperial and Royal officers of the rank of colonel and upwards fell in battle or succumbed to their wounds. During the entire rest of the war, i.e. in the next almost four years, it was only 30.

Both officers and enlisted men were simply overburdened – and they also overtaxed themselves. The consequences have been described many times. If we extract an image from the retreat of the initially victorious 4th Army: ‘Ever more people came from the engagement, passed us by – even unwounded were among them, people who had thrown away their weapons, and then endless rows of wounded, people who had lost their mind from pain or shock, [...] most of them with distorted features, their faces black with dust and earth, with wide open, bulging eyes and crazy expressions. Then the wagons: no longer pulled by the usual 6 horses, but only by 2 or 4. The limbers travelled alone, without the guns. [...] Crowds of people clung to the limbers like refugees, huddled together and with the miserable expression of hopelessness. Many wore bandages, others bled without bandages; they sat, their heads in their hands, from which the blood gushed out. There crouched a man rigidly, with hollow cheeks, sallow – the dead had mingled with the living, they were taken along because there was no time to discard the unnecessary load. It was an endlessly sad train of death and misery.’<sup>571</sup>

They had barely come to rest before the personnel measures commenced. Emperor Franz Joseph regarded the dismissal of such and such a number of senior commanders, as mentioned above, with unease, perhaps even dismay. He sent the Deputy Director of his Military Chancellery to the Army High Command in order to put a stop to the sackings. But it was to no avail. Moreover, upon his return from Przemyśl Major General Marterer reported to the Emperor: ‘Regarding the dismissals, I return as a convert and dare to most humbly request Your Majesty to make no further remarks to the AOK [Army High Command].’<sup>572</sup> The Emperor adhered to this and attempted only in isolated cases to give comfort. The heir to the throne Archduke Karl Franz Josef, however, believed he had discovered the true cause of the dismissals, namely the lack of insight into human nature on the part of Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf, which had led to glaringly wrong choices being made.<sup>573</sup> One must, however, come to Conrad’s defence against the heir to the throne, for although Conrad had admittedly been given the right to make suggestions, with so many personnel decisions his hands had been tied. And if one can talk of a lack of insight into human nature and ‘guilt’, then this is far more applicable to the immortalised Inspector General of the entire armed force, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. But Karl Franz Josef wanted to criticise him least of all. Conrad, however, was hell-bent on turning the General Corps inside out.

The removals of course set a roundabout in motion, for a string of reshuffles and new appointments followed. After the suicide of Major General Wodniansky, for example, Major General Alfred Edler von Schenk led the division for a few days, then Major General Artur Arz von Straußenburg led it for three days, and from 5 to 25 September Colonel Joseph Mark, before Schenk was then definitively entrusted with the divisional command. The soldiers no longer knew their senior commanders and they often regarded them with suspicion and rejection. It was not all new appointees who succeeded in repairing the damage done, and not just in exercising authority but also in being recognised as competent and caring. Some of them would have ample opportunity to do this during the course of a war, whose length could not be gauged.

Most of those dismissed were ordered to report sick. Another phenomenon manifested itself in the process, namely the submissiveness of doctors. They certainly struggled to survive within the military hierarchy and issued the desired certificates without using too many Latin terms. Inability to serve due to the right arm falling asleep ('upper right extremity'), as was attested for Blasius Schemua, would certainly not have been sufficient in the case of a simple soldier or a subaltern to adjudge him unable to serve at the front, aside from the fact that such requests were never made. The most common symptom of illness cited in the certificates was nervous debility (neurasthenia). This was a major topic and occupied not only the leading Austrian physicians but also the Germans. It had already been described in detail before the war as a synonym for nervousness, hypochondria and even hysteria, and was regarded distinctly as a disease afflicting men. It was believed that the war would serve to allow this nervous temper to be worked off on the enemy. The events of the war were supposed to have a therapeutic character and be a 'bath of steel for the nerves, which had withered and languished in the dust of many years of peace'. Seen in this way, the soldiers were privileged. But this no longer applied when it came to the medical certificates. Whereas neurasthenia was ascertained for officers in huge numbers, emotionally broken soldiers were regarded as hypochondriacs.<sup>574</sup>

It would certainly be wrong, however, to conclude from the complaisances of a few military physicians who had to conceal the demise of a senior officer that most of the psychological breakdowns caused by the war were dashed off diagnoses instead of the enormous problem they in fact were. Alois Alzheimer, for example, pondered in 1915 in Wrocław (Breslau) as to what, apart from the impressions of the battlefield, excessive exertion, lack of sleep and hunger, could be the reason for the so-called exhaustive neurasthenia. He came to the conclusion that it had become evident even before the war 'that our nation has exceeded the height of its mental health and is approaching an increased psychological degeneration'.<sup>575</sup> It was for this reason that there was a steady increase in the number of suicides.

For Julius Wagner-Jauregg, who had devoted himself thoroughly to the cure of war neuroses and had also dealt in the process with the observations of Sigmund Freud on

hysteria, many cases were of such a nature that they were not to be traced back to the immediate experience of war, namely shell impacts, wounds or the impression of the mass death, but instead to the sudden realisation 'that one did not have the stuff of heroes in him after all'.<sup>576</sup> This concession naturally collided with the professional image of the officer, the demand to be tested, the question of honour, career and many other things. To be thrown off the predetermined course and not through injury or death but instead through dismissal and forced retirement could undoubtedly elicit a shock. Added to the question of honour was that of the virility of the warrior.<sup>577</sup>

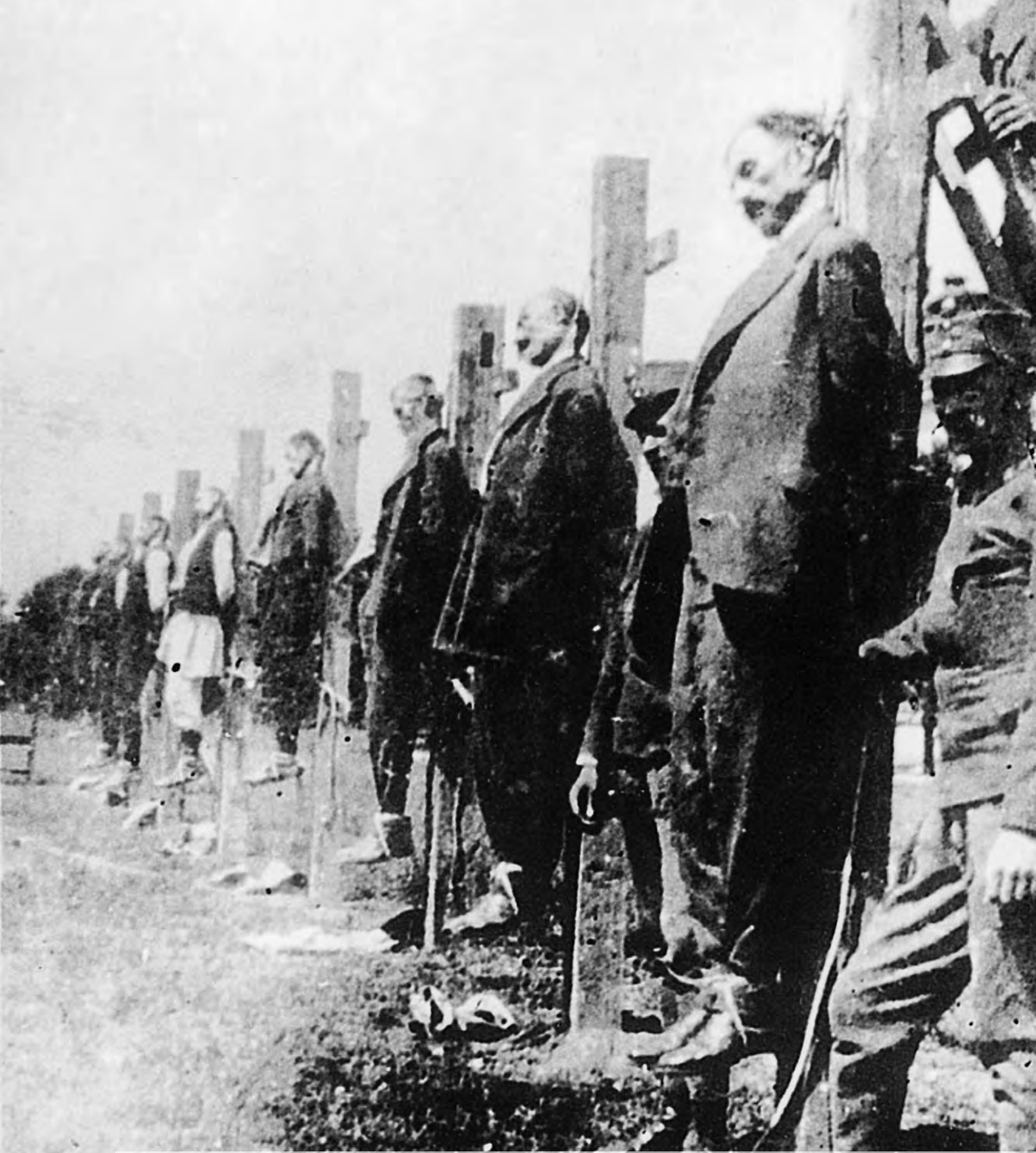
In the case of those generals for whom nervousness was attested as a reason for their dismissal, Freud would perhaps have concluded that they were neurotics, but it was not that simple. In the realm of the unconscious it may have been a combination of several things, and here in the self-image of the generals and soldiers there were also overlaps: 'Ambition, self-respect, patriotism, habituation to obedience [and] the example of others', as Freud then wrote four years later in an evaluation for the Commission for the Investigation of Military Dereliction of Duty in War regarding the therapeutic method of Wagner-Jauregg,<sup>578</sup> allowed them to wage this war and frequently give their all.

Soldiers who did not measure up, however, were not removed and shunted to the rear with a medical certificate. They remained at the front – and this was a big difference. Soldiers who landed in psychiatric clinics as so-called shell-shock sufferers were treated there with electric shocks and, although this was state of the art science at the time, one can only describe the agonies felt as a result as inhuman. No general was treated this way and the only officer of whom it is known that 'faradisation' was envisaged for him was cured of his signs of paralysis after having to witness a procedure of this nature.<sup>579</sup>

However, one should not pass blanket judgement on soldiers, doctors and, above all, the Austro-Hungarian generals, of whom up to the end of 1914 four of six at the level of army commander, six of 17 at the level of corps commander, around ten divisional commanders and two dozen brigade commanders were removed from one day to the next for not measuring up and were branded as failures, at least in the eyes of their comrades. Some of them went to pieces at this moment, such as General Wodniansky, of whom it was said he had fallen in battle, though it was not known when or where.







## 7 The End of the Euphoria

7. Gallows in Serbia, 1914. In the areas close to the front in the Balkans and in Galicia, there was an almost irrational fear of spies. Thousands were convicted or accused of collaboration by Austro-Hungarian authorities. Finally, hostages were also taken. Summary court-martial proceedings and the use military courts became commonplace. Even Emperor Franz Joseph's appeals for leniency and justice went unheeded.

It is difficult to say when the euphoria surrounding the outbreak and the first weeks of the war came to an end. The initial reports of victory preserved the confident, indeed exuberant mood. Setbacks were not concealed, but were still pushed to one side by the continued sense of excitement. Countless rumours built up hopes, only to have them dashed again. Then, a mood took hold that was characterised by a sense of perseverance and the need to hold out. However, it was not an Austrian, but a German, the representative of the German Supreme Army Command in the Imperial and Royal Army High Command General August von Cramon, who remarked that a fundamental difference very quickly became evident in the way in which news of the war events was given: the Germans exaggerated their victory reports, while the Austro-Hungarian army reports were neutral and low-key, even when there were successes. According to Cramon, this was Conrad's wish; it was precisely in Vienna, however, that this restraint was interpreted in any number of different ways.<sup>580</sup>

When Cramon talked of 'Vienna', he was without doubt not referring to the Vienna of those two million people who had to learn to live in and with the war, and who were of necessity coming to terms with the sharp increase in prices. He meant the Vienna of the imperial court, the ministries and supreme authorities, who read the army report with a sense of scepticism. Their reticence resulted from the fact that they all had additional information, and perhaps their distrust was a natural consequence of their being in office. For them, the army report was ultimately the basis of their policy. However, naturally, hopes were also held high 'in Vienna', the news of the first successes was emphasised, and Dankl, Auffenberg, Potiorek and above all Conrad were regarded as heroes, and yet at some point, something tangible was needed, and in particular more useful information.

For this reason, Berchtold, Stürgkh, the Military Chancellor of the Emperor, but also Count Tisza urgently requested that the press supply the Monarchy with appropriate news from the theatres of war. This would not involve divulging any secrets, since everything was to relate to events that had already happened. However, setbacks were not to be concealed.<sup>581</sup> At the meeting of the Joint Council of Ministers, at which this issue was addressed for the first time in mid-August 1914, Stürgkh added that thought should be given to publicising the details of individual glorious deeds, since 'the purpose is to satisfy the imagination of the people and thus to maintain the positive mood'.<sup>582</sup>

This was not an easy task, since Conrad would not be persuaded to relax the restrictive information policy of the Army High Command. He was angry at the 'snuffling

about', and would probably have preferred to forbid access to Przemyśl to the entourage of the Army Supreme Commander as well. The representatives of the Foreign Ministry assigned to the Army High Command were obliged to make repeated enquiries as to whether the press reports from abroad should be denied. However, Conrad issued a stereotypical message that he would be sure to let the Foreign Ministry know when denials were required.<sup>583</sup> The Chief of the General Staff also did everything he could to keep the War Press Bureau at bay. He saw absolutely no reason to develop a skilful press policy, although he would have had every opportunity available to do so. Instead, an army report was produced on a daily basis that sometimes failed to include even the most basic information.

However, one thing that Conrad and the authors of the army report could not be accused of was formulating events too optimistically and turning failures into successes. This also had its upside. At least no complicated about-turns were needed when it came to reporting defeats.

### The Fortress on the San

The Russian deployment had taken somewhat longer than that of the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans. Nevertheless, as the Imperial and Royal War Minister Baron Krobatin also admitted in September,<sup>584</sup> it had proceeded faster than anticipated. The reserve divisions had already been mobilised at the end of August, which indicated that the Russians had already initiated their mobilisation earlier and had systematically prepared for the war. If there was one factor that delayed the Russian deployment, then it was the railway transport. On the 15th day of mobilisation on 15 August, a third of the Russian troops had been massed. On the 30th day, in other words only after the start of the advance of the Austro-Hungarian troops, two-thirds had been mustered. Between the 30th and 60th day of mobilisation, the cavalry and infantry from the second contingent of troops began to arrive from the western military districts. And finally, after the 60th day of mobilisation, namely from October, the troops from Siberia arrived.<sup>585</sup> Only now were the Russians fully assembled. However, while they were soon halted and thrown back in their advance towards East Prussia, in Galicia they made increasing progress.

At the end of August, the Russian 3rd and 8th Armies had already pushed through towards Lviv (Lemberg) via Brody and Ternopil (Tarnopol), while Zolochiv (Solotschiw) was taken. And what from the Austrian side was initially planned as an operation into the Russian flank developed into an extensive frontal battle with high losses, in which the Russians were able to exploit their now considerable superiority in numbers to the full. Here, the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army under General Brudermann was at the

centre of the fighting and was heavily embattled. In the Army High Command, there was – as already mentioned – much dissatisfaction with the leadership of this army. The Chief of the Army General Staff, Brigadier Rudolf Pfeffer, faced the prospect of dismissal. Conrad described him plainly as a ‘muddle-head’.<sup>586</sup> General Brudermann himself was accused of ‘weakness, heedlessness and disobedience’. On 2 September, Lviv, the capital of Galicia, was lost; the next day, the Russians entered the city. In the Army High Command in Przemyśl, the opinion was that all this could have been avoided, and that what had happened had resulted solely from the fact that the 3rd Army had withdrawn without a fight. To the west of Lviv, the next battle was fought at the Horodok (Grodeck) lakes. For the first time, there was a sense that now, only chaos ruled. The retreating supply convoys became wedged. On the orders of the command of the 3rd Army, the provisions depots were doused with petroleum and set alight. The troops who were retreating from the front were met by smouldering ruins instead of reinforcements and supplies. ‘We need men more than anything else. The old women and the neurasthenics in uniform will kill us’, wrote the Commander of the XII Corps, General Hermann von Kövess.<sup>587</sup> Conrad quickly turned his 4th Army around, hoping to compensate for its numerical inferiority and overcome the crisis of the battle in the east by quickly relocating the brigades and divisions. The ‘Second Battle of Lviv’ followed, yet the Russian advance could only be slowed. The Austro-Hungarian soldiers were overstrained and in despair. Thousands, tens of thousands fell and died within the space of just a few days and weeks. They wandered about, at times with almost no form of leadership, and suffered one shock after another. The formations of the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army were decimated and were finally only half as strong in number as the attacking Russians of the 8th Army. On 5 September, the Commander of the 3rd Army was dismissed. Then, the 2nd Army, the reinforcements that had been withdrawn from the Balkans, finally arrived.

In the meantime, the Russians also pressed against the Austro-Hungarian lines from the north and brought new troops forward, integrating them into their front. Now, where the northern strike by Dankl had at first been successful, the Russian 4th and 5th Armies prepared for a counterstrike. Quite clearly, Dankl’s first successes in the Battle of Kraśnik and those of Auffenberg in the Battle of Komarów had been overestimated. It was as though the dead had been resurrected. The gap in the Austro-Hungarian front at the seam between the 1st and 4th Armies became tangibly close. On 11 September, the Army High Command was forced to order a general retreat to behind the San River. This was certainly a bitter decision, which was not only unavoidable, however, but which was also only taken when all other operational options had been exhausted.

The troops had reached the limit of their capacity. Of the 21 days they had been at the front, the soldiers of the 4th Army under General Auffenberg had by mid-September spent 18 of them fighting in battle. And yet if the battles of August and September

were characterised by one feature, then it was tenacity. Not least, it was believed that all that was needed was to hold out for a short time and accept the high losses until the Germans arrived. Yet at just this time, this prospect was thrown into doubt, and had in fact become an impossibility. Five German armies had stormed through Belgium and northern France, and between 18 August and 5 September had thrown back the French and British troops to the Marne. French offensives into Alsace and Lorraine had been repelled, and yet the German Western Army lacked the strength to advance through to Paris and to extend further westwards to encircle the French capital. Furthermore, at the end of August, two corps had been withdrawn in order to be used against the Russians in East Prussia. In light of an extremely critical situation, the German 1st and 2nd Armies broke off the battle on the Marne. The overthrow of France had failed, and the German Western Army was forced to retreat.

However, it was of no use to look to the German alliance partner and realise with a sense of sad satisfaction that for them much, or indeed everything, had also turned out differently from what had still been planned at the beginning of August 1914. The consequences could be felt not least in Galicia. In Przemyśl, preparations were made for a siege. The fortress on the San had already ceased to be simply a medium-sized Galician town a long time ago, since the majority of the civilian population had been transported out. Now, it was nothing more than a massive arsenal through which the three Austro-Hungarian armies sought to push their path of retreat. And it was raining. The roads softened to mud, the wagons became stuck, and since the poor road conditions made it almost impossible to travel around Przemyśl, the supply convoy of the armies was forced to pass through the fortress. The wounded were left behind. Then, on 16 September, the Army High Command ordered that the field armies be withdrawn. Przemyśl was left to defend itself and, as is the standard wording used in orders of this type, was to be 'held to the very last'. However, it was not thought likely that the fortress would hold out for long. The prognosis of the Imperial and Royal Inspector of Artillery Archduke Leopold Salvator was just two weeks.

The commander of the Przemyśl fortress on the San was Major General Hermann Kusmanek von Burgneustädten. The facilities at his disposal looked highly impressive at first glance: within an area of 28 square kilometres, seven new intermediate bases of the defensive belt, 24 staging posts, 200 new battery positions, 50 kilometres of covered trenches, depots, storage buildings, stables and much more had been built. 1,000 kilometres of barbed wire made the fortress more difficult to approach. It had over 1,000 pieces of artillery, of which almost a third were cannons of a model dating from 1861, however, which the Russians referred to as 'false batteries', since it was clearly inconceivable to them that 50-year-old cannons could still be used. However, there were also more modern as well as state-of-the-art guns. The communication links, which were designed not only for the needs of the fortress garrison but also for the far greater needs

of the Army High Command, were a particular advantage. Even so, all this failed to alter the fact that the fortress was left to fend for itself.

With the exception of the Imperial and Royal 1st Army, which remained with the enemy, the other armies pulled away from the Russians and withdrew behind the San into the Carpathian foothills. They had to be replenished, since there were not only heavy losses in terms of the dead, wounded and those taken prisoner to be compensated. Just as important was the loss of guns, which needed time to be replaced. The withdrawal also created problems, since Conrad had so clearly planned for the opportunity of renewing the offensive, and for psychological reasons had not made any preparations at all for the withdrawal. As a result, it had to be initiated in an overly hasty way.<sup>588</sup> However, instead of exploiting this fact, the Russians regarded the retreat of the Austrians as a welcome pause in operations. They wanted to secure the conquered territory, repair the old fortifications in Lviv, press ahead with the siege of Przemyśl, where over 100,000 Austrians were trapped, until they could make an assault, and also to compensate for their own losses. Of the 800,000 Austrians in first three and then four armies who had begun with the operations in the north-eastern theatre of war, around 400,000 had been lost, of whom 100,000 had been captured as prisoners of war. The Russians had lost 250,000 men, of whom 40,000 had been captured. On the evening of 10 September, a telegram was written by the Army High Command to the Chief of the German General Staff von Moltke, in which the position of the Imperial and Royal Armies was described in stark terms and a request was made to send the first German forces to become free in the west to the Galician theatre of war. Yet the telegram was not sent.<sup>589</sup> There was still a reluctance to admit their own weakness directly to their alliance partners.

The severe setbacks that the Austro-Hungarian troops suffered led to the dismissal of more commanders. However, the personnel measures, as the Monarch let it be known in the written order to the War Ministry and Army High Command mentioned above, were designed to be used only when no other response was possible. 'However, this should not in all cases decide the longer-term fate of these unfortunate people.' Each individual case was to be investigated. 'In such a manner, not only the person affected shall be given the opportunity to explain his conduct, but also through an evaluation of the individual case in connection with the accompanying events and their consequences, the path to justice shall be opened and guaranteed.'<sup>590</sup> However, Conrad wanted to replace any general who failed to deliver what was expected from him. Taking other factors into consideration was practically the last thing on his mind. For him, the most important aim was to overcome the crisis of the battle in Galicia, to keep the position of the Army High Command unchallenged and, if possible, to further strengthen it, to gain operational freedom and to return once more to the offensive.

For the Imperial and Royal troops, the focus of the conflict had now really shifted to the north-eastern theatre of war. From the perspective of the Army High Command

and of the state overall, the Balkans had become of secondary importance. Other things had changed too, however. The euphoria of the first weeks, and the hopes for a short war, had proven to be a mirage, and as early as September cautious forecasts were being made that the war may also continue during and beyond the winter. On 7 September, the Joint War Minister, General of Artillery Baron Krobotin, stated that suitable clothing was also available for the army in the event of a winter war. He claimed to have 915,000 fur jerkins in stock, with a further 216,000 on order.<sup>591</sup> As though this were any realistic indication of the actual possibilities for waging a winter war! However, one thing does become clear from this comment, which was if anything made in passing: that the dream of a short war was now finally over. This was reflected both by the overall picture and in the individual details. In Germany, too, there was disillusionment.

Following the 'miracle on the Marne', the hope had vanished of bringing down France in six to eight weeks. The French armies were reinforced by British corps. By contrast, the German Army was forced to draw back to the north-east and to establish a defensive position from the Channel coast in Flanders through to the Swiss border. At the north of the German eastern front, however, General von Hindenburg had succeeded in beating back the Russians at Tannenberg and around the Masurian Lakes. As a result, for this section of the eastern front, which had been a focus of some concern, the immediate threat had in fact been eliminated. However, the entire war strategy of the German leadership had failed overall, and all the plans that had been forged over decades between the German and Austro-Hungarian general staffs were now irrelevant. Now, a new concept had to be developed.

The Chief of the German General Staff, von Moltke, was already dismissed in mid-September. However, for appearances sake, this was concealed from the public for several months. His successor, General Erich von Falkenhayn, appeared to be very open to shifting the focus of the German operations to Poland. However, since the anticipated rapid victories had failed to materialise, it also became necessary at a political level to make preparations for a longer war. In order to reduce the pressure on the Central Powers through political measures, Berlin suggested that Austria-Hungary should make extensive territorial concessions to Romania and Italy, so that the Triple Alliance could finally become fully functional. The same German Empire, therefore, that had two months previously encouraged the Danube Monarchy to take up arms against Serbia to ensure its long-term existence now exploited its undoubted superiority in order to convince the government in Vienna to give up a part of its state territory.<sup>592</sup>

However, Austria-Hungary was not fussy in choosing its means. It developed the kind of approach taken by poor relatives, in whose opinion the rest of the family is ultimately there for the purpose of helping them, or otherwise the entire family would be seen in a bad light. As early as 8 September, Conrad informed the Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, that the inability of Germany to act on its pre-war agreements and



in reality to gain victory over France within a short space of time was to blame for the fact that the Dual Monarchy had suffered such a decisive defeat in Galicia. If Kaiser Wilhelm had put more effort into the war in the east, instead of worrying about his hunting grounds in East Prussia, matters would probably have been different.<sup>593</sup> Berchtold appeared only to have been waiting to be prodded in this way, and let it be known via the Austrian ambassador in Berlin, Prince Gottfried zu Hohenlohe-Schillingfürst, that the German Empire bore the responsibility for the defeat in the east, and that the Danube Monarchy may be forced to make a separate peace. He also claimed that the German march into Belgium had brought Great Britain into the arena and led to the neutrality of Italy and Romania. Everything else had occurred simply as a result of this ill-considered course of action.

At this point at the latest, Austria-Hungary began a battle of self-assertion against the German Empire. Defying German demands while at the same time demanding support from Germany very quickly developed into one of the most characteristic patterns of action. This lent an additional quality to the military measures: once, war was waged in order to win victory over the enemy and to force it to take certain political steps. Then, war was waged with the goal of preventing those powers that were not yet involved and those that were neutral from entering the war, and to impress them with the superiority of the Central Powers. Third, however, the Austro-Hungarian war was also planned with a view towards asserting itself against the German Empire. Yet was there also an overreaction here? Already on 23 September, the German Supreme Army Command let it be known that it was against being too closely linked to the Imperial and Royal Army, since the Germans risked having no operational freedom. And anyway, those Austrians! It was no better than Hradec Králové (Königgrätz) in 1866!<sup>594</sup> Still, there was no choice but to collaborate with them.

Initially, the general staffs agreed to improve the coordination between their operations in the Russian theatre of war. The Imperial and Royal 1st and 4th Armies were to again press forward to the north and advance towards the Germans, while the 3rd Army was to cross the San once more. In conjunction with the newly-formed German 9th Army (under Hindenburg), which was to attack from Silesia in the direction of Warsaw, plans were made at least to force the Russians back to the Vistula and the San Rivers. The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army under General Eduard Böhm-Ermolli, which had in the interim amassed in the north-eastern theatre of war, was to be put to use for the first time as a closed unit, and to operate from the Carpathians in the direction of Przemyśl.

As a result, the Russians had little time left to conquer Przemyśl. However, General Brusilov, the Commander of the Russian 8th Army, which was positioned in front of the fort, had miscalculated the strength of the garrison. As a result of the arrival of more personnel and the fact that the troops from the front had remained behind, the garrison

had grown to around 130,000 men, while at the same time, the amount of fort and siege artillery was greater, and in some cases of far better quality.

Brusilov attempted a bluff and demanded of Kusmanek that he surrender the fortress. Kusmanek's response to the Russian parliamentarian consisted of just a few lines, in which he wrote: 'I find it beneath my dignity to furnish your shameful impertinence with a meritorious answer.' Then, the bombardment was intensified. The Russian infantry slowly advanced towards the fortress. Since the Russians had no chance of success with just their artillery, sappers were ordered to detonate the fortifications in order to create a path to penetrate the inner fortress area. While this tactic may have worked for castles and medieval town fortifications, in Przemyśl it had no effect. And now it was the turn of the Central Powers.

Once again, around half a million Austro-Hungarian soldiers began to move. Three weeks' respite from battle had been sufficient to replenish the formations. The fresh supplies of men were relatively easy to integrate. At home, in the garrison areas of the regiments, the organisation of replacements had swung into full operation. 'March battalions' and 'march squadrons' were put together from the soldiers and replacement reservists who had not yet marched out. Each replacement troop body could allow two march formations to depart for the front relatively quickly. This made it possible to replenish the troop bodies to the full. The only problems arose with the cavalry, not because there were too few replacements available, or because its value had already been justifiably placed in doubt, but because there was a lack of horses. They were needed for the most part for harness work, for transporting the artillery, pulling the baggage supply convoys, taking away the wounded, and for all the other army transportation needs. However, since the cavalry needed not only ordinary horses, but also well-ridden ones – real cavalry horses, in fact – its needs could not be met. Despite these difficulties, the overall strength on the Russian front before the start of the autumn offensive was respectable: 477,000 'fire guns', as they were still called at that time, 26,800 riders, 1,578 pieces of artillery, including the 30.5 cm mortars, which were used for the first time on the north-eastern front, and which were the most famous Austro-Hungarian pieces of artillery to be used in the First World War.

During this phase, as had already been the case during the summer battle, the Austrian wiretapping service proved its worth. Since August, the Austrians had been able to read the Russian commands. The language officer assigned to the Army High Command, Lieutenant Victor Marchesetti, with the help of the only mobile radio station owned by the Imperial and Royal Army, which had been donated by a millionaire, succeeded in intercepting so many Russian radio messages that the Austrians were informed about the intentions of the enemy just shortly afterwards.<sup>595</sup> And even though the Russians changed their encryption several times, the Austrian cryptographers usually only needed a few days to unscramble the Russian codes once again. At the end of

September, an operational command was also netted that disclosed the Russian aims in their entirety. Between 7 and 12 October, the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army under General Svetozar Boroević, who subsequently became famous as the 'Lion of Isonzo', succeeded in relieving Przemyśl. Shortly afterwards, the 4th and 2nd Armies also arrived close to the huge fort city. Since the armies were anything but sufficiently provisioned, the fortress, which had only just been relieved, immediately became a supplier for three armies. However, the offensive did not unfold as Conrad in Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez) had anticipated, as the Russians were already putting up heavy resistance on the San and the 3rd Army was unable to leave the fortress area. Once again, the Imperial and Royal troops failed in a direct attack towards the east. They hit against what would later be termed, in the familiar words of the World War, the 'Russian steamroller'. It was not only the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Armies that were halted in their tracks. During its thrust across the Vistula River in the Battle of Ivangorod, the 1st Army also ultimately suffered huge losses totalling 40,000 to 50,000 men. This signalled the failure of the second offensive by the Imperial and Royal armies in Galicia, which gave Conrad von Hötzendorf a reason to criticise the operations of the German 9th Army, which was located north of the Austro-Hungarian front, in the harshest terms. Full of bitterness, he wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, General von Bolfras, on 17 October: 'I have immediately described this parting of the ways and the race to the Vistula, specifically to Warsaw, as a grave mistake; since however the German 9th Army is not subject to our Army High Command, but is directly subordinate to the German headquarters in Mezières, we had no influence on the matter; now however, we have no other choice but to intervene in order to relieve the Germans of their obligations [...] Everything suffers from the fact that the Germans are unable to achieve a decisive success in France, and that for this reason are neglecting the eastern theatre of war – perhaps, however, they will only rue this when it is too late.'<sup>596</sup> And ten days later: 'The adventurous Hindenburg-Ludendorff operation to the Vistula, into which we have also been drawn, has now given the result that I predicted – namely a retreat [...] I am not in a position to judge to what extent it would appear to be feasible for His Majesty to turn to Kaiser Wilhelm in this critical hour; but perhaps such a step might yield fruit.'<sup>597</sup>

Conrad pressed on regardless, since he inwardly wavered, accusing the Germans on the one hand of having failed for a long time to come to the aid of the Imperial and Royal armies, while on the other spurning help from German troops, fearing that the German Supreme Army Command would then immediately attempt to take over the leadership of operations and the command per se. He himself did not yet have to fear losing the almost unlimited trust of his subordinates, although criticism of the Army High Command, as well as of Conrad himself, was mounting. In particular, several General Staff officers working under Conrad were criticised for behaving as though, as

in peacetime, they embodied a type of 'godlike manoeuvre command'. Conrad, however, appeared to be increasingly aloof, since he steadfastly refused to travel to the front to gain his own impressions. The head of the Operations Division, Colonel Metzger, justified this by claiming that in this way, Conrad avoided being subject to an excessively strong 'influence by the individual army commanders'.<sup>598</sup> However, this explanation satisfied no-one.

The major losses sustained in battle were exacerbated by the epidemics. Cholera and dysentery took their toll, and there was a very high risk that they would spread. The Imperial and Royal IV Corps, which was particularly severely affected, recommended an immediate inoculation. However, this would mean that the corps would be incapable of action for two weeks as a result of the anticipated after-effects of the vaccination. The Commander of the 2nd Army, General Böhm-Ermolli, rejected the proposal. Attempts had to be made to fight the cholera by removing those infected and through quarantine measures. An epidemic hospital was set up in Mezőlaborcz (Mezólaborcz). The sick were transported to the hospital tightly packed together on open wagons. Ten per cent died on the way.<sup>599</sup> The losses were offset by an increasing number of march formations. The soldiers remained ready for battle, but at the end of October, the request for help from German troops and for a relocation of substantial German forces from the west to the east was made with a greater urgency than had earlier been the case. Now, everything was to be overturned. Apart from the Germans, no help could be expected, since one other hope of Conrad's had been dashed very quickly: he had been optimistic – and he was not alone in this – that the Austro-Hungarian troops would receive significant Polish support from voluntary recruits from all parts of the divided country. The Habsburg Monarchy could after all point to the fact that the Poles in Galicia were by all means better off than those living in Russian Poland (as well as those within the borders of the German Empire). At least the Austro-Hungarians tried to convince themselves of this fact. And when right at the start of the war the first units of the Polish voluntary formations had gathered under the command of Józef Piłsudski near Kościuszko Hill to the north of Kraków (Krakau), they were greeted with enthusiastic acclaim. At the same time, the fact was overlooked that the Polish rifle divisions were pursuing a very clear political goal: they were to help create the necessary legitimacy for a Polish independence movement. The formations established by Piłsudski were however competing with those that had been set up by Roman Dmowski, which he was making available to the Russians. Dmowski was banking on a Russian victory, while Piłsudski supported the Central Powers. One episode, while remaining without consequences for the Austro-Hungarian army command, completely took the Austrians by surprise. Around 300 Polish infantry had already crossed the Russian border at Michałowice during the night of 5 August, before the official declaration of war, in order to prevent questions regarding their use from even being raised. Soon, the Poles

in the Imperial and Royal 4th Army formation also pushed towards Kielce, which they occupied on 12 August. The hope that this advance would lead to an uprising in the Russian Kingdom of Poland came to nothing, however.<sup>600</sup> Even so, in the Army High Command, there was such enthusiasm for the performance of the Poles that suggestions were made that they should be counted among the regular troops, and an order was given to integrate the infantry as a legion in the Imperial and Royal Army.<sup>601</sup> This step was not accompanied by any political pledges, however. Then, following the severe setbacks, Conrad turned to Piłsudski with an urgent request for permission to use the legion troops. Conrad wanted to use them in the same way as a Ukrainian legion that was in the process of being formed, the *Sičovi Stril'ci*. However, both legion formations had ultimately been called into existence in order to contribute to a rapid victory over the Russians, and not to be consumed by an exhausting defensive struggle. During this phase of the war, they were therefore of less use, and the Ukrainian legions had to be completely disbanded due to lack of discipline and acts of robbery.<sup>602</sup> As it was, therefore, no help could be expected from this quarter.

Przemyśl was exploited and almost plundered by its own troops. It helped with its reserve supplies, provided ammunition for the field armies and took in the wounded. As a result, soon after it had been relieved, stocks in the fortress on the San River were lower than they had been during the siege. Since replenishments only came very gradually, enormous quantities of the reserve goods, which were usually intended to last for 90 days, were lacking. Considerations were therefore made as to whether Przemyśl should be surrendered. However, since it was also not possible to empty the depots in the time remaining, to remove the pieces of artillery and to render the site unusable, the Army High Command ordered that the 3rd Army be withdrawn. And yet Przemyśl was at the same time supposed to withstand a second siege. This decision was also influenced by political and psychological considerations, since Przemyśl was a symbol of the will to resist, of perseverance and also of the ability of the field armies to quickly relieve the fortress once more. Keeping Przemyśl 'firmly in our hands' had also become a political slogan. How would it be possible to claim that the setbacks were merely temporary when the largest fortress had been given up and its garrison had been taken prisoner by the Russians? How could Italians and Romanians perhaps be motivated to take the side of the Central Powers and to enter the war after all when Przemyśl had been cleared? How was it to be explained to the home front that the population would have to be prepared to make high sacrifices that would inevitably increase if a symbol had been surrendered without it being necessary to do so? And so, Kusmanek was obliged to make Przemyśl ready for battle again.

As had been the case in August, the labour battalions marched out to repair the damage, to level Russian approach trenches, bury bodies, erect barbed wire and fill up the depots. Due to the extensive destruction of the railways, the reserve stocks could

only be replenished for six days. Trains arrived every forty minutes, bringing with them what was absolutely necessary. Finally, the Army High Command felt that the fortress was once again fully stocked. Bread and rusks were provided for six months, vegetables for seven, meat for five and oats for 17 months. Anything that could not be brought into the fortress was burned. However, in part, the calculations made by the Army High Command were based on the assumption of a significantly smaller garrison than had in reality remained in Przemyśl, which leads one to conclude that there was a serious problem in communications. On top of this, the civilian population, which had again reached over 30,000, was not included. Roughly speaking, there was double the number of people in Przemyśl than the Army High Command had thought. Instead of the assumed 85,000 men, the fortress garrison alone amounted to 130,000 men, and instead of 3,000 horses, there were over 21,000 in the fortress. The soldiers were also still equipped for the summer, since they had entered the war in August. Now, however, it was November. And the Imperial and Royal armies were retreating farther and farther back.

The German comments on this turn of events were anything other than moderate, and were certainly not intended for Austrian eyes and ears. The future Prussian war minister Adolf Wild von Hohenborn summarised the situation very simply by stating that 'in the east, it looks very precarious thanks to the wretched attitude taken by the Austrians'.<sup>603</sup> 'They are no better than a militia! This has been our error, that no-one has realised what a hopeless army this is. We are successfully grappling with double the number of Russians, while the Austrians bolt when faced with an equal Russian force.'<sup>604</sup> A short time later, Erich Ludendorff, the Chief of the German General Staff for the Eastern High Command, expressed himself in a very similar manner when he wrote to General von Moltke: 'The Austrian soldiers are bad. They have heard so much about the 'overwhelming enemy' that they believe they have a right to leave when a stronger foe approaches.'<sup>605</sup> Now, only radical measures could be of any use.

The transportation of additional German troops to Poland was conducted at the last possible moment, since the Russians were just beginning to advance from the Warsaw area towards Silesia, in other words, against Germany, and in so doing to outflank the Austro-Hungarian front in the north. The German 9th Army was installed to the north of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army with the aim of attacking the flank of the Russians who were pushing forward towards the west. The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army was to be withdrawn from the Carpathians and used in conjunction with the German Woyrsch Landwehr (standing army) corps between Bytom (Beuthen) and Kluczbork (Kreuzburg). This was the first time that German and Austro-Hungarian brigades and divisions were combined, which naturally led to a substantial leadership problem. In this connection, the creation of a joint high command was proposed. However, this touched on a fundamental problem that refused to disappear right through to the end

of the war. The German proposal was that the command should be given to predominantly German generals, with Archduke Friedrich possibly continuing to nominally hold the supreme command, while Conrad would have been permitted to command the German 9th Army. By contrast, the Chief of the General Imperial and Royal Staff could only envisage the creation of a joint command for the eastern front if the German troops were subordinate to the Austro-Hungarian Army Command. A serious conflict loomed in relation to the matter.

It began on 18 October 1914 with a telegram from the German Kaiser to Emperor Franz Joseph with a request for the Imperial and Royal 1st Army to be placed under the command of Hindenburg.<sup>606</sup> The Army High Command, which had been requested to send its response on the same day, replied immediately that a subordination of the 1st Army was out of the question. However, on 29 October, Conrad already demanded that the Military Chancellery of the Emperor approach Kaiser Wilhelm to request that further German troops be sent. The Kaiser replied promptly that aside from cavalry forces, no further German troops were any longer available. However, he repeated his recommendation that the Imperial and Royal 1st Army be put under the command of Hindenburg. Once again, the Army High Command rejected the proposal. Now, the Germans wanted to discuss the matter once and for all in detail. Conrad was invited to Berlin. He let it be known that he was otherwise engaged, but would send his adjutant, Colonel Kundmann. However, Conrad's adjutant was only able to pass on information and to listen to suggestions; he was not empowered to make a decision. Thus, no progress was made. Even so, among those close to Emperor Franz Joseph, there was clearly a willingness to meet the German requests. On 4 November, General Bolfras sent a telegram suggesting the creation of a joint high command for the German and Austro-Hungarian troops in Galicia and Poland.<sup>607</sup> In so doing, Bolfras reacted directly to talks held by the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin and the son-in-law of Archduke Friedrich, Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe, with the German Foreign Minister, von Jagow. Jagow for his part had referred to the recommendations made by the Chief of the General Staff of the Eastern High Command, General Ludendorff, and his own deputy secretary, Arthur Zimmermann.<sup>608</sup>

Here, Zimmermann had a 'big solution' in mind. Following the failure of the Schlieffen Plan, his strategic assessment concluded that the Central Powers would only be in a position to unhinge the European world from Turkey and the Balkans.<sup>609</sup> During the July Crisis, he had also been a clear proponent of the war against Serbia, and now believed that the opportunity had come for the German Empire to also establish a presence in the Balkans. The creation of a joint high command would create the necessary framework to make this possible. The project, which had now been modified, envisaged Archduke Friedrich, with General Ludendorff as Chief of the General Staff, as having the supreme command in the east, while Conrad would lead the four Austrian armies,

with the German 9th Army operating under the command of Hindenburg. This would have led to uniformity of command in the theatre of war, but Conrad would almost immediately have been left without any real influence over the operational leadership, since he would have been placed between the supreme command and the four armies. It would have meant a loss of power for Conrad and the Army High Command that he dominated, since it was likely that with Ludendorff, a large number of other German officers would also have been drawn in who would have had Archduke Friedrich, who was only nominally the Supreme Commander, in the palm of their hand. The fact that this recommendation was forwarded from the Military Chancellery of Emperor Franz Joseph to the Army High Command, naturally with the full agreement of the Monarch, spoke for itself. It is likely that there were several key reasons for this. First, there was dissatisfaction and concern with regard to the leadership style of the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, and second, the Austrians were willing to forego any considerations and sensibilities in order to guarantee success. The dynastic interests were to be preserved in particular, and Archduke Friedrich was to be protected from being completely humiliated.

However, the response of the Army High Command remained negative. Already on 5 November, the replies of both Conrad and the Archduke were presented in Vienna. Friedrich agreed to the creation of a uniform high command, while fully rejecting the prospect of being assigned a German Chief of the General Staff. He could possibly conceive of the addition of a German and an Austro-Hungarian Chief of the General Staff with the associated staff appointments, naming Major General Alfred Krauß as a potential Imperial and Royal chief. However, Conrad telegraphed that he considered the insertion of a high command between the Army High Command and the armies as inexpedient. He furthermore regarded the proposal for making Ludendorff Chief of the General Staff as an indication that he had lost the trust of His Majesty, and, not wishing to be insulted, tendered his full resignation.

For a short time, Emperor Franz Joseph may indeed have considered dismissing Conrad. Finally, he made Conrad's continuance in office dependent on Archduke Friedrich's opinion. The heir to the throne, Archduke Karl, was used as a messenger and sent to Nowy Sącz. However, Friedrich let it be known immediately that he wished to retain Conrad.<sup>610</sup> In his book *War, Politics and Diplomacy*, Gordon A. Craig claims that the refusal by Conrad to agree to a joint high command and, if need be, to also free up his own post, was primarily motivated by the fact that he had taken into account the low degree of sensibility among the Germans towards the non-German troops from the Monarchy. The Germans, in his view, had never appreciated the particular nature of the Austro-Hungarian military system, and were therefore not in a position to command the Slav troops with intelligence and understanding, let alone with a friendly attitude and the necessary tact.<sup>611</sup> This is certainly an argument worth taking into con-



sideration, but it makes no reference to the fact that for Conrad, this matter was only of lesser importance. It makes even less sense to ascribe only personal motives to him, and to present him as a power-hungry general. It is most likely that Conrad's rejection of the proposal for a joint high command was his desire to make a last ditch attempt to defend himself against German dominance. After all, what use was it to fight with all one's strength to preserve the Monarchy, only to then capitulate to the German Empire? Here, Kerchnawe's book, *Unser letzter Kampf* ('Our Last Battle'), again comes to mind, which Conrad had doubtless read, and which was almost prophetic in describing such a turn of events. Since it can be assumed, however, that Kerchnawe was merely portraying the mood of the times, this struggle against German dominance and the fight for self-assertion was inherent in Austria-Hungary's last war right from the very beginning.

On 6 November, the matter was laid to rest for the time being when the Emperor expressed his 'Supreme Trust' in Archduke Friedrich and General Conrad in a telegram, and set the prospect of the creation of a joint high command to one side. This marked the end of the first leadership crisis, which had been provoked by the complicated relationship between Germany and Austria. On 14 November, the heir to the throne telegraphed the Emperor: 'Harmony with the Germans and in the High Command complete'.<sup>612</sup>

The creation of a joint high command was not discussed again until the summer of 1916. However, the difficult situation in the north-eastern theatre of war and the no less complicated relationship to the high-ranking German military leaders had left deep scars in the Army High Command. A report presented to the Emperor and compiled for the Foreign Ministry at the beginning of November reflects this clearly.<sup>613</sup> Conrad, around whom almost everything turned, politically as well as militarily, with regard to dualistic and alliance issues, was subject to extreme psychological stress towards the end of the year. His oldest son had been killed in battle, and the war situation was threatening. In his view, the forces that the Monarchy was able to provide would only suffice to fill the gaps, but not to significantly improve the relative strength in relation to the Russians... Were the Russian masses to make a charge, they would overrun everything. 'Whether the target will be Vienna or Berlin is impossible to say; perhaps Russia will under favourable conditions be in a position to pursue both [...]' The dispatch of German reinforcements was therefore vital, 'an issue of life or death for Germany and Austria-Hungary in equal measure'. Even if the Germans were to conquer Verdun in just a few days, he claimed, a decision in the west would still be far from being made. By contrast, it would be possible to defeat Russia with an additional 400,000 men in the east. Only a victory over Russia would influence events in the south-east. 'What use to us is the very slow development of the Russo-Turkish war, as we anticipate it; what use is a gradually developing Mohammedan movement in India; what benefit is there from

a thrust by Turkey against Egypt, when Russia has in the interim achieved a decisive success in Galicia?’ This was the first time that Conrad had thought beyond the purely continental conflict, albeit only to prove that everything would be decided in Galicia. A defeat of Russia would cause Italy and Romania to remain neutral, but would probably induce Bulgaria to unleash an attack on Serbia. None of this could ever be achieved in the west. Germany, however, ‘has run up against England in such a blind rage that it no longer takes the necessary calm consideration of all other matters, and it could happen that Germany realises too late that it has its most dangerous enemy at its back’.

The opinions expressed by Conrad were more than just a reflection on the war situation. This was also a response to the German efforts to now give more weight to the Balkan theatre of war after all, while at the same time also intervening more strongly in the way in which Austria-Hungary conducted the war. It is hardly surprising that his remarks revealed little optimism. The Military Chancellery of the Emperor had also spoken of a separate peace in the wake of the first severe setbacks. The lack of confidence in a victory was however certainly also disclosed to others, and was acknowledged by different sides. According to Count Franz Liechtenstein, who had become acquainted with the situation both in the German headquarters in the west in Mézières as well as with the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, and who had compared them to each other, the first difference was that the Austro-Hungarian General Staff lacked sufficient confidence. It was quite clear that the latter was greatly impressed by the Russian superiority, and that the words ‘Russian superiority’ were used repeatedly in all conversations. The only command in which confidence could be found was the 3rd Army under Borojević. His self-assurance radiated out to all those around him. The other army commanders left something to be desired in this respect. However, the body of troops was by all means intact.

Some of the observations made in this assessment were correct, while others were not so accurate. The remark concerning the intact body of troops was perhaps true. However, even there, the situation could not be measured according to the same scale. Martial law had already been imposed on individual troop bodies, and the reports of inconsistent reliability were becoming more frequent. The national composition, the duration of the training and experience in battle played a role, alongside many other factors. In general, it could by no means be claimed that the regiments of the Common Army, from either the Imperial-Royal Landwehr or the Royal Hungarian Honvéd (the standing armies of Austria and Hungary respectively), were either equally outstanding or less meritorious. Examples could be provided for any possible evaluation. However, it was plainly evident that the increasing pace at which the reservists were lined up and the ceaseless deployment of troop bodies from the Landsturm (reserve forces) were not particularly positive developments. When, after six weeks of training or skills refreshment, the Landsturm soldiers were formed into brigades and it then transpired

that there was a lack of officers, that infantry platoons were being commanded by older gendarmes and that five different types of hand weapons were being used within a single brigade, then this certainly did not support the fact that the body of troops was by all means intact.<sup>614</sup> However, as I have remarked above, by and large, the assessment of Count Liechtenstein regarding 'the body of troops' was correct. Of far greater concern were his comments relating to the General Staff. And a 'lack of confidence' was only part of the problem. A sense of despondency was becoming widespread.

One consequence was that in the light of the difficult war situation and its further deterioration, increasingly stringent measures were being demanded, and the militarisation of the home front steadily continued. Despite the pessimistic mood, there was a will within the Army High Command to persevere, while at the same time, it was isolating itself to an increasing extent. Conrad however acted with such thoughtlessness that his behaviour was in some cases no longer understood even by those around him.

The Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, was almost never involved in the decisions, and he was increasingly also only informed briefly and in some cases in a downright insulting manner. Yet he allowed himself to be treated in this manner. Conrad was due to arrive to make a presentation from around 12 to 12.30 p.m., but in most cases, he failed to turn up before 1 or 2. Then he would report for half an hour. The evening presentation ran in the same way. It was planned for 8 p.m., yet Conrad usually arrived at around 11 p.m. Until then, Friedrich was frequently kept awake by playing cards. However, in some cases, he fell asleep. After having been woken up, he was perhaps not in a condition to follow the presentations with the necessary degree of concentration. In the interim, Archduke Friedrich spent the day keeping himself up to date on the military dispositions on the basis of order sheets and the lists of casualties. All this was naturally more than detrimental to the function and reputation of the Army Supreme Commander. As his lord chamberlain, Major General Herberstein, also claimed: 'A Supreme Commander who at the most spends between half an hour and an hour of his time working on the supreme command, and only then plays the listener, but who otherwise does nothing the whole day except for correcting the schematism is surely no Supreme Commander!'<sup>615</sup>

The Army Supreme Command was also assigned to the heir to the throne, Archduke Karl Franz Josef. Since Conrad clearly feared that he would interfere and was concerned about the consequences of detailed reporting to Vienna, he sought in an already highly obvious manner not only to keep him from decisions, but also to conceal information from him. He ignored him, gave him no updates on the situation, and was not pleased when higher-ranking officers spent time with him.<sup>616</sup> The side-lining of the Archduke was made all the easier since it was said of him even by people who were by all means well-disposed towards him that he had no particular ability and no appropri-

ate presence. Those surrounding Archduke Friedrich felt that: 'He has not yet matured, in spite of his 27 years of age'.<sup>617</sup>

Now, the relationship between the Army High Command and the heir to the throne not only touched on more insubstantial issues, such as the extent to which personal animosities played a role and whether Conrad was perhaps of the opinion that the heir to the throne was still too inexperienced. Very different problems were at issue, in particular the position of the heir to the throne in relation to the military elite, which gained a new degree of importance as soon as it was asked why archdukes were given the command of operations at all and rose up to high ranks within the military hierarchy. This was only in part a feudal foible, albeit to the smallest extent. Above all, this had a very different tradition in Austria than in other European countries. Ultimately, after all, the war was understood to be decisive not only for the fate of the Empire, but also of the dynasty. Therefore, what could be more obvious than to integrate archdukes into the command hierarchy more extensively? Since in addition, signs of decay very quickly became evident within this hierarchy, the archdukes guaranteed to a significant extent the continued existence of the structures. Wherever possible, the agnates of the dynasty moved in. Archdukes Friedrich, Joseph Ferdinand, Joseph, Eugen and others, not least and in a particular fashion the heir to the throne Archduke Karl, took over high and supreme commands. No wonder it must have seemed to all appearances that this was 'their' war. Certainly, their functions were in part nominal. Under these circumstances, the attempt by Conrad to push back the heir to the throne and to decline to involve him in the decisions seemed odd in a double sense. However, Archduke Karl enjoyed greater regard from Vienna in one way by being repeatedly called there to present reports.

The Army High Command also quickly succeeded in causing the representative of the Foreign Ministry, Baron Wladimir von Giesl, to be forced into a corner and finally dismissed. For one-and-a-half months, he had been able to send independent reports to his minister. Then he was accused of passing on strictly confidential messages relating to plans for an offensive and in so doing, of breaching military secrecy. Giesl was issued with a warning, and was finally so restricted in his effectiveness that from then on he was able to do no more than copy out the army report. Berchtold was unable to prevent Giesl's removal. Finally, the minister merely wanted assurance that he would be informed by Giesl at least once a week in a private letter, in order to learn of Giesl's 'views on the situation of the armies' in this way.<sup>618</sup> This appeared to Berchtold to be all the more important, since he wished and needed to be informed as comprehensively as possible. Since the official reports from the Imperial and Royal fronts failed to yield much information, Berchtold wanted at least to take control of the reporting for other countries and thus conduct psychological warfare. He developed plans for a propaganda offensive, which naturally only promised to be a success if it were also based on knowledge of the appropriate facts.

The reporting and the influence of the Entente powers had already been a significant cause for concern since the beginning of the war. For this reason, the idea took root in the Foreign Ministry of sending several particularly highly regarded people abroad for the purpose of clarification. They were not to be sent to any random country, but to America. The idea is likely to have occurred to Berchtold himself, who proposed sending one representative each for the Hungarian and the Austrian halves of the Empire. Count Albert Apponyi was to travel on behalf of Hungary, while Austria was to be represented by Professor Josef Redlich, who is usually now known only as a diarist. They were to give presentations and to influence public opinion in America in favour of the Monarchy.<sup>619</sup> Stürgkh strongly welcomed the idea, as did Tisza. The two individuals who were to undertake the task were cautiously enthusiastic. Redlich was concerned that the journey on a neutral ship may be too dangerous, and was afraid of the large number of sea mines. Furthermore, ships were repeatedly stopped and searched by the British. He wrote to Count Forgách at the Foreign Ministry: 'As willing as I am to undertake any possible task held to be important and necessary by the common or Austrian government, I cannot forebear to say that I would greatly regret, for the perhaps long duration of the war [...] to spend my days uselessly as a prisoner of war in France or England. In this regard at any rate it would therefore be necessary to safeguard the purpose connected with this mission as far as possible.'<sup>620</sup> This letter clearly revealed a significant degree of reticence, if not fear. For a time, the suggestion of including the neutral European countries, as well as the USA, in a propaganda offensive continued to be discussed. However, the view was increasingly expressed that such open propaganda could be counter-productive. It seemed that the Entente powers were less scrupulous in this matter. They by all means made expansive use of propaganda means. Austria-Hungary, however, finally decided against such an offensive. In so doing, it left a field open to the enemies of the Habsburg Monarchy and the émigré circles who had joined the Entente side, the significance of which had already been recognised, but which had even so been entirely misunderstood. The success of the Austro-Hungarian weapons was clearly to serve as the only convincing indication in order to prove to neutral countries abroad that the Monarchy, rather than facing extinction, was in fact unshakeable. By neglecting to use its own propaganda, however, the Monarchy gave free rein to Germany and, in so doing, missed the opportunity of presenting itself in a more strongly independent light.

The comments made by Redlich as a justification for his reluctance to travel to America also directly brought the sea war into focus. Here also, not everything had gone as those in command in the Danube Monarchy had envisaged.

## Fleet in Being

It began with a severe loss. Already on 16 August 1914, French and British naval forces in the Adriatic had blocked the route to the Bay of Kotor of two older, small ships of the Imperial and Royal Navy, the cruiser *Zenta* and the torpedo boat destroyer *Ulan*, before finally sinking the *Zenta*. For many, the appearance of French and British naval forces came as a surprise.<sup>621</sup>

The Imperial and Royal Navy was far more oriented to the existence of the Triple Alliance than the army. When it came to the Fleet, it was assumed that Italy would play a role. While Conrad's deliberations with regard to a preventive war against Italy and a certain aversion towards the Apennine state were ultimately reflected in the General Staff discussions with Moltke and in the plans made by the German Empire and Austria-Hungary in such a way that more enmity towards Italy was expressed than a willingness to approach it as an alliance partner, the attitude within the Navy was entirely different.

Austria-Hungary's Navy had been built up together with the Italian Navy as an instrument designed primarily to keep the French in check. Purely in terms of strength, it would no doubt have been possible to jointly offset the French, and probably also the British, marine forces in the Mediterranean. The British also regarded the Austro-Hungarian marine forces as the most significant navy in the Mediterranean region.<sup>622</sup> Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been an ardent supporter of navalism and, like Archduke Maximilian before him, had also sought to consistently build up the fleet. Furthermore, marine armament was one of the few areas in which he more or less had a free hand. He had also covered the financial practices of Admiral Count Rudolf Montecuccoli, who was the head of department in the War Ministry as well as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, who had exploited a government crisis in Hungary in 1910/11 and the resulting failure of the delegations to meet in order to borrow over 32 million kronen from two large financial institutions and to use the money to order the construction of new battleships, the 'Tegetthoff' class of dreadnoughts. Here, Montecuccoli acted in a similar way to the War Minister, Moritz von Auffenberg, who had ordered 30.5 cm mortars while ignoring the relevant parliamentary representative bodies. What made the situation contentious was that even the War Minister was unaware of what his naval department head was doing.<sup>623</sup> This caused bad feeling. However, Franz Ferdinand settled the conflict. Montecuccoli, who was anyway nearly 70 years old, went into retirement in 1913. His successor was Admiral Anton Haus. However, the fleet continued to grow, not least at the cost of the standing army. The last approvals for the fleet expansion alone amounted to over 328 million crowns.<sup>624</sup>

In 1914, the Imperial and Royal Navy was comparatively modern as a result, and in some ship categories was even superior. The four battleships of the 'Tegetthoff' class, of

which the fourth, the *Szent István*, was however only due for completion in 1915, were warships of a highly impressive size, and with equally impressive armaments. Weighing 20,000 tonnes, with belt armour 280 mm thick and 44 guns, of which twelve were 30.5 cm cannon, they were comparable to the best formations in the Mediterranean. To the warship fleet, which was divided into two squadrons with two divisions each, were added the cruiser flotilla with six ships, two torpedo flotillas with 48 ships, as well as the supply ships, the formations designed for the defence of coastal zones and for the local defence, for example of the naval base at Pula (Pola), six submarines, and much more. Austria-Hungary's Navy, which ranked among the world's largest, totalled over 200 formations, when all training ships, auxiliary ships and hulks (but not the Danube Flotilla) were taken into account, with a personnel of officers and crew of over 40,000 men. These were supplemented by the facilities on land, the coastal batteries, naval aviation, radio and signalling stations, the personnel in the naval base areas and others. In short: Austria-Hungary had a more than respectable navy.

The entry by France and Britain into the war and the Italian neutrality had however altered the situation from the ground up in July 1914, since without the Italians, Austria-Hungary's navy was significantly inferior to that of the Franco-British forces. This also put paid to all plans that had the goal of uniting the Austro-Hungarian, Italian and German Mediterranean forces into a single fleet, which was to be commanded by the Austro-Hungarian Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Anton Haus. Instead, Haus, as Commander of the Imperial and Royal Fleet, was able only to present a 'fleet in being', to make threats and to protect the Adriatic coast.

This reticence was felt first in Germany, where there was no understanding whatsoever for such an attitude. At the start of the war, the German Navy had the battle cruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau* in the Mediterranean. The *Goeben* had departed from Pula and reached Messina on 2 August, where the naval forces of the Triple Alliance were to gather. Instead, the Germans learned that Italy had declared its neutrality. As if that were not enough, British and French fleet units began to hunt down the two German ships. The commander of the *Goeben* sought support from the Imperial and Royal naval forces. Admiral Haus was unable to provide it, since Austria-Hungary was at that time not yet at war with France and Great Britain. Additionally, the main Austrian force was gathered in Pula and was therefore at a far greater distance from the two German ships than the British and French. Haus therefore advised the Germans to seek refuge in the Adriatic, and sent an imposing force to meet them, consisting of the three dreadnoughts from the 1st Battleship Division, three further warships, eight cruisers and destroyers and 13 torpedo boats. However, while the Imperial and Royal Navy was still steaming southwards through the Adriatic, the Germans had decided differently and steered their two ships towards Turkish waters. They suggested that the Austrians should follow them, possibly also to enter the Black Sea and as such to

exploit the joint operation. They also boasted that no German warship would stay put in its home port if an enemy to be conquered were within range.<sup>625</sup> Haus, however, had not the remotest intention of following the Germans, and ordered that the fleet return immediately. He also responded negatively to further German suggestions to send formations to the Black Sea. This would have been thoroughly in Berchtold's interest, however, since he had intended to impress Romania and Bulgaria in this way. Even so, Haus could not agree to such a step.<sup>626</sup> For the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy and the Navy leadership, the Strait of Otranto was by and large the southern boundary of their own radius of activity. Beyond the Adriatic, only the submarines were assigned an offensive role. With this approach, the Imperial and Royal Navy was already subject to harsh criticism right at the beginning of the war, and was accused of leaving the Germans to fend for themselves. On a more subtle level, they had to accept the rebuke that they were cowardly and lacked sailor's spirit. The declaration of war by France and Great Britain against the Habsburg Monarchy changed everything anyway.

Augustin Boué de Lapeyrère, Commander of the Allied Mediterranean forces, which consisted primarily of French formations, received an order to press forward with as many ships as possible. He was also to present himself occasionally within view of the Italian coast, in order to make a mildly threatening gesture and to prevent Italy at all costs from abandoning its neutrality. However, the French must have known that they were advancing into the lions' den. The Adriatic did after all belong to Austria. To the south of the Strait of Otranto, only the light cruiser *Zenta* and the destroyer *Ulan*, which had bombarded the Montenegrin port of Bar, were operating in mid-August. Lapeyrère's force promptly surprised the two Austrian ships. The *Ulan* was able to escape into the Adriatic. The *Zenta* was sunk, as mentioned above. The French steamed off without showing any concern for the survivors, most of whom were able to reach the Montenegrin coast, where they were taken captive.

The sinking of the *Zenta* gave cause for new reproaches. The ship had been lost because the 5th (Fleet) Division in the Gulf of Kotor had failed to rush to the *Zenta's* aid.<sup>627</sup> Even so, she would have been powerless against the 14 warships and all other French formations. Lapeyrère subsequently made repeated attempts to lure the Austro-Hungarian naval forces out of their ports, but to no avail. Haus kept them back. He wanted to keep his fleet intact in case it were needed against Italy after all.

In Kotor, only parts of the heavy surface naval forces were concentrated for the time being, while the other formations, and the submarine fleet in particular, had their base in Pula. The move into the Bay of Kotor offered an excellent natural harbour, but was also risky since this bay, which lay to the far south of Dalmatia, was dominated by the approximately 2,000 m-high Mount Lovćen, which belonged to Montenegro. This gave the Montenegrins an ideal opportunity not only to look into the Austro-Hungarian naval base, but to shoot into it as well, and possibly to take it as their own. However,



plans to this effect, which were to have been implemented in conjunction with French naval forces, were already abandoned before the end of 1914.

The defensive principle followed by the Imperial and Royal Navy Command and, in particular, by the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Haus, was subject to criticism not only by the Germans but also within the Austro-Hungarian Army Command. Haus responded, not without some justification, with the remark that the gentlemen may perhaps have an excellent command of the land war, but had no notion of matters relating to naval strategy and operations.<sup>628</sup> On the contrary, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy could even claim a success in the land war, since there was no doubt that it was only due to the presence of the fleet in Kotor that Montenegro was kept fully in check on this section of the front. The sceptical attitude towards the defensive concept of the Navy and criticism of its only slight successes persisted, however. Since huge amounts of money had been invested in the Imperial and Royal Navy, and it certainly had the potential to be successful as a fleet, there were many who could not and would not comprehend why the Navy should be put to such limited use now that the war had begun.

The submarines were the only vessels given the task of starting an offensive maritime war. However, in the autumn of 1914, Austria-Hungary only had seven submarines, of which merely five were suitable for use in the sea war. Opinions were also divided when it came to the deployment of the submarines. Haus, who would have gladly sent a submarine into the Strait of Otranto and beyond, was faced with objections from the Commander of the submarine fleet, Lieutenant Commander Baron Franz von Thierry, who was concerned in particular about the low number. Haus made enquiries as to how long the construction of new submarines would take. When he was told that ten months would be required, he replied that by that time, the war would probably already be over.<sup>629</sup>

The strongest argument that Haus had to hand when defending the fact that operations served solely to protect the coast was that he was uncertain as to the future position of Italy, and did not wish to expose the fleet to a surprise attack by the Italians. And so the Austro-Hungarian formations bobbed about in the bays of Istria and Dalmatia and sailed the coastal waters. The shock from the sinking of the *Zenta* ran so deep that even the blockade that had begun off the Montenegrin coast and in particular of the naval station at Bar was called off.

However, the following months appeared to vindicate the defensive principle adopted by the Commander of the Fleet. The French succeeded several times in appearing on the Dalmatian coast to deliver provisions to Montenegro by sea, but in so doing, they became increasingly exposed to the Austro-Hungarian naval aviation, torpedo boats and submarines. Finally, they even suffered several damaging losses. Three days after the *Curie* had been sunk, the U 12 submarine (under Egon Lerch) torpedoed the French dreadnought *Jean Bart*, the flagship of the French Mediterranean cadre. However, an-

yone who might have thought that these successes would increase the willingness of the Commander of the Fleet to take risks was to be proven wrong. Haus continued to regard his objective as being to protect the Croatian and Dalmatian coasts. He was also unmoved by the criticism of his activities in the Army High Command, and by the fact that precisely in times of severe setbacks for the Imperial and Royal armies, there were hopes of a success at sea in order to achieve a type of propagandistic counter-effect. The Commander of the Fleet was also not minded to be blown off course by the increasingly impudent taunts from the German naval attaché in Vienna, Lieutenant Commander Albrecht von Freyberg.<sup>630</sup> He was also not sufficiently impressed by events in Galicia, nor by those in the Serbian theatre of war, to begin an operation designed only for show. His business was the war at sea.

### In the Shadow of the Gallows

During the first weeks of the war, the image of the troops marching out, the national enthusiasm, the coming into effect of emergency laws, the measures for psychological warfare and the adjustment of the Dual Monarchy to the needs of a war economy created a situation in which there was hardly any time to reflect on everything that was happening, or even to acknowledge all the individual events. In August 1914, the Army High Command had willingly attested to the political administration that its work was making excellent progress and that no tensions had arisen during mobilisation as a result of any domestic policies. With the implementation of the imperial decree on the authority of the Army High Command over domestic policy in certain areas, namely the north-eastern parts of Moravia, Bukovina and Galicia and by the Balkan High Command in the Bačka region, the southern counties of Hungary, in Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, the army took responsibility for the implementation of the emergency laws and did all it could to ensure that they were observed. The supreme commands also had no qualms about using this authorisation. The armies, corps and divisions then rigorously put the intended measures into practice. Hostages were conscripted, fines and deposits were imposed, houses were destroyed and, finally, citing the 'right to self-defence in war', executions by firing squad were carried out under martial law.<sup>631</sup> The fear of spies was ubiquitous, and even a hardened news reporter such as Maximilian Ronge wrote subsequently that the army had known no mercy, had acted ruthlessly and was mistrustful of more or less the entire population of Galicia. There was also no mercy shown when corpses were robbed; if the perpetrators were caught in the act, they were executed.<sup>632</sup>

Any hostile tendencies that were displayed towards Austria during July and August 1914 were punished in a large number of different ways. Other events emerged of their

own accord to a certain extent. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of the Serbian population took a stand against the Austrians after they had recovered from the first shock, and above all were emboldened by Serbian successes. The Imperial and Royal Army had to make every effort to choke off the unrest at an early stage.<sup>633</sup> In Bohemia and Moravia, radical Czechs called for a railway strike. Others joined the radical Czech and pro-Russian agitation. As a result, within the space of a few months 121 Czechs were arrested, of whom 18 were sentenced to death.<sup>634</sup> The waves of nationalist sentiment may not have been an accurate reflection of the attitude of the population as a whole, but it became clear that the 'redemption through war' could also be understood in a nationalist sense. For this reason, the military authorities in particular were to show no leniency. It emerged from the investigations into breaches of military duty after the war that in some cases, those commanders who had failed to act according to the expectations of their superiors and had shown leniency or had even merely respected the not-guilty verdicts of the military courts were occasionally harassed and treated with contempt.<sup>635</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Army however wished to show harshness and to make emphatic threats on its own territory and above all in the country of its enemy. Already by mid-August, the Balkan High Command ordered the conscription of Serbian hostages. If action was taken against members of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the localities in which the hostages were conscripted, the hostages' houses were to be set alight. After fighting began, and at critical points, there were even real massacres. In Šabac, for example, the 29th Infantry Division had 80 civilian prisoners slaughtered on the church square who were suspected of being involved in fighting against the Austro-Hungarian troops.<sup>636</sup> In large circles in Budapest, there was a clear sense of satisfaction that in order to suppress pro-Serb activities, thousands of arrest warrants were issued and hundreds of executions were carried out.<sup>637</sup> However, Count Tisza immediately presented a complaint to the Emperor, referring to flagrant abuses of power. In response, the Military Chancellery of the Emperor argued to the contrary by presenting this approach as a necessary measure. Franz Joseph decided in favour of Tisza.<sup>638</sup> He did not want to see a barbarisation of the war. In his view, the strict differentiation between 'Kriegsraison' (military necessity) and 'Kriegssitte' (the customs of war), was entirely in conformance with the legal doctrine that also applied to the Imperial and Royal Army, which demanded 'rigour in the implementation of the purpose of the war, yet coupled with clemency wherever possible'.<sup>639</sup> In the long term, however, it was of course difficult to maintain this argument and to curb the ruthlessness of the war measures when it became known that hostages were also taken by the enemy during the war, and that the harshest reprisals were inflicted. Thus the Commander of the Gendarmerie for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brigadier Lukas Šnjarić, reported that Austrian medical patrols had been fired at, and the prisoners and wounded had been 'bestially tortured and mutilated; their noses and ears had been cut off, and their eyes had then

been gouged out'.<sup>640</sup> The Serbs appointed a special commission. The Swiss criminologist Rodolphe Archibald Reiss was called in to investigate the allegations, albeit only those actions that were perpetrated against Austria-Hungary. While his report contained severe reprimands, it would only have been balanced if it had also taken into account the allegations made against the Austro-Hungarian side. As it was, however, the results of his investigations could be discounted as propaganda.<sup>641</sup> The attempt to impose moderation on the Imperial and Royal troops and to demand that they show clemency to innocent non-participants ultimately remained just as ineffective as did similar attempts on the Serbian and Montenegrin side.

The images of the hanged, garrotted, mutilated and shot that were to be seen in Serbia and to an even greater extent in Bukovina and Galicia contributed to identifying war as the phenomenon that it had in reality already been since the wars against the French Revolution: a war of one people against another. Galicia was a contender with other war regions for having the soil most lastingly bloodied by violence. To the bleakness of a country bogged down in rain and a million-strong army on the retreat were added the ravaged and burned towns and villages. Horodok (Grodeck) in Galicia was one of these. The Imperial and Royal troops retreating westwards saw large numbers of bodies hanging on the market square of people who had been executed for spying as a warning example. The mayor was included among them.<sup>642</sup> Georg Trakl wrote to his friend in Innsbruck, Ludwig von Ficker, how the sight of the hanged affected him as a poet who had at first been enthusiastic about the war. When he went outside, he was faced with a spectacle of horror: 'On the square, which had been bustling with life, and which then appeared to be swept clean, stood trees. A group of uncannily still trees, grouped together, on each of which a body had been hung. Ruthenians, executed locals.'<sup>643</sup> Trakl, who was a military medication assessor, wrote the following poem:

'Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder  
 Von tödlichen Waffen, die goldnen Ebenen  
 Und blauen Seen, darüber die Sonne  
 Duster hinrollt; umfängt die Nacht  
 Sterbende Krieger, die wilde Klage  
 Ihrer zerbrochenen Münder [...]'  
 ('In the evening the autumn woodlands ring  
 With deadly weapons. Over the golden plains  
 And lakes of blue, over which the sun above  
 Rolls more darkly. The night surrounds  
 Warriors dying and the wild lament  
 Of their fragmented mouths [...])

On 3 November 1914, Trakl killed himself with an overdose of cocaine. The war had broken him.

On the journey to the headquarters of the 4th Army Command in Nisko, Major Ronge, the Deputy Commander of the Evidenzbüro (the military intelligence service), drove past a row of trees on which a dozen bodies still hung. 'At this sight, he shuddered at the rages of the military justice', wrote Heinrich Benedikt, the Second Lieutenant of the Reserve who would later become an important Austrian historian. He substantiated his sense of horror with the observation that some of the reserve officers who were serving as auditors hoped 'to earn an award by making sweeping convictions'.<sup>644</sup> In Galicia and Bukovina, the terror, which was designed to act as a deterrent, was primarily directed against the Monarchy's own people. Ruthenians were deported and in some cases brought to the detention camp at Graz-Thalerhof. In localities designated as Russophile, hostages were conscripted as they were in Serbia.

The numerous, random arrests were an even greater cause for resentment among those who refused to accept this barbarisation of the war, and led to a further intervention by Tisza to Emperor Franz Joseph.<sup>645</sup> This led to the written order by the Emperor of 17 September 1914, which at its core contained the following passage: 'Many complaints have been received that recently, numerous arrests have again been made of alleged political suspects or those who are unreliable in all parts of the Monarchy, arrests that were made almost solely at the instigation or behest of military commands and authorities. I order that all military posts be instructed in the most stringent terms to authorise such measures only on the basis of highly suspicious circumstances. I do not want elements that are also loyal to be driven in a direction damaging to the state through unjustified arrests [...].' The written order failed to have any effect.

The accusation of arbitrariness directed at military posts was particularly justified where the measures were directed against Czechs, Ruthenians, and in some cases the southern Slavs. The process also ran up against barriers, however, when the political authorities put themselves in the way. In Bohemia, for example, the Czech-friendly Governor, Prince Franz Thun-Hohenstein, made every effort to underline the loyalty of the Czechs and to improve the German-Czech relationship. He did so with a method that was effective although not uncontentious, which was described by the former Trade Minister Josef Maria Baernreither as follows: 'The Czechs are bearing the war with a deep sense of resentment. It cannot be otherwise [...]. Thun [however] makes great allowances for the Czechs, endlessly praises them for their patriotism in his reports and ignores everything else so that it at all costs appears on the outside that here in Austria everything is in order. One can rebus sic stantibus have no quarrel with this method. The concealment of the real disposition of the Slavs in Austria is an extremely important matter. The success of this measure is dependent on the successes in the war.'<sup>646</sup>

The reports of a worsening mood increased, and the War Surveillance Office finally compiled all the reports for October from the military command in Prague and concluded that while the pan-Slav elements remained quiet, March Battalions II and III from Prague had already been wearing numerous pan-Slav emblems while marching out. Parts of Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau') and Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 30 ('Kolomea') surrendered to the Russians without much resistance. This led the Army High Command to question what value at all the Czech replacement formations still had, and what precautionary measures would have to be taken in order to prevent Russophile agitation. This issue again caused the antagonism between the Army High Command and the government to flare up. The Governor of Bohemia had a very different opinion of the matter and was of the view that individual incidents could not be used to draw conclusions about the population of an entire kingdom. The Imperial and Royal Interior Minister, Heinold, declared in no uncertain terms that a general suspicion of the entire Czech nation would be unfair. However, before any clarification could be made as to what had caused the incidents, an application from the Army High Command arrived in Vienna on 26 November, in which it was proposed that the area of validity of the imperial ordinance on emergency decrees from July be extended to include all of Bohemia and those parts of Moravia and Silesia that had not yet been covered; in short, military jurisdiction was to be introduced in the Bohemian crown lands, and in the Sudeten lands, the powers held by the civilian regional authorities were also to be partially transferred to the Army High Command.<sup>647</sup>

The Prime Minister, Count Stürgkh, immediately rejected this application. While he could not discount the claim that a part of the Czech intelligentsia was Russophile, their behaviour was passive. Furthermore, the accusations made by the Army High Command did not apply to everyone. Stürgkh therefore replied entirely in accordance with the views held by Prince Thun-Hohenstein and saw no benefit in granting the military posts even greater authority for taking crackdown measures. It would surely not be right to treat Bohemia as a region that should fall into the sphere of influence of the army, since the country had continued to be spared entirely from war action. The Emperor ultimately refused the applications made by the Army High Command. However, it was clear that this was by no means the end of the matter, and that the antagonism between the Army High Command and the Austrian government would only be exacerbated whenever a case of high treason or the desertion of troops became known. As it was, by the end of the year, 950 people were arrested in Bohemia due to political offences. 704 of them were transferred to the military courts – even though the military jurisdiction only applied to those operations that had been placed under military control.

In Galicia, the Army High Command naturally continued to implement its measures, since Galicia was indeed a war zone. After the setbacks in September and the

renewed advance of the Imperial and Royal troops in October, Austrian troops seized a Russian dossier in which the names of confidential informants working for the Russians were listed. Their task was to smooth the path of the Russians through Austrian Galicia. Furthermore, a large number of cases had come to light in which Ruthenians in particular had given direct help to the Russians and had attempted to convey messages across the front lines.<sup>648</sup> It goes without saying that Conrad gave the order to proceed immediately against collaborators and informants. However, the Army High Command wanted to see even more extensive measures taken, and made a request for the appointment of a military governor. Its justification for this was a report presented to the Emperor on 14 October, according to which the Imperial and Royal armies were suffering greatly in their own country from the betrayal and espionage perpetrated by the Russophile population, while the enemy was being hailed as a 'liberator'. The report claimed that as well as the uncompromising suppression of attempts to undermine the state, the mass of the population must be won over by impartial treatment and material support. However, the trust of all could only be gained through the armed forces which had for decades embodied the principle of the equal treatment of all nations. Since political officials were not up to such a task, a military governor would be required.

Repeated attempts were made by the Army High Command to extend the area of validity of military jurisdiction and to impose martial law. The eastern counties in Hungary were not to be exempted from these measures. Detailed accounts were given of the fact that some provincial governors had refused to recruit the civilian population to build roads, that identity checks were not being conducted sufficiently thoroughly, that military telephone calls were not given priority over civilian ones, and that it was not even understood why for example the station waiting rooms at Bardejov (Bártfalva) were used to house 'interim stations for the wounded'. In order to make the full seriousness of the military situation clear to the authorities and to the population, martial law should be declared.<sup>649</sup> However, once again, the argumentation of the Army High Command failed to convince. Even so, this did not prevent the apparent proclamation of nearly 5,000 death sentences in the region of Galicia close to the front during the course of the following years, most of which were due to 'reasonable activities'. A proportion of the sentences was also carried out.<sup>650</sup>

What began to emerge in September, October and in the months until the end of 1914 in the Bohemian crown lands, in Galicia and in Bukovina – and finally also in Hungary – was however merely a foretaste of far more extensive measures and endeavours by the Army High Command, which then culminated in attempts to overthrow the Austrian Prime Minister and impose a full military dictatorship. What was remarkable here was that this was generated by an Army High Command that had Conrad as its driving force, and in him, a man who also demonstrated an uncompromising attitude in domestic matters; yet at the same time, everything that was presented from

this command to the Prime Minister or the Emperor was ultimately supported and signed by the nominal Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich. With his extreme inclination to make life comfortable for himself, however, Archduke Friedrich as an individual who lacked both the ambition and the dynamism to make more of his position as Army Supreme Commander, where there was certainly room for improvement. For this reason, he allowed himself to be used by Conrad for a long period of time.

Friedrich also succumbed to self-delusion of a particular kind. If the Imperial and Royal armies gained victories, Conrad's military genius was praised and the Army Supreme Commander put up with the fact that he was not even mentioned. However, if the troops failed to achieve success and there were defeats, the Archduke came into the line of fire. And yet he remained supportive of the Chief of the General Staff and shielded him from his critics.

At the beginning of November, it became necessary to draw the armies far back to the area south of Kraków in order to gain some degree of operational freedom. The Army High Command transferred to Cieszyn (Teschen) on 10 November, a location far behind the front that offered not least the advantage of containing a residence owned by Archduke Friedrich, a small palace with stables, a carriage house, greenhouses and gardens. The Archduke could feel at home. However, outward appearances suffered at least somewhat, since the Army Supreme Commander and the supreme command had left the Galician theatre of war. Once the Army High Command departments had been accommodated in the Albrecht gymnasium school, however, the military control centre could again be regarded as operational.

At the front, a major shift of forces also began. The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army under Böhm-Ermolli gave up a part of its troops, who were taken far behind the front to the Kraków area. Larger sections of the 4th Army, which was deployed to the east of the 1st Army, were also to become effective in the Kraków area. This marked the start of an operation designed not only to give the 1st Army more space to breathe, but also to relieve the burden on the German troops, who had retreated to the Toruń area. The Chief of the German General Staff, Erich von Falkenhayn, paid full tribute to this action: 'The Austro-Hungarian Army has suffered heavily. Nevertheless, the army command there is doing everything to lead the operations in a manner beneficial to the alliance. It has moved three armies to the left bank of the Vistula and has left only weak forces in Galicia. This amounts to an act of sacrifice.'<sup>651</sup>

Falkenhayn's comments should be taken with caution, since this phase of the First World War is so strongly overridden by later ones, in which the impression was created by the German side that without German troops, success would have been impossible for the Central Powers. Here, it claimed, the actions taken by its alliance partner were no more than a fulfilment of its obligations.



From 16 to 20 November, the Battle of Kraków and Częstochowa raged, which was only a success for the Imperial and Royal troops to the extent that the Russian advance was halted. However, to the south, the Russians continued their push westwards. The Imperial and Royal 3rd Army, which had suffered heavy losses to the west of Przemyśl, was forced to retreat, leaving the encircled fortress far behind. The Russians were positioned in the Carpathians, and threatened access to Hungary. Tisza demanded immediate measures from the Army High Command to protect Hungary. However, Conrad sought to take decisive action elsewhere and bet literally everything on a single card. If he had not succeeded, he would probably have been dismissed as Chief of the General Staff immediately. Again, there was a crisis within the Austrian leadership. Conrad faced particularly stiff resistance from the Imperial and Royal 4th Army under Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. Therefore, the Chief of the General Staff, together with Major General Roth, Commander of the Innsbruck XIV Corps, established a separate Army Group Roth, which was given the task of making a risky advance into the rear of the Russian 3rd Army. Roth was also attached to a German reserve division. The Commander-in-Chief of the Russian south-western front, however, General Ivanov, incorrectly interpreted the Austrian intentions and believed that the Imperial and Royal 4th Army was retreating westwards. Now, it appeared he might even succeed in breaking through to Bohemia and Moravia.

The Army Group Roth was moved through to the Beskid Mountains, and on 1 December began an operation near Limanowa that took the Russians completely by surprise, during which the Russians were thrown back to Łapanów. Reinforcements were hastily brought in on both sides, and on 10 December, the Russians succeeded in pushing back Roth's flank, which was exposed to the east. However, Conrad had also ordered the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army to attack. From the Carpathians, the group under Sándor Szurmay (38th Honvéd Infantry Division and a 'combined' division that had been hastily assembled) gradually pushed through towards Nowy Sącz. Now, Roth also positioned the VI Corps (under Major General von Arz) at Nowy Sącz. This finally forced the Russians to retreat.

With his disposition of the Battle of Limanowa-Łapanów and the positioning of the 3rd Army at Nowy Sącz, and thanks to the clever choice of commander responsible for conducting the operation, Conrad had won an impressive victory. He had succeeded in offsetting the inferiority of numbers through manoeuvring and the exploitation of the inner line. He had impressively stood his ground against the army commander. This rendered any doubts about his leadership qualities redundant, and the leadership crisis was overcome. The Emperor awarded him the Military Merit Cross 1st Class. At the same time, Archduke Friedrich was promoted to Field Marshal and was granted permission to bear the field marshal's baton of his grandfather, Archduke Carl, and his adoptive father, Archduke Albrecht.<sup>652</sup>

What remained was a battlefield – one of many – the horrific sight of which shocked even a hardened General Staff officer such as the head of the Evidenzgruppe (military intelligence group) of the 4th Army, Lieutenant Colonel Baronet Theodor von Zeynek: ‘A warren of trenches running in all different directions, all filled with cartridge cases, broken rifles, bent bayonets, wooden board covers shot to pieces, rotten straw, ground-water, and food that had been left uneaten. Often, prayer books were still lying there, Austrian caps, Prussian spiked helmets, Russian wool hats, followed by entire networks of newly-dug, unused trenches, burned-down houses, villages shelled to rubble, overturned telegraph lines, and demolished bridges. Groups of wailing, crying farmers and their wives and children passed, who did not know where they could go; then there was a heap of dead soldiers, then we saw long rows of freshly dug graves, and numerous horse carcasses. In the villages terrible images of destruction, the population for the most part transported out or fled, the fields trampled to mud and in the sky vast flocks of screaming, scavenging crows’.<sup>653</sup>

The pursuit of the Russian 3rd and 8th Armies continued for several more days. During the battle, which finally lasted until 20 December, they were successfully thrown back to the Tarnów area. During the process, the Imperial and Royal 4th Army advanced through to the Dunajec River. The 3rd Army was forced back to the Carpathians, but the Russian breakthrough into Silesia and Hungary had been prevented. As a result, the blueprints for dividing the Monarchy agreed in Russia, France and Serbia became obsolete.<sup>654</sup>

### **Belgrade and the Failure in the Balkans**

In Constantinople, the Sultan Caliph Mohammed V proclaimed the Jihad, or holy war, against the British, French and Russians on 14 November 1914. He called on all Muslims to participate in this war on the side of the Ottoman Empire and its allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary. In so doing, he was indicating not least to the Muslims in the Balkans that their place in this war was in the ranks and at the side of the Imperial and Royal Monarchy.<sup>655</sup> Who would have thought that this would be possible after the second siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683? Already by the end of August, around 7,000 predominantly Islamic inhabitants of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar had gone over to the Bosnian side. At the start of November, the Islamic Bosnians organised demonstrations in support of the Habsburg Monarchy. They were intended to emphasise the fact that the Muslims considered themselves to be particularly reliable subjects of the distant Emperor in Vienna. For its part, Austria-Hungary lost no time in shrugging off the former wars as ‘water under the bridge’, and in underlining common ground. The country and people were described, and particular mention was made of the bravery of

the soldiers of the Ottoman Empire. The declaration of Holy War by the Sultan enabled the Imperial and Royal troops to spread this message among the Islamic soldiers in the Russian Army through pamphlets,<sup>656</sup> and the State Governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, who was now also the Commander of the Imperial and Royal forces in the Balkans, was quick to organise the reading of a 'fatwā' by the Shaykh al-Islam with the command for Holy War in the country's mosques. It was a welcome and already in all likelihood a necessary means of psychological and ideological warfare.

At the end of September, the front in Serbia had come to a standstill. The successes of the Austro-Hungarian troops had also remained very minor in the second offensive, and the losses were extraordinarily high. In Serbia, the increasing number of soldiers who were dead and wounded at the beginning of the war as a result of the impact of battle were exacerbated by a further element of brutality that was different to that in Galicia. The dividing line between combatants and non-combatants had become blurred. Violations of the laws of war were an everyday occurrence.<sup>657</sup> Austrians and Serbs accused each other of perpetrating war crimes. However, the commanders of the Austro-Hungarian forces found themselves confronted with the first signs of noncompliance, which were far too serious to ignore. Soldiers of entire regiments made it clear that they did not want to fight a war, at least not this war. When this resistance was further intensified as a result of poor leadership and the troops suffered higher losses, they were no longer prepared to allow themselves to be sent into the fire. While direct insubordination was rare, the number of cases of self-mutilation soared.

Already on 24 August, martial law was imposed on the 21st Landwehr Infantry Division. The division belonged to the IX Corps and had taken part in the battle on the Jadar River and around Šabac, but despite becoming severely embattled several times during the 10-day period of fighting in sometimes unclear, heavily forested, rough hilly terrain, with forced removal from battle for one day, it was – like the entire corps – given only scant praise. The imposition of martial law due to 'cowardice in the face of the enemy' and the threat of shootings were the most drastic means of increasing the will to fight. Emperor Franz Joseph reacted promptly and already on 2 September had a request sent to General of Artillery Potiorek as to whether martial law should not be lifted in the light of the forthcoming continuation of the fighting. Potiorek was amenable and lifted the verdict.<sup>658</sup> A few days after the start of the next offensive against Serbia, the 21st Landwehr Infantry Division again attracted attention. On 15 September, it reported 2,000 wounded after – according to the work of the General Staff – difficult hours, in which it had been 'overwhelmed by shooting from unidentifiable enemy batteries, and repeatedly attacked day and night by Serbian infantry'. However, they included around 150 men 'with low-degree hand injuries', which had been diagnosed by the army doctors as resulting from self-injury by the soldiers. The command of the

5th Army applied for a re-imposition of martial law on the basis of 'the crime of cowardice'.<sup>659</sup> Potiorek complied with the request.

If it had been thought initially that the Czechs would also be easily led into a war against the Serbs and Russians, a different attitude now appeared to have taken hold, and the Czech regiments began to be regarded with suspicion. They were clearly more shocked than others by the events of battle, and also let it be known that this was anything but 'their' war, and searched for ways of avoiding the fighting. Still, there was nothing that could be done. Even the troops who had been reprimanded were sent back to the front. Thus, Brigadier Panesch (to whom the 28th Prague Landwehr Infantry Regiment was also subordinated), the Commander of the 41st Landwehr Infantry Brigade, which in turn belonged to the reprimanded 21st Landwehr Infantry Division, described the events of 19 September 1914 very vividly in his war memoirs: 'The battle group achieved significant successes, the machine guns mowed easily into the enemy, but we were crushed, since everything turned against us. The machine guns were lost, and everyone flooded back [...]. I hit out with my stick, while all the officers threatened with their revolvers, forcing the men to turn back to the firing line. The battle came to a standstill.'<sup>660</sup> Panesch, who was accused of lacking decisiveness and of failure by his corps commander, Major General Alfred Krauß, was dismissed shortly afterwards and sent into retirement for health reasons. The self-mutilating soldiers faced the prospect of trial by a military court.

However, it appeared that the replacement organisations of the Imperial and Royal Army smoothly succeeded in compensating for the loss of troops. After five weeks of 're-establishment', the term used in the Imperial and Royal jargon for recuperation, the troops were again ready for action. However, the relative calm was not prevalent in all sections of the front. The Serbs had attempted to push forward to Sarajevo via the Romanija Planina. They had failed, but had demonstrated that they continued to be capable of attack, and had cleverly disguised the fact that their situation was becoming increasingly difficult. During the course of October, Serbia had no longer been able to fully compensate for the losses of the first weeks of the war to a similar extent as was the case in Austria-Hungary. There were already signs of a lack of ammunition. Food also became scarce. The Russians, French and British had become involved with military missions and had also actively intervened to defend Serbia. The Russians had mined the Danube and Sava, and on 23 October had in fact sunk one of the Imperial and Royal monitors, the *Temes*, which was the flagship of the Danube Flotilla and the same monitor that had in effect begun the war.<sup>661</sup> However, what would have been of far greater benefit, namely a generous replenishment of armaments, weapons and ammunition, failed to materialise.

Since mid-October, it had been raining, and snow had been falling in the mountains. Despite this, on 31 October, the Austro-Hungarian troops now attacked once again, for

the third time in three months. The Imperial and Royal 5th and 6th Armies, together with Army Group Krauss formed from the remaining sections of the 2nd Army and newly added troops, broke through the Serbian front at the beginning of November during several days of severe fighting. Once again, Valjevo was the first major goal. And although the distance became ever greater between the fighting troops and the supply convoys that were sinking into the unpaved roads, on 15 November, the 5th and 6th Armies finally reached the Kolubara River and were able to enter Valjevo. At a single stroke, all the setbacks appeared to have been forgotten. Potiorek's reputation grew boundlessly. He was honoured by the Emperor and was made an honorary citizen of various towns, while in Sarajevo, a street was named after him.<sup>662</sup> This spurred the Commander of the Balkan forces further on, and led him to allow his troops to continue the advance. The Serbian Army was to be destroyed, and Serbia occupied.

As early as 8 November, the Serbian government met for a crisis session, during which the Chief of the Serbian General Staff, Putnik, spoke of the option of declaring a ceasefire and signing a separate peace. However, the government would not hear of it, and Prime Minister Pašić declared that if Austria-Hungary were offered negotiations, his government would resign.<sup>663</sup> The Serbian troops were to continue the fight.

The Imperial and Royal troops found no rest. Potiorek drove them on mercilessly. 'The harsh weather conditions give us great cause for concern for the state of health of our men, who are still dressed in summer clothing', noted the Commander of the 29th Infantry Division, General Eduard Zanantoni. 'Discipline and spirit began to suffer. The complaints all came to nothing; Potiorek was deaf to the justified concerns of the lower-ranking commanders and made increasingly categorical demands for: 'forwards, forwards!''<sup>664</sup> The artillery remained behind and had hardly any ammunition left. As a result, even more infantry had to be used without supporting weaponry in order to break the Serbian resistance. In the main German headquarters in Charleville-Mézières, a mood of pessimism had already taken hold, and the designated Quartermaster General West, Wild von Hohenborn, wrote to his wife that in Serbia, the Austrians 'have ground to a halt on the Kolubara. I have now sent an officer to the Serbian theatre of war. If the Austrians send 3 corps from there to Kraków, it might still come out alright. But they won't get any further forward in Serbia.'<sup>665</sup> Even so, Potiorek's troops reach the Ljig River, where a new battle flared up between 26 and 28 November. The Serbs were forced back to Kragujevac. They lost the battle on the Kolubara and appeared to have reached the end. Discipline was almost impossible to maintain. General Jurišić-Šturm, who in August had still referred to the 'Swabians' as 'impudent' and 'ignorant', threatened the death penalty for acts of desertion, self-mutilation or the discarding of weapons and ammunition. The families of soldiers attempting to escape from the fighting were to share the liability, and would lose all their property and be branded as dishonourable.<sup>666</sup> Even so, all attempts to force the troops to keep up the resistance would have

led to nothing if the Austro-Hungarian troops had not also exceeded the limit of their strength and ability to endure the suffering. They had continued to attack diagonally to the natural lines of movement, and from the middle to the end of November had brought the Serbs almost to the edge of collapse. Yet they themselves were utterly spent, had almost no more ammunition and could hardly drag themselves and their weapons further forward. Potiorek refused to accept the reality of the situation, however. Since he himself was not subject to control, only the successes of the troops in the Balkans were publicised and not the unimaginable losses. Potiorek's orders were imperative demands, such as: 'A halt is absolutely necessary', to be made 'as soon as possible', 'decisive advance without consideration of march losses'. Alternatively, the General of Artillery chose to issue platitudes such as: 'Waging war means going hungry', and 'A commander in the field must always be lonely'.<sup>667</sup> He brushed off the ceaseless complaints by the corps commanders and their pleas for the replenishment of ammunition, provisions and shoes, and their increasingly urgent demands for a day of rest as 'whining'.<sup>668</sup> The result was a state of complete exhaustion among the troops, who were now solely continuing the fight in mud and snow, and who were utterly apathetic. None of this is mentioned in the entries in Potiorek's diary. On Saturday, 28 November 1914: 'Partially cloudy in the morning, and temperature below 0° R[éaumur]; fine during the day and over 0° R in the sun. Worked very hard and since the battle on the Kolubara is proving persistent, felt very nervous. Field postcards forwarded.' Sunday, 29 November: 'In the morning, temperature above 0° R; the whole day dull with damp fog. Worked as usual.' A list of the forwarded cards then follows. Monday, 30 November: 'In the morning, around 0° R with dull fog; then very fine and mild until 3 p.m., later again partially cloudy. Worked as usual. At 11 a.m. presented the decorated gentlemen of the staff with their decorations in person [...].' On 1 December, Potiorek again worked 'as usual', before hosting two North American officers as dinner guests.<sup>669</sup>

Even when the private nature of the diary is taken into account, with the exception of a few words, the entries contain nothing relating to the processes in the Balkan high command, and above all nothing about the manner in which decisions were taken. Even less is noted with regard to the state of the troops. The diary reflected the nature of the man who wrote it: hard-headed, cold, bureaucratic, and as though the war were simply an administrative act. If one reads entries for the same days in the records of one of the higher-ranking officers, an entirely different picture emerges, and the terrible losses, deprivations and human misery become evident. One of the men who wrote about these weeks in the Balkans was Egon Erwin Kisch, who was serving as a Lance Corporal in the VIII Corps. He noted on 28 November: 'The terrain is terrible, we have absolutely no reserves, all soldiers are considering suicide. If we could at least relieve the swarm line for eight days. The corps command has today sent our officers ten bottles of champagne in case they are needed, so preparations are apparently being made in

higher places for victory.' Sunday, 29 November: 'During the evening, I slept in one of the typical Rakia barns with two infantrymen. To my left lay H., an official representative of a large spinning factory in Vienna and a qualified economist, while to my right was D., doorman of a brothel in the Lesser Town in Prague with a violent burglar, who was serving his seventh year in the infantry. It was cold and we pressed tight against each other [...].' 30 November: 'Due to the lack of a suitable cold store, we have already begun consuming the champagne, being unable to wait until the final victory. Today, when the news came that the Russians had advanced across the Carpathians for the second time, the ten [...] bottles were drunk empty [...].' Tuesday, 1 December 1914: 'The last month of this most terrible of all years begins. Will this be the last month of the war? Many millions wish it with all the fibres of their heart [...]. Nowhere is an end in sight. Tomorrow, we march via Lazaravac [*sic*] [...] hard to the north-west, which gave strength to the rumour that together with the 13th Corps and the Krauss Army, we will march towards the city and fortress of Belgrade [...].'<sup>670</sup>

There were many reasons for the over-extension of the supply lines, the penetration into old Serbian territory and the military risk of an advance with so little backup support. On the one hand, there was a feeling that now, with the third offensive, success was within reach. Clearly, only one last effort was needed to defeat Serbia. Ambition and the element of personal revenge may still also have played a role for Potiorek. In addition, a vague hope was still prevalent: since for a long time Romania could no longer be counted upon, all attention focussed on Bulgaria. If Bulgaria were to intervene against Serbia in the war, the outcome of the campaign would be assured. With this in mind, the almost defeated remnants of the Serbian Army were driven towards the Bulgarians. However, Radoslavov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, did all he could to prevent Bulgaria from siding with the Central Powers. It could also not be foreclosed that Ferdinand, the Bulgarian Tsar, did not still harbour long-held resentment against Austria-Hungary and against Emperor Franz Joseph in particular.<sup>671</sup> For this reason, the Bulgarian Army made no attempt to move closer to General of Artillery Potiorek's troops. Austria-Hungary was forced to find out on its own whether the third offensive against Serbia would be a success – or whether it would fail.

However, hardly anyone doubted that the campaign against Serbia would end in victory for the Imperial and Royal Army. Emperor Franz Joseph sent the Deputy Chief of his Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, to Potiorek with the express object of conveying his heartfelt greetings to the General of Artillery and also to say to all the others that the Emperor was gladdened by the successes. Marterer met Potiorek in Tuzla. He was 'moved to tears' by the imperial greetings. The planned operations were then discussed. First, the Imperial and Royal formations would advance to the Kolubara River and take Belgrade. Then, the troops were to swerve to the right. After Kragujevac had been taken, the Serbian campaign would in effect be at an end.<sup>672</sup> Po-

tiorek was already deliberating how the border with Serbia should be drawn. Here, he was comparatively modest, and merely proposed a bridgehead to the south of Belgrade, which was at any rate the capital, the separation of the Mačva; in other words, the Serbian territory to the south of the Sava that bordered on Syrmia, and the heights above the right bank of the Drina. Marterer left feeling fully confident.

The reality of the war was far less euphoric. The High Command of the Balkan forces declined to react to any complaints, or to already alarming reports. The losses increased relentlessly. Finally, Potiorek decided to pursue a prestige target and ordered that the left wing of the 5th Army occupy Belgrade. This was achieved without a fight on 2 December 1914, the 66th anniversary of the accession to the throne by Emperor Franz Joseph. Potiorek wrote of the event: 'Worked as usual, although at midday, I was highly excited by the surprising news of the fall of Belgrade.' Then he again forwarded field postcards. The word 'surprising' in Potiorek's private records makes it rather doubtful that the occupation of Belgrade was to have been accomplished at all costs on 2 December. Certainly, however, this had been his hope. Egon Erwin Kisch was far more drastic in his reaction: 'To mark the jubilee of Emperor Franz Joseph, this morning Belgrade was conquered with many participating, and with a broad programme of entertainment. The eastern wing of our army succeeded in taking the city. The army command spared no cost or effort in order to report this event, affixed for this day, to all corners of the world without delay, and everywhere 'spontaneous' ovations were given to mark this unexpected event that had by chance occurred on the anniversary day.'<sup>673</sup>

The occupation of Belgrade was immediately reported to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor by telephone. The aide-de-camp of the Emperor on duty, Colonel Count Hoyos, had the honour of bringing the news to the Monarch. Franz Joseph shed tears of joy. In the Army High Command in Cieszyn, the younger officers in particular hoped that Potiorek, whose reputation had reached its zenith, would soon be made Conrad's successor.<sup>674</sup>

This was the fourth time that Belgrade had been occupied by Imperial Austrian troops, and Potiorek saw his name being cited alongside those of Prince Eugen and Loudon. Only now did he grant his armies a respite. It was planned to last until 3 December, the day on which a victory parade would be held in Belgrade. Yet right in the middle, the Serbs launched a major attack. The Serbian leadership knew how to re-invigorate the morale of its soldiers. The Commander of the Serbian 1st Army, Vojvod Živojin Mišić, placed all his bets on one card. The army leadership scraped together all the guns that were left in Serbia. Finally, the Serbs organised a large-scale transport of French ammunition, mainly artillery ammunition, using the railway from Salonika to Niš, which was still under their control. Neutral Greece, which was close to Kaiser Wilhelm's heart due to his family connections there, had allowed the ammunition to pass without objection. This made it possible to overcome the already catastrophic bottle-



necks in the Serbian Army. The Serbs attacked the Imperial and Royal Armies, which had been reduced to just over 80,000 men, with a force of around 200,000. At first, the XVI Corps was forced to retreat over the Kolubara. Then the entire front collapsed. The war became increasingly ferocious. The Imperial and Royal troops suspected every Serb of being a franc-tireur. It was known that the third contingent brought to the front by the Serbs was no longer in uniform. Anyone wearing farmer's clothing and with opanci on his feet was already suspicious. For their part, the Serbs also did not hesitate to spread fear and to give free rein to feelings of hatred. The accusations of violations of international law lasted throughout the war and still continue to this day. Ultimately, there were countless cases of inhumanity on both sides.<sup>675</sup>

On 15 December, Belgrade was again deserted, and by the end, the Imperial and Royal troops were again standing where they had begun in August: on Austro-Hungarian soil.

The report of the total defeat of the Balkan forces came as a shock. There had been no indication that a catastrophe loomed instead of triumph over the Serbs. Potiorek had after all repeatedly sent reports of successes and claimed that operations were progressing according to plan. Then suddenly, on 5 December, he said that the armies had to be withdrawn and that without immediate reinforcements, there was a threat of utter defeat. On 10 December, the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Bolfras, demanded in the name of the Emperor that he send a detailed report on the reasons for this reversal.<sup>676</sup> On 13 December, Potiorek was instructed to issue a press communiqué with which the public was to be informed about the state of affairs that had come about. Since in the draft of the report the situation was euphemised to such an extent that the Emperor refused to authorise it, the Military Chancellery issued a communiqué of its own. Two days later, the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, travelled to Petrovaradin (Peterwaradein) in order to gather information on site and to investigate the causes of the defeat. On 19 December, Marterer returned and was asked by the Emperor who was to blame. Marterer replied tersely: General of Artillery Potiorek.<sup>677</sup>

Officers and soldiers had been tasked with fulfilling a gargantuan objective, and the burden of suffering they had to bear had been just as great. The losses among the Balkan forces since the beginning of the war had run to 273,000 men, of whom 30,000 had been killed, around 173,000 wounded and 70,000 taken prisoner. And this was from a total of around 450,000 men, who had been committed in stages.<sup>678</sup> This was a great deal more than the total losses among the Serbs, who counted 22,000 killed and 91,000 wounded. In relation to the population and resources overall, their loss was of course far greater than the one that Austria-Hungary had to bear. Serbia was finished. The Serbian Army had neither the means nor the strength to overcome the border rivers and mountains towards Bosnia or Sylvania and into the Banat. They suffered as a result of

terrible sanitary conditions. Cholera, dysentery and typhus spread. Even so, the Serbs had succeeded in asserting themselves for now, and this had by itself created the image of David and Goliath.

On the Austrian side, there was a change of commanders. Potiorek was dismissed and was sent into retirement. On 21 December, he received a letter from the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor that was rather cryptically worded. He then asked for clearer information. However, since he was most likely aware of his situation, he already telegraphed the Military Chancellery on the 22nd and requested to be relieved of his duties and sent into retirement. However, before he was formally dismissed, he was given the task of informing the Commander of the 5th Army, General Frank, that he would be relieved of his duties. Potiorek regarded his own dismissal as unreasonable, however, and noted in his diary: 'I shall therefore not be granted the opportunity of making good the misfortune myself, and it will remain associated with my name.' He requested that he be sent to Klagenfurt as his place of residence. Aside from the supreme command of the Balkans, Potiorek had also commanded the 6th Army. This position had now also become vacant. Thus, the posts of both army commanders and that of the commander of the Balkan theatre of war were now unfilled.

The question as to who should take over from Potiorek as Commander of the Balkan forces was however easier to answer than had been expected. On 21 December Archduke Eugen was called to the Emperor and immediately declared his willingness to take up the command. This time, health problems were not mentioned. Major General Alfred Krauß became chief of staff of the Balkan armed forces. Major General Stefan von Sarkotić became Commander, or military governor, in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia. In this way, Potiorek's power base was divided. This was not the only change. The Balkan High Command, which had become independent at the end of August, forfeited a part of its independence and became subordinate to the Army High Command, which now commanded both the Russian and the south-eastern theatres of war from Cieszyn. This was no doubt sensible and necessary in terms of uniformity of the command. However, the matter of distance remained a cause for concern, although this would only apply if the Imperial and Royal troops would ever again be in a position to undertake another offensive, or whether a Serb offensive loomed. For now, neither was the case. The Serbs had utterly exhausted themselves. However, for the Austro-Hungarian troops, a hierarchy of the theatres of war really did now apply for the first time. The Balkans had become a subsidiary, as should in reality have been the case right at the start of the war.

The overall balance of the first months of the war was shocking and, in retrospect, it could be said that the terrible losses of 1914 were irreparable. Officers and soldiers had suffered the shock of realisation in discovering that they were not simply entering a war against an enemy who would be beaten after just one battle. Not even the effect of the

weaponry alone had become the key element of the war, but aspects that no-one had considered before. There was the infernal noise generated by the guns and exploding shells. Thousands of people were shouting, the wounded were screaming, and injured and dying horses were bellowing. Soldiers who were brought to the front marched into this cacophony, aware that they could be hit at any moment and join the choir of sufferers.<sup>679</sup> At some point, the noise of war died down, and there was quiet, which played no less a part in testing the psychological resilience of every individual to its limits. Everyone was robbed of his individuality, and was to be merely part of what was described as a 'well-oiled war machine'. Now, this 'machine' had shuddered to a halt.

From the start of the war until the end of 1914, 189,000 officers and soldiers had fallen, over 490,000 had been wounded and almost 278,000 had been taken prisoner or were missing. This added up to around a million people in total. If only the irreplaceable losses of the dead, prisoners of war and the missing are taken, and the number of those wounded added who remained invalids, then the vast scale of the bloodletting is clearly evident. The number of officers among the overall number of those killed, wounded and sick came to 26,500.<sup>680</sup> A further severe blow was the fact that they were above all professional officers. Their loss became magnified to a certain extent, since this, more than any other factor, affected the capacity of the troops to be led. What was not reflected in the bare figures could be most clearly derived from the reactions of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry: War Minister Krobatin made direct threats that officers who shirked frontline duties on the home front and who did not immediately report again to their troop bodies after convalescing would be rigorously called to account. No delay in returning to the army in the field by recovered officers and aspiring officers would be 'tolerated under any circumstance, and the harshest measures shall be used against marauding and front-shy officers and aspiring officers'.<sup>681</sup> Since even this was clearly insufficient, the War Ministry threatened in December 1914 'that such elements who [...] must be forced to fulfil their duty, or who shirk their duty entirely, are unworthy of bearing the status of officer; they should therefore be stripped of their post without exception'. Similarly, military doctors who were not rigorous enough in producing doctor's certificates and evaluations were threatened that they were in breach of the obligations associated with their profession and rank, and that they were unworthy of their officer's status. 'According to the stipulations of military criminal law, they too are also subject to the most stringent measures.' Krobatin also ensured in his own area of responsibility that measures would be taken that reflected the gravity of the situation, and made 140 officers in the ministry 'eligible to enlist'. By the end of December, a third of the wounded or sick officers then returned to the army in the field. The training periods for reserve officers in particular were shortened, so that they were already given a command after approximately half a year's training. The fact that professional officers who were unsuitable for troop service, together with (reserve) officers who had received

far too little training would almost inevitably face problems in leading their troops and who were in no way able to meet the demands of such a varied, indeed sensitive army, was taken into account. After five months of war, not much was left of the 'old army'. The Hungarian-American historian István Deák has pointed to the fact that in 1915, the Habsburg Army had become 'a type of militia', and that as a result of the increasing use of reserve officers, the leadership of this army was also transferred from professional soldiers to 'civilians in uniform'.<sup>682</sup> Indeed, there is nothing more to add to that.



**8 The First Winter  
of the War**

8. An Austro-Hungarian sentry in a trench in the Carpathians at the beginning of 1915. Three offensives in the Carpathians were supposed to succeed in relieving the largest Austrian fortress, Przemyśl. Instead, the Imperial and Royal armies ultimately had more dead, wounded and sick than the 120,000 men in the fortress garrison.

Like many others, Pope Benedict XV had also hoped that it would prove possible to bring about a ceasefire before Christmas. However, when the Imperial and Royal Army High Command was approached about such a truce, Conrad advised against it. Objections were voiced such as the war could not take such a thing into consideration, the Russians would not stick to an armistice, etc. The Chief of the General Staff of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces had long since moved away from the idea of a limited war; for him, the total war had already begun in August 1914, and he had banished echoes of the 19th century from his mind, when truces had been agreed for special occasions and war was rarely fought in wintertime. (The same applied to his counterparts.) Conrad had to continue planning and preparing for the second year of the war. However, a moral defeat also had to be borne and a reversal in mood had to be overcome.

On 2 and 3 December, in all larger towns in the Dual Monarchy, joyous rallies were held due to the capture of Belgrade. Flags were hoisted, regimental bands played, there were torchlight processions and celebrations took place. The mood that had still been widespread in November was swept away; Ludwig Thallóczy, the head of department in the Imperial and Royal Finance Ministry responsible for Bosnia and Herzegovina, had written of this mood: 'The so-called intelligent public is extraordinarily concerned. Fear has taken a strong hold of the people. [...] Now the state of affairs is grey and people are concerned about the outcome of the war. In even the bravest souls the chord of worry is struck and only a few people remain calm. Unfortunately, a real man is sorely lacking here: old women, gossiping know-alls, troublemakers and dumb sheep surround the people.'<sup>683</sup> Then everyone had to believe that victory had been won against Serbia, and that with it the actual objective of the war, namely to avenge Sarajevo and punish Serbia, had been achieved.<sup>684</sup> Yet another turnaround had come and in the first days of January an alleged remark by Emperor Franz Joseph was circulated, according to which the Emperor no longer dared to go outside for shame and sorrow.<sup>685</sup> The absence of Franz Joseph of course had other reasons. The defeat in the Balkans was felt to be far more lasting than anything that had happened so far in the north-eastern theatre of war.

The mood changed and one observer from a neutral state, namely the ambassador of the USA in Vienna, Frederic C. Penfield, concluded from this: 'All classes of the population seem deeply war-weary and wish the war would end as soon as possible, as long as the peace agreement can be reconciled with national honour.'<sup>686</sup> The American diplomat did not have a complete insight into events, yet he would have doubtlessly

been well-informed. He claimed to have noticed in Vienna that war-weariness was regarded as an insult to His Majesty, whilst he encountered the opinion in Bohemia that the Habsburg 'horse' allowed itself to be put before the German 'cart'. Viennese street scenes were characterised by the wounded and the surroundings of the city by the refugees from Poland, Galicia and Bukovina. Mr Penfield stated that there were hundreds of thousands. The most prominent refugee, however, was not from the Balkans but instead the Khedive of Egypt, His Highness Ali Pasha. The American relayed Viennese gossip, according to which the Imperial and Royal troops in Galicia had not been able to resist far superior forces, and in Serbia it was apparent that the troops had been unprepared and far too confident. For this reason, peace was desired.

### On the War's Objectives

As could be expected, the turn of the year 1914/15 offered the opportunity to take stock. It was generally a sober and sobering result. The occasion, however, was also suited to allowing the question to emerge much more strongly, in fact in some cases for the first time, as to which objectives the Habsburg Monarchy was pursuing in this war.<sup>687</sup> In the final days of 1914, the question had been posed as to which aims the war had actually been started with. Every one of those who then became a belligerent party had to submit to the question and attempt to formulate initial answers. But whatever was said or thought, it bore no relation to reality. No-one was in a position to look ahead and glimpse the end of the war, and it was at best estimations and hopes that formed the basis of the first concrete statements of war objectives. Parrying and obstruction were the dominant vocabulary.

Austria-Hungary had been quick to make assurances even before its declaration of war against Serbia to the effect that it did not aspire to any territorial conquests. In this way, it was above all the Russians who were to be reassured, whilst at the same time it was also to be signalled to Italy that there would be no changes in the Balkans that Italy could then make the subject of demands for compensation with reference to the Triple Alliance treaty. Nonetheless, this naturally did nothing to prevent the floodgates of imagination remaining open and everyone giving thought to what would happen if Serbia were actually defeated and Russia could perhaps be induced to back down or give up. It would have sufficed in itself if Serbia could really be persuaded to stop playing the role of a southern Slav 'Piedmont'. How it could be persuaded to do this, however, was questionable. One of the possibilities mentioned was ultimately also the allocation of territory to Serbia's neighbours, always on the assumption that they even wanted a piece of Serbia. But the most important consideration for Austria-Hungary was that the notorious troublemaker could no longer exert an influence on the southern



Slavs in its own empire. The fact that Serbian territory was later to be annexed or Serbia made dependent on Austria-Hungary no longer seemed to be of any importance, at least following the first defeats and entirely so after the failure in the Balkans.

The formulation of war objectives against Russia was also to be similarly cautious: it should stop supporting the Pan-Slavists and massively influencing the Ruthenians, among others. Territorial desires were not expressed. But everything was still very vague and, above all, not in the least foreseeable.

What Austria-Hungary speculated about and the war objectives it formulated should be contrasted with what the other parties were thinking in regard to the Habsburg Monarchy. And they by no means limited themselves to mentally trimming a piece off here or there and shifting borders in accordance with military considerations. This discussion was instead linked to longer-term objectives that aimed at the dissolution of the Monarchy. This viewpoint was further fuelled by the fact that people suddenly spoke up, some of whom had appeared to be loyal subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy until summer 1914 and now made people sit up and take notice with their radical words. Most of them had fled Austria in summer and autumn 1914 and sought refuge with the powers that were now Austria-Hungary's enemies or with neutral states, where their ideas were suddenly regarded as significant.

A handful of Czech emigrants submitted on 4 August 1914 to the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov the proposal that Tsar Nicholas II be offered the Crown of Saint Wenceslas. In his first talks with the Entente powers on war objectives, Sazonov then weaved in not only the possibility of acquiring the whole of Poland but also pondered on what he called the 'liberation' of Bohemia.<sup>688</sup> Asked directly by the ambassadors of France and Great Britain, the Russian Foreign Minister responded on 14 September that it was a Russian war objective to see Austria recast as a tripartite monarchy, consisting of the Kingdom of Austria, though comprising only the hereditary lands, the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Kingdom of Hungary. Galicia, Silesia and Posen should be united with Russian Poland. Serbia should receive Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia and northern Albania. And Hungary would have to reach an agreement with Romania regarding Transylvania. In November 1914, the Tsar stated the Russian position more precisely by – whilst not mentioning it directly – taking the forced dissolution of Austria-Hungary for granted, since the centrifugal forces would rule out its continued existence.<sup>689</sup> No further action would be necessary.

Thus, for the Russians it was furthermore the case that they emphasised in their propaganda the liberation of the Slavs from foreign rule. But did they even want to be 'liberated'? Only a few Czechs and even fewer Croats aspired to national independence beyond the Habsburg Monarchy. Nevertheless, from 1914 the question of the complete dissolution of Austria-Hungary no longer disappeared from the deliberations of the Entente. The Russian ambassador in Paris and former foreign min-

ister, Alexander Izvolsky, the man who had concocted the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Baron Aehrenthal, but since resented Austria-Hungary, wanted the French Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé to fix the most ambitious war aims possible. He assumed that France still held hidden sympathies for the Danube Monarchy, to which he retorted 'that the Habsburg Monarchy must come to an end, that it was a complete anachronism and that its nations, with the exception of Poland, would have to be educated to lead an independent political life'. In the south, a Serbo-Croat state with Istria and Dalmatia was to form a counterbalance to Italy, Hungary and Romania.<sup>690</sup> In this point, he did not obtain the complete approval of the French but at least that of a handful of Croat emigrants around Frano Supilo. The Russian ambassador in London, Alexei Benckendorff, formulated similar thoughts and was supported therein, at least regarding the future of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, by Professor Tomáš G. Masaryk, who had initially immigrated to the neutral Netherlands. Masaryk could be certain not only of Russian interest, however, but also the attention of his French and, above all, his English friends. This served not least to provide information (and disinformation) beyond the discussion of war aims. What Masaryk told the university lecturer and writer Robert Seton-Watson in October 1914 about conditions in his homeland and, above all, his hometown of Prague, turned very quickly into a discussion of war objectives, since Masaryk ultimately already sketched out a Czecho-Slovakian state with Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakia. He furthermore noted that a few border corrections in favour of this state would naturally be necessary in the regions of České Budějovice (Budweis), Znojmo (Znaim) and Gmünd. He moreover described conditions in Prague and thereby evidently forgot that some of what he said was very far-fetched. He reduced the situation to such an extent that he spoke of a Czech population on one side and the Germans, who were predominantly Jews, on the other. The hatred of the Czechs was allegedly directed primarily against the Jews and a pogrom could be expected shortly; but that would only be the beginning.<sup>691</sup> What Seton-Watson and the foreign affairs editor of *The Times*, Henry Wickham-Steed, above all had confirmed for them by Masaryk, however, was the view that any Czecho-Slovakian independence would be predicated on a German defeat. This was certainly a bold claim for the time being, in spite of the failure of the German offensive in France, and even in the case of Austria-Hungary the discussion of ambitious war aims and the disintegration of the Empire seemed not only untimely but downright preposterous. One thing, however, had become evident: wherever Austria had enjoyed sympathy before the war, for example in England, in France or in the USA, this had vanished. Wherever the Dual Monarchy had barely been respected but not enjoyed any sympathy, in Russia or Serbia, a will to annihilate Austria-Hungary was now present. Of the two moods, the first was essentially the more alarming because here the ground was being laid on which the radical opponents of the Monarchy could conduct their propaganda for the oblit-

eration of the Empire. The nature of the mood in neutral countries such as the USA is illuminated by the experience of the famous violinist Fritz Kreisler, who was accused of engaging in propaganda when he played the Austrian national anthem at the end of a concert, whilst at the same time the intoning of *La Marseillaise* in the USA triggered storms of enthusiasm on all sides.<sup>692</sup>

The kind of impressions that could be gained precisely in the USA could certainly have served to allow for a better and more realistic assessment of the international reputation of Austria-Hungary, yet the reports of the Austrian ambassador, Constantin von Dumba, from Washington merely led the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) in Vienna to attack the USA because of their deliveries of ammunition to the Entente and their support for Great Britain. There was no mention of the fact that the USA looked after the interests of the Dual Monarchy in a series of states with which Austria-Hungary no longer had diplomatic relations, or that it had been neglected to actually carry out a propaganda mission such as that of Redlich and Apponyi. Instead, Baron Dumba explored the possibility of crippling the American armaments industry by means of strikes, and involved himself in all kinds of intrigue. Evidently, neither Count Berchtold nor his emissary in the American capital had any better ideas.<sup>693</sup>

Several months of war, the collapse of euphoria and ambitious hopes led, however, to more comprehensive and, above all, realistic thought being given to the war aims of the Danube Monarchy. First of all, the relationship with Germany was addressed and pre-war deliberations were drawn on.<sup>694</sup> The Chairman of the German National League, Gustav Groß for example, had the following objectives in mind in August 1914: the alliance with the German Empire should be anchored in the constitution, German should be made the official language, an economic league should be created and a standardisation of customs duties should be aspired to. Perhaps Groß would also not have objected to ceding a small part of Bohemia to Saxony, as was being considered in Dresden,<sup>695</sup> since in this way non-German territories could be disposed of. However, speculations of this kind shunned the glare of publicity. The debate had doubtlessly been opened, however, and it led to ambitious discussions of war aims but also to all those thoughts that revolved around a reorganisation of Central Europe. Anyone who thought highly of himself aspired to discuss his ideas and considerations in small or large circles, whether it was the member of the Upper House of the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly), Josef Baernreither, politicians or senior civil servants, who in some cases sought to resume their discussions of the murdered heir to the throne, the so-called "archival circle", which – with a particularly prominent cast – gathered in the rooms of the Austrian State Archives (*Haus- und Hofarchiv*) behind the Foreign Ministry, the group surrounding the former Minister of Education Gustav Marcher, and many others.

Initiatives to this effect came not only from Austria, however. There were also people in Germany who eagerly planned for the period after final victory. Industry urged for a customs union with Austria-Hungary. The Habsburg Monarchy should become a kind of 'strategic ramp for control over the Balkans and the Orient'.<sup>696</sup> Without engaging in such speculations, the Austrian industrialists already blocked them in advance: the abolition of customs barriers with Germany would have disastrous consequences for Austro-Hungarian industry. This had the effect of pouring a lot of cold water on the matter. The multinational structure of the Habsburg Monarchy proved to be practically insolvable. Since irritations very quickly manifested themselves and above all Hungary in the person of its Prime Minister Istvan Tisza signalled a strict rejection of Austrian and German plans on Central Europe, the Prime Minister of the Austrian half of the Empire, Stürgkh, did not hesitate either to suppress the debate, if necessary by using censorship. But there were certainly other issues that could be debated in an animated fashion.

First, there were deliberations on the Polish question. The German side let it be known at the beginning of August 1914 that there were already enough Polish citizens in the German Empire and that they did not want the national character of the Empire diluted by the annexation of additional Polish territories.<sup>697</sup> In Austria, the Poles of Galicia demonstrated a clear interest in the re-establishment of a Polish state, which they imagined would have strong constitutional ties to Austria-Hungary. Essentially, it was these ideas – which were more than fuzzy – that triggered, more than the incipient discussions of Central Europe, a more comprehensive debate on war aims and potential territorial changes. What would happen – and this was more than hypothetical following the severe defeats of autumn 1914 – in the event that the Central Powers were to make up for the setbacks and conquer Russian Poland? Would that which the Polish National Committee of Galicia had announced so solemnly at the beginning of the war then apply overall? 'We stand with you, Majesty, and that is where we want to remain.'<sup>698</sup> In Vienna, however, or more accurately in Budapest, there was little willingness to seek a Greater Polish solution under Austrian auspices. Prime Minister Tisza prevented as early as August 1914 the issuing of an already completed imperial proclamation, in which the formation of a Kingdom of Poland consisting of Galicia and Russian Poland was to be announced.<sup>699</sup> As this would have amounted to trialism, a clear 'no' came from Hungary. The Hungarian government did not leave it at that, however, but instead floated the idea in the context of the regular sessions of the Council of Ministers of whether, in the event that Austria were to annex parts of Russian Poland, Hungary could take advantage of this by means of Budapest demanding the incorporation of Bosnia, Herzegovina and perhaps also Dalmatia into the Hungarian half of the Empire. Tisza was in any case against the looming Austro-Polish solution. Other ministers in his cabinet opposed this solely because desires for Rus-

sian territorial concessions were bound to make a peace settlement more difficult. The Hungarian Minister of Education Béla von Jankovich went even further and stated that they should not only forego taking something away from Russia but indeed *offer* something, namely the Ruthenian territories of East Galicia. At least they would then be rid of this 'bunch'.<sup>700</sup> For the time being, Hungary was satisfied that the issuing of the (first) Polish Proclamation was avoided. It was not only the people in the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen who could breathe a sigh of relief, however; Foreign Minister Berchtold was for the time being rid of one concern, since he felt anything but comfortable about 'conjuring up the ghosts of independence'.<sup>701</sup> The last word had by no means been spoken, however, since other considerations were in circulation like ghosts wandering through a room. The most concrete of them had been activated at the end of August 1914 by Baron Leopold von Andrian-Werburg with his position paper on 'The Question of Austrian Territorial Acquisition in the North-east in the Event of a Successful War of the Central Powers against Russia'.<sup>702</sup> It was the same Leopold von Andrian who had made a name for himself as a poet and had provided a considerably more important poet, namely Arthur Schnitzler, with the material for his *Leutnant Gustl* (Lieutenant Gustl) due to his duelling affair with a baker. With his position paper, which would be followed by others, Leopold von Andrian consciously drew parallels to the famous work of his ancestor Viktor von Andrian-Werburg, *Österreich und dessen Zukunft* (Austria and its Future), written in 1842/47.

Andrian placed above all other considerations the carving out of a 'basic principle of the Habsburg Monarchy' as the actual war aim. This was described as follows: the mission and life purpose of the Monarchy is, 'on the one hand to give the small nations, whose geographical location and numerical weakness make it impossible, the opportunity to lead an independent state existence, the advantages of a free national development, combined with the security, the power and the possibilities of economic prosperity, which affiliation with one of the largest empires in Europe guarantee'. Whilst preserving every national character, it would be the task of the Germans in the Dual Monarchy to impart to the other peoples their higher culture as well as to 'arouse and strengthen in them traditions of communal work, to which the Magyars are particularly called, thanks to their special predisposition and their powerful, thousand-year tradition'. After this, not easily intelligible introduction, Andrian went a step further and considered how Austria should behave, especially as a Catholic power. It was precisely the potential victory over France that would force Austria into this role, and the non-German peoples would expect that the Monarchy, with all tolerance internally, would play the role of the dominant Catholic power to the outside world.

Yet Andrian went even further: after the war, Austria would be among the group of Great Powers of the first order, in which, aside from the Habsburg Monarchy, there could only be Germany, Great Britain and Russia. In order to achieve this, the Dual

Monarchy would have to experience territorial gains and, with this, Andrian devoted himself at length to the Polish question. In Poland, nothing was feared more than another partition. Russian Poland would rather remain with Russia than accept another division. A solution would, therefore, be to unite Russian 'Congress Poland' and Austrian Galicia together in a single state and, similar to Hungary, to bind them in a real union to the House of Habsburg. Belonging to a Catholic empire would constitute an attraction above all for the predominantly Catholic Poles. In the event of a victory over Russia, it would be easiest to induce this state to cede its Polish territories and also to favour this over the payment of war reparations. Germany could not be allowed to acquire Poland either, as this was certain to have a lasting influence on the balance of power between Austria-Hungary and Germany, provided that an equivalent territory could not be found for Austria. Such a territory did not exist, however. In the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* from 26 August, the establishment of a Polish-Lithuanian-Curonian buffer state had been recommended, though Andrian saw no point in this, 'since such a strange construct with five chauvinistic nationalities would contain within itself the germ of severe internal conflicts, future foreign entanglements and ultimate decline'. Even an independent Ukraine appeared to him undesirable and likewise the incorporation of Ukraine into the Dual Monarchy. Perhaps an incorporation of part of Ruthenia would be imaginable, namely the Podolia Governorate and the Volhynia Governorate. The Chełm Governorate, however, should be incorporated at any rate.

Thus, the position paper of the poet-diplomat covered rather a lot. Following the description of the maximum aims, Andrian qualified it by writing that it would be problematic to have such a large Polish empire in the framework of the Danube Monarchy, just as it occurred to him that it would be unrealistic to leave the German Empire empty-handed. So Poland would have to be partitioned after all. Andrian repeatedly discussed the domestic affairs of the Monarchy, namely that in the event of a growth of the Slav population, the non-Slav and non-Hungarian parts of the population, and above all the Germans, would have to be secured a special status, in order that they did not orientate themselves towards the German Empire in a form of 'disenchantment' with the Habsburg Empire.

This had been written when the Austro-Hungarian armies had just set off to the north. It had been written in order to produce something that could also be an objective. Hypothetical considerations of this sort can now be dismissed as crazy fantasising, but they were in fact a lot more, namely a departure from mere revenge for Sarajevo as well as a renunciation of the mood that dominated before the war, according to which the Dual Monarchy was solely fighting a battle for its existence and that change could only gain ground in the Balkans or Italy, in order to provide relief for the Danube Monarchy. Now it was suddenly a question of Poland.

Several months later, at the end of the year, stock could be taken of this concept. Count Forgách, the closest advisor of Foreign Minister Count Berchtold, engaged in such deliberations and summarised his conclusions in the first days of January 1915.<sup>703</sup> Forgách did it in order to take stock himself of the development and the interrelationships, and to discuss these with Berchtold. Since Berchtold was replaced in January 1915, however, the position paper was shelved.

The defeat of the Imperial and Royal troops in the Balkans, began Forgách, had consequences for the position of the Dual Monarchy in the region that could not be put right again. It could be that a later success might at least temporarily improve the situation somewhat, but overall it would never be the same again. Austria-Hungary may have stood its ground against Russia, but the situation there was not very bright. 'At least the situation in the northern theatre of war is not entirely unfavourable, since the conquest of Warsaw by the Germans can be hoped for, just as we are, we assume, in a position to prevent a larger incursion by the Russians towards Hungary. By contrast, it is increasingly doubtful that it will be possible for us to relieve Przemyśl, which is supplied with food until mid-February. It is not necessary to elaborate on what the fall of this fortress would mean in terms of morale or the escape of six encircled Russian divisions in military terms.' Sweeping victories in the north could be ruled out. Likewise, everything pointed to the fact that it would not be possible, and was not even intended, to go on the offensive again in the Balkans. Italy and Romania were simply waiting to strike, however. Both of them had made preparations in such a way that their armies 'will have reached their full deployment by the beginning of spring. Both states hope that by then the Monarchy will be so weakened by the long war that both these neighbours can pounce on her without any conceivable risk and will be able to satisfy their national and territorial aspirations at the expense of Austria-Hungary.' Italy sought to conceal its felony, which was unparalleled in history, by means of a cynical interpretation of the Triple Alliance treaty. Romania, however, had revealed its unvarnished aspirations, which extended as far as the Tisza (Theiß). Bulgaria, on the other hand, had lost any desire to take action as a result of the defeat of the Imperial and Royal troops in December 1914, though it had been altogether highly questionable whether Bulgaria would ever have opposed the Entente, as long as Russia was not decisively defeated. 'The latter, however, since Germany sent strong forces far too late to the east, is no longer to be expected.' Then Forgách expressed what Conrad had not, though which should have been expressed long ago: 'In these so critical circumstances, with the great dangers of a continuation of the war and the very low probability of a military improvement of the situation, the question must be most seriously considered by all those in positions of responsibility as to whether a peace settlement should not be sought by all means possible. Unfortunately, there is no doubt that a peace suggested by us in the current situation could only be unfavourable. The party that first expresses

a desire to make peace will be regarded by its opponents as defeated and their demands will increase accordingly.'

Forgách, however, saw the only chance of getting off more or less lightly in the conclusion of an immediate peace. Italy should be invited to function as mediator, the same Italy to which Trentino (Trento) would have to be ceded. Towards Serbia, a status quo would be striven for, likewise in the case of Russia. Following the capitulation of Przemyśl, East Galicia would perhaps also have to be relinquished. For the purpose of initiating talks, an immediate understanding with the German Empire would be necessary, in order 'to convince the leading German elements that the peace settlement is absolutely necessary for both of us and its postponement involves far more dangers than benefits'. Germany's position in the war was also no longer bright, according to Forgách. 'With the high-strung expectations in Germany – not within the now already quite anxious government but instead among the population – it will, however, be difficult to conclude a peace that corresponds so little to the sacrifices that have been made. For our part, firm words will be necessary with regard to the catastrophic consequences of possible further resistance. In the event of German reproaches, we will not be able to suppress the fact that the unfortunate outcome is both politically and military Germany's fault alone.'

This was a rather bold formulation and can only be understood in the sense that Forgách wanted to lay the entire responsibility for the unleashing of the World War at the door of the German Empire. Austria had only wanted to wage war against Serbia. Germany, however, had sought to pull Great Britain into the war. The entry of Great Britain, in turn, had resulted in Italy's neutrality, etc. Finally, Forgách noted: 'The absence of military successes is once more Germany's fault alone. Militarily, the Monarchy has only performed poorly so far in one respect, in Serbia. But even here it was only the most energetic pressure from Germany that forced us, in complete political and military misapprehension of the importance of the Balkan theatre of war, to throw everything to the north against our better judgement. [...] Thus, German advice is also partially to thank for the shameful Serbian fiasco. [...] The greatest military failure in this global struggle is, of course, Germany's war in France. It was generally expected that France would be wrestled down in 2 or 3 months by its superior neighbour. In fact, the Germans have actually only overrun Belgium and, with the help of our mortar batteries, blown up the Belgian and northern French fortresses, which were taken by surprise and not yet completed.' This, argued Forgách, simply had to be said, in order 'to justify the claim that Germany must also be content to end the war with a lenient peace and undefeated. [...] If a peace were concluded now, the balance of power – we have not been a world power so far – could still be maintained. Economic recovery would also occur after a few years. The continuation of the war with a minimal probability of military successes could, by contrast, have catastrophic results.



The extent of potential territorial cessions can hardly be foreseen, and, in view of the barbaric modern way of waging war, great swathes of the Monarchy would be devastated by our enemies during their advance as far as Vienna and Budapest and exposed to great misery and famine. [...] It is also an open question on which basis the rest of the Monarchy could be reorganised if the Russians were to penetrate to Moravia and Bohemia and be welcomed with open arms by the Czechs. Similar consequences in the case of the advance of the Romanians against Budapest and the Serbs against Sarajevo and Zagreb would have less significance, since in the event of a complete defeat the regions inhabited by southern Slavs and Romanians would in any case be lost.' Forgách shared his thoughts with only a few people, above all the Hungarian Prime Minister, from whom he promptly encountered dissent and rejection. Ultimately, the position paper was not required, since following Berchtold's departure there was no longer an addressee; it was retained and kept on file.

Forgách saw the foreign policy and political-strategic components with considerable clarity, but he thought exclusively in diplomatic terms and those of cabinets at war, and as correct as his demand for an immediate peace was, his depiction of the possibilities of a peace of self-denial or a negotiated peace on the basis of the status quo was not realistic. He was chasing shadows, just as much as Conrad von Hötzendorf, who regarded the status quo in December 1914 as the 'most acceptable terms'.<sup>704</sup>

The new aspect of this war, however, was that it was not only waged as a people's war – other, earlier wars had been waged in such a way – or that it was a 'world war'. Examples of this also already existed. The exceptional thing about it was its almost relentless progression towards totality, the enormous losses and the militarisation of all home fronts, so that the possibilities of a partial peace, of a truce and parallel negotiations began to be precluded. The progression of a war to totality – one could have read this in Clausewitz's works – not only rules out the waging of a limited war but also the conclusion of a peace that is not characterised by its totality.

In spite of the circumstance that Forgách did not really understand the nature of the war and that he proceeded from assumptions that were simply not the case, his exposé sets itself apart from those position papers that had, in part, emerged in December 1914 and portrayed in a minimalistic and maximalistic style the objectives of the Dual Monarchy in wartime and after the conclusion of peace.<sup>705</sup> The minimum aims, as could be read in another position paper from Baron Andrian that was widely circulated by the Foreign Ministry, would be territorial cessions from Serbia, the handing over of Serbian heavy weapons and war reparations of half a million kronen. Andrian was modest in his treatment of Russia. Italy should be indemnified in Albania. The maximum aims, which would have been pursued only after a German victory in the west, would have resulted in an even larger territorial expansion of the Dual Monarchy in the Balkans and in Russian Poland, substantial war reparations, and perhaps even colonies from the British

bankruptcy assets. This was a fantasy image, against which, however, evidently no-one would have raised any objections or emphatically pointed out the realities.

In Germany, however, the debate on war aims made even bigger waves. There the discourse on Poland had also flared up completely, and after the Russians had been forced back in the battles and engagements from Łódź to Gorlice there also developed a dispute with Austria regarding who should receive which part of the Polish cake. The German Empire claimed above all the industrial region bordering Silesia. That was all it claimed, however. This accorded with the German debate on war aims, during which the annexation of a new Polish kingdom by the German Empire had admittedly been discussed. The majority of the position papers on German war aims, however, had argued that Poland be attached to the Danube Monarchy.<sup>706</sup> What was this compared to what German foreign politicians and, above all, the industrialists, or even German intellectuals wrote about in terms of desires, hopes and, ultimately, demands? The annexation of Belgium by the German Empire seemed to be taken completely for granted, whilst the reduction in the size of France and the acquisition of British colonies and dominions should merely be the logical consequence of what was still regarded as a certain German victory in the west.

A first compromise was reached with Austria-Hungary on 10 January 1915 regarding the Polish question. In the Treaty of Poznań (Posen) a partition of the Polish territories conquered up to that point was agreed, according to which the German Empire, however, received the more valuable parts with more industry. With this, an unmistakable annexation signal had been set for the war and its outcome. Further measures could not be applied, since Russia's power was by no means broken. Yet a start had been made and the justification for it did not even sound so absurd: the loss of human life of any given belligerent had already reached the hundreds of thousands. The annexation of conquered territories was therefore regarded as a self-evident means of motivation and compensation for the enormous sacrifices.

The posing of questions regarding war aims could also be a distraction, however, since the much-cited public interest was no longer focussed on immediate wartime events, military victories or failures but instead on ephemeral questions in which the imagination knew no limits. In this way, the war continued to be seen as a manageable military and foreign policy problem that fuelled dreams.

In August 1914, Andrian had devoted at least one part of his reflections to the effects of territorial acquisitions on the internal structure of the Habsburg Monarchy. Yet this factor increasingly dropped away and even Forgách made practically no reference at all to the domestic aspects. Perhaps it was a type of occupational disease that those responsible for foreign policy did not have a good eye for the internal situation. The only problem, which was then handled in a sweeping way, was the question of the decline or otherwise of the Monarchy. Forgách, the enemy of Serbia, referred to the necessity

of an immediate peace in order to counter the decline of the Monarchy. Yet his paper had been restricted to a small circle. Those who engaged with Andrian's position paper believed, however, that they could only get closer to the aim of maintaining the Monarchy by continuing the war.

It was beyond doubt that this view dominated. In this way, the war had actually turned into the war it had been regarded as in the long term: as a substitute for politics and, to some extent, the inversion of the famous axiom from Clausewitz. Politics were to be the logical continuation of war. Within the foreign policy of the Danube Monarchy and above all in its domestic policy, the hoped-for military successes were supposed to be the starting-point for a reorganisation of the Empire and the solution of the nationalities question. In the process, the politicians' understanding for the conduct of war went entirely astray, just as – conversely – the military leadership no longer understood the possibilities of politics, or the situation and requirements of the home front. There, it was not the debate over a particular war aim and the respective situation on the different fronts that dominated people's thoughts, but rather the necessity of coping with daily life. Only the great events and symbolical occurrences could evoke widespread attention.

### Death in the Carpathians

The word 'desolate' would perhaps be too strong, but 'remote' or 'unattractive' would certainly be adequate descriptions for the town of Medzilaborce in north-eastern Slovakia. For centuries, glass had been produced here, the basic raw material for the Jablonec (Gablonz) glass factories. That is now over. Yet the traces of two world wars have also been lastingly obliterated. Five cemeteries date back to the time of the First World War. They are abandoned and unrecognisable; all inscription-bearing plaques made of metal have been stolen. And the railway line through the Laborc Valley ends for part of the year on the now oversized train station. Only during the summer months does a train pass over the mountain route of the Beskids and traverse the tunnel to Poland. It was very different in 1914 and 1915. Mezőlaborcz, as the town located in northern Hungary was known back then, became the most important railway station for the arrival of people and war material in order to establish a front in south-western Galicia that was able to withstand resistance, and was being used entirely for this purpose in January 1915, when the Imperial and Royal Army Supreme Command conceived of the plan to press forward from the Carpathians to Przemyśl and relieve the fortress trapped by the Russians. It was to be one of the most costly and dubious undertakings of the First World War.

100 kilometres in front of the Austrian lines was Przemyśl, which was surrounded by the Russians and in which around 130,000 soldiers under the command of Major

General Hermann Kusmanek fought, starved and increasingly froze. Approximately 30,000 residents of Przemyśl shared the fate of the garrison. After the fortress had been relieved in October 1914, high spirits initially abounded. At the time, the circumvallation of General Brusilov's 8th Army had been broken. Now the Russian 11th Army under General Selivanov had surrounded the fortress compound.

Whoever was present at the strangulation for a second time was acquainted with a certain ritual: on 3 November the order was issued to write farewell letters, since the next day the last postal delivery was despatched. Then the instruction came to besiege the telegraph operator, since messages from the Imperial and Royal north-eastern front only arrived via him. And on 6 November Przemyśl was once again surrounded by the Russians. Since the withdrawal of the Austro-Hungarian troops continued, however, the fortress was soon located far to the rear of the Russian front. Therefore, the Russians could approach the siege very differently to the first time around, namely slower and more systematically. They showed no signs of haste, and prisoners taken by the Austrians said that the intention was to starve out the fortress. But, for the time being, no-one could take such an intention seriously. Or could they? The Army High Command was not all that confident and the caustic comment of one staff officer did not seem so far-fetched: '[...] the Austrians have not changed since Marengo [in 1800]. Victory, a celebratory mood, and then they get a beating and they have the blues'.<sup>707</sup>

Like in October, however, Kusmanek did everything to demonstrate the threat posed by the fortress. If it made any sense at all to allow Przemyśl to be surrounded with such a large garrison, then only if as many Russians as possible were tied down by the fortress and could not be used elsewhere.

At the beginning of December, the fortress noted that meat was becoming scarce. Rations were reduced and the first horses were slaughtered. As yet, there was no cause for concern. On the contrary: after the advance of the Szurmay Group to Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez) and the attack of the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army against the Russians in mid-December, it now seemed only a matter of days before Przemyśl would be relieved for a second time. Yet the Austro-Hungarian troops were stuck in the Carpathians, and the approximately 50 kilometres that separated the besieged from the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army were ultimately still too much to be overcome. In the meantime, the winter had arrived with a vengeance. The hope of relief receded after a breakout attempt on 18 December also failed. The fortress remained surrounded. One week later there stood in front of the VI Defence District, near the main base of the defensive belt at Salis-Soglio, a plaque made by the Russians on which was clumsily written: '[We] wholeheartedly wish you, valiant defenders of the fortress, a calm, merry Christmas. Peace, peace on Earth and good will to all people. May God fulfil all your desires – this is the sincere wish of the officers and the personnel of Battery No. 5 of the X Artillery Brigade.' The Imperial and Royal soldiers deposited cigarettes and schnapps in no-man's

land. The besiegers returned the gesture with fresh bread and meat. But the Christmas peace endured only for a very short time.

Towards the end of the year a large-scale horse slaughtering offensive began. Around 10,000 animals were sent to the slaughterhouses. In this way, the supply of meat could be maintained and larger amounts of animal feed could be used for the provisioning of the soldiers. Horses were still needed, however, in order to transport ammunition, supplies, the sick and the wounded within the expansive fortress area. If one of the ill-treated creatures perished, the corpse was skinned. Nothing should remain unused.

For the Chief of the General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, the matter could not be messier. He had vehemently spoken out against a further expansion of the San fortress and had regarded the only value of this defensive belt fortress as being the location for the start of a covered deployment of troops. Now he was forced to keep Przemyśl garrisoned because it could now no longer be evacuated in time, immense amounts of stocks would have been lost in its destruction and the political and psychological effect of its relinquishment was feared. Now an entire army was surrounded in the citadel on the San River, and if they were not simply to be left to their fate, the attempt had to be made to relieve the fortress. The next operations could not be selected based on where the best chances of success were, but had instead to be directed towards Przemyśl and indeed, as was soon stated, whatever the cost.

In December the Russians had been forced to withdraw their armies more than 100 kilometres, but the front near Gorlice then came to a standstill. The Commander of the Russian South-West Front, General Nikolai I. Ivanov, transferred the main force of his armies south to the Carpathian region, where on 21 December 1914 a new Russian offensive began, which forced the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army (Boroević) into the mountains and, in some places, even across the mountain ridge itself. It could be read in the British and French newspapers that it was only a matter of weeks before the Austro-Hungarian front would collapse. The Russians would be in Budapest by June at the latest.<sup>708</sup> This setback after weeks of successful alliance fighting on the part of the Central Powers resulted in an increase in criticism of the ally. Since the war began, it had been evident that the Russians had deployed the larger part of their troops in the southern sector against the Imperial and Royal Army. Even if there had been errors in leadership, the fact of the considerable numerical superiority of the Russians could not be denied. Since Russian Poland began 10 kilometres north of Kraków and the Russians surrounded Galicia in a wide encirclement, they had far more operational options than the Imperial and Royal armies. In December, the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army had been pulled a long way to the north and now covered the Province of Silesia. But where were the German defensive and offensive components? A German 9th Army had been rebuilt and inserted to the north of the Austro-Hungarian front, but the collaboration had been cause for heated quarrels and it ultimately occupied

both the Emperor and the Kaiser. Away from the optimally functioning brotherhood in arms that was exhibited outwardly, the Army High Command and the commanders of the Imperial and Royal armies and corps heard German criticism on a mass scale, a great deal of which was characterised by a lack of objectivity. At the end of December, for example, an evaluation of the German Eastern Front High Command submitted to the Army Command stated: 'The Austro-Hungarian Army Command sways back and forth in its decisions and eschews fighting. [...] Repeated demands to attack energetically had so far no resounding success. The Austro-Hungarian troops, whose fabric has been loosened, have lost the confidence of the leadership. The troops only seem to accomplish something when most closely following German troops or under German command.'<sup>709</sup> And precisely, that was the whole point.

On 19 December, Falkenhayn and Conrad had met at the railway station in Opole (Oppeln).<sup>710</sup> It should be added here that it was one of the idiosyncrasies of the joint waging of war on the part of the Central Powers that telephone conversations practically never took place between Cieszyn (Teschen), the headquarters of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, and Poznań, the headquarters of the German High Command East, or later Pszczyna (Pleß), which was 80 kilometres away and where the German Supreme Army Command had established itself. Conrad and Falkenhayn never spoke to each other on the telephone. They only met for face-to-face talks. In Opole, the Chief of the German General Staff confided to Conrad that he intended to begin a new offensive in France in February 1915. Until then, the German Army Reserve should be set up. In this way, Falkenhayn rejected Conrad's concept of aiming a crushing blow to Russia, which was supposed to decide the outcome of the war. The Chief of the German General Staff wanted instead to build a 'Great Wall of China' on the Vistula River.<sup>711</sup> This constituted a return to Moltke's planning, and the opposing positions of the different operational ideas appeared to be irreconcilable. The Chief of the German General Staff wanted first of all to vanquish the most dangerous and powerful opponent, namely France. And Conrad wanted to decisively weaken and defeat an opponent that he regarded as still dangerous but, in terms of its power, already considerably diminished: Russia. Falkenhayn and Conrad did not reach a compromise in Opole. Conrad now resorted to cajoling Falkenhayn and engaged the help of others. He first of all won over Berchtold to intercede in Berlin for German troop increases in the east. Conrad did not even shy away from threatening the withdrawal of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, which was deployed opposite the Province of Silesia, in order to relocate it to the Carpathians, if German troops were not sent precisely there. He furthermore raised generally the problem of the mixing of German and Austro-Hungarian troops, since this had in the meantime become the popular subject of a running battle. Last but not least, Conrad argued vis-à-vis the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Berlin, Prince Hohenlohe, who had come to Cieszyn, by remarking that it was

‘perhaps the last time that the allied armies would be afforded the opportunity to beat Russia before the intervention of currently neutral powers makes the idea of wrestling down Russia altogether illusory’.<sup>712</sup>

In the event of a German troop increase, Conrad also wanted to oblige a German request to lead a limited offensive against north-eastern Serbia, in order to open the route of the Danube to the Black Sea and in this way supply the Turks with the urgently needed armaments. How this should be achieved, however, was not clear, since Conrad began shortly thereafter to transfer three divisions from the Serbian theatre of war to the north and on 16 January also proposed the removal of the XIII Corps, which was deployed in Sylvania. Much to his own surprise, this was possible without any difficulties, since the new commander of the Balkan troops, Archduke Eugen, most obligingly agreed to a reduction of his armed forces.<sup>713</sup> That was not all: Eugen also offered the VIII Corps. In doing so, he had practically handed over an entire army, and the Emperor raised the question as to what exactly justified such a weakening of the South Army.<sup>714</sup> Archduke Eugen, however, was absolutely convinced that the Serbians would not so soon be capable of launching an attack.

Even so, Falkenhayn continued to defer resuming the offensive in the east. Hindenburg and Ludendorff regarded the problems of the north-eastern theatre of war in a different light, however, than the Chief of the Great General Staff did. This was ultimately the reason why the Commander-in-Chief East, Paul von Hindenburg, agreed to Conrad’s plan for an offensive from the Carpathians to the extent that he offered to strengthen the Austro-Hungarian troops with Germans without consulting Falkenhayn. Conrad sought with this offensive above all to relieve Przemyśl, in order with a clear victory to prevent neutral states from entering the war. On 8 January 1915, the German Kaiser also agreed to the relocation of German troops to the Carpathians. This was with the purpose of assembling an Austrian ‘South Army’, the Linsingen Army. General Ludendorff was designated its chief of staff. In this way, Falkenhayn had at least achieved a partial success, since he had separated the Hindenburg and Ludendorff team from each other. But for the Chief of the German General Staff the matter was by no means over – on the contrary. Falkenhayn had given in at a moment when his own demise appeared to be imminent.<sup>715</sup> Hindenburg had namely campaigned extensively for the re-appointment of Moltke and even threatened that he would otherwise refuse a command position. Kaiser Wilhelm reacted extremely severely. He compared the intrigue that had been concocted, and above all the conduct of Hindenburg, with the affectations of Wallenstein and wanted to summarily court-marshal the field marshal. Now the German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg interposed and let it be known to the Kaiser that in the event of Hindenburg’s dismissal he could no longer bear the responsibility for the political leadership of the German Empire. Field Marshal Hindenburg was thereupon requested not to leave his supreme commander in the

lurch, even if Falkenhayn were to remain. Hindenburg obliged. The Eastern Front High Command received four corps and General Ludendorff, who had already been drafted to the Linsingen Army, was recalled to the German Eastern Front High Command as Chief of Staff. What had begun as comparatively harmless, namely Conrad's desire for additional German troops, came within an inch of bringing about the complete reshuffle of the German supreme command. Ultimately, however, Conrad had come out on top, and it was not understandable why he lamented only a few weeks later: 'I am not pleased about the collaboration with the Germans; it requires a colossal self-denial – and one must constantly be aware that one must make sacrifices for the greater cause. They always bite off more than they can chew, are brutally egoistic and work with purposeful, relentless hype. [...] The fact that these people have wrecked the entire basis for our collective war with their major defeat in France; the fact that they ruined the success of our victories at Kraśnik, Tomaszów [and] Komarów by means of their eccentric operations in the east, which evidently only aimed at protecting East Prussia; the fact that they then led our 1st Army into disaster and forced us to abandon the San Line through their downright crazy operations to the Vistula, in the direction of which they just followed their nose – these gentlemen appear to have forgotten [all these things], and likewise the selflessness with which we, in merely serving the collective cause, threw our 2nd Army towards the Province of Silesia.'<sup>716</sup> Conrad was evidently unaware, however, of the consequences of the turbulence within the German Supreme Army Command on his own plans, and he reacted to the German request for a meeting at the highest level on 14 January 1915 with a flat denial. He telegraphed to the Military Chancellery in Vienna: '[I] deem the present meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm or his coming here to Cieszyn as highly undesirable for myself, because [it would be] damaging to our cause. [...] With esteem, Conrad.' The Chief of the Military Chancellery, General Bolfras, communicated half an hour later the reaction of Emperor Franz Joseph: 'very correct'.<sup>717</sup> The Army High Command could begin to implement its own ideas without potentially having to first listen again to proposals for a reordering of the chain of command or even reproaches from Kaiser Wilhelm on errors of leadership and poor "soldier material".

At the beginning of January, the Imperial and Royal divisions that were to be withdrawn from the Balkans were loaded on to carriages. They did not know where they were going. In Hungary they crossed paths with German troops travelling to the south-east. "They do not know the destination of their journey, either", noted the Commander of the 29th Infantry Division, Major General Zanantoni. Only when the troops were disembarking from the carriages did the officers and soldiers learn to which armies they would be subordinated and where they were going: to Przemyśl.<sup>718</sup>

Now, the winter war in the Carpathians began. On 23 January 1915, the offensive commenced. If one looks at the distribution of troops in the theatre of war, the contro-



versy that flared up in the context of preparations for the Carpathian offensive regarding the mixing of Austro-Hungarian and German troops as well as over the command appears peculiar. Such a strong mixing of the German and the Imperial and Royal troops had in fact already taken place that there was a regimental coexistence not only in the armies and the corps but also in the divisions. The 'German' South Army, which had been set up for the offensive, comprised three German infantry divisions, two Imperial and Royal infantry divisions as well as a German and an Austro-Hungarian cavalry division. At the end of January, there were even exclusively Austro-Hungarian divisions subordinated to the German General von Gallwitz.

At the same time as the offensive in the Carpathians commenced, Hindenburg also wanted to attack in East Prussia. Here Schlieffen's operational school was once again discernible; at the time, Schlieffen had begun to concern himself with the double envelopment whilst taking into account the study on Cannae by the prominent historian Hans Delbrück. The Eastern Front High Command wanted to launch a major pincer movement: Austrians and Germans from the south and Germans from the north. Radiant confidence prevailed in the Eastern Front High Command, yet only two weeks later it had become evident that the Austro-Hungarian Carpathian offensive was a failure.

It had already been started with comparatively weak numbers of personnel.<sup>719</sup> On the Austrian side, no more than 175,000 infantrymen mustered with approximately 1,000 guns. This time, however, the enemy was not only the Russian soldier; this time it was above all the cold that had to be fought. At minus 25 degrees in a very snowy, icy landscape, covered by dense forests and highly disorientating, the troops readied themselves. The ridge of a low mountain range, which averages only 800 metres, was to be used to get close to the encircled fortress. 'Up to 100 km apart, mountain passes transcend the many lateral ridges running parallel; between them are a few poor paths that are buried in deep snow during the winter', as Major General Zanantoni described the offensive region.<sup>720</sup> 'There were only few settlements and these few were wretched. For the most part we avoided these and, though exhausted, with our last ounce of strength we built ourselves large holes in the snow in order to find protection from the cold. Death from exposure to cold was lurking every time one fell asleep in the open air. Many a brave soldier has even been delivered from his toils in the wooded Carpathians. In the night the wolves came and satisfied their gluttony on the sleeping. [...] It must have looked something like that in 1812 in Russia.' The soldiers received no warm meals for days on end and had no accommodation; in this way thousands perished from the cold, whilst tens of thousands suffered the most serious frostbite. This affected not only the frontline troops, however. If anything, the sacrifice of the replacement troops had an even more lasting effect. Enough men could still be called up, trained, brought in mass transports to the front and thrown into battle. There they

were rapidly consumed and seemed to provide a foretaste of what has so vividly been called “blood pump” in the context of the Battle of Verdun. The Russians proceeded in a similar way: masses were deployed and decimated in an alleged calculated risk. Overall, the numbers of fighting troops did not decline, however. On the contrary, more troops were led into battle than losses occurred. In this way, however, the potential for trained soldiers was exhausted particularly drastically for the first time. On average, a frontline soldier served at the front for only five to six weeks before – statistically-speaking – he was dead or taken prisoner or transported to the rear either injured or sick.<sup>721</sup> Then it was the turn of the next replacement formations. War Minister Georgi had reported to Emperor Franz Joseph in December that 170,000 reservists were available per month and that soldiers could be mustered for another year of the war without any problems.<sup>722</sup> It had merely been necessary to re-examine the eligible generations, abolish the exemptions that had been in place and call up those eligible for enlistment on time – and that did the trick.

The corps and divisions were driven forwards in the Carpathians through snow and ice, always with the objective of Przemyśl in sight. They were forced on until their complete exhaustion, as the Commander of the Imperial and Royal VII Corps, Archduke Joseph, reported: even fire from the rear could no longer prevent the troops from abandoning their posts and ‘people at the front committed suicide from total exhaustion’. After all, as the 3rd Army reported, the stop in the trenches near Przemyśl had been the last opportunity for rest; since then, no-one had slept. The fighting to relieve Przemyśl, however, had in fact only just begun, and compared to that, the surrounded fortress – which had triggered this military lunacy – was actually doing better. Even in Przemyśl, however, losses increased. This was less because Russian attempts to storm the fortress had to be repulsed, and more because Kusmanek wanted to continue threatening and engaging the Russians.

The first Battle of the Carpathian Passes was followed by the second. Now the weather changed from one extreme to the other. On 8 February, the thaw began, the roads became almost impassable and only pack animals could transport the necessary supplies. Then there was heavy snowfall again.<sup>723</sup> The Commander of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, General Böhm-Ermolli, requested a brief delay of the attack, but Conrad insisted on attacking as soon as possible between the Uszók Pass and the Łupków Pass. As a distraction and also in order not to give Romania the impression that the Imperial and Royal troops would not be present in Transylvania and Bukovina as well, the army group of General Pflanzer-Baltin was slated to reconquer Bukovina, most of which had been lost to the Russians. Weather conditions here on the most southerly section of the Eastern Front were also like deepest winter, but on 18 February the Russians were ousted from Kolomyia (Kolomea) and the capital of Bukovina, Chernivtsi (Czernewitz). No sooner had this been achieved than the army group command ordered the

continuation of the offensive to Stanislau (now Ivano-Frankivsk). Perhaps the Russians would even withdraw troops from the Carpathian Mountains.

The divisions for the second Carpathian offensive had barely been concentrated and stocked up, when they moved into their starting positions. Since the heavy artillery could not be brought forward due to the impassable paths, it had to remain where it was. The operation began on 27 February. The Russians again suffered heavy losses, but after a few days General Brusilov's 8th Army commenced counterattacks. The Russians had sufficient forces to repeatedly remove their troops from the front and replace them with rested soldiers in dry clothes. Ultimately, however, even they advanced only slightly. On 12 March the temperatures sank anew to minus 20 degrees. A participating officer vividly described the situation: 'In the entire offensive area [there were] no quarters, for days and weeks no man could change his clothes, on which in most cases hard crusts of ice form; the ground, which was frozen hard as stone, prevents the attackers from digging themselves in against enemy fire; losses increase enormously. The wounded, whose evacuation is extremely difficult, perish wretchedly in huge numbers; the men, who are exhausted after weeks of fighting and privation, cannot even at night yield to sleep, which would mean an instant death from exposure to cold. [...] without cover and unable to move, the infantry stands there in front of enemy obstacles; the bulk of the artillery is still 3 or 4 days' march behind the front. [...] The fact that all the physical misery also smooths the way for a moral demise is hardly surprising.'<sup>724</sup> The report by the Commander of the 9th Infantry Division, Brigadier Josef Schön, to the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army was much more immediate: his men cried, lay down on the ground during a snowstorm, pulled a tent cover over themselves, and let themselves get snowed in, in order to sleep and never wake up. Others exposed themselves in order to be killed. The number of suicides increased; some people shot themselves. Many died at their posts from exhaustion.<sup>725</sup>

After the second Battle of the Carpathian Passes had finished, a third was ordered. This was a senseless act of desperation. Losses increased still further, and ultimately the number of dead, wounded and sick taken during the operations in the Carpathian winter of 1914/15 was higher than the entire garrison of Przemyśl. The relief of the fortress had not become more likely, however. To be added to the actual victims of the battles to relieve the fortress are the deserters, who must be judged as an alarm signal, because it was here that the men saw for the first time the images of the impending disintegration of the multinational state.

The most desperate aspect of the situation is expressed only very remotely in the diary of the Adjutant of the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Kundmann: the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army reported on 14 March that from 95,000 men it had lost around 40,000, of which only 6,000 were losses in battle, whilst all others were from sickness and frostbite. 'What can one do? It's no

use whining about it. What are the consequences? Should they leave? Then the Russians will advance to Budapest.' Days later: 'Report on the condition of the troops is rather unfavourable; total exhaustion, apathy. Why are the Russians not debilitated?'<sup>726</sup> A problem that was regarded by the Austrians as well as the Germans as particularly burdensome were the desertions, which were increasing among the Austro-Hungarian troops and could be seen especially among the Czechs. It made no sense to deny it; the desertions were simply too evident and reached dimensions that would have been beyond the tolerance threshold in any army. As early as September 1914, Czechs from the 26th Infantry Division had deserted to the Russians. They all knew that if they sang the well-known song 'Hey, Slavs!' they would be recognised by the Russians as deserters and not fired on. On 20 October 1914, six companies of the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau') deserted, hence Czechs again.<sup>727</sup> This continued until finally during the last Carpathian offensive, parts of the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 28, 1,800 men from the 'House Regiment', deserted. Now enough was enough. It was above all German Austrians and Hungarians who nurtured reservations against those whom they regarded as unreliable, first and foremost the Czechs, and enquiries were made least of all as to how the desertion could be explained (see Chapter 9). It was claimed that the Czechs had marched to the Russians to the sounds of the regimental band, which was a preposterous exaggeration, since this would not have been simply accepted by the troops deployed alongside the deserters.<sup>728</sup> The army commander, General of Infantry Borojević, in any case, resorted to the most drastic measure of all, namely the dissolution of the regiment. Only subsequently was the matter investigated more thoroughly and put into perspective, and the measure was not least reversed out of consideration for the mood of the Czechs. The regiment was ultimately resurrected.<sup>729</sup>

At the beginning of March 1915, the Army High Command still hoped that it would be possible to relieve the fortress on the San River at the last minute. As Conrad had informed the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, however: 'Enemy resistance, offensive power of our own troops, weather and other contingencies will decide whether we reach our objective – nothing can be predicted in this respect.' Conrad continued to plan ahead and gave the heir to the throne Archduke Karl, who was travelling from Cieszyn to Vienna, information for the Emperor, in which the impending fall of Przemyśl was announced. What had to be done after that was also stated: fight on!

Despite radical supply measures, it had already been precisely calculated in Przemyśl how long the fortress could still hold out: until 28 February 1915. Consumption was reduced still further. Since the soldiers were in any case weakened, it made sense in two respects to end the break-out attempts and localised attacks and to confine themselves to purely defensive tasks. The ammunition for certain artillery models had furthermore run out, whilst the other guns had already been used so much that their range was

decreasing. More horses were slaughtered. Ultimately, everything in the fortress district was requisitioned that could somehow be eaten or used as animal feed. Beet pulp was turned into dried vegetables, whilst horse fat increased the calorie value of human nutrition, even if the tallow spoiled the food. Ultimately, bread comprised 20 per cent birch tree roots. The measure was taken, as the commander noted, 'in order to at least alleviate to some extent the feeling of hunger among the men, caused by too little food, particularly bread, which is all the more necessary since in addition to their other duties the men must now often carry out the duties of the horses as a result of the slaughtering of the latter'.

Every few days new calculations were made for how long the fortress could still be held; The last calculation revealed that there was enough food for exactly fourteen more days.

On 15 March the Army High Command finally gave up Przemyśl for lost. The deployment of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army with around 150,000 men remained unsuccessful. It foundered, as Conrad wrote, 'on the tenacity of the enemy, above all, however, on the abnormally adverse weather, deep snow, awful cold (-23 degrees) [and] snowstorms'. From 1 to 15 March, the army had lost 51,000 men. It was assumed that of the more than 10,000 reported missing, the bulk had frozen to death or lay somewhere under the snow.

At the beginning of March, the Russians began to tighten the circumvallation of Przemyśl and became more active, since they had detailed information about the situation in the fortress as a result of the reports by deserters and from news gathered with the help of a Russophile group within the city. As then became clear, they also knew Kusmanek's most recent break-out plan. Conrad had advised the fortress commander to break out to the south-east. Kusmanek was given the freedom, however, to decide which direction he should then go in. And he decided in favour of the east. He wanted to break out in the direction of Horodok (Groddeck) and Lviv (Lemberg) because he regarded the chances of reaching the Austrian lines as hopeless. Thus, as much damage as possible should be inflicted on the Russians: blow up bridges and transport links and wreak havoc in the rear areas. The Army High Command agreed. It had no hope whatsoever that the break-out could in fact succeed. In this case it was also more psychology that was taken into account than operational planning. Kusmanek could go wherever he wanted; the most important point was that the end of the huge fortress on the San River was heroic.

'If the situation on 17.3 indicates that the relief will not be possible in time, then our honour and the glorious conduct of the fortress garrison thus far demand that a break-out attempt is made', as the Army High Command telegraphed. Shortly thereafter the troops deployed for the break out. It was to take place two days later. The formations needed up to seven hours to reach the lines of the defensive belt, since a fierce snow-

storm was raging. The soldiers were told which direction they would go only at the precise moment they departed from the eastern forts. At the same time, an order from the fortress commander was read out to them, which pathetically and falsely stated: 'My soldiers, [...] I lead you out to smash with a steel fist the iron ring of the enemy around our fortress and then to penetrate with irresistible force further and further until we reach our armies, which have forced their way almost through to us in an intense fight. [...] forward, forward regardless!' But what else could Kusmanek have said to them?

The Russians were expecting the divisions when they broke out and after several hours of bloody carnage, during which it was above all the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) troops, which were deployed in the front, that were decimated, the operation had to be discontinued. Now it was only a question of days before the fortress capitulated. The Army High Command demanded that all war material be destroyed before the surrender. The fortress command decided on 22 March as the day of the capitulation. The fortress could have been held for two more days, but the soldiers were to be given provisions for two days in order to ensure that they survived the first days in captivity.

At 5 a.m. on 22 March, the demolition of the artillery began. Half an hour later the mines and the concentrated charges in the works were ignited. At the same time, the soldiers smashed their rifles, broke their sabres, threw their bullets in the San River or trampled them into the dirt. Horses were shot, bridles and saddlery cut up. Then the last radio message was sent and the transmitting mast cut down. An aeroplane conveyed Kusmanek's final message: 'Przemyśl was relinquished today at 7 a.m. without negotiations with the enemy following the detonation of all buildings and materials.'

Przemyśl fell into the Russians' lap without them having to make a last attempt to storm it. Around 120,000 men were taken into Russian captivity. There was talk of heroism in equal measure in Austria-Hungary and in Russia. The Russians had obtained an object of prestige and Austria had one dilemma less to worry about. The original fortress garrison of 130,000 men had in any case been written off already. The press communiqués about the collapse had already been composed days before the 22 March. The claim was circulated that the besieging Russians had lost over time an entire army in front of Przemyśl. Finally the Chief of the Russia Group in the Army High Command formulated another army order, which stated that the Army High Command had been expecting the fall of the fortress for some time and that everything had proceeded in accordance with the large-scale operational planning – and in fact: now plans could once more be made regardless of the 'millstone around our neck'.

The waging of warfare was repeatedly influenced by political negotiations, which proceeded simultaneously. Italy's stance gave most cause for anxiety. In order to help Turkey and to intimidate Romania, but at the same time to pull Bulgaria on to the side of the Central Powers, a renewal of the campaign against Serbia would have been nec-

essary; in fact, a certain priority was given to such a campaign.<sup>730</sup> But until the armies of the Central Powers had emerged from the Carpathians, Przemyśl relieved and the situation in the north-eastern theatre of war stabilised, it was hardly possible to give thought to anything else.

The consequences of the setbacks were considerable. The German Empire was above all lastingly influenced in its appraisal of the Austrian situation. The joint conduct of war had by no means allowed the mutual esteem to grow. Since the offensives in the Carpathians had ended in failure, both sides shifted the blame on to each other and accused the other side of premature retreat. Conrad used every opportunity to deny that the Germans were capable of performing military miracles. The alliance partner, moreover, had still delivered far less than that which could rightly be expected of it. 'We should, therefore, finally abandon the stance of chivalry towards Germany and assume that of the ruthless businessman', as Conrad wrote to the Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery. 'If we must make sacrifices for our mutual benefit, then Germany must also participate in that. [...] We should tell them: if you can't, then fine, you'll perish with us.'<sup>731</sup> It was just the same as in the Carpathians.

Considerable differences broke out between Austrians and Germans regarding the command of operations. These differences ultimately developed into lasting antipathies, so that already during the course of the war some generals no longer wanted to be deployed together with their allies, because they fundamentally mistrusted the others and belittled their capabilities. This belittlement manifested itself in official writings and memoirs. Brigadier von Cramon, for example, the Plenipotentiary of the German Supreme Command attached to the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command, stressed in a report from 6 April 1915 that a continuation of the Carpathian offensive was only expedient if the timidity of the Austro-Hungarian commanders were to be countered. General of Cavalry von Marwitz, at the time commanding general of the German Beskid Corps, noted in his records that he set the condition that his 'troops be kept together under all circumstances, not be mixed up among Austrians, and if this must sporadically be the case, to possess command over these Austrians as well'.<sup>732</sup> Hindenburg's Chief of Staff, General Erich Ludendorff, expressed himself especially drastically in letters to the Chief of the General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke. He accused the Austrians of arrogance, a lack of will to resist and military 'incompetence'. These people simply did not have the stuff to become a great power, he claimed, and he reproached the German military attaché in Vienna for not having opened the eyes of the German authorities in time before the war.<sup>733</sup>

It was certainly very tempting to find fault for the failure of the Carpathian offensive with the Imperial and Royal troops, since in their case there was a great deal that inevitably appeared peculiar, above all to the Germans: the lack of homogeneity, or the fact that these troops could no longer be used as they had been during the first weeks of the

war, since they had already reported such big losses against the Russian superiority. And it could repeatedly be witnessed that German commanders were occasionally able to 'get more out of' Imperial and Royal troops when the latter were under their command than Austro-Hungarian officers were capable of. Perhaps this can be explained by a form of 'manager effect'. The Imperial and Royal troops were induced by German commanders to give their all. They did not want to embarrass themselves, above all not in front of the Germans. This led to them even more willingly risking their lives than they did under Austro-Hungarian commanders. Neither side knew just how disparagingly the other side judged it. Thus, Hindenburg, for example, noted that the Austrians had held out very bravely against the superiority of the Russians, 'until the [Russian] military came'.

The unease about the ally admittedly never really came to the surface; the resentment remained hidden. It was covered up for the outside world by means of the postcards, coffee mugs, badges, beer jugs and pipe bowls, on which could be read everywhere: 'Shoulder to shoulder', 'We'll stick together unswervingly', 'Let God be with us!' and similar slogans. Both sides swore 'blind loyalty' and 'allegiance to the ally'; poems, rhymes, writings, paintings and sculptures were dedicated to the alliance. In this way, however, two truths emerged: the one, which was more widespread, stated that Germany and Austria-Hungary were allies, whose loyalty and willingness to make sacrifices were beyond all doubt. The other truth, advocated merely by a few knowledgeable people in the inner circle of this alliance, regarded it as an association borne of necessity, which was logical and should remain intact but where the cordialities constituted a crumbling facade.

These special problems of the alliance's conduct of war gave another, additional aspect to the virulent problem of the removals of commanders, which continued to be practised by the Army High Command: it should be brought home to the Germans that the Army High Command had a mind to ruthlessly dismiss any commander who did not measure up. Whether this made a positive impression on the Germans, however, must be doubted. The effects on the troops were not necessarily positive, either. The removals could demonstrate that the Army High Command was willing to demand their utmost from the senior officers as well; on the other hand, however, it had been asked what the situation was with the officer corps in general. After the fighting in the Carpathians, the Army High Command dismissed one divisional and two corps commanders, Generals von Meixner and Letovsky.<sup>734</sup> In reference to this, Archduke Friedrich issued a series of orders, which stated, among other things, that commanders who were lacking in energetic leadership were to be 'called to account without leniency, removed from their command or subjected to legal proceedings'. 'Those who undermine the spirit of the troops and become a cause of failure through timid talk, faint-hearted attitude, pessimistic character, pusillanimous regret, expressions of desiring peace and a lack of faith should be treated with the same severity.'<sup>735</sup>



One result of the failed offensives in the Carpathians was that on the German side, and indeed on the part of the Imperial Chancellor and the Chief of the General Staff, it was emphatically attempted once more to induce Vienna to make concessions to Italy. It could not be risked that Italy might enter the war on the side of the enemy as well. Even with these attempts – which will be described in more detail below – to exert pressure on Vienna, however, all success eluded the German Empire. From mid-February, resignation subsequently began to spread in the German Foreign Ministry and it was pondered whether to drop Austria-Hungary. Bethmann Hollweg picked up on considerations that had already been circulating at the time of the July Crisis, to the effect that Austria-Hungary could be divided up between Germany and Russia. And it was again only the argument that public opinion in the German Empire would be inaccessible to this and that it would only result in new, serious problems that moved the German imperial chancellor not to pursue the scenario further.<sup>736</sup> The German permanent secretary in the Foreign Ministry feared once again the conclusion of an Austro-Russian separate peace,<sup>737</sup> which appeared to be of even greater consequence, since the war had in the meantime taken on a new, additional dimension. The start of the British naval blockade measures and the declaration of the entire North Sea to be a war zone had led to the German Supreme Army Command declaring the waters around Great Britain and Ireland, as well as the English Channel, to be a war zone and opening up the submarine war against merchant shipping. The war was approaching its totality.

In the west, positional warfare had now been raging for months. Ypres had become synonymous with the horrors of this siege warfare in the open field. The French had already employed gaseous warfare agents. For its part, the German Empire had commenced preparations for the deployment of poison gas. In this way, it was hoped that the positional war would return to a war of movement. Now, trench warfare threatened in the east as well, and the Serbian front had not moved any more either since December. Falkenhayn and the German Supreme Army Command thought of shifting their focus back to the west, whilst Bethmann Hollweg wanted to begin a German-Austrian campaign against Serbia, in order above all to influence Romania and to support the Turks. But neither the one nor the other had any chance of being realised.

### Gorlice–Tarnów

On 4 April 1915, Conrad came to Berlin and agreed with Falkenhayn to remain on the defensive in the east, in the Balkans and, if necessary, against Italy.<sup>738</sup> But Falkenhayn had not played with an open hand. A few days before his discussion with Conrad, he had ordered the possibilities of deploying in the area to the west of Kraków to be studied.<sup>739</sup> Only after his return to Cieszyn was Conrad informed by Colonel

Straub, Chief of the Railway Department in the General Staff, that the German liaison officer attached to the Army High Command, General Cramon, had – evidently as a purposeful indiscretion – enquired as to the transport capacity for German troops south of Kraków.<sup>740</sup> Conrad concluded from this that Falkenhayn was now prepared to despatch German troops after all. Conrad did not hesitate for a moment, and already in the night of 5/6 April, Conrad's requests for help reached the German Supreme Army Command. However, it turned out very differently from how Falkenhayn had perhaps intended. The Army High Command assumed that Italy's entry into the war was imminent and demanded the despatch of seven German divisions for deployment against Italy and a further five in order to keep Romania in check and to prop up the Carpathian front.

Falkenhayn now found himself confronted once more by a serious dilemma. He had initially vacillated between a solution in the west and one in the east. A shift in focus to the west was envisaged for spring 1915. The Chief of the German General Staff hoped to defeat the French and the British before the new British divisions established by the British War Minister Lord Kitchener arrived on the Continent. Still, the eastern solution was worth considering. Falkenhayn certainly was not thinking of a southern solution against Italy, however. He obviously suddenly favoured an eastern solution for reasons that cannot be fully explained.<sup>741</sup> It may be that the conflict with Hindenburg and Ludendorff played a role. Their attack in Russian Poland had failed at the end of 1914. Falkenhayn could thus only gain prestige in the event of a successful new offensive.

It was decided on 13 April in the Grand Headquarters in Berlin to allow the German 11th Army, which was now in the process of being deployed, to attack in the Gorlice area. This was far more than Conrad had requested or even hoped for. For this section of the front, he had considered the despatch of four divisions. Falkenhayn wanted instead to send four army corps, i.e. twice as many. However, he had concealed this from Conrad. The next day, Falkenhayn and Conrad met once again. In spite of the late arrival of the information, Conrad was extremely satisfied that his idea for a decisive strike in the east had met with German agreement and that more was to happen than just strengthening the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army in the Carpathians. Conrad also consented to German command over the joint troops, although the number of Austro-Hungarian troops would of course be larger in absolute terms. Ultimately, Falkenhayn decided not – as had perhaps been expected of him – to appoint Hindenburg to command the new army, but instead General August von Mackensen. Colonel Hans von Seeckt was appointed his chief of staff. Falkenhayn furthermore transferred his headquarters to Pszczyna (Pleß) in Silesia and optically devaluated Hindenburg in this way. Now the deployment for one of the mightiest breakthrough battles of the First World War began.

The Austro-Hungarian troops reacted overwhelmingly positively to the sudden, very strong German presence. Their confidence grew and not only in the immediate vicinity of the German deployment zone, but along the entire front. When the Commander of the Swiss Mountain Brigade No. 18, Colonel Bridler, journeyed to the Carpathians in the context of one of his regular tours of the theatres of war, he summarised his impressions for the Swiss General Staff as follows: 'At the front there is a confident, triumphant and assured mood; however, in the case of the (German) Beskid Corps to a greater extent than with the Imperial and Royal troops. Among the latter, the Hungarians distinguish themselves by virtue of their fervent patriotism and enthusiasm for battle. They recognise the Reich German troops as the protectors and liberators of their country, and they make no pretence of their greater sympathy for them than for the German Austrians. [...] I have noticed the unfavourable factor for the fighting that neither the Hungarians nor the German Austrians hate the Russians and immediately abandon the battle against the latter, as well as how they raise their hands, even if this happens only just before they are stormed. [...] In the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, only the Italian is hated from time to time, though with ferocity. [...] I have the impression that a war with Italy would be fought with murderous passion.'<sup>742</sup>

From 21 April the German formations rolled towards Galicia and into their staging areas. Secrecy proved to be a particular problem, and it almost seems that the Army High Command also wanted to keep the impending offensive secret from Vienna, whilst the presence of German troop masses on the front could not be kept secret and was spotted both by the Polish population in the deployment zone and by the Russians. The Russians ultimately also knew about the day of attack, 2 May.<sup>743</sup>

The plan for this operation, named the Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive, doubtlessly has a long prehistory, and it is almost pointless to trace its entire ramifications. The quintessence that emerges, however, is an explanation of an Austro-Hungarian and German controversy, since both Conrad and Falkenhayn claimed the credit for having the idea for this plan. But the German side also claimed for itself the 'Napoleonic' idea of many offensives. Thus, above all General Wild von Hohenborn accredited himself with the merits of having persuaded Falkenhayn to attack in the Carpathian foothills rather than over the upper Vistula River.<sup>744</sup> However, successes always have many fathers. One can best do justice to the provenance of the plan if one incorporates two components, namely the operational idea of Conrad of a large-scale envelopment into the east, which already dated back to summer 1914, and a second complementary component, namely the planning of Falkenhayn, who wanted to begin a direct thrust to the east from the area around Gorlice, i.e. precisely that for which the Austrian operational command and tactics have been repeatedly criticised. In these two operational conceptions, not only was something visible that emerged from a specific situation in April 1915 and from the theatre of war; something fundamental had also been introduced. For the

Austro-Hungarian Army, even before the era of Conrad the frontal thrust and the one-sided envelopment had assumed almost doctrinaire character in both tactics and operations and, likewise, the pincer operation had become doctrine for the German operational command. The departure from the German conception can thus be regarded as an additional indication that Conrad played a substantial role in the planning for the Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive, even if Falkenhayn was the one who had been decisive in putting it into practice. In a type of synthesis, Wild von Hohenborn ultimately summarised the facts – though he only wrote to his wife – to the effect that: ‘By the way, we want to clarify the matter historically among ourselves along the lines that Conrad appears to have had the idea first and independently of me to overthrow the Carpathian front by means of a breakthrough to the north. He appears to have communicated this in general to Falkenhayn.’<sup>745</sup>

Yet it was not just a case of drafting a joint operational plan but ultimately also of what the command would look like for this offensive. This became a matter of prestige. Finally, as a compromise, the Imperial and Royal 4th Army was subordinated to the command of the new German 11th Army, whilst in compensation its commander, General von Mackensen, was formally bound to the orders of the Austrian High Command. The Army High Command, in turn, was supposed to seek out the agreement of the German Supreme Army Command in all important decisions. This meant that the Army High Command – with all its plans and intentions – was bound to the consent of the German Army Command.

The objective of the offensive also caused some difficulties.<sup>746</sup> Conrad urged the capture of Lviv, which seemed too ambitious to Falkenhayn, especially since he did not believe there could be an ultimate decision in Russia. Thus, with the liberation of central Galicia, namely the territory as far as the San River, they set themselves a relatively modest aim. Since for political reasons particular importance was attached to a swift victory, Falkenhayn did not even await the arrival of the last German corps, the X Army Corps, and other pieces of artillery, but instead allowed the offensive to already begin on 2 May 1915. It was felt that 107,000 soldiers, 604 guns and 70 mortars in the area of the breakthrough would ultimately suffice.<sup>747</sup>

Again, as so often in this war, the setting of a date was influenced by factors other than exclusively military ones. As in the Balkans in August 1914, it was intended that the strike be made as soon as possible because Romania, if not also Italy, should be kept in check. Again, as in the case of the Austro-Hungarian offensive against Russia at the end of August 1914, the intention was to pre-empt the Russians and under no circumstances wait until the latter had regained their full strike capability.

The German 11th Army, together with the Imperial and Royal VI Corps, encountered at the beginning of the attack a weak point on the Russian front. It was not just the Russian weakness that could be exploited, however; the German corps also brought

experiences with them that they had collected on the western front, as well as a method of fighting that was different to that which was typical on the Eastern Front. In this way, the battle became a textbook example for later breakthrough attempts during the war.

The offensive was initiated by means of a four-hour barrage according to an exact fire schedule; this was something that was unknown on the Eastern Front, but practised on all sides in the west. The first day of the offensive brought an unexpectedly big success: huge numbers of prisoners and the hoped-for breakthrough. The Russian commanders had felt secure and equal to the task. In the frontline, the troops had dug themselves in; reserves stood ready; what could happen? But in the shortest of time the German artillery destroyed the Russian positions with the barrage. Since the reserves were unprotected and deployed close to the front line, they were immediately and most heavily decimated by the high angle fire of the mortars. There was no second system of positions and thus the Russians offered an easy target for the rifles and machine guns during their retreat over open terrain, which degenerated into a flight. In the immediate vicinity of the breakthrough, the Russians lost 210,000 men from around 250,000 men within six days, 140,000 of these as prisoners of war.

The victory was so big that even Falkenhayn got carried away and endorsed the delivery of additional German divisions. During the first half of May, the German 56th Infantry Division arrived in Nowy Sącz, and in June five further infantry divisions and a cavalry division followed; at the same time, three German infantry divisions were transported in the direction of the Serbian theatre of war at the end of May, two of which rolled on to Galicia in June and the third in July. After months during which the Central Powers had only been able to report minor victories, the Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive achieved a complete turnaround. On 3 June, Bavarian troops arrived in Przemyśl and the commander-in-chief of the army group, von Mackensen, who had been promoted to field marshal, did not miss the opportunity to lay the reconquered fortress “at the feet” of Emperor Franz Joseph. This dampened the joy of the Austrians and it was intimated to the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army that it had in fact been expected that Przemyśl would be reconquered by Austro-Hungarian troops.<sup>748</sup> One thing had certainly succeeded as a result of the impressive military victories of the Central Powers and the shift to a war of movement on the eastern front: Romania felt compelled to further maintain its neutrality and not to enter the war against the Central Powers. Italy was a different matter, however. But here the die had already been cast before the Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive. And Italy was at least not so lastingly impressed as to revise its decision at the eleventh hour. The concern over Italy achieved one thing: at the last moment, Vienna discontinued its plans to install a military dictatorship.





## 9 Under Surveillance

9. Each member of the Imperial and Royal Army was made to swear an oath to God, the Emperor, and the Fatherland on several occasions during the course of the war. Even though it was a 'holy oath', it did not prevent many soldiers from defecting. The Imperial and Royal 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifle Regiment No. 2 was made to swear the oath again in September 1914 after it had lost the regimental flag to which it had been sworn.



**R**ather than bringing equality to the peoples of Austria-Hungary, the war had created dramatic divisions. The emergency decrees in the event of war applied everywhere, but there was a relatively clear separation between the war zones and the hinterland of the fronts on the one hand, where the more stringent measures of the military authorities were implemented, and those of more distant regions in the interior of the Monarchy on the other. The latter were not affected by the fighting, no martial law had been imposed or the governors replaced by civilian and military authorities, and there was no huge burden caused by the presence of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. This was notwithstanding the retreats, the destruction and the human sacrifices. However, the ominous letters used to notify relatives that a soldier had been killed, and the messages that someone had been wounded or was missing and was likely to have been taken prisoner were sent to every town, every village and every family, regardless of where they were located. Far from the front, however, where work was carried out to support the war effort, and where money also flowed abundantly, profits were made and for the time being the deprivations only made themselves felt to the extent that goods became scarce, some items were no longer available at all, or at least cost a great deal of money. Here, the situation was fundamentally different to that in Bukovina, Galicia, Bosnia, Herzegovina or Croatia. This was naturally also felt, and all the more keenly so, in these latter regions of the Empire, where the people regarded their situation as being an undeserved fate, and felt themselves to be disadvantaged and forced to bear a difficult burden. Soon, stereotypical reactions developed. They included complaints that the hardships and the deprivations were unevenly distributed, that one half of the Empire was being forced to make greater efforts than the other, as well as repeated demands for a betterment of parts of the Empire and the regions after the war, and other forms of compensation for the period of suffering.

However, for the time being, almost everyone felt they had cause for complaint against someone else. In the Austrian half of the Empire, objections were made that the situation was worse than for the Hungarians, while on the other side of the Leitha River, resentment was expressed that enormous efforts were being made for the good of the Empire without an appropriate reward. Any discussion of the war aims that took into account the conditions at home therefore ended not in distant foreign countries, but usually on home soil, and with a list of all the changes that would have to be introduced after the war and the compensation envisaged for the sacrifices that had been made, for the countless dead and all the other hardships. Here, the goals being

discussed were anything but noble ones, such as human rights, democracy or tackling social injustice, but instead usually focussed on how to gain advantages and satisfy the demands of the individuals themselves, their narrower community or their own nationality. The Poles had the unification of their torn-apart country in mind, the Ruthenians wanted independence from Poland, the Czechs hoped to attain a similar status to that of the Hungarians, while the Croats also had Hungary in mind, albeit for other reasons, and wished above all for stronger independence and the end of Magyar dominance. Similar sentiments were also felt in Romania. The Hungarians for their part wanted the broadest possible degree of independence from the Cisleithanian parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, although in the event that the common empire were to remain, combining posts emerged as an option. A Hungarian officer who deserted at the end of May 1916 described in the most simplistic terms the yearning that had taken root in the Magyar soul: the majority of Hungarians wanted Hungary to detach itself from Austria. The attitude towards Germany was friendly, however, for the most part due to fear of the Russians. It would also be Germany that in future would take Hungary under its wing and protect it from its nationalities and – though not explicitly stated – from Austria.<sup>749</sup> To put it simply: Austria was to be exchanged for Germany.

The German Austrians however left no doubt as to the fact that they were tired of incessantly having to take into account the sensibilities of the other nationalities. Since they naturally found no support for their goals among the other peoples of the Empire, it emerged that in spite of all the reservations that were time and again felt, they sought help from outside, from their big German brother.

Stereotypical attitudes had also arisen among the army in the field over time, which then led to a state of affairs in which after just a few weeks and months, judgements were made about the behaviour of the different peoples of the Empire. In order to objectify individual accounts and above all tendentious reporting, efforts were made to gather a range of different statistics, since the subjective accounts of heroic fighters on the one hand and cowards on the other frequently failed to hold up to investigation.

### Of Heroes and Cowards

Since the beginning of the war, the losses had repeatedly been ascertained and reported. Initially, the casualty lists were also publicised, although this was later no longer the case. Naturally, the count continued nevertheless. During the process, those who were involved in recording the figures clearly became increasingly doubtful as to the validity of the information. Finally, in March 1915, a new count was made from the set of casualty lists in the Imperial and Royal War Ministry.<sup>750</sup> From then on, the latest figures were added month by month. However, the statistics suffered from the fact that

only the bare number of losses could be processed, without having precise information about the original troop numbers. For this reason, it was hardest of all to make statements about the losses of the individual branches of the military, or even about individual armies. The problem was that the figures varied to an extremely high degree. At the end of June 1915, the Imperial and Royal 1st Army had 1,891 officers and 46,260 troops, while the 2nd Army counted 3,043 officers and 84,347 troops. At the same time, the 2nd Army had lost 28,957 men overall during the second half of May alone. All the losses of all armies on all the fronts totalled 93,192 men during the second half of May, around four times as much as during the first half of the same month.<sup>751</sup> The total number of deaths among Imperial and Royal troops in June 1915, in other words, during a month of major successes in the Russian theatre of war, a quiet Serbian-Montenegrin front and a situation in which the shooting war against Italy was only just beginning was 2,511 officers and 193,000 men.

In the War Statistics Bureau and in the cCasualties Group of the War Ministry, new efforts were made not only to count the figures, but also to analyse them. It was calculated that in the months until June 1915, the casualty losses among officers and cadets made up between 7.1 and 7.4 per cent of the total losses of officers; over 50 per cent of the losses were caused by injury, and around 27-30 per cent were soldiers who had been taken prisoner or were missing – with the figure tending to increase. The official comment made by the War Ministry was that ‘Losses among our officers remain very high’. ‘According to the absolute figures, they are likely to be lower than the losses in the army of our ally, the German Empire; in relation to the total number of soldiers in both armies, however, our losses are almost double the level of theirs’. The figure most difficult to calculate was that relating to the number of prisoners and the missing, and here the picture changed dramatically, particularly among the troops. If the first weeks and months of the war, which were atypical in every way, are first set aside, then gradually, a type of normality emerged – to the extent that such a thing was at all possible in a war. During the first months of 1915, between 8.4 and 8.6 per cent of the losses among the troops resulted from casualties and around 40 per cent were due to injury, while around half of all losses were accounted for by soldiers who had been taken prisoner or were missing. Of course, the statistics were unable to provide information on the reasons why soldiers were captured or went missing, but it was evident that the men fighting in the Imperial and Royal Army were far more willing to raise their hands in surrender or desert than the soldiers from any other power fighting in the war. And even if the number of fallen and wounded was interpreted as being somewhat higher, at the end of the day, it remained the case that around half of the Austro-Hungarian troop losses were due to captured and missing soldiers.

The distribution of the losses among the individual sections of the army needed less interpretation. Around 65 per cent were sustained by the Imperial and Royal Army,

over 16 per cent by the Imperial-Royal Landwehr (Austrian standing army), over 8 per cent by the Royal Hungarian Landwehr (Hungarian standing army), around 5.5 per cent by the Imperial-Royal Landsturm (Austrian reserve forces) and 3 per cent by the Royal Hungarian Landsturm (Hungarian reserve forces). One last fact that emerged was that of the total losses among officers and troops, in the spring of 1915, around 95 per cent were among the infantry and riflemen, less than 2 per cent were among the cavalry, around 2 per cent were among the artillery, and the rest were among technical or transport troops and others.

Clearly shocked by the figures, the War Ministry worked at correcting them, arguing that the troops and army components also reported people as missing who had been taken to hospitals and sanatoria. Soldiers who had been dispersed would soon return to their troop bodies. On the other hand, an unknown number of prisoners of war would die from their injuries or would have died for other reasons, which again led to a rise in the casualty figures. Certainly, from the start of the war until the end of June 1915, 1,099 officers and around 54,000 men died in the sanatoria. This did not improve the overall figure. In ten months of war, around 181,500 men from the Imperial and Royal Army were killed.<sup>752</sup>

The statistics continued to be gathered and by 1918 would end in a sea of numbers. At the end of the day, one thing was at any rate clear: even if the war were reduced to a statistical example, the losses amounted to hundreds of thousands, and ultimately, millions of people.

However, the statistics also presented an inaccurate picture since they allowed little room for differentiation. They were a type of equation against which objections were made for other reasons. The process of settling the balance began. Regiments that had recruited from one part of the Monarchy or the other were far braver than others, had suffered far greater losses, had far fewer deserters and, even better, were more reliable. This was immediately contradicted by those who had been vilified and who were therefore at pains to provide evidence of their faultless behaviour and their fully adequate number of sacrifices.

Initially, the image left by the soldiers who had been deployed was relatively uniform. The behaviour among the soldiers of different regiments did not vary greatly. First, they were marched out, loaded on to trains and transported to the deployment zones. Then came the shock of the first battles and periods of success, but, above all, periods of failure. Soon, reports were circulating that one regiment or another had failed in its duty, had retreated without it being absolutely necessary to do so, that there had been many cases of self-mutilation and, ultimately, a continuous series of surrenders and desertions. Clearly, these reports were investigated. And it was not entirely by chance that once again, the national stereotypes came to the fore, both in terms of prejudices and with regard to the hard facts.

At first, the troops had thrown themselves into battle almost without exception. They were still too unfamiliar with the effect of the weapons, and did not want to accept the fact that no progress was being made, were driven forward and not least were so infused with the example set by their commanders and NCOs that they appeared to know nothing other than fighting and fending off the enemy. The result was high, indeed excessively high losses. Gradually, the parameters shifted, and from the winter of 1914/1915 onwards at the latest, clearer differentiations could be made.

From the sum total of all these experiences and factors, which were in some cases highly personal, an overall picture of a kind emerged. The problem was only that even those people who had provided descriptions and made judgements were not free of prejudice. At any rate, caution was required.

‘Our infantry, without any differences between the nationalities, has fought heroically while suffering huge losses among its officers and troops, and has withstood Herculean levels of exertion; since we had to fight without reserves, all troops were on the march or in battle without pause. The degree of pluck and bravery was unsurpassable. We bore like a heavy burden the false opinion disseminated in northern Germany that we lacked energy, and proved that the opposite was true through exaggeration’,<sup>753</sup> wrote the lieutenant colonel of the General Staff Corps, Baronet Theodor von Zeynek, who later became chief of the base high command of the Imperial and Royal Army. What he wanted was clear: that any form of distinguishing of or slight to Austro-Hungarian troop bodies and branches of the military be avoided. His comment referred only to the first weeks of the war. Even so, it corresponded with other observations, which were formulated by Lieutenant Constantin Schneider in his diary as follows: ‘[...] one was tempted to plainly request of the men that they perhaps shoot more.’ A higher-ranking officer, whom he does not name, said that at the beginning of the war, he had the impression ‘that it would not have taken much for the men to have thrown away their weapons and fought the enemy with their bare fists’.<sup>754</sup> And the officers? Countless had fallen, were wounded, and were no longer fit for active service. ‘Far too many were deployed in the field. But who would have wanted to stay behind at that time? [...] Only sick officers and untrained reserve officers stayed at home. That was the reservoir from which we would have to draw if the war were to last for a longer period of time.’<sup>755</sup>

In the initial battles of the war, the troop and army bodies were decimated, and it came almost as a shock to officers and men that this was turning into a very different war to the one that had been envisaged. ‘Almost every command was obeyed that was issued by a high commander from far behind in the rear. [...] It was ordered and carried out to the limits of possibility, and then the people stood their ground until only a few survivors remained. [...] We suffered too greatly from the blind obedience that had been drilled on the parade grounds and during manoeuvres.’<sup>756</sup>

Almost even more conspicuous than the enormous losses in the infantry was the failure of the cavalry. At the beginning of the war, one cavalry troop division counted 2,400 riders and had a 24-km long supply convoy. The peacetime organisation and training were not appropriate to war. 'Court influences had indeed caused damage in this respect', claimed Theodor von Zeynek.<sup>757</sup> However, it was not only the bulky nature of the cavalry formations that had forced the cavalry to dismount. Its weaponry and code of action were out of date. When during the fighting around Telatyn on 6 September the Russians were forced back and two squadrons of the 6th Cavalry Rifle Regiment were to be sent after them, it became clear that this was an impossible task. Of the 400 riders still counted during the previous days, only 40 now still had horses that were fit to march. 'The horses had become unusable en masse due to saddle breakages, and the impossibility of tending to their hooves also led to countless casualties', noted Constantin Schneider.<sup>758</sup>

The next item in the search for an explanation concerned the insufficient preparation for the war, and the budget policies of the countries participating in the war were compared. It was clear that here, Austria fared badly, particularly badly for some weapons and branches of the military. However, this could not only be explained simply by drawing up a list of how little Austria-Hungary had spent in the pre-war years on its army (not the fleet!), how much stronger a Russian division was against an Austro-Hungarian one, and how many more pieces of artillery it had, etc.<sup>759</sup> The fact was that the artillery was frequently too weak to provide the infantry with effective covering fire, that the Imperial and Royal divisions initially had too few guns, and that a proportion of these were out of date. In the interim, a different war standard had most certainly arisen in this area, too, and Austria-Hungary was catching up – as indeed it must. The problem was that the first months had had such a devastating effect on the whole operation that they could no longer be made good.

The technical troops, the telegraph and telephone departments, were regarded as being above any praise, and the same applied to the pioneers. Very little attention was usually paid to the supply convoy and the entire mechanism for supplying provisions, although it was precisely this that was frequently the *nervus rerum*.

There are naturally many factors that make a comparison between branches of the military and troops far more problematic, since the major differences were due not only to the difficulty and length of the battles, but also the varying assessments of the troops by their commanders, and here the national composition naturally played a significant role, as did that of the officer corps in particular. Since, however, most officers were of German or Hungarian origin, or at least were counted among these nationalities, the suspicion of an unbalanced judgement cannot be dismissed. This would ultimately also be reflected in the written documents about the war, particularly in the work of the General Staff on Austria-Hungary's final war, which was completed in 1938 and which

focussed on the achievements and fates of the German Austrian regiments, although without brushing aside the other nationalities outright. Even so, the fact that they were not to be valued in the same way as the German or Hungarian troops is subtly evident from millions of data and the accounts of hundreds of thousands of individual events. In actual fact, there were marked differences. Yet these were the result of numerous factors, some of which extended back to many years before the war. Here, the nationalities issue played a particular role.

There were however also other, more banal reasons that determined the impression made by a troop, such as the behaviour of superiors. Trust and concern bound together; incompetent leadership, excessive severity and maltreatment led to rejection. The location and type of operation also played a part, as did the branches of the military and accordingly the experiences gathered. Occasionally, everyone was overtaxed, although ultimately, every member of any branch of the military and every soldier of every regiment could claim that the war had demanded that they give their all. In the verdict of the post-war years, however, the reports read very differently. And even during the war, differentiations were already constantly being made.

Already during transportation to the theatres of war, it is conceivable that differences emerged, or at least perceptions varied: here, there was cheering, and elsewhere none; here, people jostled forward to give the soldiers 'donations of love', while this was not the case elsewhere. The (Viennese) Infantry Regiment No. 4, the 'Hoch und Deutschmeister', was greeted by crowds of people right through to Přerov (Prerau). Women and girls gave the soldiers gifts and threw baked goods and flowers into the trains even while they were departing. In Galicia, there was no reception, and no food. The summary of one person present was that the Poles did not care about the soldiers.<sup>760</sup> This was an isolated observation.

Then came the first battles, the first losses, the first successes, the first reports of the failure of entire troop bodies or of their component parts to do their duty. Commanders were interrogated, and reported of the hardships, of the scorching heat in Serbia in which the troops marched for days on end, receiving hardly any food or drink and suffering from thirst before being taken directly into battle against the enemy. They gave reports of the dust and then the rain in Galicia, which made advancing a torture. During night attacks, which were successful since no guard posts had been set up, panic erupted, and entire units fled and had with great effort to be gathered together again. Officers, including commanding generals, failed in their duty and were dismissed. Then the next mishap occurred. The supreme commanders made attempts to improve matters, in the north as well as in the south, with severity and exemplary punishments. When on 20 September 1914 the fortress commander of Kraków (Krakau), Major General Karl Kuk, reported that the 95th Landsturm Brigade, which had been replenished from other locations including Pisek and České Budějovice (Budweis), was 'so utterly unre-

liable that the fortress could become dangerous', the Army High Command promptly responded with the order: 'Landsturm Regiments 28 and 29 to be made fit for war through the influence of their commanders and rigorous application of martial law for high treason, mutiny, cowardice and self-mutilation. Report immediately regarding the attitude of the regiments'. Ten days later, the commander of the brigade, Colonel Carl Piasecki, presented the requested report. This told a different story, however: the soldiers in his brigade, predominantly somewhat older men, had not even been familiar with the Steyr-Mannlicher M 95 rifle. They would have needed at least four weeks of training in order to refresh their military skills. Instead, the brigade was already sent to the front on 30 August, had suffered severe losses during the heavy fighting and above all during the retreats, and was demoralised. Furthermore, the officers, who were mostly reserve officers, had not been enlisted for weapons training for years. The Landsturm formations should in fact not have been deployed at all, not only for these reasons, but also because they were poorly armed and were only equipped with a small amount of artillery. However, in order to meet the superior Russian might, the Army High Command had seen no other option but to send anyone to the front who was capable of carrying a rifle. In Piasecki's opinion, the men in his brigade may have been 'clumsy and indolent', but he saw 'no trace of reluctance'.<sup>761</sup>

Many direct superiors, who were requested to justify the failure of their troops, reacted in a similar manner. They found highly plausible excuses and almost without exception sought to protect their soldiers. Here, it was not to be avoided, however, that reference was made by higher-ranking superiors and commanders to troop and army bodies that had been sent to war under similar circumstances and had given no cause for complaint. Even so, ultimately everyone was aware of the fact that while individual observations were possible, no summary judgement could be made without at least taking a longer view to the domestic policy and social conditions of the crown lands and reinforcement regions from which the soldiers of a regiment originally came. Here, there were particular features that naturally stood out.

*Ruthenian* soldiers were often regarded as Russophile. They usually came from eastern Galicia and constituted the majority of the troops of the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 9, 24, 58, 77 and 95. They were part of the X and XI Corps. Then there were also Landwehr Infantry Regiments 20, 35 and 36 and the Uhlan Regiments Nos. 4, 7 and 8, in which most of the troops were Ruthenians. All other Ruthenian soldiers were distributed across other regiments and the different branches of the military without making up a significant share.<sup>762</sup> The language of the regiments was Ukrainian. Many Ruthenians had been hired as seasonal workers or pedlars with household goods and iron wire in the USA. In order to follow the call-up, they first had to return home. At the beginning of August, the passenger ships calling at the southern European ports and above all those of the neutral countries, were overcrowded. Then, the usual ritual



took place of enlistment and the assignment to the replacement troop bodies. Since those who were returning home usually spoke very good English, while their commanders spoke little Ruthenian, this led to the curious circumstance that some soldiers found it easier to communicate in English than in another language.<sup>763</sup> Carl Bardolff wrote in his memoirs that in Galicia, the oaths were taken in five languages.<sup>764</sup> The troops were then sent straight to the front.

When it came to 'ranking' reliability, the soldiers in the East Galician regiments came out badly. On 7 December 1914, Major General Peter Hofmann reported that the cases of Ruthenians in his area of command surrendering without being injured were increasing. They were clearly not only tired of the war, but had also succumbed to Russian propaganda, which promised that they would immediately be released to the areas occupied by the Russians if they surrendered voluntarily.<sup>765</sup> On 24 March 1915, the commander of the XVII Corps, General of Infantry Křitek, reported that evidently larger portions of the 11th Infantry Division, which was formed mainly from East Galician regiments, had given themselves up to the Russians without resistance. Křitek wanted to withdraw the division, but the army commander, General Boroević, immediately rejected the proposal and replied in the almost stereotypical manner: the insubordinate elements were to be proceeded against 'with the harshest measures'. What this was designed to achieve for the deserters was unclear. Among the Imperial and Royal Uhlan Regiment No. 4, Russophile propaganda was disseminated. In this case, the officers who had failed to put a stop to it were identified as being responsible. Aside from this, 'unreliable people' were also to be sent 'to the front at all costs', in order not to be 'rewarded for high treason'.

In the case of the Ruthenians, the behaviour adopted towards the enemy did not come about by accident. The Ruthenians living to the east of the San River and in northern Bukovina regarded themselves as pawns of the major powers. Their Russophile tendency, which had already become stronger in the years prior to the war, was however brought about at least in equal measure by Russia and the Poles in Galicia. It was not only the case that the Ruthenians felt disadvantaged in comparison with the Poles, but were in fact so in reality. The Compromise Agreement, which was modelled on the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, and which they had almost had in their grasp just before the start of the war, was no longer realised. Separating factors were language, religion and economic development, in which the Ruthenians were also disadvantaged. This provided fertile ground for exerting influence.

Right at the start of the war, at the request of Tsar Nicholas II, Vitaliy, the archimandrite of the monastery of Novy Pochayiv in Volhynia, called on the members of the Orthodox Church in Galicia and Bukovina to defect. The archimandrite, who had been making efforts for years to encourage Greek-Orthodox worshippers to convert to Russian Orthodoxy, produced an exhortation, which was couched in religious terms.

Tens of thousands of copies were disseminated as a handbill, in which he released the Russian Orthodox members of the Imperial and Royal Army from their 'involuntary oath taken to the Austrian Emperor' and demanded that they join the army of the true believers.<sup>766</sup> Without doubt, the advance of the Russians in Galicia presented opportunities for them to do so.

Even so, the Ruthenian troops initially behaved in an exemplary manner, and there was no failure to do their duty. However, the situation changed after the first heavy losses. East Galicia had to be given up, and for the Ruthenian regiments, the bond to their homeland was severed. They also received no more replacements from their reinforcement districts, since these were now occupied.

In September 1914, the relocation of the Russophile Landsturm Infantry Regiment No. 19 from Przemyśl to Vienna was ordered, 'since this regiment [has shown itself] to be entirely unreliable'. At the beginning of December, the commander of the army group named after him, General of Cavalry Pflanzer-Baltin, made an application for the successive replacement of between 6,000 and 7,000 men 'of Ruthenian, less reliable troops on the southern wing of the eastern front through other regiments'.<sup>767</sup>

The effects of the situation in East Galicia and above all the impossibility of replenishing the troop bodies that were being reinforced there even extended as far as Hungary. On 20 February 1915, the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) Minister, Baron Hazai, attempted to obtain the agreement of the Hungarian Cabinet to distribute 48,000 soldiers who had been medically examined for military service in Hungary among the two Galician corps. In principle, he said, it was a matter for the Austrians to compensate for the loss of replacement reservists and recruits from Galicia, but there was currently no opportunity to do so in Cisleithania. As a result of the emergency situation, Magyar assistance was needed. The Council of Ministers agreed to distribute the medically examined soldiers among Infantry Regiments 10, 40, 45, 89 and 90 (all from X Corps) and Infantry Regiments 24 and 41 and Light Infantry Battalion 27. They were expressly to be identified as 'auxiliary troops'.<sup>768</sup>

However, the troubles with the Ruthenians were only partly related to the soldiers. The problem was the civilian population, from whom military movements were already to be concealed as far as possible at the end of August. It had to be acknowledged that the Austro-Hungarian troops were shot at from the houses of civilians during their retreat. The command of the III Corps ('Graz') became convinced that the area around Horodok ('Groddeck') 'is almost solely Russophile', as the commanding general Emil Colerus-Geldern reported. The reaction to this and similar incidents was to hang or shoot the suspects.

The reference to the large number of collaborators was a highly welcome explanation for the defeats suffered. And when an information brochure describing the Russophilia among part of the Galician population and intended for Russian troops fell into the

hands of the Evidenzbüro (military intelligence service), the explanatory model appeared to be perfect.<sup>769</sup>

The Ruthenians had to fight against numerous nationalist prejudices and stereotypes, and among their Polish compatriots in particular, they did not enjoy a good reputation. However, those who held negative views felt justified in their prejudices by the type of behaviour demonstrated by Ruthenian troops at the end of January and beginning of February 1915 during fighting at the foot of the Beskid Mountains for the important railway station of Medzilaborce (Mezólaborcz). The authors of the work of the Austrian General Staff, despite their recognition of the physical hardships and overstrain, summarised the events as follows: among the troops, 'an alarming mood crept in: apathy and dullness as a result of the excessive strain from the demands being made. This manifested itself in a range of different shades; understandably among the formations of Slav nationality, who were fighting against their blood brothers, it was stronger than elsewhere. And precisely the protection of the area around Medzilaborce, which is of vital importance, was entrusted to two Galician divisions.'<sup>770</sup> These were the 24th and the 2nd Infantry Divisions, the first of which, together with Infantry Regiments No. 9 and No. 77 was indeed made up of around 70 per cent Ruthenians, while the 2nd Infantry Division was a mixture of Poles and Ruthenians. The assessment may not have made any differentiation, but it certainly sufficed as a confirmation of stereotypical behaviour.

The Ruthenians for their part also had reason to complain, however, and ultimately justified themselves in a memorandum that was presented to the Army High Command by what was known as the 'General Ukrainian National Assembly'. The authors claimed that the Imperial and Royal Army lacked sufficient orientation when it came to the national, political, religious and social circumstances in Galicia. The patriotism, which was by all means prevalent, had not been exploited. Those Ukrainians who were true to the state and the dynasty had also been placed under suspicion indiscriminately. Attempts to call a halt to this state of affairs had been unsuccessful. The National Assembly accused the Polish governor Witold Korytowski of systematically persecuting the Ukrainians. As if that were not enough: 'The Hungarian troops treated the Ukrainian population in a particularly hostile manner. They spared neither goods nor chattels, nor religious feelings, nor the sense of shame of the women nor the honour of the men. [...] In the interim, it cannot yet be determined how many innocent citizens were shot or hanged without a legal trial and without evidence, simply on the basis of a denunciation that was accepted without any examination [...] how many villages were burned to the ground [...] how many people were arrested and tormented. [...] There were mass executions of men, women and even children, and this also in areas in which there was not a single Russophile.' Hundreds of innocent Ukrainians were 'arrested on suspicion of treason, maltreated, bloodily beaten, and interned for many long months in Talerhof

or elsewhere among the dirt and vermin'. Here, a further problem was addressed: the Ruthenians who had fled, together with those who had been deliberately evacuated from the hinterland of the front, were brought to refugee camps, of which Graz-Thalerhof was the most notable (see Chapter 26). Certainly, at least at times, it was more like a concentration camp. The memorandum of the Ukrainian National Assembly continued: the Imperial and Royal Army bore responsibility for the entire situation, not least because it was taken in by the 'highly treasonous Polish informants', whose aim was to 'present all Ruthenians as a treacherous mob'.

There were several other similar memoranda. Aside from the Poles, the Jews were also the subject of serious accusations.<sup>771</sup> For this form of assignment of blame and justification, nationalistic attitudes and prejudice naturally played at least as important a role as the facts, however.

The *Poles*, who were not regarded by the Ruthenians with much sympathy, were for their part in a contradictory situation: as Poles, they fought to overcome the division of their country that had lasted for over a hundred years; as Austrian Poles, their task was to fight the Russian 'hereditary enemy'. Both bordered on the incompatible.

The Poles represented the majority of the troops in the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 13, 20, 40, 56, 57 and 90. They constituted the major part of the Uhlan Regiments 1, 2, 3 and 6 and the Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 16, 32 and 34. They were also distributed around numerous other regiments and all branches of the military. They had created a further trump card with the establishment of legions, or voluntary formations. The legionnaires under Piłsudski took the Landsturm oath and certainly proved their worth. This was not altered by the fact that the Russians also established legions and gave them the task of participating in the 'expulsion of the Prussians'.<sup>772</sup> Those who were inclined to support the Russians went over to their side during the months of occupation of large parts of Galicia. In May 1915, the troops suddenly departed, usually in haste. Ultimately, there was undoubtedly relief among the Army High Command that the Russophile Poles in Galicia had fled and perhaps also joined the legionnaires under Roman Dmowski, since this meant the evaporation of at least one insecurity factor. And there was just as little doubt as to the willingness of Piłsudski's legionnaires to fight as to the competence of the 'Polish' regiments. The picture only changed, albeit not dramatically, with the march formations. The replacement reservists tended to shirk from their duties in the Imperial and Royal regiments and the Imperial-Royal Landwehr, and instead sought to join the legions. They regarded themselves as freedom fighters and occasionally decided to fight for Austria more to protect their interests than from emotional ties. This explained their behaviour in the war for several reasons simultaneously. The Austrian Poles regarded the Russians as the great obstacle to gaining at least partial state independence. In this contest between the powers, Germany as an ally of the Habsburg Monarchy was accepted as a necessary evil

on the side of Austria. However, for the Austrian Poles, the contrast to the Ruthenians played a particular and emotional role. For Poles and Ruthenians alike, the war of 1914 and the first half of 1915 had an equalising effect to the extent that it raged in their country. And this had a wide range of different consequences. In terms of quantity, the Ruthenians came out significantly worse. Their homeland was occupied in its entirety, and this applied not only to Galicia, but also to Bukovina. Here, also, the settlement areas of three nationalities merged, with a Romanian population joining that of the Ruthenians and Germans. The south-eastern corner of Bukovina, particularly the area around Kolomyia (Kolomea), was regarded as Russophile. 'The country was swarming with Russian agents, the concept of the state had not filtered through to the population, the level of intelligence of the Ruthenians and Romanians was extremely low. [...] One was in fact "half in Asia"', claimed Theodor von Zeynek, who consciously avoided mentioning the German Austrian section of the population.<sup>773</sup> At the end of the day, the soldiers were a reflection of their country.

This naturally also applied to the *Romanians* and their share of the Imperial and Royal Army. Only a small portion of them originated from Bukovina, while most came from Transylvania. Their reinforcement districts were Oradea (Nagyvárd/Großwardein), Bela Crkva (Fehértemplom/Ungarisch Weißkirchen), Alba Iulia (Gyula Fehérvár/Karlsburg), Sibiu (Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt) and Cluj-Napoca (Kolosvár/Klausenburg). The Romanians constituted the majority of the troops of Infantry Regiments No. 31, 43, 50, 51, 63 and 64. They belonged to the VII and the XII Corps. There were no Landwehr regiments with an over-proportionate share of Romanians, although Romanians were present in large numbers in the Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 2, 4, 12, 21, 23 and 32. For the cavalry of the Common Army, only the Imperial and Royal Dragoon Regiment No. 9 had a fifty per cent share of Romanians. The Honvéd Hussar Regiment No. 10 was almost entirely Romanian, as were the Honvéd Field Artillery Regiments No. 2 and in particular, No. 6.

The Romanians had already been regarded with a certain degree of suspicion before the war. The Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza had still demanded on 24 May 1914 from the Imperial and Royal War Minister Krobotin that Infantry Regiments No. 31 ('Nagyszeben') and 64 ('Broos') be replaced by Hungarian or German regiments. Krobotin had ordered the necessary assessments to be made, but had then replied to Tisza that there was no reason to doubt the reliability of the officers and the men of both regiments. He claimed that only the reserve troops were a problem. In particular, the district school inspector of Rădăuți (Radautz), Dorimedont Vlad, exerted a negative influence over the people living in his immediate homeland area; he was the soul of the Romanian movement. However, relocating the regiments was out of the question.

The mobilisation and departure of the troops had then also been completed smoothly. Romania, which was in fact allied to the Central Powers, at least remained neutral, and

it could still be hoped for a longer period of time that ultimately, it would enter the war on the side of Austria-Hungary. It therefore also made little sense to flee to Romania. This notwithstanding, several dozens of conscripts broke away who were not willing to fight for Austria, and certainly not for Hungary. As a precautionary measure, the surveillance measures for the passes and transit points leading to Romania had been intensified, since the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Romania, Count Ottokar Czernin, had after all reported the arrival of deserters in September 1914: 'In Sinaia, small groups of Austro-Hungarian deserters have been arriving for some time. Yesterday, for example, I saw 20 men, two of whom were in uniform, who were apparently from Braşov (Kronstadt)'. Three of them were officers. Most of them were Romanians living in Hungary, although they were members of the Hungarian-Slovakian Infantry Regiment No. 12, which was garrisoned in Komárno (Komorn).<sup>774</sup>

Away from the border regions, a picture emerged that was also familiar from Poland and above all from the Bohemian crown lands: numerous teachers, lawyers and members of the intelligentsia attracted attention with nationalistic statements, and in some cases were directly agitating, so that finally, at the end of 1914, according to a report on conditions in Transylvania: 'Should Romania collapse, we cannot count on the loyalty of the population.'<sup>775</sup> The military commander of Sibiu, Major General Ernst Mattanović, gave the order at the end of November that military discipline was to be 'rigorously' maintained, and that in particular, no further care at home was to be granted for the numerous cases of illness, since it had emerged that the convalescing soldiers had attempted to flee to Romania in increasing numbers. During the following month, Mattanović began to proceed against shirkers with the full severity of the law, and to search for them with military patrols. However, the order achieved little. Finally, on 20 December, martial law was declared for deserters. This produced a result. Equally effective – and perhaps far more so – were measures that should in fact have been taken as a matter of course, namely to take more care to use officers who spoke Romanian and to emphasise particular achievements such as the bravery of Infantry Regiment No. 31, which consisted mainly of Romanians, in the fighting in the Przedbórz area on 17 December 1914.

The Romanians in Bukovina were particularly loyal, and in 1914 even demanded from King Carol I of Romania that he enter the war on the side of Austria against the 'true enemy of the Romanian people', the Russians.<sup>776</sup>

In a similar way to the Romanians living in the Habsburg Monarchy, the *Italians* were regarded with a mixture of disappointment and hope. When Italy declared its neutrality in July 1914, the news was greeted with disappointment, and sometimes – and here, Conrad von Hötzendorf was an excellent example – with restrained fury. It would remain to be seen whether the position taken by the Kingdom of Italy would also affect the Italians in the Habsburg Monarchy. The sceptics certainly felt vindicated

when Infantry Regiment No. 97 ('Triest') displayed little willingness to fight, and several hundreds of soldiers were sent back 'due to cowardice', before being found guilty and distributed among Hungarian and Croatian regiments. However, this was regarded as an exception.

Major General Franz von Rohr, who was given the task of securing the border with Italy, reported only 17 deserting soldiers from the Common Army at the beginning of 1915: two Landwehr officers and 68 members of the Landwehr and the Landsturm of Italian origin who had fled. There were also 68 deserters and soldiers who had abandoned their posts from the Trento (Trient) fortress command area. For a time, it was debated whether mandatory passport checks should be introduced for people travelling to and from the crown lands bordering Italy. However, due to the fear of negative effects on how such a measure would be perceived in Italy, the plan was dropped.<sup>777</sup> At first, the deserters and soldiers who had abandoned their posts did not really make much difference. The Italians were in most cases used in the formation of the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Tyrolean Rifle Regiments Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, where they constituted around 40 per cent of the troops. Their share in the Tyrolean Standing Infantry Battalions II and III was similarly high. The rifle regiments and standing infantry battalions enjoyed a particularly high reputation for courage and bravado that was in no way undermined by the behaviour of the Italians. Only during April and May 1915 did it become necessary to monitor them more closely. A directory of deserters, soldiers who had escaped muster and 'Welsch Tyroleans' from the Italian South Tyrol region gave around 9,000 names, of which around half were deserters. Most of them came from the imperial rifle regiments and here a particularly large number came from the 4th Regiment. However, the Tyrolean territorial infantry battalions would later be included more frequently in the list. Among the soldiers abandoning their posts were a particularly large number of farmers.<sup>778</sup> The fact that Damiano Chiesa, son of a member of the Tyrolean Landtag (regional diet) and finally the member of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly), Cesare Battisti, absconded to Italy, had a signal effect certainly on Italy, but least of all on Austria-Hungary, and the change in the political situation and ultimately the entry of Italy into the war appeared to have almost no effect on the reliability of those troops with a higher share of Italians fighting in Russia, as well as those who were later deployed against Italy. There, it was of far greater importance that the reliability could be counted on of the 3,400 *Standschützen* (members of rifle companies) of Italian origin, and that young men from Trieste (Triest) who were loyal to the Emperor were joining a 'Youth Rifle Battalion'.<sup>779</sup>

Far less predictable than the Romanians and Italians in Austria-Hungary was the behaviour of the Austrian *Serbs*. At the beginning of the war, they were in a most unfortunate position, since being Serb and yet having to fight against Serbia amounted to a crucial test. During the weeks between the assassination in Sarajevo and the be-

ginning of the war, there had also been a huge wave of anti-Serbian resentment. One only had to look at the rampaging of the Bosnians and Croats to have corresponding fears about the will to fight and the reliability of those troop bodies that contained a significant share of Serbs. And how a petition was to be judged in which Serbs true to the Habsburg Monarchy requested that 'they be sent to the front and allowed to fight against Serbia in order to prove to their Emperor that they have nothing to do with the murder' remained to be seen.<sup>780</sup> Given the situation, it did in reality appear to be an imperative of the hour not to deploy the Serbs in the Balkan theatre of war. However, things turned out differently, and later the high-ranking Imperial and Royal officers would still be constantly surprised that the 'Croatian-Serbian heroes, despite all temptations offered by the enemy, not only stood their ground, but also performed acts of heroism of ancient classical proportions'.<sup>781</sup> The Serbs represented 79 per cent of the troops of Infantry Regiment No. 70 ('Peterwaradein'). The regiment was divided into three infantry divisions: the 7th, 18th and 32nd, which in turn belonged to three different corps, although all three were initially used in the Balkan theatre of war. For Infantry Regiments No. 6, 29 and 86, the share of Serbs was low, and the officers had already vouched for the reliability of their troops before the war. There was also a higher proportion of Serbs among the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 8. For the Imperial-Royal Landwehr, however – as was the case with the Romanians – there was not a single regiment that had any significant share of Serbs. Equally, there was not one cavalry regiment with Serbian troops.

The Serbs deployed in the XIII Corps were said to be behaving courageously.<sup>782</sup> It then emerged, however, that the Serbs did not remain immune to developments. And the concerns about their reliability increased to the same degree as the number of atrocities in this theatre of war on both sides. The Balkan High Command reacted to reports claiming that Imperial and Royal Army troops who were taken prisoner had their noses, ears, and even arms and legs cut off, and that they had been bestially murdered, with drastic reprisals, hostage-taking and executions. If shots were fired from a house, the inhabitants were driven together and shot, and the house was set on fire.<sup>783</sup>

Actions such as those witnessed during the brief Serbian invasion in Semlin in September 1914 also added to the mistrust of the Serbian population within Austria-Hungary. In Semlin, the Serbian troops had been greeted with flowers and flags, and already on the day before the rapid clearance of the town, the main street had been renamed after King Petar and a Serbian mayor had been installed. On 13 September, the Serbophiles fled across the Sava River together with the retreating Royal Serbian soldiers. The second offensive of the Imperial and Royal troops then put an end to the invasion. However, the mistrust remained and appeared to be vindicated when – according to a description given by Alfred Krauß, then commander of the 'Combined Corps' – two companies of a Landsturm brigade crossed over to the Royal Serbian troops during the



battle on the Kolubara River in November. After all the active officers in the brigade had been injured, it was a reserve officer, who in his civilian profession was a lawyer in Sremska Mitrovica (Mitrovitz), who succeeded in persuading the two companies to change sides.

It was quite clear that the Serbian leadership was keen to persuade southern Slav soldiers to desert, and this already became evident at the end of September 1914 from a captured order from the Serbian 2nd Army.<sup>784</sup> However, in general, there was only a small number of units with a large share of Serbs that gave cause for disciplinary measures. If an inclination to desert or even of any significant degree of dissatisfaction was registered, however, it was also of little use to deploy the Serbian soldiers of the Imperial and Royal Army in Russia. It was therefore proposed that the Serbs be used primarily in labour battalions and in the army areas to the rear.

All the problems associated with the nationalities issue in the broadest sense appeared to be overshadowed by the behaviour of the *Czechs*, however. After the first incidents, they almost immediately attracted the attention of all the military and civilian authorities. Since the Czechs living in Bohemia and Moravia constituted around 13 per cent of the soldiers of Austria-Hungary, it was certainly no small matter that they had a reputation for failing in their duty, and for being disobedient and even cowardly. They did after all form a share of more than two-thirds in 25 regiments of the Common Army and in 13 regiments of the Imperial-Royal Landwehr, while certain regiments could be regarded as being fully Czech. This applied above all to Imperial and Royal Regiments No. 3, 8, 11, 18, 21, 28, 36, 35, 75, 81, 88, 98 and 102, as well as 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalions No. 2, 6, 12, 17 and 25. The same was also true of Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 25, 28 and 30. While dozens of other troop bodies also contained a lower share of Czech soldiers, their presence was still significant. However, one limitation also applied in every case: it was among the enlisted men that such a high share of Czech troops was to be found, but not among the professional officers. The share of Czechs among the officer corps of the Imperial and Royal Army was noticeably low before the war, and totalled between around five and eight per cent, or in absolute figures, between 900 and 1,400 professional soldiers.<sup>785</sup> Since this share was only exceeded to any significant degree by the Slovaks, in relation to them, the explanation given was that the Slovaks had an unusually low proportion of officers due to the fact that they lacked a section of society from which officers and aspirant officers were usually recruited, namely the civil service and (large) landowners.<sup>786</sup> When it came to the Czechs, such an explanation bore no weight, however. It was simply the case that 'one' did not become an Imperial and Royal officer. This type of noncompliance also applied to the reserve officers, among whom the Czechs had an even lower share than their normal statistical level.

Incidents had already occurred on repeated occasions long before the war. During the annexation crisis of 1908, there had been mutinies in Infantry Regiment No. 36.

In České Budějovice, conflicts had arisen. Severe nationalistic tensions led to the relocation of parts of the Prague 'House Regiment', Infantry Regiment No. 28, to Tyrol. During the partial mobilisation that took place in the course of the first Balkan War, reservists in Imperial and Royal Dragoon Regiment No. 8 ('Pardubice') and Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 18 ('Königgrätz') had refused to board the trains that were to take them to Galicia. In 1914, however, the mobilisation and departure of the predominantly Czech speaking regiments ran almost without incident. Indeed, the first reports of the fighting by regiments from Bohemia appeared to lay all the concerns to rest. Infantry Regiment No. 102 ('Beneschau'), in which 91 per cent of the troops came from Bohemia, was one of the first troop bodies to be mentioned with praise in the army report following the battle on the Jadar River. Infantry Regiment No. 28 had also distinguished itself as part of the 3rd Infantry Division in the battle at Komarów.<sup>787</sup> The XVII Corps finally reported that during the second advance by the Russians across the San River between 18 and 23 October, the Imperial and Royal 19th Infantry Division, which consisted for the most part of Czech soldiers, had been the best in measuring up to expectations of all three corps divisions. Like all troop bodies, those from Bohemia and Moravia also suffered high losses during the initial battles of the war.

However, there were also reports of a different nature. For example, the 21st Landwehr Infantry Division, which consisted mainly of Czechs, with Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 7, 8 and 9 ('Eger', 'Pilsen' and 'Prague'), gained itself a reputation when there were already cases of panic flight, surrender and self-mutilation among its soldiers in the first days of the war in Serbia (see Chapter 7). The result was the imposition of martial law twice due to cowardice. At the end of September 1914, the War Surveillance Office was obliged to turn its attention to an account given by one Wenzel Houska, who claimed to have observed 17 cases of soldiers arranging for the comrades to shoot into the soft parts of their hands and feet in order to avoid having to be sent to the front with a march battalion. In order to cover over the traces, the shots were fired through *Komissbrot* (army bread). The military command in Prague was to investigate the incidents.

At the beginning of October 1914, the Imperial-Royal War Ministry asked the governorship in Prague to report on the apparently critical mood in Bohemia. While no direct pro-Serbian or pro-Russian demonstrations had been called, reports of successes for the enemy had been received with satisfaction. In Tabor, unpleasant incidents had occurred during the conscription of the Landsturm. The cases of disloyalty that had occurred even before the war had increased to an alarming degree, and so it went on.

The governorship in Prague immediately presented the requested report, claiming that in no single district of Bohemia could anything negative be observed. Claims made by Russian newspapers in August, which had then been reprinted in the London *Times* and the *New York Times*, according to which there had been an uprising in

Prague and the Vltava River had turned red with Czech blood,<sup>788</sup> became a parody of themselves. The Governor of Bohemia, Prince Franz Thun-Hohenstein, also had no trouble in describing the mood among the population of his crown land as 'irreproachable'. The Prince could also not restrain himself from making a sideswipe: since the army 'was concentrating on moving backwards', those with Russophile tendencies would naturally have been given new impetus and would spread word about the victories of the Russian Army. Overall, this was of no significance, however.<sup>789</sup> And anyway, Russian proclamations had been disseminated by a man who was proven to be of unsound mind, and rumours of the imminent ceremonial entry into Prague by the Tsar were also unfounded. For the time being, the War Surveillance Office had to satisfy itself with this information, as did the Ministry of the Interior. The analysts made their doubts as to the accuracy of the report extremely clear through countless comments.<sup>790</sup> For example, notifications had been received from Olomouc (Olmütz) claiming that in the communities bordering the Přerov (Prerau), Prostějov (Proßnitz) and Litovel (Littau) districts, there certainly were significant Russophile tendencies.<sup>791</sup> It appeared not to be as calm as the governor had claimed after all. The area around Olomouc also emerged during the period that followed as a centre of Czech nationalism and resistance against the imperial military authorities, until finally the relocation of the replacement battalion of Light Infantry Regiment No. 13 from Olomouc to Hungary was considered as a last resort.<sup>792</sup> However, far more alarming than the reports coming from the Bohemian crown lands were the messages coming from the troop commanders.

During the battle near Lviv (Lemberg) / Horodok in mid-September 1914, as Theodor von Zeynek noted, the position of the northern wing of the 4th Army became untenable, since the 10th Infantry Division (Infantry Regiments No. 36, 98, 18, 21 and Light Infantry Battalions No. 2 and 12) had failed in its duty.<sup>793</sup> In Zeynek's view, the division had been indoctrinated by the leader of the Czech nationalists, Václav Klobáček, although here he was mistaken in that the regiments that were the subject of complaint came from northern Bohemia, whilst Klobáček was responsible for Prague.

On 27 October the XI Army Corps reported that the excessively high losses from the previous day were primarily due to the fact that six companies of Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau') and divisions of Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 30 ('Hohenmauth') had surrendered without sustained fighting. This was indirectly confirmed by the Russians, who also reported on the 27th that 1,500 Czech prisoners of war had been brought to Lviv and that they were very relieved that they no longer had to fight against the Russians.<sup>794</sup>

At the end of November, the Serbs succeeded in an incursion against the 29th Infantry Division, which was advancing towards Belgrade, which could only be made good thanks to the bravery of two Hungarian Landsturm regiments. 'Unfortunately, the cause of this debacle was the poor behaviour of Czech March Regiment No. 15',

noted Brigadier of Artillery Eduard Zanantoni. '2 of their battalions (88 from Beroun and 75 from Jindřichův Hradec) went over to the enemy without offering resistance, as was their duty. Martial law was imposed on the remainder of the regiment and it was withdrawn from the front line of battle.'<sup>795</sup>

The Commander of the IX Corps, General of Artillery Friedel, finally proposed to the Army High Command on 26 November not only that punishments should be given as an example, but also that all Czech replacement troops be divided among German and Hungarian regiments, and that from that point on, the Czech regiments should be assigned only German and Hungarian replacements.<sup>796</sup> He also recommended that repatriated prisoners of war be penalised by being made to serve for an additional three years. Friedel was not alone in making this demand. This aside, however, the military and civilian authorities began to blame each other for the lack of discipline and the failure of troops to do their duty. For the Army High Command, the matter was clear: the responsibility lay with the Governor of Bohemia and to a certain extent with the Imperial-Royal Ministry of the Interior. For the latter, the opposite argument applied, and Interior Minister Baron Heinold responded to the accusations made by the Army High Command simply by saying that the cases reported from Bohemia and Moravia were only individual incidents. The problem was the 'lax attitude of the military courts', with the large number of acquittals leaving the population with the impression that one could in any case get away with anything. The Landsturm courts were not adequately staffed, he claimed, and many Landsturm auditors from the civilian population were 'not nationally unbiased'.<sup>797</sup> However, they did agree that agitation from abroad played a role, and that the Professor of Philosophy Thomáš G. Masaryk in particular, who had left Austria in mid-December 1914, was giving impetus to the irredentism.

Masaryk brought together the groups of Czech émigrés in France and England, and finally united them in January 1915 to form the 'Czechoslovak National Assembly'. His aim was to create an independent Czechoslovak state. Masaryk only experienced a setback in Switzerland, where the agitation of the émigré organisations was prohibited and their obstinate leader was threatened with expulsion. The 'National Assembly' therefore published its first anti-Austrian manifesto in Paris in mid-February and expressed its demands very clearly: 'We charge Franz Joseph of the House of Habsburg-Lothringen as an enemy of the Slavs and the Czech nation, unworthy to continue to bear the title of King of Bohemia, and we shall insist that he and the entire House of Habsburg-Lothringen forfeit all claims to the lands of the Bohemian crown. The Czech nation [...] cannot do otherwise than to discard this treacherous, perjured king. With this document, all Czechoslovak soldiers and civil servants are freed from their oath to the Habsburgs.' The proclamation was published in the London *Times*. And even if hardly anyone living in Bohemia and Moravia knew about it, it did serve as a signal, namely to the Entente Powers. After the Russians, the French and the

British clearly also began to speculate about the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. The matter had its curious aspects to the extent that ultimately many of those who saw their salvation in Tsarist Russia were obliged to ignore their own convictions. Before the war, Russia had been regarded as a cradle for anti-democratic tendencies, as reactionary and precisely in comparison with Austria-Hungary as politically backward. Social Democrats from other countries, including Czech Social Democrats, had found their archetypal enemy par excellence in Russia. And now, it was Russia that was expected to provide if not liberation from what had become known as the Austrian yoke, then at least a political new beginning. Here, something didn't fit.

For the time being, however, the Imperial and Royal Army High Command saw no reason to ascribe the failure of Czech troops to any non-domestic cause. From December 1914, the Army High Command demanded that martial law be declared in Bohemia. In order to give more weight to its arguments, and not only to constantly present individual cases for the War Ministry and the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, it began to compile a proper dossier: 'A brief compilation regarding the evidence for subversive tendencies within a part of the population of Czech nationality'.<sup>798</sup> Dozens of cases were listed. The dossier claimed that the first evidence that an unexpectedly large number of people among the Czechs had decided 'to directly betray the fatherland, which is currently involved in heavy fighting' had already emerged on 23 August 1914 in reports published in Russian newspapers. According to these reports, voluntary Czech legions had been created in the Czech colonies in St. Petersburg and Moscow. 'The Army High Command has naturally ordered that both these individuals and the legionnaires now reported in the French theatre of war be treated in accordance with martial law if seized.' In September, it had been reported that the establishment of the Czech legions was making progress, and in December, Czechs were first discovered to be among the Russians laying siege to Przemyśl. Subsequently, the notifications from military and police authorities and 'reports of a confidential nature and relations regarding confidential persons' multiplied regarding the dissemination of Russian proclamations in Bohemia and Moravia, insults to His Majesty and all other possible manner of offences. The Russians also bragged about the increasing strength of the legion formations, which had however been formed for the most part from Czechs living in Russia, and not from prisoners of war or defectors – a fact about which no-one was aware, either in Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez) and Cieszyn (Teschen) or in Vienna.

The Army High Command naturally also claimed that it had been working since the end of November to make Bohemia subject to military jurisdiction under the Army High Command, and to introduce military court procedures in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, as well as transfer political authority to the Army Supreme Commander Archduke Friedrich. Since the reactions they had hoped for failed to materialise and, beginning with Prime Minister Stürgkh, all political decision-makers refused to ratify the

proposed measures, instead by contrast pointing out that the majority 'were fulfilling their patriotic duties', the Army High Command continued to collect material and declared in increasingly sharply-worded statements that matters could not continue in this way.

In particular, the Czechs time and again fared badly when compared to the troops of the different national origins.

Then came the *Croats*, for example. They had already made no secret of the fact, even before the war, that they aimed to resist any attempts at Magyarisation with all their strength, and that they were at one with the southern Slavs of the Monarchy, the Serbs and Slovenes, in their efforts to obtain greater rights and influence. However, quite clearly, the Croats did not hesitate to wage war against Serbia and Russia. They constituted the overwhelming majority of the troops in Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 16, 22, 53, 79 and 96, Uhlan Regiments No. 5 and 12 and Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 23 and 37, and in particular the Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 25, 26, 27 and 28. Their will to fight was regarded as being one hundred per cent, and the performance of the predominantly Croat troop bodies was repeatedly considered worthy of particular mention. There was no word of unreliability and tendency to desert. Theodor von Zeynek noted for example of the Croats on the right flank of the Carpathian Front: 'The real fighting power of the 'East' Corps was the Croat 36th Infantry Troop Division, which consisted of 4 first-class regiments with fighting experience.'<sup>799</sup>

The *Slovenes*, like the Croats, were regarded as being unconditionally willing to fight and as loyal. And this was not only due to the fact that in 1915, they found themselves increasingly confronted with Italian demands in relation to Austria-Hungary, which they also regarded as a threat in the national sense. The Slovenes constituted the majority of the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 17 and 87, and the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 7. They formed the major part of the Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 27, with an 86 per cent share, and were also strongly represented in the artillery.

The *Slovaks* and *Bosniaks* were regarded as being no less reliable than the Croats and Slovenes. The former constituted the majority of the troops in the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 67 and 71 and 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalions No. 19, 29 and in particular, 32. They formed 65 per cent of the Imperial and Royal Uhlan Regiment No. 11. Furthermore, the Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 14 and 15 could also be regarded as Slovak, and naturally, Slovaks were also to be found in varying numbers among the artillery and in all other branches of the military. It was impossible not to notice that in contrast to the Czechs, no complaints were made against Slovak troop bodies, and that they created no problems, either at the front or in the hinterland.

However, there were initially quite a number of concerns when it came to the behaviour of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian troop bodies. However, at the start of the war, the

fears appeared to be unfounded. The Bosniaks in part appeared to be fanatical warriors and made no compromises, particularly in relation to the Serbs. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Regiments No. 2 and 3 first took part in the campaign against Serbia, as did parts of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment No. 1. However, then all four Bosnian-Herzegovinian infantry regiments and the only Bosnian-Herzegovinian 'Feldjäger' light infantry battalion were deployed in Galicia. On this occasion, a battalion was again formed from the troops of the 3rd Regiment, who had originally been left behind in Budapest due to their unreliability, and this battalion was subsequently involved in all the successes and failures of the first year of the war.<sup>800</sup> Here, the Bosniaks gained a reputation for being particularly courageous.

However, it was the Hungarians and the Germans who vied for a place at the top of the loyalty pyramid and the reputation of particular bravery. The Hungarians regarded themselves as underpinning the state and for years emphasised the fact that within the half of the Empire in which they dominated, order was maintained not only through force and the suspension of common rights that had been won with considerable effort, as they occasionally reproached the 'kingdoms and lands represented in the Imperial Assembly' for doing. However, they were also the least reluctant to express their nationalism through action and already attracted attention by failing to take heed of the national sensibilities of the smaller nationalities. Complaints about the behaviour of Hungarian troops did not therefore relate to their willingness to fight, but to attacks on their own population, particularly in cases when doubts were expressed as to their loyalty to the Dual Monarchy.

The *Hungarians* were represented in fourteen infantry regiments of the Common Army, with a share of over seventy per cent (Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 19, 32, 34, 38, 39, 44, 46, 48, 60, 65, 68, 69, 86 and 101), as well as in the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 24. They more or less formed the entire Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 1, 35, 6, 9, 10, 17, 20, 29, 30 and 31, constituted the majority of the troops in the 16th Imperial and Royal Hussar Regiments, and were also represented in numerous other troops bodies and in all branches of the military in accordance with their national structure of around 23 per cent of the population. However, the share of Hungarian officers in the Common Army was very low, at just over 9 per cent. The reason for this was simple: Hungarian officers preferred to serve in the Honvéd than in the Common Army. This gave them a type of coherence which it was hoped could perhaps one day be used to the advantage of Hungary.

The Hungarians, in contrast to the Czechs, proved to be immune to Russian propaganda. Towards the end of the year in 1914, leaflets appeared claiming that the Russians were advancing towards Budapest, Vienna and Kraków. In the case of Hungary, the error of 1849 was to be made good, since the Russians now were coming not to cut Hungary down but as liberators: 'Long live the free, independent Hungary!' The

people living on the Tisza and Maros Rivers were unimpressed. By contrast, the military authorities became suspicious when they received notification that the Hungarian Landsturm had occasionally behaved as if it were on enemy territory, and the population yearned for the Russians to come to put them out of their misery.<sup>801</sup> Such complaints, which were probably not unfounded, were however not only made in relation to Hungarian troops. To a far greater extent, they could be included among the bitter grievances that were expressed time and again. In December 1914 in the Zemplén and Saros (Šariš) counties close to the front, severe objections were made due to attacks and the theft of food. Polish Uhlans, Ruthenians and Austrian dragoons were found to be guilty. They had, according to the complaints, behaved worse than the Russians.<sup>802</sup> One district administrator reported that in Bercsényfalva, members of the Landsturm Supply Convoy Battalion No. 32 had been plundering and breaking into buildings, food had been requisitioned and the horses belonging to the farmers had been taken from their harnesses in the fields. In Bercsény, Polish Landsturm soldiers had broken into apartments and stolen everything that they could carry with them, while in Uzhgorod (Ungvár), members of the Austrian Landsturm had been looting. Finally, during the retreat, 17 villages were set on fire by their own troops, and the only justification that could be given by the commanding general responsible, Major General Emil Colerus von Geldern, was that: 'When one is on the retreat, all objects that could serve as cover for the enemy must be destroyed.'<sup>803</sup>

Similar accounts and attempts at justification could probably be gathered from a large number of troop bodies and from all theatres of war, and none of the ethnic groups living in the Empire was exempted. War, the risk to life, hunger, indifference and disregard for fellow humans had a levelling effect.

The *Jews* in the Habsburg Monarchy were not regarded as a nationality in themselves, and were therefore not listed separately in the summaries of national origin among the troop bodies. They were part of the whole. Nevertheless, it was clear that they were under observation. They were distributed among almost all branches of the military and all troop bodies of the Imperial and Royal Army, and ultimately, with an estimated number of soldiers in excess of 300,000, they constituted around four per cent of the Austro-Hungarian forces. Most served in the infantry. The share of Jews among the medical groups and the supply convoys was above average. Not even anti-Semites could accuse the Jews in the Imperial and Royal Army of a tendency to desert, but they did very clearly exhibit a desire to avoid conscription.<sup>804</sup> However, the latter did not apply to Jewish reserve officers. Around one fifth of all Austro-Hungarian reserve officers was Jewish, which repeatedly led to particularly ugly comments by higher-ranking German officers during the two final years of the war, who ultimately wanted Jewish reserve and professional officers to be excluded from courses in which German and Austro-Hungarian officers jointly took part. It was completely incompre-



hensible to some Germans that anyone with a 'Moses confession', as it was known at the time, could as a Jew reach the rank of general in the Imperial and Royal Army without any further complications. The Honvéd Minister of many years who then became chief of the replacement administration for the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary, Baron Samuel von Hazai, was Jewish. Anti-Semitism, which was also frequently to be found in Austria-Hungary, was however far less targeted at the members of the Imperial and Royal Army than the Jewish refugees of Galicia, who were accused of cowardice and of profiting from the war. In this way, they were met with far greater aversion than the refugees from the east in general (see Chapter 26).

The *German Austrians* had no cause for concern regarding their acceptance and the recognition of their role in the war,<sup>805</sup> who perhaps even more than the Hungarians felt themselves to be the underpinning nation and, with a share of the population of around 25 per cent, made up most of the troops and above all most of the officers. Their death toll was therefore also enormous, and was disproportionately high in some regiments and in some theatres of war. However, from the beginning, they were somewhat more widely distributed than the troops of other nationalities. This had nothing to do with the fact that they were perhaps not entirely reliable, however, but that they were occasionally installed to bolster less reliable troop bodies and entire sections of the front. The Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiments No. 1, 4, 7, 27, 47, 49, 59, 73, 84 and 99, and 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifle Regiments No. 1, 2, 3 and 4 were considered to be German, although the latter had a share of Italians of around forty per cent. Further German regiments were the Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 15, 21, 24 and 26, 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalions No. 9 and 10 and the Tyrolean Standing Infantry Regiments I, II and III. There were also the Imperial and Royal Dragoon Regiments 3, 4 and 15, six of 42 field artillery regiments, three of 14 field howitzer regiments, telegraph, technical and pioneer troops, as well as numerous troop bodies from all branches of the military, half or more of which were recruited from German-speaking members of the Habsburg Monarchy. Their reliability and bravery were almost never doubted. A comment made somewhat in passing, such as that relating to the battle to the north of Kraków (16–26 November 1914) – 'At that time, there was a clear difference in the fighting strength between our Slav and German regiments' (Zeynek) – does perhaps serve as an example.

Except for smaller sections of some troop bodies and army components, most infantry regiments came from the German-speaking regions of Austria-Hungary into the northern theatre of war. There, they were distributed mainly among the III Corps (2nd Army), II Corps (3rd Army) and the XIV Corps (4th Army). This clearly reflected the battles and engagements to which they were assigned.

However, it was not only the German Austrian soldiers at the front who presented no cause for concern. On the home front, it could also be assumed that the people

regarded this war as being 'their own', to a large extent placing political and social demands lower down on their list of priorities and willingly accepting austerity measures and, above all, also bad news. This also was in stark contrast to the soldiers of numerous other parts of the Empire, particularly those from the Bohemian crown lands.

### The Prague 'House Regiment'

Up to the end of 1914, 950 people were arrested in Bohemia due to political offences, of whom 704 were transferred to the military courts, while 46 newspapers were closed and 32 associations were disbanded.<sup>806</sup> One particularly extreme case related to 65 incidents that were processed before the military court of the military command in Kraków at the end of 1914. The defendants, who came from Moravia, were accused of supporting the 'creation of an independent state on a pan-Slav basis with the assistance of enemy countries, particularly of Russia'. By the end of 1914, five death sentences had been passed, with 22 convictions, some with severe penalties.

The Governor of the Margraviate of Moravia, Baron Oktavian Regner von Bleyleben, was of the view that the majority of the Czech population of Moravia continued to be 'filled with untainted patriotic feelings.' A month later, however, the governorship of Brno (Brünn) intensified the surveillance measures and issued a circular decree threatening that homes of suspects would be searched, that meetings would be strictly monitored and that action would be taken against the dissemination of false news. This notwithstanding, at the end of January 1915, it was reported that 170 persons were being questioned by the Landwehr Divisional Court for Vienna due to the dissemination of Russian proclamations. This was the so-called 'Rennenkampf Proclamation' with which the Czechs had been summoned in September, October and November 1914 to receive the Russians as liberators; Bohemia, Upper Lusatia and Silesia, as well as Slovakia, were to be 'liberated'. Those who had passed it on risked a great deal. On 11 May 1915, the court reached its judgement. Six of the accused were sentenced to death by hanging, while one was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment, and three to ten years. Only 23 were acquitted of the charges in full.<sup>807</sup> In the interim, the circles had already long been identified from which those who were considered to be agitators in the general sense were being recruited: teachers and clerics, editors and officials working in legal chambers. It was no different in Bohemia, where the civilian and military authorities also acted as communicating vessels.

In Pilsen, stones were thrown at the troops of Infantry Regiment No. 48, who were on protection duty, and people shouted at a captain, calling him 'Hungarian pig'. A possibly unpatriotic mood was reported from Rokycany (Rokitzan), with a disloyal mood, albeit of a more socialist nature, from Kladno. In Ústí nad Orlicí (Wildenschw-

ert), placards had been put up abusing the Austrian Emperor and the German Kaiser, while in Hlinkso, highly treasonous inscriptions were found on conscription notices, and so it went on. Page after page, and one bundle of documents after another, were filled with notifications, reports from the War Surveillance Office, observations made by the state police and all kinds of gossip. And if this had not been a thoroughly serious problem, some of the reports could only have been regarded with humour. When at the end of June 1915 the governorship of Bohemia gave the order to fly flags in the city to mark the re-capture of Lviv, it was found that as on earlier occasions, certain buildings, as well as numerous banks, newspapers and insurance companies did raise the flag. A list of non-flagged buildings was produced. 'What is most disconcerting', the military command in Prague then reported, 'is that even a number of "court suppliers" have failed in this patriotic duty; a list of these suppliers is enclosed'. Of even less consequence was the fact that in the Karlsgasse in Prague water was poured from a window 'on to a procession of patriotic demonstrators, without the initiators being discovered by the police'.<sup>808</sup>

In the Army High Command, the reports from individual divisions, corps and armies regarding the failure of Czech troops to fulfil their duty continued to be collected.<sup>809</sup> The commander of the 13th Landwehr Infantry Division, Major General Gustav Székeli de Doba, reported on 7 January that among the march company of Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 25 ('Kremsier') there were 'elements of not entirely reliable disposition'. During the railway transport, comments such as 'We can't win this. We want peace', 'We're fighting against the Russians and we don't know why', 'Christ died for all, we're dying for one' could be heard. The division command feared that, with a Czech share of 83 per cent, the 'Landwehr regiment, [which until now has been] reliable without fail, and which has stood out for its magnificent performance in the fighting', could be corrupted by the march companies.

The 2nd Army Command reported on 14 March that following the battles, a total of 12 companies and two pieces of artillery had disappeared three days previously. Landwehr Regiment No. 7 reported to the Army High Command that replacement troops from the Pilsen area were 'of a lower moral condition', but put this down to the 'unfavourable accommodation conditions'. Brigadier Artur Edler von Mecenseffy, Commander of the 10th Infantry Division, which had already attracted attention, reported on 19 March that after the fighting, which had lasted for ten days, he felt just as vindicated in his negative judgement regarding Infantry Regiments No. 18 ('Königgrätz'), 36 ('Jungbunzlau') and 98 ('Hohenmauth') as in that regarding the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 12 ('Jungbunzlau'). The troops had failed to achieve their objectives, even though the enemy had not been superior. The losses 'particularly of those missing' had been significant. The Czech troops were only too willing to avoid the effort and hardships of the campaign 'by deserting or giving themselves up'. As a

solution, Mecenseffy proposed, for example, 'the broadest possible interspersing of the infantry regiments and light infantry battalions of the 10th Infantry Division with German and possibly also Hungarian elements [...] so that the Czechs no longer withdraw'. On 21 March, the 3rd Army Command reported that during fighting on the previous day near the village of Sukov, only around two (of 16) companies of Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 8 ('Prag') could be mustered. The Army Commander, General Boroević, wanted, as he wrote, only to make more precise enquiries, 'on the basis of which I shall disband this abysmal regiment'. On 11 March, the 4th Army Command reported that Light Infantry Battalion No. 12 had been attacked on 10 March by 'an enemy division wearing our uniforms'. A man in the uniform of Infantry Regiment No. 36 had been captured. He declared himself to be a deserter who had changed sides and had fought for the Russian Army. And on 11 March at Smolník, and finally in the so-called 'Easter Battle' in the Carpathians, the Pisek Infantry Regiment No. 11, which was part of the 29th Infantry Division, failed in its objectives. The divisional commander, Major General Zanantoni, who felt a strong connection to the regiment, noted on 7 April, more or less in a state of bewilderment, that as at Smolník, the regiment 'today also [failed] miserably. The largest share of the replenished regiment went over to the enemy'. There was talk of punishable decimation, although Zanantoni claimed that this would only affect those 'who had done their duty, albeit only passively'. Instead of administering punishment, the commander was replaced and an appeal was made to the sense of honour of the troops. 'From that day onwards, it was, and still remained, the old and courageous regiment that it had been at the outbreak of the war.'<sup>810</sup>

However, it was evidently not only any one regiment or division that repeatedly gave cause for alarming reports, but many. And it was not only the Army High Command that was busily collecting information about the behaviour of the Czechs in the war. This was naturally also of interest to the allies. One of the first reports of the French Deuxième Bureau, the foreign intelligence service, which dealt with Austria-Hungary, ascertained in December 1914 that the Czechs were less heroic and had a greater tendency to surrender than was the case with other troop bodies.<sup>811</sup>

In mid-March 1915, complaints were received by the commands of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Armies regarding the failure of Czech troop bodies. These were joined by reports of incidents among the replacement troops of Landwehr Infantry Regiments No. 7 ('Pilsen-Beraun-Pisek'), 13 ('Olmütz') and 8 ('Prag-Beraun'), as well as those of Landsturm Regiment No. 12 ('Czaslau'). On 26 March, Prime Minister Tisza wrote a letter to the Army High Command in which he complained about the Czechs, who had caused destruction during their march through Hungary, and proposing that they should be used for fieldwork and road construction rather than being sent to the front.<sup>812</sup> These were therefore variations on the same theme. However, since the Army High Command was anyway unsure of how the increasingly large holes in the front should be filled, it was

clear in advance that the proposal would be rejected. Another approach was therefore attempted: if troops were reported to be unreliable, they were to be assigned particularly well-performing adjacent formations. However, this was not always possible, since the troops were not available, and the integration of good officers who spoke Czech proved a failure since there were too few of them. In order to prevent the incidents in the reinforcement districts that had already long been regarded with suspicion, attempts were then made to call up the replacement troops at the earliest possible point in time, to assign them to formations and to make them ready for departure as quickly as possible. This generated a new imbalance. The prohibitive formation assignments were then interpreted to the extent that more Czechs were called up than Germans, which again gave rise to resentment and unrest. In March, the governor, Prince Franz von Thun-Hohenstein, who had pleaded for calm, finally resigned, and was replaced by Count Maximilian Coudenhove-Kalergi. This could by no means be regarded by the Czechs as an affront. To a far greater degree, it was a victory of the moderates in Vienna and ultimately also of the Foreign Ministry, since the Army High Command had vehemently, and in vain, pleaded for the appointment of a military governor. Now, it wanted to achieve at least one aim: the Army High Command made an application to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry that the families of soldiers who had been proven to have surrendered voluntarily and who had deserted should be denied their dues, and that this should also be made public. Their argument was that the families of 'traitors to the fatherland' should not be allowed to live off the state. Here, the attitude of the Cabinet in Vienna, which was keen to make conciliations, again prevailed. This did not prevent the Army High Command from furiously forwarding a message according to which on the day on which Przemyśl fell (22 March), 1,200 Czechs had apparently sworn an oath of allegiance to the Tsar.<sup>813</sup>

Finally, however, the desertion of the Czechs reached such a high level that there was no longer anything to be gained from attempting to ignore it. The most spectacular case in which the Czech troops were the focus of attention was that of Infantry Regiment No. 28, in which on 3 April 1915 near Zboriv (Zborow) to the south of the Dukla Pass, a type of mass flight occurred.<sup>814</sup> The capture of a part of the regiment by Russians gave cause for investigations, attempts at justification and disciplinary measures. The case stood out not least because the neighbouring troop bodies of the III Corps, the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 20 and Infantry Regiment No. 87, as well as the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifle Regiment No. 4, Slovenes, Italians and Germans, had held their ground very well. The failure and the mass desertion of parts of the Prague 'House Regiment' was, as it were, the straw that broke the camel's back. The Commander of the 3rd Army, General Borojević, decreed that the regiment be disbanded as punishment. The case created a huge stir and was seen above all as a confirmation of what had long been known already. The results of the investigation, while they were at least made

public, were certainly shocking, however. The subsequent investigation of the incident, which took months, brought to light the fact that there had been an overreaction, and that many factors, not least a dismal leadership style, had caused the regiment to surrender and at least not make efforts to sacrifice itself in a difficult situation. Clearly, chaotic conditions had already reigned in the replacement battalion of the regiment in September and October 1914. People had deserted, thrown their weapons away while marching out and had to be recaptured with brute force. The battalion commander made no effort to do his duty, but instead degenerated in various taverns with his drinking companions. He ignored the fact that the soldiers were waving flags in the Czech national colours of red, white and blue. In January 1915, the replacement battalion had to be relocated to Szeged. There, proceedings happily continued as before. The capitulation of the Austro-Hungarian garrison in Przemyśl was celebrated in taverns. Now, however, one consequence of the enormous loss of officers during the first months of the war made itself felt: there were far too few good officers, and literally every active and reserve officer had to be taken in order to be able to fill the intended posts even only nominally. This could certainly serve as an explanation. Equally, it had apparently been discovered that ultimately, it had been a single man, a sergeant called Lehecka, who had exerted great influence on his subordinates, had successfully agitated and had first led his own detachment to the Russians, and then subsequently encouraged other units to desert.<sup>815</sup>

The disbanding of the regiment, which was confirmed by Emperor Franz Joseph on 17 April, related primarily and perhaps even unjustly to the failure of the regiment in the Beskid Mountains, although for a troop body that had already been under surveillance anyway, the Emperor clearly felt that such a drastic measure was appropriate. In Paris, Masaryk expressed the view that the defection to the Russians by Regiment No. 28 was a sign of an 'uprising' in Bohemia. This was of course not the case. However, the matter was presented in the Czech newspapers in such a way that Infantry Regiment No. 28 had been abandoned by the other troops, had been driven forward by German machine guns, and was thus forced to surrender.<sup>816</sup> This version was clearly designed to remove the taint of cowardice from the troops who had surrendered or defected. However, the judges and condemners became entangled when some regarded the cause of the mass desertions as being glaring leadership errors, while others claimed that the Czechs were simply unwilling to fight against Slavs, and only had to refer to the Czech emigration to draw support for their argument.<sup>817</sup>

In this regard, it was at any rate incorrect to assume that the Czech soldiers from Bohemia and Moravia had not accomplished similar military achievements to those of the Hungarians or Germans. They were deployed to an equal degree to the focal points of the war, and suffered similarly high losses to the other regiments, brigades and divisions of the Imperial and Royal Army. However, when it came to the number of soldiers

taken prisoner or missing, the Czechs were at the top of the list. This made it more difficult to replenish them with the march companies that were arriving every month from the reinforcement districts. And among the replacement reservists who were then brought together to create march formations, a lack of discipline was repeatedly shown and to a greater than usual degree, even to the point of outright excesses, which generally contributed to the Czechs being viewed with suspicion. The Commander of the 10th Infantry Division, Brigadier Mecenseffy, wrote: 'As well as the requisite level of training, the troops lack [...] the necessary discipline and inner moral stability; this applies in particular to troops of Czech nationality, who – as I have already reported – in many cases politically contaminated, only unwillingly follow the call into the field'.

If it had been thought that the case of Infantry Regiment No. 28 and the disbanding of the regiment, which had become known throughout the Monarchy, would have acted as a deterrent and led to an immediate improvement, then it came as a disappointment that shortly afterwards, there were two more typical cases that were again felt as a shock. And the impression was certainly given that there was a close connection between the events at home and at the front.

On 1 May 1915, a mutiny occurred in the replacement battalion of Infantry Regiment No. 21 ('Eger'). The reason – as was so often the case – was a small matter: a man refused to obey, a companion called Mraz took his side, and threatened to use his weapon. He was knocked down and arrested. Numerous other soldiers also refused to obey commands before discipline could be re-imposed. On 6 May, the summary court-martial reached its verdict, and Mraz was sentenced to death. A peloton of Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 12 arrived to carry out the shooting, and the replacement battalion of the 21st was forced to witness the execution. Two weeks later, Infantry Regiment No. 21, together with the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau') failed in its duty at Sieniawa. The Commander of the IX Corps, Major General Kraliček, a Czech who was highly regarded by superiors and subordinates alike, then applied for the dissolution of both regiments. As in all other cases, the matter was investigated, but finally, the blame for the mass desertion was laid primarily at the door of the 36th Regiment. The situation was even less explicable since the Russians retreated after the breakthrough at Gorlice–Tarnów and the troop bodies adjacent to the two regiments in question excelled themselves in taking Russian soldiers prisoner, while only the two Czech regiments literally dispersed. Kraliček wrote in his argumentation that Infantry Regiment No. 36 had behaved shamefully, and that it appeared that its actions had been treasonous.<sup>818</sup> In the interim, he claimed, the Russians had also become aware of the lack of reliability, and if the regiments were to be allowed to continue to exist, the Russians would make repeated attempts to push through in sections where they were positioned. The reason given for the application for dissolution was also that on 1 May, Infantry Regiment No. 36 consisted of 2,571 men, with only

893 remaining on 24 May without any severe fighting having occurred. The number of men in Infantry Regiment No. 21 had been around 1,200 at the beginning of May and only around 200 after the battle on 27 May. The behaviour of both regiments was also in stark contrast to the troops of Infantry Regiments No. 18 and 98, who were also to a large degree Czech, as well as Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 12 and the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 2, who at the same time and within the same corps and in the same theatre of war had proved to be reliable and courageous without exception. Finally, following the recapture of Rózaniec (Rozanice), the inhabitants claimed that at the end of May, around 2,000 Austrian prisoners of war had marched through the village from the direction of Sieniawa with bright red lapels.<sup>819</sup> The prisoners were in buoyant mood, and calls were heard such as 'My jsme Čechy!' ('We are Czechs!'). Six Cossacks had been sufficient to escort the troops. This appeared to be the evidence that was needed. Finally, Infantry Regiment No. 21 was left intact, since the Army High Command was of the view that the regiment had been placed 'in an unexpectedly difficult position' due to the failure of Infantry Regiment 36, but according to the report by its commander had nevertheless 'fought bravely in many cases'. The 'Jungbunzlau' Regiment was provisionally disbanded on 16 July, and permanently so on 13 August. The replacement troops from the reinforcement districts of the regiment were subsequently taken to eight non-Czech, predominantly Hungarian troop bodies.

However, there was one indication that despite all the incidents, the Czechs were not accused of being particularly susceptible to desertion or to collaboration with the enemy. A whole series of predominantly Czech regiments remained on the Russian front and was not relocated to Italy, for example, when at least a priori no particular inclination to change sides and to surrender voluntarily was suspected. However, it does also appear that the troops from the Bohemian crown lands were distributed more widely than those from Hungary or the German lands of the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>820</sup> Here, the case of Infantry Regiments No. 28 and 36 could well have played its part. Certainly, there was a need to investigate the causes of the failure and defection. Ultimately, the words of Conrad von Hötzendorf, written in 1904 in an essay in the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* ('Organ of Military Science Associations'), rang true time and again: that in a longer war, experienced troops become increasingly less willing to simply accept heavy losses.<sup>821</sup> The Chief of the General Staff could also have added in the interim that the same applied equally to inexperienced troops.

Exhaustion, a desperate situation and the fear of injury and death were and still are the main reasons for surrender. Soldiers have given themselves up at all times and are unwilling to sacrifice themselves and surrender without a fight for a large number of different reasons. Any research into the reasons as to why soldiers have surrendered without a fight would show despondency and cowardice to be important factors. On the other hand, when analysing the reasons why soldiers fought and stood their ground,



obedience, bravery and self-sacrifice stand out in particular. A broad spectrum of attitudes lies between these two poles. Some of them can be classified as noncompliance, which is described in sweeping terms as desertion. This desertion, as is expatiated in the case of Austria-Hungary, is in the case of soldiers of non-German nationality 'often exclusively prevalent in political contexts as a result of a national political and national state preference'.<sup>822</sup> The result was that desertion was at least in retrospect regarded as having had a political background. The assumption expressed in this context, that the debate conducted in relation to desertion from the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War has also been applied to the First World War and Austria-Hungary, cannot be denied. However, it is doubtful that such a comparison is useful.

Quite clearly, there was a significant difference between the behaviour of officers, professional military staff of lower ranks and the 'simple soldiers', at least during the first years of the war, among those of whom evidence was sought that they had a tendency to desert from the outset. In the self-conception of the officers, honour was of great importance, and since desertion, and even more so cowardice, collided with the notion of honour in every way, such cases were rare among professional officers. Patriotism and absolute commitment to the Supreme Commander were a matter of course. All this evolved against the background of the supra-nationality of Austria-Hungary. However, even professional officers were not free of national sentiments, even if they were classic 'knapsack children'. The same did not apply to the reserve officers. Perceptions of honour appropriate to officers were mixed with conceivably civilian work and professional ethics, and furthermore, as Ernst Hanisch wrote, placing emphasis on a sore point, the 'nationalism of educated society [...] increasingly penetrated the lower reserve officer corps and created a centre of conflict'.<sup>823</sup> The high losses of professional officers had, as mentioned above, already led to a fundamental change in the army at the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1915.

For the soldiers, matters looked different, but there is no doubt that they also had a highly personal code of honour, were not much impressed by the sentimental ideal of the hero portrayed in the war propaganda, and regarded survival as the most important goal of their existence in the war. Many were able to overcome their animal fear. However, often it was the fear that overcame them. Field and summary court-martials usually recognised this and passed lenient judgements – and this in Austria-Hungary, which otherwise often appeared to act so harshly.<sup>824</sup> Fear was also sufficient explanation for many cases in which soldiers were accused of failing to fulfil their duty.

The oath, which was to be sworn by everyone, acted as a connecting link between officers and soldiers. It was a 'holy oath', and in a period and in a war in which religious feeling must be recognised as being highly valued throughout, there is no doubt that it was taken seriously. Here, lack of evidence of bravery or temporary failure of duty were still to some extent acceptable. However, desertion was another matter. The deserter

divested himself of a sworn obligation and in so doing, not only breached a code of conduct to which he was bound, but also of a duty to which he had committed himself in the eyes of God. Even so, thousands, then tens, and finally, hundreds of thousands of soldiers deserted all the same. Did God have no importance at all in the Imperial and Royal Army? Was the God of the Ruthenians different to the God of the Styrians, or of the Bosnians different to the God of the Czechs? Had nationalism won over God, the Emperor, and the Fatherland? There is no entirely satisfactory explanation for the behaviour of the nationalities in the war, and the more one focuses on an individual case, the more frequently the question arises: why him, why them, and why not the others?

Long before comparisons were made between the two World Wars and attempts then made to equate them, there was a historiography that differentiated between the judgement and contempt for desertion on the one hand and blanket idealisation on the other. The fact that for most cases of desertion, it was by no means political, national and ideological reasons that were decisive may be sobering, since it contradicts so very many national myths. And in this, desertion is relegated to the place where it in all likelihood really belongs, namely in a chain of motives that spans a century, in which what were to some extent traditional reasons for desertion far outweighed others. For weeks on end, heavy fighting, dramatically high demands on the ability of people to fulfil their duty and to suffer, malnutrition and lack of sleep, and finally, the noise of the war and the sight of the dead, the groaning and screaming of the wounded, was demoralising at all times. And often, just a small trigger was all that was needed.

Even so, the increasing frequency of the cases of desertion in the Imperial and Royal Army and the comparison with the Germans, or with any other army fighting in the First World War, brings particular features to light. It has been calculated that the cases of desertion in the Imperial and Royal Army were ten times higher than in the German Army. When examined more closely, the differences become even more noticeable. This naturally also made it tempting to exaggerate, trivialise and provide an explanation. The exaggeration of the relatively low proportion of cases of desertion among regiments with a share of German Austrian soldiers of over seventy per cent then read as follows: '[...] of all nations, the Germans remained dependent upon themselves as the only reliable support of the state and of the army.'<sup>825</sup> This sounded a highly emotional and arrogant note, with a huge degree of German nationalism. And naturally, there were also troops from the German lands of the Habsburg Monarchy among whom there was failure of duty, desertion and breach of military service obligations. However, such cases were far fewer than among the Czechs or Ruthenians, for example. The reasons for this were obvious: the German Austrians regarded their goal in the war as being to fight for the cohesion of the Empire, and possibly also to ensure that the desire for separation among numerous peoples of the Empire came to nothing. By contrast,

for an increasing number of Czechs, Romanians, Poles, as well as southern Slavs and Italians, what was at issue was disentanglement from the imperial federation that had been in existence to date, or at least wide-ranging concessions. This is also what made this war so ambiguous for Austria-Hungary: to a certain extent, the Imperial and Royal Army was fighting to realise uniform foreign policy war aims, while the peoples of the Empire each fought for themselves and, ultimately, against each other.

Many factors played a role in the respective attitudes, or at least in the general mood. The most important of these was not nationalism, however, but a far more banal motive: if the troops were successful, if they were well led and provided with everything they needed and that was indispensable to success, they almost uniformly showed a willingness to fight and to a large extent remained calm. If there were defeats, severe losses and a lack of all manner of items, and if on top of that, their leaders were incompetent, resignation spread and the inclination to give up everything, to desert and to end the war in such a way rose dramatically. It was then directly noticeable that among the troops, and in the respective crown lands, the mood improved significantly from May 1915, after the Russians had been forced back further and further. This would later also be the case with Serbia. As a result, the mistrust among the command authorities dissolved, and it was no longer assumed *a priori* that the troop bodies from entire crown lands were unreliable. Still, it took a long time for the mistrust to break down, and in fact, it was not until the end of 1915 that one or another premature judgement was revised and greater differentiation was made. The Evidenzbüro of the Imperial and Royal General Staff noted no significant change in mood and behaviour of the population in Bohemia and Moravia. With some regiments, such as Infantry Regiment No. 18 ('Königgrätz') and 74 ('Gitschin'), no manner of 'patriotic sentiment, no willing to make sacrifices' was identified, while by contrast, efforts to avoid field service using all possible means were certainly observed. This notwithstanding, it was emphasised that the Czech soldiers by all means 'create an impression of reliability'. That was not all: the troops assigned to Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 83 in Szombathely reported voluntarily in larger numbers in order to go to the front with the XVI March Battalion. From the censored post received from prisoners of war who wrote to their relatives in Bohemia and Moravia from the Russian camps, it had emerged that the blame for the mass desertions was to be laid primarily at the door of a few individual officers and NCOs, instead of the soldiers of Czech origin being regarded in general with suspicion. From Imperial and Royal Uhlan Regiment No. 11 ('Theresienstadt'), from which there had also been a notable case of mass desertion, it was reported that the troops had not even considered the option of defecting. However, their commanding officer had suddenly ordered 'Cease fire!' and had even had the command blown from a trumpet. The soldiers were then taken prisoner and led away by the Russians. A similar occurrence had taken place with Infantry Regiment No. 28. The tendency in the

Evidenzbüro was to believe the accounts, which originated not least from 'exchanged invalids'. As a result, only a single group of military staff, that of the reserve officers, required particularly careful monitoring. However, in their case, it was prudent to refrain from reaching a verdict too quickly. The outbreak of war against Italy in May 1915 may not have unleashed any mood comparable to the initial enthusiasm for war. Even so, a type of fierce determination surfaced that gripped all peoples of the Empire to a more or less equal degree. This new, old enemy needed to be beaten.



**10 'The King of Italy has  
declared war on Me'**

10. The flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy Fleet, *Viribus unitis*, near Pula at the beginning of 1915. Four ships of the 'Tegetthoff' class, Austria-Hungary's most modern battleships, with twelve 30.5 cm cannon and a crew of around 1,000 men, took part in only a few operations during the naval war in the Adriatic. They had to be protected, constituted a permanent threat to the Allies and were, therefore, themselves endangered. Two of them were sunk before the end of the war. One of these was the *Viribus unitis*.

**H**istorical events, nations and names are almost inevitably linked to certain associations. Slogans dominate here and sometimes prejudice rears its ugly head. The First World War reached in this respect a type of negative climax. On Christmas postcards, in New Year greetings and on all occasions imaginable, the people resorted all too gladly to the crass, the crude and the histrionic. All negative characteristics were attributed to the enemy, from 'demonic-malicious, via barbaric-primitive to cowardly, weak and ludicrous',<sup>826</sup> and what was in 1915 the 'dungeon of nations' for one was 'betrayal in Italian' for another. If one looks over the Austrian primary sources on Italy's entry into the war in 1915, it is above all one word that catches one's eye: 'perfidy'. In the case of Conrad, it appears in almost every letter, but even the officials of the Foreign Ministry and the ministers themselves used the word as a matter of course. It ultimately found its way into the proclamation of Emperor Franz Joseph from 23 May 1915, which began with a sentence that had been written long before Italy's entry into the war by the envoy Baron Franz von Matscheko<sup>827</sup> (others claim it was Baron Alexander von Musulin): 'The King of Italy has declared war on Me.'

What was 'perfidious Albion' for the Germans was 'perfidious Italy' for the Austrians. In this way, judgement was passed for a long time to come, and it took several decades for the beginning of the war between Austria-Hungary and Italy to be viewed in a more differentiated way. But Italy was by no means a one-off.

Emotions played a role for all war-making parties. For the 'terribles simplificateurs' in Austria-Hungary, Serbia was the dangerous troublemaker, who did not even shrink back from devious murder; for this, it had to be punished. Russia was the glutton in the east who not only fuelled Pan-Slavism but had also for a long time threatened a major war. Italy, however, was the country that had repeatedly embroiled Austria in wars, in 1848/49, just as in 1859 and 1866, in order to satisfy its territorial desires, and was always lying in wait for the next opportunity, in spite of all the peace treaties. This viewpoint is certainly too simplified, but it was indeed the case in 1914/15 that Italy saw the war as a unique opportunity and that it raised its desires for the realignment of borders and the consistent application of national statehood in general to the status of a political maxim.

Political action dominated the rivalry between Italy and Austria-Hungary for long periods. For years, irredentist actions on the part of some Italian circles were pushed into the foreground, just as, in reverse, Italy did not tire of stressing the discrimination of Italians living in Austria, denouncing the supposed 'Slavic infiltration' of Trieste

(Triest) and Dalmatia, and using the word 'Croat' as a swearword.<sup>828</sup> It was well-known that Archduke Franz Ferdinand was hostile to Italy. Conrad von Hötzendorf's aversion to the Apennine state could be heard on numerous occasions and read in position papers. This did not change the fact that Conrad valued his Italian counterpart, General Pollio, and cultivated a relationship with him that was not only correct but in fact affectionate. Nevertheless, Conrad did not trust the government and the opinion-makers in the Kingdom of Italy an inch and saw himself confirmed in his principal rejection by numerous small incidents and above all a case of espionage. All in all, the two sides found plenty of reasons to find fault with each other. It only became more emotional now and then, as in August 1913, when the Governor of Trieste, Prince Konrad Hohenlohe-Schillingfürst, broke with a long-time practice and dismissed all so-called imperial Italians from the city's civil service. This affected only 40 of the 30,000 Italians residing in Trieste, but Italian politics and media were in uproar.<sup>829</sup> For months on end, relations were very strained, which was all the more odd because the military heads of the two monarchies agreed at the same time on joint action in the event of war and swore absolute allegiance. Political alienation was confronted with military agreement.

On 28 June 1914, General Pollio died quite suddenly. The man who had seen more in the relationship to the Imperial and Royal Army than 'allied enemies' was dead. What might have happened, had he lived longer? Were the reflections of his successor, Count Luigi Cadorna, to be taken seriously? As late as 1918 he had said: 'Oh well, if we had marched to war at Germany's side in August 1914, then it would have been very advantageous for us. We would have taken Nice, likewise Corsica and Tunisia. [...] We would have marched – and how! I would have made sure of that myself.'<sup>830</sup> Alexander Demandt's book *Ungeschehene Geschichte: Ein Traktat über die Frage: Was wäre geschehen, wenn ... ?* (Undone History: A Treatise on the Question, What would have happened if ... ?) could be expanded with a noteworthy chapter. But let us restrict ourselves to the actual course of events.<sup>831</sup>

Italy had of course suspected, or rather: Italy had known that Austria-Hungary would call Serbia to account for the assassination in Sarajevo and as a precaution had already lodged the point that it wanted compensation for any changes in the Balkans in favour of the Habsburg Monarchy. On 23 July 1914, Italy was informed that Austria-Hungary had sent a limited *démarche* to Serbia; 24 hours later the text of the *démarche* was handed over in Rome. This instance of being informed after the fact makes it clear that the Habsburg Monarchy had no interest, as was the case throughout the July Crisis, in involving Italy in the decision-making of the Danube Monarchy or that of the German Empire. The explanation given by the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) to the effect that the Imperial and Royal ambassador at the Quirinal Palace, Katejan von Mérey, had been taken ill at the most inopportune moment, which was why the mishap with the late handover had happened,<sup>832</sup> was



easily seen for what it was. Mérey had even suggested informing the Italians of the *démarche* a day before its transmission, but had been met with a rebuff at the Ballhausplatz. Formally, Rome was correct to regard the approach as a transgression, since the Triple Alliance treaty stipulated the obligation of consultation in just such a case. Rome spoke of a provocation, but then made it clear that Austria-Hungary could certainly demand compensation from Serbia. The alliance need not be activated, however, since that would have required at least that information be passed on in time and that consultations take place. This might appear to be quibbling, but Austria-Hungary had made it extremely easy for the Italians. No sooner had the *démarche* been rejected and the war was 'in sight' than Italy stepped up with the demand that it would require enduring recompense for an even temporary occupation of Serbian territory. Here Rome invoked Article VII of the Triple Alliance treaty. Count Berchtold rejected the Italian request. Berlin, however, was of the opinion that now was not the time to talk about how to interpret the Triple Alliance treaty – Austria-Hungary should accommodate Italy. This was not the only reason why the relationship between the Danube Monarchy, the German Empire and Italy developed into a difficult triangular affair.

The German Empire, which was least affected by Italian policy and to whom the fulfilment of Italy's wishes and demands seemed possible, since they did not concern the substance of Germany, made it clear from the outset that the Habsburg Monarchy would do well to fulfil Italy's desires to the greatest possible extent.<sup>833</sup> Germany said more or less openly that it would welcome it if Austria-Hungary could bring itself to cede Trentino to Italy in order to induce the Triple Alliance partner in this way to enter the war or at least to maintain very friendly neutrality. Emperor Franz Joseph then declared that he would rather abdicate than give up Trentino.

With that, the positions were fixed for the time being. In expressing its wishes and demands, Rome chose not only the direct route of talking to Vienna but also preferred to take the detour via Berlin. The fact that the German imperial government adopted the Italian view as its own was already criticised during the session of the Joint Council of Ministers on 31 July 1914. Berchtold mentioned that during the previous week, he had received *démarches* almost every day from the German government, 'in order to bring about that the Imperial and Royal government assume the viewpoint of the other two allied powers in the question of compensation', namely the viewpoint of the German Empire and of Italy.<sup>834</sup> The War Minister, Baron Krobatin, also reported that attempts had been made to 'soften [him] up', and in fact by none other than Kaiser Wilhelm personally. Count Stürgkh, however, argued that Italy had no right to make any demands for compensation, 'if it does not fulfil its alliance obligations once the Great War breaks out'.<sup>835</sup>

The Joint Council of Ministers in Vienna was in agreement regarding the rejection of the Italian demands for compensation, though it ultimately commissioned Berch-

told to present Italy with the prospect of territorial compensation in the event of a lasting occupation of Serbian territory, though only if Italy were actually to fulfil its alliance obligations. Italy rejected this. However, it provided an image of complete disorientation, for almost at the same time King Vittorio Emanuele III agreed on 31 July to the plan submitted by his new Chief of the General Staff, Cadorna, to send Italian troops across the Alps to France, whereas the Italian government under Prime Minister Antonio Salandra resolved to declare Italy's neutrality.<sup>836</sup> The Prime Minister and the government thus cast their lot in with those who enjoyed a clear majority in the three-way division of opinion in Italy: a small share argued the case for an allegiance to the ally, a larger part advocated an entry into the war on the side of the Entente, and the neutralists received the most affirmation. Thus, Italy declared its neutrality. Late appeals by Emperor Franz Joseph and Kaiser Wilhelm II were to no avail.

Again, a detour could be made to the counterfactual history: assuming that Italy had edited out the last chapter of the prehistory, resolved to join the war as part of the Triple Alliance, and strengthened the German western front with an army comprising three army corps and two cavalry divisions, would the allied armies of the Central Powers really have been able to crush France in six to eight weeks? Would the combined fleets of Italy and Austria-Hungary have been able to defeat the French and the British in the Mediterranean and establish naval supremacy there? Was the war lost for the Central Powers at the end of July 1914 before it had really even begun?

The trains that the Imperial and Royal Ministry of Railways had kept available as a precaution in order to transport Italian troops via Austria to the German western front<sup>837</sup> were at any rate no longer needed. The Central Powers and above all Austria-Hungary were deeply disappointed, but had to make the best of a bad job. Cessions of territory continued to be ruled out. The words so vividly formulated by the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza applied here: 'A state that hands over territories from its own body, in order to deter a neighbour that is inclined towards treachery from committing complete betrayal, degrades itself in the eyes of the whole world.'<sup>838</sup> Tisza of course knew what he was talking about, since it was not only a question of taking the Italian problem into consideration, but also a matter that concerned Hungary directly, namely how to act in the case of Romania, which had declared its neutrality as expected. The Germans also began to apply pressure in this case and mentioned the possibility of cessions. Rădăuți (Radautz) and Suceava (Suczawa) should be sacrificed, in order to induce Romania to enter the war. For Hungary, but above all for Emperor Franz Joseph, this was unthinkable.<sup>839</sup>

Yet there was a kind of relenting on principle, since Italy was granted compensations even without its participation in the war. It was believed that a way out had been found: what if Italy were to be offered territories elsewhere? However, the proposal did not have the desired effect. On 3 August the Italian Foreign Minister Marchese Anton-

ino di San Giuliano rejected the proposal to add Nice, Corsica, Tunisia and Albania to the Apennine state. With the exception of Albania, these were, evidently, French possessions, which would have been available only after the complete defeat of France. However, the French territories were precisely what Italy expected for its participation in the war at Germany's side. The Italian-German relationship was one thing; the Italian-Austrian another. And Rome had changed its mind and demanded compensation only from Austria-Hungary. Yet the hoped-for offer from Austria, namely the cession of Austrian Trentino, did not come. On 8 August, the Joint Council of Ministers in Vienna dealt once more with Italy's demands for compensation. It was noticeable here that the attitude of the two halves of the Empire, to the extent that this attitude was mentioned in the contributions of the two prime ministers, was completely identical in the question of ceding Trentino and that the Hungarian Prime Minister opposed the Italian wishes at least as vehemently as Count Stürgkh. Conrad von Hötzendorf, however, had noted unmistakably during this session of the Joint Council of Ministers and before he left for the field that Austria-Hungary had nothing to mobilise in order to face Italy in the event of an Italian attack. He was even clearer when he said: 'From a military point of view', it was so imperative to keep Italy neutral 'that he would say, as a soldier, that no price was too high'.<sup>840</sup>

Then Count Stürgkh said that in the event that the Italians were really serious and threatened with the choice of territorial cessions or war, he would have no moral scruples whatsoever in betraying the Italians. The following scene could be set: the German Empire should go and, purportedly behind Austria's back, make the desired territorial assurances to Italy. By means of a second contract between Austria-Hungary and Germany, however, the first would become obsolete. Tisza and the Hungarian 'Minister at the Royal Court' in Vienna, Count Stephan Burián, came out in opposition to this. Italy, they said, would not allow itself to be so easily betrayed.

Consequently, fears of an Italian attack not only became so strong that the fortification of Vienna, Budapest and the Danube crossings was undertaken as a result. Furthermore, border observations and safeguarding measures were taken in the most unobtrusive way possible. The language used towards Italy remained engaging, however. The newspapers were also obliged to adhere to this and were not allowed to pull out all the stops. 'Now the order has been issued that our newspapers are not allowed to insult Italy, but are permitted to adopt the insults of the German newspapers', noted the Chief of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Civil Administration, Ludwig Thälloczy, on 5 August 1914 in his diary.<sup>841</sup>

On the Austrian side, it was pointed out that the Dual Monarchy did not strive for any territorial changes in the Balkans, i.e. did not want to reduce the size of Serbia; therefore, there did not have to be any corresponding compensation agreements. Should there, for not yet foreseeable reasons, be changes in the Balkans, however, the

wishes of Italy would of course be considered. This was the almost unvarying tone of Austro-Hungarian statements on the subject.<sup>842</sup> But they were only at the start of a lesson in Machiavellian foreign policy.

Austria-Hungary did not limit itself, however, to obliging expressions. There were also other things that indicated more clearly that the attitude of Italy and Austria-Hungary included military factors. As mentioned earlier, at the commencement of mobilisation in the case of a Balkan war scenario, Conrad von Hötzendorf had also set about mobilising the III Corps in Graz, not least because he was not certain about Italy's stance. Even after Italy's declaration of neutrality and after Austria-Hungary was entirely committed both in the Balkans and against Russia, the Italian border was not allowed out of sight.

Both states heightened their safeguarding measures, which were not yet very extensive, however. A mobilisation of the Italian Army, as the Chief of the Italian General Staff Cadorna had demanded, was rejected by the Italian government. The politicians and diplomats still had the last word, even if there was complete confusion for a time and the neutralists and interventionists were at loggerheads with each other. On 19 August 1914, at the next session of the Joint Council of Ministers in Vienna, which was in fact chaired by the Emperor, the resolution was passed to continue the dialogue with Italy and to put off the breach for as long as possible, though in the meantime to take the necessary measures on the border with Italy. For its part, Italy also began military preparations, which the Italian ambassador in Vienna, Duke Giuseppe von Avarna, an advocate of the Triple Alliance who was ultimately degraded to the status of letter carrier for the politicians, had to justify by making it known that these measures served to reassure the Italian public and maintain order.

This argument, as superficial as it perhaps sounds, had a genuine background, since in Italy an anti-Austrian mood was emerging, which could not be ignored by the government. Austria did everything to counteract this. Prominent Austrian socialists travelled to Italy and attempted to convince Italian social democrats to take a more moderate and pro-Triple Alliance line. Money flowed to the south in order to induce newspapers such as *Mattino*, *Popolo Romano*, *Il Giorno* and others to use a writing style that was beholden at least to the ideal of Italian neutrality.<sup>843</sup> The Imperial and Royal War Ministry made ten million kronen available to the Foreign Ministry for this purpose. On the Austrian side, but also in Italian circles, stress was laid on the Catholic power of Austria. Other groups were stronger and more influential. The *Corriere della Sera*, whose importance and circulation far exceeded those of the aforementioned newspapers, questioned Italy's neutrality in a series of articles as early as August 1914 and achieved a much more far-reaching effect with this than more radical newspapers from the cut of an *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which was edited by a certain Benito Mussolini.<sup>844</sup> More effective was that which Mussolini wrote in the socialist *Avanti*, where he made the case for Italy's

participation in the war, in order to end the war as soon as possible. The majority of his party was appalled and resolved upon a manifesto in which the will to neutrality was emphasised. Mussolini submitted his resignation as the editor of *Avanti!*.<sup>845</sup>

Italy's attitude of course interested not only the countries of the Dual Alliance but at least as much the Entente states. Here matters also developed their own dynamic. From discussions held by the Italian ambassador in St. Petersburg, Marchese Andrea Carlotti, who had played a role in the July Crisis as an informant for the Russians, it became clear that in the event of a victory for the Entente, Russia was contemplating the cession of Trentino as well as other territories. The outcome of these negotiations was admittedly similar to that in Austria-Hungary a few weeks earlier, when Italy had been offered Nice and Corsica.

Largely independently of this, France and Great Britain developed their own proposals, which also involved Trentino, as well as Vlorë in Albania. The British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey went a step further and wanted to see Trieste added. Thus, the catchphrase 'Trento e Trieste' was born. The Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov apparently did not want to be left out and offered Italy the acquisition of Dalmatia, adding that this was dependent on the agreement of Great Britain and France. Germany's early military success in Belgium and France, likewise that of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans and in Russia, did not initially allow the discussions between Italy and the Entente powers to really get going, since at this point in time everyone was unclear about the course of the war.

However, events moved along at an extraordinary pace. First of all, however, a clarification process within the Italian government was necessary, and this commenced in mid-August: after Foreign Minister San Giuliano had addressed the possibility of Italy entering the war on the side of the Entente in a letter to the Italian Prime Minister Salandra from 9 August, the ground was tested. San Giuliano did not conceal from the Prime Minister his personal assessment of the consequences of such a step when he wrote: 'We should make no pretence of the fact, however, that such a war [...] would be regarded across Europe as an act of dishonesty [...] even by those who might become our new allies.'<sup>846</sup> Italy nonetheless began to sound out London, and indeed consciously here first of all, because both the discretion of the French and that of the Russians was doubted.

However, Italy demanded the continuation of British coal deliveries even to commence discussions. San Giuliano requested in addition an immediate attack by British naval forces on the Austro-Hungarian Fleet formations in the Adriatic Sea. When this attack did not take place, San Giuliano interpreted this as a very good reason to maintain Italian neutrality.<sup>847</sup> He was absolutely aware that the security of Italy depended to a significant extent on the situation in the Mediterranean. As long as the Austro-Hungarian Navy dominated the Adriatic, caution was advised.

On 16 October 1914, San Giuliano died. He had steered a course of neutrality for Italy, and wanted in this way first and foremost to keep Italy out of the war. His successor saw things differently. At the beginning of November, Baron Sidney Sonnino took over the Foreign Ministry. His semi-English parentage was immediately commented on. In the interim, however, Prime Minister Salandra himself had led the Foreign Ministry for two weeks. And on 18 October 1914 he used two words that would become formative for Italy: 'sacro egoismo'.<sup>848</sup> Almost unnoticeably, the emphases had changed.

### 'Sacro egoismo'

During negotiations with the Entente and with the Central Powers Italy, remained a very patient adversary and attentively followed the war-related events in the meantime. It also exploited the situation for a time to improve its own position. When raids by Epirotes took place against southern Albania from Greece, raids that Italy believed threatened its own interests in the region around Albania, an Italian detachment – with a sweeping interpretation of the Treaty of London regarding Albania – occupied the port of Vlorë and the offshore island, and in this way brought the Strait of Otranto under its control. The distance from Vlorë to Otranto is only approximately 60 kilometres, and whoever controls the road from Otranto occupies a strategically important position. Austria accepted the occupation of Vlorë; the German Empire even expressly welcomed it.

In the meantime, as we know, the position of the Central Powers had not necessarily developed to their benefit. The German advance had stalled in France, the western front had to be pulled back and positional warfare began. The first offensives against Serbia had failed and in the east parts of Galicia had fallen into Russian hands. The Russian advance appeared to be unstoppable. In this situation, Great Britain, France and Russia made it clear that they were not of a mind in the event of a victory to make territorial concessions to Italy at the expense of the victors, unless Italy was prepared to step forward and declare war on the Central Powers. For its part, Italy pointed out that it had already set its conditions for entering the war and that one of these demands was a naval operation against the Imperial and Royal Navy. Italy feared having to bear the burden of the war against Austria-Hungary entirely alone, and this seemed too much of a risk. Here Italy almost unexpectedly received an ally, namely Romania.

The Romanian Prime Minister Ion Brătianu began talks with the Italian envoy in Bucharest and had the Romanian standpoint forwarded to Rome: both states, Italy and Romania, should jointly pursue an annihilation of Austria-Hungary.<sup>849</sup> As early as 23 September 1914, Romania and Italy signed a treaty that obligated both states to consult each other reciprocally and not to abandon their neutrality without giving the other one

advance notice of eight days. They furthermore secured the maintenance of their respective interests and committed themselves expressly to keeping the treaty absolutely secret. Romania had also received a generous offer from the Entente powers. In the event of Romanian participation in the war on the side of the Entente powers, the latter promised the Balkan state not only Transylvania and Bukovina but also the Hungarian territory inhabited by Romanians between Transylvania and the Tisza River. This was very much more than the cession of the territories of Rădăuți and Suceava held out by Germany, which in any case absolutely no-one – above all in Hungary – wanted to hear of.

After agreement had been reached with Romania, Italy resumed negotiations in London. By this time, however, the season of year now also played a role in Italian deliberations. Prime Minister Salandra did not conceal during a presentation to the Italian king that the state of the Italian army did not yet allow for an immediate entry into the war. It was especially unprepared for fighting in highlands in wintertime, for which reason Italy would only be able to begin waging war – as long as there were no unexpected events – in the spring.<sup>850</sup>

In the interim, however, Italy met with some reservation on the part of the Entente powers. They had clearly recognised Italy's tactical manoeuvring. The London press expressed itself with unconcealed criticism to the effect that Italy could not enter the war due to a formal error, just because Austria-Hungary had not kept it up to date regarding the steps taken against Serbia. If the Italian stance is compared with that of Great Britain, which entered the war only after the flagrant violation of Belgian neutrality, then the two cases were very different. Just one English journalist consistently supported Italy and steadfastly championed the Italian standpoint, namely Henry Wickham-Steed, the man who had also appointed himself the advocate of the Czechs.<sup>851</sup> However, he combined this with the call for Italy to take the step that it had evidently not yet thought of taking, namely to play the part of liberator of the Slavs in the Balkans. The population of Trieste and the surrounding region was predominantly Slav, according to Wickham-Steed, and Italy only had a chance of forcing through its wishes regarding the cession of Trieste and the Croatian and Dalmatian coastline if it presented itself as a pro-Slav power.

Progress was made in the talks being held at different locations at precisely the moment Austro-Hungarian troops were advancing far into Serbia during their third offensive in November 1914. Italy regarded this as the right moment to hold talks with Austria-Hungary over compensation. Count Berchtold responded in his well-known way and said that Austria-Hungary did not have any territorial demands against Serbia; furthermore, the ups and downs of war, which at times brought advances and at other times retreats, could not be cited as a sufficient argument for applying Article VII of the Triple Alliance treaty. This time, however, Italy played the German card and attempted again to influence Vienna by means of the detour via Berlin in order

to achieve territorial concessions. Italy began in the process to dream of great power status, which no longer took Austria-Hungary into consideration: the German Empire would be the hegemonic power on the Continent, but Italy would dominate the Balkan-Adriatic region.<sup>852</sup> It was as though Italy were anticipating the Rome-Berlin 'Axis' of the Mussolini-Hitler era.

Italian hopes received an additional boost when the German ambassador in Rome, Baron Flotow, was replaced by the former Imperial Chancellor Prince Bernhard von Bülow, who was married to an Italian woman. Bülow started by stating that Trentino could be discussed, but Trieste was 'Austria's lung' and must therefore be excluded from the talks.<sup>853</sup>

Pressure increased on Austria to cede Trentino and make additional territorial concessions. Count Hoyos, still known from his Berlin mission in July 1914, compared the German approach with recommending that Germany end the war with France by ceding Lorraine (Lothringen), which would be just as impertinent.<sup>854</sup> The thing that appeared so vivid and plausible about this comparison was in fact not quite fitting, since Lorraine had only belonged to the German Empire since 1871, whereas Trentino and Trieste were territories that had been a part of the Habsburg Monarchy for 500 or 600 years. Such comparisons on the one hand were always used, whilst on the other hand they were never very expedient and history can provide arguments and counterarguments for everything imaginable. Ethnographers pointed to the demographic structures, others argued that these structures had only emerged as a result of policies that were arbitrary and repressive towards one national group, and scholarship was once again used and abused. In the case of the Habsburg Monarchy, one could argue just as well with the idea of empire as one could in the case of Italy with the nation state. This all restricted the room for manoeuvre in negotiations. Austria-Hungary found itself ever more on the political defensive.

In the meantime, Italy expanded the notion of compensation. In the view of the new Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino, it was no longer just a question of balancing out any territorial changes in favour of Austria; he also demanded compensation for political, economic and ideational benefits.<sup>855</sup> This brought imponderables into play. Italy could claim, however, to also receive support for its demands from opposition circles in the Habsburg Monarchy. Thus, the leader of the democratic opposition in Hungary, Count Mihály Károlyi, gave the green light to a cession of Trentino. Trieste also appeared to be a logical and grantable demand to Count Károlyi. He was not prepared to talk about Rijeka (Fiume) in Croatia, however, which belonged to the Hungarian half of the Empire, and ultimately the fulfilment of Italian demands should only serve to get the Apennine state on to the side of the Central Powers, in order that Romania did not, if anything, feel encouraged to enter the war on the side of the Entente and to threaten Hungary in Transylvania.<sup>856</sup>



The official Austria, however, referred Italy to Albania in all of its claims. There, it was argued, Italy could offset its interests. This was too little for Italy, however. It repeatedly demanded the cession of Trentino, and this touched upon basic questions of the Dual Monarchy's existence. It had after all gone to war to retain and defend its territorial holdings, and any cession of territories, whether it were Trentino, Transylvania or East Galicia, must appear to be exactly contrary to these aims. The Departmental Councillor in the Foreign Ministry in Vienna, Baron Franz von Matscheko, expressed this stance as follows on 21 December 1914: 'By ceding Trentino to Italy, we would ourselves call into question the basic principle on which the existence of Austria-Hungary is based. The Monarchy's right to exist lies in the fact that the peace of Europe would be subjected to incessant convulsions, if in that territory where the great European races, Germanic peoples, Romance, northern and southern Slavs, adjoin one another in reciprocal permeation, a strong great power did not exist, which – having emerged and been put together over the course of the centuries – encompasses parts of all adjoining peoples and with them the isolated block of the Magyars. For the benefit of this European necessity, all neighbouring states must forego the complete realisation of their national ideals, just as the individual tribes in the Monarchy are necessarily subjected to constraints at a national level.'<sup>857</sup> This was perhaps an acceptable interpretation of the imperial idea and cast the famous words of František Palacký from April 1848 into an updated postulation. However, it evidently completely bypassed nationalist realities.

Matscheko continued that the cession of Trentino would tempt the Monarchy's other neighbours to make territorial claims. For the state existence of Italy, however, Trentino was just as dispensable as Ticino, Nice, Savoy or Tunis. Italy had to decide whether it wanted to subordinate its sentimental aspirations to Trentino to the existence of Austria-Hungary.

Ultimately, however, it was pointless to discuss territorial concessions with Italy, since Emperor Franz Joseph had categorically ruled out any cession, no matter who may come. Franz Joseph was not prepared to make any concessions. He was indeed very tempted to change his mind, but he remained a realist to the extent that he responded to the next proposal to offer Italy Gibraltar by saying that he had also already heard the idea but that the island was not his to offer.<sup>858</sup>

The Evidenzbüro (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal General Staff came to the conclusion at the end of 1914 that Italy would present its demands in January in the form of an ultimatum, and request South Tyrol, Istria and Rijeka, including the Austrian Littoral, Dalmatia as far as Split (Spalato), as well as the cession of the fleet against financial compensation.<sup>859</sup>

The question of the cession of Trentino ultimately led to the resignation of Foreign Minister Count Berchtold. It is not entirely clear whether he resigned because he ultimately regarded territorial losses as unavoidable or because he was particularly uncom-

promising.<sup>860</sup> For his part, he regarded the resignation as very undramatic and stated: '[...] I saw that this situation required a man whose nerves can cope with it. In order to sit tight through such a situation, *sangfroid*, or in fact a sort of light-heartedness, is needed, so that the right moment is not missed, and I do not have that.'<sup>861</sup> Weeks later he intimated that he had resigned because the Emperor had prevented him from taking part in talks on the cession of South Tyrol. Berchtold, Stürgkh, Tisza and the Hungarian Minister at the Royal Court, Count István Burián von Rajecz, met at Buchtlov Castle. Once again, Berchtold had made his castle available for discrete talks. It concerned the matter of who would succeed him. Tisza was asked whether he wanted to assume the portfolio, but he rejected it categorically.<sup>862</sup>

On 13 January 1915, Berchtold was removed. His successor was Count Burián, who should have become Foreign Minister in 1912, but had to stand back in favour of Berchtold due to the obligation to reflect the national structure in ministerial appointments. He had nonetheless exerted influence and was regarded as an extension of Tisza.

Burián also found himself under immediate pressure from Germany, but he certainly did not want to yield to it. By now, however, the views of the politicians and the military diverged quite considerably. A man such as Alexander Hoyos, who was undoubtedly able to reflect the attitude of the Foreign Ministry as well as that of court circles very accurately, made it clear that the court camarilla talked with enormous frivolity about the possibility of an Italian entry into the war: 'Let them try!'<sup>863</sup> The attitude of the military added up to the exact opposite of this viewpoint. They thought that having another opponent would lead to a military catastrophe. Conrad had already said this as early as August 1914. He repeated it several times. The Foreign Ministry, on the other hand, advanced a completely different argument. Thus, on 27 January – that is, after his departure – Berchtold justified the refusal to cede Trentino to Italy by saying that such a sacrifice would only be seen as a sign of weakness and would have 'had a depressing effect on the army and the entire population'.<sup>864</sup> He made no mention of the Emperor not giving him any room for manoeuvre in negotiations.

Gradually, with all eyes glued to something that appeared unavoidable, the 'Italian crisis' set in motion an increasingly hectic merry-go-round of proposals, counter-proposals and suggested solutions. Conrad conveyed to Burián an idea of Falkenhayn to the effect that Italy should be invited to join the Triple Alliance negotiations. This step was evidently to be taken in order to demonstrate the allegiance of Italy for all to see.<sup>865</sup> Conrad did not reveal whether he believed that such an approach could yield success, but he prepared everything himself in order to demonstrate the strength of the Imperial and Royal armies by means of a successful battle to relieve Przemyśl. He evidently did not believe in such manoeuvres. The conference did not take place.

The proposal to send the heir to the throne Archduke Karl to Rome was also not uninteresting. The idea emerged at the beginning of January 1915 and had evidently

been concocted in the Military Chancellery of the Emperor. The Adjutant General of the Emperor, Count Paar, should be sent ahead in order to make the matter palatable to the Emperor, though it was not entirely clear how the matter should be approached and the idea was dropped for the time being.<sup>866</sup>

At the end of January the idea was aired for the first time in the German Empire of indemnifying Austria-Hungary for the cession of Trentino to Italy with the coal mining district around Sosnowice in Russian Poland.<sup>867</sup> It was questionable whether Austria would even regard such an offer as sufficiently attractive. On 3 February, the first session of the Joint Council of Ministers led by Burián addressed the matter of Italy. Afterwards, the minister resumed talks with the Italian ambassador, the Duke of Avarna, and stunned the latter with a list of counter-demands, also with reference to Article VII of the Triple Alliance treaty. Burián said that Austria had the right to claim compensation for the temporary occupation of the Dodecanese and Vlorë by Italy. This was a turnaround that Rome had certainly not expected. Italy then broke off talks with Vienna and began for the first time to make threats.<sup>868</sup> Although this abortion was not the end of talks, it had nonetheless become clear that a turning point had been reached. The Austrian ambassador in Rome, now Baron Karl von Macchio, was able to learn that Italy's military preparations would not be completed until April 1915.<sup>869</sup> At that point, however, an entry into the war should be expected.

The German Empire now increased the pressure on Austria-Hungary. Prince Bülow, the German ambassador in Rome, who, without any inhibitions at all, advocated concessions, expressed his opinion in a private letter to the editor-in-chief of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, von Eckhard, to the effect that more influence had to be exerted on Vienna, since 'it would be outrageous if Austria, after it pulled us into this war, by virtue of its incompetence at the beginning of this war and in the last two or three years, would rob us of the involvement of Italy and Romania [and] send another two million enemies after us'.<sup>870</sup> The Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Baron Moritz von Lyncker, expressed himself with perhaps even more clarity: 'The Austrians do not want to, they are so haughty and blinkered, particularly the old emperor and the so-called high nobility. How they imagine the war with Italy is anyone's guess; one might think they would rather go under "with honour" and take us with them into the abyss. That's a nice prospect!'<sup>871</sup> Falkenhayn regarded the Danube Monarchy as a 'cadaver', and the leader of the German National Liberals characterised the alliance partner, to whom Germany had sworn blind loyalty, as a 'corpse galvanised for heroic feats of strength'.<sup>872</sup> This was also one way of looking at it. The fact was that ever more perplexity and helplessness began to spread.

From January onwards it could repeatedly be heard that Italy would declare war in April. One person recommended concessions and added in the same breath that it was doubtful whether Italy would allow concessions to prevent it from entering the war.

Another person advised on a powerful presence and intimidation, but at the beginning of the year there was nothing that could intimidate Italy. The negotiators in Rome appeared increasingly self-confident and the Duke of Avarna informed Minister Burián that the Imperial and Royal troops would only be allowed to take on Serbia again when Italy received binding assurances regarding the cession of old Austrian territory.<sup>873</sup> A further offensive against Serbia was in any case not even being considered at the present time, but the Italians evidently wanted to plan ahead. It was questionable, however, what would happen if the Italian wishes were satisfied. Would not Romania's desire for Transylvania by rights also have to be fulfilled? The proposals and deliberations contained everything including a separate peace with Russia at the expense of the cession of Galicia or at least part of the crown lands; instead, there would be war over South Tyrol.<sup>874</sup> At the same time, however, it was said that there would not be any cession of Galicia, since Galicia was the most important sales area for Austrian industry.<sup>875</sup> One side scoured the politics of Italy, which was aimed at making profits, and the 'sacro egoismo', whilst the other located the roots of the problem somewhere in the past, such as Prince Franz Liechtenstein, for example, who took the view that Austria had pursued an incorrect domestic policy during the previous 30 years and had always patronised Italy like some sort of 'indecent lady'.<sup>876</sup>

### The Treaty of London

Following the months from January to May 1915 in the diary of Josef Redlich, one gets the impression of considerable confusion. Phrases such as 'highly alarming', 'not very pleasant', 'quite desperate' and, of course, 'perfidious' can be found in continuous succession. Austria's 'ruling caste', according to Redlich, comprised 'weaklings and amateurs',<sup>877</sup> whilst the Foreign Ministry was 'full of useless people or plotters'. Everyone felt compelled to make comments about and pass judgement on the Emperor, the court, the ministers and pretty much all decision-makers, and one gets the impression from Redlich that – aside from himself – everyone was an idiot. That is, until Italy's entry into the war appeared unalterable, so that he was now confronted with only fatalism. Yet it was a completely different situation to the July Crisis: at that time, Austria-Hungary had yearned for the outbreak of war above all because it was believed that there might not be one. Now, since the 'coup de grace' appeared to threaten, the war should be made as difficult as possible for the aggressor.

The deputy of the German Catholic Centre Party Mathias Erzberger had made use of his contacts to the Vatican and succeeded in persuading the Holy See to intervene and advise Vienna to accept Italian demands. The papal deputy secretary Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, as well as the Jesuit Superior Count Włodimir Ledóchowski and

the Archbishop of Vienna Cardinal Piffli, had taken action on behalf of the Vatican. Even the services of the companion of the old Emperor, Katharina Schrott, were apparently engaged. In short, nothing and no-one was left out in attempts to avoid a war between the Habsburg Monarchy and Italy.

During all of this, Italy marked up its price. It made no pretence of the fact that it had a mind to obtain as much as possible for its non-participation in the war.<sup>878</sup> At the beginning of March 1915, Italy resumed talks with the Entente in London. Rome's demands were summarised in several points: the Entente should commit itself to not make any special peace with the Central Powers. A military convention should guarantee that Austria-Hungary could not concentrate its entire force against Italy. A fleet convention should ensure that the British and the French Fleets would fight with the Italians until the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Fleet in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the cession of Trentino to Italy and the cisalpine part of South Tyrol, as well as Trieste, the municipalities of Gorizia (Görz) and Gradisca d'Isonzo and the whole of Istria as far as Quarnero, including Volosca in the Kvarner Gulf, were demanded. Finally, Foreign Minister Sonnino also demanded Dalmatia from its northern border as far as Narenta. In eleven further points, the remaining Italian wishes for entering the war were summarised and contained therein were its share of a war indemnity and a British guarantee of the independence of Yemen, a neutralisation of the holy Islamic sites and the non-admittance of the Pope to peace negotiations.

All this should be negotiated to the end in the strictest secrecy; this was another of Sonnino's conditions. In view of developments on the western front and the looming failure in the war with Turkey, where the landing operations in the Dardanelles threatened to turn into a debacle on the Gallipoli peninsula, Great Britain and France were ready to pay almost any price for the intervention of Italy. In practice, this meant above all that Great Britain shelved its concerns. This was not the case with Russia, which expected the collapse of the Danube Monarchy following the Battles of the Carpathian Passes in March 1915 and furthermore brought Serbian interests into play. The Italian desire for Dalmatia naturally affected Serbia and its southern Slav ambitions. The Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov therefore attempted to force the Italians towards Albania and to raise Serbia's hopes of obtaining parts of Transylvania. But this tempted neither the Italians nor the Serbs, who would have had to argue with the Romanians over hegemony in Transylvania. Consequently, the Russian Foreign Minister was inclined to no longer pursue Italy's entry into the war.<sup>879</sup> The Entente powers, Great Britain and France, did not believe that they could forego Italian participation in the war and therefore sought another possibility to accommodate the desires of all actual and potential allies.

Now everything happened quickly. For the Entente powers, it was not a question of the original core issues, namely the cession of Trentino and Trieste, but exclusively

of Dalmatia. The British Foreign Secretary Grey suggested that Italy should at least forego Spalato. On 27 March, Sonnino declared himself ready to do so. Difficulties also emerged with the distribution of the islands off the coast of Dalmatia, which had to be negotiated with Serbia, but these were ultimately not very eminent problems, since Serbia was naturally extremely interested in an additional opponent for Austria-Hungary. On 14 April, agreement was reached over the wording of the article concerning the Dalmatian islands, but new difficulties emerged due to Montenegro's rights on the Adriatic. Finally, only one point was open, namely the date of the Italian entry into the war. The Entente powers requested 15 April. The Italian government could not accept this date, however, because military preparations could not be completed by then. Now it was really only a question of a date, however, and nothing more.

Whilst all this was being brought under lock and key, Italy continued to negotiate with Vienna and left Austria-Hungary and Germany in the belief that an amicable solution was possible that conformed to the Triple Alliance. On 16 March, Prime Minister Salandra wrote to Foreign Minister Sonnino that Vienna should 'be allowed to believe that we regard a friendly solution as possible, and all the more so, the less we believe in it. This stance, however much power of disguise it might cost you, seems to me to be currently essential in the interests of our country.'<sup>880</sup>

In the meantime, Vienna was in the process of completely revising its attitude to Italy. It was said in advance that the session of the Joint Council of Ministers on 8 March, which would be a Privy Council due to the presence of the Emperor, and at which the heir to the throne would also be present, would be the scene of 'meaningful discussions' on the further fate of the Monarchy. Burián, Tisza, Stürgkh and Ernest von Koerber, Biliński's successor as Joint Finance Minister, as well as War Minister Krobatin were convinced of the necessity of cessions. Conrad, who had been fetched to Vienna from Cieszyn, in order to attend the session, began by reminiscing and stressed that he had been in favour of a pre-emptive war against Italy for good reasons. This remark had to come, because Conrad saw in the dilemma, in which the Dual Monarchy found itself as a result of the Italian attempt to blackmail it, nothing other than confirmation of what he had predicted since his appointment as Chief of the General Staff. Therefore, he frequently expressed himself with barely surpassable contempt about Aehrenthal, who – as Conrad claimed – had prevented a timely defeat of Italy. The cession of Trentino would be a severe loss from a strategic point of view. But it would have to be accepted.

Emperor Franz Joseph – and this was decisive – had been made increasingly prepared to grant concessions. He called the Italians 'bootlegging lowlifes' and 'bandits', but on 27 February, the Lord Chamberlain Prince Montenuovo delightedly ascertained that the Emperor was no longer strictly hostile. In fact, he let it be known on 8 March that he was prepared to grant concessions in the case of Trentino, but not in the case of Trieste and the Isonzo.

Now, it was of course a matter of determining Italy's willingness to negotiate on the basis of the new proposals from Vienna. Shortly before the session of the Joint Council of Ministers, however, a telegram for Emperor Franz Joseph had arrived in Vienna from Kaiser Wilhelm, which contained the so-called 'Silesian offer', namely the return of some of the Silesian territories conquered by King Friedrich II of Prussia to Austria, if Austria-Hungary gave in to Italy. The German Kaiser had assured Franz Joseph in this telegram, which had been revised by Bethmann-Hollweg and von Jagow, that he had a mind to share good and bad with the Austrian Monarch. Another enticement was attached to the 'Silesian offer', namely Germany's agreement to lend gold to Austria-Hungary. This was so important because the loans taken so far from Germany now no longer even sufficed for the interest due and the repayment rates. Vienna believed furthermore that it had the right to demand generosity from the German Empire in the financial area, since it had held out the prospect of a loan running into the billions in the event that Italy maintained its neutrality.<sup>881</sup> Thus, Conrad's remarks against Italy remained irrelevant, and Tisza and Burián even believed that with the cession of Triente it would be possible to bind Italy once more to the Triple Alliance.<sup>882</sup> Austria-Hungary was only unprepared to negotiate over cessions in the Isonzo region, since the word of the Emperor held sway here. The turnaround in opinion was so complete that any speculation over a subsequent revision of the process was strictly rejected. The Dual Monarchy, it was said, would certainly not wage a subsequent war of revenge against Italy.

Burián immediately had the change of attitude on the part of the Vienna cabinet announced in Rome via Berlin, though he demanded that in the cession of Trentino the linguistic frontier would have to be taken as the outer limit of Italian demands. On 10 March, Italy declared itself ready to negotiate on the basis of the proposals from Vienna. Absolute secrecy was also demanded for this, but also the immediate coming into force of a treaty of cession, whilst Burián and the Austrian government had only planned on a cession after the conclusion of a peace treaty. This demand thus had a snag, since it was not only a question of making clear to the population of a region that had belonged to Austria for hundreds of years that it would have to immediately change its nationality.

Now the maps would have to be studied. Burián had one prepared, on which the linguistic frontier was marked, and the Foreign Minister wanted to conduct negotiations according to that. The minister and the envoy responsible for Italy, Pogatscher, hoped to eliminate existing differences with Italy once and for all after the cession of the ethnically Italian territory. Thus, an offer should be made that was as generous as possible. The Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery, General Bolfras, had drawn up another map, which did not go quite as far as that of the Foreign Minister. On all maps, however, only new Tyrolean borders had been marked. The handling of the Friuli region

was thus to be deferred. A study had been presented by one Professor Brückner that provided information on the ethnic situation. The Italy specialist in the Army High Command, Lieutenant Colonel Schneller, was brought to Vienna in order to allow military considerations to also flow into a new demarcation.<sup>883</sup> Conrad even instructed that care be taken to talk only of Trentino and not South Tyrol. He furthermore expressed a widespread view, especially in the military, when he said that it should be possible 'to divest the enemy of the ceded land as soon as possible'.<sup>884</sup>

How deeply Conrad was stung by the concession and how much the Austrian protagonists were dominated by an element of impotence became evident from a lengthy letter to Foreign Minister Burián from 2 April, in which Conrad regarded a special peace with Russia to be more feasible than the prevention of an Italian entry into the war. He wanted, however, that an armistice be concluded with Russia only with the aim of giving the Imperial and Royal armies a free hand for the war against Italy.<sup>885</sup> Here revenge was in play again and the perfidy should be punished. It was as though Vienna knew that Italy was receiving simultaneous assurances from the Allies not to conclude a separate peace.

Conrad said it was out of the question to wage war simultaneously with Russia, Serbia and Italy. A peaceful settlement thus had to be reached immediately with one of the opponents. Russia could be accommodated in the question of the Turkish Straits and even the cession of East Galicia would be a far smaller sacrifice to make than the cession of Tyrol and the Austrian Littoral to Italy. Such arguments, however, were already illusory. And the dilemma could not be any more complete: at the beginning of April, Russia was still at the peak of its military successes and did not intend to conclude a separate peace. Then came Gorlice–Tarnów. Russia had defeat in sight, but knew that Italy's entry into the war was imminent and thus did nothing to conclude a peace. On the Austrian side, moreover, no attempt was made to actually enter into talks with the Russians. All these considerations only existed on paper, likewise the demand made shortly thereafter by Conrad that an agreement be reached with Serbia, which he imagined would not be easy, but at least possible: 'I have', he wrote to Bolfras, 'identified the solution of the southern Slav question as the most important problem of the Monarchy and emphasised that the merging of the southern Slavs is an inevitable fact that, if it does not take place within the Monarchy, will resolve itself outwardly to the detriment of the latter. Back then, it was neglected to achieve the peaceful annexation of Serbia; in 1909 we [then] failed to bring this about by force, as I urgently advised. Perhaps the opportunity poses itself now to achieve our objective by peaceful means, since Serbia does not look to Italy with great trust. [...] I think that we must make it clear to Serbia that it can only achieve its dreams of unity and access to the Adriatic Sea in close association with the Monarchy, in other words via its annexation by the latter as a federal state, just like Bavaria in the German Empire [...]'<sup>886</sup>



Those at the German Grand Headquarters did not appear to think much of this. Conrad was requested urgently to travel to Berlin in order to persuade him otherwise. The Prussian War Minister General von Wild noted regarding the deliberations on a separate peace: 'I see in this a first, shameful admittance of weakness and the great dangers of our federal brother breaking off. I have therefore emphatically brought this danger to the attention of Falkenhayn [...]. We must not allow ourselves to be taken into tow by the "Oyster Hungarians" [...]. There are no extra tours. This will have to be made clear to Conrad tomorrow, and in general we have to open his eyes and shine a light in his fantastical political darkroom.'<sup>887</sup> In this way, and in accordance with the well-known maxim 'suaviter in modo, fortiter in re', Conrad would be brought 'into line'.

In Vienna, a map was shown to the Italian ambassador, the Duke of Avarna, that had been agreed on between the politicians and the military and in which the Austrian proposals on territorial cessions were marked. The Duke remained poker-faced, since he was merely the messenger.

Since the session of the Privy Council, Archduke Karl Franz Josef had been in Vienna almost continuously and was ultimately also included in the deliberations of the Military Chancellery to send him on a special mission to Rome. He was immediately willing to do this. He went 'enthusiastically', it was said.<sup>888</sup> The Emperor still knew nothing of this. Finally, on 16 March, General Bolfras mentioned this idea. The Emperor did not comment on it, but did not reject the proposal out of hand. On 4 April it was the Lord Chamberlain Prince Montenuovo who urged the Emperor to agree to the trip. Franz Joseph wanted to talk to Minister Burián about it. But the latter was strictly against the idea.<sup>889</sup>

Then, on 5 April, Vienna knew that Italy would demand very much more than the former was willing to concede. The Brenner border, the Austrian Friuli and the territory around Trieste were demanded. Even a visit by the heir to the throne would have changed nothing. The plan to send Archduke Karl was dropped. Instead, the Italy specialist of the Army High Command returned immediately to Cieszyn, since he would probably be most urgently needed there in the coming weeks.<sup>890</sup>

## The Final Offer

The final round of negotiations was already characterised by the news of extensive Italian troop transports becoming known and rumours about English offers to Italy simultaneously filtering through. The only compromise that Sonnino was prepared to make in negotiations with Austria was that Italy would agree to make the Trieste region a demilitarised zone and a free port. Finally, Italy once more submitted concrete demands

that were even somewhat less than those on which agreement had almost been reached in London parallel to this.

Burián, however, could not and would not concede anywhere near as much as demanded in the fulfilment of Italian wishes. He was bound by the decision of the Emperor and what was repeatedly invoked as public opinion. Heavy protests were reported in Tyrol against any sort of concession to Italy. Burián described the immediate cession of territories as unfeasible. The Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery, Bolfras, submitted the proposal that the territories granted to Italy should be militarily evacuated and in this way Austria-Hungary's peaceableness particularly underlined. Only if Italian troops were to advance further should military resistance be offered. Bolfras was contradicted immediately and vehemently.<sup>891</sup> But the Emperor, who received Conrad on 21 April, also made the case for not continuing to haggle over the cession of territories, but instead to allow the Italians to march in, if necessary.<sup>892</sup> Conrad recognised what these thoughts amounted to: if a territory was conceded more or less willingly in negotiations, then this was different to being compelled to give it up by force of arms. If Austria were to win back what had been conquered, the situation would be a completely different one to that which would arise from a straightforward relinquishment. The resolution not to concede anything voluntarily, necessitated almost automatically that resistance be offered.

Now negotiations were taken up again with the Chief of the German General Staff. Falkenhayn was doubtless more moderate in his views and his manner of expression than the Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn, who wrote to his wife on 14 April: 'In itself, it could be irrelevant for us whether or not Italy hacks off once piece more from the tail of the dying camel that is Austria, but the military situation intensifies dangerously as a result of the intervention of Italy.'<sup>893</sup> Falkenhayn met Conrad on 24 April in Cieszyn.<sup>894</sup> He informed him that he had told the Italian military attaché in Berlin that the German Empire would immediately lend its support to Austria-Hungary with 20 divisions in the event of war with Italy. Whether the Italian had believed this, however, was very questionable; the reality, in any case, looked different. Germany did not have anything with which it could come to the aid of its ally. Moreover, Germany did not want to come to its aid. How long, asked Falkenhayn, would it take the Italians to reach Vienna? Conrad answered: five weeks. Including the deployment time, there remained not even seven weeks from the expected declaration of war to the fall of Vienna. This was a horrible scenario. Falkenhayn did not know what to advise, and merely said that they would have to wait for the outcome of the offensive in Galicia, and only then they would see. There was furthermore hope of a new, effective 'smoking substance', which was currently being tested and should be deployed in the west. He of course meant chlorine gas. Perhaps this 'miracle weapon' would also help against the Italians.

As yet, Italy had not declared war; it continued to try its luck. Since more had been conceded to Italy by the Entente powers in the parallel negotiations, however, than Austria could offer in even the best case, it was no wonder that it was not Austria-Hungary who was the highest bidder but the Entente. Italy also had every reason to be distrustful towards the Austrian offers, since it always had to be taken into account that the Dual Monarchy would retake what it had ceded at the first good opportunity.

The German Empire also thought this way and Falkenhayn sent Conrad on 29 April a telegram with the request to forward it to Count Burián; the telegram stated: 'In my view, the simple facts must be decisive for our actions, namely that the intervention of Italy and co., as far as it is humanly possible to say, will decide the war unfavourably for us, also that without this intervention we can be very confident of victory, and that the victor will decide on what Europe will look like and will thus be in a position to make good any sacrifice made for victory, and, finally, that whoever is ultimately defeated not only loses the sacrifices he has made but also his entire empire.' Conrad forwarded the telegram to Vienna without any comment.<sup>895</sup>

In the meantime, there were fights and running street battles in Italy between the advocates and the opponents of an intervention. 60 Catholic bishops signed a manifesto against Italian participation in the war. In *Popolo d'Italia*, Mussolini wrote: 'War or republic',<sup>896</sup> and the opponent of intervention and former prime minister, Giovanni Giolitti, was publicly insulted. But neither the one nor the other was of any consequence for the secret diplomacy.

On 25 April, the final text of the treaty was completed. The next day, the 'Treaty of London' was signed. However, it did not become known to the wider public until almost two years later, on 28 February 1917, when it was published by *Izvestia*, the new Communist daily newspaper in Russia. The Treaty of London of 1915 constituted the basis for Italian entry into the war. Italy committed itself to intervene actively in the war as soon as possible in the near future, and not later than one month after the signing of the treaty.<sup>897</sup>

Vienna did not know, of course, that there was actually nothing left to negotiate. One could have been distrustful on 1 May, however, when Foreign Minister Sonnino refused on this day to receive the former Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister, Count Agenor Gołuchowski, who had been sent to Rome on a special mission.<sup>898</sup> The Ballhausplatz did not even want to believe it when on the same day the Imperial and Royal delegation in Athens reported that according to their information Italy had concluded a treaty with the Entente on 26 April.<sup>899</sup> The maxim retained its validity according to which one should 'first of all play the flute and not yet blow the horn'.<sup>900</sup> Day after day, Conrad's telegrams from Cieszyn arrived in Vienna, however, in which he urged that war with Italy be avoided at all costs. If necessary, all Italian demands should be fulfilled.<sup>901</sup> One can thus accuse Conrad and the senior Austro-Hungarian generals of all

sorts of things, including demands for a pre-emptive war as well as a sloppy approach to their ally. Yet one thing is equally certain: since the beginning of the war, any means and any concession seemed justified to them, especially Conrad, in order to at least maintain Italian neutrality.

On 3 May, Sonnino sent a note to the Italian ambassador in Vienna, the Duke of Avarna, which terminated the Triple Alliance. The note was given to Burián the following day. An identical note was handed over in Berlin three days later. Now it was clear to everyone that the 'War Scenario I' would occur before long. Things became emotional. Thought was still given to whether to send the heir to the Austrian throne to Rome. Archduke Karl was called to the Emperor on a daily basis. And the Emperor, who had unleashed the war more or less free of emotion, said: 'This is how we will now perish'. And he 'wept', as the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery noted.<sup>902</sup>

The German Empire was shocked and rebuked Austria-Hungary gravely for acting too late and making too few concessions. Conrad took the same line and even complained to the Chief of the Military Chancellery that Burián had overestimated the military means of the Dual Monarchy. The war would simply have to be avoided. At this moment, Conrad was once more abandoned by his sense of reality, and he only reacted emotionally. Even if it was kept in mind that he was anxious that Romania would follow Italy in entering the war and the offensive near Tarnów, which had just begun so successfully, would perhaps have to be abandoned prematurely, it was too late for concessions and dramatic gestures of humility towards Italy. An interesting proposal was made by the former Austrian prime minister, Baron Max Wladimir Beck, who advised Burián to set up a German naval base in the Adriatic in order to discourage Italy at the last moment from waging war.<sup>903</sup> Burián also called for immediate military agreements with the German Empire in the event of an Italian attack. In view of the news about Italy's military preparations and the offers of the Entente, Vienna was now prepared for an imminent breach with Italy. Late in the day, a sense of reality made its presence felt. This was not the case in Berlin, however, since the Permanent Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry, von Jagow, demanded that negotiations with Italy be dragged out for at least another four weeks; only then would German troops be available to fight against Italy.<sup>904</sup>

Conrad and Falkenhayn met each other at increasingly short intervals and, at the end, almost daily. It was a question of assessing the Italian danger and of calculating relative strengths. Could, as Falkenhayn claimed, enough divisions be liberated from the Russian front in order for at least a defence to be possible in the south-west? Should the Tyrolean front be placed under German command?<sup>905</sup> This would only be in order to remain on the defensive there, however. Instead, Falkenhayn wanted all disposable forces to be used against Serbia, in order to bring about Romanian and Bulgarian entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers and to establish a link to Turkey. Conrad

was not so sure; in fact, he described such thoughts, which also incorporated Greece, as plain 'childish'<sup>906</sup> and wanted every available man to be sent to the future Italian front. This seemed much more important to him than a potential campaign against Serbia, all the more so because the determination to act collectively seemed after all to make an impression on Italy at the last moment. All of a sudden, there was indeed a small chance.

On 8 May, a discussion took place in Cieszyn at the request of Germany,<sup>907</sup> in which the German Kaiser, Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, Falkenhayn, Burián, Tisza, Stürgkh, Conrad and others took part.<sup>908</sup> The main topic was naturally Italy. Emperor Franz Joseph and Kaiser Wilhelm had written to King Vittorio Emanuele and appealed to his honour and in the name of morality. It was pointed out during the discussion that in the press of the Central Powers the question of Italy had so far not been addressed very thoroughly and, above all, not with hostility. The military situation was also discussed, as well as final offers and interventions. The possibility was also debated of not only triggering a crisis in the Italian government but also of toppling the government and, with the help of Giovanni Giolitti, helping the neutralist wing of Italian politics to achieve a breakthrough. The decision to go to war had not, after all, been unanimous in Italy. The south of the country and the rural regions were against the war; the north and the cities were in favour of it. Piedmont and Lombardy broke ranks to the extent that they were also predominantly against the war. Brescia had evidently not forgotten the oppressive measures of 1849 on the part of the Austrian General of Artillery Julius von Haynau and voted in favour of the war. The bulk of Veneto, on the other hand, was in favour of retaining neutrality. Italy was facing the acid test. The royal house was cursed and the king subjected to death threats. A resident of Milan wrote to the King that dying for Triente was 'not worthwhile'.<sup>909</sup> Giolitti's faction indeed did not yet want to climb down, and had it in their power to bring about a dramatic reversal. Giolitti dressed it in harsh words as follows: 'To violate the treaty now and move from neutrality on to the attack is a betrayal like no other in history.'<sup>910</sup>

In order to avoid a confrontation with Giolitti, Prime Minister Salandra postponed the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies until 20 May. On this day, according to the Chief of the Italian General Staff, the army would be ready for war. Salandra came under pressure, however, from another side. The Ballhausplatz had placed all its hopes on influencing Pope Benedict XV via the Austro-Hungarian ambassador. It indeed proved possible to bring about an intervention on the part of the Holy See in favour of the neutralists in Italy. The greater number of deputies in the Chamber and in the Senate appeared to support Giolitti. Salandra expected to be defeated in a vote. Austria-Hungary made last-minute concessions and abandoned the path of secret negotiations. The whole world should know how far the Habsburg Monarchy had gone with its concessions: the whole of Tyrol, as long as it was Italian, as well as Gradisca; complete mu-

nicipal autonomy in the mixed Italian territories that remained in Austria; an Italian university and free port in Trieste, which was to ultimately become a free city; Vlorë in Albania; Austria-Hungary's lack of interest in Albania; the safeguarding of the national interests of the Italian subjects of Austria-Hungary; a sympathetic examination of the wishes of Italy regarding Gorizia and the Dalmatian islands; guarantees from the German Empire for the loyal adherence to a treaty to be signed between Italy and Austria-Hungary. The Imperial and Royal ambassador in Rome, Baron Macchio, and the German ambassador, Prince Bülow, finally went even further in their offers than they had been instructed to do in their official versions and in the paperwork.

Sonnino convened a session of the Council of Ministers on 12 May. The situation on this day was not favourable for those who made the case for Italian entry into the war. The Russians were beaten at Gorlice, the naval and landing operation of the Entente powers in the Dardanelles had pretty much failed and nothing could be hoped for in the Balkans. Voices grew louder demanding that the war be called off at the last moment. The Italian press published the Austro-Hungarian offer, which appeared to the Italians, who were not aware of the details of the Treaty of London, to be extremely generous. The cabinet resigned. The interventionists had suffered a setback; the neutralists, however, were not prepared for a government takeover. Giolitti had no chance of forming a cabinet. On 16 May, the King therefore refused the resignation of Salandra's government. In this way, King Vittorio Emanuele tipped the scales: Giolitti did not want to oppose the King, so he avoided the confrontation and left Rome. The neutralist course had failed.

The session of parliament took place, as planned, on 20 May. The most important point was the transfer of extraordinary powers to the royal government in the event of war. The Senate voted almost unanimously in favour and the vote in the Chamber, with 407:74, was also very clear. This can be regarded as a textbook example of how, from a relatively insignificant group of interventionists and advocates of war, a nation could be pulled into war by the playing of the national card. It was less the course of the war than the end of the war that proved the interventionists and nationalists to have been right. The Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio spoke of 'le radiose giornate di maggio' (the radiant month of May). No-one could know that the decision to go to war would result in around a million dead and crippled.

Austria-Hungary did not respond to events in Italy with a declaration of war, as Rome had perhaps expected. Instead, Burián reacted to the cancellation of the Triple Alliance treaty by rejecting the reasons given as irrelevant and above all by noting that in 1912 the Triple Alliance had been extended until 1920 at the request of Italy. Therefore, a termination could only be declared when this date had expired. In a *Green Book*, the Italians published several documents from the negotiations with Austria-Hungary on questions of compensation and cession, though not the documents of the parallel

negotiations with the Entente. On 20 May the general mobilisation was announced in Italy for 23 May. This did not mean, however, that the mobilisation had only been commenced on this date. It had already been underway for weeks and months. In fact, as early as the day of the mobilisation order itself, the Italians were already partially operational.

In Rome, on the afternoon of Pentecost Sunday, 23 May, Baron Macchio was handed the Italian declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, as was Minister Burián in Vienna by the Duke of Avarna. With disarming honesty, it stated: 'Determined to ensure the protection of Italian rights and interests by any means at its disposal, the Italian government cannot evade its duty to take those measures for the purpose of fulfilling national aspirations against any current or future threat imposed on it by events. His Majesty the King declares that he regards himself from tomorrow onwards in a state of war with Austria-Hungary.'

The majority of Italians believed the predictions that it would be a short war, which would end in an Italian victory.<sup>911</sup> They believed the simplified portrayal, according to which a democratic state was waging war against an undemocratic, atavistic construct like Austria-Hungary. Germany was more or less blanked out. It was also irrelevant for this war, which had been thought up by an intellectual minority, that the south of Italy and large parts of the peasantry literally had to be forced to go to war. Only in retrospect did it seem that everything had to happen in this way and that – as was stated on a poster embedded into the table on which the armistice with Austria-Hungary was signed on 3 November 1918 – 'with the victory of Italian arms, the end of the World War' was brought about.<sup>912</sup>

Italy declared war on Turkey on 20 August 1915 and on Bulgaria on 19 October 1915. The Italian declaration of war on the German Empire, however, did not take place until the following year, on 28 August 1916.

Austria-Hungary responded to the Italian step with an imperial manifesto, which had been prepared by the envoy Matscheko and was once more a textbook example of the use of language as a political instrument; it was a type of literary supplement to the 'Great War': 'The King of Italy has declared war on Me. A breach of fidelity unknown in history has been committed by the Kingdom of Italy against both its allies [...]. We have not threatened Italy, disparaged its reputation, infringed upon its honour or its interests [...]. We have done more: when Italy cast its greedy glances across Our borders, We were determined to make painful sacrifices for the sake of maintaining the alliance and peace [...]. But Italy's covetousness [...] could not be satisfied. And thus fate must take its course [...]. The new treacherous enemy in the south is not a new opponent [...] Novara, Mortara, Custoza and Lissa [...]. I greet My tried and tested troops, I trust in you and your commanders! I trust in My peoples, to whose unparalleled self-sacrifice My fatherly thanks are due [...] Franz Joseph m.p.'







## 11 The Third Front

11. The Austro-Hungarian Belvedere-Gschwent Fortress in South Tyrol after being shelled by the Italians in 1915. The barrier forts on the plateau of the Sette Comuni had been planned since 1906 and were designed to prevent the Italians from advancing northwards in the event of war. Today, the ruins of the fortresses still remain as eloquent witnesses to the war in the Alpine regions.

**F**or some people – and not only for the population of Austria-Hungary – Italy's declaration of war was utterly unexpected. Not even Italy's new allies were immune to a sense of shock, in particular not the Serbs, who like the Croats and Slovenes had become aware of the fact that, ultimately, they would bear the cost of the Italian aspirations, which could destroy their dreams of a new southern Slav kingdom. In the Military Chancellery of the Emperor in Vienna, Major General Marterer therefore remarked with a certain sense of satisfaction that the Serbian troops positioned opposite the Imperial and Royal troops near Bjeljina and Zvornik had held up white flags and called out 'Živio Franz Josef'.<sup>913</sup>

By its nature, Italy was closer in the minds of the German lands of the Monarchy than other theatres of war such as those in Galicia or Serbia. Events in the areas around Limanowa, Przemyśl and in the Carpathians had been followed with a gradually decreasing degree of concern. From the beginning of 1915 however, Italy increasingly became the focus of interest. Finally, the consternation took a leap in terms of emotional intensity and something became clear that had already been felt earlier by others due to their proximity to a theatre of war. Now, it also became clear to the western crown lands for the first time how close they were to the action, as well as the high extent to which the danger threatened to spread.

As was the case with Serbia at the time, the notion of revenge played a role to a certain degree. More important was the shock over behaviour that was judged as treasonable and as a breach of fidelity. The calculating nature of Italian politics was ignored. However, a type of disdain also came into play, since Italy was ranked below Russia in terms of its antagonism and dangerousness, and perhaps even below Serbia, which had forced the Imperial and Royal Army to take it more seriously during 1914.

Naturally, forces could also be mobilised against Italy that were not available elsewhere. In Tyrol, for example, there appeared to be nothing that might restrict the willingness of the people to perform their duty and to make sacrifices. It was as though the mood of the July Crisis and of August 1914 had come alive again. While there had always been an interest and emotional participation in the departure of replacement formations for the regiments in the east or in the Balkans, now something of the enthusiasm for war again re-surfaced. As had previously been the case with the Czechs, the authorities noted with a certain degree of surprise that the Italian-speaking population in the southern parts of Tyrol also maintained the friendly attitude towards Austria that had been observed since the summer of 1914, and at least did not abandon

it immediately.<sup>914</sup> It was only the measures related to the establishment of the military area that brought a change in this regard.

The war against Italy was also rooted in different causes than the campaigns against Serbia and Russia, and it saw the Danube Monarchy in a different role. The war against Serbia had after all been triggered by Austria-Hungary. The conflict with Russia was a result of the coming into effect of the alliances. However, Italy had stepped out of line and strung its allies along. The initiative by no means lay with Austria-Hungary, but had from the start been with the Apennine state.

However, 'Kakania', as the Austro-Hungarian Empire was derisively known, had no option but to demonstrate its impotence, and had to put up a good front. During the months of negotiation and tactical manoeuvring, everything had been pushed to one side. Italy was by no means to be provoked through aggressive, rabble-rousing language. This suppression of feelings suddenly came to an end in May, and now attempts were made at least to make it possible for verbal negotiations to take place. At this point in time, the war propaganda not only reached a high point, but also an incomparable degree of importance. Now, instead of desperation, tough determination must be shown. This attitude was reinforced by the great success enjoyed by the Central Powers at precisely this critical time in the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive. However, sensibilities had been focussed on the Italian problem far earlier. Since at the end of the July Crisis, demonstrations had been held and the Italian national anthem had also been played and sung alongside those of Austria and Germany, the disappointment over the stance taken by Italy had, beyond official policy, turned into latent apathy. Now, all this could be released, becoming a textbook example of the law of intellectual deterioration when emotions are exploited for very specific political situations.<sup>915</sup>

The images and symbols for the people living in the kingdom had already long been coined. They ranged from the usual dismissive descriptions through to the new stereotypes that then only had to be placed in relation to their own value system and self-concept in order to enable the propaganda to get into full swing. All this worked excellently, even without central control by a propaganda ministry. The slogans and symbols were to a certain extent visible on the streets, and with regard to their own value judgements, everything could be repeated that had already been said until that point about the purpose of the war. Indeed, to some degree, even more convincing arguments could be prevented. The possibility that Serbia might annex parts of the Monarchy was in realistic terms never regarded as very great. In the case of Serbia and Russia, an open, realistic demand for the annexation of Austrian and Hungarian territories was lacking. And even if the prospect did arise, it was simply discounted. Italy, however, wanted core regions of the Dual Monarchy and openly declared its intentions. If Italy were to be successful, the existence of the Empire was at stake, and the end could be foreseen. This led to a mass movement of those people living in the

Empire who were threatened, which was far more than a mass movement of those seeking revenge. In the Bohemian crown lands, Italy was also regarded as more of an enemy than Serbia and Russia, since the latter were after all Slavs. What tipped the balance for the southern Slavs was the fact that Italy had its sights on southern Slav territory extending far in the direction of Dalmatia. For Hungary, Italy was also an enemy that was judged on an emotional basis, although, certainly, it was not insignificant that Italy was regarded in the same light as Romania, and that by rejecting Italian demands, the intention was simultaneously to send signals to Romania. The unsuccessful attempt to at least keep Italy neutral was however regarded in Budapest, though with a certain degree of speciousness, as being a diplomatic failure. This could be seen as a sign of retrograde amnesia to the extent that in September 1914, there was a horrified reaction in Hungary when the idea was postulated in Germany that Suceava (Suczawa) and Rădăuți (Radautz) be ceded to Romania in order to motivate it to enter the war.

In fact, Tisza was indeed severely attacked by the Independence Party in parliament and accused of leaving parliament in the dark regarding developments relating to the Italian issue, as well as of failing to persuade the Austrians to relent. The leader of the Socialists, István Rakovszky, also became directly cynical and launched a blistering attack on Tisza and his policies. Tisza, he claimed, had already stated in 1914 that a punitive expedition with one single corps would be sufficient to bring down Serbia. And, here, he had been utterly wrong. Now, too, he was merely following the path of appeasement.<sup>916</sup> However, it was difficult to take Tisza to task, since it was not possible to demand concessions from Austria with regard to Italy on the one hand, while on the other to ignore the wishes of Romania.

The German lands of the Monarchy, however, felt themselves to be directly threatened, and reacted accordingly. The stereotypes were not hard to find. They were prevalent in the meetings of the Joint Council of Ministers, in private records and particularly extensively in the exchange of letters between Conrad and the Military Chancellery. There, for example, Conrad wrote on 20 March 1915: 'Already as a brigadier in Trieste, I pointed out the necessity of putting a stop to irredentism, and as a divisional commander in Innsbruck to the [...], to increase the number of troops in South Tyrol, to build substantial fortifications – as Chief [of the General Staff], I then urgently requested [...] and this was the main issue, that the score with Italy be settled in good time, in other words, as early as 1907, at a point in time when there was nothing to fear from Serbia or Russia. [...] The great Aehrenthal replied with arrogant haughtiness that: 'in these times, one does not wage pre-emptive wars.'

Then, on 10 May: 'Whether or not it will now come to war with Italy or only to the cession of territories, it is still a sorry affair; how different things would be if in 1907 we had crippled this perfidious neighbour for 20 years.'

17 May: 'The events in Italy force us now to finally plan for war against this perfidious state. [...] I would also like to emphasise that with regard to the proclamation to be issued if war were to be declared against Italy, it would be of great importance that in this proclamation, words are chosen that expose the perfidy of Italy in scathing terms, and that portray Italy's actions not as war, but as cowardly, mean, treacherous buccaneering.'

21 May: 'The Italian perfidy is now bearing the fruits that I had already foreseen years ago, and that I wanted to nip in the bud. [...] I find that we have been diplomatically duped [not for 'three weeks' as Bolfras had written, but] for 30 years already, although with the thorough diplomatic involvement on the part of Germany. Every member of the Gendarmerie had a clearer insight into the matter than our diplomats [...].'

2 June: 'Here, we are putting all our hopes into the most drastic possible success against Russia; – luckily, the Signori Italiani – at least until now – have not yet begun the offensive that one should sensibly expect from them. How easy it would have been in 1907 or even later to have given them a battering – it makes one want to cry to think of the shining opportunity we have missed.'<sup>917</sup>

It quite clearly failed to occur to Conrad that his repeated plea for a pre-emptive war against Italy could be judged no differently than Italy's policy now, which in a cold-blooded, Machiavellian fashion was designed to achieve its own goals.

### The Pre-emption

Already in January 1915, the first rumours of the Italian demands had been circulated beyond the diplomatic and military channels. The reaction, particularly in Tyrol, was accordingly vehement. However, as yet, nothing had really been divulged. Only in March was it announced that Italy had demanded the cession of Trentino and a part of South Tyrol, including Bolzano (Bozen).<sup>918</sup> This news, which had not yet been fully corroborated, went hand in hand with the fact that the War Ministry ordered the District Commissions for Tyrol, Carinthia and the Austrian Littoral to take preparatory measures and to evacuate all civilians who were not absolutely needed. The military posts also voiced the notion of deporting, detaining or arresting all Italian nationals – regardless of whether or not they were under suspicion – if the alarm were to be raised. More than ever, all suspects were to be treated in this way. Ultimately, the prospect of imposing martial law on the greater part of the Monarchy was raised, and only at the last moment, on 27 April 1915, after an intervention by Minister Burián to the Emperor, was it delayed.<sup>919</sup> As was the case during the July Crisis, the trigger had been enormous and, ultimately, unfounded doubts in the attitude among the population. In the end, the War Surveillance Office made significant curtailments with regard to

the detainment measures after all, and only allowed for those Italians to be detained whose disloyalty could be proven by halfway solid evidence.<sup>920</sup> However, lists had been prepared in advance as a precautionary measure, and attempts had been made to keep them up to date. The sword of Damocles of expulsion and detainment hung over tens of thousands of Italians living in the Habsburg Monarchy. The issue of the preparatory decree had already sufficed as an alarm signal.

However, the matter also had a military dimension, since if the Italians were treated with suspicion by the Monarchy in general and they were to be forcibly evacuated, what was to be done with the Italians serving in the Imperial and Royal Army and Navy? Until that point, tens of thousands had loyally fought side-by-side with the Austro-Hungarian troops, and in fact there were no signs that they would not continue to do so. Equally, however, the fact had to be taken into account that even before the Italian declaration of war, hundreds of Italians had fled from the Habsburg Monarchy and that, finally, around 1,000 people living in Trieste (Triest), just as many from the Adriatic coast and 700 from the county of Tyrol had reported as voluntary soldiers to the Italian Army.<sup>921</sup> It was, therefore, quite clear that a cautious approach was needed.

The shock generated by the rumours of the threat of war from Italy was also sufficient to intensify the attempts that had already been underway since the autumn of 1914 to create voluntary formations, and particularly to reinforce the members of the Tyrolean *Standschützen* (members of rifle companies). As early as 1913, the Tyrolean rifle associations had already been declared to be a body that was required to serve in the Landsturm (reserve forces), thus creating a new regulatory framework for incorporating this institution into the national defence forces. This was all the more important when the Landsturm took on the form of march battalions, making it available for use outside of the respective reinforcement areas. This meant that Landsturm formations from Tyrol and Vorarlberg could also be deployed in the Balkans and in Galicia.<sup>922</sup> This led to a long and fierce controversy between the governors of Tyrol and Vorarlberg, Kathrein and Rhomberg, and the National Ministry of Defence of the Austrian half of the Empire. The use – which was in formal terms almost entirely incontestable – of the Tyrolean and Vorarlberg Landsturm troops and, therefore, also of the *Standschützen* somewhere in the east and south-east, combined with the rapidly increasing losses among the Tyrolean troop bodies in those theatres of war had almost immediately caused the enthusiasm for the war on the Inn and Etsch Rivers and on the shores of Lake Constance to disappear. Even so, the *Standschützen* continued to enjoy a high influx of new recruits, and the threat of Italy entering the war again led to a mood of thrilled enthusiasm among the people. Here, the issue was not to find a justification for going to war, but simply to avenge the decision taken by Italy, which was regarded as treason and perfidy, and above all to prevent the secession of the territory demanded by Italy. An imperial order on 18 May 1915 decreed that the *Standschützen* divisions

for Tyrol-Vorarlberg should be deployed. On 19 May, the Innsbruck military command area was alerted, and so, therefore, were the *Standeschützen*. However, there were already judicial districts that were no longer able to provide an entire battalion to be marched out, as had been planned; some were now only able to assemble a company.<sup>923</sup> In many villages, it was also no longer possible to assemble rifle platoons, since too many men had already been enlisted in the army or had fallen in battle. Even so, in this way, approximately 32,400 *Standeschützen* could be assembled, of whom around 18,000 were sent to the new front. The oldest *Standeschützen* were some years over 70, and were veterans of the long-past war against Italy in 1866.<sup>924</sup> It is almost impossible to determine the age of the youngest, since the boys gave false dates of birth; it is likely that he was 13 years old. However, since the *Standeschützen* were enrolled for service without having undergone a medical examination, there were already losses during the marches to the staging areas and to the border. Finally, many unfit men had to be sent back home.<sup>925</sup> Their weaponry and uniforms were inconsistent. Those who were unable to obtain a uniform were given a yellow and black armband and ran the risk of being treated as a franc-tireur. And those who were not given one of the 20,000 repeating rifles headed out with his Mauser rifle from the rifle stand. The *Standeschützen* were joined by the voluntary rifles, who equally attempted to compensate for their lack of military knowledge and physical fitness with enthusiasm for the war. While the first companies marched towards the front, there was therefore a different movement in the opposite direction.

On 20 May, the inhabitants of the border area to the south of Lavis (Laifs) were instructed to procure sufficient food to last them for four months, and to make ready for evacuation. One or two days later, the preparatory relocation measures were also ordered for other border areas, not least those of Carinthia, and on 25 May, the interior migration began. 114,000 people, around a third of the entire Italian population of Tyrol, were relocated from Trentino. Directly on the border itself, outright depopulation measures were applied. To a large extent, animals and carts had to remain where they were, and were purchased by the state at an estimated value. However, the people were forced to move northwards in order to remove them from the areas that were endangered, to reduce the risk of espionage and to make room for the troops. All these procedures were already familiar from Galicia. Over 10,000 people were brought to Vorarlberg from the city and fortress of Trento (Trient) alone. By June, the evacuation had in effect been completed in all the areas bordering Italy.<sup>926</sup> From Italian Tyrol, the evacuees were brought to North Tyrol, Vorarlberg and also Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Bohemia and Moravia<sup>927</sup> (see Chapter 26). However, wherever no force was applied, the degree of willingness of the people to leave their homes and farms, or even only their apartments, was extremely low. For example, in Lienz, two trains were provided to transport the voluntary evacuees out of the endangered area. However, ap-



parently, one of the trains was boarded by just one single passenger: an actor who was visiting Lienz by chance as a guest performer.<sup>928</sup>

In other places, the danger was so obvious, for example in the Val Canale and Gail Valley, that from 24 May onwards, force was almost no longer necessary. On this date, the Italians already began their artillery attack, making the necessity to flee self-evident. Flight, evacuation and the forward march of troops merged with each other, and in this way once again, for hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people, life changed fundamentally within a space of 72 to 96 hours. Once again, the towns and villages were hung with flags and the trains were decorated. The music bands played whenever there was an evacuation or when troops marched out or were loaded on to trains. 'Zu Mantua in Banden', the 'Kaiserjäger March' or the 'Khevenhüller March' were the standard songs that were played, and which with time became hackneyed.

For the military, as always, the purpose was to calculate on a different basis than an emotional, enthusiastic or fearful one. Since August 1914, military preparations had been made in case Italy entered the war. Initially, it had been a type of emergency plan. On 13 August 1914, General of Cavalry Baron Franz von Rohr received the order to monitor the situation on the border and to make preparations for a rapid alert procedure. Rohr, who had been born in Arad and who before the war was Inspector General of the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army), established a group command and attempted to gain some degree of clarity regarding the military developments in Italy. He sent one report after another to the Army High Command and the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, but, overall, was only able to sketch out the almost hopeless inferiority of the Imperial and Royal troops if Italy were to attack. The situation looked more than dismal when the numbers were added up. Since September 1914, 17 battalions and twelve mobile guns were available for the five Tyrol regions, with 23 battalions and eight mobile guns for Carinthia and the Austrian Littoral. Here, the Tyrolean section had the advantage that the barrier forts on the plateau of Folgaria, which were designed to block access from the Sette Comuni to Trento, could very quickly be made ready for defensive action, and the artillery force of these fortresses was naturally to be included in the overall planning. Around 20,000 men worked to complete the fortress complexes. A far greater risk was posed to the Carinthian and Littoral sections. The very weak forces were gradually joined by the voluntary forces mentioned above. Carinthia established four regiments of volunteers with 10,000 men in total, while Salzburg offered six battalions, Upper Austria four battalions and Trieste one young rifle battalion. This made up a total of 26,000 volunteers, around a quarter of whom were suitable for use as fighting troops. In Tyrol and Vorarlberg – as mentioned above – it was primarily the *Standeschützen* who were provided. Until the regular troops arrived, at the beginning of May 1915, General Rohr, therefore, had at his disposal 112 battalions, nine squadrons and 49 batteries.

The gradual approach of this new war made it possible, however, to make thorough preparations and above all, to undertake the organisation mentioned above of the volunteers and Landsturm formations. Then there were border protection measures to be taken, which began in an extremely ambivalent way. On the one hand, until April 1915, a situation was to be avoided whereby Italy would be given an excuse to enter the war as a result of a significant increase in work to shore up defences and by building new fortresses or reinforcing existing fortifications. On the other, it was imperative at least to make minimal preparations. On 27 April, in the upper section of the Isonzo River, work began on reinforcing the terrain, and, on 11 May, the full armament of all fortifications on the Italian border began. From mid-May onwards, the first military staffs were transferred to their new headquarters.

The role of the Navy was also reconsidered, which had not moved out of the Adriatic not least because of the prospect of a war against Italy. Italy had observed the presence of the Imperial and Royal Fleet with some concern, and had requested that the British attack the Imperial and Royal High Seas Fleet as a preliminary repayment for the reversal of its allegiance. However, this would not only have been risky; it was impossible. Ultimately, only the combined naval forces of Great Britain, France and Italy in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic was to offer Italy the certainty of being equal to the Imperial and Royal Navy. The Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Haus, was planning for such a scenario.

There were, therefore, no surprises, neither on land nor at sea. During the nine months following August 1914, the military apparatus in the hinterland had become so well-oiled that in just a very short period of time, the decisions could be taken that were necessary for the area to the rear of the new theatre of war. Finally, on 25 May, the areas of the Graz and Innsbruck military commands, with the exception of Upper Austria, were declared to be areas of the field army.<sup>929</sup> In this way, Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Salzburg, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria and Styria became front zones, and all measures that until then had been in force in Galicia and the Balkans now also applied here.

### **On the Isonzo and in the Sette Comuni**

At the start of the war, Austria-Hungary and Italy should by all means have had an equal degree of knowledge of each other, since the Triple Alliance had provided many insights despite all the suspicions that were harboured. It was also possible for neutral Italy to retain military observers in the theatres of war; the hinterland was constantly monitored and with the aid of the Italian population within the Habsburg Monarchy, a continuous flow of information was upheld. Even so, Italy lagged behind in terms of its level of knowledge. Max Ronge, who later became head of the military intelligence

service of the Army High Command, traced the knowledge of the Austrians about the Italians, which soon increased significantly, least of all to the more complex or qualitatively better network of agents for the Danube Monarchy, but rather to the fact that the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Cadorna, had absolutely no regard for espionage. It appeared that he trusted in the numerical superiority of the Italians, as well as the better quality of their fortifications.

From August 1914, the Italian fortifications were reinforced and positions were established further forward, since there was a reluctance to rely solely on the long-distance fighting power of the artillery. Unlike Austria-Hungary, Italy was therefore by no means so reticent in reinforcing its land fortifications. In order to strengthen its artillery, guns were brought to the Italian border from abandoned fortresses and from the armouries. The Italians also armed their fortresses with modern guns and larger calibres. Finally, they had 844 guns ready for firing in and around their barrier forts alone. The border defence troops from all branches of the military numbered 142,000 men, and under the protection of this considerable contingent, the Italian Army was mobilised.<sup>930</sup>

The mobile militia had been in place since January 1915, and at the end of April, brigade and divisional cadres had been formed. Beyond the organisational and armament measures, shortly after taking office, Cadorna had also ordered the exceptional measure that like no other was designed to help ensure that the Italian soldiers were ready for war; the Chief of the General Staff had set in motion a departure from the fundamental secular attitude among politicians and the military and ordered that pastoral care for the military be established. This was intended to convince the soldiers in the mass army, who came predominantly from the rural regions of Italy, that the war aims were God's will, without simply ordering them to be courageous. In the words of Mario Isnenghi, the military chaplains 'were the only intellectuals who were tolerated by the military leadership in the proximity of the uniformed soldiers. They taught the minimal patriotism that consisted of acquiescence and obedience'.<sup>931</sup> This was a further step towards making Italy ready for war. Whether this would be sufficient to go on the offensive against Austria-Hungary would remain to be seen. Certainly, military interests favoured a delay in the start of the shooting war in order to be able to further intensify the training of recruits. The lack of coal and ore was a further reason why Italy was not able to come forward even earlier and even more strongly. Chief of the General Staff Cadorna had, therefore, set the long-term date for the start of operations as May 1915. In mid-April, transportation to the deployment zones began. Finally, on 23 April, a few days before the Treaty of London was signed, the mobilisation of the first eight army corps began, followed by a further six corps by May. As a result, the official declaration of the start of the war was merely a formality under international law, and had no further meaning.<sup>932</sup>

By June 1915, the Italian Army had already reached a strength of over 31,000 officers, and 1,058,000 NCOs and troops, with a fair number more under its command than Austria-Hungary, which had nothing remotely comparable with which to confront it. During its war preparations, Italy was also able to draw on the conditions agreed in the Treaty of London, however, and in the military conventions that had been concluded separately. The most important of these was the naval agreement between the Entente powers and Italy of 4 May 1915. Here, it was agreed that a first Allied fleet was to be created under the supreme command of the Italian naval forces, with its main base in Brindisi, which aside from the most up-to-date Italian units should also comprise a dozen French destroyers and six submarines. Following cessation of operations against Turkey, Great Britain also wanted to contribute four older battleships and four light cruisers to this first fleet. As a reserve, a second fleet was to be formed behind the Adriatic Fleet, in Taranto, Malta and Bizerta in Tunisia, comprising French and Italian battleships and, later, an additional four English ironclad warships. This second fleet was to come under French supreme command. All these measures were designed solely to eliminate the Imperial and Royal Navy.

The preparatory measures also included the military convention with Russia, concluded on 21 May 1915 in Baranovichi, which was also agreed to by the western Entente powers. The parties to this agreement undertook to relieve the Italian front by binding the German and Austro-Hungarian troops to their sections, making it impossible to be able to release divisions for the Italian front. However, a major offensive in the Balkans that had been planned by the Allies for some time, and which was designed to bring additional relief on Italy's entry into the war, proved impossible to realise. The idea had already surfaced in January in the British War Cabinet, and was connected to the issue of whether the armies, which had been newly deployed by Lord Kitchener, with half-a-million men, could not be brought to Serbia instead of to France. This would have conformed in particular to the indirect strategy of the British and to the doctrine of threatening the enemy flank.<sup>933</sup> However, the proposal was quickly dropped. Attempts by the Russians, Italians and above all the British to encourage Serbia to attack Austrian territory also came to nothing.<sup>934</sup> From this side, therefore, no relief for Italy was in sight.

In the autumn of 1914, Cadorna had begun with the development of operational plans and had a choice of three versions: a thrust against Tyrol, a thrust towards Vienna across the Ljubljana (Laibach) valley and the Graz basin, and a thrust across the Fella valley towards Carinthia. Due to the difficulty of the operation in the high and low mountain ranges, the option of attacking Tyrol was very quickly already disregarded. The most attractive concept, the thrust towards Graz and Vienna via Ljubljana, was considered too ambitious due to its unforeseeable components. However, in its reduced variant in the form of an offensive in the area of Gorizia (Görz) and Gradisca d'Isonzo

(Gradisca), specific targets presented themselves relatively quickly: Gorizia, Trieste, Ljubljana and, possibly, Maribor (Marburg an der Drau). Furthermore, a thrust across the Isonzo would enable a type of threat to Austria's flank. By May 1915, Cadorna had however felt so sure of what he had to do that he assigned specific operational goals to all armies, goals that lay deep in Austrian territory. His aim was therefore by no means to lead a defensive war, but to start with an offensive. Nothing else would have made sense. It is not usual to declare war on one's own initiative only to then withdraw to various defensive positions.

Naturally, when it came to the Austro-Hungarian plans for a war against Italy, the German troops also played a role. Conrad initially only wanted to use them demonstratively. The appearance of German troops alone, or so he hoped at the beginning, would surely prevent Italy from entering the war. A proposal to this effect made on 21 January 1915 was nonetheless rejected by Falkenhayn.<sup>935</sup> At the beginning of April 1915, Conrad finally believed that there was now one further chance of keeping Italy out of the war, namely if the German Empire were to put massive pressure on Italy and to threaten large-scale deployments of German troops. This did not occur, since Falkenhayn was only prepared to offer a bluff to the Italian military attaché.

On the same day, 1 April, on which Conrad wished Germany to make a final threatening gesture, he wrote to Foreign Minister Burián that an entry of Italy into the war would in military and political terms cause the Monarchy to be smashed to pieces. This was not only alarmist talk, but was grounded in a simple comparison of forces. Also, at that time it was not yet foreseeable how the battle in Galicia would develop. Above all, it had to be taken into account that Romania would very quickly follow the example of Italy.

In May 1915, however, the situation of the war altered in a manner that could hardly have been predicted. Russia appeared at least temporarily to have been beaten from the battlefield, Romania made no efforts to assert itself against the Central Powers, and operations remained at a standstill in Serbia. This enabled a displacement of forces to begin, with the aid of which at least some army formations from the Imperial and Royal Army who had experience of the fighting could be brought to the Italian front.

On 11 May 1915, Archduke Friedrich presented the Emperor with a first draft of a plan from the Army High Command for deployment against Italy. Here, the relatively precise knowledge of the Italian distribution of forces had been helpful. The Evidenzbüro (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal General Staff had been highly successful in procuring information and was also in retrospect able to ascertain that it knew far more about the Italians than the latter did about the Austro-Hungarian troops.<sup>936</sup> Cadorna assumed the Austrians to be significantly stronger than they in fact were. However, there was one aspect that Cadorna had no need to fear: that he would also be facing considerable German forces.

Already during the first considerations regarding the command structure on the Italian front, it became evident that German troops could not be reckoned with. Conrad had suggested to Falkenhayn that the forces that were to be withdrawn from the east, including ten German divisions, should be deployed to the south-western front. He initially wanted to act in a defensive manner, particularly since it could be assumed that the Italians were present with a massive superiority. Equally, however, Conrad believed that there would only be a real chance of taking the war to the new front if he also had forces available for a counter-offensive. Falkenhayn rejected the proposal. He by no means wanted Mackensen's 11th Army to be weakened, and certainly not to relocate towards the south-west. However, he was insistent that the command in Tyrol be transferred to a German general due to the proximity to Bavaria. This, however, was a direct impertinence and, as was to be expected, ruffled the sensitivities of Austria-Hungary, as well as its prestige. No agreement was reached. Conrad had to take his measures without delay, and therefore again reduced the number of troops in the Balkans. He also withdrew troops from Galicia and inserted them into the two national defence areas of Carinthia and Tyrol. The supreme command was to be given to General Archduke Eugen, regardless of the fact that he was to continue to command the Balkan forces. However, Eugen was not given General Stefan Sarkotić as his Chief of Staff, as he had wished, but instead Major General Alfred Krauß, who was somewhat difficult, but undoubtedly more important as a military strategist. In Conrad's view, there was a connection between the Balkans and Italy. If Italy were to be successful in its thrust into Austrian territory, and in particular with a possible advance into Carniola, there would certainly be repercussions for the Balkan theatre of war. The command leadership was therefore to be structured in such a way that General of Cavalry Archduke Eugen held the supreme command, and the two national defence commands, namely Tyrol under General of Cavalry Baron Viktor von Dankl and Carinthia under General of Cavalry Rohr, as well as the 5th Army under General of Infantry von Borojević, which was to be deployed on the Isonzo, were to provide the necessary formations. Eugen moved his headquarters from Petrovaradin (Peterwaradein) to Maribor.

It cannot be claimed that the mood in Austria-Hungary was particularly optimistic. Rather, it was envisaged that the war on the new front would in a short space of time turn into a catastrophe. As late as 28 May 1915, Conrad wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor that 'with the numerical superiority of the Italians and the high level of effectiveness of their very modern artillery, we must anticipate that very soon they will demolish our fortresses and advance into our territory'.<sup>937</sup> In April, Conrad had already sketched out how events might unfold: within five weeks, the Italians would reach Vienna. As a result, attempts could only be made to make the task as difficult as possible for them.

‘Now, everyone wants to go down to Italy’, Conrad wrote to Bolfras on 7 June. ‘I can understand why, and I would also prefer to go there myself since I am overcome by a boundless rage when I think of how these villains plan to invade our beautiful Alpine lands – and yet, privately, I am glad that we shall not let them in without a fight; even so, they wouldn’t have enjoyed their booty for long, even if it had been granted them, since a thorough war of vengeance would have broken out over the rogues’ heads. What we must do now is face the further course of events with a cool composure.’<sup>938</sup>

Repeated requests were made of the German Empire to intervene against Italy with a higher number of forces after all. However, the German High Command was prepared only to send a reinforced brigade – which then became known as the ‘German Alpine Corps’ – to protect Bavaria, which was to fulfil purely defensive tasks. For their part, the Germans did not consider declaring war on Italy, and a stronger intervention on behalf of Austria-Hungary was, therefore, not regarded as being an option. The fiction that was upheld until the autumn of 1916, that the German Empire and Italy were not at war with each other, therefore led to a peculiar situation. For Germany, the war against Italy was, as the campaign against Serbia had been in its day, Austria-Hungary’s own separate war. The German Empire left open the option of further talks, even the possibility of collaboration with Italy, and in so doing, created a situation which was certainly not beneficial to the mutual understanding between Germans and Austrians. The disappointment over this German stance finally even culminated in the demand made by the command of the Imperial and Royal south-western front that the Germans should withdraw the Alpine Corps.<sup>939</sup> Tellingly, the German Supreme Army Command decided against sending forces to the Isonzo from the start, where it could clearly be anticipated that the Italians would focus their efforts and might perhaps already advance deep into Austrian territory within a short period of time. The Germans appeared to be interested only in protecting Bavaria.

Conrad had expected active intervention from the Germans, and on 11 June still wrote to Falkenhayn that from the statements made by the German Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, it could be anticipated that words would be followed by deeds. Falkenhayn’s reply, which was forwarded on the same day, sputtered with fury. He vehemently disagreed with Conrad’s views, and claimed that Austria was only in a position to defend its borders with Italy in the first place since the German Empire had helped out in Galicia. ‘The Tyroleans have every reason to be heartily thankful instead of making snide remarks about the Bavarians [...]’<sup>940</sup> Conrad was deeply hurt, since Falkenhayn had seen fit to do nothing less than reprimand him beyond the actual subject in question. Already on the following day, Conrad again wrote to Falkenhayn, using his reply as a means of settling a fundamental score: Austria-Hungary, he claimed, had held its head high in 1914 when the challenge had been to keep the Russians at bay. The Tyrolean troops had been decimated in Galicia, thousands of kilometres away from

their homeland. 'When it comes to the mentality of this mountain people, it cannot be held against them when they now fail to understand why the Bavarians, who have come to their aid against an equally common enemy, are limited in their scope of fighting.'<sup>941</sup>

The national defence commander for Tyrol, General Dankl, believed however that he could ignore the barriers put in place with regard the German Alpine Corps and planned to use it for offensive purposes in the Marmolada area. This triggered a prompt rebuke from Cieszyn (Teschen), as a result of which Dankl tendered his resignation.<sup>942</sup>

Emperor Franz Joseph was also enraged by the attitude of the Germans and on 11 June ordered the Military Chancellery to avoid the expression 'brothers in arms' in telegrams to German posts.<sup>943</sup> However, the absence of greater German forces rendered illusory any thought of an offensive. Since Conrad could only plan defensive action, all available forces were brought as far forward as possible, to the border. It was implied to Dankl that he would have to retain his command and refrain from making applications for reinforcements.<sup>944</sup> There was no strategic reserve. The existence of the Alpine Corps was not even mentioned. This went so far that the Army High Command, despite an urgent request by the Germans, instructed that the existence of the Alpine Corps should continue to be ignored, even though fighting broke out between Italians and Germans from the first days onwards. Even so, the Germans were strictly forbidden to set foot on Italian soil, and were only permitted to play a role in defensive actions. An order by the German Kaiser to this effect on 8 July left no room for any possible doubt. The purpose was to prevent Germany from being forced into the war against Italy through the back door, as it were, since if German troops were to conduct operations on Italian soil, the Italians would have no other choice than to also declare war on the German Empire. And this was not in Italy's interests. This applied equally to the German Empire, which although it finally recalled its ambassador from Rome, and warned Italy against advancing into Austrian territory, refrained from sending its own troops to the main area of the Italian attack.

The Imperial and Royal 5th Army with the XV and XVI Corps, Army Group Rohr together with the VII Corps and the troops from the Tyrol national defence command under General Dankl deployed a total of 224,000 infantry, 3,000 horsemen and 640 mobile guns.<sup>945</sup> The number of Italian troops was three to four times as large, although it was above all the 2,000 and more mobile guns that were of greatest significance. However, there were also considerable weak points. The Italian infantry regiments had only two machine guns each, while the Imperial and Royal troops had two machine guns per battalion, in other words, four times as many. At the start of the war, the Italians had possessed almost no hand grenades, and the production rate of a model grenade from 1891 was just 2,500 pieces per month, as a result of which some of the Italian troops were still armed with outdated models.<sup>946</sup> In the air, the Italian Army had a far lower presence at first than had been feared. Above all, the licensed constructions



of British and French aircraft were used, which were flown as reconnaissance planes, fighters and bombers.<sup>947</sup> During the first weeks, only one biplane and two monoplanes appeared over the Isonzo, which were used to monitor the artillery and which were affectionately nicknamed 'Franzl', 'Seppi' and 'Bombenschani'.<sup>948</sup> The Imperial and Royal Aviation Troops also had little to offer, however, and only put four aviation companies to use with reconnaissance aircraft, and with two fighters per company. However, a construction programme was simultaneously begun that was designed to provide Austria-Hungary with relative superiority in the air. In one area, this was already secured, namely in terms of naval aviation. Here, Italy only had three aircraft at all that were suitable for an aviation battle, while the Imperial and Royal naval aviators with their 'Lohner L' type flying boats started from new bases on the Adriatic coast and dominated the air space over the sea and the areas close the coast.<sup>949</sup>

When considering the advantages and disadvantages, the war experience among the Imperial and Royal troops also proved highly significant, and it very soon became evident that a mode of operation that had already been tried and tested could not simply be offset by patriotism, courage and iron discipline. The concept of setting morale against machine guns had always been one that led to infinite losses. Therefore, if there was one thing that could be determined after just a short period of time, it was the fact that Italy was almost nowhere able to put its considerable superiority to use. It also cost effort to even force the soldiers to fight at all. While the Italians immediately began to play off their superior artillery, the infantry took up positions and entire brigades remained inactive in their staging areas for up to five days. The Italian leadership began to dismiss commanders, but success continued to elude them. Italy's allies, who had anticipated a decisive offensive by a fully replenished, well-rested army and as a result a gradual relief for the Allied front, expressed their disappointment accordingly.

However, it was not only the army that was a disappointment. Even more than this, the Entente powers must have regarded it as an unexpected setback that the Italian Fleet at first failed to make an appearance. In the discussions regarding the naval war, it had been agreed that the Allied fleets should become active immediately. As soon as the First Fleet dominated the lower Adriatic, the Second was to follow behind. The hope was then that the Imperial and Royal Navy would be forced into a decisive battle.<sup>950</sup> The First Fleet, a fighting power that was superior to the Imperial and Royal units in every way, sat waiting for day 'X' in the naval bases at Taranto and Brindisi. This was by no means the case with the Imperial and Royal Navy. It had been kept ready for this day by the commander of the fleet, Admiral Haus, and was to justify its existence by issuing a powerful sign of life. Haus had already begun on 19 May to have the approach routes monitored that would probably be used by the Italian Fleet in case of an attack. The air base at Kumbor in the Bay of Kotor was to report the movements of the Entente fleet beyond the Adriatic. However, the naval aviators were able to bring

reassuring news: the British and French had been so caught up with operations in the Dardanelles near Gallipoli that they were incapable of unexpectedly appearing in the Adriatic. And the Italians failed to move. The large ships of the Imperial and Royal Fleet were put under steam and just a few hours after the declaration of war had been issued, the naval detachments left Pula (Pola) on the evening of 23 May. The 'Tegetthof' class battleships, six 'Archduke' and 'Habsburg' class battleships, one 'Radetzky' class battleship, four destroyers and twenty torpedo boats headed towards the opposite coast in the Ancona area. A second detachment was directed towards the coasts in the upper Adriatic area. In the early hours of the morning of the 24th, the detachments arrived in the waters off Ancona, Rimini, Ravenna, Senigallia and the estuary of the Potenza River, and began to fire at previously specified targets. This was made all the easier since the towns and cities in question were still illuminated as though it were still peacetime. This also helped the Imperial and Royal Naval Air Service to find its destinations more easily. The Italian Fleet command ordered that the fleet make ready to leave port immediately when the Imperial and Royal squadron was reported off the coast of Ancona. However, before the departure manoeuvre could even be completed in Brindisi and Taranto, the Imperial and Royal Fleet had already begun to turn back. The units had fired at port facilities, bridges, railway stations, coastal batteries and units of the Italian Navy, almost without any counter-action. There was some destruction, but overall, the effect on morale was greater than the material damage. However, no-one could have anticipated that this action would in numerical terms remain the most significant of the Imperial and Royal Navy during the entire course of the war, since subsequently – with only a few rare exceptions – only the submarines and small units would be active.

However, Italy's entry into the war appeared to change the entire Austro-Hungarian style of naval warfare in the Adriatic. Cruisers, destroyers and torpedo boats made repeated forays against the Italian coast. In so doing, they also risked incurring their own losses. The Imperial and Royal Navy represented a constant threat to the Italian shipping lanes and ports. Now at the latest, the demand, which had been rejected by Italy's allies as being impossible to implement, for a British-French attack on the Imperial and Royal Navy, accompanied by a landing operation on the Dalmatian coast, appeared to have been only too well-justified. Instead, the Imperial and Royal Navy dominated large parts of the Adriatic and enabled the cargo vessels to travel along the east coast of the Adriatic more or less unhindered.

For the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Haus, there was nevertheless cause for concern, since he anticipated that the Italian land forces would sooner or later succeed in pushing through to Trieste. This would put the main naval base in the upper Adriatic, Pula, at extremely high risk. It therefore appeared to make sense to move to Kotor. However, there the fleet was again within range of the Allied naval forces, and was exposed for quite a different reason. Even so, Haus decided to relocate the most

modern units of the battleship fleet to Kotor. There, the Navy would have again lapsed into the slumber of inactivity for which it had already been criticised prior to May 1915 if there had not been the operations by the smaller units, in particular the submarines. The latter in particular became the pride of the Navy and naturally also dominated the headlines in the daily press. However, there was a catch: the boats were only partly Austro-Hungarian; others had been 'lent' by the Germans.

At the start of the war, the Imperial and Royal Navy had owned only seven submarines, of which only five were of a (more) modern type. In the autumn of 1914, they were relocated to Kotor, while two old boats remained in Pula. Any hopes that submarines ordered in Germany before the war would be completed in Kiel and delivered remained unfulfilled, however. In December, the Imperial and Royal Navy succeeded in sinking the French submarine *Curie*. It was excavated and put to service as the Imperial and Royal U 14. Then, the components of two German submarines were brought by train to Pula, assembled and brought under Austrian escort to the Mediterranean. This proved that submarines could be sent not only via Gibraltar, but also across the Alps. Now a deliberate confusion of a particular kind began.

The fact that although Austria-Hungary and Italy were at war with each other, Italy and the German Empire were not, appeared to make no particular difference at sea. And to a certain degree, as compensation for the decision by Germany to cancel the Austrian orders and to use the submarines built in Kiel for its own purposes, Germany sent submarine boats into the Mediterranean and the Adriatic that then sailed under the Austro-Hungarian flag. On 10 June, the Imperial and Royal submarine boat named as the U 11, which was in reality the German UB 50, and which had only one Austrian officer on board, sank the Italian submarine *Medusa*. On 7 July, a submarine named as the U 26, which was also sailing under the Austrian flag and with just one Austrian officer among an otherwise entirely German crew, sank the armoured cruiser *Amalfi*, one of the most modern Italian ships of the Pisa class. In November 1915, the U 38, which was sailing under the Austro-Hungarian flag, but which was also, in fact, German, torpedoed the passenger ship *Ancona* off the Tunisian coast, which was en route from Messina to New York. Over 200 people died, including American citizens. This case, in conjunction with the sinking of the British steamer *Lusitania* to the south of Ireland, led to a vehement debate in Germany as to the justification for torpedoing passenger ships. One of the greatest proponents of unrestricted submarine war, Admiral Tirpitz, made his exit, and the German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg succeeded in (temporarily) halting the unrestricted submarine war. In the interim, the naval war had continued to rage in the Mediterranean. An increasing number of German submarines found their way past Gibraltar, also overcoming the barriers in the Strait of Otranto and waged a war that primarily served the purpose of fulfilling German interests and plans, although at the same time, they certainly also helped to underline Austria-Hungary's

presence and intermittent dominance in the Adriatic and to all appearances also in the Mediterranean. By 1918, 56 German submarines were sailing under Austrian colours.<sup>951</sup> However, even the original Imperial and Royal submarines were successful. On 18 July 1915, the U 4 sank the Italian cruiser *Garibaldi*, and on 28 July, the U 5 sank the Italian submarine *Nereide*. There were also losses, though. The U 12, under the command of Ship-of-the-Line Lieutenant Egon Lerch, who had torpedoed the *Jean Bart*, was sunk by an Italian mine and the French succeeded in sinking the U 3 near Brindisi. Three submarines built in Bremen had to compensate for the losses.<sup>952</sup> And Austria-Hungary's own construction programme was stepped up. Here, Hungary successfully requested that more Hungarian boatyards be used for the fleet construction programme.

In the interim, the land war had also intensified. Falkenhayn was correct in his prediction that the Italians would only proceed slowly in the main direction of attack in the land war, and Conrad was forced to admit that while his pessimistic view had made it possible to scratch together any last remnants that could still be offered, his prognosis had been far too gloomy. In contrast to the 'Russian terror', as Cramon, the German liaison officer at the Army High Command had described it, there had been no 'Italian terror'.<sup>953</sup> However, there was no avoiding the fact that the army that was now to face Italy was not the same as it had been in 1914. All four 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Tyrolean rifle regiments, the Carinthian 'Khevenhüller' (IR 7), the Salzburg 'Rainer' (IR 59) and other Alpine regiments, had been deployed in Galicia and suffered heavy losses. The troops were no longer what they had been. Even the replacement soldiers had become used to the war, knew about the effects of the weapons and learned to use all technical auxiliary equipment. However, numerically, they were far inferior and they lacked artillery, particularly heavy guns. For this reason, it would soon become evident how far the Italians would be able to exploit the weaknesses of the Imperial and Royal troops to their advantage.

The Italians procrastinated heavily in their attack on the Tyrolean mountain front. In the individual departments, the front soon became bogged down as a positional war – and this at heights of around 2,000 to 3,000 metres and more. A style of warfare that was at least to some degree systematic could only be observed at all in the area around the barrier forts, on the plateau of Folgaria, where the Italian infantry attacked after a week of preparatory fire. In some sections, the Italians were able to gain a small amount of territory and occupy the villages that had been evacuated by the Austrians, since they had withdrawn to positions that could be better defended. However, then the Italian troops came to a standstill in all sections, and along the entire mountain war front a war began for the peaks, the 'war of the mountain guides' that would continue until 1916, and in some cases, until 1918, in which the aim was to gain height over the other side and with audacious Alpine methods, with tremendous losses, and yet limited operations, to shoot out or blow up enemy positions from the mountain.

On the Isonzo front, the Italians were far more inclined towards attack than in Tyrol. This also corresponded to the operative plans of Cadorna, who not only concentrated his main force in this section, but also had goals in mind that were so to speak within reach. Already on the morning of 24 May, the 2nd and 3rd Italian Army crossed the border of the Empire, occupied Kobarid (Karfreit) and reached the Isonzo. On 25 May, the vanguards of both armies stood on either side of the bridgehead at Gorizia that had been created by the Imperial and Royal 5th Army, and for a short period of time, a critical situation even arose when the withdrawal of the Imperial and Royal troops and in particular the artillery from Gorizia was ordered. Since the command of the 5th Army had got no further than establishing its base in Maribor, there was a lack of direct, tight leadership. Borojević wanted to give up the town and withdraw his army to behind the Isonzo. However, he then received instructions from the command of the south-western front to occupy the heights to the west of the river with the central and northern wing of his army. The problem here was that due to the political considerations until the start of May and beyond, no fortifications had been constructed, and precisely in the Gorizia area and to the north, the troops could only build cover by piling up layers of stones.<sup>954</sup> The artillery advisor to the command on the south-western front, Lieutenant Colonel Richard von Körner, amassed the heavy artillery in the Gorizia area, however, and from 28 May, Gorizia was also ready to be defended.<sup>955</sup> Archduke Eugen and General Krauß at first only involved themselves in the preparations for the defensive action from Maribor, but were again severely criticised for the measures taken, with Borojević becoming directly abusive. The highest Austrian commands appeared, however, to be incredibly similar in their aversion to gathering first-hand impressions from the front, remaining far to the rear, and frequently without primary information. Conrad himself led the war against Italy from Cieszyn. The problem was also, however, that the subordinate commands were very quick to criticise the high commands for being remote from the troops, while at the same time condemning inspections and more extensive visits to the front as inappropriate interference.

Following battles in which high losses were incurred around the crossing points on the Isonzo, and following the loss of Monfalcone, on 9 June, the Italian 3rd Army halted its attack on the edge of the Karst Plateau. After a brief period of rest, Cadorna planned to concentrate his forces even more strongly, to bring in even more artillery and to alter the method of attack. The Chief of the Italian General Staff also made it unambiguously clear that he would be ruthless in applying harsh measures whenever, in his view, officers and above all generals had shown themselves to be hesitant or had not ruthlessly ordered their troops to fight. Cadorna was not obliged to consult anyone when it came to dismissing a general, and had no qualms about having high-ranking officers tried before a military court.<sup>956</sup>

After the first failure, the Chief of the Italian General Staff selected two focal points: the 2nd Army was to attack the bridgehead at Gorizia, and the 3rd Army the karst descent between Sagrado and Monfalcone, the so-called Doberdò Plateau. This rocky area, with sparse vegetation, would very soon turn out to be a murderous stone desert, but it did have one advantage: there were only very few houses and, accordingly, few people who had to be evacuated. The military was in its element, and as long as the Imperial and Royal troops dominated the Karst heights, the Italians appeared to find it too risky to make a foray along the coast to Trieste.

On the Austrian side, the success of the defensive action during these first few days brought a growing sense of confidence that for a time grew into a feeling of superiority, since an enemy who was numerically far superior had been resisted in hastily prepared positions and under conditions that had been anything but ideal. The success of the defence clearly also encouraged the Army High Command to float ideas of conducting an offensive against Italy, which had at first been rejected as almost absurd. Here, it was assumed that the operational and strategic disposition would be similar to that which had been the case with Russia, on which attempts had also been made to impose the law of action through an early offensive. However, the troops on the Imperial and Royal south-western front were certainly too weak to conduct an offensive. In order to become capable of an attack, even to a limited extent, they needed reinforcements from the eastern front. Thus, once again the dilemma arose for Austria-Hungary that had been a burden to the Germans in the interim, namely the question of which theatre of war had the greatest priority. In Austria-Hungary, the decision had very clearly been taken in favour of the Russian theatre of war following the failure of the three offensives against Serbia. Now, the issue of priority re-surfaced, and presented itself with greater urgency than ever.

The advisor to the Army High Command on Italian matters, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Schneller, already noted on 11 June 1915 in connection with the attack on Lviv (Lemberg), that he regarded it as futile. By contrast, it would be far more advantageous 'to throw ourselves at the southern enemy, in other words, in particular to conduct a destructive strike against the Italians, which could succeed four weeks after completion of deployment'.<sup>957</sup> However, Schneller failed to convince Conrad with this idea. The capture of Lviv on 22 June did however make troops and above all artillery available there, which were then to be directly transported to the south-west. Schneller also had a very clear vision in this regard, and noted further: 'Today already talk to Pflug [the artillery advisor in the Army High Command] about the artillery preparation for an attack, beginning from the plateau, towards the rear of the main enemy force.' In this way, the idea was formed that would only be implemented a year later, and which aimed at operating towards the rear of the Italians from the mountains and the heights of the Sette Comuni, and beating the entire Italian troop force, which was gathered in the north-east of Italy, in a vast encirclement battle.

## The War of Attrition

However, as yet, this was no more than a very vague idea. The initiative continued to lie with the Italians, who unabatedly continued their efforts to achieve the goals they had set themselves on the Isonzo. Four weeks after war had been declared, on 23 June, Cadorna led the first major attack on the Isonzo. The aims were known. At the beginning of July, the First Battle of the Isonzo culminated in fighting around the Karst Plateau near Redipuglia, at the Monte San Michele, on the Podgora and on the Monte Sabotino. The Italian 2nd Army stormed against the bridgehead at Gorizia and put to use the fact that its infantry was numerically up to six times stronger. However, the territorial gains made from the First Battle of the Isonzo were extremely meagre and frequently only amounted to several hundred metres. The total losses among the Italians ran to around 15,000 men, however, with the defenders losing 10,000 men. Clearly, defence was precisely the right approach to offsetting the weaknesses on the Austrian south-western front. This was also expressed in the congratulatory telegram from Archduke Friedrich to Archduke Eugen, in which he wrote: 'The Army High Command places great importance on having the forces in the south-west kept ready for action and in high numbers for later decisions; for this reason, that the proven defensive approach should be upheld everywhere, even if there is a sense of victory. An orientation regarding further aims is to follow shortly.'<sup>958</sup> The fact that defensive action and simply repelling the enemy was not to everyone's taste is reflected in a statement made by Conrad on 5 July: 'If we only had four divisions for a counter-attack, then the dogs would run right back to the Tagliamento.'<sup>959</sup>

Hardly two weeks passed before the Second Battle of the Isonzo took place. It began on 17 July 1915. The aims of the Italian 2nd Army were again to take Gorizia and the bridgehead at Tolmin (Tolmein). The 3rd Army was to advance on to the Karst Plateau. Both armies had been given additional heavy army artillery. The artillery preparations on the Italian side were more focussed and effective than in the first Battle of the Isonzo. The Austro-Hungarian troops suffered terribly, since the splintering effect of the artillery missiles was multiplied even further by the bursting karst stone.

Perhaps the experience of the Second Battle of the Isonzo is better described by just a few entries in a diary than simply the balance of operations. A subaltern of Infantry Regiment No. 46 wrote of the horror from his soul: '17 July. Terrible bombardment, which is more than any human can bear. A wonder that one is still alive. [...] The number of wounded is huge, we no longer have sufficient bearers for the injured. The people have lost their minds from terror. [...] 18 July. The artillery fire becomes insanely heavy at night. I thought I was nearing my end, and made ready to die as a good Christian. It is over. Butchery without parallel. A terrible bloodbath. Blood is flowing everywhere and all around the dead and pieces of bodies lie in circles, so that...' At this point in his entry, the diary breaks off – the man had been killed.<sup>960</sup>

The Imperial and Royal troops had hardly been able to entrench their positions and had for the most part only built parapets. Since in this phase of the war, steel helmets had not yet been introduced, there were countless severe head wounds. The reason given subsequently, that it had been impossible to dig down into the rocky karst ground, was a mere excuse.<sup>961</sup> To a far greater extent, the first defensive success had created a false sense of security and had nourished the belief that the Italians could be kept at bay without making any significant additional effort. The issue of the construction of fortifications ultimately led to an intense controversy between the 5th Army, the Command of the South-Western Front and the Army High Command, which also criticised that inadequate construction of fortifications, while at the same time studiously neglecting to make one single on-site inspection. The fact that it was possible to dig into the karst rock was tellingly proven a short while later when the III Corps, which had been re-located from the Isonzo front to Tyrol, left its successors with a first-class fortification system of man-height depth.

Finally, the dispute turned into a personal conflict between the Chief of the General Staff of the south-western front, Major General Alfred Krauss and the Commander of the 5th Army, Svetozar Borojević.<sup>962</sup> The Army Commander even tendered his resignation. This reflected a further facet of the disintegration of the officer corps. Borojević, whose leadership of the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army following the dismissal of Brudermann had been regarded as exemplary, was treated with direct hostility by many, despite his successes. With the exception of Conrad, hardly anyone felt sympathetic towards him, or could stand to be in his company for any considerable length of time. Some even hated the monosyllabic Croat outright. Schneller, the Italy specialist at the Army High Command, noted for example: 'Bosco [meaning Borojević] must go. And it is he of all people, this army spoiler, who is being retained!'<sup>963</sup> And elsewhere: 'Conrad is first requesting reports. I have the impression that it will be difficult to drop the army wrecker Bosco, he most certainly deserves it, if only due to his lack of honesty and insubordination, quite apart from his ruthless leadership in the negative sense.'<sup>964</sup> Only one matter was mentioned in a respectful tone: Borojević would not back down.<sup>965</sup> He finally merely explained laconically that the losses on the Isonzo were far lower than those suffered by the 3rd Army, which he had led during the Carpathian winter of 1915.<sup>966</sup> For his part, Borojević, the stubborn, Orthodox Croat, vehemently criticised General Krauß. The letters written by Borojević to the Army High Command on this subject were apparently highly entertaining, with Borojević calling Krauß a 'docile poodle' due to his Emperor-style beard and professorial appearance.<sup>967</sup> The two men gave free rein to their antipathy.

Finally, Archduke Friedrich forced Borojević and Krauss to continue working together and rejected the retirement application of the Commander of the 5th Army. As Friedrich wrote to Eugen: 'Major General Krauß must avoid unnecessary harshness



and restrictions on the independence of the Commander of the 5th Army. Borojević must not continue to feel insulted, and must be aware at all times of the fact that orders given by a superior command must be obeyed without exception.<sup>968</sup> Archduke Eugen included this rebuke, which in any case was mildly formulated, in a letter to the Commander of the 5th Army, which concluded: 'I therefore demand of Your Excellency that in future, you suppress the inadmissible sensitivity, which is only detrimental to our great purpose, for which we all wish to do our utmost, together with the irritability that springs from it, in order to implement my plans with all your excellent strength and, in so doing, to adapt yourself to this absolutely necessary hierarchical relationship'.<sup>969</sup> Borojević understood.

The Second Battle of the Isonzo ended on 3 August. On that day, Cadorna gave the order to halt the offensive. In the interim, the battle had become a material one. The Italian armies had received the weapons from the western powers that they had lacked at the beginning, and were also in a position to boost their own armaments industry. In this battle, the Italians had been far superior to the Imperial and Royal troops with regard to high-angle weapons and infantry guns in particular. However, the successes of the Italians were again extremely limited. Even so, the losses were enormously high on both sides. In just four weeks, the Imperial and Royal 5th Army had suffered total losses of 46,600 men. The Italians, however, lost 41,800, thus fewer than the defenders. Relative to the formations deployed, losses among the Imperial and Royal troops were even double those of the Italians.

Despite the high losses to his armies during the first battles, the Chief of the Italian General Staff felt that he had chosen the right approach. He also explained to the British liaison officer at the Comando Supremo, General Delme-Radcliff, that he would continue to storm the Austro-Hungarian fronts for as long as was possible without incurring any significant risk. However, after the Second Battle of the Isonzo, Cadorna was also forced to take consequences by relieving commanders en masse, which was a similar reaction to that of the Austro-Hungarian leadership in 1914. 27 generals alone were dismissed within just a few weeks.<sup>970</sup> These measures were also designed to convey to the Entente that Italy would make every effort to wage war more effectively. However, the pleas for additional support with weapons, coal and money, which had already been voiced with urgency, created certain parallels between Italy's relationship to the western powers on the one side and Austria-Hungary's to the German Empire on the other.

Gradually, the front on the Karst Plateau took on the same appearance as had already become familiar from the positional warfare in the west, as well as from some sections of the Eastern Front. On the Isonzo, there was a severe shortage of water, and there were still far too few water conduits specifically built for the purpose. Since the rainwater was contaminated from the bodies lying about, it had to be carried to the fortifications from a great distance. The dead poisoned the air. In some cases, when the

bodies could not be buried beforehand, there was no option but to clear fortifications. During the Second Battle of the Isonzo, cholera also broke out, with the dead, sick and the fighting troops often lying very close together in a single sinkhole.<sup>971</sup>

In the light of the high losses, and yet time and again in the hope that within a foreseeable period of time an offensive against Italy could be initiated with the Imperial and Royal troops, those responsible for the Italian theatre of war in the Austro-Hungarian High Command looked distrustfully to the situation in the eastern theatre of war. It was registered with almost unrestrained agitation, for example, that the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 7th Army, General Pflanze-Baltin, wanted to go on the offensive the moment he received new march battalions for this section in the Carpathians. Objections were made immediately. 'Thank God it has been killed off', noted Lieutenant Colonel Schneller.<sup>972</sup> The replenishment of formations did not necessarily result in an attack being made. The reinforcement of defensive capabilities was also a specific goal, and troops were by all means also exchanged for a different purpose: gradually, as many Alpine soldiers as possible were to be withdrawn from the Russian front and relocated to the south-western front. As Schneller wrote, 'no Alpine soldier [should] be taken prisoner by the Russians ever again'.<sup>973</sup>

Soon, other goals also emerged. Hardly had the hope arisen that the Imperial and Royal troops would be able to assert themselves against the Italians, then not only were offensive plans produced but also the first considerations as to how Italy could be punished for its 'perfidy'. 'If the outcome were to be favourable, one would have to take something away from Italy – for military reasons', Conrad reported to the Emperor. And he already named a specific goal: Veneto. However, the inhabitants of Veneto were later not even to be enlisted in the army as soldiers but as workers. They were rather to build dykes than serve with weapons.<sup>974</sup>

During the first months of the war, the Italians were denied more major successes, both on the Isonzo and on the mountain front. They ran aground in the karst and against the rock faces. And the Austrian side was thoroughly informed regarding the strength and troop distribution of the enemy. This was a result of the collaboration between the Imperial and Royal military attaché in Bern, Colonel William von Einem, and the Swiss General Staff, in particular the head of the intelligence service, Colonel Karl Egli.<sup>975</sup> In Switzerland, there was uncertainty as to whether a victorious Italy might not succeed in expanding its nationalist goals to the Swiss Confederation. They therefore pursued a policy of monitoring the Italians – and the Austrians were co-beneficiaries. Egli informed von Einem about the Italian forces, and since the Swiss were authorised to visit the fronts and identify troops, which Austria-Hungary had naturally no longer been permitted to do since the start of the war, this was of inestimable value. After it was exposed, this connection, which became known as the 'Colonels' Affair', led to Egli being tried. From December 1915 onwards, the information became more

sparse, but never completely ran dry. The knowledge of the identity of the Italian troops and their level of equipment was not yet sufficient, however, in order to be able to provide successful, long-term defence against them. They were simply too numerous to burn themselves out quickly and completely. In some sections, the worst was also still to come. After the initial hesitation, the Comando Supremo of the Italian 1st Army had issued the ultimatum to begin firing at the barrier forts in the Dolomites. The intensity of the artillery fire was increased ever further. Conversely, the range of the fortress howitzers from the Austrian forts was insufficient to disrupt the firepower of the Italians. The Italian artillery fired primarily at the fortresses of Verle and Luserna (Lusern). Vezzena was also a constant target. After 50 direct hits, the commander of Verle began to evacuate the garrison. Now, only two intact guns remained. Then Luserna reported that it was no longer capable of action. The fortress was subjected to countless hits. Inside, it became impossible to breathe as a result of the large amount of smoke and gas that had been created.

The connections became severed. In both Verle and Luserna, white flags were raised. However, the forts, which had already been partially cleared, were re-manned, the signs of surrender were taken down, and a few days later, the barrier forts were again ready for defence.<sup>976</sup> The Italians had failed to storm and conquer the forts that had been prepared to capitulate. Then, however, the Austro-Hungarian guns were able to direct their own fire so effectively against the Italian barrier forts and the area in front of them that all attempts by the Italians to break through across the heights were repelled.

At the end of August, the Italians halted the infantry attacks in the area around the barrier forts. However, they continued to fire at the forts until late in October, without succeeding in creating the conditions necessary for a further successful infantry attack.

The war in the mountains necessitated completely new measures in order to secure the delivery of supplies, to provide for the troops and to ensure that they were kept alive in an area that was after all only free of snow for several months a year, if at all. Narrow-gauge railways, horse-drawn field railways, motor-drawn field railways and a complex system of cable cars were set up; the latter became a real speciality of the Austro-Hungarian troops in the south-west. The Italians built mainly military roads, which in some cases are still in use today, and in this way, everything was brought forwards that was needed in order to wage war in regions that were in fact only accessible using mountaineering equipment. Weapons, ammunition, all kinds of apparatus, particularly engineering equipment, explosives, medical materials, barracks parts, wood, water, provisions, communication devices, personal items for the soldiers, post, lighting equipment, in short: everything was brought to the most remote heights. Now, there was no longer any such thing as 'inaccessible terrain'.<sup>977</sup>

In time, almost all mountain peaks, even those rising to 4,000 metres, were incorporated into the fighting if they were located in the border area. The Ortler, at 3,902

metres, the Königsspitze at 3,859 metres, the Monte Cevedale at 3,778 metres, the Marmolata, the Tofana, and so on – names that until then were only familiar to the local population and mountaineers, became known to the wider world.

While a breakthrough in the mountains was not impossible, it did require time-consuming and immensely elaborate preparations, which went far beyond those required for an offensive on flat terrain. When they took into account the troop distribution and the conditions on the Italian side, the Austrians could therefore soon conclude to their satisfaction that during the course of 1915, no decisive attack by the Italians could any longer be anticipated on the Tyrolean front. The Army High Command and the Command of the South-Western Front therefore focussed their attention on improving the defences on the Isonzo, including the bridgehead at Gorizia. This presented the troops with additional challenges, since they were not simply granted a rest from battle, but had to use the respite to reinforce the fortifications in such a way that there would not be a repeat of the terrible losses inflicted during the Second Battle of the Isonzo.<sup>978</sup>

The Commander of the Imperial and Royal 5th Army, General Boroević, ultimately had every reason to be satisfied. However, even he had to battle against impressions that were difficult to bear even after a whole year of war. In a private letter to the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza, he explained on 10 August 1915: 'If the enemy continues as it has until now, it will lose all its offensive force in just a few weeks', and would no longer be capable of launching an attack. 'It really is incomprehensible that after a year of war in Europe, it [the enemy] does not manoeuvre differently. I am faced with a conundrum! During the 2nd Battle of Gorizia, I was faced with around half a million men, of whom one half stood and watched how the other was decimated. [...] My losses are a sensitive issue; in the two battles, I lost 40,000 men, dead, wounded and taken prisoner (in most cases wounded). [...] The infernal enemy artillery additionally benefits from the splintering of the shattered rock. A further problem is that the bodies cannot be buried. They contaminate the air, body parts fly around in the fire, as a result of which our people become nauseous and lose their appetite, and lose strength despite ample supplies of food. [...] In the beginning, the superior enemy mass artillery fire demoralised the troops. It was pure Hell. Now, that is also overcome.'<sup>979</sup>

Already at the beginning of September 1915, three weeks after the Second Battle of the Isonzo was brought to an end, Marshal Joffre, the French Generalissimo, appeared at the Comando Supremo in Udine in order to persuade Cadorna to take up the offensive again and, in so doing, to indirectly support the allied autumn offensive. At first, Cadorna showed little optimism, but was then given so much time and means for preparing the Third Battle of the Isonzo that he was able to muster an even greater concentration of troops and materials than before. On 18 October 1915, two-thirds of the Italian Army were mobilised in order to enforce the breakthrough. The main target of the attack was the town of Gorizia. The battle reached its zenith between 1 and 4

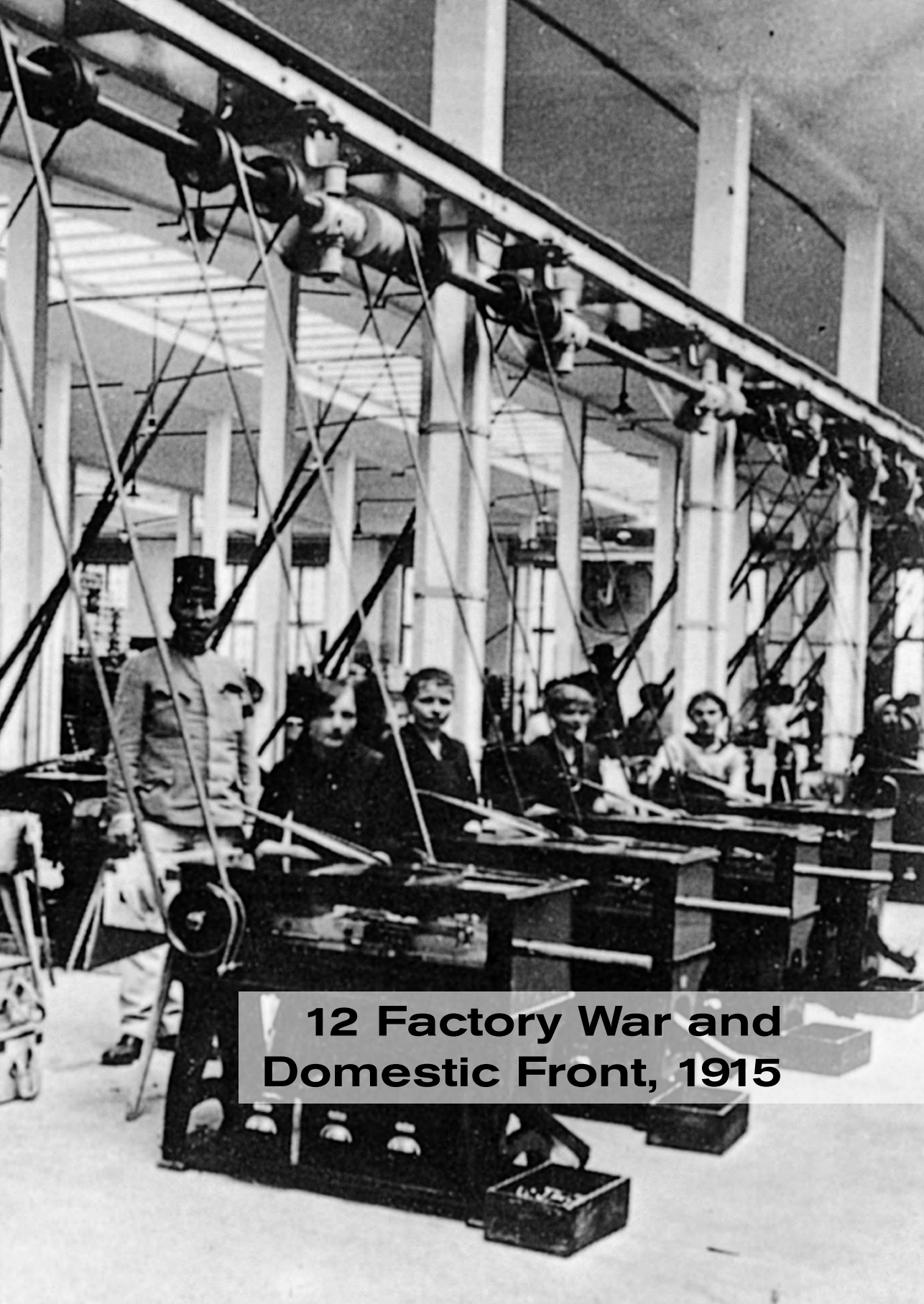
November. The Italians lost 67,000 men, with 41,000 lost among the Imperial and Royal troops. The gains from the battle consisted of a few trenches.

On the mountain front, attacks were launched that had been organised in echelons in advance and were conducted in parallel to the events on the Isonzo, similarly with only minor territorial gains. For a short time, the Italians occupied the peak of the Col di Lana, but lost it again, while a further 26 attacks remained unsuccessful. The Italians then began to chip away at the peak fortifications on the Col di Lana. The fortifications were then detonated in April 1916.

The Fourth Battle of the Isonzo almost directly followed the Third. It lasted until mid-December and again brought no operational gains. Now, Cadorna urgently needed to achieve a success, since Italy's allies made no effort to conceal their contempt for the Italian Army, while in the parliament in Rome and among the people, opposition was growing to the continuation of this costly and unsuccessful war, which, as everyone knew, had after all been wilfully instigated by Italy.<sup>980</sup>

The Third and Fourth Battle of the Isonzo took on the characteristics of the battles of attrition that had until then been conducted only on the western front. However, as was the case there, even the use of massed artillery and barrages lasting hours was not enough to enforce a breakthrough. In December, the fighting finally came to a halt in all sections. After seven months of fighting, it could be concluded that against their own misgivings, the Imperial and Royal troops had not only withstood the appearance of a new and powerful enemy, but that despite the burden of defence, the operations by the Central Powers in Russia and in Serbia had by no means been negatively influenced or delayed to any significant degree. However, the 35 Italian divisions had engaged 19 Imperial and Royal and one German division in the new theatre of war; divisions that otherwise would have been available in the Balkans or in Russia, and that perhaps in Russia in particular would have led to an earlier collapse of the Tsarist Empire than was then the case. Italy's role in the war could therefore only be assessed within the strategic framework. It conducted a war of attrition. And naturally, this affected not only the front, but equally the hinterland. Here, as in all the belligerent states, the 'factory war' was waged in which the industrial capacities to be mobilised and the ability to produce or obtain sufficient quantities of essential goods were of decisive importance.





**12 Factory War and Domestic Front, 1915**

12. The Imperial and Royal ammunition factory in Wöllersdorf in the vicinity of Wiener Neustadt was the largest of its kind within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The workforce rose from 5,000 personnel in 1914 to 40,000 in 1918. The factory, in which artillery ammunition, hand grenades, infantry ammunition, aerial bombs, and other armaments were produced, was under military administration. Most of the men were military workers. Only the women, who comprised up to a third of the workforce, were subject to military supervision but not military jurisdiction. As a rule, the work time averaged 70 hours per week.



Conrad von Hötzendorf's 'Private Notations' contain the remark that the war was not a war of military commanders but rather a 'war of the masses and the industries'.<sup>981</sup> Evidently, Conrad consciously overshot his target, since he suggested that the military commanders were immaterial and that everything had been dependent on how many people a country or an alliance was able to raise and which capacity its industries had. This was not entirely the case, and with such a statement he merely attempted to exculpate those who were truly responsible for the deployment of the masses and the utilisation of the equipment produced by the war industries. Conrad furthermore ignored the political component of military leadership in this war. He was right, however, in the sense that it did not just depend on the military commanders and ingenious military prowess. The traditional conceptions regarding the troops mobilised at the start of the war and the immediately useable armaments determining the strike capability of an army and the outcome of a war also lost their significance. Instead, the hour of the military economic policymakers and logistics experts had come. Statistical data on cohorts, degrees of suitability, output, resources and technical information became at least as important as the conventional lists of troop strengths, calibres and numbers of guns possessed by the army in the field. This side of military planning was regarded by most of the military as not very attractive, which is why the work of the General Staff *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg* (Austria-Hungary's Last War), written in the 1930s, gave practically no attention to this topic, which was not applicable for service in the General Staff. Furthermore, very little material contained in the bundle of manuscripts written by the working group 'Technik im Weltkrieg' (Technology in the World War) and stored in the Vienna War Archives since 1918 actually reached the wider public. The prosaic, accountancy elements of the World War have to this day found little appeal among historians. Yet Austria-Hungary's factory war and the 'home front' are among the most important theatres of this war.

By the beginning of 1915, the war economy had warmed itself up enough for a type of new normality to emerge. In the process, manufacturing overall did not experience any dramatic increases, and in 1915 the first great drop of the years from 1910 in the seizure of raw materials and in manufacturing had generally been sufficiently overcome for the level of normal pre-war production to be reached. However, only very little of this was exported. What was produced served to cover domestic needs. Where the supply of raw materials was no longer guaranteed, the transport problems could not be overcome or things were produced that were not essential to the war effort, the

companies in question had to close. In 1914, the shortage of workers as a result of mobilisation had led to numerous closures and collapses. In 1915, it was the lack of source materials, namely still the shortage of workers and transport problems, which led to further closures. From a total of 15,154 enterprises that had to close in Austria during the course of the war, most of them shut down in 1915.<sup>982</sup> The luxury goods industry was affected most. Many companies, however, could adapt themselves. The textiles industry produced materials for uniforms, tents, foot cloths and everything else that the millions of soldiers required in the way of textiles. Businesses processing leather switched from handbags and ladies' shoes to saddles, straps and military footwear. The food industry changed to canned goods and in a short time was not only fully engaged but in fact reached the limits of its capacity. Factories that produced for the army's requirements shot up like mushrooms.<sup>983</sup> The iron and steel corporations, whose boom as a result of the war was relentless, initially recorded in 1915 an output that was no higher than in 1913. The huge requirements of the war and the handsome profits were an enormous incentive, however, to produce more. Only very little served to cover private needs or export, though. If before the war, five per cent of Austria-Hungary's entire production in the iron and steel sector had been sufficient to cover military requirements, this proportion rose to 85 per cent in 1915. In other words, only 15 per cent were available for the civilian needs and for export, as compared with 95 per cent before the war.<sup>984</sup> From May 1915, the export of iron, steel and ferrous alloys required special permission.<sup>985</sup> This much could be said, however: the control mechanisms that had to be installed ad hoc at the beginning of the war had proved to be at least viable and were applied ever more comprehensively. Above all the central office for metal, the first consortium to be set up in the form of a public limited company and which worked closely with the War Ministry, could ensure the seizure of the required raw materials by means of strict management. The metal central office carried out collections of old iron, initiated the campaign 'I gave gold for iron' (*Gold gab ich für Eisen*), with which precious metals including wedding rings were collected and, in the case of the latter, replaced with iron rings, and in 1915 confiscated all coins minted in nickel, thus bridging the shortage of this metal that was almost irreplaceable for the production of weapons.<sup>986</sup> If private firms failed to cover war needs, as was the case with tungsten, the War Ministry abandoned its merely steering role and intervened directly. When the extraction of this rare metal by the Fürstlich Lobkowitz Tungsten Mining in Cinovec (Zinnwald) sagged, the business was placed under military control and production was increased tenfold within the space of one month. Old mines were reactivated and managed militarily from the outset and, as far as possible, with the help of prisoners of war.<sup>987</sup> Control in the metal sector resulted in the most important businesses receiving their monthly requirements a month in advance and thus being able to produce in accordance with the changing but overall increasing needs.

Whilst a consolidation and increase in production was recorded in 1915 for ores and metals, this was not the case with fuels, above all coal. In 1915, the extraction of black coal admittedly reached almost the pre-war level, despite a reduction of the workforce by around a quarter. The loss of imports made itself felt strongly, however, for which reason the total amount of available black coal in 1915 remained four million tons below the pre-war amount. The drop in brown coal was felt even more strongly, since the miners were recruited above all for the extraction of black coal. This also sheds light on why, for example, the district of Sosnowice in the Austro-Hungarian part of Poland was made use of so terribly urgently. There was another shortage, however, that was felt far more, namely in means of transport. The number of railway carriages, which were needed especially for the transport of coal, decreased steadily. Thus, not even a much greater increase in extraction would have helped, since the coal could not be transported from the pitheads.<sup>988</sup> Coal-mining required, for example, over 750,000 carriages in the first quarter of 1915, but received only 570,000. Thus, the number of carriages provided in 1915 remained thirty per cent below the demand. This meant problems for industry, the railways and above all for everyone who heated with coal. One thing could be said for sure already: it would become cold in Austria-Hungary. Initially, the Imperial and Royal Finance Minister resisted pressure from the Austrian and Hungarian lobbies to buy locomotives and rolling stock from abroad. Even when it was already evident that locomotives could no longer be obtained domestically in the required number and that the carriages had suffered tremendous wear and tear, which could no longer be even remotely offset because the carriages were in constant use (unlike in peacetime), Minister Biliński and his successor Ernest von Koerber did not digress from their restrictive stance, since the Hungarian locomotive industry intervened on a massive scale.<sup>989</sup> Later, there was no-one left from whom locomotives and carriages could be purchased in order to be imported.

Crude oil, which had begun to play an ever greater role during the course of the war, constituted a further shortage, which was felt as early as 1915. The main deposits in the Dual Monarchy were located in Galicia and were soon lost as a result of the withdrawal in 1914. When the Russians were thrown back during the Gorlice-Tarnów-Offensive in spring 1915, they quickly destroyed three-quarters of the oil wells. Thus, in spite of the re-establishment of the extraction sites of Boryslav (Borysław) and the founding of a military refinery in Limanowa, the production of oil in 1915 reached only a little more than half of the pre-war annual capacity of three million tons. In the meantime, the loss of Galician crude oil was offset by the Austrian deposits in Hohenau an der March, Rabensburg and other places, but since the demand increased in leaps and bounds, production always lagged behind. Petrol was generally reserved for the army and a small number of industrial enterprises. Small contingents were also released for agriculture. As a rule, there was no petrol for automobiles or for the busi-

nesses that were not top-priority armaments firms and those that were important for the war economy. The crude oil and oil products that were not absolutely needed were to be exported, above all to the German Empire. Nevertheless, whoever thought that private cars would disappear from the roads was mistaken. As is so often the case, the exceptions confirmed the rule.

Until its entry into the war, Italy, like Romania and the other neutral states, was a recipient of Austrian and Hungarian raw materials and finished products, whereas conversely it was again only urgently required raw materials and goods as well as foodstuffs that could be imported from or via these countries. Following Italy's declaration of war, part of this market was lost, though Italy on the other hand also had to fight for its imports. Since it was not yet at war with the German Empire, it continued to receive around 40 per cent of its coal needs from there – which found no understanding in Austria-Hungary, which was already suffering from a coal shortage. Austria, for its part, even curtailed exports of wood to Switzerland, merely in order to ensure that the Swiss Confederation could not pass any wood on to Italy.<sup>990</sup>

The upsurge and the output of the armaments industry were impressive. It had to overcome a two-fold problem. As a result of the relatively limited funding that Austria-Hungary had provided to this budget before the war, there existed a backlog demand. In war, the shift also had to be made to the production of new weapons – which had generally already been designed before the war, however – such as new types of artillery, and to the enormously increased need for communications facilities and other armaments innovations. It was only during the war that Austria-Hungary made the move to construct its own effective aeroplanes. In five largely new factories in Vienna, two in Budapest, one each in Wiener Neustadt, Fischamend and Aszód near Budapest, as well as the naval dockyard in Pula (Pola), either new Austrian developments or licensed German aeroplanes were built. The capacity was intended to be sufficient to build 45 to 60 aeroplanes a month.<sup>991</sup> The trench warfare, as fought on the Isonzo River, required hand grenades and, later, flamethrowers. New units were constructed for the Danube Flotilla and for the High Seas Fleet. The list could be extended indefinitely.

Then, however, the production of wartime commodities, above all ammunition, explosives, small arms and handguns, etc. had to be increased enormously. At the end of 1914, for example, the manufacture of artillery ammunition per gun and per day only amounted to 6.6 rounds. For the requirements of a barrage lasting hours, this was, of course, far too little. By August 1915, 14 rounds were being produced per gun and per day, and this on the basis of a considerably higher number of guns. The Russians could only supply their guns at the time with between five and ten rounds. It is evident from this that the Imperial and Royal troops, though naturally also the Germans, possessed superior firepower vis-à-vis the Russians.<sup>992</sup> If there was a problem, then it concerned the horses. It was barely possible to transport the field cannons forwards, since most

of the available horses were sent to the newly deployed howitzer batteries. The use of engine power certainly increased, but the transport situation improved only gradually.

In the small arms sector, the shortfalls still evident at the beginning of 1915 could be offset with the help of captured Russian weapons. On the other side, Russia could equip only half its troops with rifles made in its own factories since the losses in spring and summer far exceeded the capacity of Russian weapons factories. The Russian High Command had already asked Japan in 1914 whether the Japanese might be inclined to sell Russian rifles that they had captured during the Russo-Japanese War. But Japan replied regretfully that the rifles had already been destroyed.<sup>993</sup> The Allies were also not in a position to supply sufficient quantities. Russia could ultimately only help itself by buying from Italy the latter's old rifle models, including the appropriate ammunition.<sup>994</sup> By October 1915, by contrast, the production of rifles in Austria-Hungary rose to 100,000 per month. This was still not enough, but the shortfall could be met with the help of armouries close to the front, which carried out the necessary repairs, and captured weapons.

In 1915, initial considerations were made for the standardisation of the German and the Austro-Hungarian weapons factories. On both sides, however, there was little interest in abandoning the production of their own models and types in favour of those of their ally. The standardisation and control measures therefore remained limited for the time being to the respective empires. In the case of Austria-Hungary, the system of 'central offices' was gradually expanded, however. Ultimately, the war economy was controlled with the help of 91 central offices,<sup>995</sup> of which 20 were active in the area of agriculture and the food industry, 15 in the textiles industry, eight in the area of paper and printing, 13 in the chemical, oils and fats industry, six for skins and leather, 13 in the metal, tool, asbestos and petroleum industry, four for stone and earth, three for wood, seven in the area of trade and transport, one that served the foreign currency control and one that was designed to represent the interests of the civilian population as a consumer advice centre. Last but not least, in spite of several initial problems, a standardisation of the German and Austro-Hungarian efforts was achieved that far exceeded the existing cooperation in the political arena. However, Austria-Hungary very soon became heavily dependent on its ally in this area, too.

Since the import and export bans that came into force at the beginning of the war were issued without consideration for the necessary cooperation of the Central Powers in the economic area, the conclusion of a whole series of treaties and above all continual negotiations were necessary in order to overcome the barriers that had been created. Following the agreement of September 1914, however, at least the biggest obstacle to bilateral trade between the Central Powers had become redundant. The restrictive provisions could not simply be suspended, since Austria-Hungary for its part was not a uniform economic body and consideration repeatedly had to be taken of the sometimes

very different interests of the two halves of the Empire. Since the first months of the war, representatives of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry and the German authorities had been engaged in negotiations on the provision of goods in short supply for the metal and armaments industries of the Dual Monarchy. In return, Austria-Hungary supplied the German Empire with raw materials. There was some criticism of this because Austria-Hungary did not recognise the need for the German Empire to also continue supplying the neutral states with goods in the normal amount. It was above all economic relations with Italy that evoked resentment in the Danube Monarchy. Furthermore, Germany and Austria-Hungary engaged in rivalry in the neutral markets and outbid each other in order to buy the required raw materials. Only in August 1915 was a partial solution reached by means of the establishment in Berlin of a Rubber Compensation Department (*GummiAusgleichsstelle*), which had to handle the entire rubber supply of the Central Powers. In return for the provision of rubber holdings to the German Empire, Austria-Hungary received 25 per cent of the entire available seizure. Later, similar compensation departments were also created for other resources and materials.<sup>996</sup>

There is something else that is worth noting: because most of the war economy competences converged in the war ministries of the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, or at least touched on these, the importance of the representatives of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry in Berlin increased to such an extent that they ultimately de facto surpassed the diplomatic representation, especially since the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Berlin found it increasingly difficult to represent the Hungarian half of the Empire as well. Instead, Karl Heinrich von Lustig-Prean concluded the negotiations on securing army requirements, ensured an accelerated transportation of urgently needed resources and, in reverse, forwarded those goods that had been ordered from German firms in Austria-Hungary.<sup>997</sup>

Overall, however, it was not only the difficulty of shaping German-Austrian relations in an orderly fashion that manifested itself. It was especially the very different interests of Austria and Hungary that also prevented a consistent moulding of the economic and social spheres. After Hungary had already limited the competences of the War Ministry at the beginning of the war and prevented the War Surveillance Office from coming into force by establishing a parallel institution, this path continued to be consistently trodden in 1915. This happened in order to circumvent any possible domination on the part of the Austrian half of the Empire. Tisza and the Hungarian parliament jealously guarded their political and economic independence. Negotiations on the exchange of goods were correspondingly difficult and contributed to the growth of all kinds of resentments. The anger over the Hungarian stance was also reflected by most of the authors who wrote for the Carnegie Foundation after the war on Austro-Hungarian policy and administration, on economic matters, on the feeding of the

populace or on plans for Central Europe during the World War. Criticism was not limited, however, to Hungary pursuing isolationist policies in the industrial and commercial spheres, but extended instead above all to Hungary knowing how to defend its own interests in the food question with immense consistency and rigour, and also to Hungary ultimately turning out to be unapproachable in all matters relating to dualism, or assessing questions of war aims and post-war policy very differently from the Austrian half of the Empire. This then contributed to Austria seeking the union with the German Empire beyond national components, for Germany appeared in many respects to be a giver, whereas Hungary was a taker.

In monetary policy, the German Empire provided an example for raising additional funds that Austria-Hungary then emulated. It assumed the German system of war bonds and could, in this way, raise the main part of the financial means required for waging war from its own coffers. By use of bonds, an absorption of the money in circulation was made possible, and above all with bonds a more popular path could be trodden than that of tax increases (see Chapter 17). The first war bond of autumn 1914 was already a great success. It had been prepared well on a propaganda level, and the appeal to patriotism succeeded. The Lord Chamberlain's Office, for example, did not hesitate to demand a communication from members of the archducal house as to which sums the archdukes and archduchesses intended to pledge. Archduke Friedrich readily resolved to contribute a war bond to the amount of four million kronen each in the Austrian and the Hungarian halves of the Empire.<sup>998</sup> (He could afford it.) In May 1915, the second bond was issued, for which 2.6 billion kronen were pledged. And it was intended that this should continue.<sup>999</sup> Added to sums raised in this way was direct German financial assistance in the form of bonds that could be issued on the German financial market. The German government granted a limit of 100 million marks a month for this, whilst bank consortia made additional financial means available in a continually expanding credit limit.

Nonetheless, German financial assistance constituted a constant cause for complaint.<sup>1000</sup> Count Tisza criticised the fact that the German Empire did not provide its ally with sufficient financial support. By contrast, Germany was anything but pleased that part of the capital it invested in Austro-Hungarian war bonds was used by the Prague-based *Živnostenska Banka* to establish firms in Bohemia that could be expected to compete with German firms after the war.<sup>1001</sup>

With the explicit agreement of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary passed on the monthly loans to Turkey and later also to Bulgaria, and presented itself to these as a lender. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the financial means were not just transferred, however, but also served, among other things, to pay for armaments deliveries to Turkey. In 1915, the Ottoman Empire submitted an order to the largest Austro-Hungarian armaments manufacturer, the Škoda firm in Pilsen, for 30 batteries of mountain

artillery (120 cannons and howitzers) as well as 1,500 rounds of ammunition per gun. The Turks also ordered 30.5 cm mortars and 480 machine guns.<sup>1002</sup> For this, a credit limit of 47 million kronen was initially granted to them. At the beginning of 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph agreed to send a mountain howitzer division to Palestine, though he remarked with respect to the guns and personnel: 'Well, I don't think we'll ever see them.' Further artillery sections, four automobile convoys, two reserve infirmaries for Constantinople and Jerusalem, replacement sections and repair workshops followed. Specialists and skilled workers were supposed to help in mining, forestry and hydraulic engineering. In short, within a few months, the Austrian contribution to supporting the Ottoman Empire grew to an appreciable size.<sup>1003</sup> Turkey, for its part, delivered ores, wool, skins and other raw materials.

All this worked itself out relatively quickly. Still, despite quite a few attempts at cooperation, at standardising weaponry, at joint use of industrial and commercial production, at intense cooperation on the financial market and in other areas, further steps towards creating a mutual war economy space of the Central Powers failed. The solution to the existing problems was postponed; only the issues that were immediately pending were taken care of. Yet, it was precisely the cooperation of the Central Powers in the economic sphere and the possibilities for creating a new, large economic space and a completely new European empire that stimulated the discussion on Central Europe, which was soon to become the dominant topic in intellectual circles. Soldiers and workers were at most indirectly affected by this.

### Being a Soldier and the Burden of Work

Just as it is impossible to paint a uniform picture of the fronts, where officers and enlisted men did not share identical fates and picking out any one would inevitably be arbitrary, it is also impossible to paint a uniform picture of the much larger area of the home front. There, the parts of the Empire and the crown lands differed, and it played an enormous role whether a territory was very close to the front or remote from it, or whether it was an agricultural or an industrial region, a city or a village. They all had only one thing in common: the numbers of men of military service age dwindled. In the villages and small localities, this was certainly more noticeable than in the large cities of the Dual Monarchy. Yet the age group 20-40 years had already become very thin. In the barracks, march formations were formed month after month. If someone then – and this was generally the case only after a year or more – received home leave for a week or two, then those on the home front thought they could better understand what daily life had become for the soldiers. The most detailed account could not paint a complete picture, however. Conversely, those on leave, but also those who had come



to have their wounds healed or get used to using a prosthesis, saw how much their formerly familiar environment had changed. It was not even necessary to look very closely. The difference was perhaps least noticeable in the case of the farmers, since their daily life had barely changed. Still, it was impossible not to notice that the men were leaving and the women, the very old, the very young and perhaps a few prisoners of war attempted to continue to run the farms. In the commercial and industrial enterprises, however, perhaps even more dramatic changes had taken place.

The glaring lack of workers, which had been caused by the call-up following mobilisation, never again disappeared. Even when, towards the end of 1914, workers were released by the military, no noticeable improvement occurred, since these were frequently unskilled workers and the industry required men with skills. For a time, a balance could be established in absolute terms between the unemployed and the number of vacancies. From April 1915, however, the reservoir of male workers was practically exhausted.<sup>1004</sup> In the war industry, the regulations on overtime were very soon no longer sufficient. In mid-March 1915, therefore, the Imperial-Royal Ministry of Trade increased the appropriation period.<sup>1005</sup> The war economy was only at the beginning of its biggest boom, however. The regulation of the labour market exhibited further peculiarities. In order to combat the shortage of workers, refugees were initially deployed. In Vienna, for example, there were for a time 200,000 refugees, above all from Galicia and Bukovina. Some of them placed themselves at the disposal of the economy. The re-conquest of Galicia, however, allowed a large proportion of the refugees to return to their homeland. Instead, refugees then arrived from the border area with Italy. Since the Italians were hardly able to register any territorial gains from their offensives, while Austria-Hungary was also unable to push its fronts forwards, the number of refugees remained relatively stable until 1917. It was different in the case of the prisoners of war. Their number leapt in spring 1915<sup>1006</sup> (see Chapter 26). Austria-Hungary's industrial enterprises, like its farmers, initially refused to utilise prisoners of war. The necessity of ploughing and cultivating, on the one hand, and the huge shortage of workers in agriculture, on the other hand, forced the farmers to rethink, however. The Harvest Commission was unable to supply any more domestic harvest workers, so the prisoners of war were all that remained. They could frequently be employed more easily than the urbanites who had become unemployed in 1914 and who had been rejected by the farmers solely for the reason that they regarded their physical constitution as unsuitable for work in fields and stables.<sup>1007</sup> Therefore, a total of 80,000 prisoners of war were deployed in the agriculture of the Austrian half of the Empire as early as 1915.<sup>1008</sup> In Hungary, the number can hardly have been much lower. The industrial enterprises continued to argue, however, that there were difficulties in supervising the prisoners and above all problems in providing them with food, and that they for these reasons were not inclined to employ large contingents of prisoners of war. Thus, in mining, for example, where the problem of surveillance was

still considered to be marginal, only around 2,500 prisoners of war were deployed.<sup>1009</sup> The War Ministry did not tire of pursuing an increased utilisation of prisoners of war, but it foundered on the restrictions of the firms in question. Large contingents of prisoners of war were deployed only in the key enterprises controlled by the military.

It was no different in the case of the utilisation of women in industry. At the start of the war, the women had initially been particularly strongly affected by unemployment. In the Viennese textiles industry, for example, around 60 per cent of the female workers were made redundant in August 1914. It was not much different in other regions and sectors. In Bohemia and Moravia, working hours had to be limited to two to three days a week in spite of numerous redundancies.<sup>1010</sup> Thus, a large capacity of workers would have been available. In spite of the abolition of the ban on women working during nights, several industrial branches still remained exceedingly restrictive in October 1914 when it came to employing women. In Austria-Hungary's iron and steel industry, women comprised less than 10 per cent of the workforce, compared with 35 per cent in the iron and steel industry of the German Empire or of France. Not even the fact that women were often paid only half the wage of men could induce the industrialists to increase the number of women employed. No role was played in this by the circumstance that women were not subjected to military discipline or perhaps did not want to work in enterprises that were subordinated to the Law on War Contributions.<sup>1011</sup> Only the ammunition factories enjoyed a special status. At the Manfred Weiß Works in Budapest, more than 50 per cent of those working in the production of ammunition were women, and it was a similar figure in the ammunition factory in Wöllersdorf.<sup>1012</sup> In this way, the 'factory war' was also waged by tens of thousands of women. The War Ministry also characterised the women in the war economy in December 1915 as 'soldiers of the home front', thus taking into account the industrial nature of the war.

In the long run, the production of ammunition did not remain the only sector in which more women found employment. As early as the end of 1915, they also comprised ten to fifteen per cent of the workers in other branches of the armaments industry.<sup>1013</sup> Following Graz, Budapest and Bratislava (Preßburg), the municipality of Vienna also decided in spring 1915 to employ women as tram conductors. In this job, the daily working hours came to between twelve and fourteen hours. Thus, there was nothing very romantic about the job of the 'little conductress', as they were celebrated.<sup>1014</sup>

In order to keep the war economy up and running and to achieve the aforementioned increases in production essential to the war effort, ever more overtime was demanded and performed. The 110 hours a week that had to be worked in some cases for Škoda can in no way be regarded as the rule, but they were a symptom for how the limited reservoir of workers was monstrously exploited. The War Ministry therefore began in autumn 1915 to draft ordinances that envisaged a general obligation to work for women under the age of 60 years, insofar as they received state welfare support

because their husbands were in the military. The level of their wages remained behind that of the men, however. A first cost-of-living allowance approved in February 1915 was nowhere near able to cover even the increased living costs. Generally, the pressure of the government or the military was required in order to force firms to grant long overdue wage increases.

Gradually, however, the trade unions also intervened again. They had agreed to a type of truce, but had in the process increasingly lost their influence. From 1915 they began to commit themselves more strongly again. At the request of the Trade Union Commission, the 1 May 1915 was not celebrated by taking a rest from work. The slogan was 'keep going' (*Durchhalten*), and this slogan was also used unchanged in 1916. The efforts made by the government to recognise the stance of the trade unions and to avoid conflicts, however, were exceedingly clear. After the Social Democrat deputy in the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) Otto Glöckel, subsequently a prominent school reformer, had spoken at an assembly of the Professional Association of Glove Makers about the guilt of capitalism for the war, he was arrested, but attempts to obtain his release immediately began. Even the Imperial-Royal Ministry of National Defence regarded the treatment of Glöckel as nothing more than 'embarrassing'. At his trial, he was swiftly acquitted.<sup>1015</sup> The truce remained in place.

In Austria, like in Hungary, it was checked with suspicion that the efforts made during this war were equally distributed and that one half of the Empire was not in a better position than the other when it came to costs. However, this mistrust was never entirely eliminated, and just as the view in the Cisleithanian half of the Empire soon became fixed that Hungary was using large amounts of foodstuffs for itself and not contributing the same amount for the provision of the other half of the Empire, and was thus not experiencing the same degree of suffering as Austria, Prime Minister Count Tisza also began in late autumn 1915 to accuse Austria of a more limited exhaustion of its military strength. At regular intervals, Tisza renewed his accusations: Austria had achieved an advantage in its militarisation of the hinterland, which Tisza recognised as necessary in itself, since considerable parts of its available human capacity were used in operating the war economy and in this way withdrawn from the front. Thus, in relative terms, Hungary had incurred greater losses of dead and wounded, in Tisza's view. The Austrian half of the Empire could only record a considerably higher number of its own soldiers taken into prisoner of war captivity. According to Tisza, however, one could not lump together the dead and the cowardly.<sup>1016</sup> This was then contradicted by Stürgkh, who for his part attempted to prove that it was the Austrian half of the Empire, on the contrary, that had suffered the higher number of dead and wounded than corresponded to its share in the overall waging of the war, and that Austria only had a poorer balance in the case of the missing. If such a massive militarisation of the war economy had not taken place in Austria, however, it would long since no longer have

been possible to cover the requirements of the front. The Imperial-Royal Ministry of National Defence ultimately calculated that after around two years of war, the relative figures yielded the following results:

	Austria	Hungary	Bosnia-Herzegovina
Dead	57.15 per cent	40.24 per cent	2.61 per cent
Wounded	55.84 per cent	41.42 per cent	2.74 per cent
Prisoners	56.52 per cent	40.57 per cent	2.91 per cent
Missing	59.89 per cent	38.03 per cent	2.08 per cent

Who, then, had the higher proportional losses? The Military Chancellery of the Emperor argued furthermore that the Austrian half of the Empire had lost around 750,000 conscripts as a result of the Russian occupation of Galicia, so that the losses of the Austrian half of the Empire were disproportionately large; this had in any case been recognised by the Hungarian government, however.<sup>1017</sup>

If a generally binding observation could be made about the situation on the domestic front after a year of the war, then it was that, at least in the economy, no signs of unrest had yet made themselves felt. Minor strikes had not been caused by a fundamental dissatisfaction, whilst the unity of government and governed appeared to be thoroughly intact. Even the threatened detention periods of between six weeks and one year in the event of strikes in 'state-protected' enterprises did not have to be imposed.<sup>1018</sup> The truce was endangered, however, where the Army High Command endeavoured to press ahead even further with the militarisation of the home front and to secure access rights for itself that definitely bore the imprint of a military dictatorship. The Army High Command began to intervene ever more strongly in domestic policy and ultimately had a direct share in the attempts to overthrow the government of Austrian Prime Minister Stürgkh.

### The Army High Command and Domestic Policy

Since the Army High Command had established itself as the actual power centre and won enormous importance in all political questions, it had to be expected that the issue of the status of central authorities and Army High Command would intensify to the point that an inevitable confrontation would occur. The development did not occur gradually, but rather in bursts. And in the process, the factor already loomed that was subsequently called the 'stab-in-the-back myth' (*Dolchstoßlegende*) after the war.

In an emergency situation such as war, the army leadership could only fulfil its tasks with the help of measures that were based on exceptional laws or ordinances. Since

the home front was ruled with the help of partially identical regulations, a consonance with the exceptional initially emerged. Still, it was not only a question of ensuring the passable functioning of state institutions, economic life, public order and social fabric, whilst the armies carried out operations on the fronts. Fundamental factors were repeatedly affected. And here and there frictions and setbacks were the result. The Army High Command let it be known from the outset that the setbacks could be traced back to the much too limited defence expenditures in peacetime. There was a reckoning with dualism, parliamentarianism and individual politicians. Admittedly, the Imperial and Royal Army revealed weaknesses that had been intrinsic for a long time: tactical and operational procedures no longer corresponded to the demands; the introduction of new weapons and armaments had been delayed through their own personal fault; and the man-management appeared to some commanders to be a foreign concept. Complaints were made about faltering supplies and a lack of ammunition, and ultimately the lamentations became more frequent regarding the limited reliability of the Czechs, Ruthenians and Italians, and an ever more rigorous crackdown on the part of the authorities was demanded.

The soldiers noticed this distrust and became stubborn. They were, therefore, increasingly separated from their national replacement areas. The new garrison towns were not willing, however, to accommodate foreign national troops, so they let their rejection be felt and only made the situation even worse.<sup>1019</sup> There were violations of duty by reserve officers, which led to the demand of the Army High Command to particularly check the reliability of reserve officer aspirants.<sup>1020</sup>

When a territory was re-conquered, this resulted in conclusions of very different sorts being drawn. In Galicia, during the course of the major withdrawal operations in autumn 1914, 70,000 km<sup>2</sup> had been relinquished. Half a million people had fled to the interior of the Dual Monarchy. They could now be successively repatriated. However, seven million peasants were left for the time being with nothing, since their farms and fields had been destroyed and their livestock reduced to zero. During their retreat, the Russians had unscrupulously destroyed or sought to destroy the infrastructure of the land and bring about the largest possible damage. But this was only one side of the coin. Soon thereafter, the Austrians claimed to have identified those guilty for contributing to the lack of any notable civilian resistance to the Russians in Galicia: the Orthodox Church had, so it was claimed, exerted a devastating influence. Alone in East Galicia, around 30,000 Catholics had been forced to convert. Schools had been closed on a large scale, whilst the University of Lviv (Lemberg) had been Russified. It was regarded as particularly irritating that the remaining Austrian gendarmes – part of the armed power, after all – had attempted to ingratiate themselves with their new masters by cooperating with the Russian Secret Police and blacklisting thousands of people for anti-Russian sentiment and resistance, so that these were then deported to Siberia. Wild expropria-

tion and land-grabs had taken place, whilst some people had enriched themselves. Ruthenians, i.e. Ukrainians, had attacked Poles, and Poles had attacked Ruthenians.<sup>1021</sup> It was the task of the returning Austrian administration to take action against all of this, to reverse its impact and to allow a return to normality. Yet, the country continued to be a rear war zone, which meant that unrestricted martial law was in place.

Almost as a matter of course, the Army High Command also exerted from the outset an influence on foreign policy, and the position papers on war aims, special peace, territorial cessions, the annexation of former enemy states to the Dual Monarchy and similar matters characterised this side of activities of the Army High Command and accompanied the path it took.

At times of crisis and above all in spring 1915, this process was marked by a clear lack of patience. The measures of the Austrian government – which was the almost exclusive addressee of the increasingly brusque dispute – were insufficiently energetic and too late for the liking of the Army High Command, and above all in the personnel decisions the wishes of the Command were not always kept in mind to the desired extent. Martial law was not declared for the entire territory of the Dual Monarchy, the question of the governor in Bohemia and in Galicia became a touchstone for the mutual relationship, and the moment of the major bust-up approached.

At this point, a new 'player' entered the field, namely the Command of the South-West Front, which led to the Austrian government being absolutely grilled. From the moment when the Command of the South-Western Front was deployed, there was a third power centre again, just like there had been under Potiorek. The Command of the South-Western Front developed, however, a far greater dynamic and exceeded by far what the Balkan High Command had embodied in its day, as well as the second Command of the Balkan Armed Forces. The reason for this altered situation is not easy to ascertain, since the accumulation of military power does not in itself suffice as an explanation. It was rather linked to the fact that the hinterland of the Balkan front stretched to the Hungarian half of the Empire, whilst the hinterland of the south-western front led to the Austrian half of the Empire and directly touched the core lands of the Monarchy. The officer corps, which came for the most part from this half of the Empire and was above all also predominantly German, especially the generals, who were headed by Archduke Eugen, thus began to exert influence on politics with very similar objectives to the Army High Command and only ostensibly in competition with it, and with the central authorities in Vienna. For the regions in the rear of the south-western front, the command authorities in Maribor (Marburg an der Drau), but also Archduke Eugen, General Dankl or General Rohr, were closer than Cieszyn (Teschen), Archduke Friedrich or Conrad. And perhaps, and without wanting it, this division of power granted a period of grace to the ministry of Stürgkh. Emperor Franz Joseph was forced into the role of arbitrator.

The cycle of emergencies with which the Army High Command sought to expand its influence on domestic policy began on 26 November 1914, when the Army High Command asked the Prime Minister to combat with all the power of the state the 'treasonous activities' in the Sudetenland, which had already had repercussions for the armed forces.<sup>1022</sup> It was furthermore requested that the authority of the civilian state government be transferred to the Army High Command and the military jurisdiction extended to the entire Sudetenland. All requests were rejected by Count Stürgkh. Before he had even sent his response, the Army High Command applied for the appointment of a general equipped with exceptional powers as governor of Silesia. The application was submitted to the Emperor. The justification for this, namely that the reliability of the replacement personnel and the limited dependability of the Czech regiments could only in this way be increased, did not make a great deal of sense, for why should a soldier be more reliable just because he was subordinated to unrestricted military discipline until his departure for the front? The dispute continued in January and February, though the Army High Command was told that the data procured by the War Surveillance Office on the limited reliability of the Czechs in Bohemia and the incidents there partially did not correspond to the facts.<sup>1023</sup> In March 1915, the question of the relief of the Governor of Bohemia, Count Franz Thun-Hohenstein, was once more updated, but the resignation of Thun and the appointment of the present Governor of Silesia, Count Max Coudenhove, took the wind out of the sails of the Army High Command. The calm admittedly only lasted until mid-May. It was then made clear that the Army High Command was also dissatisfied with Coudenhove. It renewed its application for the appointment of a general. In doing so, it not only argued with incidents from the past, but also demanded immediate action in view of the entry of Italy into the war. 'The limitations and benefits caused by the war', wrote Conrad, 'can lead the unpatriotic populace, incited by unscrupulous agitators, to the most dangerous actions, all the more so since the state authority facing it has provided signs of the most regrettable weakness and the few remaining troops are in no way sufficient for a rebellion to be hopeless from the outset.'<sup>1024</sup>

On 21 May, Conrad wrote to Bolfras of an impending revolution in Bohemia,<sup>1025</sup> and on the same day, without the knowledge of the government in Vienna, he had the Young Czech deputy Karel Kramář and the President of the Bohemian Gymnastics Organisations, the Sokols, Josef Scheiner, arrested. Kramář was accused of high treason, because he had been in contact with the Italian consul in Prague. The Emperor was apparently angry at the step taken by the Army High Command, but was unable to do anything without diminishing his own standing and reducing his power. Stürgkh, on the other hand, was stunned. Not only that; he was in fact directly affected, since he was linked to Kramář by an almost amicable relationship. By striking at Kramář, the Army High Command had also struck at Stürgkh. Nonetheless, further developments corresponded

in no way to the expectations of the Army High Command. The charge of high treason against Scheiner had to be dropped in July. Kramář was not placed on trial until the beginning of 1916, at which he was then sentenced on several counts. A plea for annulment then led to a deferral until he was fully amnestied by Emperor Karl. A long time after the war, however, it turned out that the Army High Command had indeed been on the right scent with both Kramář and Scheiner. Both had contact to the so-called 'Maffia', namely the radical Czech resistance movement, as well as to Masaryk and Beneš, the leaders of the movement of Czech emigrants. At the time of their arrest, however, these links could not be proven. Furthermore, the arrest of the two prominent Czechs was full-blown political idiocy, and this weighed most heavily. Yet the Army High Command did not want to let up. When there was a mass desertion from Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau'), the Army High Command demanded not only the dissolution of the regiment but also the appointment of a military governor in Bohemia.<sup>1026</sup>

Conrad attempted to incorporate everything in his proposals that seemed necessary in order to rescue the Monarchy. With his demand to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor to immediately bring about a negotiated peace with Serbia in order to have calm in the Balkans, he not only had the freeing up of forces against Italy in mind, as with his suggestion for a special peace with Russia, but he also aimed at imperial reform. The annexation of Serbia by the Dual Monarchy was 'to be pursued by peaceful means', wrote the Chief of the General Staff to Bolfras; 'any half measures would be a kind of evil and in comparison all arguments that might be raised against it on the part of the Magyars would have to retreat into the background. The same applies to Romania [...]. The method of meanly victimising neighbours and the gagging of the non-Magyar nationalities must be broken with, and the question of the incorporation or affiliation of the southern Slaves to the Monarchy must be heard, and indeed accompanied by an increase in the rights of the Croats and the creation of a central parliament for the entire Monarchy'.<sup>1027</sup>

Only after Conrad had an audience with Emperor Franz Joseph on 18 June 1915, during which the Chief of the General Staff was evidently advised to show more control, did the requests of the Army High Command lose some of their edge and eventually end completely. Something else must be kept in mind here, though: from November 1914 to June 1915 it was for the Army High Command not only a question of holding down a country partout with the means of a military dictatorship, as in the case of Bohemia; far-reaching steps were also suggested to defuse the conflict of nationalities, including full and legally regulated bilingualism. In this way, the Bohemian settlement, which repeatedly failed to be achieved, would have been enforced by military force and against the German ethnic group. The Army High Command believed all the more that it could do this, since its other proposals for state reform were centralistic and it adopted many demands of the Germans in the Dual Monarchy as its own.



If the Army High Command failed with its applications for appointing a general as Governor of Bohemia, it was successful in the case of Galicia and Bukovina. The relevant requests had begun even earlier than those for Bohemia. The first remarks on this can be found in a 'Most Humble Presentation' from 14 October 1914.<sup>1028</sup> The justification, however, was partially a different one. The necessity of the suppression of activities hostile to the state was also emphasised for Poland, but then it was claimed that only a military chief of the regional administration could bridge the antagonisms between the parties and above all between Poles and Ruthenians. Galicia and Bukovina, which up till then had been administered as one, were therefore each to receive their own individual military governor. In this way, Conrad wanted to accommodate the Ruthenians, since one of the governors proposed by him was to be headquartered in Lviv and to administer East Galicia and Bukovina, in other words the territories inhabited by Ruthenians. The other governor was to administer from Kraków (Krakau) only western Galicia and any other territorial gains. All these considerations temporarily became irrelevant as a result of the Russian advance.

Not until May 1915 was the Army High Command able to renew its applications. But neither the Emperor nor Stürgkh allowed Cieszyn to execute these proposals. And this was in spite of Conrad making every effort via the Imperial Military Chancellery to make clear his standpoint and the various intentions. He knew that General Bolfras had championed the concerns of the Army High Command towards the Emperor, and he subsequently assured the Chief of the Military Chancellery how grateful he was that Bolfras had advocated Conrad's ideas 'with the most decisive authority'. 'I attach the greatest importance to this because I cannot be absolutely certain whether the so-called influential authorities are also of the opinion that the imperial concept be placed higher than particularistic, chauvinistic ambitions. To place this imperial concept higher, however, is not only an urgent requirement with regard to the current military situation but also in respect of the future organisation and consolidation of the Monarchy as well as the creation of a situation that guarantees a longer-lasting peace.'<sup>1029</sup> (By 'the so-called influential authorities', Conrad evidently meant the Austrian government.)

Finally, on 18 June, at Conrad's aforementioned audience with the Emperor, the Chief of the General Staff addressed the Monarch directly regarding the problem and received permission to appoint a general as governor in Galicia, though without dissecting the crown lands into a Polish part and a Ruthenian part. It had been above all Prime Minister Stürgkh who had vehemently opposed an alteration in the Galician regional constitution, since he did not want to alienate Poland. In mid-July, General Hermann von Colard assumed the position of Governor of Galicia. Initially, nothing more happened that corresponded to what Conrad referred to as the 'imperial concept'.

If the antagonism between the Army High Command and the Prime Minister had been defused in this way, a conflict came about when Stürgkh accepted a claim brought

to the Reichsrat in Vienna by Polish deputies and submitted a complaint against arbitrary executions in the army areas, above all in the area of the 4th Army under Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. The Army High Command dismissed this grievance. The cause of the treasonous events in Galicia, according to the Army High Command, could be found in the years-long national and party political discord, which had been stoked from abroad, as well as the economic depression of Galicia and the low level of education of broad sections of the populace. 'Those circles that lodge complaints with the army might realise this and keep in mind that it was not the army that brought about this sad circumstance but instead had to suffer its bitter consequences first hand.'<sup>1030</sup>

In the Bohemian as well as the Polish and Ruthenian questions, the Command of the South-Western Front had understandably refrained from intervening. When, however, in July 1915 it came to granting an amnesty to members of the southern Slav nationalities, above all for Slovenes and Croats, for which Stürgkh campaigned, he met with united resistance from the Army High Command and the Command of the South-Western Front. In the case of Dalmatia, initial considerations for the appointment of a military governor also began in July 1915. They emanated from the Command of the South-Western Front, but were initially not pursued any further, since two trials of strength were in any case in progress with Galicia and Bohemia and the leadership in Cieszyn did not want to tackle a third problem with which it could only forfeit prestige.

In other matters, the Army High Command was very inclined, however, to seize upon ideas that emerged in the decentralised power centre on the south-western front. In May 1915, for example, the Command of the South-Western Front had taken up the problem of the confiscation of the assets of those guilty of treason and of national subjects abroad working against the Dual Monarchy, and proposed that this group of people also be punished with the loss of its citizenship. The Army High Command immediately seized on this proposal. The deprivation of assets and the loss of citizenship became a complex of issues that was the subject of lengthy negotiations and was ultimately not settled only because Hungary assumed a stance that diverged from that of Austria. The confiscated goods would have been used to supply war invalids, in accordance with an idea of the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, General Böhm-Ermolli.<sup>1031</sup>

Cieszyn willingly involved itself in a conflict that took place in the rear of the Tyrolean front. The Reichsrat deputy and municipal chief Karl Niedrist was accused by the Command of the South-Western Front of impeding the raising of livestock by claiming that considerably higher prices would later be obtained for the cattle. Since the Tyrolean Governor Count Toggenburg and the Austrian Prime Minister Count Stürgkh, but also other Reichsrat deputies, supported Niedrist and defended him against the accusations, Archduke Friedrich felt forced to write to Stürgkh that the Tyrolean rep-

representatives used their influence 'without any understanding for the gravity of our times' in order to stir up the people against the authorities and to refuse to give the army 'the dutiful support that is now so urgently needed'.<sup>1032</sup> In this affair, as well as others, no attempt at differentiation was any longer made on the part of the military, nor by the civilian representatives; instead, a show of solidarity was made. This was also discovered by the State Governor of Tyrol, Baron Theodor von Kathrein, who approached the Commander of the Tyrolean National Defence with demands for an improvement of the position of the *Standeschützen* (members of rifle companies) and was then reprimanded not only by General Dankl but also by Archduke Eugen. After Dankl had given Kathrein a dressing down, the latter turned at the beginning of November 1915 to the Archduke and wrote: 'When the commander threatens to intervene with the harshest means, we are not afraid. He can imprison me or, if he thinks fit, have me shot [...].' Archduke Eugen replied to him that it was inadmissible 'that third parties, who rely on 'unauthorised' information, interfere between the responsible superiors and subordinates, seeking to bring about by way of theories a supposedly urgently necessary improvement'.<sup>1033</sup> General Archduke Eugen and General Dankl 'firmly closed ranks'.

Very far-reaching proposals on state, administrative and school reform, which were based on an irredentist study from autumn 1915, emanated from the Command of the South-Western Front. When the command of Archduke Eugen sent the first such position paper, it happened without the knowledge of the Army High Command, which promptly reacted with the strict order for all domestic political reports, applications and studies to be sent exclusively via the Army High Command.<sup>1034</sup> It should be prevented under all circumstances that the Command of the South-Western Front become independent. However, it was only the attempt to intervene in domestic politics that was rebuked by the Army High Command. It was absolutely in agreement with the proposals made by the Command of the South-Western Front, and indeed subsequently added to them and combined them with applications of the Army High Command, which had in some cases been submitted earlier. Thus, already at the end of 1914, the senior commands had called for 'wartime experiences' that were not limited to military observations but should instead comment on all sorts of issues. The Commander of the Imperial and Royal XII Corps, Major General von Kövess, for example, felt impelled to make suggestions on the correct national education and a change in the national school system.<sup>1035</sup> From July 1915 to August 1916, the Army Command did indeed address the reorganisation of the school system. All schools, above all primary schools, were to be nationalised and all teachers were to become state officials. The teaching staff was to be purged of unreliable teachers, teacher training reformed, the social class of the teachers raised, and finally the German language intensively cultivated. The applications were approved in principle by the Imperial-Royal Minister of Education Max Hussarek-Heinlein, the Imperial-Royal Interior Minister Karl von Heinold and

also the Austrian Prime Minister, but they remained for the most part unfulfilled. The question had to be posed again as to which far-reaching things should be uniformly enforced, above all in Hungary.

The Army High Command attached particular weight to the pre-military training of the youth. As far as the older school youths were concerned who attended higher classes in secondary schools, the Ministry of Education accommodated the demands of the Army High Command in a decree from June 1915. Henceforth, drill exercises and scouting games were carried out in the framework of lessons in accordance with exact instructions from the Ministry. The more far-reaching proposal for pre-military education of the entire youth, as far as possible from age ten onwards, remained unfulfilled, however, although the matter had been debated long and hard. Hungary was once more the impediment, resulting in solo efforts being made.

### Soldier Games?

The addressing of the problem of pre-military youth education built on considerations that stretched well back to the pre-war period.<sup>1036</sup> However, what had been viewed before the war above all from the perspective of achieving a better exploitation of military strength and an increased fairness of military service as well as the deployment of 'youth' as a connecting link between the nationalities, was now supposed above all to serve the militarisation of youth.<sup>1037</sup> The 'human material' should be formed as early as possible in order to then be able to deploy it reliably and freely.

The decree of the Ministry of Culture and Education from 2 June 1915 was designed to reorganise the entire educational system in the sense of a 'mobilisation' of the pupils.<sup>1038</sup> Resistance emerged against this. Most gym teachers were in favour of it, as were history teachers, but the aforementioned Reichsrat deputy Otto Glöckel very firmly disputed that this was 'the only or the best way to fortify a nation'.<sup>1039</sup> As soon as the resistance among the teachers made itself felt and it was noted that it was a contradiction in terms when attempts were made to strengthen undernourished, poorly dressed and ailing children by means of physical exercises, calls were made for the training of teachers to be revised.<sup>1040</sup> The Army High Command had not expected that the teachers would go along with the proposals unquestioningly, since this would not have fitted with the image that it had of them. In the eyes of the Army High Command, primary schools were in any case 'nurseries of chauvinistic or anti-Austrian sentiments' and secondary schools 'strongholds of high treason and anti-militarism'.<sup>1041</sup> Criticism of the planned measures was also voiced by the boy scouts, whereas Social Democratic, as well as Catholic and Jewish, youth organisations were more or less willing to support the pre-military education.<sup>1042</sup> The Catholic Clergy supported the efforts at militarisa-

tion for the reason that in this way the to some extent visible tendencies of neglect and of youth criminality could be countered. There was admittedly one problem in Tyrol and Vorarlberg. There, the 'Imperial Association of Patriotic Youth Organisations of Austria' was rejected since it was regarded as a troublemaker that hindered the work with youths carried out by the Rifle Associations (*Schützenverbände*). In Upper Austria, a disturbance of the youth rifle associations, which were currently under development, was also feared.

It was not entirely clear how the matter was shaping up in Bohemia, since the Governor Count Max Coudenhove reported exuberantly how enthusiastically the initiative of the Ministry of National Defence had been received, whilst it was reported to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry at the same time that there had been next to no visible measures for the military education of the youth.

The Imperial-Royal Ministry of National Defence, however, wanted for its part to exclude those youth organisations from participating in the military youth preparations whose political reliability was in question. This restriction affected above all the youth organisations in those crown lands in which nationality conflicts were germinating. Thus, the Sokol, Orel and Lassalle gymnastics clubs in Moravia were first of all prohibited from taking part in the pre-military education and training. In Trieste (Triest), several youth associations were disbanded, and when there was nationalist resistance in the military command area of Kraków the command demanded 'military school supervision for all schools in the multi-national crown lands'. This was, however, in vain.<sup>1043</sup>

The language of command in the pre-military training was supposed to be uniformly German, as in the Imperial-Royal Landwehr (Austrian standing army). It was then attempted, however, to counter Germanisation tendencies by also tolerating, for example, Czech as the language of command in Bohemia and Moravia and by eventually issuing brochures in which the commands and their explanations were provided in Czech and German.

Thus, the youths marched, hiked, practised shooting and learned to orient themselves in the open country; they were silently mustered, fell in, were 'roped in' and dismissed; there were team games and gymnastics. Since participation in the pre-military training took place on a voluntary basis, the 'soldier games' were not a sweeping success. On the contrary, levels of participation stagnated, for which reason obligatory participation was demanded by the Imperial and Royal War Ministry. Even in this case, it remained no more than a demand. And the longer the war lasted, the more the setbacks predominated overall. This also gave the Army High Command cause to criticise the Austrian government, regardless of the circumstance that in Hungary not even this level of militarisation was reached. Evidently, however, the Army High Command had learnt to live with only being effective in the Austrian half of the Empire.

The Command of the South-Western Front and the Army High Command also coluded in suggestions to alter the political division of the Austrian half of the Empire and to introduce a district constitution. The police force was to be nationalised in general, and the municipalities at least partially lose their autonomy. The state was to obtain influence over the seminaries and monitor the clergy. As with the teachers, the clergy was also to be made impenetrable to any 'extreme national and subversive influence', on the model of the Imperial and Royal officer corps.<sup>1044</sup>

At the beginning of June 1915, the Army High Command demanded that the entire civil service of Bohemia be examined with regard to its patriotic sentiments. On 17 July, the application was extended to the whole of Austria. The Command of the South-Western Front kept pace with the Army High Command. The civil servants should not only be examined for the requirements of the war, however. The civil service was to be rebuilt completely anew after the war and 'de-politicised'. The officials were to be deprived of the active and passive right to vote, in order – as the Command of the South-Western Front claimed – to prevent civil servants from aligning themselves with national and socialist parties or representatives of the civil service from coming into parliament and lobbying there. Since the officials were measured against the officer corps, complete de-politicisation was also demanded for the latter. The Command of the South-Western Front wanted furthermore to consistently and completely eliminate any influence on the part of politicians and political parties over administrative processes, promotions and transfers.<sup>1045</sup> Civil servants, like the officer corps, should be submitted to a trial in front of an honorary board. The independence of judges should be rescinded. Finally, it was also proposed that the German language not only be cultivated more strongly but also formally made the official language of the state. It does not require much imagination to recognise in the sum total of the ideas emerging among the most senior commanders of the Imperial and Royal Army during the war a type of substitute for the imperial reform that had not been obtainable during peacetime. Emperor Franz Joseph did not want to commit himself completely to this. He was perhaps not entirely in the picture regarding the thoughts of his cousins Friedrich and Eugen, but he did take one step in the direction pursued by the two of them: with the imperial decrees of 10 and 11 October 1915, he ordered the substitution of the designation used for the Austrian half of the Empire. Subsequently, it should no longer be known as 'the Kingdoms and Lands Represented in the Reichsrat', but simply Austria.<sup>1046</sup>

A particular problem was now thrown up by the Army High Command when it demanded the establishment after the war of a border protection zone against Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and Italy. In this way, influences from these countries and above all any cooperation between nationalist groups on both sides of the border were to be made impossible. This new military border was to be 25 kilometres deep. As a precursor to this, on 30 September 1915 an application was made to limit the acquisition of

properties by foreigners and the residence of foreigners in militarily important border regions. Ultimately, it was the government that gave most attention to this application; in view of the resistance of Hungary, however, which had also pursued the dissolution of the old Croatian military border, there was little real chance of it being realised.

### The Attempt to Topple Stürgkh

Given the multitude of proposals, applications, position papers and intrigues that both of the most senior commands brought into circulation, one must ask whether it really fell within the jurisdiction of the Army High Command and the Command of the South-Western Front, or whether at all events excess capacity for thought could not have been redirected more effectively into other areas, or the staffs reduced overall. Evidently, those considerations that more intensively addressed the army itself, its structures and its problems, which became more obvious on a daily basis, fell short. For example, it must be asked why the number of complaints to the military courts in the rear areas, i.e. not at the front, could rise between 1914 and 1916 from 2,058 to 22,954, whereby the numbers doubled from 1915 to 1916. It would also have been worth considering why in Vienna, for example, the number of officers charged by military courts exceeded that of the enlisted men proportionately by a quarter or, in Zagreb (Agram), by a third.<sup>1047</sup> Yet Cieszyn and Maribor were evidently less concerned about the worrying developments in the Imperial and Royal Army and Navy. It was more comfortable to blame social ills on the hinterland and on politics.

In spite of numerous applications on the part of the Army High Command for domestic political changes, the result was rather modest. Proposals such as those for school reform, the forfeiture of assets, changes in the political division, the creation of a border protection zone, as well as others, were repeatedly taken up by the Austrian and Hungarian governments and partially realised. Most of the applications, however, ultimately remained unfulfilled. The criticism of individual ministers, but also of the entire cabinet and, above all, the Austrian Prime Minister, rose. Archduke Friedrich and Conrad were not prepared, however, to support an initiative by members of the Austrian House of Representatives, namely Gustav Marchet and Josef Maria Baernreither as well as the prominent historian Heinrich Friedjung, for toppling Stürgkh. The three men went to Cieszyn at the end of July 1915, evidently fully aware of the possibilities of this power centre for influencing policy. Yet they departed without having achieved anything. Perhaps it was merely the case that the wrong people had gone to work. Two months later, there was another constellation and the initiative was taken – at least formally – by the Army High Command itself. The steps taken by the Army High Command to overthrow the Austrian Prime Minister, however, were also in this case

steered by others. The trail led to the vicinity of the Emperor. Conrad namely seized upon an initiative from the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Major General Marterer, and demanded in a 'Most Humble Presentation' to the Emperor that Stürgkh be dismissed. The whole affair began as a court intrigue, which originated with Marterer and the Lord Chamberlain of the Emperor, Prince Montenuovo. He regarded the time as ripe following the months-long, unmistakeable criticism of the Austrian government, which could not be missed, but he did not want to expose himself. It would be better if the Army High Command were to do this. Marterer shared the Prince's view and could be certain that Conrad would promptly set to work on drafting a corresponding presentation, which of course not he but rather Archduke Friedrich would sign. In early autumn 1915, the Chief of the General Staff was at the summit of his prestige; it was, therefore, logical to harness him for the overthrow of Stürgkh, especially since Marterer knew from his correspondence with Conrad that the latter had repeatedly called for the dismissal of Stürgkh and his replacement with a more energetic prime minister. It was ultimately Marterer who suggested to Conrad the name of a successor: Prince Konrad Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst. The Chief of the General Staff replied immediately on 20 September to the effect that he also regarded 'Konrad Hohenlohe as a personality who would doubtlessly achieve more at the head of the government than the current [head]'.<sup>1048</sup> The formulation reveals that Conrad was not convinced that Prince Hohenlohe was the best man for the job. He was merely described as more suitable than Stürgkh. Conrad furthermore stated that he would exceed his authority if he were to ask the Emperor for Stürgkh's removal. Such a request should be submitted by the Foreign Minister. Nonetheless, five days later Conrad and the Army High Command did what Marterer and others had requested of them. On 25 September, in a presentation to the Emperor with regard to conditions in Bohemia, Galicia and Bukovina, the unreliability of the Czech body of troops, Serbian national agitation by teachers and the clergy in the southern Slav provinces, Italian irredentism and subversive agitation, i.e. with regard to the sum of allegations and grievances over the course of a year, Archduke Friedrich concluded that 'the attempts of the government so far, despite the war legislation, were for the most part in vain'. As if that were not enough, further great tasks would face the Monarchy: an appropriate adjustment in the organisation of the Monarchy, radical reforms in domestic administration, the education of all nationalities in the interests of Austria, economic reforms, the alteration of administrative structures, legislation on schools and defence, and many others. 'The government, which was not in a position to appreciate the numerous signs of germination and the powerful development of subversive tendencies in almost all crown lands with Slav or Italian inhabitants, and was unable, even in the decisive hour, to successfully combat the destructive consequences, will hardly be able to cope with the approaching, incomparably greater challenges. These circumstances, which are capable



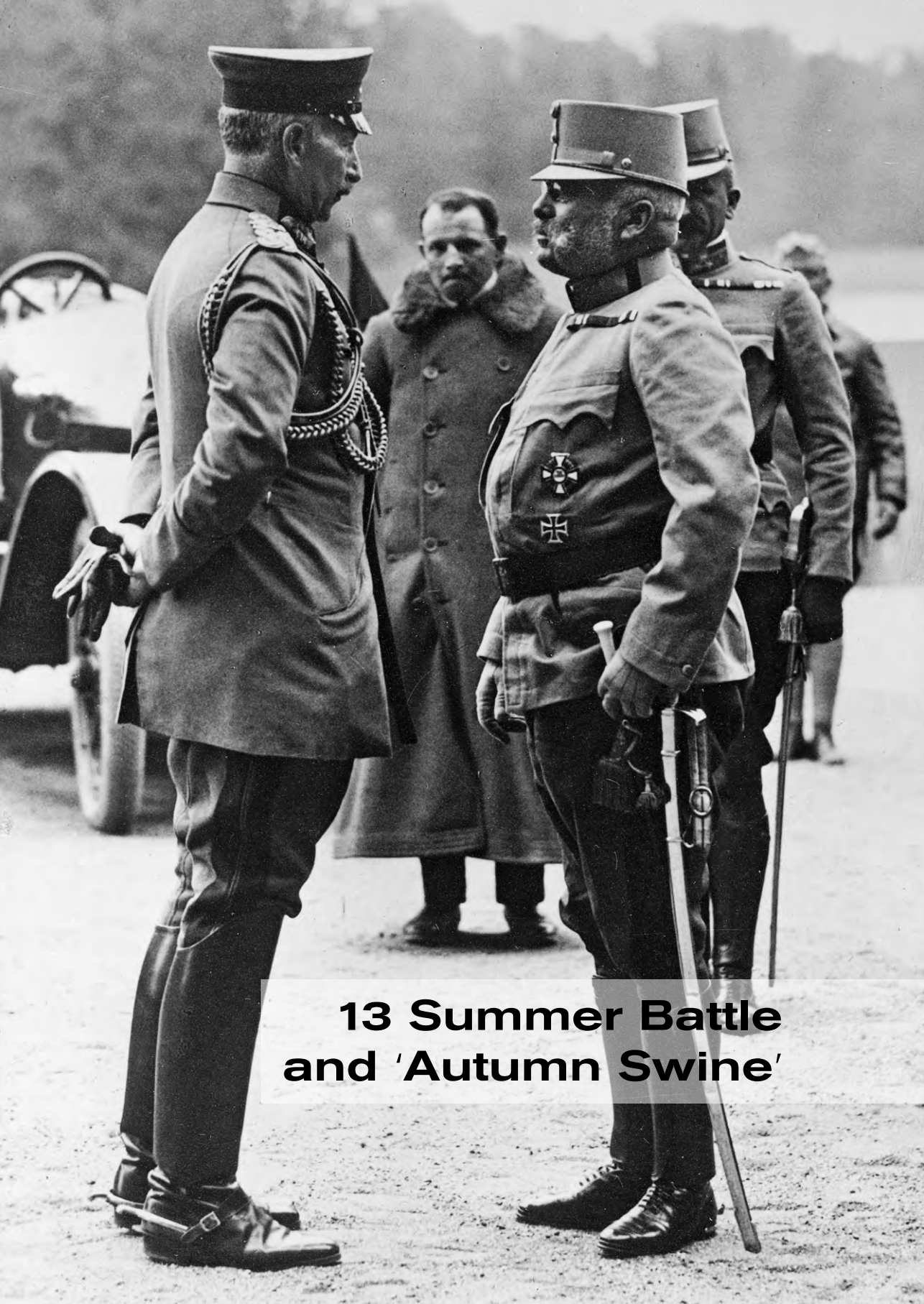
of influencing in an exceedingly negative way the appropriate reorganisation of the Monarchy and the required powerful development of its armed forces, induce me to submit the most loyal and obedient request that Your Majesty deign to entrust with the leadership of the administration of the Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Reichsrat a personality whose acknowledged ability and unshakeable energy guarantee a propitious solution to the questions that are decisive for the future fate of Austria-Hungary. – Archduke Friedrich.<sup>1049</sup>

One could certainly regard this as something that belongs in the category of attempted interference on the part of the Army High Command. Yet it was more than that. The mass of position papers, allegations and grievances were addressed to the Austrian Prime Minister and individual ministers, but also to the Tisza government. Hardly anything was actually brought to the attention of the Monarch. Now, however, the Army High Command went all out. The stalemate emanated, after all, from the Emperor. At the head of the Monarchy there was a vacuum that assumed ever more terrifying proportions. It was down to the Monarch to act, even if this meant putting the Army High Command in its place. Alternatively, there would indeed have been a new government and a radical reform of the political system. But Franz Joseph wanted neither those people who were trusted by him and devoted to him to be replaced, nor a radical change. Everything was to be postponed until after the war. The war had to end sometime. Until then, everything was to remain as before. The intrigues blossomed and the Empire was rapidly declining.

In spite of the interesting constellation, on which the presentation of the Army Supreme Commander was based, the foray failed. The Emperor was not willing to replace the Austrian Prime Minister and did not exhibit any direct reaction to the letter from his archducal cousin. The failure of this attempt to topple Stürgkh in no way discouraged the protagonists, however, and less than a month passed before members of the upper house of the Austrian Reichsrat had an exchange of views in three executive committees that once more boiled down to Stürgkh's resignation. On 27 October 1915, the members of the upper house Count Gołuchowski, Baron von Czedik and Prince Fürstenberg submitted a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister in the form of a memorandum.<sup>1050</sup> The reasons that they gave and the failings of which they accused the government were partially different to those cited by the Army High Command. At the top of the list was the rapidly deteriorating food situation. The government had not succeeded in bringing about a comprehensive organisation for the provision of foodstuffs. The memorandum claimed that the danger existed that a desperate mood might develop that 'can assume a threatening character'. The next points were the lack of preparation for solving the questions that would arise after the war in the economic sector and in the relationship to Germany, the reorganisation of the domestic national and parliamentary affairs, and above all the relationship to Hungary. The latter was vital,

since in Austria 'there is a strong feeling that the prestige of Austria towards Hungary threatens to recede into the background'. These points did not aim at an exhaustive account of the failings and weaknesses of the government. They were sufficient, however, and the representatives of the upper house of the Reichsrat closed with the declaration 'that the government is not capable of meeting these demands'. They had, therefore, come to Stürgkh in order to explain this to him 'with complete openness'.

This action did not lead to the overthrow of the government either, or to the resignation of the Prime Minister. Just two ministers, including Interior Minister Baron Heinold, were replaced. The Prime Minister remained, however, and seemed unimpressed. His backing was the Emperor, and he therefore thrust aside all allegations and complaints, as well as hidden threats that he would have to give an account of his actions at some point in the future. He did not respond to the attacks of the Christian Socialists, who opposed him and reproached him by saying that the worst parliamentarianism was still better than none at all.<sup>1051</sup> He also failed to react to the accusations of politicians from other parties, and could even derive a certain confirmation of his own opinion from the enormously varying perceptions of the nationalist politicians. The German National League had demanded that German be the official language as early as 1914. In the same year, the trade and economic alliance with Germany had also been proclaimed as indispensable. The Viennese Professor for Eastern European History, Hans Uebersberger, who had contributed to the indictment against Karel Kramář, advocated a military dictatorship. Naturally, the representatives of Slav nationalities vehemently resisted the demands of the German nationalists. Could very much really be expected of the reconvening of parliament? The result of all this for the Vienna government was not the knowledge of being replaceable but instead a feeling of isolation and competition towards the other power centres. Since the Emperor had become almost invisible and so obviously refused to change anything of note, politicians and the military were both inclined to see only their own individual realities from now on. And this special problem of selective perception strengthened each and every one of the actors in the belief that they were doing the right thing and, if this was not complied with, to paint a picture of impending disaster. The war had reached the stage of dismal prophecies.



**13 Summer Battle  
and 'Autumn Swine'**

13. The Commander-in-Chief of the German and Austro-Hungarian Armies, Kaiser Wilhelm II and Field Marshal Archduke Friedrich met at different time intervals in Pszcyna and Cieszyn. Since a recurring topic of discussion was the request for assistance from German troops on the Imperial and Royal fronts, the Archduke generally regarded these meetings with mixed feelings.

**S**ince the war had begun against Italy, it had become even more difficult to agree on the operational goals of the Central Powers. In the east, where following Gorlice–Tarnów the effects of the major successes could by no means yet be predicted, Falkenhayn finally also agreed to continue the attack and not only to reach the San-Dniester line, but to continue beyond it. While Conrad, who had been the first to speak of Lviv (Lemberg), but who was then forced to deal with Italy, wished to maintain the troop levels in the north-eastern theatre of war, he also envisaged adopting a defensive approach after the San-Dniester line had been reached, and deploying against the new enemy, Italy, any troops that could possibly be released in both the north-east and above all in the Balkans. In Conrad's view, all force must be used when proceeding against Italy, and as had been the case with Gorlice–Tarnów, the Austro-Hungarian and German troops should be combined in such a way that they would be capable of making a decisive strike. However, Falkenhayn began to favour the idea of a new campaign against Serbia.

### **On the Priority of the Theatres of War**

For Austria-Hungary, the problem of priority had arisen in a particular way in relation to the south-western theatre of war, since here, the issue was not only to wage a war like any other, but also, to punish something outrageous and perfidious, as Conrad described it. For the Germans, however, there was no urgency attached to Italy whatsoever. Therefore, all plans for a generous transfer of Austro-Hungarian troops to Italy, as well as discussions that had already extended to offering Field Marshal Mackensen the command over the south-western front, were irrelevant. Since the forces required for an offensive against Italy could not be scratched together, it was agreed of necessity on 21 May 1915 to wage a defensive war against Italy. But how should the war continue in the east? How long could the German Empire pay so relatively little attention to its western theatre of war, as it did from May to July 1915, even though it was precisely there that its main enemies were fighting? How could Austria-Hungary intervene in a convincing manner for all concerned in order to re-conquer East Galicia and Bukovina, while at the same time holding Italy at least in check?

The question of how to proceed on the Italian front, lack of clarity regarding the attitude of Romania, the situation in the western theatre of war in Belgium and France

and not least the increasing problems of conducting joint warfare against Russia did not remain without consequences. And since it was also prestige that was at stake here, almost everything mattered. Naturally, the Army High Command was also frustrated that some troop bodies were still inclined to desert, despite the fact that a major success was becoming evident. One example was again the case of Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau'). This led not only to the regiment being disbanded as punishment, as mentioned above, a measure which was wrested from the Emperor by the Army High Command, but also to the order that unreliable troops in the defences were no longer to be entrusted with important sections of the front on their own, but were instead to be mixed with reliable troops.<sup>1052</sup> When Alpine, Silesian or even Hungarian troops failed in their duty, the measures taken were not nearly as harsh. This naturally did not go unnoticed, and was ultimately merely an expression of a latent tension that was hidden somewhere behind the successes. And what was happening at the front had an immediate effect on the hinterland. It was no coincidence that it was again Bohemia where the effects were felt most strongly.

There had certainly been opportunities to take counteraction, but they were favoured least of all. One option that was considered was to involve the heir to the throne, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, to a greater extent. In June 1915, he was relieved of his post in the Army High Command and was from now on to visit the troops. This was then presented in such a way that, in so doing, he was to become intimately acquainted with 'the theatres of war, the leaders and weapons, the technical and base facilities of the great Austro-Hungarian, and in some cases also the allied German Army'. 'He brought to all the greetings and gratitude of the Supreme Commander; however, he also listened with untiring interest to the words of every individual man', according to the 'hagiographical' literature.<sup>1053</sup> Even so, Archduke Karl Franz Josef was later able to put his voice to a record for the benefit of the military, widows' and orphans' fund, and with all honesty begin with the words: 'I was at all the fronts [...]' However, whether he was able even at a minimum level to compensate for all the errors in leadership that had been made, must remain open to doubt.

The setbacks of the spring were compensated by the aforementioned occupation of Przemyśl on 3 and 4 June 1915, a victory in which only one note of bitterness remained in the Austrian state of mind, namely that the greater share of this success was enjoyed by German troops. Even so, the joy was felt by all, bells were rung in the Monarchy and flags were hoisted. And the willingness to make further advances in the east and, in so doing, to reap further successes, increased significantly. Nonetheless, it was precisely during these days that Falkenhayn suggested agreeing a peace with the Russians on the basis that the territorial status quo be maintained. This proposal, which was connected to the forwarding of Conrad's memorandum, which was already known, led to numerous controversies in German historiography.<sup>1054</sup> Was the leadership of the German

Empire to blame for the fact that no golden bridges were built for the Russians, or was it the case, as Bethmann Hollweg claimed immediately after the war, that the Russians were not so deterred by the successes of the Central Powers in the early summer of 1915 so as to already be prepared to settle for peace? One thing is certain, and that is that only shortly beforehand, the Russians had undertaken in the convention with Italy not to agree a separate peace.<sup>1055</sup> Was that really the end of the matter, however? In his version, the German Imperial Chancellor drew on soundings taken by a Danish intermediary, the ship owner and privy councillor Andersen, who had gained the impression in St. Petersburg that the Tsar was anything but prepared to make peace. As a result, Bethmann Hollweg assumed that any proposals for peace would be fruitless. In contrast to Austria-Hungary, at that time, the German Imperial government felt it least of all necessary to end the war by concluding separate peace agreements and making concessions. It may also have played a role for Bethmann Hollweg that it was only the conflict with Russia that meant that the German Social Democrats continued to support the war.<sup>1056</sup> Again, however, an initiative to partially end the war failed and, again, it had emerged that it was precisely alliances that prevented political and military solutions, or at least made them significantly more difficult.

The war in the east continued. Falkenhayn finally agreed to Conrad's proposal to select Lviv as the next goal for operations. Mackensen's area of command was to be extended to the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army. However, for the sake of Lviv, Conrad was even prepared to accept that. On 22 June, the capital of Galicia was already re-taken by the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, and thus, the major part of the Austro-Hungarian territory that had been lost in August 1914 and during the following months was again 'firmly in our hands'.

This time, even the outward appearance was accurate: Mackensen had given the Austrians priority. Again, bells were rung, flags were hoisted and there were ovations. On the evening of 23 June, Archduke Friedrich left Cieszyn (Teschen) for Lviv in order to celebrate its recapture. However, he remained unimpressed by both the organised and spontaneous jubilations. 'Everywhere along the route, torchlight processions, flags, the national anthem and so on. [The] Archduke doesn't move, but continues eating! And all around him behave as though this had nothing to do with them', wrote Lieutenant Colonel Schneller, who accompanied the Archduke.<sup>1057</sup>

However, Emperor Franz Joseph ordered the Army High Command, even at the moment of recapture of the capital of Galicia, to spare the Ruthenians, who had to a not insignificant degree collaborated with the Russians. 'We wish to come as liberators, not as judges', he telegraphed. The warning certainly came at an appropriate time. Even so, it appeared here and there as though they had penetrated deep into enemy territory.<sup>1058</sup> It was not only that measures were taken against those suspected of collaboration, but also that the people were again forced to work for the war effort. The rural population

in particular had in succession been coerced into working for their own army, then for the Russians and finally for the Imperial and Royal troops, and frequently had hardly any opportunity to cultivate their fields and carry out even the minimum work needed in order to ensure their own survival. Ludwig Hesshaimer, who belonged to the artists' group of the War Press Bureau, described the scene in a few words: 'In those areas of the eastern theatre of war, large parts of the rural population were formed into companies of workers in order to rebuild the roads; due to the lack of men, their number included many strong women. [...] In Miechów, they all wore white linen patches with numbers sewn on to their upper arms. They were also put to work in the fields.'

If the advance was slowed by boggy ground, simple road repairs were not enough; in order to transport a mortar battery, for example, log roads were constructed for which up to 30,000 tree trunks were used. Companies of workers also cleared the horrific battlefields, 'buried the dead, collected many thousands of grenades, detonators, rifles, bayonets and knapsacks that were lying about, as well as the chaos of all the other items'. In the middle of it all, farmers made attempts at rebuilding their huts. 'Some walked in the deepest mud across the destroyed fields, from which the dead warriors had only just been removed. Rows of grave mounds lined the road, and right next to them, the plough was pulling its furrow'.<sup>1059</sup>

Following the conquest of Lviv, two armies under Mackensen's command, the Imperial and Royal 4th Army and the German 11th Army, were to veer towards the north and implement the large-scale strangulation of Russian Poland that had already been considered at the beginning of the war, and which had as yet failed to take place. The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army was left to continue marching eastwards. However, since the goals of the joint offensive had already been far exceeded, the notion of initiating the transport of German troops towards the west arose of its own accord. In that theatre of war, there had been defensive successes in the First Battle of Champagne against the French, as well as against the British near Lille. However, despite the use of poison gas for the first time in the arc of the front at Ypres (on 22 April 1915), positional warfare had continued.<sup>1060</sup> It therefore stood to reason that Falkenhayn would wish to bring new forces to the west. However, Conrad did all he could in order to continue the offensive in the east. At an audience in Schönbrunn Palace, during which he was to inform the Emperor regarding the situation in the Russian theatre of war, when Emperor Franz Joseph asked what would be done following the recapture of Lviv, Conrad had replied that the offensive must be continued in order to weaken the Russians further. Perhaps they would then be inclined to settle for peace after all.<sup>1061</sup> However, in order to resume the push towards Russia, German troops were needed, which entailed once more discussing the next goals with Falkenhayn.

On 28 June, the two chiefs of staff met in order to determine the basic tenet of the operations now to come. Conrad, who had been promoted to the newly-created rank of



*Generaloberst* (immediately below the rank of field marshal), was able to present himself as someone who had now been subsequently reaffirmed in the operational principles he had already formulated in 1914. For his part, Falkenhayn, who had been named proprietary colonel of Infantry Regiment No. 81 following the capture of Lviv,<sup>1062</sup> was able to refer to the fact that without the provision of German troops and a significant German participation in the command in the north-east, these successes would not have been possible at all. During the meeting, details of the continued advance, the command and use of troops were negotiated, and while they were naturally not without friction, they were aimed at achieving a common goal. The offensive in Poland was continued.

However, if anyone had imagined that the successful joint conduct of war might perhaps have increased the degree of understanding and sympathy between the Germans and 'Comrade Lace-Up', as the Austro-Hungarians were known, they would soon be proved mistaken. Again, the Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn expressed his contempt in particularly drastic terms. He was present during the capture of Kraśnik, the so-called 'Second Battle of Kraśnik' (1–10 July),<sup>1063</sup> and wrote: 'And the Austrians are wretchedly limpid. Recently at Kraśnik [...] I saw sights that would make a dog whimper. [...] They then proceeded in such a fashion that in our Grand Headquarters we believed that they would soon be in Warsaw. Then the Russians turned about and the brave brothers in arms simply ran off! It's tough! But one must bear them! We have nothing better at our disposal.'<sup>1064</sup>

In July, considerable progress was made, and finally, at the end of the month, Lublin was taken, followed by Chełm (Cholm) on 1 August. On 4 August, the German 9th Army conquered Warsaw and the Austro-Hungarian Kövess Army Group (the reinforced Imperial and Royal XII Corps) took Dęblin (Ivangorod). At this point, therefore, the Vistula River was also crossed. The great campaign in the east appeared to have reached its conclusion.<sup>1065</sup> In Vienna, at least, there was no concept of how to proceed following the recapture of the Austro-Hungarian territories that had been lost during 1914. As Conrad told the Emperor in the aforementioned audience on 26 July, the Germans also had no ideas on the issue, however. 'They have no direction, no programme.'<sup>1066</sup> The problem was that while there was a desire to bring Russia to the negotiating table, no-one knew how. The Foreign Minister, Burián, was at a loss as to how to enter into peace negotiations with the Tsarist Empire. The German Empire had failed in its attempts to establish talks on two occasions, and in the case of Austria, the Ukrainian question had in the interim become a particularly serious problem. The Russians feared that Austria-Hungary would exert a particularly strong appeal over the Ukrainians. As Burián reported, they harboured 'uneasiness about the Ukrainian population, which is mostly intermingled with Jews. The Jews are the revolutionary element in Russia'<sup>1067</sup>. Once again, therefore, the best solution appeared to be to continue the war.

In mid-August 1915, following the fall of Kaunas, the Tsar dismissed the Russian Supreme Commander, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich, as well as the Russian Supreme Command, and took on the role of Supreme Commander himself. The Russian disaster had already caused smaller upsurges of revolutionary activity. The dismissal of the Grand Duke, who still enjoyed great popularity, then led to student strikes in St. Petersburg, the name of which had been Russified during the previous year, and which was now called 'Petrograd'.

In Russia, it was anticipated that the German northern armies would attack the Russian capital with a simultaneous naval operation against the coast. And indeed, the Chief of the General Staff in the German Eastern Front High Command, General Ludendorff, put his plans for an attack in the north into action. However, he did so in strict opposition to Falkenhayn, and with an overestimation of his own forces.<sup>1068</sup> Already in the days following the conquest of Warsaw and Dęblin, Falkenhayn had announced the end of German operations as soon as the Bug-Brest-Litovsk-Grodno line had been reached. From that point on, strong German forces would have to be withdrawn immediately for use in other theatres of war. In the east, operations were to become defensive and the front divided in such a way that it corresponded to the length of the borders between the Central Powers and Russia, in other words, with a ratio between Germany and Austria-Hungary of 9:7. At the same time, Falkenhayn proposed that the cooperation between the troop formations of both armies be terminated. The German troops from the 8th Army were to be separated, and the Mackensen Army Group and Woysch Army Division dissolved. The purpose of these measures was to redirect the focus of the German effort to the west and, in particular, to also conduct the campaign against Serbia that Falkenhayn had already been considering for some time.

A campaign against Serbia was anything but popular in Germany, and was only planned in order to finally create a land connection to Turkey, to be able to provide the Turks with effective support and to prevent them from breaking away from the front of the Central Powers. Falkenhayn would have been able to take his time with the plans for the Balkan offensive, since at the end of July, he received a letter from Enver Pasha, the son-in-law of the Sultan, in which the suggestion was made that the Central Powers should continue to advance towards Russia, abandon the campaign against Serbia entirely and instead operate towards Odessa. Then, Turkey would no longer have to worry that with operations at a standstill from the Baltic Sea to Bukovina, the Russians might then concentrate their efforts on the Russo-Turkish front in the Caucasus.<sup>1069</sup> Hindenburg demanded an operation by the northern wing of the German Army East to Vilnius, the Turks wanted an operation on the southern wing, and the Foreign Ministry in Berlin wanted the Balkan campaign.

The Chief of the German General Staff finally opted for the latter. The operation towards Odessa may have appeared to him to be highly unrealistic, and would also have

necessitated a greater intensity of collaboration with the Imperial and Royal troops. Perhaps Falkenhayn was also tired of the constant disputes with the Eastern Front High Command of the German Army. Since he had moved to Pszczyna (Pleß), his relations with Hindenburg and Ludendorff had steadily worsened, and in the case of Ludendorff had already turned into unconcealed hatred.<sup>1070</sup> The relationship between Falkenhayn and Conrad was considerably better. At least they showed a certain degree of restraint in their dealings with each other, and only permitted themselves to express their animosities freely in internal correspondence. Thus, Conrad wrote in one of his letters to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor after a visit to Pszczyna on 10 August, and following a three-hour conference with Falkenhayn: 'This is surely one of my most difficult duties; it entails unbounded self-control and self-deception! I cannot describe what degree of anger I stifle; but it cannot be otherwise for the good of our great joint purpose.'<sup>1071</sup>

For political reasons, aside from the memoirs, historical analyses during the inter-war period brushed aside the animosities between the alliance partners and played down their role. However, the personal records speak a very different language. And the files are even more unambiguous. The actual share of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command in the leadership during the great campaign in the east during 1915 was lower than can be surmised from the depiction in *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg* ('Austria-Hungary's Final War'). Therefore, the termination of the collaboration in the summer of 1915 certainly had its logical aspects, and the dissolution was also implemented by both sides. Ultimately, it was also influenced by personal hostilities. The Army High Command had not overlooked the fact that new axes had been created, and that it was no longer of prime importance to keep an eye on the relationship with Mackensen or Ludendorff. The man who really mattered was Mackensen's Chief of the Staff, General Hans von Seeckt, who had increasingly made direct contact with Falkenhayn and, in so doing, had bypassed both Mackensen and the Army High Command. The target of German censure, aside from Conrad, who was the subject of only relatively moderate criticism, was the Commander of the Imperial and Royal 7th Army, General of Cavalry Baron Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin.

Conrad was in principle in agreement with the decision to halt operations in the east, although he regarded the front on the Bug River, just 40 kilometres to the east of Lviv, as being too close in order to be certain that no new risk might arise for Austro-Hungarian territory. The offensive was therefore to be continued with limited goals. In this way, he took the first step in making it clear that the Imperial and Royal troops wished to carry on with their attack towards the east and, if necessary, that they would do so alone, as they had already done in 1914. Even so, this had only become possible as a result of the joint successes that had been achieved in the Russian theatre of war. Conrad, however, was keen to emphasise the successes of the Austro-Hungarian troops

and to present them as being fully on a par with the Germans and even as being a superior army to that of the Russians, in order to have a stronger starting position if it were perhaps to come to peace negotiations.<sup>1072</sup>

The separation from the Germans was also a logical step in the sense that while the dying and suffering among the non-German nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy might still be acceptable in the Austro-Hungarian war, making the same sacrifices to further the war aims of the German Empire was out of the question. Since the Army High Command was fighting for an equal place in the hierarchy and was keen to maintain its prestige outwardly, the subordination of Imperial and Royal troops, armies and army components had become a double problem. Naturally, this problem varied for each different level, and was regarded by the German troop commanders only from their perspective. However, the unpleasant coexistence had deeply marked everyone involved. Laborious constructs were found in order to secure the supreme command for one person or another, to uphold prestige and at the same time, to secure control.

But what was the point? Now the moment of separation had come. The complete disentanglement of the German and Austro-Hungarian troops would not be achieved completely, but without doubt, they were once again relatively independent of each other, and for their part, the Austrians announced as early as July that they would again prepare for attack with the aim of conquering East Galicia.

### **The 'Black-Yellow' Offensive**

Conrad was eager to prove the leadership qualities of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command. There had indeed also recently been increasing doubt as to his suitability with regard to his responsibility for operational planning and implementation, since he had failed to push through his own operational ideas among the German generals, who acted in a patronisingly friendly manner towards him, and of whom he was thoroughly sick and tired. His aim was now to split the Russian western and south-western fronts more widely open, which were already divided by the Pinsk Marshes. This was then to initiate an operation, a 'black-yellow' offensive, which would prove the re-established freedom of action and independence from the German Supreme Army Command.<sup>1073</sup>

Conrad planned to advance to Rivne and, if possible, on to Kiev. In his view, it would furthermore be possible to implement a vast pincer operation with the northern wing of the eastern front, the armies of the German Eastern Front High Command, and to encircle 25 Russian divisions.<sup>1074</sup> Finally, the opportunity presented itself of pushing through beyond Russian Poland and on to actual Russian territory. There was a buoyant mood in the Army High Command as a result of its regained independence. Conrad informed Falkenhayn about his intentions and is likely to have been angered

by the latter's sceptical reaction. However, Falkenhayn also acknowledged the fact that Conrad's plans could have two positive benefits: if the Austro-Hungarian troops were to be successful with their offensive, the Russian fronts could be further weakened to a significant degree. Additionally, the fact that an operational success would of necessity increase Austro-Hungary's self-confidence also had to be taken into account. Since this would certainly have been welcome in relation to the joint conduct of the war, Falkenhayn was able to accept Conrad's plans. It was after all probably no secret to the German command authorities, and in particular to the Chief of the German General Staff, that the tensions and disputes regarding the conduct of the war had for a long time already no longer been based on objective opinions, but had taken on a purely personal aspect. Therefore, if the Imperial and Royal Armies could return to where they had begun in August 1914, confident and full of burning offensive spirit, then it could only be to the benefit of the Germans. The only question that remained unanswered was whether it would be possible to start over from the beginning and disregard what had happened in between. Another uncertainty was whether this was still the same army.

After a year of war, Austria-Hungary had registered a total loss of 56,989 officers and NCOs and 2,484,548 men from over 5.6 million soldiers overall.<sup>1075</sup> One in eight officers and one in ten men had fallen. Almost 730,000 soldiers had been taken captive or were missing, while 928,000 had suffered injuries of varying degrees of severity. The 'old army' had therefore long since ceased to exist, and in the middle of the war, a new army began to emerge. In July 1915, the XIII March Battalions and Squadrons were already being formed. For most regiments, one replacement body was formed every month. Even so, the number of soldiers at the front had tended to decrease rather than increase. On the reference date of 15 August 1915, the Austro-Hungarian armies had a total of 29,113 officers and 806,982 men standing on all fronts, not including those small contingents deployed on the western front or in the Middle East. Then came the Imperial and Royal Navy. However, the approximately 837,000 soldiers at the fronts were fewer in number than those who had been available at the start of the war. In 1915, soldiers were mustered who had been born in 1897. However, this was not enough to cover the replacements needed. On 21 July, Conrad declared that despite the favourable war situation, it must not be forgotten that all this had been obtained at an enormous cost in terms of materials and personnel, and that 'in particular, the reservoir of personnel resources is finally beginning to dwindle'.<sup>1076</sup> Already with a view to the war year 1916, the re-mustering of troops born in years that had already been mustered once or twice was demanded. Additionally, those who were due to complete their 18th year in 1916 were already to be mustered in December 1915 in order to be able to enlist them as early as January 1916. It was then proposed that the obligatory Landsturm (reserve forces) service age should be reduced to 17, although Hungary objected to this. Even so, preparations were made for the second contingent of the Landsturm to replace the

people who were suitable for fighting at the front in the base area and in the hinterland. Since the second contingent of the Landsturm had until then not yet been enlisted, this measure also signified a further increase in the war effort.

At the same time, the large-scale staging operations around Vienna and Budapest in the bridgeheads located there were also completed. The soldiers in the protective position in Vienna had anyway already been used for all possible purposes, although now only in some cases for military objectives. In 1915, they had gathered a large nettle harvest, for example, from which the stems were then delivered to a spinning factory in Komárom (Komorn), where the fibres were used to make fabric. Now, however, the bridgehead garrisons were marched to the front.

Conrad calculated that despite all the shortages for his 'black-yellow' offensive, he would not only have sufficient troops, namely 38½ infantry and 8½ cavalry divisions. They totalled around half as much again as the Russians in the 8th Army.<sup>1077</sup> In order to provide coverage, countless labour battalions were again put to use. Wherever no men were available now, since in some areas the Austrians were on enemy territory, women were also used to a greater extent. The 'requisitioned' female farm workers constructed reserve fortifications. They dug the trenches through fields and forests, 'staunchly and without a sound with their heavy shovels', as the painter Ludwig Hesshaimer wrote. 'Here, the women dug coverage; as the war willed it, their own men would die behind it.'<sup>1078</sup>

On 26 August 1915, the attack began. The Imperial and Royal armies took Rivne and were able to capture Lutsk on 31 August. Brusilov withdrew across the Styr River. The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army (under Böhm-Ermolli) joined the advance. Conrad urged the army commanders not to attack frontally, but to encircle on one side. Now, the aim was to implement old operational principles of the Imperial and Royal Army and to attack the flank. The Imperial and Royal 1st Army under General of Artillery Puhallo and the army group under General of Infantry Roth were to realise this single-sided encirclement, which extended far to the north. However, Conrad was dissatisfied with the progress of the operation, and the withdrawal of the Russians eastwards confirmed him in this view. On 28 August, his aide-de-camp already noted: 'In East Galicia, the Russians are retreating from our attack. One does not have the impression that fierce fighting is taking place, the effect of the operation against Lutsk is making itself felt. Puhallo and Roth are operating so poorly, so frontally, that [the] Chief is furious in the evenings.'<sup>1079</sup>

The Army High Command then attempted to interfere ever more strongly in the command of the 1st Army and Army Group Roth. The Commander of the 4th Army, General of Infantry Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, received the command over the entire north flank, and Puhallo was from now on to command the 1st Army. Even so, the Russians appeared to be not in the least deterred, established their positions time and

time again, destroyed bridges and roads and finally also had the rain on their side, so that the Imperial and Royal troops once again became bogged down. General Ivanov, the Commander of the Russian south-western front, for his part ordered relief attacks from the bridgehead around Ternopil (Tarnopol), thus threatening the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army and the German South Army (under Bothmer), which remained within the remit of the Army High Command. Conrad needed a success to the north, in Volhynia, if only in order to relieve the pressure from his own fronts. 14 divisions were deployed at the focal point of the fighting in Volhynia, and it simply did not make sense that they were unable to penetrate six Russian divisions. The encirclement in the north that Conrad had envisaged was inadequate. The Russians succeeded in extracting themselves from the envelopment. Finally, they again made themselves ready for battle in the Olyka area.

Among the staffs at Cieszyn, the atmosphere was seething. The Chief of the Italian Group, Major Karl Schneller, who was already following the operations in the east with particular interest since they would decide whether or not there would soon be an opportunity to relocate forces to the south-west, noted on 3 September: 'This entire operation is one of the most shameful that we have commanded. An army allows itself to be held up by two brigades and bumbles about for so long until an enemy that really is stronger arrives.'<sup>1080</sup> Finally, it was ordered in the harshest terms that the Austro-Hungarian troops be hauled forwards; in particular the commanders should be forced to lead more effectively. On 4 September, Archduke Friedrich decreed that the army commanders were to establish commands according to which no further orders to retreat were permitted. What emerged here was a dilemma for the Austro-Hungarian leadership, however, and threw a conceivably crooked light on their operational abilities. The army commanders and a whole series of corps commanders were indeed not capable of successfully preparing and implementing a larger offensive operation. They displayed a degree of amateurishness that due to a sense of shame was in most cases omitted in the Austrian literature following the war.

It is almost unfair, however, to single out individual persons for criticism. Certainly, it was not only individuals. Starting with the Army High Command and continuing through the army commands and corps commands down to the divisional commanders, it could be seen time and again that the generals were frequently not up to the task, developed too little initiative, in some cases failed to obey commands and, above all, could be neither convinced nor inspired. Here also, it was not simply a question of failure; to a certain degree, the malaise lay deeper. During peacetime, officer training was clearly inadequate and in part inappropriate. During the war, it became even shorter and of necessity of poorer quality. The lack of theoretical and practical elements was to be compensated for by combat experience. It also had to be taken into account that in a situation in which army components and armies had now regained their independence,

their commanders had to bear an additional burden, since they were now under pressure to achieve success and had been given highly ambitious goals by the Army High Command. Ultimately, however, the Army High Command, which was equally under pressure to achieve its aims, did not tire of interfering in the command to an increasing extent, and instead of being satisfied with simply naming the overall goals, also began to want control over the details.

Nevertheless, there was reason to question whether the idea of 'de-mixing' had been such a good one, and how long the Army High Command would be able to maintain its independence from the German ally. If it failed to do so, it could already be assumed that the Army High Command would be entirely overrun by the wheels of the German Supreme Army Command and would forfeit its equal status.

A further factor played a role in the proceedings in the east, namely the negotiations with Bulgaria regarding its entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers. While the Imperial and Royal armies were threatened with defeat in their 'black-yellow' offensive, the German political and military leadership was making intensive preparations for the conquest of Serbia. Here, the relationship with Romania also played a part, which the Central Powers had attempted to woo through successes in the Russian theatre of war, but towards which Austria once more appeared in a weaker position. It was no coincidence that Germany again demanded from the Danube Monarchy that it make territorial concessions to Romania in Bukovina and Transylvania. A victorious Imperial and Royal Army and an Army High Command that now inspired confidence would have been able to withstand all this pressure with ease. By contrast, a weakened army and an Army High Command that had been compromised in its degree of competence were forced to become merely a plaything. This meant that it was no longer the policies pursued by the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) that were the touchstone for the position of the Habsburg Monarchy, but almost entirely the strength of the army.

Instead of an operation with a broad reach, as had initially been planned and ordered, attacks were made ever more directly towards the east. There was another reason for this, however. The Austro-Hungarian army leadership was aware of the fact that the Russians were bringing in as many reinforcements wherever they could spare them, and that it was therefore necessary to penetrate eastwards as quickly as possible, since it could be anticipated that this advance would very soon come to an end. For this purpose, and for the operation beyond Lutsk towards Rivne, sacrifices were made. The troops who were already intended for deployment in the Balkans in order to participate in the campaign against Serbia with considerable forces were directed back and thrown once more into the battle in the east. Initially, only one corps was affected. It was taken into account that no reinforcements could be released for the south-western front, and a series of crises were provoked there since success was still being sought in the north-



east. As if that were not enough, the Chief of the Russia Group in the Army High Command, Lieutenant Colonel Christophori, even proposed that reinforcements be sent from the south-western front.<sup>1081</sup> This naturally met with the strongest resistance from the Italian advisor, Major Schneller, and was also not put into practice. However, it was precisely here that the crisis was manifest. The battle had already passed its point of culmination, and it had been noticeable that the Russians had not only re-grouped, but would for their part go on to the offensive for the first time since the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive.

General Ivanov set his main force against what was in itself the strongest section of the Imperial and Royal north-eastern front, Army Group Archduke Joseph Ferdinand (1st and 4th Army). From the Rokitno Marshes, which had been regarded as unsuitable for larger-scale operations, Ivanov directed reinforcements towards the area of his 8th Army and, in so doing, enabled Brusilov to compensate for his inferiority of numbers. Finally, the Russians broke through the Austro-Hungarian positions at the Stubiel stream to the north-east of Dubno.<sup>1082</sup>

The Russian attack affected the Imperial and Royal 4th Army most of all, and it was no coincidence that the mood there was compared with the situation and mood among the Balkan forces in December 1914. The Commander of the X Corps, for example, Major General Martiny, noted in his diary: 'We are all dispirited. Why? What is the reason? The reason is the reckless, unfounded energy that is constantly demanded of us from the Army High Command, until events, the pressure from the superior enemy and the exhaustion of the troops create a catastrophe. You only have to look at Potiorek!' In the Army High Command, meanwhile, Schneller noted in his diary for 15 September: 'The 4th Army is operating outrageously poorly.'<sup>1083</sup> In the Army High Command, there was astonishment at the low level of fighting spirit and poor leadership of the troops. Conrad's aide-de-camp, Kundmann, recorded: 'Chief says: it is impossible to plan an operation with our troops. Throughout the entire war, we have had nothing so simple as this operation, nor as certain, and even that has been messed up.'<sup>1084</sup>

The Chief of the Italian Group, Schneller, reported on Conrad's psychological state: 'Conrad creates the impression that he is deeply affected by events. He is in fact a poor man. I see today how he is given orientation. He and all the 'gung-hos' standing over a map: Brantner, Captain in the General Staff, reads the report from the 4th Army from a Hughes [telegraph] strip that had not even been gummed! And from this, the Chief of the General Staff is supposed to form an impression.'<sup>1085</sup> Conrad could have obtained an impression for himself at the front, but it was one of his idiosyncrasies that he almost never became acquainted with the situation directly. He was against visiting the fronts in general.

Conrad and Falkenhayn discussed the effects of the Russian counterattack, and although Falkenhayn in particular suggested that it would be advantageous to draw back

the Austro-Hungarian front, the decision was nevertheless taken to defend the line that had been reached, since a retreat would potentially have a negative impact on the morale of the Imperial and Royal troops. In order to reinforce the troops, a further corps that had been assigned to Serbia was deployed in the north-east. Instead, Germany sent its replacement force to Syrmia.

The emerging rout of the Imperial and Royal troops had direct consequences, and led to a further worsening of Austria-Hungary's position in relation to the German Empire. The German Supreme Army Command declared itself willing to offset the absence of the Imperial and Royal troops in the Balkans. This threatened to make the Balkans a 'German' theatre of war, a prospect that made Emperor Franz Joseph uneasy. However, in light of the situation that had arisen in the Russian theatre of war, it was clear to both the German Supreme Army Command and the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command that, in turn, only the insertion of German formations and a partial takeover of the command by German generals would be able to limit the defeat to a bearable scale. Once again, the harsh accusations hailed down on both sides.

The fact that Conrad attempted to air his dissatisfaction and sought to blame others is understandable to a certain extent. Baron Andrian from the Foreign Ministry, who was present at the Army High Command on 15 September, noticed several things that until then had tended to be whispered behind closed doors. Andrian wrote of this to Foreign Minister Burián: '[...] I believe I should not omit to mention how strikingly and passionately Baron Conrad, when I visited him at the request of Your Excellency, voiced his resentment against the Supreme German factors and, in particular, against General Falkenhayn. The times when our Chief of the General Staff described his relations with his German colleague as pleasant in comparison with those with Marshal von Hindenburg and General von Ludendorff appear to have long gone. With bitter words, Baron Conrad vented his feelings about the pettiness, self-aggrandisement and mala fides of the leading German military elements and about the shameless way with which they use our scarce military resources and the resulting fact of our dependence on them for the purpose of blackmailing us. He spoke at length about a point regarding which I have already heard other officers complain, namely the abuse by the German leaders of the Austro-Hungarian troops under their command. [...] I had the impression that not without thinking of the coming operations in the south-east, he vented his feelings so bitterly with regard to our allies, towards whom, on top of everything else, as he said, one must show "love and gratitude".'<sup>1086</sup>

Conrad had come to realise that the Imperial and Royal Army would no longer be able to change course using its own strength, and decided to ask the German allies for help once again. Conrad's state of mind can easily be imagined. Falkenhayn rapidly agreed to send him two divisions, on condition that the German troops and two Im-

perial and Royal cavalry corps were deployed on the north flank of the 4th Army, and that the entire 4th Army were put under German command. General von Linsingen was selected to lead this army group, and was in turn to be subordinate to the Army High Command. This was a bitter loss of prestige, and Schneller noted in his diary: "The operations in the north have been given the name "Autumn Swine of the Imperial and Royal Army East" by the young Turks [the younger officers in the Russia Group]. This autumn swine will have unpleasant consequences in several ways. 1) We are now entirely at the mercy of the Germans, 2) they have brought about the deployment of all forces intended for the Balkans from the northern theatre of war. We were also unable to keep to our agreement with Bulgaria and there – and as a result throughout the Balkans – we have therefore also lost our prestige."<sup>1087</sup>

On the German side, it was pointed out that the mood in Romania and Bulgaria had changed to being highly negative towards the Central Powers, and Austria-Hungary in particular. However, in the case of Romania, not much would have changed in this regard. As a result, Bulgaria was confirmed in its view that for a joint campaign against Serbia, only a German command would be acceptable. It would be too simple, however, to simply trace Bulgaria's refusal to come to terms with an Austrian military leadership to the defeats of the Imperial and Royal troops in the Balkans in 1914 and then to the difficulties of the 'black-yellow' offensive. Relations between Austria and Bulgaria were to a far greater extent impaired by the fact that Austria-Hungary had shown itself to be just as inflexible in its negotiations with Bulgaria as it had been elsewhere, and that it was also not prepared to promise Bulgaria larger territorial expansion at the cost of Serbia. It was this more than anything else that had created a considerably hostile mood in Bulgaria. Everything that Bulgaria had been promised in its negotiations with the German Empire was again called into question by Austria-Hungary.<sup>1088</sup> And this was a political and not a military problem. However, in this issue, the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff also played a key role.

The Army High Command was again forced to redirect in the Budapest area two divisions that had already left for the Balkans and to dispatch them back to East Galicia.<sup>1089</sup> The situation had worsened further, and not least, the Russians were capturing an increasing number of soldiers in Volhynia.<sup>1090</sup>

Now the German General Linsingen again took over the command of the army group that until then had been named after Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. His command had been the subject of harsh criticism, and Conrad had clearly not been able to bring himself to demand that the Archduke be dismissed, and even more so since in the communiqués from the War Press Bureau he had always been described in the most glowing light. Now, however, there was at least a pretext for giving the Archduke a new command. On 23 September, General Brusilov's 8th Army succeeded in retaking Lutsk, which until then had been held by the XIV Corps under General Roth. Roth

was accused of not having cleared the bridgehead earlier and in an orderly manner. Major Schneller admitted to the German military attaché, Count Kageneck, that 'the majority of our generals are incompetent', and he continued: 'The XIV Corps now appears to be utterly decimated.' When it came to Roth, Schneller allowed himself to become carried away in his propensity to use drastic phrases: 'He, along with his chief of staff, should have been thrown out long ago.'<sup>1091</sup>

The Russian success not only resulted in the fact that the losses among the Imperial and Royal troops increased enormously and that, above all, the number of prisoners rocketed. Literally with Austrian help, the Russians were also able to overcome their shortages of infantry weapons and ammunition. The infantry ammunition soon ran out, since the Russians were terribly wasteful in their use of it. According to their own calculations, the statistics for each man were 125 pieces of ammunition per month, as opposed to the 30 shot by the French and 50 that were available to a British soldier. However, during their counter-offensive, the Russians seized so many small arms from the Imperial and Royal troops that they were able to equip two corps with them. By the beginning of 1916, Russian munitions factories had ultimately produced around 37 million pieces of Austrian calibre ammunition in order to be able to supply sufficient replacement ammunition for the weapons that had been seized.<sup>1092</sup>

And it was as though the situation were jinxed. Barely had Linsingen taken over the command, when the turnaround began. The Russians halted their offensive. While General Brusilov wanted to continue forwards, the commander of the Russian south-western front, General Ivanov, ordered the transition to a defensive approach the moment he heard that German troops had again been inserted into the Central Powers' front. He still felt the shock of Gorlice-Tarnów deeply. Although Linsingen now wanted for his part to go on the offensive, the German Supreme Army Command and the Imperial and Royal Army High Command decided to halt the attack. Falkenhayn had again returned to focussing his forces in the west. He ordered the withdrawal of the German Alpine Corps from Tyrol. However, he wanted the forces intended for the overthrow of Serbia to remain undiminished. For this reason, the final change to the defensive was ordered in mid-October.

Thus, a picture emerged that appeared to leave nothing to be desired: the 'black-yellow' offensive had failed. Not only had the strategic target of decisively beating the armies on the Russian south-western front, taking Rivne and, in so doing, intercepting the Russian fast-track route through the Pinsk Marshes and completely banishing the enemy from Austro-Hungarian territory failed miserably, but the Imperial and Royal Army had also suffered a heavy defeat, which cost it 230,886 men. Of the 109,280 missing included in this number, according to Russian information, around 100,000 men had been taken prisoner. The number of men in the eastern armies fell from around half a million to just over half that figure.<sup>1093</sup> However, Falkenhayn believed that he

could draw a quintessential value from what had happened: for the Austro-Hungarian soldiers who had believed they could conquer Russia, the 'black-yellow' offensive had been an unequivocal lesson.<sup>1094</sup>

The reasons for this disaster are not difficult to find. It was not only the poorly conceived operation in itself that was the problem, since the planning was thoroughly logical, and the disposition of the troops was probably in order. However, it was in particular those serious diseases from which the Imperial and Royal Army had already been suffering for a long time that emerged. The talents and skills of the officers were frequently inadequate in order to implement the operational ideas. The troops, who had already lost confidence or had even already become disaffected, would not submit to being led. The weather was also a factor, since at the start of September, the weather conditions had changed and, from that day on, rain fell almost continuously. In this region, which was not arid terrain, this caused the rivers to swell, severely hampering the movement of artillery and supply convoys. The failure was least of all a result of insufficient troop numbers, insufficient weapons or lack of ammunition, since all this was just about satisfactory. However, it should also be taken into account that some of the troops were overstrained. If one takes the 3rd Infantry Division as an example, it had marched almost 900 kilometres between 4 May and the end of September, and the advance had involved fighting. The cavalry, which had regained its strength, was unable to assert itself against the Russian riders. In the Polesian terrain, the Russians proved themselves to be far more at home than the Imperial and Royal Cavalry, which in some cases was also equipped with poor maps.<sup>1095</sup>

Thus, one individual, and one command post of the Imperial and Royal Army, felt robbed of success by another. Among the front commanders the loss of confidence in Conrad as a military leader and in the Army High Command overall must have had a severely detrimental effect. Major General Martiny probably expressed this particularly concisely in his diary when he noted: 'Army High Command beats down all a(rmy) commands, who are not allowed to have their own opinion, nor to have the courage to express their views openly. The few general staffs there are a disaster for the armies. Ever more reckless offensives without moderation or sense. Shooting and exposure of the leaders who are unwilling to fall in line with this, and now the consequences are being felt. This behaviour of the Army High Command (whether Conrad knows anything of this is doubtful) is a blight and an unlucky star for the entire conduct of war and has already brought about many regretful consequences. It is now high time for a thorough clear-out there!'<sup>1096</sup>

There was clearly also someone who then informed the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor on the internal activities of the Army High Command and personal estimations, the aide-de-camp of Archduke Friedrich, Baron Mor-Merkl. However, he was not rewarded with much gratitude. On 24 October, it was already

reported: 'Mor to be cut down. It appears that it has been discovered that he informed Marterer regarding the autumn swine.'<sup>1097</sup>

The fact that the point of culmination of the battle in the east had passed was also underlined by the fact that the will to fight was decreasing rapidly. In the 4th Army, which was the most severely affected, almost 62 per cent of all losses were missing men, of whom the very large majority was most likely to have been taken captive.<sup>1098</sup> In the German Army, by the end of 1915, an average of 5.2 per cent of officer losses were caused by men going missing or being taken prisoner. During the campaign in Rivne by the Imperial and Royal armies, this figure reached almost 30 per cent, and in the 4th Army, it had been almost 33 per cent. Among the Germans, the ratio of sick to wounded officers by the end of 1915 was 1:2.4. In the Austro-Hungarian Army, it was noticeable that the number of sick officers was greater than the number of those wounded with a ratio of 1.6:1.<sup>1099</sup> Since the reports on losses had clearly only be very cursory, the rumours of conditions in the north-eastern theatre of war proliferated more intensely. The Emperor demanded clarification, and the Military Chancellery ordered detailed reports. However, as Major General Marterer noted on 26 September, the Army High Command responded in a contemptuous tone that one should 'not believe the irresponsible rumours'. The situation was presented as being highly favourable.<sup>1100</sup> At the same time, no mention was made of the fact that, again, entire regiments had broken up in the same way as Infantry Regiment No. 36 had in its day. There had been eminent crises among the 19th Infantry Division, which comprised mainly Czech and Ruthenian troops, as well as by Light Infantry Battalion No. 22 ('Eger') and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment No. 1 and other troop bodies. In some cases, they disappeared without trace and crossed over to the Russian side. The result of mass desertions in one troop body was that the threshold of inhibition was lowered for the others. Why should they be the ones to hold out, after all? Even so, the front could be regarded as having been consolidated. The Russians were no longer able to launch a large-scale attack without completely reorganising and replenishing their armies. And the troops fighting for the Central Powers took up what was known as the 'entrenched position', in which they dug themselves in with the aim of limiting themselves to defence. The focus of the Central Powers shifted to the western front in the case of Germany, to the south-west in the case of Austria-Hungary and, finally, for both, to the Balkans.

### The Fourth Offensive against Serbia

On 4 October 1915, the Chief of the General Staff of the Imperial and Royal Army wrote to the Head of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor that he would be departing from Cieszyn the following day in order to present information to the Emperor

at the latter's request. '[...] in so doing, I shall also be in the position of presenting to his Sovereign Majesty the forthcoming action in the south-east, as well as briefly on the proceedings here in the north, in other words, on the serious crisis that we have, I hope, happily overcome. You can certainly imagine that on this matter, it was no easy task for me to again call for German help, but it weighs on me far more heavily that our war against Serbia, towards which all our traditions point and of which I dreamed in 1909, will from now on be led by the Germans. Yet this year has taught me to bear bitter disappointments; and so this, too, must be accepted; I hope that it will contribute to the success of our common purpose.'<sup>1101</sup>

Let us pick out a few words: '[...] our war against Serbia, towards which all our traditions point, [...] will from now on be led by the Germans.' Nothing could emphasise the position of the Habsburg Monarchy, its armies and its military leaders more clearly than these words, dictated full of disappointment and bitterness. It looks almost the same as the vision created by Hugo Kerchnawe in 1908 in his book *Unser letzter Kampf* ('Our Last Battle'): once Austria-Hungary had spent its forces, it was overrun by Germany. The brotherhood in arms had become a competition. 'Our' war was being led by the Germans. In a higher sense, it had perhaps already become a German war long previously.

There had been talk of a resumption of the offensive against Serbia since the spring of 1915, and already at that time, the Chief of the German General Staff had made it clear that he was prepared to send German troops to the south. To the Germans, Serbia had already appeared to be more important than Russia in the summer of 1915, a fact that was easy to explain. For Russia, there was no large-scale strategic goal, since there was hardly any sense in simply marching somewhere and continuing to fight. However, with the hoped-for overthrow of Serbia, a domino effect was supposed to be achieved: if Serbia fell, Romania and Bulgaria would also alter their position. Turkey could be effectively supported, and Montenegro could also be taken as a kind of additional prize. There would of necessity be consequences for Greece. In short, the entire Balkan region would take on a new form and change the way in which the war was fought. Falkenhayn might also have expected Austria-Hungary to be highly receptive of such ideas, since the Balkans were, after all, the Habsburgs' 'backyard'. Instead, Conrad showed at most polite interest in the concept of resuming the operations to overthrow Serbia. In his view, Italy was far more important. Yet Falkenhayn refused to let up, and already at the end of July 1915 he began with the specific preparations. Conrad had every reason, however, to at best agree cautiously to the German plans, since it was quite clearly not only Serbia that was at issue. And if Germany were to be successful in a campaign on the Danube, Sava and Morava Rivers, the Balkan region would definitively lose its status as the Habsburgs' backyard, and everything that had been fought for against the Ottomans and the Russians would fall victim to the Germans. Accordingly, Conrad's

comment was: 'This is a political issue. With this operation, Austria-Hungary abdicates as a major power; the leadership falls into the hands of Germany. If a German military commander is the leader there [here, he refers to Serbia], we will have abdicated there.'<sup>1102</sup> Conrad was also of the opinion at the beginning of September that it would be best to come to an arrangement with Serbia.<sup>1103</sup>

Nonetheless, events had in fact already progressed beyond these objections and speculations. It had however also become irrelevant what options Serbia for its part had been considering, and what the Italians in particular wished to force it to do. Italy had greatly hoped that Serbia would again go on the offensive, since this would have further splintered the Imperial and Royal armies and – as was the hope in Rome – would have made the heart of the Habsburg Monarchy an easy target for an Italian advance. However, the Serbs were on the one hand highly relieved to be able to continue their recovery from the fighting, epidemics and hardships, while on the other, they distrusted Italian politics. While Belgrade had not been involved in the London negotiations, it had reached its own conclusions regarding the fact that the Allies had signed a treaty with the Italians. This could only mean that Dalmatia had been promised to the Italians. Combined with an Albania dominated by Italy, this could only have a detrimental effect on Serbia's push towards the Adriatic. Serbia's troops were therefore ordered to march towards Albania as a precautionary measure, and occupied Elbasan and Tirana. These were intended at some point to serve as a lever for negotiations regarding a reorganisation of the ownership of the territory in the western Balkans.

As if this were not enough, Serbia also felt it necessary to provide military backup in order to pursue a further option. There was not only a push to reach the sea, but claims were also made in the direction of Bulgaria, for the fulfilment of which the 'drôle de guerre' on the Danube and the Sava appeared to create the best possible conditions. In July and August 1915, division after division was sent to the Bulgarian border, as Phillips, the British military attaché in Serbia, noted with concern.<sup>1104</sup>

Then Belgrade had looked to Bucharest. If the Romanians had entered the war against the Central Powers in the spring or the summer, as Italy had done, Serbia might also have joined them.<sup>1105</sup> However, Romania had remained neutral. As a result, Serbia also waited. And here, the law of action lay with the Central Powers or, more specifically: with the Germans. At the beginning of August, a Bulgarian mediator arrived at the German Grand Headquarters in Pszczyna. His mission was to conclude the still outstanding political and military agreements, and above all to negotiate the price for Bulgaria's entry into the war.

Like Romania, Bulgaria had been faltering since July 1914, and it was threatened. Here, ancient political modes of action were combined with undisguised opportunism. One principle was: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The second dominant question was: who is offering more and, above all, who will win? Whoever offered more, and



offered it immediately, was to be given the 'handshake'.<sup>1106</sup> For Tsar Ferdinand from the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who had been born in Vienna, and who had served as an Officer of the Hussars in the Imperial and Royal Army and most certainly felt sympathetic towards the Danube Monarchy, there was quite possibly a further, personal reason: he was afraid of being the victim of an assassination like Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and therefore had a conscious desire to remain reticent.<sup>1107</sup> This mixture of considerations, feelings and concerns, as well as not wanting to feel drawn to any one side or the other, resulted in Bulgaria's neutrality. It was understandable that the Central Powers, like the Entente, attempted to pull Bulgaria on to their side. Russia simplified the process by making threats: if Bulgaria were to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers, the Tsarist Empire would savagely attack its former foster child. Thus, Bulgaria continued to wait. The belligerents made repeated attempts. What Bulgaria wanted was comparatively clear. As a prize for its allegiance, it wanted territorial gains that would compensate for the loss of territory that Bulgaria had occupied between the first and the second Balkan Wars. Although these had only been annexed for around four months, like all the other Balkan states, Bulgaria was fond of using its former size as an argument. The British, who would gladly have accommodated Bulgaria's wishes, faced the problem that they could not meet its desire for either Serbian or Romanian territories.<sup>1108</sup> For their part, the Central Powers in turn needed to pay particular attention to Romania and Greece, since they did not wish to create more enemies. Furthermore, Kaiser Wilhelm II had blood ties to the ruling families of both kingdoms. Finally, Greece made it clear that if Bulgaria attacked Serbia, it would intervene in the war. If however a German and Austro-Hungarian strike were to be made against Serbia, and Bulgaria were merely to participate and follow suit, Greece would see no reason for intervening. This was a subtle difference! Romania, on the other hand, had allowed Italy's entry into the war to pass without exploiting the situation, and wished to continue to wait and see how the war would unfold. Finally, the Turks tipped the scales: since for the Ottoman Empire the decision regarding whether or not to continue the war depended on whether the Turkish troops would very rapidly receive supplies of weapons and ammunition by land, the High Porte agreed to territorial concessions for Bulgaria in the Maritsa region.<sup>1109</sup> On 6 September, the alliance between the Central Powers and Bulgaria was established in the form of a German-Bulgarian friendship treaty without the involvement of Austria, a German-Bulgarian secret agreement regarding territorial changes relating to Serbia, and a military convention in which Austria-Hungary also participated. The military operations were to begin no later than 30 days following the signing of the alliance agreement. Now, only the issue of the supreme command was left to be decided.

Falkenhayn approached his goal with resolution. Mackensen was to be the man for the post. He however was to receive his orders directly from the German Supreme Army Command. Falkenhayn explained this by claiming that the operation had been

initiated by the Germans, and that it would mainly be conducted with German and Bulgarian troops. Furthermore, he claimed that there was a clause in the agreement with Bulgaria that stipulated that the command should be held by a German general. This was no doubt correct, but it did not yet mean that the supreme commander against Serbia would have to be subordinate to the German Supreme Army Command. Conrad insisted on an Austro-Bulgarian high command, since around half of the armies (he did not calculate the number of divisions, since then, the Austrian minority would have become clear) would have to be provided by the Danube Monarchy. Austria-Hungary would also be responsible, and primarily so, for logistics and transport areas. A Balkan war under the supreme command of a Prussian general would, according to Conrad, 'severely damage the position of the Monarchy in the Balkans, remain incomprehensible and run counter to the sentiment among the people in the Balkan states, and equally also the peoples of the Monarchy'. As a riposte to Falkenhayn's reference to the fact that Germany had important interests in the Balkans, Conrad hurled back a phrase by Bismarck, saying that until now, the Balkans had meant even less to Germany than the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier.<sup>1110</sup>

However, Conrad himself had hardly any means left to bring about a change of course, since the Monarchy had already abdicated as a major power, and had been politically, militarily and above all also economically taken in tow by Germany. The German Empire decided on the structure of the alliance, and decided whether a strategic offensive should or should not be initiated in a theatre of war. The German Supreme Army Command had the troops and decided on how to lead them, while the Imperial and Royal Army Command was left with only individual sections of the front. However, Austria-Hungary had no choice other than to ultimately agree to the German plans, and, to make matters worse, it was weakened following the defeats in Russia. However, in some ways, the Imperial and Royal armies contributed to forfeiting the esteem in which they were held by others. The setbacks in East Galicia, for which they only had themselves to blame, were just one factor. Equally, however, old, well-known machinations set in when it came to arranging the supreme command over the Imperial and Royal troops in the forthcoming campaign. The commander nominated for the force, which was now known as the 3rd Army, was General of Cavalry Carl von Tesztyánsky. However, he had not only made himself unpopular with the Hungarian military authorities, but also with Tisza, causing Tisza to accuse him to the Emperor and in a letter to Archduke Friedrich of being 'agitated and nervous'.<sup>1111</sup> Conrad thundered that it could not be permitted that an army commander could be dismissed by a prime minister. Since the Emperor wished to please Tisza, however, and wished to see General of Artillery Baron Hermann Kövess von Kövessháza nominated, who was a general far more acceptable to Tisza, the Army High Command had no other choice but to announce this nomination on 19 September.

Therefore, the reports from the Balkans already played a part in the final phase of the fighting in the north-eastern theatre of war. The army group command under Field Marshal Mackensen had established its headquarters in Timișoara (Temesvár). From there, orders were forwarded to the Bulgarian 1st Army, the German 11th Army and the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army in Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez). Instead of the six divisions originally planned, Germany had relocated ten divisions to the Serbian front. Two of these divisions were subordinate to the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army, while all the others were concentrated in the German 11th Army. Conrad was in fact clear that he would not succeed in his demands for an Austro-Hungarian high command. And so he was forced, as he wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery on 4 October, to 'bear the bitterness'. There was only one possibility left, namely to 'hold out in a decisive and resigned manner'.<sup>1112</sup> The only thing that Conrad could still achieve was the dubious solution of not mentioning the issue of the high command in the negotiations with Bulgaria. However, as a result of an internal agreement between the Dual Alliance partners, the orders to Mackensen were to be forwarded from the Imperial and Royal Army High Command. In practice, this never worked, and already, the first order from Falkenhayn to Mackensen bypassed the Army High Command.

Whoever might now have thought that all difficulties would already have been overcome, following the decision regarding the command and the peculiar procedure that meant that – in the light of the unbridgeable contradictions between the new allies – not one word was included in the contract with Bulgaria on precisely this command, was fundamentally deluded. As could only be expected, there were also significant differences of opinion regarding the large-scale operational plans for the campaign against Serbia. In 1914, the thrust across the Sava and Danube Rivers had been regarded merely as an act designed to bind forces until the Imperial and Royal 5th and 6th Armies had initiated a wide-reaching encirclement and strangulation of the Serbs. Conrad was still unable to abandon this notion. In so doing, he by no means found a requited fondness for the idea from Falkenhayn, who wished to directly apply the Mackensen Army Group from Syrmia, feeling very strongly bound to the geographical conditions and historic models, which had all sought the direct route to Belgrade and had then advanced further southwards. For Falkenhayn, the Austro-Hungarian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, just like the Bulgarian Army, were merely there in order to drive the Serbs towards the German 11th Army. The latter was to cross the Danube and the Sava using the bridge materials generously provided by Austria-Hungary and under the protection of the Imperial and Royal Danube Flotilla, take Belgrade and then reach the Morava Valley. According to Falkenhayn's plans, Mackensen was to operate following the direction in which the rivers flowed, exploit the valleys and only penetrate into the mountains when absolutely necessary. If this were to occur, then the German Alpine Corps, which had previously

been deployed on the Italian front, were to be brought to the Balkans in order to reinforce the German troops.

In Serbia, the realisation only came at a late stage that something was being prepared. The country had consolidated to a certain degree and had also succeeded in overcoming the typhus epidemic during the spring, yet Serbia had naturally also been unable to compensate for its losses from the previous year. From August 1915, it had been known that the war would begin afresh. Unrest began to spread. The Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, who had until then enjoyed a relatively high level of freedom, were no longer permitted to leave their camps and places of confinement. According to rumours, German troops had been sighted in the Banat region. The presence of German troops was first assumed to be a show of force. Only on 25 September did the Chief of the General Staff, Vojvoda (Field Marshal) Putnik feel a sense of alarm, and yet in the Royal High Command, no-one wanted to believe him. In particular, Belgrade was conceivably poorly protected. The Serbs relied on the British, Russian and French guns that had been brought into position in order to protect the Danube front. Once the offensive of the Central Powers then began, these guns could be used for show, but nothing more.

After the German 11th Army under General of Artillery Max von Gallwitz had mustered to the north of the Danube between Pančevo and Ruma with eight infantry divisions, the Bulgarian 1st Army under Major General Kliment Bojadjeff had deployed along the western Bulgarian border with 4½ infantry divisions and also the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army under General of Infantry von Kövess with eight infantry divisions, including two German divisions, and five brigades had taken up their initial positions to the north of the Sava and the Danube near Mitrovica and Belgrade and along the Drina River, the allied powers enjoyed marked superiority, since they were able to use around 500,000 men against 250,000 Serbs. Even more crushing was the amassed artillery, against which the Serbs had nothing of even remotely the same strength. The Imperial and Royal troops put everything to use that they had at their disposal, including 42 cm mortars.

As well as their superiority in terms of weapons, the German and Austro-Hungarian troops on the western front, and in Russia and Italy, had developed tactical methods and were for example skilled in massed fire – something the Serbs were only familiar with from hearsay and from the war reports. They were also scattered from Tirana to the Bulgarian border, and were unrecognisable compared to 1914.

The artillery preparation already began on 5 October. On the following day, Austro-Hungarian sappers and pioneer battalions began to ship the troops across. A bridge strike à la Prince Eugen would have to wait. From the Danube, the monitors of the Imperial and Royal Danube Flotilla supported the fighting of the German and Austro-Hungarian troops and enabled the first bridgeheads to be formed. From Zemun,

two German divisions that had first crossed the Sava intervened in the battle for the Serbian capital. On 11 October, General Živković was forced to give up Belgrade. Shortly afterwards, the city was taken over by the Central Powers. The fact that both German and Austro-Hungarian troops had been involved in the conquest was an impediment to perhaps again sending a telegram to Emperor Franz Joseph in order to lay the city at his feet for a second time. However, the occasion had to be marked in some way. On the Kalemegdan, the fortress of Belgrade high up above the Danube and the Sava, a black-yellow flag was hoisted.

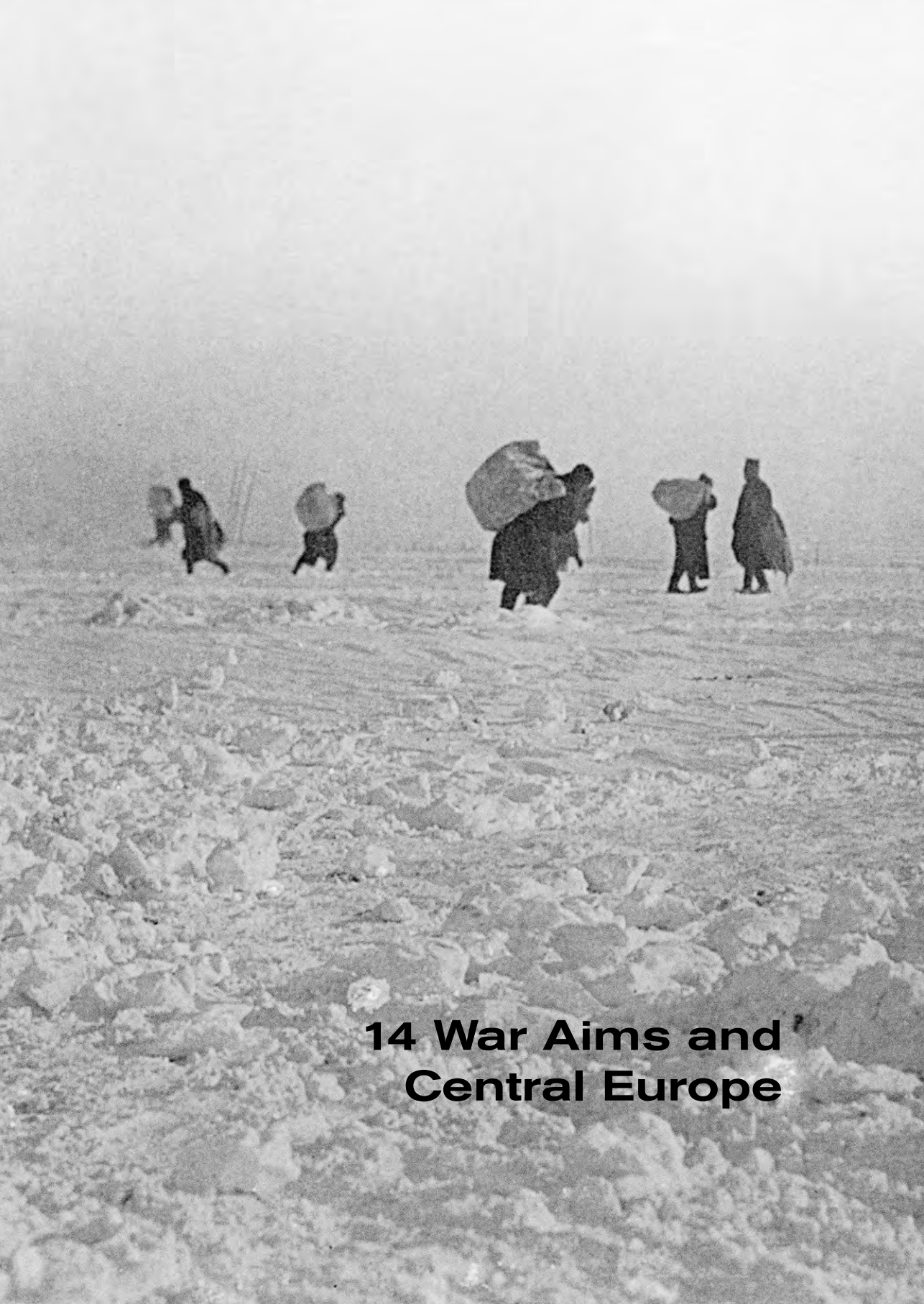
Further down the Danube, the mass of the German 11th Army had crossed the river at Smederevo. It is unlikely that anyone noticed that they passed Temes-Kubin, which had once been linked to the unleashing of the war. The Serbs were forced to retreat rapidly towards the south.

Only now, on 14 October, did Bulgaria declare war. Bulgarian troops advanced to Niš, which since the beginning of the war had been used as the seat of the Serbian government, and, to the south of the city, destroyed a part of the railway line to Salonika. This made it practically impossible for French and British troops from the 'Army of the Orient' under General Maurice Sarrail to arrive quickly in order to support the Serbs, even though the French were already positioned at Gevgelija. However, the German troops encountered the same problems as the Imperial and Royal armies had done during their offensive against Serbia. The rain and countless carts very quickly made the few roads almost impassable, supplies could only be brought forward with great effort, and the subsequent transportation of the artillery and ammunition for the guns had become almost impossible. The artillery could only be moved forwards at an average statistical rate of several hundred metres per hour.<sup>1113</sup> At the same time, Mackensen knew that he was racing against time, since Serbia was to be entirely eliminated and its army encircled and taken captive. He envisaged a decisive battle in the Kragujevac area.

The Chief of the General Staff and the person who was in reality commanding the Serbian troops, Radomir Putnik, saw that the time had come for negotiations. However, the political leadership was unwilling to surrender, and Prime Minister Pašić threatened to resign immediately. While this may not have been much of a deterrent for anyone, those surrounding the King clearly felt that it might be possible to bring the Serbian Army to the Albanian coast, where it could expect help from the Allies. The Serbs made ready to flee. To the chagrin of the Allied liaison officers, the Serbian High Command appeared to have lost the will to put up any energetic resistance. And instead of evacuating military storehouses, provisions, weapons and ammunition, the last trains were stuffed full with relatives of politicians and staff officers.<sup>1114</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian troops attacking from the Drina and Vardar Valley were unable to cut off the Serbs, enabling the already severely decimated Serbian formations to push their way through into Kosovo between Mitrovica and Pristina.

However, it was no longer possible to reach Skopje, since it had already been occupied by the Bulgarians. Now, it was simply pure survival that was at stake, and for the troops of the Central Powers who were in pursuit, it now no longer mattered whether the Serbs could be followed with more or less artillery. The Serbs had lost so much that they were hardly any longer able to maintain their resistance. The prisoners of war who fell into the hands of the Central Powers spoke for themselves. Until then, there had been 20,000, more than half of which had been taken by the Germans. However, their appearance was the same everywhere: they embodied the deepest human misery. 'This was hunger and psychological anguish covered in rags. The residue of the beaten, fleeing army had suffered unimaginable horrors during its retreat. This collapse, regardless of who won or lost, was one of the shocking dramas of the Great War', noted Captain Heshshaimer, who had again been sent out in order to draw and paint his impressions for the War Press Bureau.<sup>1115</sup> For what remained of the Serbian Army, the only option left open was to head towards Montenegro.



## **14 War Aims and Central Europe**

14. After the defeat of the Serbian Army in October and November 1915, the remainder of the Serbian troops made their way to Albania via the wintry mountains of Montenegro. They were decimated by starvation and disease. The Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war were taken along and lost approximately two-thirds of their original number of more than 70,000 men.



**O**n 6 November 1915, Falkenhayn and Conrad met once more at the German headquarters in the palace of the princes of Hochberg in Pszczyna (Pleß) in Upper Silesia. Whoever thought, however, that the four-week campaign and the close and successful cooperation in one theatre of war would result in a noticeable improvement in the relationship between the two general staff chiefs was to be deceived. The common approach separated them more than it united them. It seems that Conrad had been waiting to make clear that he in no way wanted to submit to German dominance. He also begrudged his German counterpart the success the latter had achieved with his headlong operations in Serbia, in complete contrast to Potiorek with the plan – approved by Conrad – for an approach from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the development in the second phase of the campaign did not fit into Conrad's concept for several reasons and the Germans were not prepared to give consideration to relevant Austrian arguments, the mutual understanding could ultimately no longer be maintained. These were bad omens for an agreement over the conclusion of operations against Serbia.

### **The Salonika Problem**

Falkenhayn and Conrad negotiated in Pszczyna on the future of the Balkan region following the defeat of Serbia. They discussed the repatriation of the Serbian population that had fled and the start-up of important manufacturing plants, above all the armaments enterprises in Kragujevac. They spoke about the division of the communications zone and the stipulation of how many Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Bulgarian troops would be stationed there. Falkenhayn and Conrad agreed that Bulgaria should maintain eleven divisions in Serbia as occupation troops, whilst Germany and Austria-Hungary wanted to limit themselves to five divisions each. Conrad aspired to leaving the Germans there in order to have them to hand, if necessary, for a war against Romania. But the much more far-reaching question was whether they should be content to occupy Serbia or whether they should advance further to Greek Macedonia, above all to Salonika, where an allied expeditionary corps was endeavouring in the meantime to establish a front. Conrad argued that the Balkans would only then be fully under the control of the Central Powers when the so-called 'Army of the Orient' of the Entente, which had violated Greek neutrality by seizing northern Greece, had also been forced to embark. Falkenhayn, on the other hand, regarded the aim of the cam-

paing as being achieved with the defeat and occupation of Serbia. Neither Greece nor Montenegro nor Albania should be attacked, and there should be no further commitment of German troops in this part of Europe. It had to be said here that Falkenhayn could hardly act any differently for foreign policy reasons, since the German Kaiser had made the solemn promise to the Greek King Constantine I that no German and above all no Bulgarian troops would set foot on Greek soil. And it was evidently not of great importance that Greece made no attempt to throw Entente troops out of its country. In all probability, however, Greece would have entered the war on the side of the Entente in the event that troops of the Central Powers had crossed its border.

The German Empire wanted to continue to exert influence on the Balkans, but with a minimum of forces. In the process, however, not only German but also Austro-Hungarian involvement should be limited. At the same time, it was hoped that a reduction of forces could perhaps limit the almost unavoidable disputes to a minimum. According to German conceptions, Bulgaria should play the main role in this region. The task intended for the Bulgarians of controlling the Serbian and Serbo-Macedonian territories doubled Bulgaria's sphere of influence. It could expand as far as Epirus. When Conrad proposed that Greece could perhaps enter the war on the side of the Central Powers and that it could be offered control of the region between Bitola and Ochrid, Falkenhayn merely responded laconically that this would not be possible because the Bulgarians were pushing forward as far as there. The Bulgarian Prime Minister Radoslavov did, after all, originate from Ochrid.<sup>1116</sup> This was a rather weak argument, since if all the leaders of the states allied to the Central Powers wanted to return to their places of birth or where they had spent their childhood, then countless other difficulties could be expected, since Mustafa Kemal Pascha, for example, the commander in Diyarbakır, had been born in Salonika and visited the military academy in Bitola. Falkenhayn's thoughts nevertheless certainly had some merit. Since the Macedonian-Greek-Serbian territory, as well as the adjacent Albanian territory, had only been independent from the Ottoman Empire since 1912, namely only three years, they were completely lacking in any stability. To assume the role of occupying power there meant not only the continuation of the fight with the Franco-British Army of the Orient but also endless quarrels with Bulgarians, Turks, Macedonians and Albanians – not to mention Serbians and Montenegrins.

During the course of November, Falkenhayn withdrew eight of the ten German divisions deployed in the Balkans. This was far more than had been agreed in Pszczyna and a situation emerged in this way that was not dissimilar to the one that had arisen in September 1915 on the north-eastern front: the Chief of the German General Staff sought to simply remove from the Austrians the instrument that allowed them to continue the campaign. Parallel to this, rumours grew stronger that the German Empire was looking to increase its influence on Serbia. Prince Johann Albrecht von Mecklen-

burg-Schwerin was already being referred to as the future Serbian king.<sup>1117</sup> The Army High Command advised caution and argued that the Serbs had not yet been definitely defeated. The German Supreme Army Command, however, regarded the campaign as being over. Conrad now attempted to put an end to the degradation of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command to a mere conveyor of orders and an element of implementation, and declared on 25 November that for his part Mackensen's authority over the Austro-Hungarian troops was at an end as soon as no further joint operations were undertaken.<sup>1118</sup> He regarded himself as all the more entitled since he had ascertained on several occasions that the Army High Command had not only been repeatedly bypassed in the issuing of orders, but that in at least two instances Falkenhayn had discussed matters relating to the conduct of war in the Balkans with the Bulgarians or with Enver Pasha, the Turkish generalissimo. Falkenhayn could only spare sarcasm for Conrad's objections, which caused Conrad to make the counter-statement that he, Conrad, had grown up with Balkan problems and did not require any tutoring in this respect.

At the end of November the expulsion of the Entente troops from the southern Slav region was jointly accomplished, but then neither German nor Bulgarian troops were permitted to cross the Greek border, thus rescuing the Allies from a probable heavy defeat and Greece from becoming a war zone. Conrad, however, did not want to give in. He informed Falkenhayn that he – in contradiction of his original intentions – was planning an operation against Montenegro under the leadership of the Army High Command, and when Falkenhayn described this as unnecessary and demanded for his part – in accordance with an assurance that had already been given – the sending of two Austro-Hungarian divisions to the western front, Conrad responded that he could not make these two divisions available but that he would leave it to Falkenhayn to remove the German formations of the South Army in Bukovina. With this controversy, which in the end was continued only in writing, the relationship between the two general staff chiefs had – not entirely surprisingly – reached its low point.<sup>1119</sup>

Falkenhayn repeatedly summoned the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, August von Cramon, and explained to him that it was impossible to work again with Conrad, since the latter did not adhere to his obligations and concealed from him, Falkenhayn, the most important information.<sup>1120</sup> What Falkenhayn had studiously overlooked, however, was the circumstance that he had blatantly issued orders over the heads of the Austro-Hungarian authorities and also cherished the illusion of being able to conduct the Serbian campaign as a predominantly German affair. In the meantime, the German Supreme Army Command had also been shown that absolutely nothing was simple in the Balkans and could not be measured by Prussian yardsticks. Austria-Hungary, for its part, was also not content to subordinate itself to the German Supreme Army Command and its war aims. The differences in opinion

between Pszczyna and Cieszyn (Teschen) were so big that it was almost inevitable that serious disagreements would arise. Since each of the general staff chiefs believed furthermore that he had been insulted by the other, an absolute breach occurred.

This breach, which was occasionally viewed as a case of the Chief of the Austrian General Staff not having wanted to back down due to a personal foible, was far more than just a grievance over a pet issue, and there were also other people involved and other interests at stake than just those of the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff. First and foremost was Emperor Franz Joseph, who had accepted developments in the Balkans but had regarded them from the outset with anything but pleasure. The war against Serbia had been 'his' war and not that of the Germans! Too many people, too many goods and above all too many emotions had been invested in this region both before and during the war. The Emperor, however, had taken a stand and invited Field Marshal Mackensen to a court banquet on 24 September, before the start of the campaign. Yet it was only a question of draping the already fixed chain of command with the approval of the 'Most Supreme'. Of greater importance here was the visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who was also invited to a court banquet. The two emperors could congratulate each other on the victories. And in order to make the thanks of the House of Austria completely obvious, Mackensen was once more granted an audience on 6 December and permitted to report for an hour on the campaign. Ultimately, however, the Emperor was interested not least in how things would proceed, and for this reason Conrad, Archduke Friedrich and Tisza were granted repeated audiences during October and November. For the time being, none of them could provide a definite answer.

At the beginning of December, Count Tisza travelled to Berlin. After his return he immediately submitted a written report to Franz Joseph on the information he had received in Berlin and the impressions he had gathered.<sup>1121</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm and his entourage, according to Tisza, massively overestimated the successes in Serbia and underestimated on the other hand the 'difficulties and dangers' that still awaited the Central Powers. It was dependent exclusively on the moderation of the war aims of the Central Powers as to whether the Entente would be prepared to make peace, and not on military successes. 'A truth that we can disregard all the less, since in spite of all the heroics and brilliant successes, the moment of exhaustion must occur earlier in our case than in that of the enemy.' Tisza had certainly endeavoured for his comments in Berlin not to be understood as war weariness, but he would in any case have been unable to curb German optimism. One thing had pleased Tisza: the 'scornfully dismissive assessment of Romania' by the German Kaiser. Berlin had furthermore dropped the plan aired weeks before to conclude a special peace with Serbia for the price of Albania, which was to fall to Serbia. Now Wilhelm II had spoken only of the dissolution and division of Serbia – as Count Alexander Hoyos had once done. Tisza, however, regarded this as the wrong path to take. Serbia should not simply be completely dissolved and

wiped off the map, but instead had to be brought into a position in which it would have only the Habsburg Monarchy to thank for any form of state identity. It was also not conducive to this end that the German Empire had transferred those territories it had initially conquered to Bulgaria to be occupied. None of this was politics, but instead unadorned revenge and dismemberment. And under no circumstances did Tisza want this. This was also not the intention of Conrad, who in his position papers on war aims from October and November 1915 had named the dependence of Serbia without dismemberment as an objective – one that diverged from Tisza's view. Conrad described plans to incorporate Belgrade into the Banat region and to covert the Mačva region between the Sava and Drina Rivers into two Hungarian counties as 'insane rape'.<sup>1122</sup> Tisza and Conrad agreed that for the time being, not even the military objectives had been achieved in the Balkans. Thus, both of them declared that politics could only be pursued once Montenegro had also been defeated, Serbia had been completely isolated and left without an army, and the Albanian question had also been solved in a way that was adequate for the Central Powers. The German Supreme Army Command did not want to follow this view. Franz Joseph, on the other hand, was in agreement with it.

### Winter War in Russia and Montenegro

The estrangement of the two general staff chiefs occurred at the same time as the Central Powers had won one of their greatest victories in the war and the balance sheet for the year was by all means acceptable. The culmination point of the war had brought a range of factors to light that initiated the collapse of the present war coalition. A turning point had been reached.

An alteration in the entourage of the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command, which appeared to be rather incidental, would play a part in everything that followed. Archduke Friedrich brought his former steward, Brigadier Count Herbert Herberstein, who had assumed command of a cavalry division in 1915 and then led a cavalry corps, back to the headquarters in Cieszyn. Herberstein had requested a command at the front at the time because he could no longer endure life in the wartime court household and no longer wanted to participate in the monotonous luxuriousness in Khyriv (Chyriw), later Nowy Targ (Neumarkt) and finally Cieszyn. He was furthermore displeased with Archduke Friedrich in so many ways, above all due to his readiness to content himself with his wretched role, so that Herberstein wanted to leave this environment as soon as possible. His diary entries from the period speak volumes: 'The Archduke could again play Army Supreme Commander for a quarter of an hour. This quarter of an hour, as well as many evenings, are [...] all that bear reference to the Army Supreme Command of the Archduke, I mean with regard to operations. I cannot comprehend how someone

can content himself with that.<sup>1123</sup> He had witnessed how Friedrich had cut a pathetic figure in his meeting with the German Kaiser and the military heads of the German Empire. Nothing in this respect had changed over the course of the year that had since passed. The Archduke barely spoke, and he appeared confused and – which was much more unpleasant – uninformed. It was the same in December 1915, when it came to a meeting with the German Kaiser in Pszczyna. ‘After the meal’, Herberstein noted, ‘we stayed for approximately half an hour, the Archduke could not be held there any longer, since he – not unreasonably – was always afraid of conversations at which he had to express an independent opinion. Not only his shyness plays a role here but also the circumstance that as a result of his mental inertia he is never orientated towards the current state of affairs and is afraid that someone notices this.’<sup>1124</sup> As a result of this, Friedrich’s reputation suffered both in his own Army High Command as well as vis-à-vis the German ally. Now Herberstein returned to headquarters and the actual power centre of the Danube Monarchy and had a mind, if not to resurrect the battered prestige of the Archduke, then at least to strengthen the status of the Army High Command.

His Imperial Majesty did not make it easy for him. On the contrary, the Archduke had just at this moment earned the nickname that would remain with him and ultimately find its way into Karl Kraus’ *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The Last Days of Mankind). During a visit to Cieszyn from the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand, a war film was screened in which, among other things, the impact of an Austrian 30.5 cm mortar was shown. As Herberstein described it: ‘Everyone was under the impression of the splendid depiction of this moment, but His Imperial Majesty, who wanted to show that it had made no impression whatsoever on him and that he had often seen and experienced (?) such things, loudly called out “Bumsti” into the hall during the impact of the projectiles, which naturally made a very bad impression.’<sup>1125</sup> It could not be avoided that Archduke Friedrich was from then on named ‘Bumsti’ within the Army High Command and soon also beyond it. The visit of Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria to the Army High Command of course had another reason than merely to satisfy courtesy and to give rise to witticisms: Ferdinand attempted in this way to win sympathy and the agreement of the Army High Command to the occupation of Prizren and Pristina by Bulgaria. But it was in vain.

Herberstein thus decided to show the status of the Army High Command to its best advantage. In doing so, he unexpectedly intervened in the already difficult constellation between Conrad and Friedrich, though even more in the relationship between the Army High Command and the German Supreme Army Command. For if Friedrich were to be strengthened or if only the status of Conrad were shaken from within, this most have repercussions for the joint conduct of the war. This was also part of the traversal of the culmination point of this war. For the time being, however, the balance sheet of the second year of the war was addressed.

The final weeks of 1915 were characterised on the north-eastern front by the Russians, with a largely unvarying troop distribution, almost entirely discontinuing their attacking activities and by the Austro-Hungarians also no longer possessing much in the way of offensive capacity. They limited themselves to local thrusts. The sojourn in the 'entrenched position' and the clear situation in the Balkans allowed the question to move into focus as to how things should proceed in 1916 on the Imperial and Royal fronts. In the Operations Division of the Army High Command, specialists in the Russia and the Italy Groups sought to force through their respective concepts. Both pointed to priorities that they believed they had discovered in 'their' theatre of war, whereby the researcher for the Italy Group, Schneller, doubtlessly had a compelling argument at hand when he explained that the Italians were carrying out one offensive after another and that it was time to give more attention to the south-western theatre of war and above all send more forces to it. On the other hand, numerous things had been set in motion precisely as a result of the strained relationship with the German Empire. Falkenhayn also attempted to bring about a relief of German troops on the north-eastern front, first in order once more to disentangle them and to again begin a separate conduct of operations, and second because he wanted to send all available forces against Verdun in order to start the bloody battle that he hoped would bring about a turnaround in the west.

But something else played a role in Falkenhayn's deliberations. He had been informed by Conrad that the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff was considering an offensive against Italy with a considerable force. Conrad had also once more requested the dispatch of German troops, troops that Falkenhayn promptly and roundly denied him. The Germans had experienced the fact that their allies did not easily give in, however, and Falkenhayn already mistrusted Conrad's intentions in general. Therefore, he not only wanted to make no German troops available for the south-western front, but also demanded the transfer of German troops on the Russian front and their replacement with Austro-Hungarian army components. In this way, additional Imperial and Royal troops would be tied up in Russia and it would be made impossible for Austria-Hungary to go it alone against Montenegro and, above all, Italy.

At precisely the same moment as the severance of personal relations between Falkenhayn and Conrad, heavy Russian attacks commenced on the north-eastern front, which increased to become the *Neujahrsschlacht* (New Year's Battle). It lasted from 20 December 1915 to 26 January 1916. This time, the Austro-Hungarian armies achieved a remarkable defensive success, which was received in the Army High Command with particular satisfaction. The confidence and the trust in the capability of the Imperial and Royal troops, which had already sunk considerably, rose again enormously. Schneller, the Italy specialist, also reported a change in the tactical views within the Russia Group.<sup>1126</sup> A battle technique had namely contributed to the defence of the attacks that was based on experiences that had been made above all in the west and that constituted

a novelty for the Russians. Extended positions had been set up, similar to those that existed in Flanders. Every possible means of engineering, above all barbed wire obstacles, were used, whilst troops and artillery were distributed in such a way that the Russians got stuck in the deeply staggered positions of the Imperial and Royal formations and suffered heavy losses. The Russians were stuck in a considerable crisis, and this became clear in the final weeks and months of 1915. The masses of men had become noticeably thinner, even if they were still referred to as the 'steamroller'. But there was very little hidden behind this steamroller. And the stubborn attacks against enlarged positions contradicted all experiences they had made so far in the war. The Russians had considerably fewer guns at their disposal than the Austrian troops, however, and the artillery teams suffered furthermore from a striking lack of ammunition. Taken together, this brought about the victory in the *Neujahrsschlacht*.

Conrad was certainly aware that the Russian Army was still a long way from being beaten in the field,<sup>1127</sup> and he expected a major new offensive in the spring. He also wrote this in December to Bolfras, whereby he formulated it as follows: '[...] yet the fact that we, as you correctly say, will face some hard tests, is certain. I have been expecting for a long time the Russian thrusts against us, and likewise a major, general offensive (presumably in the spring) rather than local offensive thrusts. One of these is currently in process against the 7th Army. Prepared for it, we directed troops to the endangered front on time; the Russian attacks have so far been deflected, hopefully this will continue.'<sup>1128</sup>

It appeared that Conrad had every reason to be confident. In spite of the 'autumn swine', the Imperial and Royal Army was again looking good in the Russian theatre of war, and the offensive for the conquest of Montenegro and thus the expulsion of the rest of the Serbian Army from the Balkans, which it had begun against the will of the Germans, appeared to be succeeding.

In the euphoria of victory, however, it was a temptation to see the war objectives of the Central Powers in a very simplified fashion, and it was precisely those around Conrad who believed they had finally found a reason for why the Germans no longer wanted to support the Austro-Hungarian war aims in the Balkans, and why specifically Falkenhayn rejected the planned offensive against Italy and repeatedly attempted to make all kinds of difficulties. It was claimed that Germany could have no interest in seeing an Austria-Hungary emerge that exceeded by far its own strength, to which half of Poland, half of Serbia and also part of Italy would be added.<sup>1129</sup> This observation in the vicinity of Conrad was evidently only partially correct, however, since at least in the German Supreme Army Command there flickered something akin to sympathy for Austria, and they wanted to be generous in negotiations over territories. Thus, the Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn wrote to his wife on 1 November 1915: 'I think that if we take Courland with Lithuania [and] the Vilnius, Kaunas [and] Suwałki Governorates, and regulate our border properly up to the southern end of Silesia, it



certainly corresponds to the level of what Austria has achieved that it receives Poland. [...] In spite of many weaknesses, Austria has held out well.<sup>1130</sup> Though the possibility that Austria might become a 'rival for hegemony in Europe', should of course remain out of the question.<sup>1131</sup>

Out of satisfaction at the successful outcome of the *Neujahrsschlacht* and a very clear weakening of the Russian opponent, Austria also deduced, however, that the time had now come to re-formulate the political aims of the war and above all – and this then became ever more visible – that it was also time for Austria-Hungary to offset the sacrifices brought by the war by increasing its conditions for making peace. The debate on war aims received a new impetus and it was pursued with very different substance than in the first round, when the arguments had been comparatively modest.

It had almost appeared as though the euphoria of the beginning of the war, the mood of 'salvation through war', had not only quickly trickled away but would also never surface again. However, ideas do not normally disappear into nothing, but only mutate and then re-emerge in altered form. Even so, it should be asked, however: how did the mood of salvation transform and in which shape did it resurface? If we attempt to pick up the threads again, then this is most easily done where the question of the war aims of the individual states arose and everyone sought to develop his ideas on these aims. It was here that this intellectual upsurge, as well as this revolt against the present, both of which could hardly be encountered anywhere else, could be continued. When war aims were ruminated on, when model outcomes emerged and the question of existence was combined with the question about the future, however, it was more than just a temptation to engage in mind games and the philosophical penetration of geopolitical questions. It was here in altered form that the meaning of life was asked, or to put it more accurately: the meaning of sacrifice. For if all of this was to have a purpose, then only of bringing about a better future. At this conclusion of the intellectual process, the formula of salvation through war metamorphosed into that of salvation *from* war, and one Arthur Schnitzler, who had initially, like most people, welcomed the war and celebrated it as the emergence of the meaning of life, wrote the sonnet that began with the line: 'Someday peace will return.' If there was something that offered an intellectual incentive, however, then it was the debate on war aims. For an additional challenge, though, one could also turn to the discussion that endeavoured to portray Central Europe in a new context.

### The Central Powers and Central Europe

That which was spoken and written in this discussion, which lasted a long time and was, at least in part, pursued at a high intellectual level, had many roots. For one thing, there was the question of the economic unification of the Central Powers Austria-Hungary

and the German Empire. Military cooperation of course also played a role, and even more so the joint appearance towards the neutral countries, as well as the Entente powers, who were to be encountered with a common stance. Finally, history and journalism usurped the problem and took it to that intellectual level on which, far beyond the war and touching on the fundamentals, the purpose of the war and future of the Empire were discussed.

Admittedly, that which the deputy of the German Reichstag (Imperial Diet) Friedrich Naumann and others referred to as Middle Europe was conceivably indistinct. Where was the middle of Europe? Was it a landmass located somewhere between the north, the south, the east and the west and, if so, what about its limits? Strictly speaking, the middle of Europe could in fact never be defined geographically, and it probably was and is not even useful to attempt it. The now established term of Central Europe has also changed nothing in this respect. The different definitions, however, had already been a cause of discomfort during the First World War, since the Habsburg Central Europe was faced by a predominantly German Central Europe, which was both larger and different.

When Friedrich Naumann's book *Mitteleuropa* (Central Europe) appeared,<sup>1132</sup> the vision he drafted already had several precursors, not least in Austria. Regardless of whether it had been Prince Clemens Metternich, Prince Felix Schwarzenberg or Baron Karl von Bruck, they all saw themselves beholden primarily to the Habsburg Monarchy. They were then joined in Prussia and Germany by Friedrich von List and Konstantin Frantz, among others, of whom the latter wrote about a Danube and a Baltic Federation. All of them, however, had taken a non-existent Central Europe as their starting point and had attempted in a different way to define it geographically and politically. When Central Europe was addressed again during the war, it was possible to fall back on these preliminary works. Therefore, what was thought and written during the war bore a close resemblance to Friedrich von List, Paul de Lagarde and Konstantin Frantz. Unlike the aforementioned, however, the Central Europe plans of someone like Friedrich Naumann, but also those of Heinrich Friedjung, the cultural philosopher Richard von Kralik or a Richard Charmatz had their roots above all in the experience of the World War.

The debate on Central Europe begun in this way, had from the outset a very strong economic-political orientation and adapted above all the older plans of the 'Central European Trade Association', which was founded in 1900 in Vienna, as well as the very numerous plans of the German Customs Union. At any rate, a phase of lively, excited and in some cases polemical discussions began that could be followed in the form of books, articles and newspaper contributions but also at numerous conferences, as Gustav Gratz and Richard Schüller then described it in their volume on the plans for Central Europe during the war.<sup>1133</sup> But the economic aspects were without doubt only a partial aspect.<sup>1134</sup>

In autumn 1914, the first articles appeared by Richard Charmatz, who wrote in the journal *Die Hilfe*, edited by Friedrich Naumann, on 'Österreich und Deutschland' (Austria and Germany).<sup>1135</sup> In November 1914, the Innsbruck classical historian Rudolf von Scala wrote a contribution on a customs union between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, in which he attempted to outline the major advantages, but also stated that the economic adjustment would be accompanied by severe burdens for Austrian industry and agriculture. This was to be accepted, however, when considering the objective, 'just as we have taken on the sacrifices of the war in order to receive a thousand-fold reward in return'.<sup>1136</sup> Richard von Kralik went a step further and sketched an association of states stretching far into the east and to the Orient. His Central Europe, the core of which should be formed by Germany and Austria-Hungary, reached as far as Syria and Egypt. 'If the German idea spread far beyond its current imperial borders, then it is not evil imperialism as in England and Russia', he said, 'but only the remembrance of the Germany of the Middle Ages, the true, proper Germany'. The German Empire stretches itself 'because it still feels the old power in its limbs from the time of the old Emperor [...], from the time when Belgium, Toul and Verdun, when the Baltic Sea provinces were German'.

In spring 1915, a meeting of the German-Austro-Hungarian Economic Union took place in Berlin, which Michael Hainisch, later the first Federal President of the Republic of Austria, and Gustav Marchet, among others, took part; in the summer the discussions were continued and in autumn 1915 it was felt that the realisation of these plans was considerably closer. In October 1915, Naumann's book was released and Heinrich Friedjung telegraphed him: 'Reading your book carefully twice fills me with the certainty that you have presented the nation with the ripest fruit of the World War, an indispensable guide to the aim being pursued'.<sup>1137</sup> Friedrich Naumann's book *Mitteleuropa* resulted in a huge wave of enthusiasm and an overflowing of ideas. All Germans, those of the German Empire, those of Austria-Hungary, those of Transylvania and those of the Banat found themselves united as a 'nation of brothers'. But the acclaim and those engaging in it made it clear that it was above all the Germans of the Habsburg Monarchy who saw their war aims and their national dreams formulated in the book. The German lawyer, sociologist and economist Max Weber called it 'mood capital'.<sup>1138</sup> Yet the agreement was in no way universal. Advocates of economic liberalism and free trade went so far in their criticism of Naumann's book as to discard in their entirety the ideas presented therein. In the event of a return to free trade, 'we do not need a Central Europe with all its dependencies of all those unwashed peoples of Austria and further east and the intrigues of the Vienna Hofburg [Palace] and the Austrian Schranz, as Central Europe brings with it for us', wrote the German economist Lujó von Brentano to Naumann.<sup>1139</sup> But the entrepreneurs of Austria-Hungary, the industrial sector and many politicians demonstrated a noticeable reserve. Only in a preferen-

tial customs system and in trade alleviations did they see possibilities to configure the alliance with Germany. However, they evidently did not believe in a Central Europe of equal nations or a Europe of fatherlands. The expressions relating to a Greater German Central Europe and the necessary 'living space for the German people' were certainly not suited to reducing the distrust of the non-German nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy. The Hungarian Prime Minister saw therein a 'sugar-coated offer of a vassal state', which Austria-Hungary would become. Nonetheless, the projects on Central Europe also encountered considerable resonance in Hungary, Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* was translated into Hungarian and resulted in just the same polarisation as in the German lands of the Habsburg Monarchy: the Hungarian Industrialists' Association bet completely on Central Europe; the farmers were against it.<sup>1140</sup>

The Czechs, over whom Naumann took great pains, also discarded the idea after some hesitation, since it soon became apparent that the imperial Germans could not be harnessed 'to influence the Cisleithanian Germans to defend the Czech cause'.<sup>1141</sup>

The left-liberal ideas on a confederation of states, as propagated for example by Richard Charmatz, handled Central Europe much more cautiously, but even for the advocates of this world of thought it was the Germans who would exert the dominant influence.<sup>1142</sup> Therefore, Charmatz could not expect the support of the non-Germans either, and he swung more or less completely across to Naumann's line.

Central Europe was the main topic at private and semi-official gatherings of leading personalities of intellectual life, politics, trade and industry in Austria. The 'Tuesday Circle', the 'Marchet Circle' and the group around Josef Maria Baernreither and Heinrich Friedjung sought to survey all dimensions.<sup>1143</sup> The basis for their aspirations and their talks was ultimately the 'Position Paper from German-Austria', which the Friedjung circle had presented even before Naumann's *Mitteleuropa*. In this position paper, very concrete deliberations were made on the political, military and economic alliances to be concluded; domestic political demands were registered, the incorporation of Serbian, Polish and Ukrainian territory was discussed, and finally a Central Europe was outlined that would stretch from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf. Thus, a delineation was given here of what Fritz Fellner would describe decades later as an element of the Austrian search for identity during the war.<sup>1144</sup>

The dimensions of the 'Position Paper from German-Austria' were far-flung: 'The contours of the political worldview emerge before the gazes facing the future, as far at least as the enormous spaces from the North Sea to the Persian waters come into question. However the war might end: all hopes of the Islamist world will also continue to be intertwined with the self-assertion and power of the two empires in the centre of Europe. [...] A powerful bloc is emerging in the middle of a world of hatred and distrust. [...] Across all vicissitudes of the war, the economic-political embrace of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Middle East will remain the ultimate aim of the

statesmen of Central Europe, in the same way as German patriots such as Friedrich List and the great Austrian trade politician Karl Ludwig von Bruck 1840-1860 prepared for the fulfilment in word and deed.' The peoples of the Balkan Peninsula could not distance themselves from this, the position paper continued, and would again experience a period of growth as a result. 'This work of peace is, aside from what has been gained by the sword in Belgium and Poland and can still be gained, the victory prize to be carried away from the World War.'<sup>1145</sup>

To a certain extent, what had been written at the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1915 in the position papers of Andrian-Werburg, Baron Mérey, Count Szápáry, Baron von Wense and Count Wickenburg was continued here, although the latter in particular had been expansive and had described alongside territorial conquests also economic expansion as far as Asia Minor and Persia.<sup>1146</sup> Politicians, business people and academics added to and varied the topics addressed and wanted in this way to bring a clear line into the debate on war aims and into the politics of the two halves of Austria-Hungary. In the diverse circles it was generally a case of large-scale economic policy, whereby the questions of the future possibilities for developing Austria-Hungary's economy, which had been virulent even before the war, received a noticeable weightlessness. It was not a question of annoying quotas in the compensation negotiations between Austria and Hungary, or import and export obstacles, and also not of the relationship to Germany, but rather of a comprehensive imperialist concept and generous settlements in a pan-Continental space.<sup>1147</sup>

Here the question of the role that the German Empire and Austria-Hungary would play in Egypt and the Middle East could finally be inserted, which was otherwise at best a secondary aspect in the war of the Central Powers. The 'Jihad', or holy war, had not achieved very much, and the Austro-Hungarian representatives in the High Porte, the ambassador Margrave Johann Pallavicini and the military plenipotentiary Brigadier Joseph Pomiankowski, characterised it as a complete failure.<sup>1148</sup> They also had other doubts regarding the clout and loyalty to the alliance on the part of the Ottoman Empire. Austria's representatives in the High Porte intervened repeatedly due to the cruel treatment of the Armenians by the Turks. It was furthermore irritating and annoying that the Turks for their part attempted to compare the resettlement of the Armenians and the countless dead in the suppression of the rebellion of the Armenians in Turkey with the approach of the Imperial and Royal authorities against the Serbs in Bosnia and Dalmatia.<sup>1149</sup> Other events, however, gave cause for optimism and inspired the imagination. The Moravian prelate Dr Alois Musil had carried out expeditions until July 1915 to the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula in order to incite them against the British.<sup>1150</sup> The Egyptian Khedive Abbas II Hilmi, who had a Hungarian adjutant, made no secret of his pro-Austrian stance, and the Austrians in the Orient repeatedly heard that they were shown far more sympathy than the Germans.<sup>1151</sup> Why should this not bear fruit?

Germany was seized by the Central Europe euphoria just as Austria was. There were also sceptics, however, who not only doubted the feasibility of the plans but also used the argument, like Falkenhayn, that by means of a close annexation of Eastern-Central European and South-Eastern European regions by Austria the latter could be sufficiently strengthened to become a rival 'for hegemony over Europe'. He sought to counter this development by attempting to plan ahead for the military conditions that would be vital for such an ambitious alliance of the Central Powers. Falkenhayn took Bavaria as a prototype and, as the Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn noted, went so far as 'to compare our future relationship to Austria with that of Prussia to Bavaria, and did not want to recognise that Bavaria concluded its secret treaty with us after [18]66 as a defeated state', whereas Austria-Hungary was fighting as an ally in the World War. The War Minister and the Chief of the General Staff agreed, however, 'that in the war the German Kaiser must have supreme command, that the mobilisation and the deployment of a joint general staff section must be worked out, and that German regulations must be introduced in Austria. Both states must commit themselves to introducing unrestricted general conscription, a common active period of service, etc.; furthermore, mutual guarantees regarding economic mobilisation (supply of raw materials and foodstuffs), demission of armaments, etc.' Falkenhayn also considered a significant reduction in the sovereign rights of the Habsburgs in favour of the Hohenzollerns as being possible.<sup>1152</sup> 'What the Wittelsbachs had to put up with in Bavaria can also be borne by a Habsburg.'<sup>1153</sup> Austria naturally knew nothing of such thoughts.

The victory over Serbia stimulated the protagonists of Central Europe once more, and ultimately several Vienna university and college professors submitted to the Foreign Minister, the Imperial-Royal Prime Minister and three ministers of the Austrian half of the Empire shortly before Christmas 1915 a declaration signed by 855 college lecturers in Austria, in which they demanded the permanent economic fusion of the German Empire with Austria-Hungary. Among other things, they wrote: 'After due consideration and extensive consultation on the questions relating to the new order after the war, the undersigned college professors are of the conviction that a close and lasting economic fusion of Austria-Hungary with the German Empire by means of the most far-reaching convergence and collective conduct to the outside world possible seems necessary, and indeed such that a lasting community of interests results from it.' Many had signed the declaration, though a few had not. The manifesto had not been signed either by Heinrich Lammasch or Baron Ludwig von Pastor, and of course not by the professors of Slavic nationality.<sup>1154</sup> There were also others who were sceptical and reserved in their judgement, such as the President of the Mortgage Bank, Rudolf Sieghart, of whom the Swiss envoy in Vienna, Bourcart, reported in mid-January 1916 that he, Sieghart, thought little of the vote of the Vienna professors. 'Gynaecologists or theologians are not those organs who should be providing a competent assessment of

economic questions.' Sieghart and large circles of industry, Bourcart continued, could not be won for the Naumann plans. The slogan of 'one trench – one customs territory' may sound nice, but the Imperial and Royal armies were not there to support German colonial plans.<sup>1155</sup>

As early as November 1915, the German Foreign Ministry had presented a memorandum on the subject, in which it suggested that negotiations be started on the creation of a unified economic territory.<sup>1156</sup> It was proposed that the first step be a customs alliance, with which the merging of the two empires to become a unified economic territory should be prepared. The customs duties should first of all be aligned and then dismantled. The two states would have to appear jointly *vis-à-vis* third parties and pursue the liberalisation of mutual trade. Since Austria-Hungary had higher customs duties than Germany, and would therefore sustain a significant waiving of revenue, Germany potentially wanted to compensate this by abandoning its claims to Russian Poland. The transportation system should furthermore be re-structured and above all the routes to the south-east improved; other states should also be granted the most favoured status, however, and their affiliation with the unified customs territory facilitated. Certain benefits, however, would be reserved for the two allied powers.

Austria-Hungary's response to this memorandum was prompt and positive, yet planning was not made as far in advance and only the standardisation and the dismantling of the customs duties was envisaged, whilst the plans in their entirety were made dependent on the next compensation negotiations with Hungary even allowing for such a standardisation of the customs duties. Negotiations with Germany were thus postponed. Austria believed, however, that this would only be for a short time. In August, when the debate that was flaring up on Central Europe turned out to be one in which economic questions played an exceedingly important role, the Austrian cabinet had recommended simply extending the existing settlement with Hungary from 1907, which was based on the treaty of 1867 and had to be re-negotiated every ten years, or instead conceiving a resolution on the necessity of a principle renewal of the settlement. Then, however, the negotiations with Germany should commence immediately. This proposal was accompanied, on the other hand, by remarks such as those of Richard Charmatz, who vehemently demanded that a Central European solution be found during the compensation negotiations.<sup>1157</sup>

Tisza was of a very different opinion. And he knew that he could be certain of the agreement of his cabinet. On 2 October 1915, the ministers had discussed potential territorial gains and the resultant constitutional changes. Some of them had become positively aggressive. Gains in Poland were not needed. A special peace with Russia was far more important than a few more square kilometres of Poland. Minister of Education Béla von Jankovich wanted – as mentioned earlier – to leave the Ruthenians to the Russians, in order to wipe the slate clean once and for all and be rid of all

Russophiles. 'This would not even constitute an economic loss', he claimed.<sup>1158</sup> The ulterior motive was most likely that Hungary could only increase in importance in relation to a downscaled Austria. For the time being, however, it was a question of renewing the compensation treaty between Austria and Hungary. Tisza called for the settlement of 1867 to be first of all renewed and then for negotiations on all details to be completed before an agreement with Germany could be addressed. As a result, in February 1916, compensation negotiations began in Budapest that would last for more than a year and thus effectively prevented action being taken quickly for the realisation of plans for a union with Germany. Had the realists got in the way of the idealists? Had something got caught between the administrative millstones or was there more to it? Whilst Austria entered into negotiations with very minor requests for changes, Hungary demanded a marking up of the customs duties and a new quota system that would bring about a reduction in the Hungarian compensation quota. Finally, as compensation for Austria potentially receiving Polish territory, the incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Hungarian half of the Empire was addressed. This was not to affect the Hungarian quota, however, which was to be reduced, but the gains of the Austrian half of the Empire were to be counted and result once more in an alteration of the quota in favour of Hungary.

Only one conclusion could be drawn from this: Hungary had no interest in being part of the plans on Central Europe, and immediately set the bar so high that it could be cleared only with great difficulty. Stürgkh was correspondingly disappointed. He began the compensation conference by giving free rein to his disappointment on 8 February 1916: he had to say that the Hungarian demands had the tendency 'to increase and flesh out the division, whilst we take as our starting point the highest political interests of both state territories of our Monarchy. [...] Instead, the attempt to bring about a further division in the economic sector runs like a red thread through the proposals of the Hungarian government.' The Hungarian government perhaps thought, Stürgkh continued, that it, as a parliamentary government, was facing an Austrian government of civil servants that was currently governing without a parliament. But no government of civil servants existed that could expect the Austrian people to accept such a settlement.<sup>1159</sup>

Tisza countered and noted in a letter to the Emperor that it was entirely down to Austria to bring about a swift settlement. There had been plenty of time already to take stock of the objectives of the compensation negotiations, to make suggestions and to carry out an evaluation. If the Austrian government were keen to conclude an agreement with Germany as soon as possible, then the prerequisite would be that the validity period of the settlement would be doubled and trebled. Hungary could only agree if it also pushed through its own demands. Finally, Tisza posed the cabinet question: if the Emperor and King were to support the standpoint of the Austrian government, Tisza



would submit the resignation of the Hungarian government. Since no-one wanted this, nothing remained but to commence the compensation negotiations in the form desired by Hungary. Central Europe had fallen foul of Hungary, and ultimately there was neither a settlement nor a Central Europe in accordance with German or Austrian wishes.

After only a few months, the idea of Central Europe was dead. In September and October 1915, the culmination point had also in this respect been crossed. There then came a phase of consolidation and the desperate attempt to reignite the debate. Instead, a nationalist radicalisation began that made large-scale solutions redundant. Ultimately, nothing more remained of the Central Europe euphoria than a desire for the annexation of Austria by Germany. The 'Central Europeans' had had a peace order in mind, but it required peace with victory on the part of the Central Powers. And this reflects one of the most eminent weaknesses of all these constructions, since how should a peace order be erected on a foundation of suppression and dismemberment?

### The Vision of Peace with Victory

As mentioned earlier, the defeat of Serbia stimulated the discussion on the future path of the Central Powers and the war aims in a special way, and it was now more so than ever a question of the future of Austria-Hungary. As early as autumn 1915, Conrad had intervened with several position papers on the war aims and especially on those in the Balkans. On New Year's Eve, he temporarily concluded his works on this subject.<sup>1160</sup> His deliberations presupposed in a particular fashion a peace with victory. If in 1914 it had been stated all too clearly that Serbia should not be dismembered or even very much reduced in size, and also that Russia should suffer no territorial losses, matters looked rather different now. Conrad outlined in his New Year's Eve position paper<sup>1161</sup> the future fate of Poland, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, and he also concluded in the case of Italy that no peace could be made on the basis of the status quo.<sup>1162</sup> Not only that: since October 1915, Conrad had repeatedly extended the war aims. For Russia, he saw these targets eastwards of Lublin and Siedlce; in the case of Serbia and Montenegro, they were located somewhere on the Greek border; Italy, however, should be forced back as far as the 'terra firma' of Venice. Specifically, Conrad described it as desirable 'if the entire Polish territory were to fall to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; but I would still regard a division of the same with Germany (for instance in line with the borders of 1795) as more suitable than a return of this territory to Russia. If a restriction of Russian power to this effect were to come about, this would also indirectly break Serbian resistance.' With regard to Serbia, Conrad saw the only solution as a complete incorporation of the same into the Dual Monarchy. Weeks earlier he had said to Falkenhayn that Serbia should merely be brought into a position that made it clear

that it had Austria-Hungary and no-one else to thank for everything. Now, however, he went further and acted in accordance with the well-known principle: appetite comes with eating. 'The major importance that the unification of all southern Slav territories in the Monarchy possesses for the latter's status as a great power and in particular for its status as a naval power', noted Conrad, almost went without saying. In this point there was subsequently a type of accord between Conrad and Tisza, who both opposed the German intentions, which were also occasionally heard in Austria, to partition and dismember Serbia. In fact, however, Tisza and Conrad wanted not less, but more. 'An independent Montenegro appears far less dangerous than an independent Serbia', as Conrad continued, 'provided that it is not granted any coastal possessions. [...] However, an incorporation of Montenegro appears more advantageous, also for the economic prosperity of this country itself.' In the case of Italy, Conrad demanded that it be returned to its pre-1866 borders.<sup>1163</sup>

Now there was no mention of a special peace with Russia or with Serbia; instead, it was a question of victory and defeat of the enemy. When both Minister Burián and War Minister Krobotin appeared with moderate proposals and found far less ambitious war aims to be sufficient, Conrad once more turned to the Emperor and confronted him with the claim that being satisfied with less would constitute 'a severe impairment of the interests of the Monarchy and an eminent danger for its future'.<sup>1164</sup> Conrad wanted to have one thing duly noted: the configuration of the alliance with Germany was an indispensable prerequisite for being able to rejoice in this victor's prize.

Since around the turn of the year – following the defeat of Serbia and in view of the hopeless position of Montenegro – for the first time in this war the moment had come to give a signal for how armistice and peace negotiations were conducted in a world war and in view of the sacrifices made, what was said about Serbia and Montenegro was of the most far-reaching political significance. It became clear that the Army High Command did not focus on revenge but was certainly ready to dictate the harshest conditions.

A session of the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 January 1916 also provided the opportunity to discuss the question of armistice and peace conditions in the case of Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>1165</sup> Conrad, who was called in for this session of the Council of Ministers, left no doubt about the radical demands of the military. But his view was by no means shared by everyone. Following the session of the Council of Ministers, Conrad took stock and wrote to Bolfras: 'The in total eight-hour-long conference in the Foreign Ministry left me with the very sad impression that whilst Stürgkh, Koerber and Krobotin voted for the annexation of Serbia and Montenegro, Tisza is completely against it and the Foreign Minister regrettably lets himself be taken in tow by the former. I expressed the opinion [...] I have held for years, to the effect that only the annexation of Serbia and also Montenegro can liberate the Monarchy from the

grave danger, by which it was forced into this most horrible of all wars. I cannot give my support to the crime that after the grave and bloody sacrifices demanded by this war, the Monarchy would be placed once more in this danger – I cannot believe that the narrow, short-sighted and petty reasons brought against this annexation should win through.<sup>1166</sup> Conrad hoped, however, that it would later be possible to realise the annexationist desires. But the Army High Command repeatedly foundered with its ambitious demands on the Foreign Minister, Count Burián, and on the Hungarian Prime Minister.

It surely suggested itself to Austria-Hungary at the beginning of 1916 to cherish the hope of not only ending the war that year but to do so successfully and victoriously. No-one recognised that the culmination point had already been exceeded.<sup>1167</sup> The confidence of the Army High Command was based in the defensive successes on the Russian front and above all in the fact that the ‘backyard’, the Balkans, had practically been swept clear. In the first weeks of January, Cieszyn was concerned that the military triumph might be diluted at the last moment. At the end of December, deciphered Italian radio dispatches had been read with noticeable satisfaction, which stated that the French and the British did not want to allow the remains of the Serbian Army, which was fleeing to Albania, to reach Salonika, and Italy was endeavouring to gather the Serbs in the region of Shkodër, but also did not want to allow them to get to the Italian-occupied southern Albanian port of Vlorë.<sup>1168</sup> This offered the chance to catch up to the Serbian Army, which, with around 150,000 men, was numerically still impressive, and which, taking three different routes, had fled in an approximately two-week march, chiefly from Peć in Kosovo via the Čakor Pass to Montenegro and then over the inhospitable mountains of Montenegro and Albania to the coast, and force it to surrender. Along the route taken by the Serbian Army, but also the King, the Crown Prince and the Chief of the General Staff, as well as the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, there lay thousands of dead, people who could go no further due to exhaustion, or had starved or frozen to death.<sup>1169</sup> They marched around 700 kilometres from former Serbian territory to the coast, and for the prisoners it was no longer important from which part of the Habsburg Monarchy they originated. Initially, it was above all the Czechs who had been greeted with particular friendliness.<sup>1170</sup> But during the march to the coast the prisoners starved, and starved to death, without distinction. It should be asked, however, why the Serbs even took the 70,000 prisoners of war on their march. The main reason was that after a conceivable release the prisoners would have been reformed and this would have strengthened the Imperial and Royal Army. Neither the Serbs nor their allies had any interest in this happening. In the process, however, they risked making slower progress and having to share what little food there still was.

The Austro-Hungarian troops attacking from Kosovo and via Montenegro succeeded in forcing the Serbs back and on to the few paths over the Montenegrin and

Albanian mountains. Serbs, Montenegrins and the remainder of the prisoners of the war nonetheless reached the coast via detours. What happened then, in order to prevent the embarkation of the Serbs and also the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, certainly does not allow for the description 'hell-bent' or even 'bold'. The Imperial and Royal Navy contented itself to just watch.

On their way to the coast, the remains of the Serbian Army had been repeatedly attacked by Albanians, who were interested not in fighting but instead looting. They were generally successful and the Serbs relinquished their last possessions to them.<sup>1171</sup> Whilst the Serbs rushed on, the Allies were completely at odds as to what should be done with their defeated alliance partner.<sup>1172</sup> The Italians stubbornly insisted on their standpoint of not allowing the Serbs into the south of Albania. They should disappear into the region of Tirana/Durrës, argued the Italians. The objection that this territory was far too small in order to accommodate the Serbs in addition to the Albanians, did not interest Rome. Paris advocated transportation to the Tunisian city of Bizerte. This proposal was not made out of conviction but merely for the sake of at least proposing something. Then the possibility of bringing the Serbs to Corfu was examined. But Corfu was Greek and the British hesitated to once again confront the Greeks, on whom they had already forced the questionable benefit of landing troops in the Salonika region, with a *fait accompli*. Perhaps the matter could be sorted with money. Necessity demanded haste, and the arguments and counterarguments were plentiful. In London, for example, the information that the presence of Serbian troops on Corfu would prevent the Germans from using the island for their submarines, did not have the desired effect. This could be achieved, argued the Foreign Office, with fewer people than the approximately 100,000 Serbian soldiers. Ultimately, however, Corfu offered the only real chance to evacuate the bulk of the Serbian Army – and to keep them alive.

Montenegro had not yet abandoned its resistance, but the signs of its complete defeat were multiplying. King Nikola I of Montenegro left his capital city, but as a precaution hung a portrait of Emperor Franz Joseph in his study, in order to make obvious his alleged veneration of the Austrian Monarch, which had not diminished as a result of the war. But it was to no avail: Montenegro was also to be completely defeated and occupied. In the meantime, it had become clear that the Serbian and Montenegrin troops would be evacuated in their entirety by the Allies. On 16 December 1915, the first contingents were embarked in Vlorë. Two further ports were at the disposal of the allies, Shëngjin and Durrës. On 9 January 1916, it was clear that the Entente troops would take possession of the Greek island of Corfu and evacuate the remaining Serbians and Montenegrins. The information, which was also on hand in Vienna, originated from one of the countless dispatches of the Italian Foreign Minister Baron Sonnino that were intercepted and deciphered by Austrian cryptographers.<sup>1173</sup>

A separate peace with Montenegro was also discussed. But here, Burián and Conrad were in agreement that this should be not conceded. Conrad immediately demanded that Montenegro should lose its independence and attach itself completely to the Habsburg Monarchy. The Foreign Minister, however, emphatically made the case for its continued existence. Then Conrad wanted at least a reduction in the size of Montenegro and the relocation of its capital city from Cetinje to Podgorica.<sup>1174</sup> (Conrad's demands remained unrealised until 1945. It was not until after the Second World War that Marshal Tito, who had been an NCO in the Imperial and Royal Army in 1916, though already in Russian captivity for several months, transferred the capital city of Montenegro to Podgorica, which was given the name Titograd.) Ultimately, Burián simply requested understanding for Montenegro not being robbed of its sovereignty. He wanted to concede to Conrad only the militarily most necessary territories. In foreign policy terms, however, Montenegro should be represented in the future by the Danube Monarchy. Finally, Emperor Franz Joseph also demanded that no conditions should be set that were too onerous. Cieszyn was unimpressed by the imperial volition, however, and continued to assert military necessities. On 11 January 1916, the most spectacular military success in the fight against the Montenegrin Army was achieved: the Imperial and Royal 47th Infantry Division under the command of Major General Ignaz Trollmann conquered the massif of the 1,749 m-high Mount Lovćen, which towered steeply south of the Bay of Kotor. Until May 1915 the mountain had not been attacked out of consideration for Italy, since Austria-Hungary wanted to signalise to Rome that it did not intend to make any alteration in the equilibrium on the opposing Italian coast. Later, the Imperial and Royal troops did not have sufficient forces at their disposal to conquer the mountain. But the troops of Trollmann, who was then given the noble title 'von Lovćenberg' (literally 'of Mount Lovćen'), succeeded in expelling the Montenegrin garrison. The Montenegrins then offered to engage in armistice negotiations. Conrad, however, promptly telegraphed the Commander of the 3rd Army, General Kövess, that the operations were to be continued: 'Only an unconditional surrender of the entire Royal Montenegrin Army without any sort of negotiations and the handover of all Serbian troops still on Montenegrin soil are suited to induce the Imperial and Royal AOK [Army High Command] to cease hostilities.'<sup>1175</sup>

On 13 January, Montenegrin officers delivered the Imperial and Royal XIX Corps a handwritten letter from King Nikola of Montenegro, which was addressed to Emperor Franz Joseph, in which the Montenegrin King requested a cessation of hostilities and an honourable peace. Emperor Franz Joseph, however, did not back away from the demand for an unconditional surrender, either. On 17 January, a telegram arrived in which Montenegro announced that it submitted to all of Austria-Hungary's conditions and offered its surrender. But the situation remained unresolved. Some Montenegrin troops attempted on their own initiative to continue fighting, at which point a continuation of

the war was threatened. And Conrad was very satisfied with this, since in this way the Imperial and Royal troops could penetrate further to the south against Albania. Finally, on 23 January, news of the complete surrender arrived. At the same time, however, the antagonism between the Army High Command and the Foreign Ministry completely erupted. Conrad could not imagine anything else for the future than a territorially severely diminished Montenegro, which, like Serbia, would be attached to the Danube Monarchy. It should conclude a military convention, form a customs union, align its coin and currency system with that of Austria, and refrain from conducting an independent foreign policy. The Foreign Ministry, however, was in favour of far more moderate demands, rejected an annexation and wanted to give a signal to the other opponents of the Central Powers by means of restrained conditions, in order to increase their readiness for peace.

At the point Montenegro's unconditional surrender, its internal organisation completely unravelled. King and government fled and ordered the resistance to be continued. Individual voivodes (warlords) remained. The army surrendered or fled to Albania. The Montenegrins already in Austro-Hungarian prisoner of war captivity refused to go back to their homeland because they did not want to return to the chaotic conditions of a politically and economically devastated country. Temporarily, there was not even anyone there with whom they could negotiate.

Now it was on to Albania. The Imperial and Royal XIX Army Corps pursued the Serbs to the Shkodër region, where the Serbian troops again put up a fight and finally surrendered. Other Serbs had reached Durrës and the south of Albania, where they were brought to Corfu with ships belonging to the Entente. The Italians continued to occupy Vlorë and the territory as far as the Shkumbin River. A central power was also lacking in Albania, since Prince von Wied, who had briefly acted as ruler there, had long since fled. Subsequently, the Imperial and Royal troops advanced further southwards and finally over the Shkumbin, until they encountered Italian troops and encircled them near Vlorë. Of the 70,000 Austrian prisoners of war who had started out in October, only 23,000 arrived at the coast. Together with the Serbian troops, the Serbian civil administration and civilian refugees, over 190,000 people were brought with eighty steamers and under the protection of more than seventy warships to Corfu, but also to Lipari and Ponza, as well as Marseille, Bastia, Bizerte and other places.<sup>1176</sup> Provided they did not die of privation, cholera or other epidemics following their evacuation, the Serbs were nursed back to health and finally brought to Salonika, where they were to augment the 'Army of the Orient' of General Sarrail. In this way, the Entente was served, for on the one hand, it no longer had to give any appreciable care to the Serbian soldiers and, on the other hand, avoided the evacuation of Greece, which had already been envisaged. With the surviving contingents, Serbia associated a type of leftover sovereignty and a chance to reconquer the lost lands.

Albania, which has now been cleared of two-thirds of the Entente troops there, was not an enemy state for Austria-Hungary, but it was – more so than the other territories that the Turks had evacuated in 1912 – searching for an internal order. Before the war, two powers had shared influence in Albania: Austria-Hungary and Italy. During negotiations with Italy at the beginning of 1915, Vienna had hoped it could prevent an Italian entry into the war by conceding the Alpine state more influence in Albania as well as the occupation of Vlorë. In this way, Italy would control the Strait of Otranto. But Italy took this merely as capital requirements. Now, at the beginning of 1916, it had to be asked which aims Austria-Hungary should pursue in the long term in Albania, provided that it was even in a position to apply its policies for a long time in the ‘land of the Shqiptars’. As in the case of Montenegro and Serbia, Conrad advocated a complete annexation, and even initially made the further advance of Austro-Hungarian troops to Albania dependent on the land ultimately joining the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>1177</sup> Otherwise, the sacrifices and the military expenditure could not be justified. In the question of annexations, Conrad demonstrated ever more radicalism. In the process, however, Archduke Friedrich’s profile also benefitted a little, which could perhaps be traced back to the influence of Count Herberstein, since the Army Supreme Commander very clearly made the case for an enlargement of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>1178</sup> Conrad and Friedrich made their view clear not only to their own Foreign Ministry, however, but also to the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand during his next visit to Cieszyn in mid-February 1916. According to Conrad, the territory of Kosovo Polje around Pristina coveted by the Bulgarians, but also the territory to the west of this around Prizren and Peć, were in the Austrian sphere of influence. At the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery), the Chief of the General Staff said that war should not be risked with Bulgaria but that it was the task of the Foreign Ministry to make Austrian demands unmistakably clear.<sup>1179</sup> Conrad did not want to accept what the Bulgarians offered in defence of their standpoint: the Habsburg Monarchy, argued Sofia, had stated very clearly before the campaign against Serbia that it would only occupy a bridgehead near Belgrade and Šabac. Was this no longer valid?<sup>1180</sup> Conrad responded with fury, to the effect that ‘the idea of such a sad construction as the bridgehead idea [could only] originate with the other side’, but not with those responsible from the military.

The Imperial and Royal Army High Command thus steered an unvarnished annexationist course. Objections that the heir to the throne Archduke Karl also made in respect of Hungary were pushed aside: just because Tisza did not want any territorial gains out of consideration for the precarious equilibrium of the Hungarian half of the Empire, this could not be allowed to prevent the enlargement of the Dual Monarchy. Hungary wanted only Dalmatia, which Conrad decisively rejected. From a Central European point of view and with respect to the aspects of the reorganisation of the Dual Monarchy, thinking in terms of the two halves of the Empire and strictly meas-

ured-out territorial possessions would in any case have been untenable. The Empire, the entire Danube Monarchy, should experience an expansion of its power and size. This had become the only acceptable war aim for the Chief of the General Staff and his entourage. Any gain in Poland, which had been considered repeatedly, above all at the Ballhausplatz, and varied in countless Austro-Polish solutions, seemed to the Army High Command in Cieszyn considerably less important than the acquisition of territories in the Balkans. Austria-Hungary should become a power that stretched far to the south and the south-east.

The occupation of Serbia, Montenegro and the bulk of Albania, however, posed a plethora of problems, since following the mutual slaughter of 1914 Serbia and Montenegro had barely made themselves noticed until October 1915 and had allowed themselves to be kept in check by a few observation and support troops. Now, however, more soldiers were required for occupation and control than had been needed at that time for observation. Albania had furthermore to be occupied, too. Austria-Hungary was aware of the roughly 130,000 allied soldiers in Greece, who were admittedly held more or less in check by Turks and Bulgarians, but still constituted a threat. The main problem was supply. The defeat of Serbia had served to open up the land route to Turkey. This consisted above all of the railway and road connections through the Morava River Valley. Now, however, the troops in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania who were away from the main routes and above all without a railway connection had to be supplied. It was precisely in the land of the legendary hero Skanderbeg that there were practically no durable road connections at all. They had to be painstakingly built. And, as it turned out, even a provisional maintenance was only possible if the most essential facilities were established. Therefore, following the preliminary completion of operations in the Balkan Peninsula, it had indeed to be asked whether the military success had even been worth achieving in view of the problems that followed. The answer to this question could only be that the sacrifices and toil would have been worthwhile if Austria-Hungary emerged from the war victorious, since then these lands could be territorially reduced in size and brought into a position of direct dependency. Then, the Danube Monarchy would become the heir to the Ottoman Empire after a type of short-term interregnum. In the case of any other outcome, however, only the efforts and losses could be counted.

For the time being, Austria-Hungary had to content itself with occupying a considerable part of the Balkans, installing a military and, in some cases, also a civil administration and conducting itself like a classical occupying power. In the case of Albania, this could by all means also be to the benefit of the occupied country, since railways were built and streets improved, and since for the first time a functioning postal system and above all, a school system were established. Whilst keeping this aspect of the occupation in mind, these factors cannot be viewed entirely detached from the fact of the occupation itself. Perhaps it is necessary here to also weigh up the positive and neg-



ative factors: Albania, Montenegro and those territories of Serbia that had only been separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and 1913 experienced, in spite of the occupation, a boost in innovation and were acquainted a little with Central European conditions. The expansion of the education system, the establishment of postal services, the construction of roads and paths, which were naturally also linked to the occupation, were just such positive indications. In Cetinje, the old capital city of Montenegro, the monument that is most carefully treasured today as a first-rate cultural landmark was established alongside the singular construction of the Biljarda of King Nikola Petrovič Njegoš: the first and only relief in Montenegro. Austrian occupation soldiers under the guidance of an officer trained in geography crafted it on a scale of 1:10,000.

Other things, above all, the relentless fight against real and imagined spies and also, the struggle against the underground, which was gradually gathering together, led to repressive measures that revealed the ugly side of the occupiers.

For the political and military leadership of Austria-Hungary, the success in the western Balkans was satisfying. It ultimately affected the delicate mood of the Chief of the Austrian General Staff so deeply that he took the step that had been expected from him for weeks: on 22 January 1916, Conrad sent a conciliatory letter to Falkenhayn. Subsequently, on the occasion of Kaiser Wilhelm's birthday celebrations on 26 January 1916, a meeting took place not only between the German Kaiser and Archdukes Karl and Friedrich, but also between the general staff chiefs in Pszczyna. However, it was limited to very general discussions. Falkenhayn and Conrad only gave mutual confirmations that they had not been able to reach a closer understanding in respect of their views on the next strategic objectives. Both Kaiser Wilhelm and Falkenhayn argued that King Nikola should be left on the Montenegrin throne. Conrad presented counterarguments. In the Balkans, he claimed, a reorganisation had to take place, since this was where the war had started and where Russia had had its allies.<sup>1181</sup> In the case of Russia, the hopes of a separate peace had foundered and this raised the question as to how the war would develop on this front. Where were the limits of a thrust towards the east, if such a thing had to be attempted? Where should the line be drawn that Napoleon had also failed to reach? There were certainly controversial viewpoints in this respect and not only within the German Supreme Army Command but also in the Imperial and Royal Army Command. No-one, however, could give a more exact insight beyond mere personal preferences.

Then the Chiefs of the General Staffs discussed Italy. Falkenhayn said he was still against an offensive, but wanted to discuss it once more in detail. Everyone eventually agreed that somewhere the opportunity must offer itself to pry another opponent out of the united front of the Entente powers. Falkenhayn was thinking of France, but Conrad continued to have only 'perfidious' Italy in mind.





**15 South Tyrol:  
The End of an Illusion (I)**

15. A 30.5 cm mortar used by the Imperial and Royal Army at the front in the Dolomites at a height of 1,700 metres. The 30.5 cm mortars were probably the best guns of their type during the First World War. 'Electric trains' made it easy to transport the mortars on rails and paths, including to remote regions. The Škoda factory in Pilsen produced a total of 79 pieces from 1911 to 1918. Between 15 and 17 men were needed to operate a single gun.

**O**n Thursday, 11 May 1916, the first food riots took place in Vienna. This was such a clear alarm signal that even the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Major General Marterer, made a note of the fact in his diary. Josef Redlich was similarly alarmed. Only the newspapers printed nothing about the incident. There, the reports given dealt with nothing except temporary shortages of milk, eggs, potatoes, flour and above all fat, as well as the fact that the Mayor of Vienna, Weiskirchner, received a delegation of women. Money was also becoming scarce, and on the same day, 11 May, the Viennese municipal authorities increased a large number of fees, in some cases drastically. Whoever reported on these events, and however scarce items had become, everyone understood in principle what was happening. And it is likely that it was clear to almost everybody that from this day on, the truce had come to an end, and that this from this point on, a period of radicalisation had begun. After almost two years of war and in the light of a lack of supplies and price increases whose proportions were becoming more and more menacing, this was an alarm signal that was impossible not to comprehend. This signal clearly contrasted with the situation in the war, since in this respect, everything seemed to be working in Austria-Hungary's favour, with successes wherever one looked, both in relative and absolute terms. This state of affairs could, therefore, not be traced back to the military situation per se, if the fact is disregarded that the war was still being fought, and that there was no indication that it would end. The radicalisation of the hinterland was the result of other factors, and was in principle only one aspect as well as an indication of those irreversible processes that the World War had triggered. The impossibility of precipitating a military outcome, and equally, the impossibility of surrendering or concluding a peace, the increasingly threatening scale of the war through the successive involvement of the USA, and with it the last non-belligerent major power, and more than anything else, the effects of the British blockade measures that were becoming ever more keenly felt, helped this radicalisation to take root. On those fronts where domination was frequently no longer possible by means of military operations or with a campaign in the classic sense, attempts were made to use increasingly radical means. The maximum violence available was used, and every new warfare agent was thrown into the war in the hope of breaking open the fronts, pushing through into the hinterland and clinching victory through total overthrow.

The passing of the culmination point led to the fact that an increasing amount was put at risk. The use of flame-throwers, guns with ever increasing power and above all, poison gases, were indications of this phenomenon. If, for a time, it had appeared that

more caution was being taken in the way people were used, it was in fact during 1916 that care in planning the use of armed forces was abandoned in favour of forcing an outcome. After all, what use was it to achieve a limited success on one front, or even the unconditional surrender of an enemy such as Montenegro, when one was being starved out and one's own resources were coming to an end? And so, everything was to be thrown – indeed had to be thrown – into the battle, and every enemy systematically destroyed. The maxim that applied was to exhaust the enemy to an increasing degree, and at the same time to beat the weakest opponent off the field. In this, almost all belligerents threatened to lose the connection between the front and the hinterland, and the needs of the front and those of the hinterland became almost impossible to reconcile. In Russia, clear symptoms of the crisis had already appeared, symptoms that were combated using the country's own forces and with the aid of the Allies. From the summer of 1915 onwards, the Tsar assumed the supreme command in person, and the first steps towards democratisation were taken. However, this was only intended to help overcome the setbacks of the summer of 1915. The most severe shortages of armaments were compensated for by Allied supplies. The British organised delivery to Russia of Allied replenishment goods via the Arctic Sea ports, and even took on the port administration themselves in order to ensure that unloading and further transportation ran smoothly. Even so, Russia remained the problem child of the Entente. For the Central Powers, the problem child was the Danube Monarchy, the same Danube Monarchy that was the next top-ranking power to show symptoms of crisis and signs of an emerging radicalisation as a result. The pattern that this radicalisation took on was not the same everywhere, however.

All that was left now of the highly idealised Central Europe movement of 1915, which had still reflected a certain degree of optimism and something akin to a shared European future, was the will to attain a peace with victory. The nationalist elements stifled the liberal political and economic approaches until only radicalism was left. Most of these were founded on relatively vague goals, although they were all concerned with the purpose of the war. The answers differed in Austria-Hungary in particular, since as soon as the nationalists began to independently formulate their goals or even only their wishes for the period following the war, the uniformity disintegrated. Each attempted to follow his own egoistic goal, and in order to define himself more clearly and make himself stand out, opted for radicalisation.

### **The Easter Demands**

What had become clear in the Central Europe movement, and had been expressed in petitions such as those produced by college professors towards the end of 1915, now continued in the form of the demands made by the German National League

(*Deutscher Nationalverband*) in 1916. In March 1916, the National League wrote a memorandum entitled 'The Position of the German National League Regarding the New Order of Matters in Austria'.<sup>1182</sup> It stipulated the following basic principles:

1. The alliance with Germany is essential. Germany and Austria-Hungary are dependent on each other. Therefore, the alliance must be developed and efforts made to secure it in the state constitution, while maintaining Austria-Hungary's independence.
2. The alliance should retain its stability through the economic approximation of both empires. The economic area created in this manner shall be expanded through the inclusion of other Central European states.
3. In Austria, a change to the constitution is required, which shall reduce the domestic conflicts to an unavoidable minimum scale, if not entirely eliminate them.
4. The mutual relationship between the two halves of the Empire should remain unaltered in principle; however, in the economic sphere, the duration of the agreements should be specified as 25 years.
5. The Monarchy must shed the Slav dominance, for which reason Galicia must be separated from the close state association.
6. Following implementation of the necessary changes to the constitution, the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) should resume its duties immediately.
7. The domestic language for official authorities and communications is German, and the language used in trials before the supreme courts is also German. All state authorities are to receive submissions in the German language. Where another language is the common regional language, written or verbal attachments may also be produced in the common language of the region.
8. The language of instruction in primary schools in German areas is German. In the mixed language areas, the communal authorities shall decide the language of tuition. If there are at least 40 children with an average age of five in a community whose mother tongue is different to that of the language of tuition, a primary school with the relevant language of tuition is to be established at the request of the parents.
9. Care should be taken that administrative areas are created that have a uniform language. This applies to Bohemia in particular.

In this memorandum, similar lines of thought were expressed that had been heard in the Central Europe movement, as well as in the opinions voiced by the Army High Command and the Command of the South-Western Front on reforms to domestic policy. For the radical German parties, however, this was not enough. In the 'Easter Demands' of Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916, they set their aims down on paper and, in so doing, expressed even more unequivocally that in Austria, only the Germans should in fact be fully entitled citizens 'and that with regard to the needs of this state nation,

the claims, rights and needs of the other, non-German peoples, must unconditionally be withdrawn.<sup>1183</sup> It was only in terms of the representation of the relationship with Hungary that the Easter Demands did not go beyond the goals of the German National League. Parallel to this, the radicalisation on the streets began.

Now, what was expressed in the Easter Demands – and it should again be emphasised that at this point in time, this was only a radical German minority – had nothing in common with what was happening on the streets of Vienna, except for the fact that different events pointed to one and the same problem: the aims and the purpose of the war were at issue. On 11 May 1916, the severe rioting mentioned above took place in Vienna as a result of food shortages. Shops were looted. At first, the police did nothing; only in the 14th and 16th districts were fire hoses used in order to disperse the people. However, several days later, the unrest spread to other districts.<sup>1184</sup> The radicalisation progressed. The ‘Easter Demands’, like Friedrich Naumann’s bestseller *Mitteleuropa* (Central Europe), were systematically disseminated by their radical proponents in Bohemia and Moravia and among the other non-German nationalities in order to show the direction in which German dominance should go.<sup>1185</sup> In the same way as the German radicals and the organisations within the German National League were convinced that the war would bring about a far-reaching change in the political structures of Central and Eastern Europe, it was also understandable that the demands for dominance by the Germans in the Monarchy within the framework of a reshaped Central Europe were met with the counter-demand: destroy the Monarchy! The Czech opposition, if it had not been incarcerated in prison, as Kramář had been, went into exile. Tomáš Masaryk was joined by the Russophile Josef Dürich, along with Edvard Beneš and members of the secret Czech organisation ‘Maffia’.

The southern Slav émigrés, who had suffered a severe setback at the point at which Italy had been promised a series of territories in the Treaty of London that were of necessity equally coveted by a Yugoslav movement, were gradually able to re-form. They became more radical at the moment when, following the occupation of Serbia and Montenegro, the émigré community was strengthened by an influx from those countries. The émigrés from Austria and the radical opponents of the Monarchy who had fled via Albania and Corfu met and from then on worked together to pursue their political agenda abroad.

For the Entente powers, it was certainly difficult to differentiate between the individual groups of émigrés, and to process the large amount of information. Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, southern Slavs, deserters and Austro-Hungarian politicians on foreign trips mixed up truths, semi-truths and untruths, passed on any tepid rumour that was heard and in some cases, even provided protocols of meetings of the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet). All this had to be evaluated and classified. Espionage went



one step further: original files from the Imperial and Royal Embassy in Madrid even arrived at the British Foreign Office.<sup>1186</sup>

However, since the Entente powers were not clear until the first months of 1916 regarding what goals they should formulate with respect to the Habsburg Monarchy, and the effects were still being felt from statements from 1915 such as the one made by the head of the British military mission in Bulgaria, Sir Henry Bax-Ironside, who had claimed that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy must remain intact,<sup>1187</sup> the émigré organisations were keen to generate a voice in the Entente countries that was directed against the Habsburg Monarchy, by means of propaganda and the use of all possible areas of academia, particularly history. Journals such as *La Nation Tchèque*, edited by Professor Ernest Denis at the Sorbonne in Paris, a friend of Masaryk, or *New Europe*, published by R. W. Seton-Watson, Henry Wickham-Steed and, again, Masaryk, were suitable instruments that had been designed to carry such propaganda. Seton-Watson, Steed, Masaryk, Beneš, the Croat Trumbić and others all agreed that the Habsburg Monarchy must be destroyed. They responded to voices that claimed that the Monarchy was essential in order to maintain the balance of power in Europe by saying that since the Dual Alliance agreement in 1879, Austria-Hungary had been merely an appendage of Germany. The mosaic of different peoples was only being held together by force, they claimed, and was ultimately nothing more than an instrument of Berlin and, as a result, the unwilling enemy of Europe. For this reason, Austria must be destroyed from the outside by separating from it those people who tended towards other ethnic groups.

According to this pattern of radicalisation, Austria-Hungary was not to be destroyed for its own sake, but in order to weaken Germany in the long term.<sup>1188</sup> This was particularly important for Great Britain, which had no full-blown conflict with the Habsburg Monarchy, and could therefore only be won round to working towards destroying Austria-Hungary indirectly via Germany. As the detailed evidence now subsequently shows, all of the groups emerging from the émigré organisations participated in the campaign against the Monarchy, and they did so 'with a remarkable lack of scruple'.<sup>1189</sup> Thus, for example, Steed's *New Europe* wrote that in England, only a very few groups, namely some financiers, a few members of society, the Catholic Church and the Jews, had a vital interest in maintaining the Monarchy. Their attitude stemmed from a desire to maintain the German-Jewish finance system, which had created the economic conditions for Pan-Germanism, as well as to maintain the largest Roman Catholic state in Europe. According to Steed, the social circles who favoured the upkeep of the Monarchy simply regarded the Austrians as nice people because they had beautiful country houses and excellent hunting, and because their lifestyle was better than that of the Germans.<sup>1190</sup> However, Great Britain in particular was hesitant about participating in the debate on dismantling the Monarchy. If resistance to the destruction of the

Monarchy was voiced, though, then it was by a group of radicals and Socialists who had already been interested in this part of Europe before the war. Their arguments against dissolving the Monarchy were for the most part economic.<sup>1191</sup> Yet their influence had never been very great, and dwindled rapidly.

What had been conceived of during emigration and had been the subject of a change of opinion in the lap of the Allies could only then go beyond the stage of pure speculation if the opportunity of putting it into practice were to arise. For this reason, the focus repeatedly returned to the front, since it was ultimately there that the outcome was being decided, even if in the hinterland it was also being influenced by politics, the economy and the entire population.

### The 'Punitive Expedition' is Prepared

For Austria-Hungary, at the beginning of 1916, no end to the war was in sight, despite the defeat of the enemy in the Balkans. The people and the strength seemed to seep away. On both the Italian and Russian fronts by May 1916, hardly anything had happened to bring significant changes in relation to the main enemies or even give cause to anticipate dramatic reversals. However, what was prepared by the staffs was hardly ever communicated to the general public. Even so, a flattening out and deceleration of military events is a symptom of any war of long duration. While initially, one major development was followed by the next, as the war dragged on, an increasing number of months passed until an operation that sought to force an outcome could be begun. The diminishing level of strength made it necessary to make long-term plans for marshalling people and materials.

For Conrad and the Army High Command, it was however urgent and logical, in the light of the continuation of the war, to address the next enemy after Serbia and Montenegro that could be made the target of their strategy of bringing down the enemy, and this meant Italy. A small note by Conrad contains all the information about what was being planned. He had drawn a straight line over the Isonzo front, a gentle curve over South Tyrol and then a line from South Tyrol through to Venice. This line was divided into six parts, with each part representing a daily advance of 20 kilometres. From South Tyrol, Venice was just six days' march away. It was that simple.<sup>1192</sup>

The plans against Italy again clearly reflected how much the operational decisions in the war depended on those military plans that had already been elaborated during peacetime. In the Operations Division of the Army High Command, the very first studies for a decisive strike against Italy had already been linked to ideas that had formed the basis of pre-emptive war plan 'T' for several years. According to this plan, the main armed force was to be amassed in Tyrol. In the interim, this appeared even more

promising, since it was known that most of the Italian fighting capacity was bound up on the Isonzo River and on the border with Carinthia, and a wide-sweeping advance into the rear of the Italians would envelop the mass of their army in the Julian March. This was to bring the decisive outcome.

The Italy specialist in the Operations Division of the Army High Command, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Schneller, continued to work on his memoranda and operational plans, with the intention of using sometimes more, sometimes fewer German forces. Finally, from July 1915, when the German Empire had made it clear that it did not wish to involve itself on the Italian front, Schneller stated that it would be better if the Germans were to assume the main burden in Russia, while Austria-Hungary would 'shrug off Italy'.<sup>1193</sup> Schneller could take his time. The summer battle in Russia, followed by the transition to the 'entrenched position' and finally the Balkan campaign had engaged all available armed forces, so that for a long time, he had to leave his operational plans as they were. However, at some point, the hour of the Italian Group would also come. In the interim, the Army High Command was confident that the front on the Isonzo River would hold out. And even if the Italians were to succeed in penetrating somewhat deeper into Austrian territory, this would have no impact on the situation. Schneller's studies were presented to the Chief of the Operations Division. Colonel Metzger added his comments before sending it back. Some of these comments are of significant interest.

Metzger had wanted to transfer the command of the planned offensive from Tyrol not to the Commander of the South-Western Front, Archduke Eugen, but to the National Defence Commander for Tyrol, Baron von Dankl. This was felt by Schneller to be a sideswipe against the Chief of Staff of the South-Western Front, Major General Krauß, who – according to Metzger – 'is unable to be subordinate'.<sup>1194</sup> However, there was an unwillingness to allow Archduke Eugen to become too powerful, since this would not be welcomed at the 'palace'. The 'palace' was a reference to Archduke Friedrich, who lived in the palace at Cieszyn (Teschen). Dankl, by turn, enjoyed the confidence of Conrad. Finally, however, the supreme command was transferred to Archduke Eugen.

However, at this point, it was by no means the issue of the command that was the subject of discussion. First, the German-Austrian relationship had to be clarified; the relationship that the 'Central Europeans' regarded in such an idealistic light, but which in many aspects was merely a façade, and in which the dispute was veiled by outward signs of friendship, daily evocations of loyalty to the alliance and the repeatedly acknowledged necessity for cooperation in this war. The fact that the general staff chiefs had resumed their functional communication was irrelevant. Quite the opposite: it would have been an outright scandal if they had carried on pursuing their 'private war'. However, the facade continued to crumble further. The records of the German plenipotentiary at the

Imperial and Royal Army Command, General Cramon, spoke volumes. There were only very few individuals in the Austro-Hungarian hierarchy who were not the subject of contemptuous remarks on his part. Conrad remained utterly incomprehensible to him, and one has the impression that General Cramon must have felt that he was the only normal person among a bevy of idiots. By contrast, he almost never found reason to criticise the Germans in positions of authority, or German troop leaders. Turkey and Bulgaria also usually fared better than, for example, Stürgkh, Conrad, Kövess or even Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. Yet, for how long could the cracks be papered over?

The notion of an attack on the Italian front took on a clearer form. Conrad interpreted the refusal by Falkenhayn to send German troops to the south-western front not as being due to a relocation of the German focus to the west, as Falkenhayn intended at that point, but instead claiming: 'Either Germany wants to prevent an overthrow of Italy because it is pursuing important trade policy interests there, since a large amount of German capital is bound up in Italy, in short, because in economic terms, it also wants to ensure that Italy remains a friend in the future; alternatively, however, and I consider this to be highly likely, it regards Italy as being the third party with which it can constantly keep the Monarchy in check, and which it can play off against us.'<sup>1195</sup>

For his part, Falkenhayn questioned whether participation by German troops in the war against Italy might not be stirring up 'a hornet's nest of conflicting desires' and whether this could mean that in such a way, German troops would be sacrificed merely for the fulfilment of others' aims. Here, there was no longer any mention of Central Europe and brotherhood in arms; now, the mood on both sides was dominated only by the deepest distrust.

Conrad was quite simply furious about the reluctance of the Chief of the German General Staff to even seriously consider the Austrian deliberations with regard to Italy. He had initially written in detail to Falkenhayn about his plans, and claimed that, like Falkenhayn, he assumed that the war would be decided in France. However, he did, he said, feel that it was right to organise the attacks in succession, first in Italy and then, following its overthrow, together against France. It would be advisable to proceed in the same way as against Serbia, which had after all also only been attacked following completion of the operations in Russia, and where a huge success had been achieved.<sup>1196</sup> Conrad did not want parallel campaigns, but joint warfare, albeit in accordance with his ideas. And he regarded the Italian offensive as a vital preliminary stage in order to decide the outcome of the war. He may certainly have been correct in his assessment that before overthrowing Italy, Austria-Hungary would be unable to release troops from any front in order to support Germany. However, Falkenhayn had by then decided to attack Verdun.

On 12 February 1916, the German Grand Headquarters moved from Pszczyna (Pleß) to Mézières and Charleville in Belgium. The breach between the general staff

chiefs had anyway reduced the form of cooperation practiced until that point to a minimum. The Central Powers appeared to have descended from being a brotherhood in arms to an association forged of necessity. And both Austria-Hungary and the German Empire hoped to be able to prove to each other that their own respective path was the right one and would lead to victory.

On 3 December 1915, Conrad had held a large meeting at the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command in Cieszyn to discuss an offensive against Italy. The general conclusion was that the problem was not the weapons, which could be procured; it was rather the people. The other fronts would have to be divested of troops in order to bring together the 14 divisions calculated by the Italy specialist Schneller. Conrad would have preferred to start the offensive as early as December, but this was of course illusory. The operations in the Balkans would continue until January 1916, and in February the thaw would begin in Italy, yet at the end of February the climatic conditions could make it possible for the offensive to begin, Conrad claimed. The Italians would have to be taken by surprise, he said, and should not be allowed time to recover from their failures of the first year of the war.<sup>1197</sup> And these failures were evident: four offensives in the Isonzo River area, with huge losses, had brought a gain of only a few kilometres of ground. All talk of a push through towards Trieste (Triest) or even to Vienna via Ljubljana (Laibach) had ceased long ago. And the barrier forts on the edge of the plateau of the Sette Comuni, which had been used to blow to pieces the Austro-Hungarian forts from Sommo to Verle in order to enable the Italian troops to advance in the Adige Valley, had at times made life difficult for the Austrians, but had in the interim been reduced to rubble themselves.

The political approval for the offensive against Italy was given in January. From statements made by the Hungarian Prime Minister, and from a few isolated words recorded from the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 January 1916, it can be concluded that Conrad must have been given the green light for his offensive. However, he had informed no-one even cursorily about the manner and direction of his approach. Not even the Army Supreme Commander had any specific information. And this was remarkable.

Now the preparations began. Nothing was to be left to chance, and everything was planned down to the minutest detail. However, ultimately this only applied to the deployment. When naming the major operational goals, the Army High Command satisfied itself, as it had done in the months previously, with the observation that two-thirds of the Italian Army were caught up at the Isonzo River in an area of around 80 x 150 kilometres, and that even advancing only up to the edge of the plateau of Arsiero and Asiago would certainly lead to a withdrawal of the Italian front to the Piave River. This could be expected to lead to a reduction in the length of the Austro-Hungarian front by at least half and, in the most favourable scenario, the removal of Italy from the war, namely if the major part of the Italian Army could be enveloped and forced

to capitulate. If this were to happen, 250,000 men would become free to fight on other fronts almost immediately.

All attempts by Conrad at the beginning of February 1916 to convince Falkenhayn of the necessity of a joint offensive against Italy came to nothing. The final discussion on the matter, a conversation at Pszczyna on 3 February, also produced no result. A few days later, Conrad must have felt downright deceived, since Falkenhayn had declined to tell him that he had made preparations for a major attack at Verdun, which began nine days after this discussion, on 12 February 1916. Conrad felt all the more motivated to now present the ally with a *fait accompli*. What then so aptly became known as a 'punitive expedition' could equally be interpreted as a punishment for German arrogance.

The first plans related to the amassing of the troops. They were to be taken from the Tyrolean front, from the north-eastern front and above all from the Isonzo front, in order to create two armies with around 200,000 men. Then the overall command was established, as well as the supply of guns, ammunition and war materials of all kinds. However, the fact was ignored that for a war in the high mountains, other requirements would have to be met than in the lowlands. Clearly, this made no particular difference to anyone. It corresponded to the theory of warfare according to which occupation of the heights determined who dominated the valleys. Thanks to the electric train that had been developed by Ferdinand Porsche, the heavy artillery was sufficiently mobile to be brought even to remote regions, and as far as the soldiers were concerned, experience of fighting in the mountains was not regarded as necessary. After all, it had emerged during the course of the war that soldiers from the plains of East Central Europe, who before the war had never seen a mountain before, had irreproachably proven their worth in mountainous regions. Why should it not be possible to conquer the massifs that separated the Imperial and Royal armies in the Dolomites from the northern Italian plain? It was even suggested that Turkish troops be used in South Tyrol, but these considerations were never put into practice, since although there were no doubts that the soldiers of the Sultan would be able to cope with the hardships, it would have been necessary to provide them with all the equipment required for war in the mountains.<sup>1198</sup>

For all the considerations relating to an offensive from Tyrol, initially still under winter conditions, it is clear that other experiences of mountain warfare and the huge difficulties in mustering and breaking out of the mountains played no role. This is even more extraordinary since almost all those responsible for the plans, including Conrad in particular, had a great deal of experience in conducting operations in the Tyrol region. Finally, the fighting in the Carpathians of 1915 could also have contributed to gaining additional insights, which Italy could not possess, or at least not to the same degree. And these experiences included not least the fact that cold and snow were factors that were almost impossible to plan for. And yet it was also not taken into account that in

some cases, the snow cover could even make it impossible to extract troops who had already been deployed on the mountain front and who were now to be mustered and used elsewhere. With snow cover of between three and five metres, it was impossible for example to move around the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles and Tyrolean standing infantry regiments, who had been dispersed over the front to form a type of corset. The troops became exposed to extreme danger, since they risked being buried alive every time they marched through slopes where avalanches were likely to occur – and there were certainly enough of these in this region.

Under these extreme weather conditions, bringing up troops, and above all war materials, guns of all calibres, even the heaviest ones in the Monarchy, which now included not only the 30.5 cm mortars, but also a 35 cm cannon, as well as 38 cm and even 42 cm howitzers, demanded an exorbitant degree of effort and willingness to suffer hardships. For the deployment of the heavy offensive artillery on the plateaux of Folgaria and Lavarone, at heights of no less than 1,500 metres, only three roads were available for use. The one that was most at risk from avalanches was chosen for the transportation of the 42 cm coastal howitzer. Since this transport suffered from severe difficulties, the road was blocked for days for all other supply traffic. The cable cars only had a limited capacity, although from 20 March onwards, the most efficient of these, from Cagliano to Folgaria, achieved an impressive daily transport quota of 200 tons.<sup>1199</sup>

The first consequence of the weather-related difficulties was the use of the front troops, who were arriving by degrees, alongside the labour battalions in order to deal with the snow masses. As a result, an early date for the attack became illusory. The first deadline was put back. However, it was not possible to use the additional time in order to reconnoitre the terrain in front or to zero in the artillery on the enemy. All this would after all have given the deployment away and, in so doing, eliminated the element of operational surprise. Even so, the Italians were not unaware of the preparations for the attack. The delay in the offensive that resulted from the fact that the deadline was ultimately put back twice meant that the enemy troops were now made ready for defence – something that they had not been before.

Let us leave the more military issues relating to the deployment for the 'punitive expedition' to one side for now. There were also other particular features. It immediately becomes obvious that everything that was put into practice had been arranged from behind a desk. Plans were developed in Cieszyn, and it was in Cieszyn, too, that the orders were formulated that then led to the deployment in South Tyrol of an army group of two armies, the Imperial and Royal 11th (under Dankl) and the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army (under Kövess). From a distance of 800 kilometres and more, thoughts were discussed and staffs bent over maps, whilst the overall troop distribution, but also many details, the targets to be attacked and the entire logistical procedure were contrived. When the Chief of the General Staff of the Command of the South-Western Front, Major

General Alfred Krauß, wanted to travel to Cieszyn in order to discuss details of the plan, he was told that his visit was not felt to be of any benefit. Conversely, neither the Italy specialist, nor the Chief of the Operations Division, and certainly not the Chief of the General Staff for the entire armed force, Conrad, came to South Tyrol. There was surely no starker case than the South Tyrol offensive of leadership from behind the desk.

There was also a clearly obvious contrast between the significance given to the undertaking and the way the campaign was handled in Cieszyn. Conrad was occupied to a far greater extent by issues relating to the conduct of war in the Balkans, to the future of Poland and to personnel matters than would have allowed him to become extensively involved with the offensive in South Tyrol. And even when he was, his focus of concern was not logistics and the operation, but issues of rank, prestige and dynastic problems.

The question that absorbed him most was how to employ the heir to the throne. Following his assignment at the Army High Command, which had been everything but frictionless, and following months during which he had made visits to the troops, Archduke Karl Franz Joseph was to be given the command of an army corps in order to rush him through his military career. And even though the Emperor wished him to be deployed in this way and had already given his approval, Conrad made objections. In a somewhat rosier version of this sequence of events, Conrad would have already recommended in February 1916 that the Archduke be given the command of the XX Corps for the forthcoming offensive, which was to consist primarily of rifle regiments, with troops from Salzburg and Upper Austria. The Chief of the Military Chancellery, Bolfras, apparently reacted to this idea by saying: 'Just think, if anything were to happen, the successor [Otto] is still a child!'<sup>1200</sup> However, the Emperor would have given his agreement, and the heir to the throne would have commanded the corps.

The reality was different. Conrad's first reaction was to brusquely reject the assumption of a corps command by the heir to the throne. There were also others who were against using Karl for a front command. Archduke Karl then departed from Cieszyn in an 'angry' mood, as Conrad's Adjutant General noted in his diary.<sup>1201</sup> The heir to the throne chose the only path that might yield a positive result: he went to the Emperor – and did so for five consecutive days. Promptly, his efforts paid off: Conrad was ordered to attend an audience with Franz Joseph. However, even before the audience, the Chief of the General Staff arranged for the heir to the throne to be given the command of a corps formed from the 3rd and 8th Infantry Divisions. Karl agreed to the proposal. Therefore, Conrad was able to report to the Emperor during the audience that the matter had already been resolved.<sup>1202</sup>

However, Conrad had not been prepared of his own accord to grant the heir to the throne an important front command. It therefore again fell to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Arthur Bolfras, to explain to the Chief of the General Staff that here, other issues were at stake than purely military ones. Since the purpose



was to equip the heir to the throne at least outwardly with the qualities of a tried and tested military leader, and since the ability to lead an army was deemed an essential virtue in a ruler, Conrad's objections would have had no effect but to cause his relationship with the heir to the throne to deteriorate further. Ultimately, Conrad was not only being asked to agree to giving the Archduke command of a corps. The Archduke was furthermore assigned probably the best corps in the south-western theatre of war, namely the XX Army Corps mentioned above, which consisted of the 3rd ('Edelweiß') and the 8th ('Kaiserjäger') divisions. The fact that the Army High Command was not happy with the outcome was made clear by the diary entry of the Italy specialist, Lieutenant Colonel Schneller: 'I now have the task of explaining the whole caboodle about the south-western front and Tyrol.'<sup>1203</sup>

The improvement works to the barrier forts that had in some cases been severely damaged in 1915 were driven forward with great urgency. (It is indeed extraordinary that prior to an offensive, work was conducted on the reinforcement of the defensive positions). Away from the front, command posts were built in the forests on the plateau and blasted into the rocks, most extensively where the heir to the throne was to set up his headquarters near Virti. Hundreds of kilometres of conducting wire were laid. During the day, and particularly at night, thousands of people were on the move.

At the beginning of March 1916, there had again been heavy snowfall – a not unusual occurrence for the time of year and the region. In the depressions, the snow was four metres high. Even when frontline troops were used to deal with the snow masses, the only achievement was that they and the labour battalions were able to shovel free some of the most important roads by mid-March. However, during this time, 1,237 men were buried by avalanches; only half could be brought out alive.<sup>1204</sup> At the beginning of April, it began to snow again. Once more, the snow reached a depth of two or more metres. It was therefore now obvious that the next planned date of attack, 11 April, had also become illusory.

Gradually, all attempts at camouflaging the deployment turned into a farce. When troops began to be withdrawn from the Isonzo in order to bring them to South Tyrol, it was claimed that the formations were being sent to Russia. In Maribor (Marburg an der Drau), it was made to appear as though a new headquarters was being established for Archduke Friedrich, with the aim of creating the impression that an offensive operation was again being planned for the Isonzo. The cover-up manoeuvres went so far that General Kövess, who had arrived from the Balkans and who was to take command of the 3rd Army in the South Tyrol offensive, was only told about his new command at the last minute. Even the Germans were to be misled. By the beginning of March, everything was indeed proceeding very well. However, the Command of the South-Western Front was then placed under the army group command of Archduke Eugen, and his area of authority was extended to that covered until then by the Tyro-

lean National Defence Command. The latter was in turn given the command of the 11th Army. And this could not remain a secret. When the Germans first began to ask questions, attempts were made to explain the destination of the divisions by claiming that the forthcoming Fifth Battle of the Isonzo had made the relocations necessary. However, this battle ended after just a few days, when it was cut short by the Italians. Despite all the machinations aimed at preserving secrecy, the German liaison officers already knew by around 25 March of the overall plans and, a few days later, learned of the details of the planned offensive.

The Italians had been alerted even earlier, and also had an overview of the situation by the end of March and beginning of April. The Army High Command wanted to arrange for a series of deflection manoeuvres to be conducted in order to fool the Italians, but nothing more of any consequence was done. The Navy, which was ordered to act along similar lines as it had done at the beginning of the war with Italy, felt itself unable to take such a step. Its commander, Admiral of the Fleet Haus, sent a dispatch to Conrad stating that so many torpedo vessels had become inoperative that there was no guarantee that the battleships could be protected against submarines and mines. An angry Conrad then wrote back that he would make a note of the low value of the battleships for later.<sup>1205</sup> An air attack on bridges in the hinterland behind the Isonzo front and on railway facilities was repeatedly delayed, before the Army High Command finally demanded in no uncertain terms that it take place on 27 March. On this day, however, the weather was poor, the bombers failed to find their targets, and four aeroplanes were lost. On 18 April, the Italians finally achieved a spectacular success in the Dolomites: after months of preparation, they detonated the peak of the Col di Lana. It was the first large-scale mine detonation of the mountain war. The sound of drilling that had been heard since January had been initially interpreted by the Austrians occupying the mountain as Italian cavern construction. Then they became suspicious and began to press ahead with counter-tunnels. Even so, it was not clear what was happening below the peak. Instead of reducing the garrison on the peak to just a few men, however, half a battalion remained in position among the rocks – until during the night of 18 April the mine with its 5,500 kilograms of dynamite was ignited. Of the 280-man garrison from the Tyrolean Rifle Regiment No. 2, over 100 were buried under the rocks. The prominent peak belonged to the Italians.

Conrad's only response to this dramatic episode in the mountain war was to say that 'the defence of Tyrol is rather passive'.<sup>1206</sup> By contrast, in Vienna, the detonation of the peak caused a great upset, which Conrad was at a loss to understand. He compared the last defensive success in Bessarabia, which had led to the loss of nearly 16,000 men, to the Col di Lana and wrote derisively: 'Now [...] the small Col di Lana heap (there is no more space than that), which is occupied by 2 companies at most, is ascribed such significance.'<sup>1207</sup>

The Army Group Commander Archduke Eugen, whose nerves were stretched to the limit by the pressure from the Army High Command to act more quickly, finally lost his patience. On 23 April, Major General Krauß asked whether the Army High Command might not wish to obtain the basic information necessary to reach a decision through the presence in person of the Chief of the General Staff ('see the procedure applied in the German Army'), or by sending an official representative.<sup>1208</sup> Conrad responded as was to be expected: officially, he wrote in a return dispatch that there was no reason for such a measure. On a personal level, he wrote to Krauß – and the reference to Falkenhayn had certainly been hurtful: 'If the AGK [= Army Group Command] should find it necessary for the Army High Command to also take responsibility for the beginning of the attack, which can only be assessed on site, then this should be reported, in which case I would travel to South Tyrol, unless his Imperial and Royal Highness the Army Supreme Commander were to go there himself.' Krauß insisted that it would have been easy to order the attack despite the deep snow, to sacrifice thousands of lives and then to put the blame on the weather. Conrad replied that the Army High Command would also never consider ordering an attack under such snow conditions, and that the reference to thousands of lives was misplaced. There was, he said, no need for the Chief of the General Staff to travel to Bolzano (Bozen).

Conrad was absolutely against coming into closer contact with the theatre of war. Yet everyone was becoming increasingly nervous, and finally, it was only Kletus Pichler, a Tyrolean by birth and Dankl's Chief of Staff, who said aloud what the others were thinking: it would be a mistake to begin to move the troops so early, since in this region, the snow never melted before mid-May. And when he in turn was put under pressure to finally order the offensive to begin, he went outside, rammed his walking stick into the snow, and with this *ad oculos* demonstration attempted to prove that it would be impossible to order the soldiers to attack in snow that was knee-deep.<sup>1209</sup>

Conrad remained silent. In his letters to Bolfras, he also referred almost exclusively to personal issues, and discussed how matters should proceed in Poland after the military governor there, General Colard, had suddenly died. On two occasions, he commented on the 'Endrici case', a particularly spectacular and also difficult case, in which the Bishop of Trento (Trient), Endrici, was accused of conducting reconnaissance and having unauthorised contact with the enemy. Conrad was anything but pleased about the outcome of this matter, whereby the authorities refrained from pursuing legal proceedings against the church dignitary. But soon, other issues took up his attention. The Chief of the General Staff occupied himself with accolades. He particularly wanted to see the Chief of his Operations Chancellery, Colonel Metzger, honoured. Conrad was concerned about the health of the Emperor. He considered the issue of flags and coats of arms in great detail, since new designs had now been created. It appeared that the days of the double-headed eagle were numbered.<sup>1210</sup> Conrad even presented the

Emperor with new uniform designs at Schönbrunn Palace, which did not appeal to the Monarch, however. So much appeared to be more appropriate for a cabaret than for an army that had become used to war. The Chief of the General Staff discussed the issue of a new national anthem, which he recommended should be referred to as a hymn to the sovereign, since the Hungarians had objected to the words 'Emperor' and 'Austria'. Also, each state could have its own text. And it must have looked like a re-ignition of the debate surrounding Prime Minister Stürgkh when on 2 May, Conrad, after negotiating the issue of the national anthem and coats of arms, continued: 'In general, I see the moment approaching when we must look towards the future constitutional organisation of the Monarchy; it is of no use to try to slip past this issue unnoticed and to shield our eyes against it. For this purpose, the Austrian half of the Empire most urgently needs a prime minister who is a real man, who knows how to act decisively and energetically and, in so doing, place the good of the entire Monarchy, in other words, the dynasty that belongs to us all, above his own separate interests, and who thus also has the power and the will to ruthlessly tackle the latter whenever they press forward to the detriment of the Monarchy as a whole. The fact that the full retention of a dynastic armed force is a fundamental requirement here, is clear.'<sup>1211</sup> All these questions occupied the mind of the Chief of the General Staff during this period, but he avoided saying even a single word, or a single sentence, about South Tyrol!

Finally, the Army High Command began to doubt whether Dankl and Krauss wanted to attack at all. Bitter disputes broke out, including within the Army High Command itself, in which the tone was full of hatred. On 8 May, the troops began to be moved again. This was not least a reaction to the fact that the Italians had got wind of the Austrian intention to attack. Since the end of April, they had continuously brought in reinforcements, a measure that presented far fewer difficulties for them than it did to the Austrian side, which was disadvantaged by the deep snow and poorer connections. However, the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Cadorna, could still not quite believe that the Austrians really intended to begin an offensive from the area around Folgaria and Lavarone through to Mount Pasubio. The Germans again made their presence felt and the German plenipotentiary at the Army High Command, Cramon, was again given the task of informing Conrad that perhaps the dubious enterprise should be brought to a halt and that the Imperial and Royal troops who would then be released should be sent to the German western front. Conrad rudely rejected the proposal, although, as Cramon reported, there were 'younger gentlemen' in the Army High Command who fully shared the opinion of the German Supreme Army Command.<sup>1212</sup> It was not before 9 May that Conrad officially informed Cramon about the planned operation, allowing him to look at the situation maps and deployment plans. A brief discussion followed regarding possibilities for diversionary offensives. However, at Verdun, 21 German divisions had already become stuck fast

and, while suffering terrible sacrifices, were attempting to put Falkenhayn's notion of 'blood tapping' into practice.

Cramon again wanted to know whether the Austrians were not afraid of a Russian diversionary offensive. After all, the first signs of a Russian offensive had been detected as early as 14 April 1915.<sup>1213</sup> Conrad assuaged his concerns, claiming that the Russians would not be in a position to attack. After the next march battalions had been incorporated, additional Imperial and Royal divisions could even be released from the Eastern Front and possibly also sent to Italy. But for now, the attack in the south-west must be made.<sup>1214</sup>

On 13 May, Conrad travelled to Vienna for the last time before the start of the offensive in order to inform the Emperor in person. It was still possible that the weather might put paid to the enterprise at the last minute and lead to a further delay. 'A month ago, this would have been an ambush', Conrad told the Monarch. Now, he said, it had become 'a duel'.<sup>1215</sup>

## The Attack

On 15 May 1916, the South Tyrol offensive, which in such an over-exaggerated and vindictive way had been labelled the 'punitive expedition', was launched. And so began a unique attempt in history to begin a huge operation with two armies – in other words, an entire army group – in a high and medium-range mountain region and to push through southwards towards the Veneto plain and the lowlands of the Po River. The power of the artillery fire and the storming of the Italian positions by the infantry masses across snow that was still 20 cm deep had an exceptional and almost unreal quality. It was the same kind of attempt at revolutionising warfare as the strategic concept of 'blood tapping' practiced by Falkenhayn at Verdun.

The two Imperial and Royal armies in the main area of attack comprised around 157,000 men altogether, while the Italian 1st Army facing them consisted of 114,000 men. With a superiority of numbers that was even less than one-and-a-half times the number of enemy troops, the balance of forces was not unequivocally clear. After preparatory fire that lasted about two hours, the infantry troops began to move. To the south of Rovereto, the troops of the Imperial and Royal VIII Corps (under General of Artillery Scheuchenstuel) made good progress. In the Terragnolo Valley, one locality after another was taken. In the Sugana Valley, the Italians were surprised outright by the Imperial and Royal XVII Corps (under General of Infantry Kritek), which belonged to the 3rd Army, and hastily retreated. The Austro-Hungarian artillery fired at the Italian positions and cleared the way for its own infantry. The excessively heavy guns, with a range of over 15 kilometres, were able to hit their targets with precision thanks to the

aerial surveillance, and a 35-cm *Marinekanone* naval gun already forced the command of the Italian 34th Division to leave Asiago after firing its second shot.

Almost nowhere were the Italians able to withstand the might of the Austro-Hungarian attack, and they retreated. They lost mountain ridges and valleys, were forced to abandon their barrier forts and were unable to re-establish themselves, despite the rapid arrival of the reserves. In all sections, the Austro-Hungarians succeeded in throwing the Italians out of their fiercely defended positions. Here and there, the attack faltered, such as in the area of the Piano della Fugazze in the Pasubio region. However, elsewhere, particularly where the XX Corps, the 'Heir Apparent' Corps, and the III Corps (under Major General Krautwald) collaborated, progress was made. On the fifth day of the offensive, the Imperial and Royal XX Corps had reached its operational target, the Astico Valley. This provided the opportunity to break through to the plain. However, there was one factor that quickly became a problem: the Army Group Command had already formulated an order in April, according to which human lives were to be spared as far as possible, an order that was addressed to the Commander of the 8th ('Kaiserjäger') Division, Major General Fabini. However, there were others to whom the recommendation to take more care with the lives of their soldiers was certainly also applicable. While this did not concord with the reckless forward drive that the Army High Command wished to see implemented, Archduke Eugen had his own ideas about how human life should be respected. For his part, Archduke Karl had directly issued an order for his corps prior to the start of the attack, and threatened to rigorously call to account any commander who reported excessive losses. It is not difficult to imagine how an order of this nature from a man who might become Emperor at any moment must have been received.

Instead of storming forwards and exploiting every opportunity that arose to pursue the retreating Italians, the Austro-Hungarian troops only moved behind tentatively. Interruptions occurred time and again, as considerations were taken as to whether to pull up the artillery and again begin systematic preparatory fire. However, in the rough terrain, and in particular when it came to crossing deep ravines, drawing the artillery first hundreds of metres downhill and then bringing it hundreds of metres back up again, led to extremely long delays. Instead of marching in advance in the valleys, sights continued to be set on the heights, which were still dominated by the Italians. Replenishments, particularly when it came to artillery ammunition, could not be maintained on the required scale even as early as the second day of attack.<sup>1216</sup> However, the advance steadily continued, and the Army High Command saw its 'most audacious expectations' exceeded.<sup>1217</sup> The Italian XVIII Corps was forced to surrender the Sugana Valley as far as Borgo. Now, the Army Group Command wanted both armies to proceed less systematically, but instead to rapidly pursue the retreating Italians and force them to make a disorderly withdrawal. Dankl, who had been promoted to the rank of full general on

1 May, disagreed: the fighting had shown that the greatest successes had been achieved when the most artillery had been used. At the other sections, there had been far less progress, and there had also been significantly higher losses there. Dankl refused to abandon the systematic preparation of the artillery and did not forward the order to his corps commanders to change tactic and begin the pursuit. However, he also declined to inform the Army Group Command of this fact.

The XX Corps inserted a rest day on 20 May, since, as Dankl had wished, the artillery was first to be brought up from behind before the advance was resumed.<sup>1218</sup> The events on this day in particular also showed that the Italians, in their constructed positions, in caverns and on mountain slopes, could not be dealt with by the infantry alone. The 11th Army was unable to move any further forward, and the Italians were only forced to surrender further mountain ridges to the III Corps, which was able to amass its 300 guns. Asiago and Arsiero, depopulated piles of rubble in the Italian defence and Austro-Hungarian attack areas, were taken. Now it really did seem to be simply a matter of descending into the lowlands.

In Cieszyn, there was confidence that the breakthrough to Thiene and Bassano would succeed. Then, however, the Imperial and Royal 5th Army on the Isonzo River was also to go on the offensive and bring about the finale of the 'guerra alle fronte italiana'. Cadorna was already planning to establish a new army, the Italian 5th Army, as a disaster force in the Vicenza and Padua area.<sup>1219</sup> It was conceivably uncertain whether the Italian brigades in the Vallarsa Valley, on the Zugna ridge and in the Pasubio region would succeed in keeping the divisions of the Imperial and Royal XXI Corps (under Major General von Lütgendorf) at bay. The Italian formations had withdrawn so quickly from the XX Corps that contact with them was even lost. However, time and again, the greatest problem for the Austro-Hungarian forces was bringing up the artillery and spurring the troops on to make a rapid pursuit. If the 'Heir Apparent' Corps lost not a single man on 23 May,<sup>1220</sup> then this may be regarded as particularly sparing of human life, but equally, it meant that there was practically no fighting, and that the corps did not move up behind the enemy. There was 'quiet ahead of the front'. However, the dynamic of the offensive continued to dwindle. Now, the Army Group Command tried other means: the Chief of Staff, Major General Alfred Krauß, travelled from Bolzano to Trento in order to persuade the 11th Army in particular to advance more rapidly. He wanted it to push through the valleys and to keep harassing the Italians. However, General Dankl rejected the idea of conducting such a 'valley thrust' without previously having occupied the accompanying mountain ridges. (There it was again, the theory of warfare regarding occupation of the heights!) Krauß was unable to enforce the implementation of the order from the army group, and finally had to remain content to threaten Dankl that he would have to answer for not obeying the command.<sup>1221</sup>

The Army Group Command continued to decline to intervene directly. It received reports, and passed on its impressions and recommendations. The Army High Command was unable par distance to decide whether the Army Group Command or Dankl was correct, or whether Major General Archduke Karl should not more decisively command his XX Corps to press ahead. However, the Army High Command did everything it could to release further Austro-Hungarian troops from the eastern front in order to make them available for transportation to the south-west.

On 21 May, at the moment when it must have been felt by everyone that Army Group Archduke Eugen had it in its power to conquer Italy, Emperor Franz Joseph ordered that the Command of the South-Western Front was to report directly to the Military Chancellery, and not via the circuitous route of the Army High Command. Clearly, the Monarch and those closest to him wished to be informed directly and comprehensively, and not simply by means of the 'Emperor's reports'. It can only be surmised that, in this way, not least dynastic interests were to be served by the introduction of a more independent command for Archduke Eugen. At any rate, Conrad was furious.<sup>1222</sup> He rightly regarded the measure as an unpleasant restriction of the field of competence of the Army High Command. 'What the Army High Command has done to deserve this', he wrote to Bolfras, 'I do not know, least of all now, after the Italian campaign.' However, it was indeed not yet 'after the Italian campaign.' The campaign was still in full swing. Yet it was Conrad more than anyone else who would not be robbed at any price of the success and satisfaction of having dealt Italy the death blow. He let it be known that the Army High Command had planned this offensive for months, and that he himself bore a large share of responsibility by having ordered the attack, even though Falkenhayn had made urgent attempts to dissuade him from doing so. The armed forces needed for the offensive could now 'be mustered [only at the cost of a] serious weakening of our Russian front and our Isonzo front'. Everything was interlinked: the railway transports, the telegraph facilities, and the supply of artillery. The Army High Command, he said, had made a conscious decision to remain reticent and 'only felt it necessary initially to intervene with regard to operations', when the Army Group Command ordered the offensive to Brentonico in the Valsugana Valley. The leadership must therefore remain in the hands of the Army High Command. What Conrad did not realise was that with the command facilities available at that time, it was impossible to lead a campaign from a distance of 800 kilometres, and what he refused to accept was that Archduke Eugen did indeed gain a certain degree of independence by reporting directly to the Military Chancellery. Conrad vigorously challenged this state of affairs. The operations, he claimed, should and must remain united under a single command. And to make his overall argument even clearer, he added on 23 May: 'I still have too strong memories of the extra aims that Potiorek attempted to pursue with his arrogant notions of independence at that time. [...] the facts have proven me right.'<sup>1223</sup>



The news of the successes in the South Tyrol offensive even held people like Josef Redlich in thrall, who in the interim only very rarely occupied himself with military developments in his diary records. 'Wednesday, 24 May. Magnificent progress by our splendid troops in South Tyrol: 24,000 prisoners, 250 cannon taken, almost the entire line from the Brenta to the Adige Rivers on Italian soil. What our old Austria is still capable of after two years of war! This will dampen the arrogance of those self-confident gentlemen in Berlin somewhat.'<sup>1224</sup> There they were again, the German phantoms. The newspapers reported in as much detail as possible on the successes of the Imperial and Royal troops. The war reports were embellished, individual achievements emphasised and, once again, a sense of euphoria spread. However, towards the end of the month, the names of the localities alone revealed that the attack was grinding to a halt.

With the slowing down of the Austrian offensive, for which to a certain extent it only had itself to blame, the Italians were able to gain time, and with the aid of their dense railway network set in motion a massive relocation of troops. They knew perfectly well that the war hung on a knife edge – and perhaps it really had been lost for the Central Powers on Mount Pasubio and around Asiago. Imagine that Conrad's concept would have proved successful, 250,000 Italians encircled and Italy were to have been overthrown!

During the last days of May, the two Imperial and Royal armies were now only able to make minor progress. And finally, the Italians were able to claim the two last massifs before the exit into the lowlands at Bassano and Thiene. A large number of peaks and mountain ridges that had achieved a symbolic character before had already been taken by the Imperial and Royal troops, or had finally come under their control after days and weeks of struggle: Monte Meletta, Monte Cimone, Monte Priafora and others. Almost the entire plateau of the Sette Comuni was in Austrian hands. The Italian barrier forts, which, like the Austrian facilities, were the pride of the army command, Monte Verena, Campolongo and Campomolon, which in 1915 had fired their deadly barrages at the Austrian forts of Verle and Lusern, had in some cases been detonated, and in others had fallen almost undamaged into the hands of the Austro-Hungarian troops. However, the Austrians were then not only prevented from emerging into the lowlands, but in some sections were thrown back. The Army High Command sent further reinforcements. One division was due to arrive from Boroević's 5th Army on the Isonzo; the prospect was held out of sending a further war-ready division from the Russian front.<sup>1225</sup> However, it remained to be seen whether it could be made available, since in the interim, a very different crisis began to rear its head on the north-eastern front. It was then Italian members of parliament who in the Chamber of Deputies in Rome found words to express the essential connection between South Tyrol and Russia: they had been 'saved by the Russians'.<sup>1226</sup>





**16 Lutsk:  
The End of an Illusion (II)**

16. Austro-Hungarian and German troops in the Carpathians at the beginning of 1915. During the course of the fighting in autumn 1914, the first German formations were inserted into the Imperial and Royal fronts in the east. The pinnacle of the joint conduct of war was the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive, which succeeded for the most part in reconquering Galicia. With the progression of the war and in view of the inescapable weaknesses of the Imperial and Royal troops, more and more German soldiers were inserted into the southern sector of the eastern front. Tensions were almost unavoidable.

In the garden of Moscow's Novodevichy Convent, close to the Moskva River, there is the grave of a Russian general whose name has become a synonym for the war in the east and above all for summer 1916: Aleksei A. Brusilov. The grave is marked by a simple stone made of red-brown marble and surrounded by a wrought iron fence. Although the text is a little faded, it is clear that even the Communist regime showed respect to this Tsarist troop leader, all the more since he placed himself at the disposal of the Bolshevik regime. For several weeks in June and July 1916, it had seemed as though Brusilov had it in his power to give the war a sudden turnaround in favour of Russia. And that was to be recognised across regimes.

### **The Brusilov Offensive**

On 6 December 1915, by means of an invitation from the French generalissimo General Joffre, senior representatives of the allied high commands had gathered together in Joffre's headquarters in Chantilly in order to discuss war plans for 1916. They had agreed to launch an attack at the earliest opportunity after March 1916 against the fronts of the Central Powers. This was designed to prevent the Germans and Austrians continuing to exploit the advantage of the inner line. The allied timing, however, had been mixed up by the beginning of the German attack on Verdun on 21 February 1916. All that could be attempted was to commence a relief offensive. The Italians did this with little success at the Fifth Battle of the Isonzo. The Russians, in their attempt to fulfil the pledge made at Chantilly, also suffered a heavy defeat in their attacks against the German Eastern Army in the so-called Lake Naroch Offensive between 18 March and the end of April. The offensive had been poorly prepared and the attempt had been made to carry it out by using tactical approaches that were in fact long since obsolete. The 'steamroller' had served out its time. And the strategic aim of releasing pressure on the allied front in France was missed by a long way and with considerable loss of life. Then, however, Aleksei Brusilov took over the Russian south-western front, a general who went to work with a very different aptitude than the average Russian military leaders from the cut of an Aleksei N. Kuropatkin or an Aleksei Evert, to name just two examples. Brusilov furthermore received enough time to prepare his offensive. Now, for the first time, the Russians also proceeded in such a way that they made use of experiences gathered on the front in Flanders, and in this way could offset those dis-

advantages that had recently allowed them to appear both tactically and operationally hopelessly inferior.

Brusilov had already repeatedly made things difficult for the Austro-Hungarian troops as the Commander of the Russian 8th Army. In autumn 1914, he had advanced to the west via Lviv (Lemberg), demolished the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army and enclosed Przemyśl for the first time. Then the 8th Army had been in the Carpathians and derailed three offensives of the Central Powers. And now the Russian general was to make a contribution to the allied conduct of the war, separate the German and the Austrian fronts and offset the defeats of 1915.

Brusilov wanted to lead the main thrust of his attack to Lutsk, against the Imperial and Royal 4th Army of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, who had already contributed in September 1915 to the painful setback in the 'black-yellow offensive'. Three corps of the Russian 8th Army were to commence this thrust towards Lutsk from the region of Olyka. Two other Russian armies were to support this offensive by means of accompanying thrusts. Brusilov even baffled his superiors with the claim that he did not need any additional formations but instead wanted to see if he had enough with the troops of his front. Since the Russian divisions had been completely filled out, masses of men were suddenly available again, like at the start of the war. The weaponry and the equipment had also been improved. Two corps of the Russian 8th Army were completely armed with Austrian rifles; a further 50,000 rifles from captured Imperial and Royal stockpiles were in reserve.<sup>1227</sup> These were all after-effects of the failure near Lutsk in 1915, the 'autumn swine' of the Imperial and Royal Army.

In May 1916, however, it appeared for the time being that the Central Powers exclusively held the initiative.

The Germans stormed Verdun and the Austrians struck out in South Tyrol. Ten days later, the Stavka asked Brusilov when he could begin his offensive, since the Italian High Command had most urgently requested a relief offensive in view of a defeat that could perhaps decide the war. The Chief of the Russian General Staff Mikhail V. Alekseev initially hesitated to forward this appeal. He nonetheless enquired with Brusilov whether he was ready to strike. Finally, the start of the offensive was fixed for 4th June. Alekseev, however, doubted to the last the method of attack on a broad front planned by Brusilov and implored him on the evening of 3 June to postpone the offensive, regroup and proceed against the Austrians with a narrow spearhead. Brusilov refused.

Since March it had been observed on the Imperial and Royal front that the Russians were attempting to negotiate the manoeuvring area. Deployment and provisioning were reported, without this producing any greater response than occasional attempts to disturb the Russians. Even sharp-worded orders from the army group commander, the German General Linsingen, could not dispel a certain languidness on the part of the Imperial and Royal troops. Officers and enlisted men did not appear in any

way troubled. They believed after the experiences of the *Neujahrsschlacht* (New Year's Battle) that they could repel the Russians at any time, and showed no ambition to risk their lives in local thrusts. The war would be decided elsewhere – if it had not already been decided. In any case, it had surely not been without effect that many of the best troops had been withdrawn for the South Tyrol offensive. Other divisions had been taken from the front for the purpose of 're-establishment' and helped with the cultivation of the fields in the spring.<sup>1228</sup> At the front were few who had already been tested and all the more replacement troops from the last march battalions. And only few of these had been subjected to hard battle training, but instead engaged in drill and attempted, above all, to make their positions and the accommodation in the rear areas 'liveable'. The numerical losses were offset and a total of around 800,000 soldiers and 16,000 officers sent to the eastern front. The departures came to just over 200,000 men and 4,000 officers. Thus, a healthy surplus remained.<sup>1229</sup> The artillery was increased and was to have sufficient ammunition. There had certainly also been losses and not only through the withdrawal of very good troop bodies but also as a result of considerable portions of the heavy artillery having been transported to South Tyrol. Nonetheless, inspections of the front were to the full satisfaction of the commanders. According to a report of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, the troops were healthy and looked very good; one could see the positive influence of the officers, the beneficial effect of the military surgeons and the senior commands. The positions had been outstandingly built and attempts were being made to improve them still further. Reports of inspections by German generals made for similar reading. The Russians had absolutely no chance with an offensive, not even 'beginner's luck' would grant them a limited victory, as the Chief of Staff of Army Group Linsingen, Colonel Stoltzmann noted.<sup>1230</sup> Four months, during which it had been possible to say 'nothing new on the eastern front', had created a misleading feeling of security.

Even the increasingly frequent news of goings-on on the Russian side of the front could change nothing about the rather sedate view of 'it won't be that bad'. In mid-May, an analysis of the most recent Russian offensive reached the staffs of the Central Powers: 'Experiences from the Russian March Offensive of 1916 against the German 10th Army'. The bottom line was that it should be no problem to fend off a Russian offensive. The infantry was not to be feared, the officers generally hung around somewhere behind their formations, primarily making sure that their soldiers did not flee, and the soldiers at the front had no experience of war.

Again, all warnings were thrown to the wind. Aerial intelligence reported time and again the preparations being made on the Russian side. In mid-May, the Russians had already dug five parallel trenches in order to bring their troops into their starting positions;<sup>1231</sup> the increase in enemy artillery was obvious and statements from prisoners of war pointed towards an attack on a broad front. The Imperial and Royal Army High

Command was eventually informed on detail about the Russian troop deployment and the impending attack. It also intercepted the Italian distress signal, which requested a commencement of the attack as soon as possible in order to provide relief in South Tyrol. But a last ditch effort to improve the Austro-Hungarian positions was not made until the end of May. Everything nevertheless appeared sufficiently prepared when the Brusilov Offensive broke loose on 4 June 1916.

On the first day, Cieszyn (Teschen) still believed that the Imperial and Royal Army was heading for another victory in a defensive battle, but then the Russian artillery fire increased. 'With a barrage of unforeseen strength, the Russians assailed an area of 500 paces deep', reported the Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich, Count Herberstein, on 20 June to the Emperor, 'and affected not only the actual fighting positions, whose crews were generally buried under the loose sand and topsoil in the shellproof dugouts, but also the held-back reserves, who in many cases suffered severe losses even before their deployment.'<sup>1232</sup> The nerves of the Imperial and Royal troops who had never before been under fire were soon at breaking point. 'Aside from the fact that the strong wire obstacles were destroyed by the enormous impact of this barrage, as a result of the dryness and lack of wind a huge, thick cloud of dust and smoke, often intermixed with asphyxiating gases, hovered the whole time over the entire fire zone, removed all visibility and frequently impaired breathing.'<sup>1233</sup> On the western front, in France and Belgium, such a barrage, and likewise poison gas, would no longer have been classified as extraordinary. In the east, however, this was something new. When the Russian storm troopers ran out of their trenches at close range, they succeeded in successfully storming the first Austro-Hungarian line. The deployment of the army and corps reserves did not take effect; there was a withdrawal to the second line and then the retreat to the third line began. The leadership of the 4th Army failed, and even the bravery of individual commanders and troops could change nothing about the situation. This marked the beginning of the calamity.<sup>1234</sup>

The Army High Command, as mentioned earlier, had admittedly been alarmed for a time, but had composed itself again as a result of the reports of the army commanders and the confidence at the front. Conrad recognised as early as 4 June, however, that the Russian offensive was something different to that which had been known since spring 1915. The celebrations on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Archduke Friedrich were not allowed to be disturbed, and offered up a torchlight procession and ovations that were worthy of the occasion. In the meanwhile, the Russians had discovered the first weak point of the front and concentrated on the section of the front of the 2nd Infantry Division, which consisted primarily of Viennese, Lower Austrians and Czechs, and the 70th Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) Infantry Division. Brusilov had hammered the idea into the heads of his subordinate commanders that they should pay particular attention to the sections of the front, where 'Slav' troop units would show less inclina-



tion to resist. In fact, it was far more promising to start there, where inexperienced units tended to give up easily and raise their hands in surrender. The Imperial and Royal 4th Army sent the 10th Cavalry Division, which had been held in reserve, to the critical section. Artillery ammunition was replenished, while sparing use of the ammunition was called for. As early as 5 June, Conrad advised the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, Cramon, that German troops would once more be required. Before a formal request reached Falkenhayn in Mézières, however, Falkenhayn let Cramon know that in order to fulfil this request the Army Command would have to draw on the reserves on the Italian front, including Trentino. 'That is bitter, but I see no other way.'<sup>1235</sup> The deterioration of the situation induced Falkenhayn to then undertake minor transfers of German troops on the eastern front, but this had no impact.

On 6 June, the front of the Imperial and Royal 4th Army collapsed. A dent in the front, 75 kilometres deep and 20 kilometres wide, had emerged. The commander of the army group, General Linsingen, demanded the dismissal of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. The Army High Command joined in the call for an immediate dismissal, and on 7 June an archduke was relieved in the middle of a battle, which constituted a novelty. Instead of Joseph Ferdinand, General of Cavalry Nadas von Tersztyánszky assumed command of the 4th Army, the same general who had not been allowed to lead the campaign against Serbia due to his conflict with Tisza and had since been at the 'disposal of the Supreme Commander', i.e. doomed to inaction. Whether it was very clever to appoint a general who was rumoured to be ruthless and who had been removed from his post due to a dispute with Tisza to command an army of which about half were Honvéd troops, can be left open.<sup>1236</sup> The blame for the failure of the Imperial and Royal 4th Army was again apportioned not only to a single commander or staff. It was later discovered that large parts of the Moravian Infantry Regiment No. 8 had deserted to the Russians. Thus, it was once more Czechs who were identified as the ones who had apparently failed and provoked a crisis. This was a circumstance that was noted above all by the Germans.<sup>1237</sup> 'Unfortunately, our military situation has shifted over these days as a result of the truly woeful route of the brave fraternal allies on the Stryi [River], which led to the loss of Lutsk', noted the Prussian War Minister. 'Falkenhayn was furious, and rightly so! During this grave struggle, however, we cannot allow entire divisions to abandon their artillery and desert to the enemy. [...] Falkenhayn wanted immediately to telegraph Conrad with the greatest coarseness.'<sup>1238</sup> Instead, he decided on an immediate meeting. Hectic consultations began.

At the time of the change in command of the 4th Army, the Russians attacked once more near Lutsk. The bridgehead collapsed. To the south, the Russians succeeded in an ancillary attack that culminated in the battle of Okna 30 kilometres north of Czernivtsi (Czernowitz), in making a deeper incision against the Imperial and Royal 7th Army of

General Pflanzer-Baltin. Here, as in the case of the adjoining formations to the north, there had been initial confidence that the Russian onslaught could be successfully withstood, but then the same happened as with the 4th Army. 'The woeful Ruthenians have deserted once more in droves', observed the German side.<sup>1239</sup> The decisive breakthrough of the Russians had in fact succeeded against the 79th Honvéd Infantry Brigade, which had replaced troops that had been withdrawn to Tyrol because of their particular aptitude in battle. Of the 5,200 men in the brigade, 4,600 fell, were wounded or were taken prisoner. It was a similar story with the 42nd Honvéd Infantry Division, which had a high proportion of Croats. Around 7,000 soldiers surrendered.<sup>1240</sup> 'Our position south of the Dniester was transformed into a heap of rubble and wreckage as a result of the barrage of heavy artillery lasting several hours across an expanse of more than 6,000 m. [...] Our brave Honvéd troops were literally buried, and when the barrage ended and the curtain fire began, entire columns could be seen being marched off into Russian captivity', established the army chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Zeynek.<sup>1241</sup> The troops melted away; there could be no thought of an orderly, staggered retreat. A large part of the troops in the first line were taken prisoner, and after contact had been lost between the individual units, a unified battle command ceased to exist. Pflanzer-Baltin's army was leaderless. A new front could not be established until 11 June.<sup>1242</sup>

A few days earlier, the Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich had been called to Vienna to submit a report to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor.<sup>1243</sup> General Bolfras was to tell him at the request of the Emperor that the latter wished to be informed of events more promptly and more comprehensively. He could read more in the daily newspaper *Fremdenblatt* than in the so-called imperial reports of the Army High Command. Herberstein, however, was only able to report of a catastrophe in the making. He had no knowledge of the details. On 13 June, the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer himself travelled to Cieszyn. There were murmurings that this mission would end in the same way as that of Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich von Beck following the Battle of Königgrätz. It had also been Marterer who had initiated Potiorek's dismissal. For the time being, however, there were no further dramatic personnel measures. Marterer may, however, have been informed of the accusations made behind closed doors against the 'household' of Cieszyn. The formula 'hibernation, women, hunt, concerts' sought to explain why catastrophe threatened in the east, although the Russians had already long since been denied the capacity to attack.<sup>1244</sup> Some commanders, such as that of the 7th Army, General Pflanzer-Baltin, had been joined by his wife, whilst others had brought their entire family to the headquarters. This did not necessarily mean that anyone had lost sight of his duties as a result, but it certainly left behind a bad impression. And when the family members of various high-ranking personalities were hurriedly returned with automobiles, whilst the wounded were left behind, then it was nothing short of a scandal.<sup>1245</sup> The following

day, Marterer reported to the Emperor. The Monarch and the chiefs of the Military Chancellery discussed the military situation for more than three hours.<sup>1246</sup>

It was as though the Army High Command were paralysed. For days on end, it stood by and watched how the Eastern Front disintegrated in the area of two armies, and saw that nothing could be done by means of issuing orders alone. German assistance did not come, and Conrad could not yet bring himself to immediately abandon the South Tyrol offensive, since it had been more than just any campaign. It had been a 'punitive expedition', an attack with the strategic aim of destroying the Italian Army and punishing the 'perfidious' former ally. And yet, at the time of the start of the Brusilov Offensive the failure of the South Tyrol offensive had in any case already become clear.

It was cause for the wildest speculation: was it possible to leave the Russian theatre of war and, above all, the command of the Imperial and Royal troops to the Germans, thus saddling them with the sole responsibility? Was it possible to make another push in South Tyrol, thus showing the Germans a unique opportunity to decide the outcome of the war? Would an immediate change at the top of the Army High Command change anything? None of these thoughts were anything more than a mirage, however. Instead of investing additional forces in the offensive to Bassano, two divisions were rerouted to Russia. It was clear, however, that they would arrive too late. Yet, Falkenhayn stepped in after all, directed a division from the Eastern Front High Command to the Army Group Linsingen, and heralded two further divisions from the west. He wanted to know, however, what Conrad was doing to overcome the crisis. He therefore requested him on 8 June to attend an urgent meeting in Berlin.

It was not by chance that Conrad had the feeling of going on a penitential pilgrimage. He had nothing more to offer and could now only make claims and requests, since divisions could not simply be pulled out of South Tyrol, either. The Italians had meanwhile been able to strengthen themselves to such an extent that they now became dangerous. Where an Austro-Hungarian division had previously been confronted by one Italian brigade, it now faced up to ten.<sup>1247</sup> Conrad's adjutant, Kundmann, noted on the meeting in Berlin: '[The] boss doesn't have it in him to speak forcibly with Falkenhayn, always like the naughty schoolboy towards the teacher upbraiding him. I came in during the meeting and [the] boss had his head between his hands and was staring at the map.'<sup>1248</sup> Later, Conrad was supposed to have said that he would rather be given ten slaps in the face than have to again participate in such negotiations in Berlin.<sup>1249</sup> In spite of the miserable state of affairs and Conrad's gestures of humility, Falkenhayn did not offer very much, and above all nothing that might endanger his own plans for Verdun and the Somme. Thus, all that was left for Conrad to do was to break off the South Tyrol offensive, since the artillery was also needed in the north-east. Both general staff chiefs still believed, however, that it was a case of limiting the damage and that Linsingen would iron things out again with a counteroffensive. In Italy, lines should

only be won in the Arsiero region that were easier to defend. Then, the fronts should be stabilised everywhere.

On 10 June, however, Pflanzer-Baltin's 7th Army disintegrated. The balance had been tipped because the South Tyrol offensive had not only been abandoned, but the rapid transportation of troops and artillery to the Russian front had been ordered. There, two developments took hold: the Brusilov Offensive continued, omitted the Germans, repeatedly affected the Imperial and Royal troops, forced them back, scattered them and called into question their manageability. In order to re-establish order, ever more Austro-Hungarian large military formations were subordinated to General Linsingen and his army group, so that the German area of command was suddenly extended. As a result of the catastrophe with Pflanzer-Baltin's 7th Army, stabilisation could once more only be achieved with German assistance. General von Seeckt, who since the end of the Balkan campaign had been more or less idly hanging around with the still extant Army Group Mackensen in Skopje, directly applied for a command on the Russian front in the area of the 7th Army, though everything had to be placed under German command in order to establish order and achieve results. Conrad fought tooth and nail against this German dominance. He attempted to avert this development by making counter-proposals. Schneller noted on 12 June: 'We are now without doubt in the hands of the Germans.' On this day, Seeckt's insertion as 'Senior Chief of Staff' (*Oberstabschef*) with the Imperial and Royal 7th Army was announced. The incumbent 'normal' chief of staff of the 7th Army, Colonel Zeynek responded to this by saying: 'Here a firstborn really has been sold for a pot of lentils, since it was a question of the fundamental issue of the quality of military leadership by Austrian or Prussian generals.'<sup>1250</sup> Zeynek departed for a long vacation, since he did not want to serve as chief of staff under Seeckt. On the same day, Falkenhayn made the suggestion to place the entire territory south of the Pripyat Marshes – and this was the territory in which the Austro-Hungarian armies were fighting – under the command of Field Marshal Mackensen. Conrad again made counter-proposals, which Falkenhayn rejected. Falkenhayn now had a clear objective in mind, and the events of 8 to 12 June had ultimately only been a foretaste of what was to come.

The Army High Command ordered the South-Western Front in Tyrol to go on the defensive. A dispatch to the army group command stated that the Army High Command would shortly make its personnel decisions. Practically the entire leadership was to be replaced. Beforehand, Archduke Friedrich wanted only to liaise with his brother, Archduke Eugen. Archduke Eugen, however, had very similar intentions. He dismissed the Commander of the 11th Army and former National Defence Commander in Tyrol, Baron von Dankl, due to the 'insubordination' of the command. Dankl had apparently taken too literally the order of the heir to the throne to spare lives, and refused to allow troops to attack without sufficient and systematic artillery preparation. The army group command could demand whatever it wanted, but Dankl simply refused to follow the

orders of his superior. His chief of staff, Brigadier Kletus Pichler, was also dismissed. These were effectively only measures that aimed at making someone responsible for the failure. The defeat of Italy had failed. And in view of the, as it seemed, unstoppable advance of the Russians in the direction of Lviv and Hungary, the discontinuation of the 'punitive expedition' appeared not only self-evident but also the only way to avoid a catastrophe. And it was also a perfectly plausible excuse for being forced over large sections to retreat to the initial positions. On the Eastern Front, however, the Army High Command, as Cramon reported to Falkenhayn, abstained from 'any influence or operational directive' to the Army Group Linsingen, and Conrad also emphasised to Falkenhayn in conclusion of a telegram 'that I am aware of the consequences of the failure, which has come about against all likelihood, thus also the self-denial, which is inflicted on me as a result'.<sup>1251</sup> Falkenhayn did not honour any gestures of humility, however, no more than he allowed himself to be irritated to any extent out of any mood of defiance. He became increasingly more challenging, did not want to be either advised or contradicted by Conrad, and eventually became so harsh and insulting that Conrad no longer gave him any reply on 20 June.

On this day, Count Herberstein, the Adjutant General of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, was once more summoned to Vienna. In the opinion of the Imperial Military Chancellery, the reports still left a lot to be desired, for which reason Herberstein should once more report directly. He did this and remained for over an hour with the Emperor. Franz Joseph admittedly fell asleep briefly during the audience. Now, however, he was more comprehensively informed and visibly shaken.<sup>1252</sup> The same afternoon, Herberstein informed ministers Burián and Krobatin. They also appeared not to have been previously aware of the extent of the Russian offensive. But an end to the catastrophe was not yet in sight. An initial, cautious stocktake of losses among the Imperial and Royal armies affected by the Brusilov Offensive revealed a minus of around 200,000 soldiers, whereby a differentiation had to be made between the 4th Army, whose losses could be mainly attributed to the capture or desertion of tens of thousands, and the 7th Army, which explained the drop in its combat strength to 57 per cent predominantly with tens of thousands of fallen and wounded. But the 7th Army also lost tens of thousands as prisoners of war. Pflanzer's 7th Army lost Chernivtsi, the capital city of Bukovina, which thus had to be left to the Russians a second time. Conrad pointed most emphatically to the consequences of a loss of Bukovina, since in that case it could be expected that Romania would enter the war. Telephone dispatches that were intercepted and deciphered by the Army High Command during the two following days, confirmed this threat. The Italian Foreign Minister Sonnino sent telegrams concerning this matter both to Bucharest and also to Petrograd (as St. Petersburg had been renamed following the outbreak of war).<sup>1253</sup> The Imperial and Royal Army High Command decrypted them.

It was once more necessity that forced Conrad to resume official communication with his German counterpart. He travelled to Berlin in order to discuss the necessary operations. He had a repetition of the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive in mind, though in another region, and he was not sufficiently aware that such reruns can never be accomplished. However, the idea to carry out a large, joint offensive in the southern section of the front, where the South Army under the German General Bothmer stood, though with predominantly Austro-Hungarian troops, as well as the Imperial and Royal 7th Army, gradually took shape. Falkenhayn even made a rather surprising suggestion, which apparently took consideration of the alliance partner: the new army group should be placed under the command of the heir to the Austrian throne, whilst Seeckt should be added as chief of staff and should lead the operations. The proposal was magnificently conceived. Conrad could hardly reject the option, since he would otherwise have had to accept a German army group commander. Conrad's weak references to General Böhm-Ermolli constituted merely a minor quibble.

Fetching the heir to the throne back from South Tyrol and his further military reevaluation understandably caused a stir in the Army High Command, since it was unthinkable – in contrast to the case of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand – to criticise the leadership of the army group or to demand the dismissal of the heir to the throne. The heir to the throne would also be placed a little under German trusteeship, however. The Army High Command could see no way out. For the Germans, however, the situation was clear: if Archduke Karl were to receive such a senior command, it could be assumed that the Emperor, the Military Chancellery and *nolens volens* also the Army High Command would give the heir to the throne those forces that would guarantee him success. Thus, everything spoke in favour of the Army Group Commander Archduke Karl Franz Josef.

Ultimately, there was no way out for Conrad. On 30 June, when he was ordered to attend an audience at the Schönbrunn Palace, he characterised the appointment of the heir to the throne as 'a worrying affair'.<sup>1254</sup> Something was muttered about 'Solferino' and remonstrations were made against a premature wearing out of the heir to the throne, but the Emperor was understandably agitated by events and very aware that the Germans were building him a type of golden bridge. Conrad attempted during his almost two-hour audience to obtain legitimacy for his arguments. Immediately afterwards – which was unique during the course of the war – the Chief of the Military Chancellery Bolfras, War Minister Krobatin, Foreign Minister Burián, and Prime Ministers Tisza and Stürgkh were brought in and the discussion continued for a further two hours. Then the decision was made: Emperor Franz Joseph agreed to the appointment of the heir to the throne as army commander. Karl himself travelled to Vienna on 2 July and was informed about the results of the consultations. If he raised any objections, they were swept under the carpet. The Archduke was very aware, however, that the last

word had already been spoken. Karl Franz Josef became Commander of the 12th Army, to which the Imperial and Royal 7th Army and the German South Army were then subordinated. He thus led de facto three armies, i.e. an army group. Seeckt became his chief of staff and Colonel von Waldstätten, who had already accompanied Karl to South Tyrol, where he had been his chief of staff with the XX Corps, became his General Staff Officer 'for special purposes' (*'zur besonderen Verwendung'*). One of the corps commanders, and indeed the Commander of the Imperial and Royal VI Corps, soon made a name for himself as well, namely General of Infantry Arz von Straußenburg. Waldstätten and Arz soon became indispensable to the heir to the throne.

### The Hindenburg Front

The Germans had not automatically succeeded in appearing as saviour and military miracle worker, since the attacks of the Army Group Linsingen and, finally, attempts to push Pflanzer's 7th Army forward again, both failed. The German divisions and corps transferred to Bukovina were also unable to force their way through. This may have comforted the Austrians. Nevertheless, there were increased tensions, since as usual one side shifted the blame to the other: there had been too little support, the troops had failed, they were led poorly or 'the Prussians' could not win the trust of the troops, which frequently consisted of Landsturm (reserve forces) and newly arrived march battalions. But it was the Imperial and Royal troops who repeatedly suffered severe setbacks. Brody was lost, the 4th Army suffered new defeats, and Böhm-Ermolli's 2nd Army plunged into a crisis. The arrival of the divisions rolling in from South Tyrol was delayed, so that German divisions once more had to be relocated and deployed in emergency actions. Pflanzer, whose dismissal had been pursued for weeks by Falkenhayn and who was not popular with the heir to the throne, was driven back to the Carpathians. Now things seemed to revolve around Hungary.

But it was a completely different section of the eastern front where something decisive was being prepared, namely the region north of the Pripyat Marshes around Baranovichi. There, the Russian 4th Army (Evert) had gone on the offensive, but – unlike Brusilov – had been massively reinforced and failed in the initial stages, although the main weight had again and not coincidentally been directed against an Imperial and Royal Corps, the XII Corps (General of Infantry Henriquez). This was of course grist for the mill of those who claimed that the same could not happen with Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Woyrsch, etc. as had happened with Friedrich, Conrad, Pflanzer and the other 'Comrades Lace-Up'.

With this, those who demanded that the entire Imperial and Royal north-eastern front be placed under a German commander received a new impetus. And this demand

received support at the court in Vienna and among many Austrian and Hungarian politicians. A strong voice had been above all that of the influential Hungarian Count Gyula Andrásy the Younger, who, 'stressing the imminent disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, has positively requested Hindenburg'.<sup>1255</sup> However, a curious constellation emerged: Falkenhayn, who had registered a considerable drop in prestige and influence as a result of the poor position of the German troops at Verdun and after the beginning of the allied counteroffensive on the Somme, saw himself once again threatened by dismissal and replacement by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. In this way, the interests of Conrad and Falkenhayn joined for rather irrational reasons, since neither of them wanted an extension of the power of the duumvirate in the Eastern Front High Command. Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, on the other hand, worked consistently to extend the influence of Hindenburg, since he needed the reputation of this man in order to overcome the symptoms of the crisis, which were also becoming palpable in Germany.<sup>1256</sup> The Chancellor pointed to the magical power of the name of Hindenburg and ultimately, on 3 July, nothing else was left for Falkenhayn to do but propose to the Emperor the establishment of a 'Hindenburg front' in the east. Now, however, it was suddenly the German Kaiser who hesitated and feared a personal loss of prestige if he appointed Hindenburg. The Eastern Front High command finally submitted a formal application for the subordination of all troops of the Central Powers and attempted to make this palatable to the Imperial and Royal Army High Command by holding out the prospect of extensive German support for Volhynia and Galicia.

Whether he wanted to or not, Falkenhayn had to forward the proposal to Cieszyn. The German Plenipotentiary General, August von Cramon, called on Conrad in order to present the plan to him, found the latter with his wife Gina in a coffee house (which irritated Cramon beyond measure) and, as he noted, 'surrounded by a throng of prying eyes and waiters', presented the proposal, as per his instructions. He 'naturally [suffered] a rebuff'.<sup>1257</sup>

Conrad opposed with vehemence a reorganisation of this nature. But did he even have any room for manoeuvre left? The Austro-Hungarian north-eastern front was on the point of collapse, and since it could not be assumed that the Russians had become so hugely superior overnight, that their soldiers were suddenly much better than the Austro-Hungarians, or that the Austrian generals, General Staff, staff officers or subalterns, likewise the NCOs and soldiers, had suddenly become so much worse and could no longer lead and fight, something else must have been going on. Shortages could be observed, above all in the case of ammunition for the heavy artillery, since the South Tyrol offensive had been built not least on vast artillery superiority. There, however, all stockpiles had been used up. At the same time, the battles in East Galicia, Poland and Bukovina required more than could be continuously produced. However, none of this is enough to explain why the Imperial and Royal armies collapsed.



Now, for the first time, the consequences of only superficially successful personnel management manifested themselves very clearly. It seemed that it had been repeatedly possible up till this point to offset the enormous loss of human life, but in reality nothing could be substituted entirely and nothing at all could be undone. Many high-ranking and senior officers continued to fail to measure up. Since 1914, tens of thousands of officers had attempted to lead their troops and spur them on through their personal example and tireless commitment. The result was that the loss of officers was proportionally considerably higher than the losses of enlisted men, and that tens of thousands had fallen or were no longer fit for the front. It had never been possible to completely replace them. The soldiers had been overexploited, whether by being ruthlessly forced forward, as in the Balkans, or by being sent into severe fighting without appropriate familiarisation, where they were then decimated. Since late autumn 1914, desertions had increased, which was something that was absolutely unknown to the Germans in these proportions. Hundreds of thousands of Austro-Hungarian soldiers had in the meantime crossed over to the enemy, above all to the Russians. If tested and reliable soldiers were to be deployed anywhere, they had to be positively scraped together.

The Austrian and the Hungarian Prime Ministers levelled serious accusations at each other due to the insufficient exploitation of the military strength of the respective halves of the Empire. Both of them referred to privilege. Count Tisza claimed to be able to detect unauthorised exemptions in Austria and 'that the process of the subordinate official bodies, at least in some parts of Austria, allowed more room for the consideration of convenience, for economic interests and for shirking than is the case in Hungary'.<sup>1258</sup> The Imperial and Royal Prime Minister, however, pointed for his part to the fact that the long occupation of Poland had meant an enormous loss of troops that could otherwise have been enlisted, namely around 60,000 men. Furthermore, the Russians had destroyed the military records during their retreat from Galicia and Bukovina, so that an overview could only gradually be gained again regarding who could be called up for military service. It could be established, furthermore, that Hungary tied an excessive number of men to agriculture who would otherwise have been eligible for military service, namely more than 120,000; in Austria, the number was half as big. On the other hand, in the Austrian half of the Empire there were very many conscripts exempted from service at the front in order to work in industries vital to the war effort.<sup>1259</sup> Finally, Count Tisza believed that he could end the dispute by observing that in Hungary, state and society had waged 'the struggle for life and death [...] in a more unified way, more energetically and more uncompromisingly than was the case in Austria'. Stürgkh did not want to leave this unopposed, either.<sup>1260</sup> The Prime Ministers mutually made the case, however, for drastically reducing the exemptions and sending as many able-bodied men as possible to the replacement formations.

Four commissions had the task of scouring the garrisons in the corps command areas on the look-out for able-bodied men for service at the front. The commissions were empowered to order anyone on leave to report for duty, to ascertain the medical condition of the person in question and to oblige the suitable men to return to service before the expiry of their leave.<sup>1261</sup> Shirkers had been searched for previously, but now the required fitness levels were lowered and those who had been returned to civilian life previously or classified as 'less fit' were now drafted. Authorities and departments were inspected unannounced and in this way tens of thousands were called up by a single commission.<sup>1262</sup> The most well-known general officer to spread such disquiet was Brigadier Josef Teisinger. 'Teisinger is coming!' became an alarm and sayings associated with the General were repeatedly quoted: 'The trench air will strengthen your weak heart', or 'You don't need to lift the arm that hurts you; you only need to shoot with it'.<sup>1263</sup> The 'Teisinger Action' was ultimately only a drop in the ocean. It could not be prevented that there were repeatedly sections with too few, unreliable, poorly trained or physically and mentally unfit troops. If they got into difficulties, then they tended all too quickly to drop everything, so that during retreats huge amounts of weapons and armaments were also lost. This could also not completely and not immediately be offset, although the Austro-Hungarian armaments industry achieved its highest levels of output at precisely this time.

From raw iron and steel, via practically all weapons, to the ammunition for infantry and artillery, in 1916 the highest manufacturing figures of the entire war were recorded. Complaints about a lack of war material could only have a palliative effect, for what did they amount to in view of reports that positions were evacuated so quickly, that artillery could no longer be withdrawn and instead fell into Russian hands, or considering the number of prisoners of war, which reached the tens of thousands and, ultimately, the hundreds of thousands? From a total loss of 475,000 men among the Imperial and Royal troops as a result of the Brusilov Offensive, 226,000 prisoners of war were counted. With figures like this, rifles and guns really could get scarce.

The causes of the signs of disintegration were in fact far more deep-seated, and the reports of a tremendous war weariness in Hungary and elsewhere, which appeared as early as the beginning of July 1916, allow the conclusion that the willingness to continue fighting had slackened in general and that civilians and soldiers were not only tired of the war but also that no-one any longer saw any sense in the fight against the Russians. The soldiers did not want to go on, they had to some extent lost faith in their officers, leadership was failing, and the operational ability of the staffs was in many cases unconvincing. The result was a hasty evacuation of sections and, even more noticeable, surrenders on a mass scale.

Faith in Conrad had been successively damaged, and this faith had dwindled dramatically in particular in the Foreign Ministry. Thus, it was the political leadership,

Minister Burián, the Austrian ambassador in Berlin, Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe, and other representatives of the Foreign Ministry, who involved themselves increasingly in the question as to whether the command in the east should not be transferred to the Germans. This was all overlaid by the dramatic development that was looming in Romania: the country that had waited even more than Italy for the most favourable moment to enter the war was evidently on the verge of taking this step. In Conrad's eyes, the moment had therefore come in which the Central Powers would collapse. He saw one possibility to still prevent this, namely if the Germans and the Austrians jointly aimed a major strike against the southern flank of the Russian front. Conrad was prepared to do everything to bring this about: he even accepted Falkenhayn's suggestion of transferring a Turkish corps to the Galician front. Finally, he beseeched the Foreign Minister to emphatically make a request to Berlin to assist the threatened eastern front, and for the first time he was prepared to back down on the question of the supreme command.<sup>1264</sup>

Hohenlohe intervened with Bethmann-Hollweg. Thus, it was no longer the case that questions of operational command were discussed purely at the military level between Conrad and Falkenhayn; they now became the subject of foreign policy. In this way, something quite positive in itself had happened, namely the return of the conduct of war to the political arena, but this was not in fact quite the case, since to be precise it was in fact foreign policy that had been placed in the service of the war. What had been achieved by this step manifested itself immediately. Bethmann-Hollweg, who assured Hohenlohe that he would champion Vienna's cause, promptly recommended to Falkenhayn that he 'buy' the strengthening of the eastern front from the Imperial and Royal Army High Command by expanding Hindenburg's command. The problem, however, was that it was precisely this that Falkenhayn did not want to do, since the creation of the Hindenburg front would inevitably directly affect him. He rejected the proposal. Burián did not give up. He knew – or believed he knew, as did others in Vienna – that Conrad's standing with Emperor Franz Joseph had suffered enormously.<sup>1265</sup> He joined forces with the Permanent Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry, Gottfried von Jagow, who was for his part working on the German Emperor, just like Bethmann-Hollweg. The war weariness of Hungary, the potential Romanian entry into the war, and the necessity to retain Bulgaria as an active ally – which was impossible for Austria-Hungary, though perhaps still possible for Germany – also persuaded Kaiser Wilhelm to see the Hindenburg problem in a new light. Conrad was once more invited to a conference in Berlin on 18 July. Alone the frequency of the meetings at the highest level in Berlin, for which there was nothing comparable in Vienna, could be understood as a signal. But no tangible results were achieved this time either. Conrad reported to the Military Chancellery – at its request – at considerable length on the course of the conference, and emphasised his main arguments: even a Hindenburg was unable to

achieve anything without troops. It was not the commander who was important but the sending of German troops. Furthermore, in spite of the extension of German influence, in the event of a declaration of war by Romania, it could happen that the German Empire might undertake nothing against Italy or against Romania and perhaps even conclude peace with Russia, Italy and Romania at the expense of Austria. Lastly, Conrad complained about the 'diplomatic impact on purely military matters', and requested that Emperor Franz Joseph prohibit this.<sup>1266</sup> Privately, he wrote to Bolfras: 'Since the unfavourable events of the war in the north, there has been a relentless, nervous interference of the Foreign Ministry as well as the Prime Ministers in the conduct of the war, which I regard at all times, but especially in critical times, as exceedingly worrying, all the more so since the Foreign Ministry in particular proves itself to be responsive to different influences, including external ones.' Finally, he stressed that he could at any time resign from his post, should he so wish. 'It would never occur to me to cling to my post, if trust was denied to me or doubts were raised about my ability to continue to fulfil this post for the good of our cause.'<sup>1267</sup> The only person who appeared to steadfastly stand by Conrad was Archduke Friedrich, although even his Adjutant General, Brigadier Count Herberstein, had in the meantime crossed over into the camp of the opponents of Conrad.<sup>1268</sup>

From Berlin, the question ultimately reached the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Imperial and Royal High Command, General Cramon, as to whether he did not regard it as sensible for Kaiser Wilhelm to address Emperor Franz Joseph directly and demand the dismissal of Conrad. Cramon advised against it, although he barely had anything positive to say about Conrad, or wanted to for that matter. As far as he was concerned, the Chief of the General Staff had spent a little too much time in the Albrecht Grammar School, the headquarters of the Army High Command in Cieszyn. In the eyes of Cramon, he was a 'paper strategist' who was already moreover exhibiting signs of 'senility'.<sup>1269</sup> Cramon later noted that he had only advised against Conrad's dismissal because he feared that if the Imperial and Royal Army were to be deprived of its idolised Chief of the General Staff, then despondency would gain considerable ground. So far, only the hinterland had lost its faith in the genius of Conrad; the soldiers, however, still believed in him.<sup>1270</sup>

The 'Hindenburg front' was eventually realised, after all. On 20 July 1916, the Russians broke through the positions of the Imperial and Royal 1st Army (Puhallo), and a day later the Army had to be withdrawn a long way back. Day after day, Burián wrote about the Romanian danger. Bethmann Hollweg and Permanent Secretary von Jagow worked on Kaiser Wilhelm, who did not want to hear of any threat of war from coming from Romania. On 21 July, Conrad travelled to Vienna and argued as before. He especially pointed out to the Emperor that in the event of German overall command on the eastern front, two-thirds of Austro-Hungarian troops would be under German

command; Falkenhayn himself had seized the argument that the damage done to the prestige of the Army High Command together with the demoralisation of the Austro-Hungarian troops would complete the collapse of the Imperial and Royal Army, and Falkenhayn had finally noted that only Conrad, not Hindenburg, could keep the Slav troops in line.<sup>1271</sup> The latter was a particularly shaky argument, however, since under Conrad's leadership numerous regiments with large Slav components had already after all proved to no longer be obedient, whilst under Hindenburg's command and that of other German commanders, troops from the Slav lands of the Habsburg Monarchy had fought with enormous commitment. It was the Military Chancellery of the Emperor that opened the eyes of the Chief of the General Staff regarding Falkenhayn's stance: 'A large intrigue is being played out here. The aim is to constrain him.' Falkenhayn was not well-liked in Germany.<sup>1272</sup>

Further discussions and machinations took place, though the inner-German controversy between Falkenhayn and Ludendorff played a much larger role in the ultimate decision on the command on the Russian front, than perhaps the continual influence of the Foreign Ministry or Hungarian politicians. The latter only contributed to strengthening the aversion in the Army High Command towards Hungary. Finally, in at a high-level conference in Pszczyna (Pleß) planned for 27 July 1916, an initial decision was made. Kaiser Wilhelm had invited Archduke Friedrich and the heads of the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command to Pszczyna. Two hours before official talks began, the German Kaiser and the Archduke met for a one-on-one talk. Friedrich was extremely nervous. His Adjutant General noted: 'In his shyness, the poor gentleman has the feeling of being led to the slaughter, and sweats on the outbound journey with agitation.'<sup>1273</sup> But Kaiser Wilhelm treated him with particular kindness. All in all, the Germans approached the matter very wisely. Since they evidently knew that the Adjutant General of the Archduke was convinced of the necessity of a joint command and without a doubt exerted influence on the 'Imperial and Royal grandpa', Count Herberstein was given additional grooming. Whilst Kaiser Wilhelm spoke with Archduke Friedrich, Herberstein sat with the Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, von Jagow, who was a particular advocate of joint command. Afterwards, Wilhelm, Friedrich, Conrad, Hindenburg and Ludendorff retired to a lounge in a corner of the Castle of Pszczyna.

On one decisive point, Friedrich did not want to back down: he opposed the joint command on all fronts of the Central Powers. He was most certainly not concerned about his own status, since he had in any case been increasingly neutralised and he was barely interested anymore in exercising leadership. During the serious setbacks on the Russian front, he had primarily cultivated the garden in Cieszyn and then made a considerable effort to build his grandson Nikolaus a hut complete with a bombproof shelter.<sup>1274</sup> Since Conrad so strictly opposed the joint command, however, and he was

also present at the negotiations in the lounge area, the Archduke did not want to adopt a fundamentally different point of view. At least a partial victory was achieved by the advocates of the joint command: Hindenburg should in addition command only the Army Group Linsingen, which was fighting south of the Pripyat Marshes, and ultimately – corresponding to a wish of Conrad's – also the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, which had lost Brody whilst the talks in Pszczyna were taking place. The 'Hindenburg front' now stood, although the German field marshal was formally tied to the Imperial and Royal High Command for the operations south of the Pripyat Marshes. Hindenburg set up his headquarters in Brest-Litovsk (now Brest).

Just as this was being finalised, the Russians hammered anew against the Austro-Hungarian sections. They did this in the intention, already explained to the Entente powers, of driving Austria-Hungary from the field. The Imperial and Royal 4th Army (Tersztyánszky) was attacked on 28 July by the Russian 8th Army and suffered several days that were almost as catastrophic as those at the beginning of June at Lutsk. The Army, which had anyway brought only 25,000 soldiers to the front line, lost on this day 15,000 rifles and 10,000 men, which means that a far greater number of soldiers than those who fell, were wounded or taken prisoner had simply thrown away their rifles. A German corps was immediately inserted. And again the phenomenon could be observed that the mere presence of German troops was enough to bring about a halt to Russian attacks.

A few days later, Hindenburg visited the 4th Army and hugely impressed its staff – only the army commander, General von Tersztyánszky, remained reserved. Brusilov repeatedly renewed his offensive on new sections of the front, but a sweeping success eluded him. The German troops had evidently brought the Russian offensive to a standstill. General Cramon was tasked with making Cieszyn emphatically aware that Austria-Hungary 'once again' had to thank 'solely Germany for its salvation'. But he had 'the feeling that Austria does not duly appreciate this, because it is repeatedly emphasised that this is also in our [that is, Germany's] interest, because if Austria were to go to the dogs, Germany's demise would be an inevitable consequence'.<sup>1275</sup>

The 'Hindenburg front' ensured that a shift of German forces or the alternate subordination of Austro-Hungarian and German troops could take place most quickly and in a way that was suited to the situation in question. Tersztyánszky could hardly go wrong, since his 4th Army was suddenly under the command of the German General Litzmann. He himself commanded German troops. But it was ultimately only a system of temporary assistance. And there was above all one thing that it could not achieve, namely prevent Romania's entry into the war.

The Austro-Hungarian Army High Command had long feared that Romania would take this step, then expected it, and finally from July 1916 at the latest even believed it had knowledge of the details of the bargain that Romania had just struck with the En-

tente. Thanks to the now almost effortless deciphering of the radio dispatches between Petrograd and Rome, hardly any uncertainties remained. Whatever was read in Cieszyn was also received at once by the German Supreme Army Command.<sup>1276</sup>

On 9 August, a radio dispatch was intercepted that stated that Romania would sign a treaty with the Entente powers on 14 August. It could thus be calculated that hostilities would commence after 20 August.

But which troops should be used to fight Romania? The replacement personnel that had joined the Austro-Hungarian regiments were simply described as 'shirkers, old men or children'.<sup>1277</sup> Now two divisions of Turkish troops also arrived on the eastern front of the Central Powers, where they were to be transferred to the region around Chelm, in order to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Austrians and Germans. Whenever the situation became precarious, German troops were slotted in. For Austria-Hungary, however, in the meantime the situation on the south-western front had also again become perilous, since the Italians had gone on the offensive on the Isonzo River and the fall of Gorizia (Görz) threatened.

## Poison Gas

The system of temporary assistance was hardly clearer than in the moment when the Austro-Hungarian troops were hit head-on by the Brusilov Offensive and they had to break off the 'punitive expedition', shortly after which they were forced into another battle by the Italians on the Isonzo, and they were furthermore required to prepare themselves for the entry of Romania into the war. The troops could simply not be shifted back and forth too quickly whenever they were needed at the blazing hot spots of the Great War. Everything was intertwined: events at the fronts, foreign policy, domestic policy, economics and social policy. And the fighting and dying on the fronts happened at the same time as negotiating, worrying, working, sinking into poverty and hoping.

The South Tyrol offensive and then the breakthrough of the Russians at Olyka and Lutsk had distracted attention from the Isonzo. Scarcely had the Italians repelled, with some good fortune, the onslaught from the north, when they attempted once more to become active in the old direction of attack. Similarly to the situation after the first weeks of war, the unbending will was first of all demonstrated to strengthen discipline and morale by really making heads roll. For insufficient preparations for the defence against the Austrian attack or grave weakness in leadership, 13 generals and one colonel were placed before and sentenced by a military court.<sup>1278</sup> The serious crisis also made itself felt on the political stage, and led to the replacement of the head of government Antonio Salandra with the aged Paolo Boselli. The Chief of the General Staff

Luigi Cadorna remained in his function, however, and prepared the next battle on the Isonzo front. Five battles had already been fought there. The objective of the Italians had remained the same: Trieste (Triest). They repeatedly attacked. The deployment of artillery had become more substantial each time, but apart from the fact that literally every metre struggled for in the region of the mid-Isonzo and, above all, on the Karst Plateau of Doberdó, not very much had changed. Positions were dug in and caverns were blasted in the mountains around Gorizia. At the beginning of a battle there was an artillery barrage lasting several hours, after which came the first assaults. Positions were lost and then won back again. The next assaults took place. After days or a few weeks, the firing subsided. The wounded were brought to the rear; the dead were buried. The losses were counted. The Fourth Battle of the Isonzo in November 1915 had cost 49,000 men on the Italian side and 25,000 on the Austro-Hungarian side. The Fifth Battle in March 1916 had been broken off due to the South Tyrol offensive and had therefore cost 'only' 2,000 men dead or wounded on each side. It was a relentless war of attrition. And the general staffs on either side were naturally occupied with the question as to how they could finally achieve the breakthrough and escape from the stalemate. The Italian answer was to deploy even more artillery and infantry. The Imperial and Royal Army High Command, however, wanted to employ a weapon that was no longer so new: poison gas.

Since autumn 1914, irritants, so-called 'stench agents', had also been increasingly employed by the Imperial and Royal Army.<sup>1279</sup> Experiments were carried out with stench mines, which were designed for the 9 cm mortars of the Imperial and Royal Army. In February 1915, the effect of xylyl bromide (T-stoff) was tested. It was then mixed with bromoacetone (B-stoff) and the irritant was shot using mines, artillery shells and hand grenades. The development of irritants continued: bromomethyl ketone, methyl formate, chloromethyl chloroformate. The intended impact was impairment of vision, inflammation of the airways, nausea and vomiting. Thus, irritants were not deadly, but since their impact could only be reduced and neutralised with the help of gas masks, they restricted an opponent's radius of action.

At a meeting of the general staff chiefs, General Falkenhayn informed Conrad von Hötzendorf on 27 April 1915 that the Germans had used a new 'smoking device' at Ypres on the Western Front, with sweeping success. Falkenhayn had meant the attack on 22 April, during which chlorine gas from 6,000 bottles had been dropped over the Allied Front in the form of a gas-cylinder attack. The attack bought the German Army a gain in territory of around 4 km, though not the hoped-for victorious end to the war. Conrad was highly interested. Captain Maximilian von Ow was sent from Krems in order to study the principles of deployment and the impact at the German Gas Pioneer Regiment 36. He participated in the first gas-cylinder attack by the Germans on the Eastern Front and was subsequently taken ill himself as a result of the gas. In



September 1915, the progress report was submitted. It was, as expected, positive, and accordingly it could be assumed that poison gas would also be deployed shortly on the Imperial and Royal fronts. But then, Emperor Franz Joseph put a stop to this. He had his Military Chancellery inform the Army High Command on 15 September 1915 'that it is out of the question for the Army that a gas attack be carried out'.<sup>1280</sup> Major General Marterer had spent an hour with the Emperor on this day, and it can be assumed that he argued in the interests of the Army High Command. But the Emperor decided against it. The 'gas warriors' now had to do a lot of persuading. From October 1915, the troops were informed about the possibilities of deploying poison gas. Reports were requested as to whether the Russians and the Italians were making preparations to deploy poison gas. Safeguard measures were prepared and, above all, work began to distribution gas masks. On 18 November the Emperor was ready to consent to the Imperial and Royal Army also using poison gas, 'as soon as one of our enemies uses this weapon against us'. In February 1916, it was understood that the Italians had deployed 'gas bombs'. And now the 'gas warriors' had Franz Joseph where they wanted him. He agreed to the deployment of poison gas.

For the Emperor, it had evidently been an ethical problem. His entourage, however, who were plagued least of all by the question as to whether the deployment of poison gas contravened the norms of international law, could of course argue that Germans, British and French were using poison gas and that it had in this way become a normal weapon. Moreover, the use of poison gas was regarded as much less serious than the impact of artillery barrages. It was also expected that the Italians and Russians would also shortly deploy poison gas. In fact, on 4 June 1916, General Brusilov began his offensive with a gas attack against the Imperial and Royal 7th Army.<sup>1281</sup> At this point in time, the Imperial and Royal Army was in the process of preparing on the Isonzo front its first gas-cylinder attack. The deployment area had been inspected on several occasions. The region east of the Isonzo, near Gradisca, was considered to be the most suitable. The aim was to hold Monte San Michele and to remove the danger to Gorizia, which was already serious. 6,000 steel bottles had been filled with chlorine and phosgene. The troops in the section, the 20th Honvéd Infantry Division and the Imperial and Royal 17th Infantry Division, had been left as far as possible in uniform, but had received 40,000 gas masks. From 18 to 25 June, the bottles of gas were brought to the prepared positions, dug in, connected with pipes and prepared for the cylinder attack. Then a favourable wind was awaited. In the event that the attack succeeded, a push should be made towards Sdraussina and over Monte San Michele. On 29 June, all requirements appeared to be fulfilled. The wind blew, at least in the southern part of the section, towards the Italians, the sapper special battalion (SSB) opened the valves, and the gas streamed out. The Italians were taken by surprise. They had too few gas masks; therefore, their losses of 6,000 men were primarily casualties of the gas attack. Yet around

50 per cent of the gas bottles had a defect or were not opened due to the danger that a sudden drop in the wind might cause the gas to beat back on the Austro-Hungarian troops, who were reluctant to walk into the gas vapour. The Italians soon recovered from their shock and re-conquered several sections of the front. Officers had made their contribution by chasing the Italian soldiers back into their positions at pistol point. The upshot was that the two Austro-Hungarian divisions also lost 1,550 officers and men in the attack area. And the aim of the Imperial and Royal troops – to acquire the western bank of the Isonzo River – was not achieved. Also in this case, however, it was just the beginning. Even so, the Imperial and Royal Army did not carry out a further gas-cylinder attack. In the meantime, intensive work was being carried out to develop gas shells. New irritants and poisons were being developed and tested. In Germany, the leading chemists and physicists were working on new and even more effective warfare agents. Nine scientists who were awarded a Nobel Prize before, during or after the war, were completely dedicated to the work. The chemical warfare would be escalated considerably.

In the meantime, the Italians had long since recovered from their shock, and General Cadorna, who had also received a boost from the failure of the Austro-Hungarian South Tyrol offensive, launched his 3rd Army into the next Battle of the Isonzo, which would finally determine the outcome. The army under the command of the Duke of Aosta was brought up to its old strength in July, and it ultimately boasted greater numbers than ever before, with 220 battalions in nine divisions. In the area of attack, the Italian 2nd Army was also to become operative, and it had seven divisions at the front and six in reserve. To this were added around 2,000 guns and mortars, giving the Italians an almost two to one superiority over the Imperial and Royal 5th Army. When it came to the guns, the superiority was even threefold. The Austro-Hungarian command was able to learn of neither the strength of the Italians nor the timing of the attack. Boroević's army had furthermore been weakened as a result of the transfers to South Tyrol. The Imperial and Royal troops, who had been fighting on the Isonzo since May 1915, in fact now experienced their first serious losses of ground in the Sixth Battle of the Isonzo, which was now underway. Following a two-day assault, the Italians succeeded in entering Gorizia on 8 August and in forcing the 58th Infantry Division of Brigadier Erwin von Zeidler to evacuate the city. The domineering heights of Monte Sabotino and Monte San Michele were also lost. On 17th August, the Italian 3rd Army ceased attacking. The losses had once more been extraordinarily high, totalling around 50,000 men each in dead, wounded, captive and missing.

Now one could naturally compare the loss of the bridgehead of Gorizia with the serious setbacks in Galicia, but the Isonzo front was – whatever Cieszyn thought of it – a section of the front that not only had its peculiarities but was also capable of emotionally attracting attention. It was a coincidence that the commanders at the

front came more strongly to the fore as a result of their personality and showed more contours than, for example, General of Artillery Puhallo, or Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, but also General Böhm-Ermolli. The commanders on the Isonzo, Borojević, Rohr, Archduke Eugen, but also their chiefs of staff, corps and divisional commanders, had branded themselves more deeply on the memory. It therefore seemed natural to accuse the Army High Command of not having taken sufficient precautionary measures and of not having made enough weapons available. Cities in the Isonzo section of the front, such as, most notably, Gorizia or Trieste, the aim of all Italian offensives, were given symbolic meaning. For this reason, events on the Isonzo were also felt on other fronts. The loss of Gorizia was perceived as a catastrophe, since the Italians had gained scarcely any ground up till then by means of the positional warfare on the Isonzo. Now Trieste appeared to be seriously endangered.

The impression in Vienna and with the Army High Command was equally devastating. Gorizia appeared to be far more important than anything on the Russian front, and even more important – at least for the non-Hungarians – than Romania's impending entry into the war. Subsequently, the not yet consolidated north-eastern front had to send two divisions to Italy.<sup>1282</sup> This turned out to be too late and at the same time too much, since Borojević had already accomplished a consolidation merely by means of small additions of reserves. Wherever one looked, however, there appeared to be more patchwork required. And now only 'the Germans' seemed to be in a position to help.

In the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command, but also among very many commanders and officers at the front, there was considerable sympathy for the Germans. They exuded far more confidence, were generally easy to get on with and had the particular aura that comes with success. The Army High Command compared Kaiser Wilhelm with Archduke Friedrich – and such a comparison could only ever turn out in favour of the German Monarch. Falkenhayn, Hindenburg, Ludendorff and, especially, Mackensen were also generally much more positively evaluated than the Austro-Hungarian military leaders. The German political leaders also generally enjoyed more acclaim than the Austrians. One compared Bethmann Hollweg with Count Stürgkh or Count Istvan Burián and found far more quality among the Germans. Only the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza was rated comparably, and even where he was met with distrust, reserve or rejection, it was clear that he was not counted among the mediocre.

### **The 'Joint Supreme War Command'**

In summer 1916, the Army High Command in Cieszyn began to divide the people up according to whether they were in favour of or against the joint command of the Ger-

man Kaiser. The Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich, Count Herberstein, used this opportunity – when he was not forced to accompany his field marshal to the construction of what Herberstein called the ‘children’s playground’ – to work on drafts of an agreement with the Germans on the joint command. He was also able to win over one of the two aides-de-camp, Colonel Baron Viktor von Lorx, to assist him. On 6 August 1916, the Hungarian Honvéd Minister, Baron Hazai, travelled to Cieszyn. He also let on that he was in favour of the joint command of the German Kaiser. Hungary had long approached the Army High Command with distrust and rejection. With regard to an all too tight embrace of Germany, however, there was also concern and scepticism. Tisza continued to hold steadfastly to the close ties to the German Empire, but the Hungarian opposition did not take pleasure in an even stronger German influence, precisely at a time when the course was to be set for the post-war alliance.<sup>1283</sup>

Herberstein finally drafted – and one should keep in mind here that he ultimately did this with the approval of Archduke Friedrich – a written agreement on a joint command, in which Bulgaria and Turkey would also be considered. Herberstein and Lorx first of all informed the German Plenipotentiary General, who reported the matter to Pszczyna.<sup>1284</sup> ‘The Austrians’ were evidently ready!

With the creation of the ‘Hindenburg front’ and the containment of the military by the politicians, another part of Austria-Hungary’s leadership elite shattered, however. The military was, after all, not just a prerogative of the crown but also its most significant pillar. And with the rupture of the military hierarchy the Monarchy became unstable. This alone allows the actions of someone like Conrad to appear in a different light. With the inexorable disempowerment of the Army High Command, on the one hand the perversion of power shrank that had found its expression in the rudimentarily accomplished military dictatorship. The power centre in Cieszyn was in any case only an empty shell by autumn 1916. On the other hand, one of the pillars of the dynasty lost its sustainability, and this weighed much more heavily. First of all, the basic relationship between politics and the conduct of the war changed and the period of dominance of the decentralised power centre of Cieszyn ended. Then, however, the military lost its function as an expression of sovereign power. And it should be noted that this development was not a consequence of the imperial succession but had instead begun months earlier.

Since the beginning of the Brusilov Offensive, Minister Burián had begun to pose Conrad pressing questions with regard to the war situation. It seemed as though this was merely a revival of the old argument along the lines that the central authorities in Vienna lodged a complaint to the effect that they were not sufficiently well informed by the Army High Command. In view of the shift in power, however, these questions had a different weight. Then, on 26 June 1916, Conrad was summoned to Vienna to a session of the Joint Council of Ministers. He let himself be represented by Colonel Slamec-

zka from the Operations Division the Army High Command, since he eschewed the gathering of ministers and prime ministers. But the Joint Council of Ministers (which, incidentally, did not manifest itself in the regular minutes, because it was perhaps not regarded as a formal gathering)<sup>1285</sup> demanded concrete information, and when it was not supplied 'the ministers protested at being treated like journalists. Tisza declared that he would resign tomorrow if he did not actually receive the concrete information that he demanded.'<sup>1286</sup> When Conrad was informed of this, he acted as though he were aggrieved. As his reasons for not supplying information, he cited alongside secrecy the inadmissibility of the interference of state functionaries in the conduct of war. Now the prime ministers and Burián stuck to their guns. They recognised that Conrad's position was shaken, that the Emperor and, at least indirectly, also Archduke Friedrich no longer unreservedly covered for the Chief of the General Staff and would ultimately also drop him. Now the situation was reappraised.

On 7 July, the Emperor decreed that the Foreign Minister be 'kept continuously informed of the condition of the Army and the replacements and reinforcements to be supplied to it'.<sup>1287</sup> On 13 July, at the next session of the Joint Council of Ministers, the Army High Command was again represented by Colonel Slameczka. The ministers acknowledged with satisfaction the willingness of the Army High Command to increasingly request assistance from German troops. The use of Ottoman troops was admittedly met with some concern, but in order to stabilise the Carpathian front and to keep the Russians away from Hungary, the Turks were also acceptable. Scarcely was the Ministerial Council over when the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) began to appeal to Berlin regarding the Hindenburg front. And shortly after, once the front had become reality, the German Imperial Chancellor travelled to Vienna and noticed with satisfaction the badmouthing of the Army High Command. Burián, Tisza, Stürgkh and Montenuovo assured Bethmann-Hollweg that the expansion of Hindenburg's area of command had brought with it a redemptive effect, and it was only regrettable that Hindenburg did not have the entire Eastern Front under him. Conrad's misgivings were completely unfounded. As a result of his private circumstances, his private war with Italy, which the Emperor had only reluctantly agreed to and Archduke Eugen had urgently advised against, and his lack of personal contact to the front, Conrad had forfeited all credit. This applied not just to Conrad, however, but to the whole 'morass' in Cieszyn.<sup>1288</sup> All this was, at least in part, nonsense, but it sounded good.

The next opportunity to strongly remind Vienna of its failures, mistakes and lack of willingness arose during the visit of the Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn at the beginning of August. Wild claimed on this occasion to have really given War Minister Krobatin and the head of department in the War Ministry a piece of his mind: 'The insights into the replacement conditions and the ammunition and equipment production were horrifying. Powder is the *nervus rerum*, and they produce at best 1/20

[sic] of our amount! [...] Krobotin himself remained amiable throughout, promising everything and smiling! There is no seriousness! No firm desire! But they have to! [...] When I told them: 'Your divisions perform badly, which is why your artillery must have an increased impact. The lack of human steadfastness must be replaced by machines. Our divisions have at least 10,000 rounds in reserve if they fire barely 1,000. This cannot continue', etc., they pulled long faces, but they accepted it.<sup>1289</sup>

Finally, the attention of those responsible for policy was demanded in a particular way by the events in Romania. In part, the situation as we know it from autumn 1914 and May 1915 repeated itself. The political and military leaderships were uncertain about the respective possibilities and demanded the impossible: the cession of Transylvania on the one hand or, alternatively, a decisive blow to the Russians, which was designed to discourage the Romanians. Both of these options were impossible or not feasible. But not only in Austria-Hungary did confusion and the breakup of existing structures manifest themselves. This was also the case in the German Empire. Falkenhayn refused to believe in a forthcoming war with Romania, braced himself completely unreasonably against the Chancellor and Hindenburg, and finally regarded the radio messages that had been intercepted and decoded by Austria as incorrect or even falsified by the Austrians. On 19 August, the Imperial and Royal High Command knew that Romania had not only signed a military convention with the Entente but had also begun to mobilise.<sup>1290</sup> Even so, Falkenhayn repeated his accusations of forgery.<sup>1291</sup>

The Chief of the Great General Staff felt he had almost reached his objective in a matter that was for him essential. After the creation of the Hindenburg front, he had to give thought to how the position of the Chief of the General Staff of the German Army could be consolidated vis-à-vis the Eastern Front High Command. He seized on the idea from 1915 of creating a joint war command of the Central Powers. He conferred with the Imperial Chancellor and with the Kaiser, and visualised for the latter that he, Kaiser Wilhelm II, practically already exercised this supreme command. Since signals came from the entourage of Emperor Franz Joseph, but also from that of Archduke Friedrich, to the effect that they found such a joint war command at least worthy of being discussed, only Conrad had to be 'steamrollered'. It should be brought home to him that it was the desire of Turkey and Bulgaria that such a joint war command be created and that both Turkey and Bulgaria were prepared to subordinate their high commands and their troops.<sup>1292</sup> Coincidence also helped a little. After he had visited the troops of the north-eastern front – a rare event – Conrad had also journeyed to visit the Isonzo. And it was precisely during this time that the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, Cramon, submitted to Archduke Friedrich the written draft for the reorganisation of the chain of command. It was supposed to come into force three days later. The draft stated: 'His Majesty the German Kaiser assumes from 25 August 1916, at 12 noon the unified command of the joint affairs

of the Bulgarian-Austro-Hungarian-Turkish conduct of the war. His executive organ for this purpose is the Chief of the General Staff of the German Field Army. The independence of the individual allied army commands within their particular sphere of action should only be affected by this regulation to the extent that the great common cause requires it. [...] If orders of the joint war command are issued, they must under all circumstances be followed.<sup>1293</sup> This was still a draft, and the date was also fictitious. When Conrad returned, he 'snarled and raged'.<sup>1294</sup> He immediately telegraphed the Military Chancellery that under these circumstances the Army High Command could no longer carry responsibility, and that it was a political matter of the greatest import, a matter that was 'decisive for the future relationship between Austria-Hungary and Germany, for the great power status of the Monarchy and for its independence'. This was certainly true at its core, for it was clear that as a result of the interlocking of German and Austro-Hungarian troops the influence of the German Kaiser would inevitably be incomparably greater on the latter than, for example, on the Turks in the area of Baghdad or in the Caucasus.

Conrad still believed he had a silent ally who could play a role in efforts to prevent the joint supreme command, namely the heir to the throne Archduke Karl. He had repeatedly made anti-German remarks and was least of all inclined to accept German dominance. In spite of a personally good relationship with his Senior Chief of Staff, General von Seeckt, Karl made it clear in mid-August that he was not pleased about the direct contact between Seeckt and Falkenhayn, since in the process the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command was neutralised. As he wrote in a handwritten memorandum that he gave to the Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich, however, this was 'ominous'.<sup>1295</sup> He did not want any German chief of staff, as it was; he regarded it as patronisation and was strengthened in this view by his Deputy Chief of Staff and someone who enjoyed his trust, Colonel Baron Waldstätten. But the heir to the throne did not want to risk relations with the German Empire in any way, and he furthermore did not have such a relationship to Conrad that he would have sought an understanding. Consequently, those people remained decisive who campaigned for the joint supreme command. And here Count Herberstein and the aide-de-camp of Archduke Friedrich, Baron Lox, came ever more to the fore. On 22 August, Herberstein noted in his diary: 'The question of a unified supreme command for all fronts under German leadership occupies me most of all and I can already see that my ideas, which I have propagated for months, will now be carried out after all. As a result of events, however, we might now be forced to do this, whereas it would have been a completely different story if we had proposed this voluntarily at an earlier stage. The fact that the unified command must be led by the Germans – Kaiser Wilhelm – is self-evident, since Germany is the most powerful state and has a monarch who stands in the field, is energetic and in full possession of his [mental and physical] strength!'<sup>1296</sup> Herberstein added: 'His Imperial

Highness has agreed to this plan, but Conrad was opposed for considerations of prestige and decisively rejected this proposal. There was nothing left for it but to obtain the decision of His Majesty.'

Herberstein therefore wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, General Bolfras, and requested an audience with Emperor Franz Joseph. It was fixed for 25 August. With this, so much had now become clear that Conrad could hardly expect any more support for his attempts to maintain the independence of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command. The Army Supreme Commander Archduke Friedrich had forsaken him perhaps less out of conviction and more because he was fed up with his own role. Conrad negotiated once more with Falkenhayn, who could do nothing else but endorse the joint supreme command and endeavoured to explain to Conrad the advantages of such a regulation. He pointed not only to Bulgaria and Turkey but also to the Entente, since – according to Falkenhayn – the French Marshal Joffre had the overall command. In claiming this, Falkenhayn was either not careful enough with the truth or he did not know any better, since whilst Joffre might have chaired the conferences in Chantilly, the states were on an equal footing. Conrad did not know this, either.

On 25 August, Archduke Friedrich and Herberstein were in Vienna. Friedrich 'was very agitated and definitely afraid of the audience [with the Emperor]', as his Adjutant General noted.<sup>1297</sup> But he wanted to assist him and was able to do so. The Archduke remained alone with the Emperor for over an hour, then Herberstein was called and he presented for a quarter of an hour on the memorandum that he had already sent to Bolfras. Franz Joseph had indeed been coached for this by the directors of his Military Chancellery. The execution in the form of an expression of the imperial volition had therefore already been prepared and Franz Joseph only had to dictate it to Herberstein: 'It is My will that the initiative of the German Kaiser regarding the unified supreme command will be accommodated if possible. My Army High Command should – after customary agreement with the German Supreme Army Command – submit to me such proposals for a solution of the matter, so that My Sovereign Rights and the dignity of My Armed Forces are not affected and the current sphere of influence of My Army High Command with regard to My Armed Forces remains unrestricted.'<sup>1298</sup> Friedrich appeared afterwards to be relieved and was only concerned about how he should break the news to Conrad. Herberstein also wanted to relieve Friedrich of this.

Conrad was exceedingly agitated and asked who had 'perpetrated [the] document'. It was easy for Herberstein to answer, and he told Conrad 'that His Majesty dictated the document 'It is My will' to me himself during the audience. Now he [Conrad] became very upset and even called me a traitor to the fatherland etc.'<sup>1299</sup> But the Chief of the General Staff did not yet give up, and pleaded on 27 August to establish a joint war council instead of transferring the supreme command to the German Kaiser. But



non-one could warm to this idea, and ultimately dramatic changes occurred on this day and in the days that followed. Italy declared war on the German Empire and Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary. Romania attempted, as Italy had done, to divide the Central Powers, since no declaration of war was sent to Germany. But what had worked once did not work a second time: one day after the Romanian declaration of war on the Habsburg Monarchy, the German envoy in Bucharest presented the declaration of war of the German Empire. The German reaction was mildly reminiscent of May 1915, when Austria-Hungary had become aroused about the 'perfidiousness' of Italy. Since Falkenhayn had let the German Kaiser know time and again that Romania posed no threat, the Chief of the German General Staff was no longer credible. When Cramon rang Falkenhayn to inform him of the news, the latter simply did not want to believe it, and the German Plenipotentiary General had to expressly and personally vouch for the accuracy of the message before Falkenhayn would go to Kaiser Wilhelm. The next day, Falkenhayn was dismissed and replaced by Hindenburg. Ludendorff received the position of First Quartermaster. It was the third German Supreme Army Command of the war.

If Conrad had hoped, however, that Falkenhayn's dismissal would take care of the question of the supreme war command or at least result in a solution in the interests of Austria, he was mistaken. For one thing, in the German Empire a joint war command had not been pursued only by Falkenhayn – far from it; and for another thing the Foreign Ministry in Vienna did not give up, since it sought to fetch the war back into the political sphere and continue to push for the demolition of the Army High Command. Cramon had found an outstanding contact person in the Army High Command in the form of Count Herberstein, who became the mouthpiece of his Army Supreme Commander, who evidently did not want to emerge from the shadows himself but instead continue to play the role assigned to him – Archduke 'Fritzl', the silent Habsburger! Friedrich and Count Herberstein could always be certain, however, of the agreement of the Military Chancellery.

On 2 September, a telegram from Bolfras reached the Army High Command. It stated: 'His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty deems the achievement of complete agreement in the sense of a decisive supreme command as necessary.' Conrad turned to Ludendorff, but he was not interested in a war council, either. For Ludendorff, the supreme war command could only consist of the German Kaiser holding supreme command. Conrad turned to the Foreign Ministry for support, and argued that this matter was also to be seen from the perspective of what effect German preponderance would have after the war.<sup>1300</sup> But the Foreign Ministry was in absolute agreement with developments. Finally, Conrad presented his deliberations to the Emperor once more during an audience on 3 September lasting one and a half hours. He argued by saying 'that according to the 1st point of the official communication, all military decisions

are actually placed in the hands of the German Kaiser, and thus the German Army Command. To put it quite clearly: the latter can therefore relocate troops as it sees fit and can thus, for example, say that we should evacuate South Tyrol and send the troops there to another theatre of war, to Courland or to the Vosges Mountains.' Conrad again wanted to integrate the Foreign Ministry, but he received a rebuff. The Emperor let him know that it was now only a question of maintaining the Monarchy and since Austria-Hungary was too weak and dependant on German forces, it was only right if the German Kaiser were given the deciding voice, 'since ultimately someone must make the decision in points of controversy'.

Emperor Franz Joseph was very well aware that he was relinquishing part of his rights as sovereign and granting the German Kaiser a visible primacy. Ultimately, it was the latter who would decide whether the war would be continued or whether there would be peace.

The Supreme War Command became reality on 7 September 1916. The relevant 'Provisions' stated, among other things: 'In order to guarantee the unified command of the future Bulgarian-German-Austrian-Hungarian-Turkish operations, His Majesty the German Kaiser assumes the supreme command of the operations of the Central Powers and their allies. [...] The Supreme Command extends to the fundamental objectives of the operations carried out in the different theatres of war, the forces used for these [...] [and the] chain of command and subordination. For exercising the Supreme Command, the army supreme commanders of the allied armed forces and their general staff chiefs are at the disposal of the German Kaiser.' Agreement should always be reached, but after consulting the others, the 'decisions made by the German Kaiser' were 'binding for all allied armed forces'. The army supreme commanders were obliged to continually 'provide reports' to the German Kaiser. The conduct of negotiations between the allies 'is the entitlement of the German Supreme Army Command'.

Austria-Hungary and Germany had agreed to grant the Habsburg Monarchy and above all its Monarch a special status by means of (secret) supplementary agreements – but only vis-à-vis the Turks and the Bulgarians. For this reason, the agreement stated that in all measures related to the conduct of the war the German Kaiser would be guided by the principle of 'considering the protection and integrity of the territories of the Austro-Hungarian equal to those of the German Empire'. But the safeguarding of prestige could not change the fact that here sovereignty had been relinquished on a huge scale. And it was not yet foreseeable that now an instrument had been created that could be used against Austria-Hungary and against any solo action on the part of the Habsburg Monarchy in the war. The new German First Quartermaster, Erich Ludendorff, who actually assumed the position of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, very soon made it clear that he regarded his remit as also stretching to Austria-Hungary. He spoke of the greatest efforts to utilise Austria-Hungary's human material. All

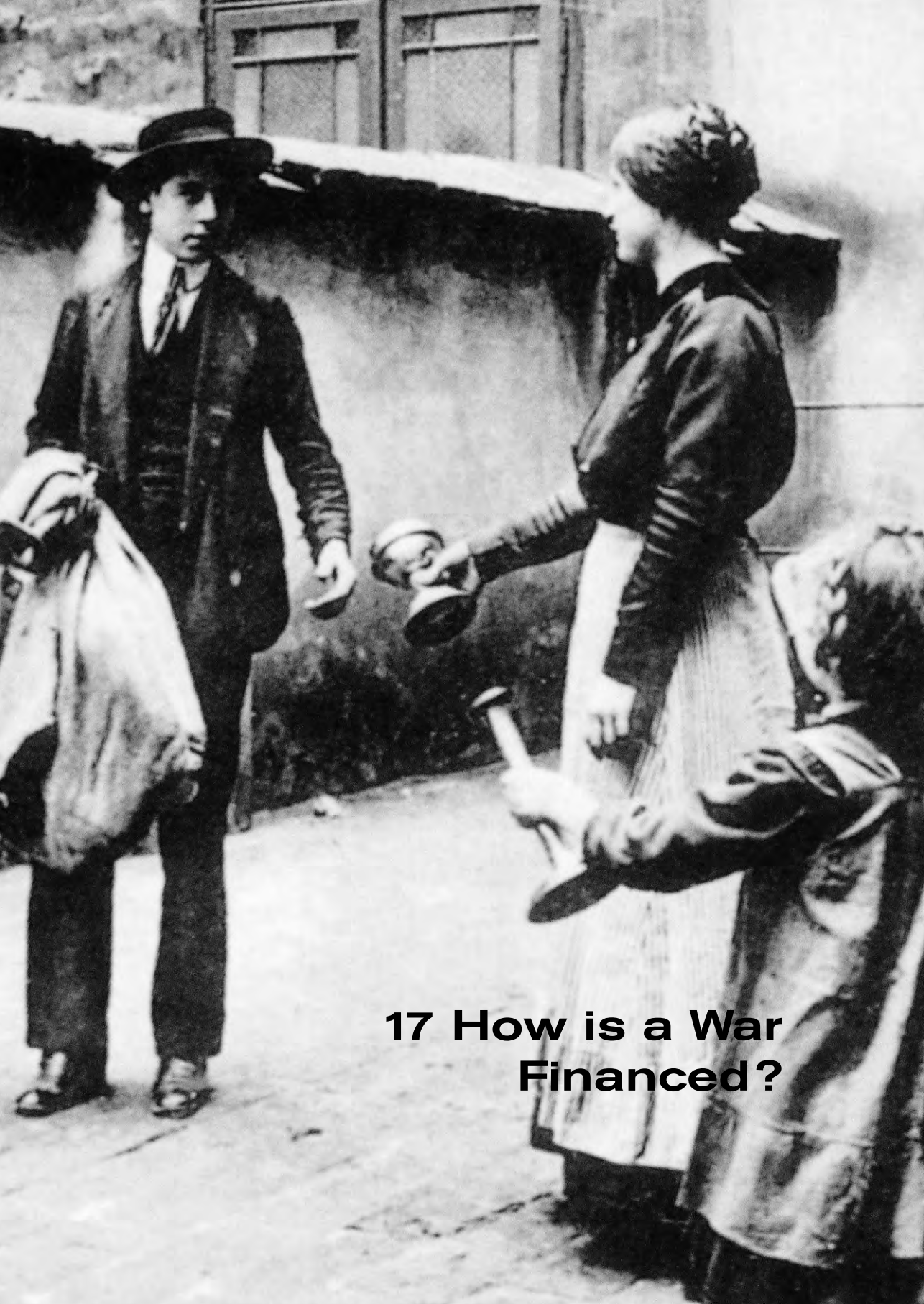
able-bodied men were to be sent straight away from the hinterland and the base area to the front, and the potential of the less able-bodied and the women should be radically exploited in order to increase the performance in particular of industry. The industrial sector was to drastically increase its output of heavy-calibre ammunition, guns, mortars and also materials for the construction of entrenchments; then victory would be certain for the Central Powers.<sup>1301</sup> General Cramon summed up what had been achieved by saying: 'Truly, no-one could demand more, since all measures of the Central Powers had actually now more or less been placed in the hands of the German General Staff and with that, thank God, a new era began.'<sup>1302</sup>

The German ambassador in Vienna, Baron von Tschirschky, was perhaps even more drastic in his assessment and gave even more expression to the increasingly pervasive mood in Berlin to the effect that Austria-Hungary should be taken firmly in hand. On 28 September 1916, he wrote 'in complete confidentiality' to the German Imperial Chancellor: 'The longer the war lasts, the more an uneasy question thrusts itself on one as to how long the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy will be able to continue the fight, both in a military and an economic respect.' Deplorable conditions reigned in Cieszyn. 'The deviousness and dishonesty of the leading authorities there' had shown themselves repeatedly. That naturally rubbed off, he said. The lack of seriousness was contagious; there was dissatisfaction across broad strata and resignation among the 'conscientious elements'. But the human material in the Army was – 'aside from certain Czech and other exceptions' – good. The leadership had failed, however. If the production of guns and ammunition were not cranked up under German leadership, then at the beginning of 1917 Austria-Hungary would be finished. Pessimism and oppression found plenty of sustenance, whilst the customary sloppiness, protectionist economy and lack of expert knowledge predominated. People were already starving in Vienna's suburbs. 'As far as Austria is concerned, one must attribute the main share of the blame for these grave conditions to Prime Minister Count Stürgkh. [...] With such a head, one cannot expect anything good from the limbs.' The personality was missing 'who dictates from above the preservation of common interests. Baron Burián, who is destined to be in first place here, would give a look of incomprehension if something like this were expected of him.' Now the agrarian state of Austria-Hungary had turned to the German Empire for help with cereal crops. There was chaos in the Imperial and Royal finances, although Germany was paying 100 million a month to its ally and 'furthermore regularly [advancing it] the aid to be paid to Bulgaria and Turkey'. The bottom line was that von Tschirschky proposed that the heir to the throne be invited to Berlin. 'It is only in a change in the leading positions of the Monarchy that I can see the possibility of revitalising the will to hold on among the broad strata.' The German ambassador thus called on the German guardianship court, as it were, to incapacitate the old Emperor in Vienna. A specific suggestion should be made to the young gentleman regarding who

should become prime minister in Austria: Archduke Eugen. He could create order in domestic politics and, above all, tackle Hungarian chauvinism, which had been particularly fuelled by the errors of the supreme military leadership. 'The sins of internal Austrian politics for decades, which have made the betrayal of the Czechs possible and as a result of which thousands of Hungarians have been sacrificed, has deeply embittered Hungarian circles.' In order to hold down the Czechs, it had been necessary to transfer Hungarian regiments to Bohemia instead of deploying them in the defence of their homeland. Here, also, Archduke Eugen would have to intervene. And, finally: 'I believe that we must make the attempt to clean up local conditions. Otherwise, we expose ourselves to the risk that the Monarchy suddenly becomes terminally ill and drags the German Empire with it into ruin.'<sup>1303</sup>

In view of this scenario, it is not surprising that at precisely this moment the influential German Lieutenant Colonel Baron von Stoltzenberg submitted a plan to General Ludendorff for the reorganisation of Austria-Hungary, which recommended winning over the heir to the throne and binding him to the German Empire. And if Emperor Franz Joseph were to oppose the new order, 'the Emperor would have to [be forced] under gently persuasive pressure' to abdicate.<sup>1304</sup>

The old man in the Schönbrunn Palace, who clung so doggedly to his throne, constituted a certain obstacle, but the Germans evidently no longer ruled out the possibility that he would completely resign himself to his fate. It would not be a very big step from recognising German supremacy to relinquishing the throne, and ultimately the secret supplementary protocol on the Joint Supreme War Command mentioned territories and not the sovereign. Events on the fronts had been brought under German control. Austria-Hungary's room for manoeuvre in foreign affairs had been drastically restricted. Soon, the armaments industry would also be adjusted to German norms by means of integrating it into the Hindenburg Programme. The material dependence was evident from the fact that Austrian and Hungarian financial institutions were in debt to German banks to the sum of around three million kronen.<sup>1305</sup> From now on, however – according to German conceptions – everything would be different. Austria-Hungary seemed ripe for a 'hostile takeover'.



**17 How is a War  
Financed?**

17. 'I gave gold for iron'. Propaganda postcard from 1916. The slogan, which was coined during the wars of liberation in 1813, was used in Germany from September 1914 and shortly afterwards in Austria-Hungary to persuade citizens to voluntarily give up precious metals, particularly gold. Gold wedding rings were replaced by iron ones. However, it was not only wedding rings that were needed. Initially, most people felt a sense of pride in having donated for their own troops, and being able to visibly demonstrate that they had done so. From 1916 onwards, the willingness to give up objects made of precious metals may have declined, but not the willingness to make donations overall.

‘**T**re cose, Sire, ci bisognano preparare, danari, danari e poi danari’, the Marshal of France, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, is said to have replied to the French King Louis XII when he asked him about what was needed to wage war. Similar statements were apparently made by the Imperial Field Captain Lazarus Schwendi and Field Marshal Raimondo Montecuccoli: to wage war, one needed money, money and, again, money. And in fact, everyone knew this – including in Austria-Hungary. Only the quantity of money that was to be spent on the entire armed force was repeatedly the subject of debate. The budgets prior to 1914 had at any rate only been set for an army and navy during peacetime.<sup>1306</sup> However, what was to be done during a war? What would happen when the war was not short in duration, but long and, finally, one in which the existence of the Empire was at stake? This made it necessary to make alterations to any budget planning and, above all, it also became clear that during the war, it was not only a question – figuratively speaking – of soldiers and cannons, but of each individual existence. Money, money and, again, money was needed. The ‘Great War’ left no-one untouched.

### **The Search for the Nervus Rerum**

Just a few weeks and months after the beginning of the war, the financiers in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had become increasingly concerned. The situation looked anything but favourable, and now, the years before the war were remembered with nothing other than feelings of nostalgia. At that time, everything had seemed to be more or less as it should be, and even if financial policy measures had been necessary every so often in order to keep the state budget to some degree in order, there had been no doubts as to the solidity of the finances and the stable value of the currency, the krone. The fact that the Austrian government was unable to produce a balanced state budget, and that numerous crown lands also had difficulties in passing their budgets, had nothing to do with the fact that the Monarchy was possibly severely in debt and the banks insolvent. Quite the opposite: the Austro-Hungarian Bank, which acted as the central credit institution and the central bank of the Danube Monarchy, was not only able to draw on a gold reserve of around 1.5 billion kronen, but also on bills of exchange and deposits that ran to far higher sums than the debts. And the liabilities

shown by the trade balance during the years before the war were explained by the fact that the consequences of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been clearly reflected in a temporary decline in exports to states such as Serbia. Altogether, the Balkan Wars and poor harvests had caused the deficits to increase drastically, and 'deficit spending' was by no means the guiding principle of the economists. The consternation became more widespread. However, at one time or another, this would all be balanced out, and the Austrian currency continued to be regarded as solid. Monetary circulation ran to 2.1 billion kronen. The annual average economic growth of the Monarchy was 1.32 per cent, which was considered to be very good. The fact that despite this, Austria-Hungary was still described as an 'industrialised agrarian state',<sup>1307</sup> and that it was regarded as backward compared to highly industrialised states such as the German Empire, Great Britain or France, was due to the uneven distribution of industry and the only very slowly changing agrarian structure, predominantly in the Hungarian half of the Empire. Compared to Russia and the south-eastern European states, however, the Habsburg Monarchy could certainly be classified as 'western'.

On 9 April 1913, in the light of the growing problems, and in order to increase the 'financial readiness for war', the governor of the central bank, Alexander Popovics, recommended a series of measures in a letter of the same title to the Austrian and the Hungarian finance ministers. He demanded a restriction on imports, a ban on subscriptions for foreign loans, a replenishment of the gold reserve and thus an increase in the funding ratio for the Austrian currency, and numerous other financial policy measures designed to prevent the Habsburg Monarchy 'already at the moment mobilisation is ordered, even before the first shot has been fired, from [...] having to take steps towards the destruction of the existing legal order of the monetary system'.<sup>1308</sup> The appeal fell on deaf ears. Even so: Austria-Hungary was at least retrospectively a 'world of security', and was regarded as experiencing what Stefan Zweig so vividly, albeit falsely, described as a golden era. 'Everything [...] appeared to be established for the duration, with the state itself the supreme guarantor of this stability. [...] Our currency, the Austrian krone, was circulated in pure gold bars and in this way vouched for its immutability'.<sup>1309</sup> The war was to change all that.

On 19 July 1914, the Governor of the Austro-Hungarian Bank was confidentially informed by the Foreign Ministry of the imminent dispatch of the ultimatum to Serbia, so that measures for payment transactions could be taken as a precaution. The Governor, Alexander Popovics, had therefore been one of the many who were not surprised by the mobilisation, or by the war. Four days after the note, on the day the ultimatum was sent to Serbia, the major banks were ordered not to present the central bank with any excessive demands. The banks were therefore also warned that there would be war 48 hours before the arrival of the Serbian response note and five days before the war was declared. No trace of surprise here! However, a war with Serbia would be easily



endured without any great difficulty. Money was available, and the only significant problem, the lack of small banknotes, could be resolved by completing the existing semi-finished notes with a value of 400 million kronen.<sup>1310</sup> Then, however, the general mobilisation got underway, the need for money increased dramatically, and the first emergency measures became necessary. Bank statutes were suspended and a moratorium imposed, according to which only amounts of up to 200 kronen could be drawn from savings books. This prevented the depositors from storming the financial institutions. However, this might never even have happened, since at the beginning of the war, the mood was largely confident. As the slogan ran: 'Serbien muss sterben' (a rhyming variation on 'Serbia must die').

On the Vienna Stock Exchange, the rates had slipped to negative figures during the July Crisis, but had soared again after the *démarche* was sent to Serbia. This was interpreted in such a way that it was assumed Serbia would submit.<sup>1311</sup> In actual fact, the depositors may have calculated that the listed stocks and shares would rise in value as a result of the war, and wanted to profit from this rapid increase. However, business transactions in the securities department of the Vienna Stock Exchange were then suspended until further notice. The stock exchanges in Budapest, Prague and Trieste (Triest) also closed. On 1 August, the commodity exchange was shut down, and business transactions in stock exchange values were prohibited.<sup>1312</sup> From then on, the 'corner stock exchanges' in the coffee houses flourished. This would remain the case until March 1916.

For the financial experts, a fundamental question arose as early as July and August 1914: how is a war financed? No-one had experience in this area. Here, also, the Habsburg Monarchy was in a worse position than Great Britain, France or Russia, since these states – like others – had most certainly been faced time and again with the issue of where the money should come from to pay for the military expenses during periods of war. One answer to the problem appeared to be to refer to the still extant and functioning commercial relationships. The scope and consequences of the export problems could not initially be estimated. However, one thing was clear from the first moment on: domestic demand would increase to a very significant degree. Since most goods were required by Austria-Hungary's own military, however, the sudden increase in supplies to the military would at least compensate for the lack of export. However, any number of theoretical papers and domestic economy models would have achieved little more than to describe the dilemma in detail. It was and remained a point of debate what could be done to counteract the situation. With the suspension of the metallic, i.e. primarily gold coverage for the banknote circulation, however, Pandora's box had been opened for the first time. Not everything had to be gold in order to glitter. On 23 July 1914, the Austrian currency still had a coverage of almost 75 per cent of the banknotes then in circulation. On 31 July, the figure had decreased to 46.3 per cent. On the same

day, the issuing of foreign currencies was halted. Four days later, permission was issued for the metallic coverage of the banknote circulation to fall below forty per cent.<sup>1313</sup>

Next, the state began to borrow money.<sup>1314</sup> The war bonds were intended to pre-finance the expenditure, even if national debt increased as a result. The fact that here, the division of the Empire made itself felt, and made it impossible to implement uniform procedures, once again turned out to be a problem. And the Joint Finance Ministry, from which it could have been expected, precisely in the situation that arose during 1914, that it would be the highest authority when it came to money matters, played a remarkably minor role. This ministry was in fact only responsible for national debts, customs, indirect taxes and border railways. As a result, until November 1916, the Joint Imperial and Royal Finance Minister, Baronet Leon von Biliński, and after him, Ernest von Koerber, were not the ones to set the policy when it came to money matters, but the finance ministers of the two halves of the Empire, Baron August von Engel, followed by Alexander Spitzmüller in Austria, and the Hungarian Finance Minister, János Teleszky. It was they who were to function as a type of transmission belt between the Army Administration and the financial institutions.

The fact that the ongoing and already stressed budgets would not be sufficient was clear for all to see. As a result, financial measures had to be initiated. First, treasury notes were issued by the Austrian and Hungarian financial administration, which could then be pledged by the banks at 85 per cent of the nominal rate. This brought in cash after the Army Administration had specified the amount of money required for the first 15 days of the war as 608.6 million kronen.<sup>1315</sup> Next, the Imperial and Royal War Ministry claimed a loan from the finance ministries of both halves of the Empire to the tune of two billion kronen. This, too, was raised by the banks. 1.272 million were allotted to Austria, and the remainder to Hungary. Almost all of the money was forwarded to the military payment authorities. In Austria, it lasted until 15 October, and in Hungary until 28 October; by then, the loans had been spent. The money from the collateral loans had also been used up. The relevant ministries then produced bills for a further two billion kronen. The money was to be divided according to the same ratio.

The funds were used primarily to attempt to satisfy the needs of the Army Administration. And already after the first months of the war, it was known that the cost would be enormous, and that not only the more or less 'normal' expenditure would have to be financed, but also the vast material losses of millions of rifles, thousands of pieces of artillery and the war equipment that ran to hundreds of thousands of items that were broken, abandoned or also fell into the hands of the Russians and Serbs. As a result, it became necessary to make further financial efforts in order to procure replacements, something that was not known on such a scale in Germany or France, or even in Russia and Serbia, during the first months of the war. The consequences of the war could after all be measured not only in the number of dead, wounded, missing and soldiers taken

captive, but also specifically in weapons and items of equipment. By the end of 1914, around half a million rifles had been lost. The armies forfeited up to a quarter of their artillery guns. And even if it would never be possible to assess the losses of weapons and equipment in detail, one thing was clear: the material losses were on an enormous scale, and the costs for procuring replacements were correspondingly high, quite apart from the fact that the weaponry, which was insufficient and in some cases outdated, had to be modernised as quickly as possible if there were to be any chance at all of surviving the war.

The Imperial and Royal Army also had a 'colourfulness' that was by no means welcome. Among the old, pike grey uniforms, which were almost blue in appearance, the 'field grey' uniforms that had been introduced later were intermixed, and for Army Group Pflanzer-Baltin, the solution found for the soldiers provided to protect the Carpathians was to supplement their merely makeshift uniforms with black and yellow armbands. What therefore looked like the last dregs from the barrel was in fact the best that could be offered. Replacement troop bodies were clothed in thin, drill, dark blue peacetime uniforms or ones that had not yet been withdrawn. Here, too, more purchases were needed. And during the first year of the war, 875 million kronen were spent on Imperial and Royal Army uniforms alone.<sup>1316</sup> However, the largest item of expenditure throughout was the estimate for 'rations in kind and food for personnel'. After all, two, three, and finally four million men had to be fed, provided with medical care and be given their wages. Hundreds of thousands fell or were no longer fit to continue fighting. Their relatives had the right to claim maintenance support. During the second year of the war, expenditure soared, since the output of weapons and ammunition – as mentioned above – could be significantly increased. The armaments industry needed extraordinary loans in order to do so, however. War bonds were designed to help them intensify production. The entry of Italy into the war made further efforts necessary. More money was needed. Again, the central bank played a role. Events began to spin out of control. Month after month, the War Ministry issued reports on what was needed for the war. Although they varied slightly, during the first two years of the war, the average sum was 1.3 billion kronen every month. Here, the military was interested least of all in how the money was to be raised.

In Hungary, unrest began to spread, and the Hungarian Council of Ministers demanded on 5 June 1915 that the Finance Ministers meet, with the inclusion of the prime ministers, the Foreign Minister, the governor of the central bank and also the Chief of the General Staff. Finance Minister Teleszky had made a long, dramatic presentation to the Hungarian ministers. His core message was: Hungary was no longer able to satisfy the requirements of the credit operations that had been implemented until then. Since the beginning of the war, Hungary had spent 3.8 billion kronen on waging the war, of which 3.2 billion had been raised through loans. Austria, he said,

had raised 5.9 billion with the help of loans, and had spent only 5.4 billion, putting it in a far better position, and even having generated a surplus of a kind, albeit of a purely arithmetical nature, since, ultimately, it was 'merely' a question of having higher or lower debts. One thing was clear: Hungary was supposed to raise more than a third of the monthly amount needed by the military. In the light of the weaker economic performance in the Hungarian half of the Empire, this was, he claimed, also out of the question. It had already been necessary to request an advance of the second war bond from the banks in order to make the ongoing payments. And from July 1915, halfway normal means of providing funds would be utterly impossible. As a solution, Teleszky suggested issuing a Hungarian loan in Austria, or that Austria should make its surpluses available in the short term. The minister also proposed that the Emperor and King, Franz Joseph, should be requested to attend the conference.<sup>1317</sup> Although this wish was not fulfilled, the conference did take place a few days later, on 18 June. Teleszky's contribution certainly succeeded in ruffling feathers. He presented the same arguments as he had done in Budapest: from July 1915 onwards, the Hungarian half of the Empire would no longer be capable of funding the war by means of the methods that had been applied until then. Austria was in a better position because it was economically far more powerful. In the Hungarian crown lands, however, money had already been borrowed and spent in anticipation of the receipt of loans that had not yet been granted. The 'normal' credit operations had been supplemented by such unorthodox liabilities as a Bulgarian and a Turkish loan, which could not be refused due to foreign policy interests. And even if Hungary only had to take on the repayment of an aliquot share of 36.4 per cent of the 150 million francs (leva) granted by Bulgaria and the sum in excess of 47 million kronen for Turkey, it again amounted to a great deal of money, all the more so since the loan repayments had in part been requested in gold. Due to the fact that the requirements of the war were increasing steadily, and that since the war against Italy, the Navy had also been requesting more and more funds, there was no end to the liabilities in sight. This should surely also give the Army High Command pause for thought. And with Conrad in mind, Minister Teleszky claimed that there was no doubt 'that the period within which we could wage the war from an economic perspective at least could be significantly extended if greater care could be taken across the board to conduct the war in a significantly more economical fashion than has been the case to date'. This had to be said once and for all in all clarity, and it remained to be discussed in all openness from which point in time 'the continuation of the war becomes questionable, including from the point of view of human and war material'. Conrad would not be moved, and as could only be expected, the conference on 18 June 1915 failed to achieve a result. In the light of the declaration of war by Italy, words such as 'economical' and 'limitation' had no meaning for the military. Everything was at stake. Ultimately, the Hungarian financial administration caved in after the

spectre suddenly emerged that the Army Administration might contemplate calling on the Law on War Contributions in order to sequester the entire apparatus of the central bank for its own purposes.<sup>1318</sup> However, once the appeal for economy had been made from the Hungarian side, it was also seized upon by War Minister Baron Alexander von Krobotin, although he almost became a laughing stock with his recommendations, since with one solitary measure, he proposed a regulation whereby all automobiles used for private purposes should be withdrawn in order to save rubber, petrol and lubricant oil. In Vienna alone, according to the War Minister, around 3,000 'luxury cars' had been counted over the Whitsun period in 1915. The Hungarian Minister of the Interior, János Sándor, put this figure into perspective by saying that in Hungary, there were at most 600 such vehicles, of which between 200 and 300 were in Budapest. He claimed that the rented cars would anyway have been forced off the road due to the lack of petrol. Since Krobotin refused to relent, however, on 13 August 1915, the Hungarian Council of Ministers turned the tables and demanded to know how matters stood with the army, for which 'as everyone knows, an enormous quantity of automobiles is still used today without any effective monitoring or restriction for the diversion or purposes of convenience of individual persons'. The withdrawal of these vehicles would achieve a dual purpose by making the cars available and using the drivers for active field services, those gentlemen, in other words, 'for whom the automobile service provides a convenient excuse in order to avoid those duties that entail greater risks and hardships'.<sup>1319</sup> The issue ran into the sand. However, the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to cover the needs of the Army, and that each side was seeing the mote in the other's eye, while overlooking the beam in their own, was blatantly clear.

From the summer of 1915, simple borrower's notes were issued by the credit institutions instead of more collateral or discount credits. On 15 July, the first new type of loan totalling 1.5 billion kronen was transferred to the governments: 954 million to Austria and 546 million to Hungary. The money lasted until the autumn. A second loan followed and, finally, during 1916 and 1917, the authorities managing the budgets in the two halves of the Empire received eight further payments totalling the same amount, at the same conditions (1 per cent interest) and with the same allocation. What was then not yet known was that in 1918, the looming collapse would be revealed in the form of exploding national debt. Between 20 March and 14 October, the two parts of the Empire received 11 (!) loans of 1.5 billion kronen each.<sup>1320</sup> The increases in taxes that were imposed even during the war were hardly able to yield the interest for the burgeoning war debt.

In order to keep Hungary's liquidity problem in check, Hungary was permitted to be issued with a bank loan in Austria, which while it was not issued for public application did however offer Finance Minister Teleszky somewhat more room for manoeuvre. Naturally, this was also nothing more than a temporary measure of assistance. Despite

the fact that attempts were made to borrow money abroad, they did not achieve a result. There was just one exception: the Danube Monarchy was able to borrow money in Germany. In November 1914, 300 million marks (375 million kronen) were borrowed from large Berlin banks, which were secured by treasury notes. And the Germans also continued to lend until, finally, the debts owed by Austria-Hungary to the German Empire from this title in the summer of 1916 alone grew to around three billion and then to over 6.7 billion kronen.<sup>1321</sup> Naturally, the expectations in Vienna had been higher, since the borrowed money had to be used not least to pay for the large number of imports from Germany. However, quite clearly, there were doubts as to the creditworthiness of the debtor and, anyway, Germany also faced the problem of not knowing how the money for waging the war should be raised.

What had become of the 'world of security'? During the first months of the war, the gold and silver coins had already disappeared. The prohibition on hoarding coined precious metals remained ineffective, regardless of what was written or preached.<sup>1322</sup> The central bank attempted to take counter-measures and issued a part of its metal hoard, particularly silver krone coins and old silver gulden. The result was that clusters of people gathered in front of the banks in Vienna and Budapest, so that the police were forced to intervene in order to maintain at least some kind of order. Barely had they been issued, when the silver coins, which had a total value of 100 million kronen, disappeared into the money stockings just as silver coins worth around 400 million kronen had done previously. In order to have at least small sums available for everyday needs, in 1914, bank notes with a value of 1 krone were already issued instead of silver coins; at the end of 1916, bank notes worth 2 kronen came into circulation. Instead of nickel, the fractional coins with a value of 10 and 20 heller were initially minted in nickel silver, which consisted of a mixture of 50 per cent copper, 40 per cent zinc and 10 per cent nickel. Then, these metals also ran out. The fractional coins that had been minted until then were withdrawn, and from then on, only iron coins were minted. Now, it was mostly paper kronen and iron heller that were in circulation.

For the central bank and the other credit institutions, however, the most pressing problem remained how to finance the needs of the military. With the treasury notes, the loans and the borrower's notes, effective financial operations tended to be conducted only for the short term. And ultimately, these were transactions of which the average citizen at least became aware. The army anyway appeared to live according to the maxim that money had to be found, since otherwise, how was war to be waged? In fact, there was another way of financing the war, by means of which the number of banknotes in circulation could also be reduced: war bonds. Ultimately, these became a type of symbol, not only for the war itself, but also for the fact that it was a total war. Aside from the patriotic collection of metals needed for the war – 'I gave gold for iron' – there was after all nothing comparable that could be used as propaganda

for the war, and for affecting the senses as well as sentiments. Almost everyone knew about war bonds.<sup>1323</sup>

### The War Bonds

Initially, it had still been assumed in the finance ministries that no bonds should be issued. It was not yet felt that the moment had come to siphon off money. Since it could not be taken for granted that the money from a bond would be 'put on ice', but would instead immediately have to be used in order to cover financial needs, the finance experts feared an inflationary effect.<sup>1324</sup> However, it was of no use. Either the taxes were drastically increased, or the state was forced to borrow money by taking out bonds. Whether the money borrowed could one day be paid back and, if so, how, was anybody's guess. However, there is no doubt that all monetary transactions were accompanied by the hope that the conquered enemies would one day be forced to pay vast sums in reparations, and be called on to settle the debts.

In the autumn of 1914, the first war bond was issued. It was offered on 16 November as a five-and-a-half per cent bond, and was to be paid back in the Austrian half of the Empire by 1 April 1920. Subscriptions could be made at the post office savings banks and all large credit institutions, as well as at the Austro-Hungarian Bank. 15 credit institutions combined to form a syndicate chaired by the Austrian Post Office Savings Bank, which made decisions regarding denominations, settlements, advertising and propaganda, and not least also regarding the commissions. The result was unexpected and certainly remarkable: the bond raised a nominal value of around 2.2 billion kronen in Cisleithania alone.<sup>1325</sup> However, the funds from this bond were quickly used up. As a result, a second bond was issued in May 1915, and finally a third in the autumn of the same year. Redemption was deferred by five years in each case. The repayment date for the third bond was set at 1 October 1930.

The willingness to invest money in war bonds, or at least to set an example, had grown considerably in comparison with the first two bonds. And the result of 4.2 billion kronen far exceeded the earlier sums. Ultimately, things were to move forward rapidly, until finally, on 28 May 1918, the eighth war bond was issued in Austria. It still yielded a subscribed amount of over 5.8 billion kronen, even if the currency was highly inflationary, and was thus just below the total brought in by the seventh war bond, which with over 6 billion kronen yielded the best result in nominal terms of all the Austrian bonds. However, due to the rate of inflation, it fell far short of the third bond. The last bond in Cisleithania was due for repayment by 1958. In total, over 35 billion kronen were subscribed to bonds in the Austrian half of the Empire alone, although according to the currency value of 1914, this was the equivalent of only 9.1

billion. However, calculations of this nature were left until after the war. For a short period of time, the dual purpose of the bonds, namely to finance the war while at the same time quickly siphoning off the additional money brought into circulation by the money printing press, appeared to have been achieved. In November 1915, the value of the banknotes in circulation decreased by 150 billion kronen. However, the curve subsequently soared upwards again.

The Kingdom of Hungary also chose the bonds option, taking out 17 in all. Of these, 13 were issued for public subscription, while four were placed with the banks of the Danube Monarchy. Unlike in Austria, the money magnates of the Hungarian half of the Empire, led by the Rothschild banking house, were for a long time unconvinced by the advisability of bond transactions. They were particularly doubtful as to whether the war bonds would be accepted. Their scepticism would turn out to be unfounded. The first Hungarian war bond raised subscriptions of 1.15 billion kronen. There had been problems, however. Due to the fact that the war bonds paid a higher level of interest than the savings books and other securities, which offered interest of first 3, then 4 per cent, there was a run on the banks and savings banks, with investors taking out their money and immediately investing it in war bonds. While this was not a problem for the large banking houses, the smaller institutions were suddenly faced with difficulties in paying out the savings balances, since their funding ratio was insufficient in order to satisfy all the demands for cash. For this reason, the Hungarian Finance Minister, with the agreement of the entire Cabinet, permitted those credit institutions that were at risk to use state deposits, and the crisis was overcome. Half a year later, the second war bond was also issued in Hungary, and now the negative prognoses appeared to be coming true: the total amount subscribed remained far below expectations. Quite clearly, people had spent everything they had, and had no more savings that they could use to subscribe to a war bond. The tone of the advertisements for the bond had also been muted, perhaps because it had been expected that a kind of automatic subscription-happiness would ensue. Again, the banks were forced to step in so that at least a respectable sum could be raised. However, it subsequently became clear that the Hungarian half of the Empire was having difficulties achieving a comparable result to that of Cisleithania. The 18 billion kronen that were finally raised from all the bonds emitted in Hungary remained around a billion kronen below what was commonly regarded as being the Hungarian quota, which was 36.4 per cent for outgoings and income. It was a decent sum, however, and, as was the case in Austria, left many owners of the bond millions impoverished after the war. After all, at the end of the day, they had invested in a loser.

When it came to subscribing to war bonds, the differences between the two halves of the Empire were not the only ones to emerge. Far more noticeable was what was happening within these individual halves, and how again in this case, parts of the finan-



cial world gave out signals that could only be interpreted as a rejection of the Empire. However, this was not simply the rejection of a few unimportant 'bankers' who were unwilling to speculate on making a profit. It was most certainly the rejection by nationalists, who in their own way refused to do what was so closely bound up with the bonds, namely to declare their patriotic loyalty and demonstrate their will to win and persevere.

A few years ago, Thomas Winkelbauer posed the question: 'Who paid for the downfall of the Habsburg Monarchy?' In response, he gave some highly informative answers, albeit ones that are not held in high estimation by some historians.<sup>1326</sup> First came the banks and savings banks. Their commitment could be taken as an indication of how willing the credit institutions were to take on risks and to invest savers' money in war bonds. An interesting picture already emerged for the first bond. Slovenian-Croatian savings banks subscribed bonds to a value of 1.1 million kronen, with 2.7 million from Italian savings banks, 28 million from Czech savings banks and 471 million from German savings banks.<sup>1327</sup> The Slovenes and Italians played only a small role in Austria due to both their low share of the population and the lack of corresponding credit institutions in the financial world of the Habsburg Monarchy. The situation was entirely different when it came to the banks and savings banks of Bohemia and Moravia. After the German Austrians, the Czechs were by far the strongest national group in financial terms. Thanks to the high degree of industrialisation and the fact that, unlike Galicia, Bukovina and the Slovenian and Italian regions, the Bohemian crown lands had not suffered directly from the war, they were able to move freely on the money markets. The dividing line was after all different to the one that separated the front from the hinterland. When all the subscriptions from banks, savings banks, insurances and also physical persons for the first war bond were included, the Imperial and Royal Military Command in Prague calculated that 85 per cent of the investments could be attributed to German institutions and individuals, and only 15 per cent to Czechs, with a further difference emerging between Bohemia and Moravia in that the willingness to subscribe to the bond was significantly higher in Moravia. For the subsequent war bonds, the picture shifted slightly in favour of the Czechs, but it remained the case that the Czechs had a comparatively low share in the total amount raised by the war bonds. Naturally, attempts were made to explain this, and it was argued that the Czechs, like the Poles and Italians, had hardly ever subscribed to state loans even before the war, preferring instead to invest their savings in local institutions that were also ascribed to their own nationality, and in most cases also to leave them there rather than investing them in loans. Clearly, their attitude was not affected by the fact that the war bonds offered a far higher rate of interest than other forms of investment, or even savings books. The message here seemed to be that a secure three per cent return was preferable to six per cent 'speculative profits'. The reasons for the absence of the Czechs were more wide-ranging, however. In December 1915, during the so-called 'Kramář case', the

Governor of Bohemia, Prince Franz Thun-Hohenstein, had to justify to the examining judge why the total subsidies in the crown land for which he was responsible had been so low for the first war bond. The long-winded attempts at explanation by way of the fact that the Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia did not have enough cash, and that the bond had been issued too soon after the harvest, could surely not have constituted a convincing answer. Prince Thun then pointed out that the second war bond had also been accepted by the Czechs, even though in April 1915 the war situation had looked anything but promising. However, this was tantamount to glossing over the situation, since it was only from the third war bond onwards that an increase in subsidiary sums could be observed, after the 19 Czech savings banks alone had been issued with 104 reminders from the Governor's office.<sup>1328</sup>

Ultimately, attempts were made to explain the low degree of willingness among the Czechs to finance the 'downfall of the Habsburg Monarchy' not only in terms of region and nationality, but also individuals. It was the members of the board of the Živnostenská banka, the 'flagship of the Czech banking system', who were keen not to involve their institution in the bond transactions. And other banks followed suit.<sup>1329</sup> The Deputy Director General of the Živnostenská banka, Jaroslav Preiss, was arrested in June 1916. He was accused, with proof provided, that he had directly prohibited the branches of the bank from advertising the first war bond, and the *Národní listy* newspaper had warned against the risks of both the first and the second war bond. His bank also even belonged to the bank consortium that had been set up under the leadership of the Austrian Postal Savings Bank in order to emit the bonds. However, clearly, Preiß had given higher priority to national sentiment than he had to maximising profits; at least, he did not regard subscribing to the bond as being a patriotic act. On 15 November 1914, Preiss wrote that the end of the war 'is shrouded in an obscure fog', and with reference to the second bond, expressed the view that it would be better to be satisfied with a lower rate of interest and not to be misled by the tempting noises that were being made.<sup>1330</sup> In a rather pro forma manner, his own bank also subscribed the comparatively modest sum of 38 million kronen to the first war bond, around the same as the small Bank for Upper Austria and Salzburg. Almost as soon as it had purchased the securities, the Živnostenská banka and its directors attempted to rid themselves of them again by selling and pledging them. As if that were not enough, the 'flagship' bank also purchased Russian pensions and securities.<sup>1331</sup> To attempt to explain this purely by reason of prosaic bank interests would be to miss the point. The fact that attempts were being made in Prague to remain liquid also for the period after the war, and that both the bank's own interests and those of the Czech economy were kept in mind, comes closer to explaining what happened. And the heart of the matter was most likely the fact that speculation was being made on a Czech future without the Austrian superstructure.<sup>1332</sup> The degree of enthusiasm for war bonds also varied widely among other

Czech banks, and it was certainly not only Jaroslav Preiss who advised the public to invest elsewhere. However, just as the temporary boycott of the Czech credit institutions cannot be ignored, there is also no denying the fact that the sums subscribed by the German Austrian credit institutions themselves were by far the highest.

Subscription results for large Austrian credit institutions to the first four war bonds  
(in millions of kronen)

	1st w.b.	2nd w.b.	3rd w.b.	4th w.b.
Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe	20	30	45	55 mln.
Wiener Bankverein	20	30	40	50 mln.
Österreichische Länderbank	20	30	40	50 mln.
Niederösterreichische Escompte Gesellschaft	20	30	40	50 mln.
Böhmische Union Bank	7	8	12	15 mln.
Böhmische Eskompte-Bank	5	7,5	10	12 mln.
Zentralbank der deutschen Sparkassen	2	3	5	10 mln.
Živnostenská banka	3	6	10	15 mln.
Česka průmyslová banka	1	2	3	4 mln.
Zentralbank der tschechischen Sparkassen	0.01	0.1	2	3 mln.

From: Hermann Heller (ed.), *Unsere Kriegsanleihen. Monumente des Patriotismus. Historisch-statistische Skizze nach authentischen Quellen 3: 1914–1917, Vienna 1917, 21–58, and Winkelbauer, Wer bezahlte, 391.*

Institutional investors, which were predominantly the large credit institutions and industrial companies, subscribed 40.6 per cent of the papers issued for the first war bond. For the third and fully for the fourth war bond, almost half of the subscribers were already institutions. For the fifth war bond, institutional investors already provided over half the total sum, and for the eighth war bond, the share of major institutional investors would come close to the two-thirds mark.<sup>1333</sup>

Others also paid, subscribed to war bonds and made very substantial contributions to financing the war. Top of the list among the non-institutional investors were the major war suppliers and armaments companies. They invested a share of their assets – and in some cases much more than that – in bond securities and, in this way, refunded a part of the profits. Quite clearly, they were not acting purely for altruistic reasons. At the top of the list of the war suppliers was the Hungarian war product public limited company (Hadiermény r.t.), which with 211 million kronen subscribed almost twenty times the value of its deliveries to the army and fleet, followed by Gebrüder Böhler & Co (Vienna), which subscribed a total of 78 million kronen for the first seven war bonds. It was followed by Dynamit Nobel (Vienna) with 74 million, Wetzler & Co

Viktualien (Vienna) with 72 million, and then the large weapons factories: Škoda (Pilsen) with 61 million, the Österreichische Waffenfabriksgesellschaft AG (Steyr, Vienna) with 67 million, the Hirtenberger Patronen- und Zündhütchenfabrik (Hirtenberg) with 44.5 million and the Manfred Weiss Works in Budapest with 44.9 million kronen, and so on.

Ranking the contributors is difficult, since for example in the period up to 1917, the Austrian Linen and Cotton Industrial Corporation for Army Supplies (*Österreichische Leinen- und Baumwoll-Industriegesellschaft für Heeresausrüstung Marbach & Konsorten*) in Vienna subscribed around half of the delivery value of 150.4 million kronen in total back into war bonds, while the Wetzler company, which with a delivery value of around 1.2 billion kronen was right up at the top among the war suppliers, may have repeatedly subscribed high sums, but returned no more than six per cent of the delivery value in the form of bonds. Wetzler & Co's actions clearly reflect another fact: the big business with the war was conducted not by the armaments companies, but by the food trade!

In Austria, according to a survey conducted by the Imperial and Royal War Ministry<sup>1334</sup> that was classified as 'confidential', for the war years up to and including 1917, 6,900 war suppliers were counted that fell into a type of first category, and whose deliveries in terms of quantity and value were on a larger scale than those of the 4,770 suppliers in the second category. For the first group, figures were gathered relating to the value of supplies to the army and the fleet on the one hand, and the amounts subscribed to the war bonds on the other. At the end of 1917, companies and consortia with contributions of over 100 million kronen were immortalised in this War Ministry 'best list', although the bond subscriptions were not made dependent on the level of the delivery values. By the end of 1917, 457 companies in the Austrian half of the Empire had subscribed over one million kronen. Around half of the major and larger suppliers were, however, unable to provide evidence during the survey of having subscribed to bonds. It is therefore likely that even companies who without doubt made significant profits from the war felt in no way obliged to subscribe to bonds. This applied to Austrian and Hungarian companies in equal measure. While they did not finance the downfall, they did initially profit from the orders received. However, companies such as Gerngroß, Herzmansky and others, which frequently subscribed sums to bonds that were many times the value of their deliveries and, equally, those who not only made their money from supplying the army and fleet, showed all the more willingness to subscribe. The fact that in 1918, the institutional investors, in other words, the banks, savings banks and insurance companies, were already subscribing over 60 per cent of the bonds, makes it clear, however, that not only the share of private subscribers fell significantly, but also that of the companies. The Austrian war suppliers were 'ranked' as follows:

## Austrian companies with a delivery value of over 100 million kronen

Gebr. Böhler & Co. A.G.	Vienna	496,720,876
Böhmische Landwirtschaftliche Viehverwertungs Ges. m.b.H.; cattle for slaughter	Prague	479,081,321
Karl Budischowsky; leather factory	Jihlava (Ig- lau)	162,491,428
Deutsche Viehverwertungsgesellschaft für Böhmen Ges. m.b.H.; animal utilisation	Prague	191,862,146
Enzesfelder Munitions- und Metallwerke A.G.; ammunition	Vienna	219,446,578
Erste k.k. priv. Donau-Dampfschiffahrtsges.; first Imperial-Royal private Danube shipping co.	Vienna	117,750,431
Fischer'sche Weicheisen und Stahl-Gießerei Ges.; ammunition	Traisen	117,003,099
S. & J. Flesch Lederfabrik; skins	Wilhelms- burg	141,751,345
Hirtenberger Patronen- und Zündhütchen-Fabrik; shells and percussion caps	Hirtenberg	137,920,095
Kärntnerische Viehverwertungsgesellschaft; Carinthian animal sales association	Klagenfurt	110,165,537
Kriegs-Getreide-Verkehrsanstalt; war grain trade office	Vienna	491,146,383
Oesterr. Leinen- und Baumwoll-Industrieges. für Heeresausrüstung von Marbach & Konsorten;	Vienna	150,417,116
linen and cotton for army equipment Oesterr. Daimler-Motoren A.G.	Wiener Neustadt	113,274,403
Oesterr. Lederindustrieges, für Heeresausrüstung v. Budischowsky, Bloch, Rieckh & Konsorten	Vienna	494,110,095
leather for army equipment Oesterr. Mannesmannröhrenwerke Ges. m.b.H.; pipe mill	Vienna	139,342,623
Oesterr. Tuchlieferungsges, für das k. u. k. Heer v. Offermann, Quittner, Schoeller & Konsorten;	Vienna	317,700,000
cloth supplies for the Imperial and Royal Army Oesterr. Vieh- u. Fleischverkehrsgesellschaft; animals and meat	Vienna	285,287,567
Oesterr. Vieh- u. Fleischverkehrsgesellschaft	Urfahr	154,978,047
Oesterr. Waffenfabriksgesellschaft A.G.; armaments	Vienna/Steyr	378,535,641
K. k. priv. Oesterr.-ung. Staatseisenbahnges. A.G. Imperial-Royal Austro-Hungarian state railway association	Vienna	102,617,484
'Özeg', Oesterr. Zentraleinkaufsges. A.G.; central purchasing association	Vienna	111,853,711
C.T. Petzold & Co.; ammunition and barracks	Vienna	144,871,053
Poldihütte Tigelgussstahlfabrik; cast steel factory	Vienna	133,375,867
F. Rieckh Söhne; leather	Graz	139,796,431
G. Roth A.G.; powder factory	Vienna	379,090,524

Josef Saborsky & Söhne; cattle for slaughter	Vienna	225,629,200
Schöller & Co.; steam mill, steel and iron, wood sanding	Vienna	105,866,992
Škodawerke A.G.	Pilsen	543,527,452
Spirituszentrale; central spirits office	Vienna	150,000,000
Ústředni Svaz česk. hospod. společenstev; Czech business association	Brno (Brünn)	188,930,737
Vereinigte Jutefabriken; sandbags	Vienna	137,912,835
B, Wetzler & Co.; victuals	Vienna	1,191,837,387
Witkowitz Bergbau-Gesellschaft; mining	Vitkovice (Witkowitz)	224,753,357
Zentralverband der böhm. Landwirtschaftl. Genossenschaften f.d. Markgrafschaft Mähren Ges.m.b.H.; central association of Bohemian agricultural associations for Moravia	Brno	148,886,569
Zuckerzentrale; central sugar office	Vienna	193,755,040

The list of major Hungarian war suppliers may be somewhat shorter than its Austrian counterpart. Overall, by the end of 1917, however, there were also around 5,300 category 1 companies, associations and consortia in the Kingdom of Hungary. Of these, 321 by degrees subscribed to war bonds with sums of over one million kronen. These were usually accompanied by extensive deliveries. 20 companies came out at the top with over 100 million kronen. The list was dominated by suppliers of foodstuffs and animal feed:

War suppliers in the Kingdom of Hungary with delivery values of over 100 million kronen

Haditermény r.t.; war products, plc.,	Budapest	1,033,607,820
Weiss Manfred r.t. konzervgyár; preserves factory, plc	Budapest	827,357,494
Wetzler B. és tsa; preserves	Királyhida	593,899,252
Magyar élelmiszerszállító r.t.; Hungarian food transport, plc	Budapest	581,469,319
Vágómarha központ; slaughter animal central office of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry	Budapest	565,693,483
Weiss Manfred lőszer, acél és fémművei r.t.; ammunition, steel and metalworks, plc	Budapest	545,000,000
Wolfner Gyula és Társa, bőrgyár; leather factory	Budapest	356,570,000
Nemzeti egyes. Textilművek és tsaik magyar posztószállító társasága; Hungarian cloth supply company for the Imperial and Royal Army	Budapest	323,012,287
Kelenföldi bőrhadfeldszerelési intézet, Schmitt és Tsai.; Kelenföld leather manufacturing factory for army supplies, Schmitt and Cons.	Budapest	231,186,465

Nemzeti egyesült Textilművek r.t.; 'National United War Products', plc., textile works, plc.	Budapest	223,380,678
Magyar földberlők szövetkezete; cooperative of Hungarian estate holders	Budapest	183,011,698
Nemzeti egyes. Textilművek és tsaik magyar pamut- és vászonárúk szállító társasága; Hungarian cotton and linen goods delivery company for the Imperial and Royal Army	Budapest	175,775,324
Kisjenői főhercegi uradalom haszonbérlete r.t. szarvasmarha, termények; plc for the leasing of the Kisjenő archducal domain, animals, products	Budapest	143,686,590
Hafner Radivoj; animals	Karlovac	134,516,076
Croatian-Slavonian purchasing central office of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry for slaughter animals	Zagreb	133,397,646
Dohányjövédéki központi igazgatóság (magy.kir.); central office of the Imp. and Royal tobacco admin.	Budapest	119,722,483
Magyar gyapjuárú-, katonaposztó és takarógyár; Hungarian wool-len products, military fabric and blanket factory	Zsolna	112,320,530
Ganz és Tsa. 'Danubius' gépgyár, waggon és hajógyár r.t.; Ganz & Co. 'Danubius' machine factory plc	Budapest	108,300,774
Sertésátvételi bizottság; pig acquisition commission of the Imp. and Royal War Ministry	Budapest	100,759,280
Szab. osztr. magy.- államvasút Társaság; private Austro-Hungarian state railway association	Budapest	100,638,088

It is noticeable that for the figures for both the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Empire, while the owners of large domains and territories who were listed frequently appeared as war suppliers, the columns for data on the war bond subscriptions remained empty, or showed relatively modest amounts. This applied to some members of the upper aristocracy such as the Auersperg, Szécheny, Teleky, Windisch-Graetz, Kolowrat and Potocky families, as well as to the comital houses of Hoyos, Lankoronsky, Nostitz and others, and in a strange way corresponds to the fact that it was precisely the upper and middle aristocracy that tended to keep its personal war contributions at a low level. A comparison with the nobility in the German Empire is almost shocking (I shall return to this subject later). Even so, it would be inaccurate to conclude from the low degree of willingness to subscribe to the bonds on the part of the ancient nobility and the comital houses, as well as very wealthy members of the lower aristocracy, that they did not subscribe to any war bonds at all. However, there is no doubt that a whole series of members of the upper aristocracy and large landowners<sup>1335</sup> behaved in stark contrast to the practice of the ruling Prince Johann Nepomuk von und zu Schwarzenberg, who – while making no large deliveries to the treasury – did however arrange for his establishments and assets in Admont, Murau and Hlubotká nad Vltavou (Frauenberg) in Bohemia to subscribe a total of 72 million kronen to the war bonds. For

this reason, too, the picture that thus emerges is clear and confusing at the same time. One has the impression that it was precisely those sections of the upper aristocracy who with their agricultural goods, industrial investments and other interests were not among those whose livelihood was at stake when they subscribed to bonds, and were more or less automatically classified as belonging to the group of people who identified with the Crown and the Empire, who were frequently not foremost among those who linked the continued existence of the Empire to the ups and downs of their businesses and establishments. More pointedly: for those running small businesses, small Jewish firewood or animal feed suppliers, Bosnian victuals traders and not least their employees and workers, it was in most cases a matter of course that they would combine their services to their ruler and fatherland with very personal contributions and give up their savings and at least tie them up for the long term. Perhaps they lacked sufficient foresight, succumbed to the temptation of the high interest rate, and ultimately the manifold pressure from society and from the authorities. At any rate, the conclusion was that it was not least due to the money transactions during the war and the financial debacle following the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy that the differences between social classes were dramatically intensified. And if in the new Austria the lenders were unable to redeem their war bonds by 15 May 1919, then they at best had a memento of the lost war in their hands in the form of bond documents and coupons that had become worthless.

Every war bond was accompanied by extensive advertising. It was also made particularly easy to purchase subscriptions, which could be made at banks, savings banks, finance authorities and, above all, post offices. In some cases, the post offices were open until 9 p.m., and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. The Anglo-Austrian Bank erected thousands of collection points in schools. The military commands granted a two-day holiday in order to give soldiers the opportunity of subscribing to war bonds. Occasionally, it is likely that regular holidays were granted only after the applicant had carried out their 'patriotic duty',<sup>1336</sup> and people were almost forced 'to extrude one or two kronen from each individual; and the people, who are anyway subdued as a result of the rough treatment by the officers, give willingly, if only to be left in peace again.'<sup>1337</sup> Separate subscription officers conducted advertising, accepted applications and took money. For soldiers, the deadlines for subscription were more or less extended as required.<sup>1338</sup> The governors directed thousands of personal letters to members of the upper classes. The chairmen of consortia were summoned, and if the bond subscriptions of the members of the consortium failed to meet expectations, official records were even made. Occasionally, specifications were issued to the municipal authorities – as was the case with the fifth war bond in November 1916 – as to the sums to be subscribed. Before then, in other words, until the fourth war bond, the total amounts subscribed by the municipal authorities were for example as follows:



Municipality of Wiener Neustadt	1,300,000 kronen
Municipality of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad)	2,500,000 kronen
Municipality of Linz	2,500,000 kronen
Municipal authority of the town of Subotica (Szabadka)	4,000,000 kronen
Municipality of Liberec (Reichenberg)	3,600,000 kronen
Municipality of Vienna	166,600,000 kronen, etc.

Other cities, market towns and villages may have been less enthusiastic. However, from November 1916, there was no escape. Civic employees and others were generously given wage advances with an interest rate of five per cent.<sup>1339</sup> However, since the war bonds at the time offered a rate of 5 ½ per cent, a small profit could still be made.

Hundreds of articles appeared in the newspapers, such as 40 contributions in the *Neue Freie Presse* alone for the second bond. The slogan was: 'Best rate of interest with maximum security'. Thousands of advertisements were placed for each bond. Servant girls, cooks and chambermaids made applications to their professional groups; a three-line rhyme was circulated as an apparent wise saying: 'Warmer Mai / Geld wie Heu / Günstig für die Krieganleihe' ('Warm May / Money like hay / Good for the war bond').<sup>1340</sup> The rhymes written by Gustav Hochstetter, 'Das Lied vom Feldgrauen Geld' ('The Song of Field Grey Money'), were also of a light nature, culminating in the refrain:

'Oestreich kämpft mit einer Welt, / Und zum Krieg gehört auch – Geld! / All ihr Männer, all ihr Frauen, / Die ihr Oestreich Heimat nennt, / Habt zum Vaterland Vertrauen, / Gebt ihm, was ihr geben könnt.'<sup>1341</sup>

('Austria fights against a world, / And what the war needs too is – gold! / All you men and all you women, / Who call your Austria your home, / Have faith in your fatherland, / And give it everything you can.')

From the second bond onwards, most credit institutions asked the best artists to design posters and, as a result, exhortations to subscribe to the war bonds sprang out from all advertising spaces, showcases and advertising pillars. In order to underline their attractiveness, the Austro-Hungarian Bank decided to copy the model used by the German Reichsbank, offering the bonds and paying interest on them at particularly favourable conditions.<sup>1342</sup> The rate of interest was increased from 5.5 per cent to 6.25 per cent. The owners of bond securities were already recommended for the fourth bond to exchange their older securities with a term of 20 years for those with a term of 40 years. As a result, the repayment periods were extended.

There was no banking confidentiality with regard to the war bonds. The names of nearly everyone who subscribed larger and substantial amounts were published. All

the newspapers printed reports about major investors who had subscribed significant sums. It goes without saying that wherever possible, it was emphasised that Emperor Franz Joseph had subscribed 44 million kronen overall to the first three war bonds in Austria and Hungary. The entry of Italy into the war led him to increase the subscription amounts once again, so that the money would not run out when it came to fighting the 'hereditary enemy'.<sup>1343</sup> Emperor Karl then ordered posters to be printed for the campaigns for both the Austrian seventh and eighth bonds with the message that His Majesty had in each case subscribed 12 million kronen. In the publications relating to the subscription results, entitled *Monumente des Patriotismus* ('Monuments of Patriotism'), the members of the ruling dynasty were however usually listed without any specific figures. As was the case with the children of the heir to the throne and his wife who had been murdered in Sarajevo, the only information provided was that they had subscribed 'a significant sum'. Doubtless such signs of patriotism were also expected of them. Counts Johann II von und zu Liechtenstein and Johann Nepomuk Schwarzenberg were not far behind the monarch, however. When it came to the others, greater efforts had to be made in order to then be able to document their patriotism. War suppliers were obliged to accept war bonds instead of payment; public servants received part of their wages in the form of war bonds, and were unable to buy anything with them. Although at least at the beginning, there had theoretically been the option of pledging the bond securities, with the exception of the Czech banks until 1917, almost no-one made use of it.

Ultimately, the aim most certainly was to be able to monitor precisely who had subscribed which sums. This raised a question that has been left unanswered even until now, and which at the end of the day is impossible to answer: why did such and such a person subscribe nothing, only a little, or a great deal? And if someone perhaps escaped the attention of the newspapers, or did not want to see their contribution publicised, they were still listed in the honorary works of the fatherland. There, it was written for all to see how much had been subscribed in the crown lands, or in the district of Oberhollabrunn or in the parish of Prägarten, what sums had been subscribed in the savings banks in Drohobycz in Galicia and Rădăuți (Radautz) in Bukovina, and how much subscription money had been collected by the parish offices in Ried im Innkreis. Readers could begin to ponder on why the pupils in Upper Austria, with a subscription of around a million kronen, were far behind those in Lower Austria (without Vienna), where around 7.5 million were raised. And this was exactly what was intended, in order to spur people on by setting an example, but also to be able to point the finger at anyone who was missing from the list.

The bond results were distributed over the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Empire as follows:

## War bonds in billions of kronen

	<b>Austria</b>	<b>Hungary</b>
1st war bond (November 1914)	2.20	1.23
2nd war bond (May 1915)	2.69	1.13
3rd war bond (October 1915)	4.20	2.27
4th war bond (April 1916)	4.52	1.94
5th war bond (November/Dec.1916)	4.47	2.36
6th war bond (May 1917)	5.19	2.55
7th war bond (November 1917)	6.05	3.95
8th war bond (May/June 1918)	5.81	3.16

The total amount came to 53.72 billion kronen. Or, to put it another way: Austria-Hungary raised only two-fifths of the funds for its war through taxes and ongoing revenues, with three-fifths coming from war bonds. The absolute figures are however misleading to the extent that the seventh war bond, which, with a nominal value of 6.05 billion kronen in the Austrian half of the Empire alone, was the most successful of all eight bonds, only corresponded in terms of purchasing power to a total of 732 million (peacetime) kronen, and therefore was in fact only worth an eighth of the nominal value.<sup>1344</sup> Regardless of how the war ended, with terms of 40 years until the bond was redeemed, it could be expected that future generations – children and grandchildren – would also pay the price for Austria-Hungary's (final) war.

The smallest payment units were tranches of 100 kronen. However, those investing very small sums could also make use of the opportunity to purchase parts of 100-kronen bond securities. From 25 kronen, they were 'in'.<sup>1345</sup> Indeed, it wasn't even necessary to pay this money in cash; it was paid in advance. The first bond attracted a huge wave of small investors, around 55,000 in Cisleithania alone. For the second bond, the number of subscriptions for the smaller amounts of up to 500 kronen decreased, but this was offset by the increase in subscriptions for higher sums. However, from the sixth war bond onwards in May 1917, people were no longer prepared to purchase bonds in Austria, even if it was repeatedly stressed that the results were a sign of 'unshakeable confidence' and described and honoured as a 'sweeping success'.<sup>1346</sup> Ultimately, newspapers, authorities and model examples could not fully influence behaviour, since if someone was unwilling to subscribe, and was not forced to accept war bonds instead of wage payments or cash, they could not be coerced into doing so. In Moravia, one sentence began to circulate in 1917: 'The war bond is prolonging the war'. The sentence had an effect. However, even in crown lands such as Tyrol and Vorarlberg, where an almost unconditional will to persevere could be observed, the amounts subscribed by private investors went into steep decline. There was no money left, and the much-lauded middle classes were, according

to the Innsbruck Governor's office 'with the current price inflation no longer in a position to invest their savings in war bonds, since they by necessity have needed them to finance their livelihoods, which have anyway been subject to the harshest privations'.<sup>1347</sup> Here, no letters complaining about the flagging willingness to subscribe were of help. It also made no difference denouncing members of the Social Democrat movement, who in response to the sixth bond had announced that they did not wish to again vote in favour of the bond subscriptions in the municipal councils.<sup>1348</sup> It was also to no avail that under Emperor Karl, a veritable flood of subscriptions rained down on the heads of those who worked to promote the bonds. Directors, general managers, executive heads of imperial councils and hundreds of other directors, proxy directors, school head teachers, chairmen, editors and lawyers were made Knights of the Order of Franz Joseph by the dozen. Many hundreds more were awarded the Golden Merit Cross with crown, the Golden Merit Cross (without crown), and the War Cross for Civil Merits 2nd, 3rd and 4th class. They had something to be pleased about.

### The Raging of the Banknote Presses

Until the seventh bond, demands were made to make money fluid for victory in the war; then, in connection with the eighth and final bond in June 1918, the words 'final victory' were also mentioned, although, in fact, the purpose of the final loan was more to help finance the transition to peace.

Whoever had been able to had not only subscribed to bonds, but had also reacted to the countless pleas for donations that had resulted from the increasing poverty. The income from these was not used to finance the war, but here and there to alleviate one of the impacts of the war. Money was collected for members of the army who had been blinded, the school for one-armed invalids, the families of those who had been conscripted, the Red Cross Society, an initiative to feed the unemployed, for the refugees from Galicia and Bukovina, help to relieve the hardship of the needy Jews of Galicia who had been affected by the events of the war, the widow and orphan fund of the entire armed force, the Austro-Hungarian prisoners in enemy countries, the initiative to procure prosthetic limbs, the War Welfare Office, the invalid funds and dozens of others. These were joined by the war lotteries, numerous sales exhibitions and charity bazaars. The many different pleas were in fact impossible to ignore. One initiative with a rather more commercial orientation was cinema days, in which a modest sum was donated from the price of the entrance tickets for one charitable institution or another. Establishments of a widely varying nature used similar tactics in their attempt to escape enforced closure, due not to the fact that the amusement they offered was not considered appropriate for the public, but rather due to a lack of money.

An increasing amount of money came into circulation – and less and less was available. This applied to individuals as well as to the state. And the demands made by the Imperial and Royal War Ministry for mobilisation credits came with never-ending regularity:

March 1916:	1.353 billion kronen
April 1916:	1.281 billion kronen
May 1916:	1.332 billion kronen
June 1916:	1.357 billion kronen
July 1916:	1.340 billion kronen, and so on.

Then came the money claimed separately for the war machine, which totalled 15 (and more) million kronen every month for the operation of the High Seas Fleet and the Danube Flotilla, as well as other monthly contributions for the construction of new submarines and torpedo boat destroyers. The total military costs also included the monthly purchasing requirement for horses, which amounted to around 10 million kronen, as well as carts and feed. Finally, the Foreign Ministry made demands for money, which could not be refused, for the support of the family members living abroad of Austrian soldiers (10 million), to support Austrian prisoners of war, alleviate the plight of refugees, and so on. The banknote presses were ceaselessly at work.

Now, thoughts also naturally turned in Austria-Hungary to the option of raising taxes. However, it was precisely here that the Habsburg Monarchy behaved contrary to what one might have expected. The instrument of tax increases was implemented only very sparingly, and rather as an exception. Only in April 1916 did a really incisive tax measure take effect as a result of the introduction of the war profits tax. This primarily affected share and joint stock companies, associations and limited liability companies. The incomes that had increased as a result of the war were also taxed at a rate of between 10 and 60 per cent.<sup>1349</sup> The war profits tax applied retroactively to 1914, which meant that in mid-1916, all the companies affected had to make large tax repayments. However, the tax debt could be made good by subscribing to war bonds. This was a not insignificant factor in terms of the success of the fourth and fifth war bonds. It is probably true that large companies also succeeded in avoiding the war profits tax and hiding their profits in the balance sheets. However, this is an insufficient explanation for the only modest amounts that this tax was able to raise.

The low tax revenues were in stark contrast to what was done in Great Britain, for example, in the wake of the war-related financial measures. In Great Britain, income tax alone increased five-fold during the course of the war, and the British covered a quarter of their war expenses from ongoing revenues.<sup>1350</sup> In Austria, an increase in income could in fact only be gained from consumption taxes. Spirits, beer, wine and meat

taxes were continuously increased. Then however – and again, the break came in 1916 – the grain for the breweries became scarce and the amount of meat available decreased. As a result, there was no longer much money to be made from the consumption taxes. What remained were stamps, duties and taxes, customs and, above all, monopolies. Salt was used, and the tobacco monopoly also brought in revenues. Finally, a twenty per cent tax was raised for the first time on coal after a similar measure had been introduced in Germany in August 1917.

In order to finance the war – it could almost be said ‘self-evidently’ – the banknote press was also put to use. The consequences of the extensive loans granted to the state were that the quantity of money in circulation increased rapidly. Incredibly, price levels initially remained moderate, so that even a type of prolonged war economy engendered the feeling that both victory and defeat were easily affordable. Then, the prices doubled year on year, and everyday goods became increasingly scarce. The turning point came in 1916, and from 1917 onwards, prices began to increase more rapidly than the quantities of money. What use were higher wages and pay when there was nothing left to buy? At the end of the war, over 33.5 billion kronen were in circulation, as opposed to 3.4 billion in July 1914 – a tenfold increase.<sup>1351</sup> This was, of course, paper money, as well as iron coins. The prices increased to sixteen times the original amount.

Naturally, it was inevitable that the finance magnates in Austria would obtain information about the war financing by friends and enemies. In comparison, Austria-Hungary came out both well and badly. The first country to be considered was of course the German Empire. There, nine war bonds were issued as time went on. The interest offered was slightly lower than in the Habsburg Monarchy, although the terms were much longer. The last German bond would not have been due for repayment until 1 July 1967.<sup>1352</sup> With an equivalent in German marks of 121 billion kronen, the total income from all the bonds exceeded by far the amount raised by Austria-Hungary’s bonds. With the income generated by the nine bonds, Germany was able to cover around 60 per cent of its war costs. German credit institutions also provided funds to the alliance partners, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. Austria-Hungary’s banks invested in assistance for the allied partners neither voluntarily nor generously, but in spite of this, they did so, and hoped to do big business after the war.<sup>1353</sup>

France issued four war bonds, Great Britain three, the USA four and Russia seven. Ultimately, however, no-one except the USA was able to ‘afford’ the war. Huge financial and economic crises were inevitable. However, all this lay far in the future and was until then of interest only to economists, futurologists and pessimists.

Only later did it become possible to add the figures together, although ultimately only approximate values were available. Even so, the figures exceeded the scope of the imagination. What did it mean, after all, when it was calculated that Austria-Hungary had spent 22.4 billion peacetime kronen, or 80.85 billion kronen (other calculations

came to a sum of around 90 billion) at the inflationary value of 1918 on its war,<sup>1354</sup> and during the final year of the war had been in a position to cover no more than 17 per cent of its expenditure by ongoing revenues?

The index of living costs rose inexorably:

June 1914:	100
June 1915:	153
June 1916:	317
June 1917:	650
June 1918:	1,082

Alternatively: at the end of October 1918, the national debt ran to 83.155 billion kronen.<sup>1355</sup> It was certainly tens of times greater than the level of debt before the war. It was unimaginable, and also impossible to repay, even if claims were still being made in the statement of accounts of the postal savings bank office that in 1918, 'the institution still enjoyed a good financial year and achieved a satisfactory result'. The number of savings investors had even increased slightly compared with that of 1917.<sup>1356</sup> The Austrian currency still had a degree of coverage of 40 per cent, and the share value had decreased only slightly, since the shareholders wanted to wait and see how events would unfold.<sup>1357</sup> Speculation was still possible. However, one thing already became very clear: it would not be Austria that would recoup its losses through its enemies. To a far greater extent, it was the latter who were looking for opportunities to offset their no less unspeakable material losses through reparations. The calculations continued. At any rate, the 'secure world' was now utterly gone.







## 18 The Nameless

18. The German General Erich von Falkenhayn at a situation briefing for the Austro-Hungarian Army Supreme Commander, Field Marshal Archduke Friedrich, near Sibiu in September 1916. After the Romanian declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, Germany in turn declared war on Romania and from 25 September 1916 conducted an offensive with the German 9th and the Austro-Hungarian 1st Armies that was designed to expel the Romanian Army from Transylvania and to crush Romania.

In autumn 1916, historical events appeared to abide by the seasons. Not only did the year pass, but the events also received a veneer of increasing gloom. Josef Redlich cited the dominant feeling as one of 'tiredness'. And yet somehow everything remained balanced: successes and failures, hope and resignation. More than two years of war had left deep imprints, however. The memory of the 'spirit of 1914', when people had marched towards death with a feeling of joy, was no longer present. All of those waging war were struggling to deal with military, political and, above all, social problems. The national communities of fate were decomposing. If the war had initially exerted an integrating influence, strengthened the political and social fabric and turned domestic and socio-political tensions outwards towards the enemy, with the increasing duration of the war the integrating tendency was replaced by one of polarisation.<sup>1358</sup> The faultlines were becoming visible. Here and there, they had already become blatantly obvious and gaped wide open. Polarisation, radicalisation and totalisation were variously dominant.

These observations on the location of the historical events of the First World War, which were made for the first time by Andreas Hillgruber years ago, certainly also applied to the Habsburg Monarchy. Still, the faultlines perhaps ran differently to those in Germany or France, also to those in Russia, and the trio of polarisation, radicalisation and totalisation also had a different weight than in the countries cited. The totality had a comparatively integrating effect, but polarisation and radicalisation became factors of state disintegration. In the long term, therefore, the tiredness could not retain its status as the dominant feeling, since tired people do not radicalise and polarise. Redlich had probably just chosen the wrong word: the mood that dominated the elites of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was most accurately a feeling of hopelessness. The broad strata of the population supplemented this with disenchantment. Dissatisfaction had become clear; strikes and food demonstrations had already taken place. In the War Surveillance Office, the central authority that vigilantly registered all those remarks that were either of a nationalist nature or were directed against the Monarch or the military and state leaderships, the number of notifications and reports multiplied. And yet: the 'autumn' had only just begun. The 'winter' was around the corner. Let us attempt, however, to determine more precisely where the standstill had occurred in the course of the First World War.

The culmination point of the war had long since been passed; it lay approximately a year in the past, in autumn 1915. However, the so-called 'critical year of European history' – 1917 – had not yet begun. Europe found itself somewhere in between, at a

turning point. The point now reached signalled something. Let us call it the 'point of no return'. If it were crossed, there could be no turning back; the war would have to run its course, which could no longer be disrupted.

This point signified several things, and it cannot, of course, be characterised as a single day. Within the space of a few weeks, however, decisive events took place. Austria-Hungary found its way into an unprecedented state of dependence on the German Empire. In Austria, the Prime Minister was murdered. And, finally, there was a change of monarch. It would be tempting to test out the trio of polarisation, radicalisation and totalisation against these events. But this trio is only applicable – if at all – in the opposite order: with the submission to the German Supreme Army Command, those measures being implemented in the area of military and armaments policy that signalled a totalisation also become effective for Austria-Hungary. It was above all the so-called Hindenburg Programme for the total utilisation of the armaments economy that aimed in this direction. In its radicality, it also decided on who would be cut off from food supplies even more so than before. This created a special type of symmetry. The murder of Count Stürgkh can be easily recognised as an act of radicalisation. The death of Emperor Franz Joseph and the accession to the throne of his great-nephew Karl, however, cleared the way to a change with unforeseeable consequences. This suggests, however, that until the end of November 1916 a unity of the Empire and above all that of ruler and subjects had existed. From the end of November 1916, a rapid polarisation occurred, and it was not only the last degree of unity that crumbled but also the country and the regime.

Let us leave it for the time being at this outline, which anticipates the processes of the years 1917 and 1918 and is obligated to the search for the location of the historical events. The situation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at this 'point of no return' can also be described in a different way.

The most significant decision in the strategic area was the creation of the Joint Supreme War Command of the Central Powers. From a military point of view, it appeared sensible. Measured against the military and power political possibilities of the Danube Monarchy, a considerable accommodation on the part of the German Empire was still contained above all in the secret supplementary clause. For without German help, the Imperial and Royal armies would by this time have no longer been capable of acting and would perhaps no longer have even existed. The original shape of the front in the north-east, in Poland and in Russia, cannot tell us very much about this, but the story of the Brusilov Offensive of summer 1916 does. One glance at the maps illustrates fully how German troops had been slid into the Imperial and Royal armies like stays into a corset.

Austro-Hungarian and German armies were situated east of Kovel, at Brody and scattered across Bukovina as far as the Carpathian forests. They had occupation troops in Poland, Serbia and Montenegro; and there was only one theatre of war where the

Habsburg Monarchy continued to fight alone: Italy. It was precisely this theatre of war that had not played any role during the creation of the Joint Supreme War Command. The Imperial and Royal troops had lost only a little ground to Italy at the Isonzo River, and still controlled the Alpine front from the Gailtal Alps to the plateaus east of Trento (Trient), as well as the Ortler. The loss of Gorizia (Görz) had been painful, but the subsequent battles seven to nine on the Isonzo showed the well-known image of battles of attrition without notable highlights and without the Italians gaining any ground. The crises had been confined almost entirely to the east, where the serious setbacks of the Brusilov Offensive could not initially be made good and the new loss of part of Bukovina and of Czernivtsi (Czernowitz) in particular was very painful. Then Romania had entered the war on the side of the Entente powers, thus creating a completely new state of affairs. The situation could only be mastered with German help. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had neither the political nor the military means to call Bulgaria into action against Romania and to commence an immediate offensive against Romania. This is what the German Empire could offer. And in view of the determination of the German leadership not to be deceived by Romanian tactics and to tackle the former ally together with the Imperial and Royal armies, Romania's entry into the war became a military problem that was certainly manageable for the Central Powers.

In order to even remotely be able to realistically assess the military situation, we have to look once more at the losses of the Imperial and Royal Army. If it had been possible before summer 1916 to point out that the Army of the Monarchy possessed more battalions than at the start of the war, three times as many machine guns and twice as many guns, this was dramatically put into perspective during the course of subsequent months. Alone on the north-eastern front against Russia, the Imperial and Royal armies suffered in June and July 1916 a loss of 300,000 soldiers dead, wounded, missing or deserted. By the end of the Brusilov Offensive, the number had risen to around 475,000. The march battalions that had been over-hastily thrown into the battles since the beginning of the war, the XXII, XXIII and XXIV, were by no means sufficient; in November the troop bodies, which could barely be filled any more, once more had to be assigned exceptional march battalions provided expressly for the purpose.<sup>1359</sup>

Particularly apparent were the considerable differences in the losses. For a period of time in the summer, the north-eastern front had suffered almost 60 per cent of its losses to desertion. By September, the number had increased to 226,000 men. On the south-western front in Italy, on the other hand, the most losses as a percentage were the dead. This front was meanwhile responsible for a third of the total losses. In absolute terms: the casualty lists for 1916 contained around 1.75 million Imperial and Royal soldiers. Since the eligible generations had already been mustered and re-mustered, and by now even the 18-year-olds had been called up, it could already be calculated when the stage of complete exhaustion would be reached.

The system of march formations pulled in each month was to blame for the soldiers no longer being seen as anything other than statistical material, simply 'human material'. They were brought to the front more or less automatically, and there was barely even time to integrate the soldiers in the regiments and to accustom them to war. Only too often were they immediately deployed and 'used up'. It took only a few weeks to already become a veteran. In reality, however, the soldiers were still inexperienced, slightly fearful young men, farmers, craftsmen, students, salaried employees and workers. It would have been better to train them longer and to send them to the front in larger, and not monthly, replacement formations. But the system was established and rigid.<sup>1360</sup> Since 1916, the march formations had not even been covering the losses any more. It was furthermore high time that the oldest eligible generations, the over 40s, were removed from the front and as far as possible disarmed. There was one thing the 'old warriors' could do – aside from fight – they could tell stories about what they had seen and what the 'old army' had looked like. For this 'old army' no longer existed.

Even the outer appearance had already changed.<sup>1361</sup> Since September 1915, the uniforms had become field grey, greyer and more earthy, and they replaced the clearly visible and sensitive 'pike grey' uniform material. Ankle gaiters made of cloth replaced the leather ones. Everything became simpler, in some cases more practical, and always cheaper. Since the colourful facing materials had become too expensive, instead of the coloured collar lapels, only narrow, vertical bars were now attached to the regimental colours. In November 1916, provisional troop insignia made of oil cloth flaps was then introduced. There were hardly any calfskin kit bags left. The soldiers carried rucksacks, in which they tucked a second pair of shoes, a bowl for eating, a set of underclothes, toiletries and reserve rations, letters, personal mementos and perhaps one or two books, frequently the Bible. In addition, there was the bread bag, which held cutlery, bread, a canteen, a weapon-cleaning kit and tobacco. Increasingly, hand grenades were also stored in the bread bag. The cartridge satchel, on the other hand, which held 120 cartridges for a soldier and 40 cartridges for an NCO, had remained the same.

The outward appearance of the officers had likewise changed. The stiff, black cap had promptly disappeared at the start of the war. The other features of an officer were also reduced to a minimum. There were no longer any sashes and no sabre to go with the field uniform. The officers were armed with a bayonet and a pistol. They had never carried a kit bag, but at least subalterns increasingly had a rucksack, since the peacetime equipment of an officer's attendant, who carried the baggage and took care of the well-being of the officer, had meanwhile been considerably cut back. In 1914, there had still been 54,000 officer's attendants, which comfortably corresponded to three divisions. How many it was in 1916, however, cannot be put into figures.

In 1916, steel helmets were introduced for the first time, with which the soldiers were to be protected against shell fragments and chips of stone. This did not mean, however,

that everyone already had one. The first models of the Berndorf helmet had considerable deficits. Weighing over 1.3 kilograms, they were relatively heavy. Occasionally, an additional forehead plate was attached to the helmet, which added 2.4 kilograms and could not be worn for an extended time. The deployment of irritants and poison gas had led to the soldiers of the field army being equipped with German gas masks, which were carried in tin cans. The three-layer filter of these masks only protected the soldiers for an hour; then a reserve filter had to be inserted.

The Steyr-Mannlicher M 95 rifle had remained the main weapon, but it was now the standard weapon of the infantry and had replaced obsolete rifles that had still been used at the start of the war. Furthermore, in 1915 1.4 million Russian rifles as well as a few 'exotic' rifle models had temporarily arrived as a stopgap, but became a type of commodity. Machine guns of the Schwarzlose 07/12 model emerged more and more. Improved communications facilities, flamethrowers and large numbers of engineering devices and explosives completed the equipment of the infantry. The cavalry had in the meantime largely been 'dismounted' and brought in line with the infantry in terms of uniform and equipment. The artillery, which had become numerically ever stronger, received very many new guns, and horse power was above all replaced by engine power.

However, the external evidence did not by any means tell the whole story, and the internal findings were even more suited to clearly demonstrating the changes. The soldiers lived in a type of sub-system of normality, advancing or retreating, always provided a battle was not raging at any given moment. In the base zone and in the rear areas, everything could to some extent be found that was also available in normal civilian life: beds for the night, shopping facilities and doctors, but above all bakeries, slaughterhouses with their own livestock, water-processing plants, laundries, delousing stations and brothels. The field post functioned as a rule without complaint, albeit one had to of course be aware that the field postcards were read by the censors. Gift parcels, charitable donations and foodstuffs arrived, provided there was someone who sent such things. The Hungarians were envied, since they allegedly received foodstuffs from the home front more often and in greater quantities.

The officer corps had become more bourgeois and, above all, more 'civilian'. The reserve officers outnumbered the active officers by far. This did not result in a mere statistical observation, however, but instead symbolised a dramatic change: if, before the war, an infantry regiment with around 4,000 men had counted 100 career officers and, after mobilisation, an additional 90 reserve officers, in 1916 the infantry regiments had four or five times as many reserve officers as career officers.<sup>1362</sup> In contrast to the other armies, in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces there was no possibility for NCOs to be promoted to officers. This was without doubt demotivating and disappointing. For example, Julius Arigi, a field pilot who – with 32 air combat victories – was second only

to Captain Godwin von Brumowski in the Austro-Hungarian list of flying aces in the First World War, could only become a warrant officer.<sup>1363</sup>

The changes within the officer corps also resulted in reserve officers being divided into their individual nationalities, above all in the troop bodies, since there would otherwise have been no way of communicating. Thus, the troop bodies were in a national sense more homogenous, but also more susceptible to nationalistic slogans. This was all the more the case when the reserve officers were in pre-university or university education and came from secondary schools or colleges, which were very often strongholds of nationalistic tendencies. It also occurred, however, that regiments were located adjacently to one another whose members could barely exchange a sentence with each other. This circumstance should not be completely ignored because in critical situations, where it was not just a matter of issuing an order that was comprehensible to all, the failure to understand could lead to uncertainty and panic reactions.

Ultimately, officers and soldiers had one thing in common: in the conduct of war, they were actually only statistical values. It was a war of the nameless.

### **The Peace Campaign of the Central Powers**

Romania's declaration of war on 27 August 1916 was initially regarded by Austria-Hungary as threatening in a double sense: for one thing, a new opponent had appeared who was estimated as having 620,000 soldiers, and even if one subtracted a third of those as not fit for the front, a great many still needed to be offset. For another thing – and this was felt to be far more depressing – Romania's entry into the war meant the loss of the deliveries of foodstuffs and cereal crops from this country, too. This fact weighed particularly heavily.

The realisation that the Central Powers had reached their limits in this war led to politics being reformulated and restructured. And at this moment it was revealed that whilst Austria-Hungary still gave the impression of pursuing independent policies, it had in fact become completely dependent on Germany. The reason for this was certainly not the result of only one event; instead, a development reached its conclusion: in its political and military deliberations, the Habsburg Monarchy had always only acted as a European power. The German Empire, but also France and Great Britain, had based their strategies on the extra-European realms of the globe, which was made possible by their maritime presence. As soon as a decision that was crucial for the war imposed itself in the area of global strategy, Austria-Hungary could not make its own contribution. It was tied to German considerations and, ultimately, German decisions, and had to concur with them. As mentioned above, a development reached its conclusion here,



and the war, in its final third, thus also took on a shape that would be formative for its outcome. Austria-Hungary could not even make peace of its own accord.

This is highlighted by the depiction of Emerich Csáky, the envoy who was summoned to serve in the Foreign Ministry and was assigned to Department I led by Ambassador Kajetan von Mérey. The department had the task, among other things, of addressing all matters relating to the future peace. Although Mérey complained about an enormous work overload, he in actual fact – as would soon become apparent – had nothing to do, and the man allocated to him, Csáky, was also sinking in inactivity.<sup>1364</sup> The essence of this story is: as long as Germany did not undertake any steps towards peace, nothing could be done in Vienna, either.

The year 1916 was also full of crisis symptoms for the German Empire, since the failure of the encirclement at Verdun and the start of the counteroffensive by the Entente powers at the Somme had been alarm signals, and likewise the failure of the Austria-Hungarian armies in the 'punitive expedition' and during the Brusilov Offensive. The German leadership believed, however, to have a means at its disposal with which it could bring about a turnaround, namely submarine warfare. Austria-Hungary could not give any thought to a strategic use of submarines, since it did not have any. Tied to the question of a resumption of a large-scale submarine war, however, was the danger of an entry into the war on the part of the USA, since the latter had already in April 1916 threatened with the severance of diplomatic relations and, indirectly, with war, if the German Empire did not return to waging a submarine war in accordance with the rules of prize warfare. It cannot be discussed here whether this threat did not constitute first and foremost a massive help to Great Britain, which had declared itself unwilling to ease blockade measures against the Central Powers and instead intended to continue starving them out. Without doubt, however, the American threat had a lasting impact on German decisions and it was responsible for Germany's hesitation in commencing unrestricted submarine warfare. In view of the fact that the land army had been unable to achieve a decisive success in either the west or the east in favour of the Central Powers, and that the naval war was not to be expanded to a decisive dimension, a political solution was sought after. It was to be set in motion in the form of a peace initiative.

In order to take a step towards peace, there were to all intents and purposes two possibilities for the Central Powers: either they made use of the neutral states as mediators, first and foremost the American President Woodrow Wilson, or they started their own initiative. For this, it was above all an agreement between the German Empire and Austria-Empire that was required; Bulgaria and Turkey were to be informed and included in discussions only later. Thus, the German government sent Vienna an invitation to detailed talks at the Grand Headquarters in Pszczyna (Pless). The Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister, Count Burián, saw this as the opportunity to take stock and to make an assessment of the war situation. The result was remarkable. At the outset of

his talks with the German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Burián advocated an independent peace move by the Central Powers without the mediation of the Americans. Burián argued that reasonable conditions would be bound to have the desired effect on the neutral states, above all the USA, and nourish the eagerness for peace in the enemy states. At the same time, such a step would also be welcomed by the peoples of the Central Powers and, in the event of a rejection, increase their determination to see the war through to the end.<sup>1365</sup>

The Foreign Minister's arguments were, so to speak, the preamble to what followed, which is not mentioned in Burián's memoirs. The Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister handed the Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg a list of peace conditions, which the former had endeavoured to formulate not only for Austria-Hungary but for all the Central Powers.<sup>1366</sup> But could Burián's list even be described as peace conditions? The things he cited were war aims, since the Minister had succumbed to the vision of peace with victory just as much as the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff. The German historian Wolfgang Steglich also stated, therefore: 'The first step in the matter of a peace offer approximated very closely the conclusion of the agreement on war aims.'<sup>1367</sup> Burián wanted to swear Bethmann Hollweg and, ultimately, all four of the Central Powers to joint war aims.

In his list, he named first of all the territorial integrity of the alliance states. This did not perhaps so much mean that Austria-Hungary and Turkey should have those territories that were occupied by the enemy returned, since in the case of Austria-Hungary the territory still occupied by Russia in Bukovina and East Galicia could be swapped for the Russian territory held by Austria-Hungary. It was more a question of establishing that Austria should not lose South Tyrol to Italy or Transylvania to Romania. Germany should also not have to relinquish Alsace-Lorraine. The next thing that Burián made the case for was the return of the German colonies occupied above all by the British; in this way he made a demand that in fact far exceeded German wishes and also the German assessment of the situation. He furthermore wanted to secure the Congo for the German Empire. Added to the integrity of the alliance states were aims directed at the Entente and the states allied with it.

Belgium was to be re-established as a sovereign state, but brought into a particularly close relationship with the German Empire, whereby a personal union with Austria-Hungary appeared to Burián to be desirable. Albania should be independent, or rather become independent once more; it had been a neutral country whose neutrality had been guaranteed in 1913 by six great powers, including Austria-Hungary. If possible, Albania should benefit from a territorial expansion into Montenegro. Montenegro, for its part, continued to be theoretically dismembered and, according to Burián's concepts, would have lost Mount Lovćen and the coastal strip south of Krivošije, and thus been de facto cut off from the sea. Bulgaria was to recoup itself at the expense of

Serbia. Around half of Serbia, including the south as far as the border to Montenegro with Pristina and Prizren, should fall to Bulgaria. Austria was to be recompensed at most with the territory south of Šabac. The rest of Serbia should also be brought into a close and above all economic dependence on the Habsburg Monarchy. Regarding Romania, Burián wanted frontier improvements at the Iron Gates and at the Transylvanian passes. But that was not all, and the Minister was aware above all that during negotiations quite a number of compromises would have to be made. Even allowing for this 'negotiations factor', however, this programme corresponded in no way to the war situation. On this basis, it was clear that no peace negotiations would be initiated.

The genesis of the demands can be traced back a long way; some of them had already been formulated in 1914; but now they were on the table. And Burián let it be known that Emperor Franz Joseph would have agreed to these demands.<sup>1368</sup> Perhaps not so much importance should be attached to all the things that were submitted by the Austrians during this phase of contact concerning a peace offer of the Central Powers, for the reason that it did not in its entirety find its way into the actual peace offer of 12 December. But it is worthwhile beginning the balance of the war year 1916 with a reference to the demands introduced by Burián. They are so far from being comprehensible in the light of the military and domestic circumstances of the Dual Monarchy that either Foreign Minister Burián must be certified as being so remarkably lacking in a sense of reality or one understands this war aims list to be a symptom. This is all the more the case since ten months earlier it had been the same Burián who had stopped Conrad von Hötzendorf when he was formulating his far-reaching war aims and placing the political leadership under pressure with them. Together with the Hungarian Prime Minister, he had put a dampener on the General Staff Chief's theoretical flights of fancy, not least bearing in mind what Tisza had written to him: '[...] we cannot force [peace] on the enemy. We can only create by means of further military gains a situation in which the enemy is convinced that a continuation of the struggle would be pointless and that peace is in his own interests. This conviction is dependent to a large extent on our peace conditions.'<sup>1369</sup> No session of the Joint Council of Ministers had taken place to discuss Burián's war aims. The question of the presentation of such demands in the framework of a peace offensive had also not been linked to the question as to whether the Monarchy was even in a position to make demands. And, besides, it had not really been considered what would happen if the demands were to be rejected and the war had to be continued.

### Hohenzollern against Habsburg

If Minister Burián had still given the impression in 1915 that he did not want peace with victory, the year 1916 – with its very different events and an ever longer list of

victims and losses – had led him to change his mind. For one thing, it was precisely the setbacks that strengthened the view that the sacrifices made in the war could only be justified by corresponding results. Then Burián wanted to demonstrate confidence in victory, but above all to persuade the German Empire to adopt the cited aims as its own. Germany's identification with the existence and the integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy appeared to be important for foreign policy, military strategy and, above all, domestic policy reasons. In this respect, the Joint Supreme War Command had far more than just a purely military significance, and perhaps it is precisely the way in which the Foreign Minister wanted to help himself to the new possibilities that explains why he had been among the most committed advocates of a stronger German influence. He evidently did not share Tisza's misgivings or those of the Hungarian opposition with regard to German preponderance. The view expressed by the authors of the 'Position Paper from German-Austria' had more validity for Burián: 'Power in itself will play a much greater role in interactions between peoples than before. Therein lies an undeniable incentive for the two empires in the middle of Europe, to establish and expand their military and economic union.'<sup>1370</sup> With his ambitious demands and the attempt to give an impression of strength, however, Burián was unable to fool anyone. Almost at the same time as he was philosophising on war aims, a detailed report by the German ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich von Tschirschky, addressed the controversial points in all bluntness. And even if we account for a certain amount of pride, plenty remains that is worth considering.<sup>1371</sup>

Tschirschky started with the observation: 'The longer the war lasts, the more the question imposes itself as to how long the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy will still be in a position to endure the struggle, and both in a military and in an economic respect. [...] The reservoir of soldiers is nearing its exhaustion, and we must expect to see Austria-Hungary at the end of its military strength next spring, if at least in the area of gun and ammunition production decisive progress should not be made by then under our leadership.' He then addressed the economic situation and the closely related domestic policy conditions, and continued: 'All radical organisation is lacking, and where the first beginnings have been made according to our model, these are bound to founder on the customary "sloppiness" and protectionist economy. Nowhere is there a systematic approach, ordinances are issued without subject knowledge and without consulting experts and generally only for one or the other of the crown lands, which results in an absolutely unjust distribution of foodstuffs. The people in the suburbs of Vienna are starving and exceedingly exasperated by having to "queue up" for hours in front of the food [stores], often in vain [...]. To this are added the very unfavourable harvests this year in Austria and in Hungary, as well as the hapless economic relations between the two countries, which, above all in relation to Hungary, prevent a loyal mutual support of the other half of the Empire with foodstuffs. The Hungarian government, with Count

Tisza at its head, is pursuing narrow Magyar policies; in spite of all the grandiloquent words, it knows no generous principles and it is lacking in any understanding for the common adversity and for the common higher purpose. Here as well the personality is lacking who dictates from above the preservation of common interests.' Hungary, he continued, was striving to loosen the bond with Austria; Hungarian chauvinism was blossoming, but the blame for this lay with Austria as well.

This report was also part of the balance of the war year 1916. The German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg furnished this analysis of his ambassador in Vienna with the remark that it was in no way exaggerated and a meeting should take place at all costs between Kaiser Wilhelm and the heir to the Austrian throne Archduke Karl, in order to provide redress. Again, as in the case of the disempowerment of the Army High Command and Emperor Franz Joseph by means of the creation of the Joint Supreme War Command, Berlin no longer paid any heed to the Monarch in the Hofburg Palace, but instead looked primarily to his successor.

In Tschirschky's report it was blatantly obvious that scores were being settled with Hungary, since this Hungary showed itself to be anything but approachable when it came to German desires for a reorganisation of Central Europe. Budapest had instead the clear concept in mind of a change of emphasis in the Habsburg Monarchy, which emerged ever more as Count Tisza's personal war aim. On this topic he had written a 'top secret' letter to Minister Burián months earlier: 'The existence of the Hungarian national state is completely intertwined with the great power status of the Monarchy; on the other hand, even this great power status cannot be imagined without its most solid pillar: the living force of the Hungarian state. [...] If one is not completely blinded by prejudice, then after the experience of this war, one cannot call into question that not only the energy of the Magyars in an ethnographic sense but the solid fabric of the Hungarian national state constitute the greatest living force and the most solid pillar of the power status of the Monarchy.'<sup>1372</sup> Germany, however, intended least of all to support 'the living force [...] of the Magyars'.

Thus, a vicious circle began to form. This German Empire, which as an ally had begun to play such a huge role for the Habsburg Monarchy in the war, was regarded at the same time as an eminent threat. It was precisely in Hungary that this dichotomy must be felt most strongly, since the critical situation created by the entry of Romania into the war could only be rectified with German help. The German Empire, however, showed no inclination to promote Hungarian desires for supremacy. Having said that, Count Tisza, who represented to the outside world the politics of upgrading Hungary, had to be for many reasons more welcome to the German Empire than any alternative candidate. Hungary demanded perhaps more loudly than the Austrian half of the Empire clearly defined objectives in this war and by no means wanted to see them realised in the form of some territorial gains and alleged strategic improvements, but rather

in a clear increase in national liberties.<sup>1373</sup> The war was only a means to this end. And Budapest was also imaginable as the imperial capital and seat of royal residence.

No-one was more trapped in this vicious circle of accepting and rejecting on the part of the German leadership in the war than the Chief of the General Staff of the Austro-Hungarian Army, Conrad von Hötzendorf. And no-one expressed this dilemma more eloquently. Conrad had reluctantly bowed to the installation of the Joint Supreme War Command and then only because both the Monarch and the nominal Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, had forsaken him in his resistance. Aside from the fact that a huge thorn had remained, Conrad was not willing to deviate from resisting the domination of the German Supreme Army Command. The position of the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff had been considerably depreciated, and it was actually an open secret that Conrad might and should have been dismissed. The fact that a suitable successor could not be named was the only circumstance that kept Conrad in office. According to the notations of Conrad's adjutant, Colonel Kundmann, for a time the Army High Command 'smelt a rotting carcass', but Kundmann claimed that the Emperor and the heir to the throne would think long and hard before dropping Conrad. 'Think only of the [potential] successors! Arz? Krauss? [O]r even Tersztyánszky? Each one of them [is] valuable in his own way; but none of them [is] greater!'<sup>1374</sup> Yet no-one in the Army High Command knew how Conrad's position hung by a thread. The Emperor wanted, as before, to make the vote of the heir to the throne the basis for his decision. Karl, however, argued for Conrad to be retained. He named the same personnel alternatives as Kundmann, namely Arz and Krauß, but also in addition Major General Csicseric. If Conrad were to stay, however, according to Archduke Karl, then at the next opportunity the Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, would have to be replaced by Archduke Eugen, who was alone capable of tidying up the mess of the subordinate organs in Cieszyn (Teschen).<sup>1375</sup>

On 14 September Conrad sent one of his last long letters to the Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery, General Baron Bolfras. In it, he vented all the frustration that had built up over the previous weeks.<sup>1376</sup> 'With the dawn of the Ludendorff era, for which Hindenburg only provides a cover name, a much sharper tempo was introduced to all military, but especial all political, affairs', began Conrad. 'Bismarckian ruthlessness' reigned. 'I believe I would characterise Falkenhayn's programme by saying that he thought of a close, lasting [and] equal association on the part of Austria-Hungary, though with a certain influence of Germany on our military consolidation, however without touching the complete sovereign independence of the Monarchy.' (Conrad had evidently very quickly forgotten how severe his conflict with Falkenhayn had been for a time and how much he had castigated the latter's attitude to the Army High Command. But now a new era had begun.) And Conrad continued: '[...] Ludendorff's pro-

gramme, by contrast, appears to me to be the complete subjugation of our Monarchy to the German leadership both in military and in political terms. He is quoted as saying: 'Germany's victory prize in this war must be Austria' – I have heard this, as a rule, from very informed sources, to whom I am also indebted for the following information.' He then described the events that had led to Falkenhayn's fall and the formation of the third German Supreme Army Command. The consequences for Austria-Hungary had been felt immediately. In the Polish question, there had been an about-turn. Austria was supposed to hand over to Germany the territories under its administration. The 'harmless concessions' granted by Austria to the Polish Legion had been acknowledged with indignation by the Germans and the legion had been immediately transferred to the German sphere of influence near Baranovichi. 'All these things happen by virtue of the power of command conferred on Kaiser Wilhelm – as the Germans interpret the concession that was made by us on the occasion of the settlement of the command issue. This whole command settlement is said to have been the work of Ludendorff, with the aim of bringing to bear the power of Germany on us in practice. At the time, on the occasion of the first demand of this nature, I warned against this, but we are inferior to the agitation carried out on all sides and bowed to this Caudium yoke; the consequences did not fail to materialise. Militarily, this subordination was superfluous; it damaged our prestige, but above all our military and political importance; this was not considered by those people who urged this [course of action] at the time. In doing so, they did the Monarchy a disservice and aggravated even more the already difficult position of the Army High Command. It is no trifle, on the one hand, to have to constantly claim German help as a result of the inadequacy of our military means, but on the other hand to have to sustain the military prestige of the Monarchy. It cannot be denied that the Germans abundantly provide these means, also now under Ludendorff, but they certainly do nothing for free, since they are cold, ruthless reckoners; it is part of their system to hold us up as the weak, the inferior [and] to belittle our achievements, in order to deprive us of any right to make demands. They are supported in this by our public opinion, our audience, which falls to its knees adoringly in the presence of anything alien and delights in the undignified disparagement of everything that is its own – but also by those cliques, individuals and parties, whose personal or political aspirations include voicing snide criticism of our situation, [and] undermining the reputation of our leading authorities; the part open, part concealed agitation against the Army High Command belongs in this same category. [...] I find it bitter [...] to have to accept how our army is infiltrated with German commanders and German troops.' This had begun, according to Conrad, in the Carpathian winter of 1914/15 and had steadily continued, and it had ultimately been the result of, above all, German reporting that the achievements of the Imperial and Royal troops were depreciated and those of the Germans instead allowed to shine, 'wherefore they exploit the circumstance created

by themselves that German generals occupy senior commands; in this way, Mackensen, Marwitz, Linsingen, Gerok, [Kurt von] Morgen [...], finally Hindenburg and now Falkenhayn moved in with us. I have no doubt that this all happens with system and purposeful intent – unfortunately, it falls on fertile ground in German nationalist and Hungarian circles as well as with people who enjoy disparaging everything of their own – as well as with those who lose heart in difficult situations and cling to a supposed knight in shining armour, as though in this monumental struggle, in which only the number and the quality of the troops is decisive, a single miracle could take effect. Germany has precisely these troops.

If I have characterised these purposeful efforts of Ludendorff as raising Germany, so to speak, to [the status of] supreme state, to the leading power, then the conclusion is that the current German direction seeks a more or less far-reaching hegemony over the Monarchy; to what extent this is done in a purely egotistical German interest or in the common interest, in the realisation that as a result we must also confront our enemies, especially Russia, is difficult to say – that it follows its aim with Bismarckian ruthlessness, however, is to be expected.

And now to the consequences! It is essential that we immediately become aware of our future relationship to Germany, [and] not seek to postpone this until after the war; this relationship must be fixed by means of a binding state treaty; mere pourparlers on this matter are worthless. The elucidation of our relationship to Germany must be preceded, however, by a regulation of our own house, namely the clarification of the relationship with Hungary and the political direction in Austria; this is urgent and must be done with all energy. Positive results must be achieved, even under the imperative intervention of the army. If this does not happen, then it will hardly be a favourable horoscope that is cast for us and the grave sacrifices of this bloodiest of all wars will have been in vain.'

Conrad, who can certainly be accused of a great many things, but who was just as certainly not plagued by 'senility', as the German Plenipotentiary General August von Cramon claimed to have observed, was deeply pessimistic regarding the effects of the Joint Supreme War Command. And he saw his view of things confirmed when he learned of incidents that made clear the contempt of a growing throng of German policymakers. Cramon, for example, was generally reserved in his official comments, but in a smaller circle and towards his superiors in the German Empire he gave his unvarnished opinion. And it oozed insinuations and denigrating remarks: thanks to the Joint Supreme War Command, he claimed, the Imperial and Royal Army Command was now only the 'postman'. Conrad hardly ever emerged from his 'foxhole' or from the 'arms of his lovely wife'. The Germans constantly had to run to the rescue of their Austrian fraternal allies, because the Germans would otherwise 'have irretrievably lost' the World War, and then this nation, which is ruled by 'sloppiness', does not even



demonstrate the necessary gratitude.<sup>1377</sup> The things expressed in Cramon's notations constituted a widely-held opinion and ultimately became a cliché.

We have now covered the whole range of impressions and concrete problems that combine to form the autumn balance of polarity, radicality and perhaps also totality. Everyone, and not least the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, was not concerned so much at this point in time about the situation on any of the fronts; that had by no means priority. All problems were dominated by the question of the status of the Dual Monarchy vis-à-vis the German Empire. The possible solution indicated by Cramon was ultimately simple: the army should assume power and, equipped with special authorities, take decisive action; he called this an 'imperative intervention of the army'. He evidently expected no resistance from Emperor Franz Joseph, and action should be taken before Archduke Karl ascended to the throne. What sounded so determined, however, was in fact only bluster. Conrad von Hötzendorf cultivated a radical turn of phrase, but he did not have the stuff to be a military tribune. And he was – when it came down to it – never, under any circumstances, disloyal. It was perhaps understandable that he doubted his Emperor. And even if Conrad continued to dominate the Army High Command, it was a long way from pushing through its demands beyond the theatre of war.

'The Monarchy has perhaps never been in such a grave situation as [it is] now, and precisely at this moment it is lacking a strong hand that should unify everything on the home front', noted the Adjutant General of the Archduke Friedrich, Count Herberstein at the very same moment. 'My Lord [Archduke Friedrich] is destined more than any other in view of his status to intervene powerfully, but unfortunately he is not the right man! And Conrad is perhaps an excellent strategist, but a notoriously poor statesman!'<sup>1378</sup>

### On the Convention of the Austrian Parliament

This discussion about the future of Austria-Hungary was going round in circles. German domination was rejected and was a cause for concern. On the other hand, Germany was needed for military and economic reasons. In foreign policy, any room for manoeuvre had long since been forfeited. German assistance was required in order to regain it. Barely had this been pondered on when the discussion returned to where, in the view of the army, as well as the Germans and many Austrians, the root of the problem was, namely the structure of the Empire and domestic policy. The structure of the Empire touched on its dualism, and in Austria it was first and foremost a case of criticising the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza. On the other hand, Tisza was valued as an extremely powerful and also very consistent statesman. It was only due to Tisza

that Hungary still demonstrated some unity and the conflicts that were still very much in evidence were generally not pursued externally. During the current demands of the war, Hungarian politicians did not lose sight of the long-term aims of the Magyars, and the discussion revolved above all around the question of the timing and the extent of further steps towards independence. The fact that in the process little willingness existed to demonstrate understanding for the Austrian half of the Empire is not surprising. It was then always Tisza who also came to the defence of the Austrian half of the Empire, who defended Conrad in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) against the claim that he was a centralist, and who rejected the accusations that the Alpine soldiers were only loitering about in the hinterland and guarding bridges, the Czechs were only deserters and the Hungarian soldiers were systematically prejudiced and maltreated by the German officers.<sup>1379</sup> Thus, on 15 September 1916, Prince Ludwig Windisch-Graetz had held an inflammatory speech in the House of Representatives of the Hungarian Reichstag against the Army High Command and accused it of grave mistakes in the military-organisational and the operational areas.<sup>1380</sup> Tisza hit back. He also opposed the demands of the opposition in the Hungarian Reichstag that the defence of Transylvania be trusted exclusively to Hungarian soldiers. However, the Hungarian Prime Minister had not been able to prevent the fact that his own 'Party of Work' had split in summer 1916 and that the radicals had formed their own party under Count Mihály Károlyi. This new party was no longer concerned with measured and gradual changes. It wanted to confine the commonality of the two halves of the Empire to a simple personal union, carry out radical social reform and curb German influence.<sup>1381</sup>

Tisza also interfered indirectly in the affairs of the Austrian half of the Empire, and indeed not only for instance by virtue of his example and his involvement in the Joint Council of Ministers. He supported Count Stürgkh, wherever he could, and he was above all content to see the parliament in Austria deactivated.<sup>1382</sup> An Austrian Prime Minister who was not forced to defer to the wishes of the Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovenes, Italians and Germans, and plead their demands to the Hungarian half of the Empire was doubtlessly preferable to him than a functioning Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly).

In Conrad's eyes, but also those of many Austro-Hungarian and German political circles, however, Stürgkh's government in Cisleithania had failed and long since fallen into ruin. Conrad was one of the first and keenest critics of the government. On the other hand, Stürgkh maintained precisely the absolutist system that army circles had in mind, and opposed an end to the dictatorship. Gradually, however, the parallelogram of forces shifted so strongly that the criticism of the government and above all of its Prime Minister developed into a common line for most people. It was as though Stürgkh were alone to blame for the war situation and for the fact that the 'point of no return' had been reached.

The government of the Austrian half of the Empire was increasingly encircled: almost traditionally from the side of the nationalities, their representatives and parties, but also from the side of the population, which began to make it clear that it did not want to bear the pressure much longer. It was encircled by foreign policymakers and, finally, by the military administration. But Stürgkh reacted only very slowly. He could, above all, not bring himself to recall the Reichsrat. Before it came to this, Austria should be changed to such an extent that a blockade of his parliament institutions could not occur again.

Occasionally, it seemed as though one could catch a glimpse of a first feature of political decay in the anyhow hesitant preliminary considerations for the re-establishment of the functionality of the Austrian parliament.<sup>1383</sup> This does not take into account, however, Hungary's tendency to become independent, nor the desertion of Czechs and Ruthenians, which had long since provided a glimpse of the political decomposition. Certainly, however, deliberations on the removal of the Galician and Dalmatian representatives from the Austrian parliament increased in autumn 1916. This was linked above all to the fact that the position of Poland was in the process of being re-defined. And this much was clear: there should be a Kingdom of Poland, which was to be established above all from the current Russian Poland. Poland was to become a hereditary monarchy with dual dependence on the German Empire and Austria-Hungary. It was to receive its own army, whose high command would be in German hands, in accordance with the agreements already reached between Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1916.<sup>1384</sup> For the duration of the war, however, Poland was to remain an occupied territory and base area. The Foreign Minister, Count Burián, had only opposed the German wishes for a complete integration of the new Kingdom of Poland into the German economic space. But evidently no-one objected to the creation here of a peculiar cripple, since the new kingdom with dual dependence would have comprised only the Russian, but not the Austrian and German territories of Poland. The government in Vienna did, however, hold out the prospect of giving Galicia an increased degree of autonomy.<sup>1385</sup> This was precisely the point that was to then in the long term bring about the withdrawal of Galicia from the Reichsrat. In Stürgkh's eyes, this was a prerequisite for the reconvention of parliament. The second important change was to be in relation to the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Whether it would be attached to the Hungarian half of the Empire or included in a southern Slav solution, was not yet clear, but it seemed only sensible to incorporate Dalmatia in this. This landmass would thus also have withdrawn from the parliament of the Austrian half of the Empire. As a result – and this certainly played a special role in the deliberations – the Germans would have become the strongest faction by far in the Reichsrat and would have been able to hold the remaining nationalities, and above all the Czechs, at bay. In view of the increasingly strong influence of the German Empire on Austrian interests and the related German

interests in all occurrences in Austria, it is not surprising that ultimately political and military advisors of the German imperial government also voiced their suggestions for the reorganisation of Austria. The fact that they went so far as to propose that the old Emperor be persuaded to abdicate and that the heir to the throne be installed in his place and enlisted for the realisation of German desires for a reconfiguration of Austria, was just one facet of this constellation. The idea was then not simply dropped but instead its feasibility was systematically examined. The German Supreme Army Command sent the aforementioned Lieutenant Colonel von Stoltzenberg to the Army Group Archduke Karl.<sup>1386</sup> Stoltzenberg was ostensibly supposed to smooth out any tensions between the Senior Chief of Staff of the Army Group, General von Seeckt, and the heir to the throne. In fact, he was assigned the role of informant. This was also the reason why Conrad von Hötzendorf felt the need to expressly warn the heir to the throne against Stoltzenberg.<sup>1387</sup> The latter had already sent a position paper to Ludendorff in September, in which he unmistakably formulated: if Austria should believe that it 'cannot manage [its tasks in the war] alone, as a result of the blood sacrifices we have already made for its preservation we have acquired not only the right but also the duty to interfere not only in an advisory capacity in its operations and organisations but also in its politics as the currently inseparable basis of its military. This is all the more so the case if, as everything indicates, it is expected that we take the initiative for all things.'

The very vague formulation of 'all things' that were 'expected' did not relate to concrete German intentions or even to deliberations, but rather to Austrian ones, and probably primarily to the thinking of the Chief of Staff of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, Baron Carl von Bardolff. Brigadier Bardolff, until 1914 Chief of the Military Chancellery of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, had drawn up 'Guidelines for Future Austrian Policies', and it can be assumed that Stoltzenberg's suggestions formed the basis of this position paper. Stoltzenberg regarded this as the implementation of an – alleged – political testament of the murdered heir to the throne. Bardolff had not only made people sit up and take notice with this document, but probably even more so with his proposals for the conclusion of a military convention between Austria-Hungary and Germany.<sup>1388</sup> Conrad von Hötzendorf was also well-disposed towards the conclusion of a military convention, though he pointed to the lack of political prerequisites for such an agreement. And the heir to the throne Archduke Karl was repeatedly the subject of discussion.

Berlin consistently continued to take the course of honing the heir to the throne as a political force and winning him over for Germany. The prerequisites were also conceivably favourable, since it was noticeable how Archduke Karl in Vienna was kept away from the political decisions and how it was attempted to relegate him to military matters. There, however, at least in the Army High Command, he had not encountered more than the bare minimum of respect and played an imaginably peculiar role in the

fabric of command. Perhaps with this degree of attention directed towards the heir to the throne, the Germans also sought to stem his evident anti-German trends, which were, however, more a whim. During his stay in Berlin at the beginning of October 1916, Kaiser Wilhelm therefore attempted to give the heir to the throne some understanding of his thoughts on an intervention in Austrian domestic policy. There were two people who the German Kaiser wanted to see removed with the help of Karl: Foreign Minister Burián and the Imperial and Royal Prime Minister Count Stürgkh. Karl allegedly said to Wilhelm that Stürgkh could be replaced by Prince Konrad Hohenlohe. The German Kaiser was satisfied with this.<sup>1389</sup> It was again the Austrian Prime Minister who had been pointed out as responsible for the overall situation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

### Count Karl Stürgkh (1859–1916)

At this point in time, Stürgkh hardly had anyone any longer who, at least verbally, came out in his favour. Instead, he had all the more opponents, and the correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse*, reporting from Vienna, Dr Goldemund, expressed what was probably a widely-held view, when he reported to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that Stürgkh was not only incapable but also a pliable tool in the hands of Hungary and the court. He was a schemer who damaged Germany wherever he could, and Austria simply could not understand that 'Germany sits by and watches these goings-on for so long and does not energetically demand the removal of Count Stürgkh'. His main fault, continued Goldemund, was that he consulted with the highly treasonous Czechs. He agreed with the heir to the throne Archduke Karl to the effect that the Czechs constituted the best countermeasure to German influence.<sup>1390</sup>

However, no-one really knew who should be appointed prime minister instead of Stürgkh. Conrad wanted a military dictatorship, whilst Archduke Karl spoke of Konrad Hohenlohe, the former Interior Minister, who had resigned because of a conflict with Stürgkh. The German ambassador brought Archduke Eugen into play, who was the only one with the will and the power to again procure for the Germans the position in the state due to them.<sup>1391</sup> Bethmann Hollweg was also pleased with Archduke Eugen. But he was not acceptable either to the old Emperor or to the heir to the throne, since Eugen possessed the qualities of an emperor, and this was exactly what they were not looking for.

Thus, everyone somehow remained isolated with their problems, desires and suggestions, and the only thing that united them was their waiting for results. Josef Redlich describes this wait as a succession of dinners and highly important discussions with the aftertaste of the latrine. Amidst his sense of resignation, Conrad repeatedly hinted at

the desire for a violent intervention by the army. Favour was curried with the Germans and it was wished that they be deployed for the solution of all problems in life, but then, conversely, they were repulsed and their increasingly palpable dominance was condemned.

Stürgkh was particularly alone and appeared to now only wait for something to happen that would enable his resignation. The death of his Emperor would have been just such an occurrence. The Prime Minister had shown himself to be inaccessible to all demands that he resign and seemed not to be impressed by real letters of rejection. No-one wanted to support him any longer, aside from the more radical groups of the nationalist associations. At Pentecost in 1916, the Reichsrat deputy Friedrich Wichtl had presented him with the prospect of breaking off all relations of the German National League (*Deutscher Nationalverband*), above all because of the relations Stürgkh had entertained with Kramář. Wichtl had written to the Prime Minister and given a copy of his letter to the German ambassador to be forwarded to Berlin: 'Prime Minister Count Stürgkh, I publicly bring the charge against you that your tenacious adherence, your clinging to the ministerial seat, is suited to benefit our enemies, but can inflict untold damage on the state that you are obligated by oath to serve'.<sup>1392</sup>

Stürgkh awaited a new settlement with Hungary and the solution to the Polish question, which was designed to give imperus to imperial reform. He also waited for a vote from the old Emperor, the only one to which he felt unconditionally obligated. And he doubtlessly knew about the criticism of him and his policies. His anti-parliamentarianism had been expressed in anecdotes. Afterwards, Stürgkh had passed the parliamentary building on Wiener Ring and remarked: 'The most important act of my ministry was to transform that building into a military infirmary'.<sup>1393</sup> Even if this was ever actually uttered in this way, however, it no longer applied, since Stürgkh had gradually also come to the conclusion that the reconvention of the Reichsrat, which had been suspended in March 1914, was the lesser of the two evils. Lead articles in the *Neue Freie Presse* had called for this step, as had countless articles in other newspapers of all political convictions. Members of the upper house of the Reichsrat, such as the Bohemian right-winger Count Ernst Silva-Tarouca, had voted in favour of it being summoned, whilst the Viennese Mayor Weiskirchner advocated the end of governance without parliament: Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians, southern Slavs – all of them wanted a return of the parliament in view of the exploding food problems, but also in order to discuss the foreign policy of the Monarchy, the post-war situation and naturally also the war situation and the relationship of the peoples of the state to one another.<sup>1394</sup>

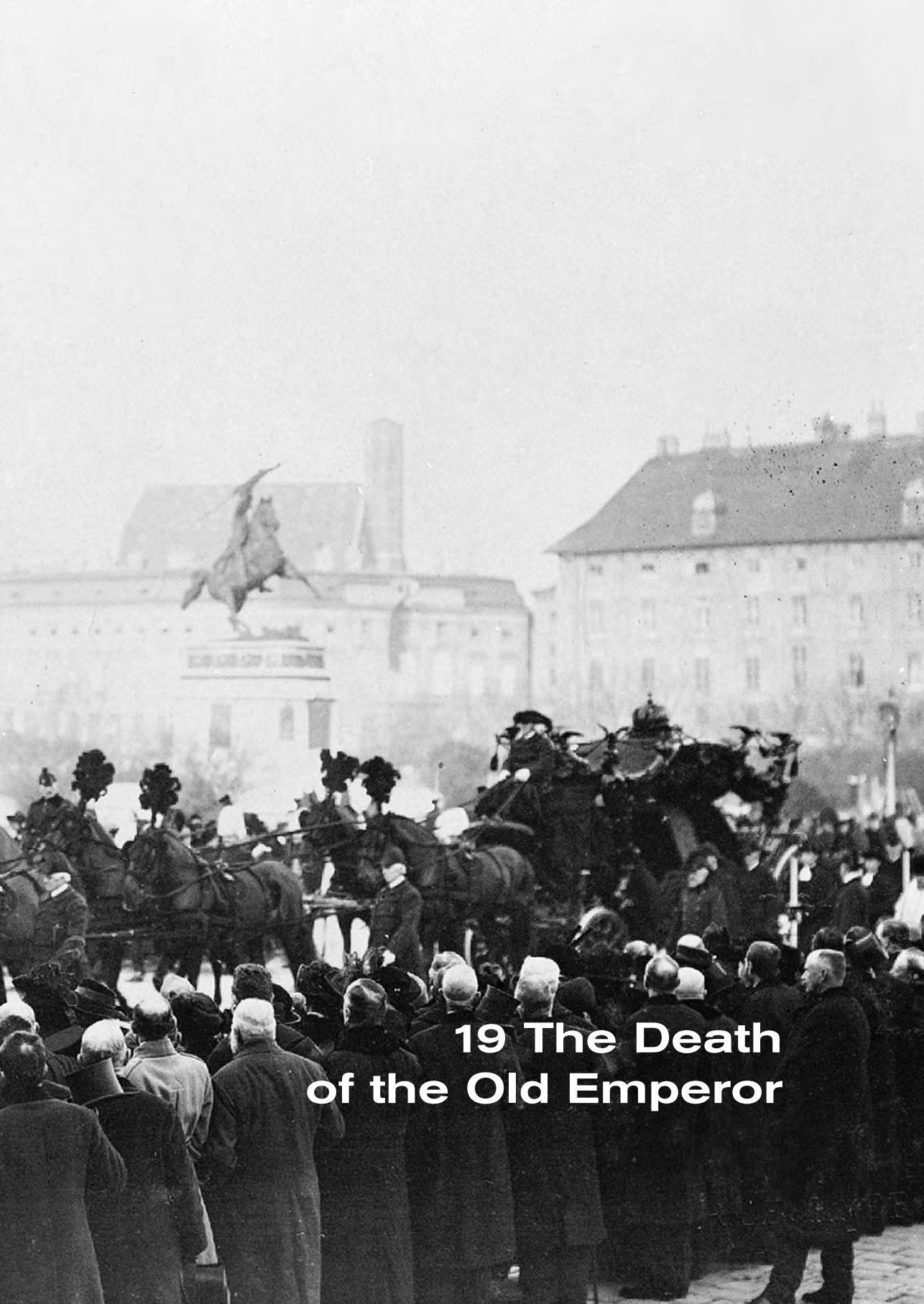
Stürgkh continued to make a stand. His concern was that in the Reichsrat there might be an official rejection of the Monarchy by the nationalities and that this might result in a disintegration of the Empire visible to all. And this demonstrated the eminent weakness of Stürgkh and his dilemma: a man who was treated with hostility by

practically all political groups, who knew that the Army High Command, the upper house of the Reichsrat, individuals of the greatest rank and influence, and also the German Empire demanded and pursued his demise, who in principle recognised the necessity of parliament reconvening but also knew how reluctant the Emperor was to take this step, could not bring himself to make a clear decision. He ultimately delegated responsibility to someone else in a matter that was, in itself, not particularly important. Three Viennese university professors, the Professor for Constitutional Law Edmund Bernatzik, the historian Ludo Moritz Hartmann and the expert in international law Heinrich Lammasch, had sent out invitations to a gathering in the concert hall on Sunday, 22 October 1916.<sup>1395</sup> The subject of the function was to be ‘The Parliament’. Bernatzik, the Speaker of the House of Representatives Julius Sylvester, and the Social Democratic deputy Engelbert Pernerstorfer, among others, were to take the floor. Stürgkh left the decision as to whether the function should be permitted or not to the Viennese Police Commissioner Baron Gorup. He wanted it prohibited, since remarks might be made that would then be exaggerated abroad. The head of the State Police, Johannes Schober, contradicted his boss: the function could be used as an outlet and the newspaper coverage of the event could be controlled. But Gorup insisted on the ban. On 20 October, after the function had been announced on a large scale, the ban was imposed. The next day, Stürgkh was shot to death by Friedrich Adler whilst having lunch in the hotel ‘Meissl und Schadn’ on Vienna’s Neuer Markt square. The son of the party leader of the Austrian Social Democrats Viktor Adler had known that Stürgkh would eat at ‘Meissl und Schadn’. He did so practically every day. Adler had entertained the idea of carrying out the assassination for one-and-a-half years. The jolt of a political murder appeared to him to be the only way to point to the drastic restrictions on human liberties brought about by the war, the million-fold death on the fronts and also his own dilemma. The cancellation of the function in the concert hall had merely been the final trigger. Adler had initially had in mind the Imperial and Royal Minister of Justice Baron Hohenburger, and then the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza. Adler considered Hohenburger to be too insignificant, whilst in the case of Tisza he feared that his murder could perhaps be interpreted as an act of nationalism. He, therefore, struck him from his deliberations, too. Finally, Adler thought of the Public Prosecutor Dr Mager and also the Foreign Minister Count Burián, before he determined on Stürgkh.<sup>1396</sup> Adler had planned the murder for three months. Stürgkh was at lunch with the Governor of Tyrol, Count Toggenburg, and Captain of Cavalry Baron Lexa von Aehrenthal. After almost two hours, during which Adler had observed the Prime Minister, he approached him. Stürgkh was extremely short-sighted and did not even see who was standing in front of him. He was fatally shot three times. During the scuffle that ensued, Adler shot again and injured Baron Aehrenthal.<sup>1397</sup> He then allowed himself be arrested.

It was one of many political murders. It was certainly not the most far-reaching in its consequences, and yet it was prominent, and if one leaves aside for a moment the motives of the assassin and the question as to whether it was the mental illness that was rampant in his family or indeed political motives that had led to the assassination, then the following should be noted: Stürgkh was not killed by a member of a non-German nationality, but rather by a German Austrian. Admittedly, the killer felt obligated to internationalism and not Germanism. The attitude of the Social Democrat movement, its partial agreement to the plans for Central Europe, the isolation of the left and the political truce, not least on the part of his father, had caused him to reach for the revolver.<sup>1398</sup> Finally, with this murder, Adler had not only become a tool of his own convictions but also a tool of the Army High Command, the German Supreme Army Command, the upper house of the Reichsrat and the heir to the throne. And this had been very far from his intention. As the Saxon envoy in Vienna, Count Rudolph Karl Rex, had written in a secret report for King Friedrich August III roughly a year before Stürgkh's murder: 'In our imperial German interests, an overthrow of Prime Minister Count Stürgkh could only be met with joy, since he is decidedly a stumbling block for Germanism in Austria.'<sup>1399</sup> What the German ambassador in Vienna, von Tschirschky, ultimately said at Stürgkh's coffin was then simply called a 'sermon' and not an obituary.<sup>1400</sup> According to the most widespread tone, the deed should be condemned and the dead person shown respect; straight afterwards, however, his political errors and failures were recited.

Even if the murder of Count Stürgkh can certainly not be characterised as a run-of-the-mill death, at a time when death occurred daily not only by the dozen but thousand-fold, alongside the horror over the fact of Stürgkh's murder it could be discerned from the vast majority of reactions that the death did not go very deep. It merely seemed that an obstacle of sorts had been removed.





**19 The Death  
of the Old Emperor**

19. The funeral cortège with the coffin of Emperor Franz Joseph on Heldenplatz in Vienna, 30 November 1916. In a sense, the Emperor, who had not been seen in public for over two years, became visible again by means of the hour-long funeral procession through the centre of Vienna. However, the death of the 'father figure' was regarded first and foremost as the decline of a symbol.

**O**n hearing of the murder of Count Stürgkh, Emperor Franz Joseph is claimed to have said that his death was incomparably worse than a lost battle.<sup>1401</sup> For the Monarch, who had himself been feeling ill for months, the death of one of his leading statesmen was a severe blow. However, not everyone shared his view. In order to also satisfy the sense of malice, the newspapers mentioned more than merely in passing what Stürgkh had been served for his final lunch. The image that arose could only be interpreted in one way: one of the upper crust gentlemen is dining on barley soup, beef and plum tart, while the people go hungry.

Stürgkh's counterpart, Tisza, only recorded the fact of the murder in his diary, without adding any personal comment. Burián asked himself who would be the successor, and named the Joint Finance Minister, Ernest von Koerber, with a certain degree of concern.<sup>1402</sup> Josef Redlich wrote of 'dull defiance', and noted that the people showed no anger over the murderer and what he had done.<sup>1403</sup> This was not quite true. There were only very few people who had become so radicalised that they were prepared to consider murder. However, it was in reality no surprise that the opinion was widely held that here, the change that had been so very necessary at the top of the Austrian administration had now been violently precipitated.

One of the most interesting comments on the murder of the Austrian Prime Minister again comes from the German Ambassador, Baron von Tschirschky, who after the death made a connection between Austrian, Hungarian and German politics. He was, however, of the view that the murder of the Austrian Prime Minister was linked primarily to the growing level of hardship in Austria, which is why he could not comprehend Burián's statement that the murder had been only a political act.<sup>1404</sup> In the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, where von Tschirschky came to express his condolences, he had an opportunity to collect impressions, opinions and states of mind. The Minister of Railways described the situation to him as 'anarchic'; the Employment Minister, Baron Trnka, characterised the attitude among the miners as 'dangerous'; the Imperial-Royal Finance Minister von Leth reported unrest and strikes in the village of Heimburg, 'which [could] only be beaten back with the aid of the military'. Baron Erasmus von Handel, the incumbent Imperial-Royal Interior Minister, claimed that Count Tisza 'bore most of the blame for this murder', since Hungary had stood and watched while the privations in Austria had increased. In the interim, the food demonstrations had spread and had also shortly before led to violent riots in Graz. The German Ambassador simply confirmed that 'Germany has a vital interest in seeing all

energy being concentrated on remedying the untenable domestic conditions that have been illuminated like lightning by today's sad act'. And when a weary Interior Minister Handel pointed out resignedly that Austria had no means of persuading Hungary to give more, Herr von Tschirschky brought the Joint Supreme War Command into the conversation as though this were a natural response. If nothing else worked, then order should be instated in this way, 'otherwise, today's assassination of the Prime Minister will only be the beginning of a chain of grave events that will destroy the state and the dynasty, and must surely threaten our common victory over our enemies'. A strong arm was needed.

In the diary of Conrad's aide-de-camp, Kundmann, there is no entry for 21 October 1916. On the following day, the Chief of the General Staff wrote to the Chief of the Military Chancellery of Emperor Franz Joseph, General Baron von Bolfras.<sup>1405</sup> In the letter, Conrad only focussed briefly on the shocking event: 'However, quite apart from the horrific nature of the crime, the murderer has done severe damage to the Monarchy, since all foreign countries will now conclude that our domestic situation is in a sorry state, and they will also cite the regrettable incidents in Graz. It is precisely now all the more urgent that we ensure that the deficiencies that became too severe during the Stürgkh era are remedied immediately, and that above all, the distribution of food is regulated.' Conrad wanted an energetic, prudent, impartial man, with no obligations to any particular side, and with a sensible outlook and organisational talent. 'Say what you will – such people are best found in a soldier's uniform. In my opinion, therefore, the prime minister should be found from this source. On short reflection, Georgi, Schönburg, Alfred Krauß and Bardolff would be potential candidates.' After having acknowledged each one, he advocated Krauss, a comment that is surprising, since Conrad and Krauss had repeatedly been sharply at odds when it came to military and leadership issues.

And so, just hours after the murder in fact, there was a return to daily business. Pressure was applied from the German side in particular, and a man with 'energy and authority' was requested.<sup>1406</sup> This was above all due to the fact that the German authorities had increasingly regarded the food question as the main problem in the Monarchy, with everything else almost secondary to this. For their part, the opinions and discussions about the individual who was to become the new Austrian Prime Minister, who initially could only be identified on the basis of certain wishes, make it clear that Stürgkh was not mourned for long, and that instead, attention was focussed on the far more important question of his succession. His death also instigated a change that could be regarded as one of the last chances for the Monarchy. It is frequently the case that the sudden loss of individuals has a greater effect than simply swapping names. The case of the Imperial-Royal Prime Minister in particular had a great impact on the ruling elite.

For two days, the Military Chancellery of the Emperor was subject to interventions on an extreme scale. In essence, they all pointed to the fact that the future prime minister should be taken from the higher ranks of the military. On 22 October, telegraphs were sent not only by Conrad, but also Archdukes Eugen and Friedrich, as well as Major General Alfred Krauss. Eugen reported to the Emperor 'that at this moment, I consider it my most holy moral obligation to be permitted to express my opinion that in these difficult times, it is necessary for the sake of state and above all, dynastic interests, in order to uphold peace in the interior and, in particular, to maintain the positive mood at the front, that a powerful *military* administration is established, including in those positions to which Your Majesty has conferred the highest authority for the affairs of state'.<sup>1407</sup> Archduke Friedrich, to whom the telegram was forwarded, was not opposed to the correctness of the remarks, as he put it in his dispatch, and agreed 'in principle'. Alfred Krauß telegraphed: 'Hannibal ante portas!', and pleaded with the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer: 'I ask you therefore to do everything in your power to ensure that Archduke Eugen is appointed by His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty'.<sup>1408</sup> The two highest military commands, the Army High Command and the Command of the South-Western Front, accordingly did all they could in order to ensure that the Prime Minister would come from their ranks. Franz Joseph had Minister Burián present him with information with regard to the matter for half an hour, but did not consult an Austrian minister. Instead, on the day after the murder, he summoned the joint Finance Minister Baron Ernest von Koerber and expressed his desire that Koerber become head of the new Austrian government. Koerber had experience, and also – and this is likely to have been the decisive factor – he was known to the Emperor. Koerber requested time to consider. Although he had already been included in the list of candidates as Stürgkh's successor for quite some time, the former Prime Minister and later Interior Minister Prince Konrad Hohenlohe was without doubt by far the greater favourite. For two days, Koerber conferred with a wide range of different people. On 25 October, the designated Prime Minister was again summoned to an audience with the Emperor. Before this meeting, however, Archduke Eugen had also spent an hour with Franz Joseph. Possibly, the aim had been to indicate an alternative after all. However, Franz Joseph had quite clearly decided in favour of Koerber. He became more insistent. However, Koerber was still unwilling to definitively accept the offer. He travelled to Budapest, talked to Tisza and in particular discussed the compromise negotiations with him, which were still in progress. However, the Hungarian Prime Minister gave him nothing more than vague agreements with regard to the settlement. Elsewhere, also, the Prime Minister designate was not always successful. A series of people refused him, while others, such as Josef Redlich, who had nurtured hopes of becoming Finance Minister, were not asked, and thus the professor noted even before Koerber was sworn into office on 28 October: 'He will not

be able to hold his cabinet above water for long; I consider him physically, morally and intellectually inadequate for this task, since he is already failing so miserably in forming the government."<sup>1409</sup> The overriding sentiment expressed in the note was mortification. Already on the day after his return from Budapest, Koerber reported the result of his discussions to the old Emperor. At this opportunity – as Koerber later told Redlich on 8 December – his intention had been to present the Emperor with a refusal of the mandate to form a government. "Then a scene occurred, sa[id] Koerber, which he will never forget all his life. The old Emperor half rose out of his chair, white as a sheet, his eyes bulging, raised his hands in entreaty towards him and cried with the voice of a man in torment: "Do you have no pity for me?" Koerber was afraid that at any moment, the Emperor might die from a stroke!"<sup>1410</sup> It is possible that these words really were spoken in this way. On All Saints' Day, the process of forming the cabinet was completed.

The new Austrian Prime Minister was without doubt one of the most eminent men of state. He had already been Prime Minister from 1900 to 1904, and had then led first the Austrian and finally, under Biliński, the Joint Finance Ministry. During Stürgkh's period in office, he had come to the fore as an occasional severe critic of the Prime Minister. Now, he himself was the man who was in a position to set the course. For him, the most urgent problem was the issue of constitutionalism and the reconvening of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly). There was one thing that Koerber could not do, however, and that was to ignore the realities – and there were many of these to take into consideration at the same time. The Prime Minister was unable to rule without the agreement of the Emperor, and Franz Joseph was against changing the policy that had been implemented to date, in other words, he was in principle in favour of the continued suspension of the Reichsrat. At the same time, however, Koerber could also not ignore the Army High Command, and had to incorporate what for the most part was an anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary attitude. Ultimately, Koerber was also unable to disregard the reality of the political parties and interest groups. And here, the German parties were naturally of particular significance. However, they could neither be persuaded to support a compromise of the nationalities, nor were they at that time ready to make peace.<sup>1411</sup> For them, Germany and the peace with victory were paramount. Christian Socialists and German nationalist representatives had agreed on 9 November 1916 to a joint resolution in which they demanded that the new Prime Minister immediately take in hand the 'new order of affairs in Austria'. Here, however, their purpose was to achieve the goals of the German National League (*Deutscher Nationalverband*) that had been stipulated in the spring of 1916, but not to secure equal access to power for the nationalities in Austria, and certainly not their self-determination. One of the moderate proponents of Central Europe, Richard Charmatz, who placed great hopes in Koerber, was of a different opinion. He knew him as a supporter of Naumann's Central Europe plans, and welcomed him in the journal *Hilfe* with the

following passage: 'Of him [Koerber] it can be expected that he has intensively occupied his mind with the problem implied by the Central European design of the future. We are experiencing the blessings of our entrenched society every day, and the longer that fate forces us to hold out in order to destroy the foolish hopes of fragmentation of our enemies, the clearer the desire becomes that the Quadruple Alliance, that stretches from the Baltic to the Black Sea, will grow into peace.'<sup>1412</sup> However, Charmatz also expected Koerber to undertake immediate reform of domestic policy. He was highly critical of the bureaucratic style of rule by his predecessors, which had been anything but close to the people, and had hopes that Koerber's liberalism and constitutionalism would lead to a rapid convocation of parliament.<sup>1413</sup> All in all, the liberal Koerber, who also enjoyed a great deal of respect in Social Democrat circles,<sup>1414</sup> had been a clever choice. In particular, however, the existence of a civilian prime minister was to be of huge significance for the late autumn of 1916, since this accelerated the process of disempowerment of the Army High Command in a particular way. The war had again been brought back by degrees into the political arena, and – in Austria-Hungary at least – would never again be released from it.

While Koerber again formed a type of civil servants' cabinet, it was composed not only of specialists and state officials, but primarily also of representatives from important political groups. Outstanding personalities – aside from the Prime Minister himself – were the member of the Bohemian upper aristocracy, Count Clam-Martinic, who took over the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Minister of Justice Franz Klein, who had consistently come out in support of recalling parliament and mitigating press censorship.<sup>1415</sup> This at least hinted at the fact that these issues would play a part in the programme of government.

For Koerber, however, it was not the recall of parliament that became the actual touchstone, but the issue of imperial reform. Since, like Stürgkh, he refused to alter the constitution to guarantee the German majority in the Reichsrat, as well as to exclude Galicia from it and to divide Bohemia into a German and a Czech part, he almost instantly lost the support of the German parties.<sup>1416</sup>

As early as May 1915, Koerber had considered ruling the Monarchy from Budapest, as Bismarck had also envisaged.<sup>1417</sup> Plans of this nature were likely to be approved in Hungary, but not among the German Austrians, and probably also not among the Slavs, who would have felt as though they were jumping from the frying pan into the fire. In order to be able to understand Koerber's rapid failure, however, the demands must also be taken into account that were made on the Prime Minister by the Army High Command. These included not only the nomination of military governors in some parts of the Empire, and militarisation and disciplinary measures in the hinterland. The Army High Command also expected above all that the Prime Minister would take immediate and radical measures in the food sector. Here, the circumstances were

as described by Conrad in his final letter to Stürgkh regarding the food situation: the poor, in some cases already catastrophic, food situation had not only led to food riots and the need on several occasions to call in the army, it was also like no other issue a point of concern in the Joint Council of Ministers. And again, as was so often the case, the only course left open was to appeal for German assistance. However, the Foreign Ministry in Berlin replied that the situation in Germany was similarly difficult, and announced that the Danube Monarchy would have to rely on its own harvests, which would present no problem if they were accompanied by appropriate rationing. And if the Austrians were unable to cope on their own, then the Germans would have to show them how. 'The imperial government', ran the response note from the Foreign Ministry, would be happy 'to support the Imperial and Royal government in taking all necessary measures'. In Berlin, it was felt that only dictatorial measures would lead to success, and this was precisely what Koerber shunned. A Food Agency was then created, but since it remained without any authority, it lacked real penetrating power. For this reason, people such as the former prime minister, Baron Max Wladimir von Beck, also refused to head the agency. Beck demanded that Koerber take into account the German and Hungarian relations in solving the Austrian problem, a suggestion that was a truism at best, and which Koerber politely declared as unacceptable for constitutional reasons.<sup>1418</sup> However, it was not only a question of the constitution; of even greater significance to Koerber was the fact that almost all suggestions relating to the regulation of the food provision system demanded that it be organised by the military. A representative of the upper house of the Reichsrat, Count Max Egon zu Fürstenberg, who in October had discussed the provision of food with German officials, addressed this aspect: if antagonism were to arise between Austria and Hungary, civilian authorities would be powerless. Since the Imperial and Royal Army was subordinate to the Emperor anyway, however, opportunities to intervene would present themselves.<sup>1419</sup> This also corresponded exactly to the line taken by Ambassador von Tschirschky, which is why the German Empire agreed to this approach, as did the Army High Command, since here, it had the opportunity to regain something of its dwindling power. However, a food agency with dictatorial power for both halves of the Empire no longer fell within the remit of the Austrian Prime Minister. In this way, the listing of the problems and obstacles, and at the same time the lack of options available to the new Austrian head of government to do anything about them, already essentially meant that any hopes that had been placed in him soon had to be drastically reduced. Since, however, Koerber did not turn out to be the pliant tool of those who had hoped so much from his entering office, either, it was only a matter of time before he fell.

Despite the fact that Koerber's government was only short-lived, it marked a clearly recognisable transition. The government under Count Stürgkh had behaved apolitically in the sense that it had been independent of the political parties. Koerber's government



was regarded as a political one, and in the dual sense of the word, since it was both more dependent on the parties and sought to implement the positions represented by the parties in its policies.<sup>1420</sup> This raised the question of how far this influence could go, since Koerber was not least involving himself in 'prerogatives of the crown' and in foreign policy. This was reflected particularly clearly with regard to the Polish issue. Koerber was obliged to put into practice what had already been negotiated. Nonetheless, at the last minute, he attempted to scupper the solution to the Poland question, which had already been agreed.<sup>1421</sup> He did not succeed. The Two Emperors' Manifesto, with which the creation of a Kingdom of Poland after victory by the Central Powers was announced, was issued on 5 November 1916.

One of the motives for the act was that in both the German Empire and in Austria-Hungary, it was hoped that in Poland, replacements could be drummed up for the troop bodies, which were by now almost impossible to replenish. Troops from a new, still somewhat imaginary Kingdom of Poland could at least be used against the Russians, or so it was hoped. Naturally, Russia would still not allow itself to be subdued as a result of such a measure, but perhaps it would be brought closer to utterly exhausting its means.

Koerber had indeed only just begun to restructure the political arena when an event occurred that had far more wide-reaching consequences than the death of Count Stürgkh: on 21 November 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph died. The death of the old Emperor had been long anticipated, and he was mourned more as the demise of a unique symbol, as an integrative personality who had still radiated authority, than that the death was regarded as the catalyst for a sudden power vacuum. Since the old Emperor had in fact created and embodied this vacuum, it could not be otherwise. However, nothing of the relief was expressed that had been present after the death of Stürgkh. The time of obituaries began, in which their authors, as well as those who soon began work on Franz Joseph's biography, battled against a strange blank spot that extended over the final years of this Emperor's life. Almost immediately, it became a place where nostalgia took root. The staging of the final act in the story of the old Emperor also demanded this outright.

### Obituary for the Father Figure

In Schönbrunn Palace, when you enter the office or bedroom of Emperor Franz Joseph or the room where he died, you are given the impression at first glance of being in a middle-class home at best. During guided tours, the modest lifestyle of the Monarch is mentioned, who clearly eschewed all comfort and occasionally is also seen as embodying the old Austria: other-worldly, out of keeping with the times, symbol and father figure combined.

Quotations such as the words attributed to the Emperor but not confirmed, on hearing the news of the assassination in Sarajevo: 'A superior power has restored that order which I unfortunately was unable to maintain [...]', or the well-known 'I am spared nothing', also convey an image of a resigned, wise, suffering monarch who, heavily marked by fate, cleared the path to war. This may well have been true to a certain extent, since the 84-year-old Emperor and King had most certainly envisaged spending his final years differently – if he had envisaged anything at all – than seeing himself returned to the first years of his reign. After all, at that time, he had been just eighteen.

In 1848, Austria had been threatened with collapse; in 1914, the Emperor instigated its demise with his decision to go to war. In 1848, he had been given a degree of power that was almost impossible for him to gauge. In 1914, he nolens volens had a degree of power, the scope of which was no longer clear to him. In 1848, he was supported by a few closest associates and advisers, and above all by an army that was at least in a position to strike down the revolution in Austria and win victory over an enemy that was anything but equal, Piedmont-Sardinia and the revolutionaries in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. In 1914, he was surrounded by a number of older gentlemen who advised and shielded him; from the Imperial and Royal Army, however, it was expected that, as in former years, it would defeat and destroy an enemy that was anything but equal – Serbia – within a very short space of time.

Yet, at the end of the day, any attempts at comparison were futile.

The Monarch had become old, very old. His degree of power was relativised, since Franz Joseph was obliged to have far greater regard for the peoples of his empire than he had 66 years previously. Absolutism had become a thing of the past. Yet the renewed political structures also didn't fit at all, could frequently no longer be brought in line with those of the surrounding European countries, and even led Franz Joseph to make the statement passed on by Carl J. Burckhardt: 'I have been aware for a long time the degree to which we are an anomaly in today's world.' The Emperor had three ministers who were responsible for the central tasks of the Empire – yet the heads of these ministries were rarely his trusted associates. He had two governments, each of which attempted to control one half of the Empire, respectively – yet Franz Joseph regarded the prime ministers and members of the government as merely replaceable figures. Overall, during the course of his reign, he had appointed and dismissed around fifty governments and hundreds of ministers. There were two parliaments: the Hungarian, which was at times able to conduct its work, and certainly had been capable of doing so since 1913, and the Austrian, which due to the Czech obstruction in March 1914 had been suspended, as though the aim had been to give it pause for reflection at a time when no-one was prepared to do so. Yet, the Emperor and King still did not think much of his parliaments. Finally, the army, for Franz Joseph the epitome of power and the object of his fervent attention throughout his life, had for a long time ceased to be

familiar to him, and the estrangement had intensified further after he had entrusted the day-to-day business of the military to Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This was a – not entirely voluntary – gesture of faith, although at the same time it was a calculable risk, since the Emperor still retained the Supreme Command. However, he had now hardly exerted any further influence over the filling of posts, and had also long receded from everyday military life.

However, millions of soldiers – around six million during the months of the war leading to 1916 alone – swore the oath to Franz Joseph in eleven languages: ‘We swear to God the Almighty a solemn oath, to be loyal and obedient to His Apostolic Majesty, our Most Illustrious Prince and Ruler, Franz Joseph the First, by the Grace of God Emperor of Austria, King of Bohemia, etc. and Apostolic King of Hungary, also His Sovereign Generals, and all our superiors and those of higher rank [...] and in this manner to live and die in honour. So help us God. Amen.’ If the references to God were put to one side, one had to ask whether those who took the oath were really aware of how bound they were to it. Was it already sufficient to act in all conscience? The soldiers of the Common (Imperial and Royal) Army did not swear an oath to the constitution, the basic law written in 1867, which most at best knew only from hearsay. They exclusively swore a personal oath to their Supreme Commander. However, a passage had been inserted into the formula of the oaths for the Honvéd and Landwehr (the Hungarian and Austrian standing armies, respectively), which also swore the members of these sections of the army to the ‘sanctioned laws of our fatherland’. The bond that they entered into with the Monarch was however the same for all soldiers, and most members of the army should certainly have been aware of the personal commitment that they entered into. Only gradually, and particularly from the moment when ‘he’ no longer lived, were stronger differentiations made. The Monarch was one thing; the Empire, to which many only felt conditionally bound, was another.

The Emperor, to whom the troops swore ‘to bravely and manfully fight, at any place, at any time and on all occasions’, was however no longer to be found among his soldiers during the great, decisive war, aside from the three visits he made to the wounded at brief intervals in September and October 1914, and on 18 July 1915 in the Schönbrunn Palace park, where he watched the ‘Kaiserjäger’ Imperial Tyrolean Rifle Regiment file past. On 24 June 1915, he also made an appearance to accept a ‘homage to the Emperor’, which took place in celebration of the recapture of Lviv (Lemberg).

Otherwise, he was invisible and yet ever-present, since not only did his portrait adorn the walls of offices, barracks, classrooms and numerous apartments, but his face was also to be found on every banknote, every coin and stamp, the lettering of his name decorated countless buildings and objects, every sabre and every cap, whether for the military or for civilian officials. Then there were the monuments, painted portraits, busts and badges, trinkets and kitsch. Millions of documents bore his signature,

railways, roads, squares, bridges and so on were named after him. The list could go on almost endlessly. Thus, purely by dint of his long period of reign, he had already become the symbol and nominal bearer of a power that threatened to slip from his grasp, but which he tenaciously and doggedly attempted to retain. Franz Joseph created the impression of being a spider right in the centre of the huge web that he regarded as his – entirely personal – kingdom, and by all means not only in the figurative sense.

More than in the political sphere, perhaps, he had repeatedly made his unbending stance and the priority he gave to tradition clear when it came to the imperial family, his 'dynasty'. Anyone who was not prepared to bow to convention and take the place assigned to them would be thrown out, and the next person would move up to fill the empty space. Naturally, Franz Joseph had constantly to consider the issue of who would follow him. And he had no love for any of his heirs presumptive, be it for his brother Ferdinand Max, even for his son Rudolf, and certainly not for his nephew, Franz Ferdinand. Rudolf had fought to win his father's love – and had been disappointed. Franz Ferdinand could hardly wait to follow his uncle, and returned the cool relationship through and through. Finally, Franz Ferdinand had a portrait painted that already depicted him as Emperor. The picture would never fulfil its purpose. After the death of his son, Franz Joseph had hesitated for years before officially appointing Franz Ferdinand as heir to the throne, and only after the death of Archduke Karl Ludwig in 1896, who would theoretically have been next in line as successor to the ruling office, did Franz Joseph do what had already been expected of him for a long time: he reconciled himself with the next person in the rank order and kept him at arm's length. Then he too was dead, and Archduke Karl Franz Josef moved up in the line of succession. Franz Joseph bowed to necessity and accepted him as successor right on the day after the assassination. He even assigned him a suite of rooms at Schönbrunn Palace, although he then did his utmost to keep the young man from being continuously in the vicinity. He ordered that he undergo military training. However, what the Emperor had not reckoned with was the manner in which the new heir to the throne so skilfully treated him. In contrast to his three predecessors, of whom at least two had made no secret of their desire to succeed the Monarch, and the sooner the better, Archduke Karl did nothing of the kind.

On the day of the assassination in Sarajevo, Franz Joseph was in Bad Ischl. On the morning of the following day, he travelled to Vienna in the royal train. On 30 June, the new heir to the throne had the opportunity for the first time to talk to the Monarch – not alone, but in the presence of the Imperial Lord Chamberlain, Count Alfred Montenuovo. No further plans had been made however, since clearly, no-one considered the possibility that Archduke Karl Franz Josef might also fall victim to an accident, an assassination or illness. The next in line to the throne – aside from older archdukes such as the Emperor's brother, Ludwig Viktor (who was out of the question) – were Arch-

dukes Friedrich and Eugen. However, nobody wanted to think this far ahead, no more than the fact that then, a regency of many years would perhaps have become necessary for the oldest son of the heir to the throne, Otto. Finally, however, speculations of this nature were superfluous: he was after all still there, the 27-year-old heir to the throne, Archduke Karl.

Emperor Franz Joseph is said to have become increasingly callous as he grew older, or at least only rarely showed his emotions. Bewilderment was not a quality that he permitted himself to possess. For this reason, he also attempted in his old age to create the image of a sovereign who made his decisions rationally and consistently and always with the best interests of his empire and his dynasty in mind. How much of this was a facade, and how deeply some matters did in fact affect the Emperor, will never be known. His portrait has been painted by many people, and painted over with far too many layers of colour than would now allow us to see through to what lay underneath.

On 29 and 30 June 1914, Franz Joseph was informed about the procedures for the burial of his dead nephew and his wife according to protocol. Theoretically, the Emperor could have ordered for the couple to be buried in the Kapuzinergruft, the imperial crypt in Vienna. However, the thought did not occur to him, since Franz Ferdinand had requested otherwise, and had in fact already arranged for long-term preparations to be made in the burial chapel in the palace at Artstetten. Clearly, no-one also thought to contradict the protocol, which had been written by the Emperor and his Lord Chamberlain, and which envisaged a hasty farewell in Vienna, followed by a transfer to Artstetten in Lower Austria. The Austrian and Hungarian prime ministers, Stürgkh and Tisza, the Minister of the Imperial Household and also Foreign Minister, Berchtold, were already summoned to Schönbrunn the day after the Emperor returned, as was the new heir to the throne, but they too did not regard it as their business to interfere with the protocol. They only came to pay their condolences. Aside from the new heir to the throne and Franz Ferdinand's half-sister, Archduchess Maria Annunziata, no family members were granted an appointment with the Emperor, unlike the German Ambassador von Tschirschky, whom he saw on 2 July. On the afternoon of 3 July, the bodies of the murdered couple were blessed in the Hofburg Chapel. The aide-de-camp of the Emperor on duty, Count Hoyos, noted that the time required for the procedure was 25 minutes. Then, the journey continued to Schönbrunn. The other members of the family were also not allowed much time to mourn and take their leave, since a family meal had been arranged for immediately after Franz Joseph's return. The Emperor was not present when the dead were seen off at the Viennese Westbahnhof station. The next day, Franz Ferdinand's three children with their tutor, Prince Thun-Hohenstein, were permitted an audience of 15 minutes. However, on 5 July, life appeared to have returned to normal. Among other things, Conrad, the Chief of the General Staff, presented information to the Emperor for 40 minutes. The next day, Archduke Friedrich

was summoned. These were the first signs that an Army High Command was in the process of being formed.

Now one of the key issues is of course the extent to which it was Franz Joseph himself who determined the events that followed and, in particular, took the decision to threaten Serbia with war, or whether he simply sanctioned a position that emerged during the Joint Council of Ministers of the government leaders of both halves of the Empire, his joint ministers and the top ranks of the military.

On Monday, 6 July, the Foreign Minister and the War Minister, Berchtold and Krobatin, each had a separate audience of 20 minutes in order to inform the Emperor and ask for his opinion – without doubt too little in order to adequately acknowledge all aspects of the critical situation. The appointments were at any rate no longer in duration than those that followed, in which the aide-de-camp of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Colonel Bardolff, reported to the Emperor about the last days and hours of his great nephew. All else became submerged in the usual daily business. The heads of the Austrian and Hungarian Cabinet Offices, Chief of Staff Baron Schiessl and Head of Department Daruváry, came with files and documents to be issued. Count Montenuovo and the Adjutant General of the Emperor, Count Paar, were also given a few minutes. As was usual, nothing was recorded; instead, the orders were given verbally. And equally – as was usual – everything took place one on one. Yet was there in fact much that needed to be discussed? The journalist mentioned earlier, Heinrich Kanner, apparently discovered from his conversations with the – by then already former – Joint Finance Minister Leon Biliński that Franz Joseph had already decided to go to war on 3 July, and that he was by no means assuming that the war would be waged against Serbia alone, but that there would also be a major war with Russia.<sup>1422</sup> Why Biliński had apparently obtained this information on 3 July of all days is however unclear, since on this date he had not been with the Emperor. Even so, Biliński held an important position in that during the following weeks, he occasionally travelled to Bad Ischl and of all the joint ministers was the only one who was requested to remain near the Monarch for days on end. In Vienna, however, he was summoned to present information only on 29 June. On 7 July, Franz Joseph again boarded the royal train and returned to Ischl, as though Sarajevo and its consequences had been nothing more than an annoying interruption of his traditional summer sojourn.

This was all the more astonishing in that on the same day, 7 July, a Joint Council of Ministers had been arranged at the same time, in which the subject of discussion was the fundamental decision whether war should be waged against Serbia, which consequences such a decision might have, and what goals the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy should pursue in the war that might be unleashed. However, Franz Joseph had probably already decided days, if not hours, after the assassination that Serbia must be called to account. And despite all the possible objections that the Hungarian Prime Minister

Tisza may have made during his 20-minute audience on 30 June, Franz Joseph was no longer prepared to make compromises. While the course was therefore being set in the direction of war, the Emperor was sitting in the royal train on his way to the Salzkammergut. If Austria-Hungary had been a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch had no more than a representational function, the fact that the monarch was so obviously absent would perhaps not have played such an important role. However, in the Habsburg Monarchy, the Emperor had far more power than merely a representative role, and it was precisely decisions regarding war and peace that depended on the vote of the Emperor.

Could it be mentioned in defence of the Emperor's absence from the Council of Ministers on 7 July that he had not expected decisive resolutions? Did he assume that he would in any case be informed on time and asked for his consent? Perhaps he first had to reach a state of peace with himself. Ultimately, all these considerations can be discarded. The fact that much was at stake on 7 July 1914 was beyond dispute, and, as subsequent months would demonstrate, it was not Franz Joseph's consistent intention to remain absent from the sessions of the Joint Council of Ministers, for he indeed later – admittedly only occasionally – attended such sessions. Even the argument that matters were discussed that had already been decided on, for example the question of a swift end to the war, is redundant because such a thing was never mentioned during a session of the Joint Council of Ministers during the war years of Franz Joseph, and the Emperor and King attended sessions at which far less important things were debated, but still possessed the character of Privy Council meetings. The conclusion can therefore only be drawn that the old Emperor assumed that on 7 July, everything had already been said, or that he wished to indicate that he was ready to defer personal considerations and rely on the judgement and the decisions of the most important representatives of his Empire. However, they already knew of the Emperor's wishes, and simply worked to ensure that they were satisfied. And the Emperor also had no doubt that his decision would be respected. He therefore needed no further consultation sessions at which he was present in person and expressed his views to a committee. Franz Joseph evidently also shied away from consultations that were attended by several people. The Austrian and Hungarian prime ministers were almost never simultaneously called to see the Emperor, even where important questions relating to the Compromise were concerned or when the consonance of political, legislative, social or other measures in the two halves of the Empire had to be ensured. Even that might have been a vestige of an absolutist notion of government; modern and, above all, in keeping with the unprecedented situation in July 1914 it certainly was not.

Franz Joseph apparently said a year after the war was unleashed: 'I am a constitutional monarch, not an absolute ruler, and for this reason could not act otherwise! From the beginning, I had all the influential advisors to the crown against me; for a full three

weeks, I vehemently defended myself against any aggravation that might lead to war – in vain! They would not be persuaded, and after three weeks of fruitless effort, I was forced to give in<sup>1423</sup>. This sentence, which was then passed on by the Austro-Hungarian plenipotentiary in the German Grand Headquarters, Brigadier Alois Klepsch-Kloth von Roden, is a retrospective claim that has not a grain of truth. When the Emperor left Vienna on 7 July, the course had already been set towards war.

In Bad Ischl, therefore, away from the daily routine and yet with an only temporary link to the actual power centre in Vienna, the Emperor received reports. There he learnt of the proceedings of the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 July and received the memorandum drafted the following day by Count Tisza, in which the Hungarian Prime Minister argued in favour of not simply attacking Serbia but rather issuing ultimatums, on the fulfilment of which the further course of action should depend. The Foreign Minister had two opportunities to inform the Emperor of developments in his summer domicile. But when the Council of Ministers next met on 19 July, the Emperor was missing once again and apparently did not have any part in the decision regarding the actual issuing of the *démarche* containing the ultimatum. He was only informed in retrospect of the consultation process by Finance Minister Biliński. And when it was a question of signing the declaration of war and thus unleashing the war that was regarded by Franz Joseph as inescapable, this took place without further consultations, without one last, dramatic conference and, naturally, without direct contact with the German Kaiser, as the monarchs never telephoned each other. Thus, the declaration of war against Serbia was reduced to a simple administrative act.

Franz Joseph then remained in Bad Ischl for a further two days, and did not return to Vienna until 30 July. From then onwards, he never left his imperial capital and seat of royal residence again.

### The Geriatric Circle

When Franz Joseph returned to Vienna, the war against Serbia was not even two days old. Everything had in fact already been decided by the 'administrative act' of 28 July. Now, it was only a matter of the consequences. And now, for the first time since the assassination in Sarajevo, something akin to nervousness could be sensed in the old Emperor. Shortly after his arrival at Schönbrunn Palace, Archduke Friedrich, who had been designated Commander of the Balkan Forces, presented a report. Then, Count Berchtold came and informed the Emperor that he had deleted the passage relating to the skirmish at Temes-Kubin from the declaration of war. Finally, the Chief of the Military Chancellery came, General Bolfras, who at that time was 76 years old. He stayed for one-and-a-half hours with his Emperor, and in so doing marked the beginning of



a practice that would remain unchanged during the final years of the Emperor's life: Artur Bolfras spent far more time with him than of all other members of the imperial household, and even more so than the length of time allotted to the prime ministers, ministers, dignitaries and top-ranking military. The nervousness lasted until 15 August. The Chief of the General Staff, Conrad, Archduke Friedrich and War Minister Krobatin came repeatedly. On 31 July, Tisza and Stürgkh had an audience and in each case remained somewhat longer. Stürgkh was granted several audiences by mid-August, before in his case, also, a kind of typical pattern emerged. The Austrian Prime Minister came to the Monarch at intervals of between one and one-and-a-half weeks, the Hungarian Prime Minister somewhat less frequently. The Foreign Minister and Minister of the Imperial Household, Count Berchtold, and after him, Count Burián, were frequently granted audiences, particularly in August and September 1914, and then again from January 1915, when the subject of Italy came to the fore. As a rule, the frequency of the audiences depended on military and political developments, however. The appointments were also very much dependent on the individual in question, since Berchtold's successor, Count Burián, came far less frequently to Franz Joseph. Either he felt that it was not necessary to offer a succession of appointments to his foreign minister, or – and this is more likely – Burián only sought audiences occasionally, and was also aware of the fact that after his insistence that extensive concessions should be made to Italy, he was no longer held in much esteem by the Emperor.

Again, it is appropriate to ask which elements of control the Austrian Emperor used in order to exert influence and to fulfil his function. After all, there was no doubt that until the creation of the Joint Supreme War Command, the person ultimately responsible for the major political and military decisions was Franz Joseph.

To a certain degree, the Joint Council of Ministers was able to function as the intermediary body that, together with the Monarch, was responsible for making the important decisions. However, the Joint Council of Ministers, as had been known since July 1914 at the latest, was not the committee to which the Monarch also added his voice and over whose decisions he exerted influence. Only twice, on 19 August 1914, when the fortification of Vienna and Budapest and the crossing points on the Danube, as well as war reporting, were at issue, and again on 8 March 1915, when Franz Joseph decided to agree to concede territory in Tyrol to Italy, albeit not on the Isonzo River, did the Joint Council of Ministers mutate into the Privy Council chaired by the Emperor. From that point on, Franz Joseph never again attended a meeting of this nature, and clearly also made no requests for certain items to be discussed. And yet there would have been so much that needed to be agreed on: the great issues of the war, in particular the question of a premature termination of the fighting and the initiation of peace talks, for example. However, quite clearly, it did not occur to Franz Joseph to encumber the Joint Council of Ministers with such matters. War was his field of expertise, and since

he had never considered calling the alliance into question, until the end of 1916, the possibility of concluding a separate peace was never seriously discussed in the Council of Ministers. While in 1915 and 1916, the Army High Command and the Balkan High Command had in their own way been occupied with issues of imperial reform, in the Joint Council of Ministers no such topic was discussed. Only in January 1917 was the question of peace brought up by Emperor Karl. From this, the following could be concluded: for the decision to go to war, the Joint Council of Ministers provided all the basic formal procedures; when it came to ending the war, it was not consulted by Franz Joseph. This was clearly not a matter for the ministers! There were also other issues that were not discussed in the Joint Council of Ministers, in particular questions relating to conditions at home, further national compromises or even a change to the dualistic form of state.

The separate interests of individual crown lands and regions of the Empire were nothing new. However, before the war, while attempts at compromise may not have been pronounced, they were certainly being made. Then, the process of imperial reform stagnated, and to the extent that it affected the prime ministers of the two halves of the Empire, they also showed no particular interest. They were far more forced to acknowledge the fact that the military centres had become the real bases of power, to which everything else was subordinate. Prime Minister Count Stürgkh reduced this to the simple formula: Austria is in fact not a state, but a conglomerate. He had indeed also 'more trust in battles won than in compromise conferences'.<sup>1424</sup> There was therefore no question of continuously steering the country through the war. Nonetheless, Franz Joseph, like Kaiser Wilhelm II, had an 'extra-constitutional power of command' at his disposal.<sup>1425</sup> It was hardly ever exercised, however. Instead, a huge vacuum also emerged, and here in particular, it was combined with a contradiction that could not be resolved. The Austrian Emperor, while not foregoing the opportunity to control developments in the war and to exercise his power of command, was simply no longer capable of doing so.

The Emperors' advisors had become few in number, and they also appeared to be primarily concerned with ensuring that the Monarch was kept going by maintaining his usual routine and standardised sequence of daily events, and that he was relieved of the burden of his duties as far as possible.

It was the conscious return to a routine that the old gentleman was looking for in particular during the war in order to create a sense of normality that by now was hardly provided at all. In line with this normality, Franz Joseph, after an interruption of several months, again arranged for a General Audience to be held on 9 November 1914. 13 people were permitted to attend; five minutes were available for each presentation. On 26 November, a further General Audience took place, and again on 11 and 27 February 1915. Then these meetings ended entirely, and from that point on, an audience with

the Monarch only became possible following a written request.<sup>1426</sup> After August 1914, the Emperor would only make very few regular trips out and leave Schönbrunn Palace. On 19 and 28 September, and on 15 October 1914, he visited wounded soldiers and hospitals. After that, he saw no further victims of the war that he had unleashed. And in November 1915, he had no other choice than to travel to Vienna's Penzing railway station in order to greet Kaiser Wilhelm II in the court pavilion. He attended almost no more official appointments at Schönbrunn, and avoided donning his gala uniform. On 24 June 1915, he received the Mayor of Vienna and a delegation from the municipal council that wished to offer its congratulations for the recapturing of Lviv. Then, in August and September 1915, he was obliged to receive congratulations on his 85th birthday. Perhaps the most arduous event was the entourage of a Hungarian delegation of around 300 people, which had come to mark the occasion.

The certain reticence and understandable timidity of the Monarch when it came to still presenting himself in public also reduced the descriptions of meetings of the Monarch with those in positions of power in the Habsburg Monarchy, and it was and evidently still is regarded as a portentous statement when the Imperial and Royal Military Plenipotentiary at the German Supreme Army Command, Brigadier Klepsch-Kloth von Roden, described the Emperor as 'very frail and in a subdued frame of mind',<sup>1427</sup> while the Lower Austrian governor and subsequent Interior Minister Baron Erasmus von Handel recorded after an appointment with His Majesty that the Monarch had appeared thoroughly 'fresh'<sup>1428</sup>. The Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn had a similar impression of Franz Joseph on 3 August 1916: 'The Emperor conversed with me for approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour with astonishing freshness, for the most part regarding detailed military questions.'<sup>1429</sup> However, he is frequently described as lonely and tired,<sup>1430</sup> as one of his daughters, Archduchess Marie Valerie, noted in her diary in October 1916 '[...] a kind of veil lies between him and the outside world; a kind of excessive tiredness'.<sup>1431</sup> Similar comments had already been made previously. On 17 November 1916, Conrad von Hötzendorf was with the Emperor. The Emperor followed his 'presentation with his usual interest', but then fell asleep.<sup>1432</sup>

Those closest to him had already known for a long time that it made a great difference whether one had an audience with the Emperor during the morning or during the afternoon. As the Chief of the Military Chancellery put it: 'In the evening, the Emperor is very tired. While during the morning, he is a master of attentiveness, in the evening, he frequently asks for matters to be repeated.'<sup>1433</sup>

On one matter, everyone was in agreement who had dealings with the Emperor during these years: he was dominated by his everyday routine. Whether this was out of a sense of duty or because of his desire not to change the order of the day significantly from what it had been until then remains open to speculation. The unchanging daily cycle kept him alive.

The Emperor rose at 3 a.m., or half an hour later at most.<sup>1434</sup> During the morning, starting at 7 a.m., the Lord Chamberlain Count Montenuovo and the Directors of the Cabinets of the Austrian and Hungarian Court Chancellery arrived, who were to attend their appointments. Here, the issues discussed were primarily administrative ones, or requests, promotions and accolades. Everyday matters. The almost daily appointments included reports presented by the 77-year-old Adjutant General Count Eduard Paar, and in particular, the Chief of the Imperial and Royal Military Chancellery, General Bolfras. The latter was granted the only longer appointments on an almost daily basis – and their length also increased, and they lasted up to two hours. During the afternoon, there was time for archdukes, and in particular for his favourite daughter, Marie Valerie. In some cases, he would see ministers, the Chief of the General Staff, Conrad, who visited Vienna at longer intervals, and official personages. The high aristocracy played no part in the audiences. Only if someone had a function or had been newly appointed were they given an appointment. However, the paladins of the Empire would only again see their monarch in his coffin. No wonder that they withdrew and in some cases hardly felt bound to the House of Habsburg any longer.

During the daily appointments, which continued regardless on Sundays and public holidays, the Emperor and King received reports, expressed opinions, and gave commands and orders. He showed interest and communicated to the Foreign Minister and Minister of the Imperial Household, Count Burián, that he was not only interested in foreign policy, but was also minded to determine the direction taken. The Minister noted in retrospect that ‘It was a joy to work with Emperor Franz Joseph’,<sup>1435</sup> while deliberately ignoring the fact that with regard to foreign policy, the powers of the Monarchy had decreased significantly since August 1914, and that the relationship with the German Empire had hardly ever fallen within the remit of the Foreign Ministry and was to a far greater extent the responsibility of the Army High Command, the War Ministry and later, in particular the Ministry of Food. In particular, what was not expressed with this ‘joy’ was that during Burián’s period in office, there was in fact only one issue that was of particular importance, namely the question of whether or not Italy’s entry into the war could be prevented by ceding territories. And here, for a long time, the Emperor did nothing other than to consistently refuse all demands, and had to be pressured by his minister during numerous audiences into taking a more flexible stance, until it was too late.

If, and this occurred relatively frequently, changes in personnel were made, for example when a change of minister needed to be discussed, this was conducted with ‘unsentimental matter-of-factness’.<sup>1436</sup> From the moment someone lost his office, he was waved aside. This had so insulted Ernest von Koerber, the Austrian Prime Minister who had served between 1900 and 1904, that for years, he no longer visited the court or the upper house of the Reichsrat.<sup>1437</sup> Even so, by October 1916,

everything had been forgiven, and Koerber became the successor to the murdered Count Stürgkh.

One fixed item in the afternoon programme was the daily review of the newspapers. Usually, the day ended at 7 p.m. The Emperor soon became tired, and increasingly so. However, he did not consider forfeiting even part of his power. Archduke Ferdinand had been placed at 'the disposal of the Supreme Commander', and had been given authority over most military issues. He also had his own military chancellery. In terms of political and administrative matters, he was only occasionally given authority over more minor issues. However, he had not only a task to perform, but also responsibility. The fact that it was precisely in military matters that Hungary set strict limits, and that in Budapest, it was argued that the Hungarian constitution did not envisage a representation of the Monarch, had led to a sense of aversion on both sides. For the heir to the throne, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, the issue of representation and authority never even arose, since the Emperor shunted him off to Galicia and accorded him 'the disposal of the Supreme Commander'. The new heir to the throne – naturally – had no military chancellery of his own, and would by no means be granted similar powers to those of Archduke Franz Ferdinand before him. Nobody – and least of all the old Emperor – thought of possibly transferring the Army High Command to him, quite apart from the foreign and domestic policy issues. However, this did also have its benefits: in this way, Archduke Karl did not run the risk of having to adopt a position when it came to the unavoidable conflicts, and in so doing, *nolens volens* to use up his strength prematurely.

However, with the best will in the world, Franz Joseph was unable to fill the gaps that were becoming increasingly evident, both in the political and military spheres, and which of course did not remain without consequences. The vacuum at the top therefore provided fertile ground for all kinds of uncontrolled growth, and in particular gave the high commands a degree of power that not only permitted them to consider possible imperial reform and to write studies on the issue, but also, with regional variations, to exercise forms of nothing less than military dictatorship. Franz Joseph represented no obstacle to this type of future planning. However, certainly his mere existence created a barrier that was indeed respected both at home and abroad. As long as he lived, the separatist tendencies among the northern and southern Slavs were of no particular importance. Even within the Entente, as yet, no serious thought at all was being given to the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. And perhaps much more importantly: even the highest representatives of the German Empire refrained from behaving in a coarse manner and only dared to wait until three months after the Monarch's death before making a clear leadership claim and drawing the Habsburg Monarchy into the lethal embrace from which it would never again be able to release itself.

### The Military Chancellery of His Majesty

The connection that Franz Joseph maintained to the outside world from July 1914 consisted of audiences, reports and visits. Here, the Military Chancellery increasingly became a control element, which due to the lack of other functioning institutions and above all in the light of the physical absence of the Emperor gained in importance among the general public and in the theatres of war. The area of authority of the Military Chancellery had been regulated in 1910, and accordingly it was to be considered as being independent of the constitution, was placed solely at the disposal of the Monarch and did not have to account for its actions to anyone else.<sup>1438</sup> The Chief of the Military Chancellery, Baron General Artur von Bolfras, had the unlimited trust of Franz Joseph and could allow himself to feel flattered that of all the people surrounding the Emperor, it was he who spent the most time with the Monarch. Far more than the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery was Brigadier, then Major General Baron Friedrich von Marterer.<sup>1439</sup> However, both worked together to 'translate' the will of the Monarch and already dominated merely by virtue of the intensity of the contact they had with the ruler. The insights that the heads of the Military Chancellery of Emperor Franz Joseph gained into the progress of the war and important political issues were however usually only reported second hand, since they were based primarily on correspondence and conversations, and only rarely resulted from visits to the front and direct impressions of the events of the war. Even so, the information that Bolfras and Marterer received was then to a large extent passed on to the Emperor. Ultimately, the two generals decided what was to be presented to His Majesty, and how. Here, the Military Chancellery was fed from different sources, which were by no means only military ones. As a result, the heads of the Military Chancellery also became involved in foreign and domestic policy issues. Marterer in particular was repeatedly sent on diplomatic missions, and was to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm, the German Imperial Chancellor and, naturally, the military leadership. Issues relating to the delegation of responsibility were discussed, as were the joint supreme command or, in discussions with Tisza, state symbols, the extension of emergency decrees to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and much more. Several times, Bolfras and Marterer addressed the issue of whether Stürgkh should not be removed from office. And when they were reluctant to introduce a topic themselves, they arranged to send the Lord Chamberlain or First Adjutant General ahead. Bolfras conducted more or less regular correspondence with Conrad von Hötzendorf, and ultimately passed on his views, while Marterer was initially in contact with Potiorek, before effortlessly changing sides and leading the calls for Potiorek's dismissal. Shortly afterwards, Archduke Eugen claimed that he was 'brilliant' and at least on some occasions, he became his mouthpiece.<sup>1440</sup> For a short time, Bolfras feared that the Emperor might use the Military Chancellery as the

‘General Staff of His Majesty’, which he described as utterly impossible. However, here he had evidently misunderstood something.<sup>1441</sup>

In the Military Chancellery, the threads also connected in informal ways. The prime ministers, the Foreign Minister and other decision-makers frequently used the time before and after audiences in order to hold preliminary discussions about certain topics in the Military Chancellery, or to sum up the contents of an appointment with the Emperor, in the full knowledge that Bolfras in particular had every opportunity to influence the Emperor’s opinion. Conrad already complained on 7 September 1914 that the Germans were not keeping to the agreed operational plans, and that in the north of the German eastern front, deer hunting and the Trakehner stud farm belonging to the German Kaiser were influencing the way that war was waged. Bolfras promptly expressed the view that in the light of the German stance, thought should be given to a separate peace with Russia.<sup>1442</sup> All dismissals of high-ranking commanders were reported to the Military Chancellery. This went so far that the Emperor then sent Marterer to Nowy Sącz (Neu Sandez) in order to determine the state of the army and to announce that His Majesty regarded the large number of dismissals as questionable. On his return, Marterer immediately presented himself to the Emperor and reported his impressions. ‘With regard to the dismissals, I return a convert and dare to request that Your Majesty make no further comments to the Army High Command on this matter. The dismissals that have been implemented have proven to be a blessing for the army.’<sup>1443</sup> The Emperor accepted this view, and the dismissals were allowed to continue.

Personnel policy in general was a domain of the Military Chancellery, and the Emperor would have been informed of most of the details via Bolfras. On 24 September 1914, Bolfras and Marterer discussed whether it might not be best to subordinate the leadership of the Imperial and Royal troops to General von Hindenburg. They then considered who might replace Conrad. Marterer suggested Borojević. He would – not least under Conrad’s influence – be less pro-German and repeatedly varied ‘the topic of Prussian egoism’. Finally, Franz Joseph, under the influence of his Military Chancellery, rejected a joint operation between the Imperial and Royal 1st Army and the German 9th Army. In the contradiction of views as to how much should be made in the way of concessions to the German pressure for a joint supreme command, Bolfras ultimately retained the upper hand, and the success at the Battle of Limanowa and Łapanów contributed further to strengthening the standing of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command and of the Chief of the General Staff. This impression was reinforced by the reports from the heir to the throne, who was frequently recalled to Vienna, and who ‘described [the situation] as reassuring’.<sup>1444</sup>

The next stormy days for the Military Chancellery occurred in connection with the failure in the Balkans. Marterer was sent to Potiorek, but also sought a meeting with the most important commander, and on his return, bluntly told the Emperor that Po-

tiorek was to blame. Franz Joseph, who on 2 December had still received the report of the taking of Belgrade with tears in his eyes, acknowledged Marterer's report on the 19th regarding the failure of leaderships with the simple comment that Potiorek 'must go'. Marterer then only had to make the General of Artillery understand that he would have to prepare his request for dismissal as quickly as possible.

Day after day, Bolfras remained longer with the Emperor than anyone else, read telegrams, as well as perhaps extracts from Conrad's letters, provided reassurance and caused him to be agitated. However, it is unlikely that Bolfras of all people spread a sense of optimism, since towards the end of 1914, he began to consider what might happen if Italy were to enter the war, and what consequences a siege of Vienna could have. The court, Bolfras claimed, would move to Salzburg. But what would happen then?<sup>1445</sup> Could his fears be allayed by the fact that War Minister Krobatin reported to the Emperor that the Monarch was in a position to continue the war until November 1915, and that 170,000 soldiers could be sent to the front every month as reinforcement troops? Even so, by the end of the year, the war had already cost six billion kronen.

Those closest to the Emperor also talked of peace. Here, the 'Norns' of the Military Chancellery were joined by the First Adjutant General of the Emperor, Count Paar, and his adjutant, Baron Albert von Margutti. As though they were sitting at a tavern table, the gentlemen discussed whether Germany might not conclude a peace with France, or – if this proved impossible – whether Austria should not terminate the war with Russia. Count Paar attempted to explain these considerations to the Emperor on 9 January, but was told in response that a peace with France would only be possible once a decisive victory had been gained over Russia. However, on this occasion, the Emperor also said that for Austria's part, two decisive errors had been made in this war. Franz Joseph admitted his own guilt for the first error, that until an outcome had been secured in the Serbian theatre of war, a defensive position should have been maintained against Russia. The second error, he said, was closely connected to the first. Conrad's first offensive in the north, in other words, the initial campaign, had been a mistake.<sup>1446</sup> This was now a surprising admission, since Franz Joseph was acknowledging in retrospect that the offensive against Serbia had been given his full support, and that he had not been of the opinion that in the light of the war against Russia, the campaign against Serbia should have been halted. The matter had in the interim become obsolete, but the statements revealed not only an appropriate degree of self-criticism, but also reflected at least doubts in the correctness of the decisions taken by the Chief of the General Staff.

Subsequently, the Military Chancellery was also a hub, or at least an information exchange with a special degree of importance. The heir to the throne used it in particular in order to intervene repeatedly in events and to rid himself of his 'observer role' in the Army High Command. Karl saw Bolfras especially as an ally when, from January 1915, a mood of aversion towards the Germans observed in Franz Joseph could be made to



increase in its intensity.<sup>1447</sup> On his return from the German headquarters, the heir to the throne let it be known post haste that he had been told to his face that the Austrians were incapable of marching. While German soldiers marched 50 km every day, for the Imperial and Royal soldiers, this was 25 km too much. Naturally, Franz Joseph was angered by statements of this nature, since if there was one thing he did not want to hear, then it was the accusation that the Imperial and Royal soldiers were worse than the Germans. In this context, he was also able to abandon overnight his basic principle that men in command positions should if possible not be dismissed. When he learned that the Imperial and Royal X Army Corps had retreated contrary to the order given by the German General von Marwitz, to whom it was subordinated, he ordered the immediate dismissal of the corps commander, General Hugo von Meixner, and also decreed that he be retired immediately.<sup>1448</sup> This reflected not only dissatisfaction with the command of an Austrian general, however, but furthermore anger regarding the German position when it came to Italy. On 20 April 1915, Conrad was summoned to Vienna on a journey that was to be kept as confidential as possible, in order to request that he obtain from Falkenhayn specific information regarding the German position. This was an almost unique procedure: the Foreign Minister Burián, together with Bolfras and Conrad, jointly spent over two hours with the Emperor. Conrad was also requested to attend a further audience. Here, the subject was almost solely Italy. However, it was noticeable that the heir to the throne, who was also in Vienna at this time, was not included in the discussions, but instead was given separate appointments. Clearly, however, the Emperor also disliked the idea of sending his great nephew to Rome in order to a certain degree to beg for peace. Italy, as Franz Joseph later stressed, even mentioning it to the American Military Attaché at his farewell audience in 1916, was the 'hereditary enemy'. Here, the events of 1848/49, 1859 and 1866 came full circle. The decision, which was described as final, was that if an attack were to occur, the Italians should be met with resistance.

During the weeks prior to the declaration of war by Italy, the Emperor was at the limit of his physical and mental capacity. At the end of January, he had already suffered a fainting fit. Time and again, it was noted in the Military Chancellery that the Emperor was subdued. He resisted the increasingly urgent demands for cessions with all his strength. Burián, Conrad, Marterer, Tisza, and finally also Stürgkh demanded that territories be given up. Only Montenuovo remained in disagreement, and believed steadfastly and unrealistically in a peaceful solution. When the German ambassador telegraphed from Rome on 4 May that Italy had set an ultimatum for the fulfilment of its demands, Franz Joseph now simply expressed the view that 'In this way shall we go under.' In the ante-chamber, it could be heard that the Emperor 'was crying'.<sup>1449</sup> However, it was clear that Franz Joseph preferred the option of war to that of making further concessions. Whether this could be interpreted as obstinacy or adhering to principles,

the outcome was the same. However, it was one of the last important decisions that the Emperor made. From then on, as the Deputy Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor wrote on 16 June 1915 in his diary: 'It is a sad sight; no energy, no drive, everything brittle. The Emperor frequently nods off during reports, we are lacking the strong central force, uniform action everywhere.' On 20 June, Franz Joseph again suffered a severe fainting fit.

The war also made its relentless demands on the Emperor. He was tense,<sup>1450</sup> sometimes suffered from ill health, and was occasionally unable to follow the presentations, so that reports had to be repeated and questions asked once again. His way of organising his day certainly contributed to the fact that he showed signs of fatigue during the afternoon, since by then, he had already been awake and working for twelve hours. The so-called 'déjeuner', which was usually a fork lunch, hardly offered a real interruption, and neither did the three or four smoking breaks in which the Emperor smoked his 'Regalia Media' with a long cigarette holder. However, he did not wish it differently, regarded himself as being in a position of responsibility – which he indeed was – and wanted no-one to doubt that he was Austria-Hungary's Supreme Commander and sovereign, and that he was the one to make all the decisions.

His daily routine knew almost no variation. During the summer of 1915, he had sufficient strength to again go for walks frequently, and for longer. Often, however, it was not the Schönbrunn Palace park in which he arranged to be accompanied, but only the great gallery. On Sundays and on particular commemoration days such as the anniversary of the murder of Empress Elisabeth, masses were required to be held in the palace chapel. It was noticeable that in the autumn of 1915, audiences with prime ministers Stürgkh and Tisza became rare. Certainly, however, Archduke Friedrich and Conrad von Hötzendorf frequently visited the Emperor and remained long over an hour. When it came to audiences with the high-ranking military, the monarch conspicuously restricted himself to the land army. Throughout his life, he had never been able to understand the navy. This attitude remained unchanged by the war, and by the navy's occasional successes or failures. The Chief of the Marine Section, Rear Admiral Kailer, occasionally took part in the meetings of the Joint Council of Ministers, and was also called to the Emperor several times. Admiral of the Fleet Haus, however, never appeared for an audience during the war, nor was he invited to court dinners that were arranged on particular occasions. The visits by Field Marshal Mackensen at the end of September and the beginning of December 1915 also gave cause for hosting court dinners, as did the visit by Kaiser Wilhelm on 29 November, or the two visits by Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria in mid-February and the beginning of March 1916. 21 August 1916 stood out from the uniformity in that Franz Joseph inserted a 'Hungary day' and received in succession Archduke Albrecht and Counts Andrassy and Apponyi, as well as the member of the Reichstag (Imperial Diet) Stephan von Rakovszky. However, re-

ardless of other appointments, the dominance of the Military Chancellery remained unchanged. Up to November 1916, Franz Joseph spent thousands of hours within his geriatric circle. On the day of Franz Joseph's death, Baron Bolfras again spent more time with the Emperor than anyone else.

### The Heir to the Throne

Even if the Emperor himself was rarely to be seen, reports of his activities constantly made the rounds. Frequently, however, rumours acted as a surrogate for real knowledge. For this reason, there were extensive complaints that the Emperor was to some degree hermetically sealed off by his entourage. The external circumstances of his life could not remain entirely hidden, however. 'A wall of prejudices separates the Emperor from all free political persons', noted the member of the Austrian upper house of the Reichsrat, Joseph Maria Baernreither. 'Not only the atmospheric, but also every fresh draught of political air is kept at one remove from him by the lord chamberlain-like, in-house military and medical circle that surrounds the Monarch. The life of our times that is flooding away with force is only a faint acoustic noise in the ear of our Emperor – if it is anything at all. He is blocked from any real participation in this life, he no longer understands the times, and the times are riding roughshod over him.'<sup>1451</sup> This would have been nothing other than the swan song of a long life, if there hadn't been a war, and if it had not been the survival or collapse of the Habsburg Empire that was at stake.

While at one time, it may have been the case that the Monarch could be influenced by the indirect route of his long-standing companion, Katharina Schratt, during the war years, this option was completely ruled out. The Emperor and the 'gracious lady' now only saw each other rarely. Here, therefore, neither the occasionally highly over-estimated attempts at hindrance by the Lord Chamberlain, Count Montenuovo, nor those of the Emperor's daughter, Marie Valerie, were needed. The old gentleman reduced his visits to Frau Schratt of his own accord, perhaps not least because he was not inclined to saddle himself with even more relationship problems. The aides-de-camp therefore only very rarely noted that the Emperor took a walk in the Schönbrunn 'Kammergarten' court gardens, a phrase that was used as a veiled reference to a visit to Frau Schratt. Following the Emperor's return from Bad Ischl on 30 July 1914, he first went to see Frau Schratt on 1 August. They then met again on 23 August 1914. Three further meetings followed until 9 September, with a further three in October (1, 19 and 23 October), then on 3 and 21 November and on 9 and 20 December. The resumption of the visits to Frau Schratt, which – including the walks there and back – lasted an hour at most, provided an opportunity to talk about any manner of subjects, and yet they were certainly not made by Franz Joseph for the purpose of receiving her advice or

to focus on any one person or topic in particular. They were rather conversational therapy meetings, which then, unusually for the final years of the Emperor's life, became more frequent at the time of the Italian crisis during March, April and May 1915. They then met once again in July 1915, and finally on 10 May 1916. This was the final visit that Franz Joseph made to the court gardens.<sup>1452</sup>

The Emperor's family also played a subordinate role in the daily routine of the old gentleman during his final years, however. Occasional family meals, in other words, an evening meal together at 5 p.m., in which only between six and eight people joined Franz Joseph to eat, clearly replaced more complex family life. Who would have come, after all? His granddaughter Elisabeth, the married Princess Windisch-Graetz, came more frequently, but it is likely that she sought a meeting with her grandfather not least due to her financial and marital problems. Cousin Friedrich made repeated visits, not for family reasons, but in his capacity as Army Supreme Commander. Friedrich's brother, Archduke Eugen, came only rarely, for a few minutes on 1 August 1914, and finally on 21 December when the transfer of the command in the Balkans was discussed. Occasionally, Archdukes Albrecht, Heinrich Ferdinand, Franz Salvator and his son Hubert also paid a visit. However, there were also exceptions. The wife of the heir to the throne, Archduchess Zita, repeatedly came to see the Emperor, who for his part insisted on visiting Zita twice, and each time following the birth of a child. However, one constant visitor was Archduke Karl Franz Josef himself.

The image of the heir to the throne needs to be adjusted in that while he was not properly prepared for his task, he did repeatedly seek an audience with the Emperor or was called to one during his frequent visits to Vienna. It is all the more astonishing that Austria's final Emperor, Karl, made no mention in his memoirs of his impressions of his imperial great uncle during the war, what topics they discussed and what decisions were prepared or even made. From the diaries of Franz Joseph's aides-de-camp, however, the frequency, and in some cases however also the brevity, of the meetings is quite clearly recorded. Some of the information strikes one as odd. And it all began as early as the summer of 1914.

Archduke Karl Franz Josef, who on 28 June had automatically moved up the ranks to become heir to the throne, was given his first opportunity to report to the Emperor on 30 June. He appeared together with the Lord Chamberlain, Count Montenuovo, and was familiarised with his new status. The procedure was repeated on 3 July. The heir to the throne finally travelled to Bad Ischl to visit his imperial great uncle at the end of July. However, he was not permitted to live in the royal villa, but took accommodation in a hotel. He would not have been informed regarding the process that led to the dispatch of the ultimatum. On the day war was declared, the Archduke took a long automobile trip to the Attersee and Hallstätter See lakes, returned to Bad Ischl in the evening and then visited his aunt, Gisela von Bayern, for dinner.<sup>1453</sup> Two days later,

he furthermore did not travel back to Vienna with his imperial great uncle, when they would have had time to discuss various matters on the train, but was only permitted to meet with the Emperor for 20 minutes the following day. He was then shunted off to the Army High Command. However, Archduke Karl subsequently requested permission by the Emperor to travel to Vienna on frequent occasions. Karl Franz Josef also used the appointments in Vienna to pay visits to the Foreign Ministry or the Prime Minister. Although in the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, it was assumed that the heir to the throne arranged these meetings because he had too little to do in the Army High Command, and had no real function to perform, this was certainly not the entire reason, since the Archduke always brought the latest news and probably also a large portion of chit-chat to Vienna, and was able to report on events and matters that were excluded from the daily imperial reports. The Emperor may therefore have regarded the visits by the heir to the throne as useful and informative. For this to be so, however, Archduke Karl would have had to have been sufficiently well-informed himself – and this was frequently not the case. Conrad viewed the Archduke's visits to Vienna with unmitigated suspicion. There was, however, an additional and relatively simple explanation for these trips. In contrast to the Army Supreme Commander, the Chief of the General Staff and other members of the Army High Command, Karl Franz Josef did not bring his wife Zita to Cieszyn (Teschen). She lived at Schönbrunn Palace. The heir to the throne therefore came to visit her in equal measure. However, in September 1914, for example, Karl came to see the Emperor on eight days, with four visits in October, five in November, as many as 14 in January 1915 and almost daily in May 1915. The frequency of the appointments was clearly connected to current developments, and the meetings could last from just a few minutes to a whole hour. In November 1914, the subject of discussion was a reorganisation of the chain of command as a whole, whereby huge pressure was applied to Archduke Friedrich to accept a German Chief of General Staff. The focus then shifted to the question of Italy. From December 1914 and throughout the spring of 1915, the idea was aired in the Military Chancellery of sending Karl to Rome in order to prevent the Italians at the last minute from starting a war against Austria-Hungary.<sup>1454</sup> Franz Joseph was vehemently opposed to the plan, although his decision is likely to have been guided less by the view that sending the heir to the throne to the Italians would be of no use in persuading them to change their minds than that precisely in the case of Italy, he wanted to allow matters to take their course. Karl also participated in the Privy Council on 8 March 1915, in which the Emperor gave his agreement to the cession of territories in South Tyrol, although almost throughout, the heir the throne was relegated to the role of listener. At the end, he posed a brief question and was given an equally brief answer. He then only returned temporarily to the Army High Command, and instead was in Vienna almost daily during June and frequently from July 1915. It was only when he took over the

XX Army Corps as part of the South Tyrol offensive in 1916 that Karl did not visit for several months. Then, on 2 July 1916, he reported the events of the previous weeks to the Emperor. During the following months, the heir to the throne had enough on his hands with his field army and finally army group command, so that by 25 September 1916, he only paid one more visit to his Emperor.

Suggestions to bring Archduke Karl to Vienna in order to relieve the Emperor and enable the Archduke to slowly familiarise himself with the tasks of a ruler had been categorically rejected by the Monarch until September 1916. 'The old gentleman, who overall felt well until the beginning of November, did not wish to admit the necessity of receiving assistance', as Foreign Minister Count Burián wrote in his memoirs.<sup>1455</sup> It was only on 18 November 1916 that Franz Joseph agreed to the constant presence of his great nephew. Three days later, he died. The heir to the throne had therefore only experienced the final physical decline of his great uncle from a distance. Since his wife, Zita, lived at Schönbrunn Palace, however, he was certainly informed as to the Monarch's state of health, as Zita was conversely informed with regard to conditions at the front and the state of affairs at the Army High Command. When the Adjutant General of the Emperor, the now 80-year-old Count Paar, went to Zita at the request of the Emperor in order to inform her regarding military developments, she replied that this was not necessary; 'she travels daily to the Archduchess Isabella, from whom she learns everything'.<sup>1456</sup>

## The Will

Naturally, Franz Joseph was also occupied with thoughts of his final hour. He wanted to be prepared – and he was equipped. The attendance of Sunday Mass, the daily prayers, confessions and communion were an integral part of his daily and weekly routine. In principle, these arrangements remained unchanged by the war. Neither more nor fewer masses were held. The deeply religious Catholic Monarch did not miss a single Sunday Mass and arranged for additional masses to be held in the Chapel of Schönbrunn Palace on special occasions. On 9 August 1914, the Prince-Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Piffl, celebrated a silent mass 'for our arms', as the aide-de-camp then noted. On the anniversary of Empress Elisabeth's death, a mass was read, although the procedure was not followed to mark the day of death or any other anniversary of Crown Prince Rudolf. These were silent affairs, since the times when High Mass was held were long gone.

If one looks back on what was of importance in the Emperor's mind during his final war years other than the daily business and numerous appointments with the army leadership and individual officers, then one single issue comes to the fore, and

that is money matters. However, the question that preoccupied him was not 'How is a war financed?', with regard to which the Austrian Finance Minister was occasionally called to present a report, but far more banal: how are the imperial finances faring? For this reason, the private chamberlain, the Director General of the Imperial Fund, Privy Councillor Franz von Hawerda-Wehrlandt, to the circle of people who were frequently given appointments with the Monarch. On repeated occasions, there was a matter that needed to be regulated, with payments to Franz Joseph's private coffers and funding for family members such as the somewhat problematic granddaughter, Princess Windisch-Graetz, the subject of discussion. It was Hawerda whose job it was to make the payments to Frau Schrott and, ultimately, to cover the compensation amount for the passionate and almost insatiable gambler. He advised the Emperor in all financial matters resulting from the death of Franz Ferdinand and the appanage to Archduke Karl, and was also responsible for enabling Franz Joseph to act as an example by subscribing to war bonds. Finally, he was one of the few men in the Emperor's entourage with whom he spent many hours. Aside from the military aspects of the war and the necessary political contacts, financial matters were the most important subject of Franz Joseph's attention, even until the last days of his life. On the Sunday after the farewell ceremony for Franz Ferdinand, Hawerda was with the Emperor, and subsequently returned at regular intervals, around once a month, and sometimes within the space of a few days. And in each case, he was granted longer, and sometimes very long, audiences. Finally, he came to Schönbrunn on 7, 15 and 18 November 1916, three days before the Monarch died, at a time when only his closest circle had access to him. However, the last items had already been regulated long ago, and the will had been written and deposited.

Anyone who had perhaps expected that Franz Joseph might wait until the moment of his passing to leave behind a surprise of one kind or another was to be disappointed. His last will and testament contained not even a tentative reference to a desire for peace, no blazing appeal, no words of warning to his successor – or anything else of the kind.<sup>1457</sup> The testament was like the man: correct, unimaginative, and with no unexpected phrases. It is perhaps also astonishing that Franz Joseph had failed to modify and re-draft the testament that he had written in 1901. On 2 March 1889, soon after the suicide of his son Rudolf, the Emperor had begun to divide up his assets. In 1901, he had put this idea into practice by establishing an entailment institute, and in it, listed those properties that were to be bequeathed to his successors undivided, in other words, in their entirety. The agnates of the dynasty, the older archdukes, had accepted this. On 6 February 1901, Franz Joseph had then written his final testament, which was signed by a series of witnesses, including the Foreign Minister and Minister of the Imperial Household, Count Agenor Gofuchowski, and the First Adjutant General, Count Paar. The heir to the throne at the time, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, expressly wrote his

agreement in an authentication line. Then, two copies of the document were taken for safekeeping by the Office of the Master of the Household.

On 16 November 1913, Franz Joseph added a codicil to his testament, which regulated the payments to the Archduchess of Hohenberg, the wife of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and their children. And on 29 June 1916, there was a second codicil, which dealt with payments to Count Otto Windisch-Graetz, after his marriage to the Emperor's granddaughter, Elisabeth, had again been patched up. The Director General of the Imperial Fund was also instructed to do what was necessary in this case.<sup>1458</sup>

In summary, it can only be said that it was a very bourgeois and conceivably prosaic procedure that Franz Joseph employed in order to prepare for his death. Material issues were by far the most important.

The individual sections of the will make for very easy reading. There was talk of transience and salvation. Then the Emperor decreed that following his death, the usual embalming procedure should take place, but 'without transferring individual parts to other crypts'. By this, he meant that the heart was not to be taken to the St. Augustin Church and the intestines to St. Stephen's Cathedral. This was immediately followed by the section on material goods. A reference was made to the entailment institute, from which the respective bearers of the crown were to benefit. Everything else was to be divided in equal parts among his daughters Gisela and Marie Valerie, as well as his granddaughter after Crown Prince Rudolph, Elisabeth Windisch-Graetz. The daughters were to ensure that all closer relatives received suitable mementoes, with the same applying to persons 'who were close to me and who performed loyal services'. After arrangements regarding material goods had also been completed, two articles followed that addressed the peoples of the Empire and the armed forces. In Article 14, the testament read: 'To my beloved peoples I express full thanks for the loyal love that they showed to Myself and my dynasty in happy days and in times of danger.' (A semantic lapse had been made here in the original, which clearly nobody noticed, and which remained uncorrected.) 'The knowledge of this devotion did My heart good, and gave Me strength in the fulfilment of my difficult duties as regent. May they maintain the same patriotic feelings towards My successor to the throne.'

Article 15 then read: 'I also remember My army and fleet with feelings of touched gratitude for their bravery and loyal devotion. Their victories fill Me with joyous pride, and misadventure through no fault of their own with painful sadness. The admirable spirit that has from the beginning animated army and fleet together with My two standing armies reassures me that My successor to the throne shall be able to count on them to a no lesser degree than I.' That was all he had written.

The article regarding the peoples of the Empire was very similar to the testament written by Emperor Franz I (II of Hungary), who in his last will had also already coined the phrase 'My people, My love' in Article 14. In the Latin version, 'Amorem meum



populis meis', this brief quote was subsequently inscribed on the monument to 'good' Emperor Franz in the inner courtyard. It is certainly possible that Franz Joseph had this passage in mind when he went to work on the text of his will at Hofburg Palace.

Even less convincing was the paragraph in which the Emperor addressed the army and the fleet. The text of this article at least should have been altered. As it was, however, the testament formulated in 1901 made no reference to the war that the Imperial and Royal troops were waging in the name of their Emperor and King in order to secure the existence of his Empire and the reign of his dynasty. At the same time, it could not be claimed that the Emperor had been unaware of the sacrifice that was being made, and had not at least tried to ameliorate the suffering. Yet he was unable to find any new phrases to express this, and also did not deem it necessary to alter the material provisions in his will. On 23 November 1916, the *Wiener Zeitung* published the official part of the passages in the testament that related to the peoples of the Empire and the armed force in a special edition. Everything else remained unpublished. The Emperor was dead. Long live the Emperor!





20 Emperor Karl

20. Emperor Karl I in the uniform of a Prussian field marshal on 28 August 1917 at the railway station in Bad Kreuznach. The Austrian Emperor visited Kaiser Wilhelm II several times in 1917 and 1918 at the German Grand Headquarters in order to discuss questions concerning the continuation of the war and the alliance. He generally failed in achieving his goals. Outward appearances were made to cover up increasing tensions.

One must go back further in time to find a comparable case in Austrian history of a monarch passing away during a war. Perhaps the transition from Ferdinand II to Ferdinand III in the Thirty Years' War could be cited here. Less applicable would be the replacement of Leopold II by Franz II at the start of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, every example that could be given would have to be accompanied immediately with the observation that the death of Emperor Franz Joseph took place in an incomparably critical situation for his Empire. It was without precedent and unrepeatable, as history so often is.

Attention turned overnight to the new ruler, the not yet thirty-year-old Emperor Karl I (also King Karl IV of Hungary). As heir to the throne, he had appeared episodically during the course of the war, initially as a colonel, who was assigned to the Army High Command and had encountered little consideration and, in the case of Conrad, little sympathy. Then, as Commander of the XX Corps during the South Tyrol Offensive, shortly thereafter as Commander of the 12th Army on the Russian front – an army that in fact never became fully operational – and finally as commander of an army group in the southern section of the eastern front. He had also been intermittently in Vienna. In his various pursuits, the aspect of meeting and greeting had always been to the fore. However, he had been neither thoroughly introduced to the military matters of the war nor the political problems of the Dual Monarchy and the war. The depictions of the heir to the throne during the period until 22 November 1916 convey the image of a not especially intelligent and ambitious, but rather a shallow and immature mind. It was of course nonsense that Conrad subsequently dismissed him and would not even grant him knowledge of the alphabet. For his part, Karl provoked nothing but head-shaking when he not only dismissed the German General Staff wholesale on the occasion of a visit to the troops in spring 1915 but also stated that 'he does not understand why we make so much effort, since everything is in any case pointless; the war cannot be won and he will be pleased if he is left [so much as] a palace in Vienna'. One of the first impressions that the Austrian Prime Minister gained of the new Emperor was that he was aware of the gravity of the problems of the Empire, the danger of the overall situation and the great difficulties of the Monarchy.<sup>1459</sup> The young Emperor's biggest handicap, however, was that he did not remotely possess the charisma that had distinguished the old Emperor.

Emperor Karl was not granted a grace period, since the war, politics and, above all, the hunger of the people did not experience any hiatus, either. From the first moment

on, when the new Emperor was attempting to obtain an overview, the problems came tumbling down on him. As though it were necessary for the most burning social concerns to become blatantly obvious, food riots took place on 27 November in several Austrian localities, not even a week since the death of the old Emperor.<sup>1460</sup>

The Emperor was expected to be ready with a solution to every problem – and, to some extent, he was. It was above all apparent that with every problem he attempted to push through his own personal ideas and to consolidate his power. He brought himself to mind as an element of politics and the conduct of war far more than Emperor Franz Joseph had done, and in view of the division of power in Austria-Hungary he endeavoured to exercise the function of a real imperial ruler and head of government for both halves of the Empire. To be sure, in terms of neither his moral weight nor his appeal could Emperor Karl be the anchor that the old Emperor had embodied. From the first day on, he was vulnerable – and had to be so – and he laid himself open to the criticism and, ultimately, to the attacks. He directly exposed himself to them.

There is something else that cannot be overlooked in this transfer of power: as a member of a considerably younger generation, Karl was also confronted with those expectations that are always placed in a younger, less jaded generation. He benefitted from the older ones offering their loyalty more unreservedly and enduringly than the younger ones. But this did not help very much. Everyone wanted to measure the Emperor by his successes and conceded him very little; above all, however, they did not give him the benefit of his inexperience. They were guided by the Monarch's first proclamation, in which he promised to end the horrors of the war at the earliest opportunity and to return the blessings of peace to his peoples.

Karl almost instantly created new foci and power centres. He did not reside in Schönbrunn Palace, but instead in Laxenburg Castle. In doing so, he not only relocated away from where Franz Joseph had lived; he also escaped unwanted influences and the direct monitoring of his policies. Even before his accession to the throne he had made it known that he intended to spend only a minimum of his time taking care of paperwork; instead he wanted everywhere to acquaint himself on the spot with his people and their problems.<sup>1461</sup> It was characteristic of his style of governance that Emperor Karl travelled to the south-western front straight after the funeral of Franz Joseph and then from there to the Army High Command in Cieszyn (Teschen). It was barely possible to gauge the meaning of the frequent journeys, but it was foreseeable that there would repeatedly be communication difficulties. And it was not always met with enthusiasm that very many policymakers had to travel with the royal train or that the Emperor conducted numerous important discussions whilst on it.

The new Emperor and King began his reign with a mixture of inexperience, idealism, defiance, personal preference and personal aversions. It is probably not valid to use exactly the same yardsticks to measure the period before the accession to the throne with

the period thereafter. Certain main features remained, however. It had already emerged during the course of the South Tyrol offensive that Karl tended to express his humanism and his respect for human life by threatening the harshest punishments, should the soldiers be sacrificed recklessly. This was certainly a deeply ethical stance, but one that was sometimes the wrong one because it led to hesitation and waiting. For the soldiers, however, the important thing at first was that 'their' Emperor did not put their lives thoughtlessly at risk. Karl was popular.<sup>1462</sup>

His influence on certain elements of the conduct of war, obligated to humanitarian standards, continued where Emperor Karl made the dropping of aerial bombs over the home front of the enemy dependent on his personal approval, and likewise the deployment of poison gas and of incendiary ammunition for combating enemy aircraft.<sup>1463</sup> The Germans had no trouble in ensuring, however, that this decree was valid only for the Italian front but not for the joint front in the East. In the south-west, however, the comparison was immediately made with Italy, which by no means intended to impose such restraint on itself. This order was quickly assumed to reflect Karl's pacifist impulses – which was not the case – but above all the influence of his wife Zita, a princess of the House of Bourbon-Parma by birth. A further problem for Emperor Karl was that in his efforts to force through his views, he attempted to avoid real or supposed obstacles by interposing in political affairs more strongly than was perhaps wise. This occasionally happened imprudently and prematurely.

It could be repeatedly observed that the heir to the throne evidently had no sympathy for the Germans. The Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich, Count Herberstein, gave thought to this as early as November 1914 and noted at the time: 'We were very vexed about the rather childish, senseless and out of place remarks on the part of Archduke Karl, who [...] insulted the "Prussians", and especially Hindenburg, in a very coarse fashion.'<sup>1464</sup> When he was then confronted with utterances and expressions that he was perhaps no longer even aware of, it could happen that he looked for an excuse.<sup>1465</sup> Viktor Adler later argued that Karl never really had a chance, although he took the correct path and had his heart in the right place.<sup>1466</sup> His dilemma was that he was supposed to fight against the war and in favour of peace, lead the Monarchy – if possible, already consolidated by an imperial reform – safely out of this war and shake off German dominance. He failed in all three tasks.

### The Master's New Servants

At his first audience with the Emperor, Prime Minister Koerber tendered his resignation. He was requested to continue the work of his ministry. Koerber soon had to recognise that it was not enough to merely continue his work. More vigorous interven-

tion was now required, and had also become possible. Josef Redlich was thus certainly mistaken when he stated that under Koerber nothing had changed concerning the rule of the army, and that the new government, which was led by party politicians and comprised in large part members of the House of Representatives and the upper house of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly), was also no different to the government of civil servants led by Stürgkh, only that now the course was determined by politicians and that this altered the effect it had on the mood of the people.<sup>1467</sup> The big difference was that now it was no longer an already remote ruler who delegated political and military responsibility from a room at Schönbrunn Palace, but instead a young Emperor who very evidently assumed responsibility himself, attempted to exert political influence on the governments of the two halves of the Empire and was in this way much more closely identified with their actions than Emperor Franz Joseph had been. Koerber, like Tisza, had to acknowledge that he could not rely even remotely so unconditionally on the support and backing of the Emperor as had been the case until November 1916. The prime ministers of both halves of the Empire felt themselves called into question by the Emperor both personally and in terms of their policies. It was not just the youth of the Emperor, however, that took effect but also a peculiar backlog. The new ruler constituted for everyone, therefore, an enormous adjustment, since the years in which a monarch in Austria had continually and strongly intervened in the business of government – and not just by way of personnel decisions – dated back a long time. Therefore, no-one was prepared for this unaccustomed interplay.

Karl acted quickly and purposefully – and also too quickly and without due forethought. One of his first measures was to establish himself in relation to the army as its ‘Supreme Commander’ and to secure the loyalty of the soldiers. This was nothing exceptional in itself and was implemented with a minor alteration to the form of the oath. On 24 November, all soldiers of the Imperial and Royal Army and Fleet were to swear an oath to the new Monarch. At the front and in the hinterland, whole battalions or regiments stepped up. Wherever possible, the entire garrison was gathered and allegiance was pledged to the Emperor; every individual said: ‘So help me God.’ In Prague, for example, it was the station commander Major General Zanantoni who had to make provisions for the troops to swear an oath to the new Emperor. On Invalidenplatz in Karlín (Karolinenthal), the members of the Prague garrison were gathered and swore, as before, to be ‘faithful and obedient’; only the sick and wounded renewed the oath in the infirmaries in the presence of the hospital commander.<sup>1468</sup>

On the same 24 November, Conrad received the directive to draft an order for the army and fleet, with which the Emperor announced his personal assumption of supreme command. Conrad did what was requested of him, and on 2 December, the same day that had been celebrated since 1849 as the anniversary of the accession to the throne of Emperor Franz Joseph and thus had a special significance, the order was



issued. It stated: 'In the exercise of My sovereign rights, I assume the Army Supreme Command and thus the supreme command over the entire armed forces of My army and My fleet. I designate Field Marshal Archduke Friedrich as My deputy in the Army High Command.'<sup>1469</sup> The order apparently had a 'devastating impact' on Friedrich,<sup>1470</sup> although Friedrich must have known about it. The next day, Karl travelled to the headquarters in Cieszyn. He had not been there for a long time, but he knew for the most part the situation there, Conrad and his way of exercising order and power, and above all his uncle Archduke Friedrich, whom he simply called a 'fool'.<sup>1471</sup> Perhaps Friedrich had pictured his removal differently. It had long been known that he wanted to retire into private life. The Archduke was the wealthiest man in the Dual Monarchy. His estates, mines, factories, castles and art treasures, above all the 'Albertina' in Vienna, constituted an unparalleled collection of material goods. To these were added the most modern facilities in agriculture, above all dairies, which had earned Friedrich the nickname of the 'cream rich' (*der Rahmreiche*). However, the Archduke had never used this enormous wealth in order to win political influence. Friedrich contented himself with obtaining ever more economic power; indeed, he counted *nolens volens* among the biggest war profiteers, since he was one of the most important suppliers for the armaments industry and furthermore earned vast sums of money by provisioning the home front. He had served faithfully, however, and to a certain extent also impartially. Karl's judgement of the top members of the Army High Command and, above all, Archduke Friedrich was for the most part in accord with that of one of the numerous visitors to the Army High Command, the Swiss Captain Wille, who had taken a tour of the Austro-Hungarian front on behalf of his government. On 17 September 1916, Wille had visited Conrad in Cieszyn: 'During the half-hour talk, it was above all his South Tyrol offensive that played the main role. I cannot rid myself of the impression of a person who was not above average. Perhaps I was already prejudiced beforehand, but I do not think without reason. Aside from that, the Chief of the General Staff was very amiable. [...] Afterwards, I travelled to the Palace to report to Archduke Friedrich. Heavens above, my expectation of the Imperial & Royal grandpa had not been this bad!<sup>1472</sup> Friedrich had, to be sure, made no secret of not putting his heart and soul into being Army Supreme Commander. He was always good at provoking awful situations. He feared talks with the German Kaiser and the German Supreme Army Command, whilst his entourage feared other occasions. Even a short address could become a fiasco. On his 60th birthday, on 5 June 1916, he had driven his entourage to desperation. Responses to the anticipated speeches had been prepared. Important passages had been underlined in red and pauses inserted. But then the Archduke first of all took the text upside down 'and then it lasted a while before he found the first page', as his Adjutant General wrote.<sup>1473</sup> 'Then, haltingly and with a completely false emphasis, he began to read the first page. The turning of the same lasted a while and the reading of the next

page as well, although the letters were ½ cm big. Then came the third and fourth pages, which were overcome without further ado. The transition to the 2 page was very difficult and time-consuming, however, due to the gloves that the Archduke had forgotten to remove and that disturbed him. And so it continued until it was over.' The removal of Archduke Friedrich was self-evident and necessary.

After the changes that had already been made, the Army High Command had become worried and curious as to who would be entrusted with which function. Captain Glaise von Horstenau noted: 'We in Cieszyn were naturally very nervous. The new master hated the AOK [Army High Command], and we knew it.'<sup>1474</sup> Karl assured Conrad and his deputy, the Chief of the Operations Division Major General Metzger, of his trust. In most cases, the Monarch then stuck to this: he initially let the people remain in office and exchanged them only somewhat later. Karl also sought to take the edge off the intended changes by showering people with nominations, honours and military decorations.

As early as 23 November, he had appointed Archduke Eugen field marshal and, two days later, the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa was conferred on Archduke Friedrich. On the same day, Conrad was promoted to field marshal. It was intended that he also receive the Knight's Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa, but Conrad requested the Monarch to refrain from conferring it on him. Karl had a completely different decoration up his sleeve: all officers who had served for at least six weeks at the front were to receive the Karl Troop Cross. The endowment of this award contained a sting, however, since it was least of all the General Staff officers, and especially those who served in the Army High Command, who would enjoy the bestowal of the Karl Troop Cross, since they could not attest to the required period of service at the front. Karl was subsequently persuaded to make a few alterations to the designated provisions, but they remained for the most part as they were – and the General Staff had understood the underlying message. In the same way as he did not stint with decorations and titles in the military sector, in order to bind people to him, the young Monarch also acted in the civilian sector and, in so doing, earned the nickname 'optic ennobler' (*Sebadler*, a play on the German word *Seeadler*, meaning 'sea eagle'), because – the joke went – he only had to see someone to ennoble them.

In Cieszyn, however, it was not just a question of titles, decorations and intrigues, but also substantial matters of a different kind. Karl first of all surprised everyone with his desire to relocate the Army High Command. He wanted to get the Army High Command out of Cieszyn and have it transferred as close as possible to Vienna. In doing this, however, he was not only demanding a change that resulted in a substitution of people and places, but it was far more a deep incision in the military leadership. Conrad presented every counterargument that occurred to him, but it was no good: with the takeover of the Army High Command, Karl made clear his claim on the personal lead-

ership of the Imperial and Royal armed forces and compelled the Army High Command to submit. In order to put a complete end to this independence, it was to relocate, and by virtue of its geographical proximity to Vienna and the Emperor's favourite residence, Laxenburg Castle, enable the Emperor to exercise supreme command. This was associated with a claim to power that the new Emperor wanted to assert not only towards his own Army High Command but also vis-à-vis his most important ally.

Upon his accession to power, Emperor Karl had discovered the existence not only of the Joint Supreme War Command but also the resulting dependencies and programmes. As early as 22 November, on the day after the death of the old Emperor, Karl had indicated that he was not prepared to simply accept German dominance. On this occasion, another characteristic became clear that went beyond simple inexperience: Karl was rash and imprudent. The *Neue Freie Presse* paid tribute on 22 November to the deceased Monarch in a moving and very balanced lead article. The article described as the highest achievement of the old Emperor the conclusion of the alliance with the German Empire, 'which is one of the greatest facts of European politics and a guarantee of victory at a time that is full of sacrifices'. This had been written entirely in line with the policies pursued until November 1916. The young Emperor, however, was annoyed about the emphasis on Germany and immediately ordered that in the future officers be forbidden to write for the *Neue Freie Presse*. When confronted about the article, the responsible official in the censorship department vindicated himself by saying that he had not found anything offensive in this formulation, and even if there had been something to criticise about this lead article, he would have let it pass, since in such a matter one should not leave any embarrassing blank spots on the title page of a newspaper. Ultimately, War Minister Baron Krobatin succeeded in persuading the Emperor to retract the order, which was directed at a single newspaper, and to replace it with another one that forbade officers – aside from those who were inactive – from writing for periodicals in general.<sup>1475</sup> But this was not only an indication of the impulsive and, in this case, also impulsively wrong things that Karl occasionally did, but even more of how Emperor Karl wanted to handle the German problem from the first moment of his rule on. More was in play here than brotherhood in arms and the frequently invoked community of the trenches. The trauma of 1866 and personal issues also played their part.

On 23 November, when Karl informed Conrad of the intended takeover of the Army High Command, the new ruler also demanded changes to the agreement on the Joint Supreme War Command.<sup>1476</sup> Conrad had initially said that only Article 4 should be changed, which had stipulated that the army supreme commanders of the allies were at the disposal of the German Kaiser. Since this would have meant the subordination of the young Monarch to the orders of the German Kaiser, the passage was to be altered in the case of Austria-Hungary to the Deputy Army Supreme Commander, i.e. Arch-

duke Friedrich. But this was too little for Karl and it furthermore contradicted his intention of establishing a personal command and the end of the independent existence of the Army High Command up to that point. The Emperor then sent Conrad his own draft, which the Chief of the General Staff was supposed to push through vis-à-vis the Germans. In accordance with Karl's wishes, the German Supreme Army Command should only lead the negotiations between the allies but not be permitted to issue any orders. Conrad travelled with this draft to Pszczyna (Pleß), but the mission ended in complete failure. It can be assumed that Conrad espoused the wishes of his Emperor, since he had been an opponent of the Joint Supreme War Command. Ultimately, however, he had to ask himself whether he was only doing something for his successor, since he himself did not even believe in his further use.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff insisted on the present agreement and were only prepared to make minor modifications to Article 4. They argued that Bulgaria and Turkey would otherwise revoke the agreement. Kaiser Wilhelm was also unamenable. There was nothing left for Karl to do but submit to this 'blackmail'. He had to comply with the ultimate authority of the German Kaiser; indeed, the new secret supplementary article did not even contain the German obligation to maintain the integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy. This was a slap in the face for Emperor Karl, and he reacted with defiance: he forbade further negotiations on a military convention with the German Empire and no longer wanted to conclude a trade treaty. In his judgement, the German Empire had become a military dictatorship.<sup>1477</sup> This observation, which was made towards Minster Burián, was both interesting and accurate because it elucidated a peculiar contrast: until autumn 1916, authority had been exercised in large parts of Austria via the direct influence of the Army High Command, whether by means of large territories being designated rear army areas, military governors being appointed, the War Surveillance Office being entrusted with monitoring internal security or employment conditions being regulated by the Law on War Contributions and the workers being placed nationwide under military jurisdiction. Karl wanted to end this state of affairs and he worked consistently to achieve this. In the German Empire, on the other hand, until the appointment of Hindenburg and Ludendorff military power had been mitigated by constitutional establishments, which had continued to function. Now, however, the image of a military dictatorship emerged ever more in the German Empire.

When Karl travelled to Cieszyn, he had already had to swallow the bitter pill concerning the Joint Supreme War Command. Talks no longer had to address this topic. But the relationship with Germany could also be examined in other areas. And this did not proceed without friction, either. On 5 December, Karl was due to travel to Pszczyna with the leadership of the Army High Command in order to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm and the German Supreme Army Command. Since not only Kaiser

Wilhelm but also Hindenburg and Ludendorff were present in Pszczyna, other matters were to be discussed. But even the prerequisites for such a discussion were not good, since it almost seemed as though Kaiser Karl had aimed to snub the Germans. Kaiser Wilhelm had let it be known that he would wear an Austrian uniform at the meeting. Courtesy naturally demanded that Karl and the officers in his entourage, provided that they held honorary titles in German regiments, wear German uniforms. But half an hour before the departure of his special train, Emperor Karl issued a counter-order, and everyone in Cieszyn put their Imperial and Royal uniforms back on. During the journey to Pszczyna, Karl stopped off in Bielsko (Bielitz) for a considerable time, and the royal train finally arrived in Pszczyna with a half-hour delay. Even during the stay in Pszczyna, Karl repeatedly let the German Kaiser wait. On 7 December, the Germans paid a return visit to Cieszyn. The Austrian Emperor was late again, upset the whole schedule and finally alighted from his saloon carriage in a Prussian uniform that was not yet buttoned up.<sup>1478</sup> The Germans appeared to overlook it all and wanted only to address affairs of business. These were not only questions of the Joint Supreme War Command, but also and above all matters of armaments policy and food.

### The Hindenburg Programme

The measures that had come into effect in September 1916 in the framework of the Joint Supreme War Command also extended to the armaments economy, where – as had been often and occasionally threateningly announced – the Germans should intervene vigorously in order to help the Austro-Hungarian war economy achieve its maximum capacity. At the beginning of November, Austria-Hungary had been incorporated into the so-called Hindenburg Programme for increasing the output of the armaments industry. The programme, which was described as a ‘triumph of heavy industry and the General Staff’ of the German Empire,<sup>1479</sup> was based on producing out of thin air additional factories for the manufacture of armaments by means of an immense commitment of funds and labour. In Austria-Hungary, this meant – expressed in figures – that within six months, from November 1916 to April 1917, over 454 million kronen were invested. The money was used for the construction of new factories, above all gunpowder factories in Blumau, Bratislava (Preßburg) and Magyaróvár, for the ammunition factory in Wöllersdorf, the extension of the artillery works in Brno (Brünn), the further expansion of Škoda in Pilsen and its subsidiary factory in Győr, but also for the construction of workers’ housing. However, it was a completely unrealistic programme. Austria-Hungary had certainly had a lot of catching-up to do in 1914 and 1915. It was above all in wartime that everything had to be modernised and produced that had not been available due to the low army budget at the outset of

the war. But this period had been overcome and in 1916 a level had been reached that was completely sufficient to cover the requirements of the Imperial and Royal Army. In 1916, around 1.2 million rifles and almost 13,300 guns were produced. The manufacture of rifles could even be scaled back in favour of the mass production of machine guns. Four million rounds of rifle ammunition were produced each day and two million pieces of artillery ammunition each month. Yet the Hindenburg Programme was supposed to practically double the output. The targets for small arms were 7.8 million bullets each day and for artillery ammunition four million pieces each month.<sup>1480</sup> Even assuming that there were constantly days of major combat, it was not possible to fire this much.

The Imperial and Royal War Ministry believed for a time that it could get hold of the required amounts of iron and steel for the new production targets, namely at the expense of allocations of carriages, tracks and bridges, but this meant intervention in another sector that was in any case already in a crisis, namely transportation. As it happened, the envisaged increase in the output of ammunition for small arms was in fact realised in a matter of months. But in the case of the considerably more elaborate artillery ammunition output remained far behind the demands, and ultimately less was produced in 1917 than prior to the introduction of the Hindenburg Programme. The Dual Monarchy was dependent on the import of premium iron and steel, and the imports in this sector could only be increased slightly. The situation was even worse for the rare metals that were essential for the production of ammunition or aluminium. The Hindenburg Programme envisaged the monthly production of 1,100 tons of aluminium, but even when all capacities were strained it was only possible to produce 462 tons in Austria each month.<sup>1481</sup> Thus, wherever one looked, unrealistic target values could be detected. The newly forced production of armaments did, however, lead to a rapid exhaustion of raw materials that could neither be procured in sufficient quantities domestically nor obtained from the German Empire. Instead, other economic sectors were deprived of their last funds and resources. The necessary expansion of transportation was not even attempted, and as early as the beginning of 1917 it was evident that the programme was bound to fail and that the whole thing would end in chaos.<sup>1482</sup> Since, however, the programme had been begun with German support, namely financial assistance and the appropriate know-how, and everything was also geared towards the programme that had started at the same time in Germany and was also ending in chaos, the Habsburg Monarchy not only became increasingly dependent but also had to ask itself how attempts to sign a peace could actually be reconciled with such a programme. It was visibly difficult for the Imperial and Royal Majesty, however, to escape from the German arguments of the necessity of the programme.

### From Koerber to Clam-Martinic

The visits to Cieszyn and Pszczyna were finally rounded off with Prime Minister Koerber, who had accompanied the Emperor on the trip, being tasked with the commencement of negotiations in other matters. It concerned one-and-a-half million metric hundredweights of grain that Germany had not delivered because Austria owed the stipulated amounts of crude oil, and it also concerned Silesian coal, which was needed not least for operating ammunition factories, which could otherwise no longer produce anything. Koerber was unsuccessful, though. As a result, the failures in the question of the bilateral relationship between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary had a defining impact on Karl and became a veritable trauma. It seemed obvious, then, that he would make those people responsible who had been unable to prevent these failures: Conrad, Burián and Koerber.

In the case of the latter, the relationship soon came to a head. It was a matter of constitutional questions and whether the Emperor should swear an oath to the Austrian constitution without imposing any alterations beforehand. This was a problem that had run like a red thread through Koerber's time as Prime Minister since 23 November, the day on which Karl had requested Koerber to submit to him proposals concerning the matter.<sup>1483</sup>

When Koerber returned from Cieszyn, he was already prepared to resign. The Imperial and Royal Prime Minister and Karl were unable to find common ground. Koerber did not simply want to allow the Reichsrat to reconvene, which was just what the Monarch demanded. Koerber was bypassed on important matters, for example when the Emperor appointed Prince Hohenlohe as Joint Finance Minister without even consulting Koerber, or when Karl decreed German to be the official language in Bohemia against Koerber's will. Koerber also did not accept the settlement negotiated with Hungary at the end of the Stürgkh government. He considered it too burdensome for Cisleithania and therefore advised the Emperor to reject it. It would probably have required a longer period of time for a bond of trust to develop between the Monarch and the Austrian Prime Minister. But Karl wanted to act swiftly here as well and above all surround himself with people whom he had selected, who enjoyed his trust and who would make it clear that a breach had occurred. And it was a breach. On 13 December, Koerber submitted his demission, which was immediately accepted.<sup>1484</sup> In his political notations, the Emperor found rather simple words for this: 'I dismissed Prime Minister Koerber because he was a clown of the old system.'<sup>1485</sup>

That same day, the Trade Minister in Koerber's Cabinet, Alexander Spitzmüller, was summoned as head of an interim government. He was an outstanding expert on the settlement with Hungary and was supposed to conclude the negotiations in the shortest possible time. Karl wanted to put the settlement into effect by means of an octroi.

Spitzmüller most urgently advised against this and he wanted under no circumstances to lend himself to this end. Nonetheless, he was tasked with forming a government. He endeavoured for a week to bring together a cabinet, and he was ultimately successful. At this point he was contacted by the man who was considered one of the Emperor's closest confidants, Count Ottokar Czernin. According to Spitzmüller's notations, Count Czernin said that 'the "poor, little Emperor" required at the beginning of his government special custody' and Spitzmüller could not provide him with this. 'It was furthermore imperative in the highest interests of the state to solve the Bohemian question by taking the octroi route', and Spitzmüller was not authorised for this task in view of his political past. His task could 'be seen at most as a one-month stopgap'. The bottom line was that Czernin informed Spitzmüller that he, Czernin, would become prime minister. Spitzmüller had understood. However, the next day Czernin was told by the Emperor that he wanted him as foreign minister. Now Spitzmüller's shares had risen again. But the experiences of not even a week induced the designated prime minister to hand back to the Emperor the task of forming a government.

On 20 December, Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic was appointed Imperial and Royal Prime Minister. He succeeded in forming a cabinet within the space of 24 hours. He was only the prelude, however, to radical changes in personnel. The Emperor brought those men into his entourage from whom he hoped for the realisation of his ideas. It was not only a question of trust but even more one of identification. Those appointed by Karl felt primarily obligated to the new ruler, whilst those leaving office must have considered themselves appointees of the old Emperor. The break with Koerber, two days later from Burián and, finally, from Archduke Friedrich and Conrad was intended to make it clear that Karl wanted to draw a line under the past. He could not foresee, however, that the one-time replacement of certain people would not be the end of the matter. Instead, a process began that increasingly accelerated and finally became like nothing else an expression of hopelessness. Regardless of who it was: ultimately, no-one could offer solutions that would guarantee the survival of the Monarchy.

It is understandable that the Allies in particular followed the personnel changes and events in Austria-Hungary with special interest. Perhaps the opportunity for a separate peace would arise. Some things were known about the new Emperor, whilst other things were learned and then garnished with assumptions that were flatly wrong. It was correct that Karl was a decided opponent of German ideas for Central Europe. He regarded the alliance with Germany as a wartime necessity, though not as something of a lasting nature. A Central European federation would place Austria-Hungary (or just Austria?) in a position of 'dependency à la Bavaria', in the view of the Allied analysts.<sup>1486</sup> France also understood a remark made by Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski to mean that there had been a 'Renaissance of Slavism' in Vienna, since the new Emperor had separated himself from the group of leading personalities that orientated itself



towards Germany and in this way it was intended that Hungary's policy be disabled, which was aligned with Berlin. The Emperor's wife, Zita, was, after all, a Bourbon and determined to force back Hohenzollern influence in Austria-Hungary. However, she was just starting out and it would be 'a long, hard path'.<sup>1487</sup>

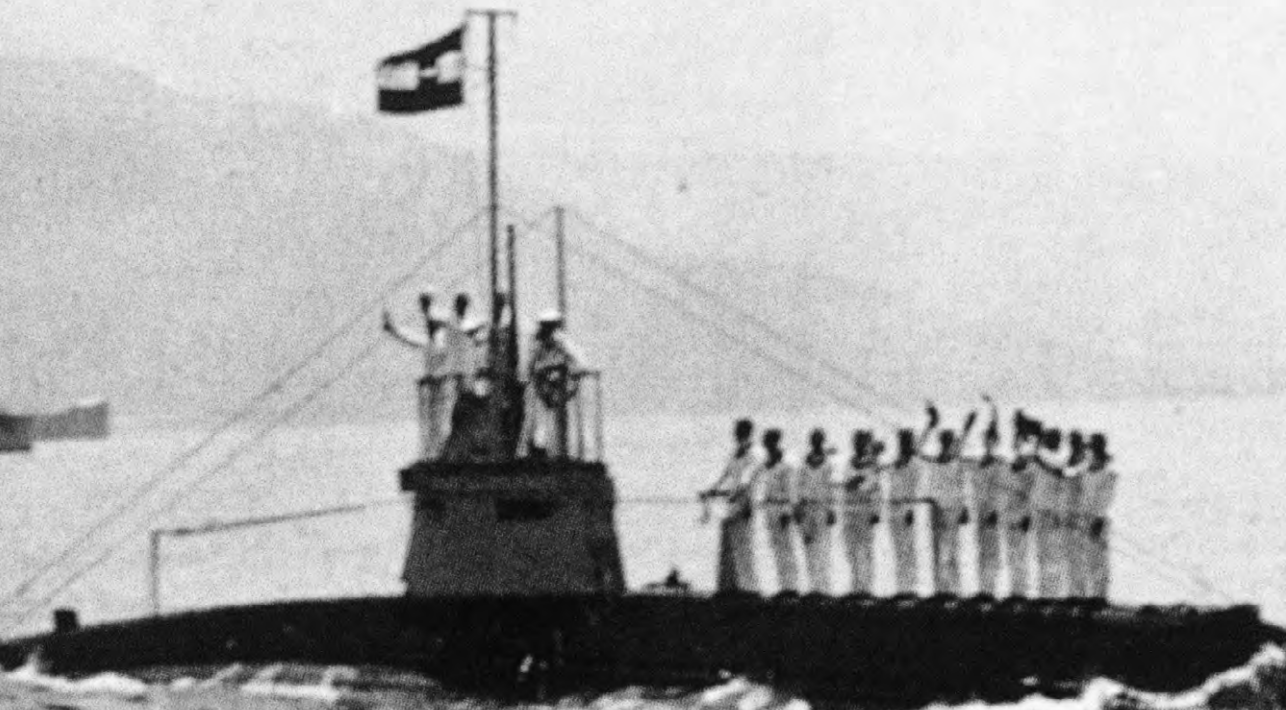
Karl initially demonstrated skill in his selection of people. The Bohemian Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic was not a bad choice as the successor to Koerber or Spitzmüller, whilst Konrad Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst as Lord Chamberlain instead of Prince Montenuovo was a signal for a clear liberalisation of the court. The fact that Karl made a new appointment to the position of Director of the Cabinet Office, and chose Baronet Arthur von Polzer (later Count Polzer-Hoditz) instead of Baron Franz von Schießl, and that Count Leopold Berchtold became Keeper of the Privy Purse, received less attention but was interesting for the reason that – as with Czernin, who had belonged to the circle around Archduke Franz Ferdinand – a very particular continuity became evident. Karl dismissed and appointed with incredible speed. In doing so, the intention was to dissolve the stiffness. New people came and brought with them new ideas. The brief episode with Spitzmüller, in which, aside from Czernin, Konrad Hohenlohe, Josef Maria Baernreither and others were also involved, also demonstrates that here an oligarchy had established itself in a flash, and one that contributed very decisively to the exercise of authority and had the power in its hands to interpret the wishes of the Emperor and, if necessary, to disregard them. It was then Emperor Karl himself who regarded a whole series of his own appointments as wrong or at least questionable, since in hindsight he subjected many people to painful criticism to whom he had initially given his trust. Koerber had been a 'clown' and Count Burián 'ossified'. Instead of him, Czernin came, but he proved to be an 'imposter': 'He was doubtless very shrewd, but erratic and nervous. He constantly had new ideas, which came one after the other, but he never carried any of them through. He was in fact boundlessly ambitious and stopped at nothing to satisfy this ambition.'<sup>1488</sup>

As a result of the almost continuous participation of the Emperor, the Joint Council of Ministers became Privy Council sessions. As early as 12 January 1917, Karl made it clear that he found the procedure repulsive: in the case of Poland, everything was to be left open in spite of the Polish Proclamation. Instead of war aims, peace aims were to be drawn up. Karl wanted to content himself with maintaining the integrity of the Monarchy. Nothing else was needed. The next thing to do was to conclude peace with the Russians and renew the League of the Three Emperors. The usual contributions to the discussion were made. Karl was incensed about the never-ending debates. He took the view that everything could have been said much quicker,<sup>1489</sup> and he looked for new people.

It was easiest to make changes among the army leadership. Military hierarchies were in place; orders were issued and obeyed. This did not prevent interventions being made,

however. Archduchess Isabella, the wife of Archduke Friedrich, who had been demoted to Deputy Army Supreme Commander, chose to approach the German Kaiser in order to prevent Friedrich's complete demolition. Emperor Karl simply called her 'the beast' and had no mind to revoke any decision he had already made, especially since Empress Zita was against such a course of action, and that was what counted.<sup>1490</sup> In comparison to the role played by the young Empress Zita as Emperor Karl's advisor and confidante, all other people paled. She soon came to be regarded as the person who most enduringly influenced the Emperor. It was conceivably easy, therefore, to suspect the Empress and to assume a conspiracy of the House of Parma whenever someone was not able to force through his viewpoint or something happened that was not immediately comprehensible.

The most interesting thing was the German reaction to the new situation with Austria-Hungary. The German Supreme Army Command did not want to content itself to have its own representative attached to the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, just as Austria was represented by a senior office in the Grand Headquarters, to whom were added the respective military attachés and their aides. This was now no longer enough for the German authorities. They, therefore, availed themselves of the Imperial and Royal General Staff Major Edmund Glaise von Horstenau in order to obtain additional confidential information from the Army High Command. The Germans furthermore fostered a veritable military intelligence service in Austria-Hungary, which was designed to supply the German policymakers in Berlin, Psczyna, Mézières, Spa or wherever with information about the ally.<sup>1491</sup> Clearly, a new era had begun.



## **21 The Writing on the Wall**

21. An Imperial and Royal submarine at the Bay of Kotor. After much hesitation, Austria-Hungary decided to participate in the unrestricted submarine war that had been started by Germany. However, in 1917, the Imperial and Royal Navy had only 14 submarines available. A further 32 submarines were operating in the Mediterranean. The number of enemy ships sunk rose sharply in April 1917, but declined again in May by half. For the submarines of the Central Powers stationed in the Adriatic, the Allied blockade of the Strait of Otranto was difficult to overcome.

**M**onarchy appeared to fall at the hurdle of dualism. Instead of setting maximum price limits, goods were seized. The range of rationed goods increased week by week. It was not only food and substitute materials that were affected: from the end of 1916, animal feed such as turnips, hay and straw were also strictly rationed. And Austria-Hungary's enemies knew this. They monitored developments using all the means at their disposal, gathered together all information obtained from their intelligence services and produced increasingly comprehensive reports on the economic situation of the Central Powers and the resulting political consequences. In the case of Austria-Hungary, a clean distinction was made between the two halves of the Empire, and its dependence on Germany was emphasised with increasing force.<sup>1494</sup>

As British analysts wrote in their reports during September and October 1916: 'The major part of the Hungarian population is tired of the war and only wishes to return to peace'. However, they continued, it had to be taken into account here that all political forces, including Tisza, had their hands tied, since Austria-Hungary was so closely linked to Germany. Until the war had begun against Romania, the only talk had been of a separate peace. The officers, they said, were no longer in favour of continuing the war, and were dominated by a feeling of helplessness. The declaration of war by Romania had changed a great deal. Now, they claimed, people were again full of admiration for the Germans, and placed their hopes in Germany.<sup>1495</sup> The reports also stated that the question of signing a separate peace was consequently debated rather in passing in the Hungarian parliament, since, first of all, Transylvania would have to be liberated before any further discussion could take place as to how to proceed further. While the Hungarian parties may have been at loggerheads over most other issues, they were in agreement when it came to Transylvania and Romania.

However, according to the British analyses, the lack of food was also a central issue in Hungary. The Hungarian millers had also warned that by the summer of 1917 at the latest, further reductions would have to be made, since the current quantities of bread cereals would no longer be available, even if maize were used. The Hungarians also complained that they were being forced to give up so much to Austria and Germany. The situation was exacerbated, the British continued, by the refugees from Transylvania, who also needed to be fed. However, complaining and criticising others was quite simply normal behaviour during the war. And there were so many opportunities for presenting oneself as being at a disadvantage. This could already be seen in 1914, when the implementation of the Law on War Contributions was discussed, but also when it

came to the key issue of procuring troops, financing the war and also accommodating prisoners and war refugees. Consensus could not even be reached with such an apparently minor issue as the provision of donations and war propaganda. From July 1916, a major war exhibition was shown in the Viennese Prater park.<sup>1496</sup> Hungary refused to participate. After all, this was the Imperial-Royal Prater, in which – as was advertised on countless placards – a trench, an enactment of a naval battle, Gorizia (Görz) and its surrounding area, dogs used for military and medical purposes and a cinema could be viewed from ten in the morning until eleven at night. As many aspects of the war as possible were to be shown at over 30 stations, from military youth training through to the theatres of war, life for prisoners of war and the War Graves Department. Since the exhibition was shown in Vienna and not in the area surrounding the Budapest Millennium Memorial, for example, the Hungarian government refused to take part. While the Hungarians explained their absence by claiming that they considered it inadvisable to put the latest war technology on display, the real reason was that the proceeds from the entrance fees were to be donated only to Austrian charitable institutions, while their Hungarian counterparts were excluded. The fact that the war was being used as a source of entertainment was of less concern.

In 1916, hunger had suddenly descended over the Habsburg Monarchy. The stockpiles had been used up and the confidence that the agricultural state of Austria-Hungary would easily be able to survive the war had evaporated entirely. The hunger provided fertile ground for nationalist and separatist movements, and together with the supply problems, also increasingly began to replace the war at the fronts as the subject that was foremost in everyone's minds. After travelling through Bohemia and Moravia in June and July 1916, an informant working for the British reported that all aspects of life were dominated by hunger.<sup>1497</sup> He claimed that supplies of flour were suffering most. Even in good hotels, there was sometimes no bread on offer, and it occurred with increasing frequency that children were unable to take bread with them to school. Now, food ration cards were needed to buy anything at all and, in some cases, prices, particularly for rice, were extortionate, while at the same time, everything else was also becoming increasingly unaffordable. In restaurants, he said, meat was served without a side dish. Everything had to be ordered separately. The war bread was made to go further by using barley, maize, chestnut and potato flour; oats and beans were added, as were roots and grasses. Coffee was usually made from a substitute of chicory or acorns. For tobacco, which had initially appeared to be available in sufficient quantities, 72 additional ingredients had been found in the interim to make it go further. A war mixture was particularly recommended that consisted of 20 per cent tobacco, 40 per cent beech leaves and 40 per cent hops. The sale of tobacco products to women was forbidden.<sup>1498</sup>

According to another British informant, in Studenec (Studenetz) in the Krkonoše Mountains, where a poor, rural population lived, there was no possibility of fulfill-

ing the delivery quotas. Nonetheless, the number of cattle, eggs and other agricultural products to be relinquished was precisely specified. Shoes were in particularly short supply, and wool was also a very rare commodity. Wool remnants were collected in order to knit new woollen garments. City dwellers went on foraging trips to the surrounding countryside. Women from Prague exchanged clothes, shoes and even hair for a sack of potatoes. The other side of the coin, as it were, was the sight of war profiteers and speculators, the greed for profits and the excessive lifestyle of not so very few privileged individuals. Soothsayers enjoyed a boom.<sup>1499</sup>

In the Imperial and Royal War Ministry in Vienna, a 'Scientific Committee for the War Economy' was established in April 1916. However, its purpose was primarily to gather data and to analyse the war economy, and not to provide relief. This was already impossible due to the fact that within the committee, whose members included Otto Neurath and Othmar Spann, opinions regarding the causes and measures conflicted dramatically. Following his release from prisoner of war captivity by the Russians, the intention was that Otto Bauer should become a member.

At the beginning of November 1916, the British learned from Vienna that the crisis was worsening.<sup>1500</sup> The queues in front of the shops were growing longer and longer. Regular control checks were made in order to prevent 'foraging', and the punishments were intended to sting. Butchers who sold something at any time other than during the three days on which meat was permitted to be sold were just as severely punished as their customers. In Hungary, too, two meat-free days and one fat-free day had already been decreed. The sale of bread and baked goods in cafés and restaurants was forbidden. Beer cost three times as much as it had done before the war. The price of food was around 178 per cent of what it had been in 1914. To make matters worse, the harvest had not been as good as had originally been predicted after all. In Bohemia, separate ration cards for potatoes also had to be issued. There were food demonstrations, and shop windows were broken. The shortage economy was also reflected by the fact that soap had almost entirely disappeared, and what was available had become very expensive. There was simply no more fat left in order to produce soap.

The people going hungry in Austria cursed the monopolists, the Hungarians, the aristocrats, the Rothschilds, and others. Foreign diplomats sent their families to Switzerland. At the end of the day, one only had to read the newspapers to learn the extent of the suffering and of the starvation in particular. For the Austrian half of the Empire, the situation could be summarised as follows: in 1915 and 1916, Galicia, to which a third of the agricultural land of Cisleithania belonged, and where a quarter of Austria's grain was harvested during peacetime, had as good as disappeared as a source of supply. It had become a battlefield, the population had fled, and the fields in the surrounding vicinity were sequestered as a means of satisfying the needs of the army. There were also deficits in other areas, particularly as a result of the shortfall in farmers and helpers, the lack of

fertiliser and the decrease in the number of horses. During the winter of 1916/1917, a great horse slaughtering measure was begun. Then, the horses that remained began to die. In comparison with the last year of peace, the grain harvest of 1916 had decreased to less than half the amount, and as a result of the war with Romania, imports slid to around a third of their previous level. Where had the times gone when it had been hoped that measures would suffice such as the prohibition on using grain as feed and of baking more than twice within 24 hours, the setting of maximum prices and finally, the introduction of ration cards for flour and bread? Two-thirds of slaughter cattle went either to the army or to the canning factories that catered for the army's needs.<sup>1501</sup> It is understandable that all possible measures were taken in an attempt to persuade Hungary to supply Austria with greater quantities of food, but with little success. Here, too, the figures told a very clear story. During peacetime, Austria had imported around 14,000 metric hundredweights of grain. In 1915, the figure had still been just over 5,000 metric hundredweights, while in 1916, it was 463.7 metric hundredweights. In 1917, it was as low as 276.8.<sup>1502</sup> Imports of cattle also decreased during 1916 to a third of the quantity imported in 1915. All in all, therefore, there was a great deal that had to be 'gone without'.

During the winter months of 1916/1917, Bohemia and Moravia in particular were required to supply the regions of Austria south of the Danube down to the southernmost peak of the Bay of Kotor. However, the Bohemian crown lands also had no surpluses. A desperate process of calculation, reallocation, bringing forward and dilution began. New substitute ingredients were sought and, finally, parts of the stockpiles of seeds were requisitioned. This was already pure robbery, and yet the hardships allowed no room for any other option. The army, which usually had food in its warehouses to last 14 days, now had stockpiles for just one or two days. Now, the threatened punishments were also radicalised: the death sentence was imposed for food profiteering, and anyone found 'hording goods' faced a five-year prison sentence. And aside from this, the military was authorised to requisition food wherever it was necessary.<sup>1503</sup>

Hungary was certainly in a better position than Austria, but just as the Magyars were keen to paint their own situation in gloomy colours, in Austria, the potential agricultural yield from Transleithania was overestimated. For example, the autumn rains of 1916 meant that the maize had to be harvested very wet, rather than dry, so that large quantities rotted. Even so, the harvest statistics continued to report record yields. Hungary had already signed a contract in 1914 committing it to export around 30,000 pigs to Austria every month. In November 1916, however, only 7,800 animals had been available for delivery.<sup>1504</sup> At the beginning of 1917, there was a great commotion in the Austrian Council of Ministers when it was announced that the per capita quotas for bread cereals were to be oriented to the standards specified for Germany, while it was now forbidden to use barley for brewing beer and the Germans had been promised 200,000 slaughter cattle.<sup>1505</sup>



At the end of 1916, Tisza still also considered it unreasonable to expect the Hungarian half of the Empire to adjust itself to the lower Austrian per capita quotas, or also those of the Germans.<sup>1506</sup> And he immediately called for censorship when criticism of Hungary's attitude emerged in the Viennese press.<sup>1507</sup> Here, in particular, the feeling of bitterness was expressed that in Hungary, where rationing had been introduced in just the same way as in Austria and a grain traffic agency regulated allocations, an assessment of the harvest was made so late after it had been brought in that only a residual portion of the yield was recorded, rather than the actual total amount.<sup>1508</sup> The Chief of the Base High Command, Major General Höfer, proposed that the per capita quota for grain that applied for the self-sufficiency of the Hungarian farmers should be reduced from 153 kg to 130 kg, in order to offset the shortfalls in Austria. In his view, the most sensible option would be to control rationing throughout the Monarchy centrally. However, he immediately abandoned the idea, since 'with our state organisation and the known stance taken by Hungary, there is certainly no hope of this for us'.<sup>1509</sup> The Hungarian agrarians were certainly aware of their significance and position, which were reflected not least by the fact that they were the only group in Hungary to be amenable to the plans for Central Europe. In a larger Central Europe, too, the Hungarian breadbasket would no doubt play an integral role.<sup>1510</sup>

For Tisza's policy, protectionist measures were only one aspect, however. Even more fundamental was what he demanded during the negotiations for a new Compromise. He systematically played off the unequivocally stronger position of Hungary, referred to its functioning parliamentarianism and to the fact that Hungary was supplying flour and flour products to the army in the field, and finally criticised the fact that in Austria, there were still dreams of creating a Central Europe from which he would obtain far less benefit, if any at all. It is hardly surprising that this attitude led to bitterness among those in authority in Austria and in army circles, and that it added grist to the mill when it came to the contrast between the peoples of Cisleithania, in particular the Austrian Germans on the one hand, and the Magyars on the other. Here, a further aspect was added to the problems in the political arena and with regard to the nationalities in the Monarchy: starvation caused people to squint suspiciously at those who were still faring better. And it only served to exacerbate the antagonisms.

Probably a better indication of the increasing privations than all the import and export statistics, which measured absolute quantities, and which revealed little with their metric hundredweights, tons and thousands of pieces, was provided by the report produced in 1917 on the 'First Viennese Soup and Tea Establishment'. Here, the price of food could be tracked in detail and, above all, it could be seen how the number of individuals who were dependent on charitable support and free meals increased dramatically month by month.<sup>1511</sup> During 1916, 54,000 people in the imperial capital and city of royal residence were already using the free public meal service every day. The

final figure would subsequently reach 134,000. Later, the war kitchens, where members of the middle classes could purchase simple meals at low cost, had to be closed, since they were sent no further deliveries of food. Warm shelters, day centres and the aforementioned 'Soup and Tea Establishments', where above all hot drinks were served, provided sustenance to tens of thousands of people every day. Since a minimal supply could be secured with the aid of the war kitchens, the measure was even considered of prohibiting cooking in small, private households, since this consumed more energy and food than in the large kitchens.<sup>1512</sup>

Emperor Karl received letters that left no room for misunderstanding. 'Your Majesty,' wrote one correspondent, 'do not send the War Minister to the front, since there, he will encounter the brightest end of the spectrum of our suffering'. The letter continued: 'Send him to the replacement cadres, where men with severe tuberculosis of the lung are dragging themselves across the parade ground. [...] Send the War Minister to the edge of Vienna, to Ottakring, to Favoriten, where the women, who have descended into unrecognisable, typical starved apparitions, with emaciated children in their arms, are standing in line in front of the shops. [...] Your Ministers, Majesty, only see the people on the Kärntnerstrasse street, who are protected against hunger and malnutrition by their fat war profits – and one can still obtain anything at a high price. [...] Majesty! Your name as the Emperor of peace will outlive this conflagration and live on in history: do not allow it to become besmirched through the narrow-hearted pursuit of power, and as soon as the first opportunity arises, and before it is too late, sacrifice a portion of your power, for it is worth forfeiting for the sake of the loyalty of your people.'<sup>1513</sup>

It was not only letters of petition to the Emperor that contained this message. Similar information was also passed on by the Chief of the Base High Command to Conrad von Hötendorf, albeit in a 'de-personalised' form, and had also not shied away from writing about corruption and denouncing the economic mismanagement in detail: rationing had been introduced too late. In Vienna, he claimed, there was an actual requirement of 40 wagons of flour per day. However, 60 were used. The warehouses emptied within a very short space of time. Maximum price regulations had caused products to disappear from the market and had only fuelled speculation. Civilian and military authorities had intervened with contradictory and unhelpful rules, he said. In Hungary, according to Höfer, the distribution measures were catastrophic, causing profiteering and usury to flourish there, too. And private distribution organisations such as the 'Miles' in Austria or the 'War Products Joint Stock Company' in Hungary even had to pay high fees to the military authorities, with a benchmark price of 1,000 kronen per wagon.<sup>1514</sup> However, it was not only the shortage of goods on offer that was to blame for this scandalous practice, but to an at least equal extent, the lack of rolling stock. In this respect, the war with Romania had particularly negative consequences, since almost 34,000 wagons were required for the deployment and initial provisioning of the troops, and these had to be withdrawn

from the transportation of civilian supplies. As a result, the transport of coal in particular had also become almost impossible. However, if nothing else, Hungary was keen to receive compensation from Austria for its deliveries of foodstuffs in the form of fuel.

It was therefore for many reasons that Karl – Emperor Karl I in Austria and King Karl IV in Hungary – took the carefully considered step of having himself crowned in Budapest as soon as possible. This was anything but an act of simple conformance to convention. The decision by Karl to be crowned in Hungary had been suggested by Tisza, and went hand in hand with an assurance given by the Monarch that he did not intend to interfere in constitutional structures. Karl did not even attempt to win concessions from Hungary to change the constitution and have himself crowned only later. Clam-Martinic, Czernin and others had urgently advised him to consider the matter, and had repeatedly attempted to use as an argument the man who was a role model for Karl: Franz Ferdinand. And he had vehemently rejected the prospect of having himself crowned in Hungary before dualism had been abolished.

With this in mind, however, the question also arose as to whether Karl should not also have himself crowned in Prague. While he had not yet made any comment in relation to the matter, the possibility could at any rate not be rejected out of hand, and would have been seen as sending a clear signal to the Czechs. In Prague, hopes were at least held. For their part, the Czechs wanted to participate in the ceremonies in Budapest as a type of advance preparatory measure.<sup>1515</sup> However, the Emperor was initially motivated solely by his wish to see Hungary pacified. He needed Hungary, since in the light of the entirely unclear situation in the Austrian half of the Empire, he could no longer count on the undivided support of the Cisleithanian crown lands. Hungary had it in its power to contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the supply of goods to the Monarchy. Indeed, Hungary was in a strong position, with stable conditions. If, therefore, anything was wanted of Hungary, and the goal was to ensure its participation in measures designed to retain the Monarchy and to continue the war, then the 'atavistic' constitution would have to be treated with respect. This also applied to the Monarch. During the war, there had been a shift in the degree of importance in the two halves of the Empire, and the decision to have himself crowned in Budapest at the earliest possible opportunity was merely an expression of this state of affairs. The final step would however have been to make Budapest the imperial capital and city of royal residence, an option that was certainly considered in Hungary. The Empire would then perhaps have been renamed 'Hungary-Austria', or perhaps simply 'Greater Hungary'.

The day arrived on 30 December: Karl was crowned in the Matthias Church in Budapest. The scene was certainly unprecedented: the Emperor and King, who following his coronation made an appearance on the coronation mound in front of the church, which had been created from earth from all the counties of Hungary, the Empress and Queen, Crown Prince Otto, the magnates and their wives in sumptuous robes and the

black-clad, Calvinist Prime Minister Count Tisza as the palatine in the middle of the ceremonial group. If Tisza had felt any satisfaction, he showed no outward signs of doing so. He could not least have felt displeased to have been given the role of palatine, although Karl had initially considered installing a Habsburg archduke for this function. However, the Monarch had failed to secure any agreement to this suggestion on the part of the Hungarian Prime Minister. Even so, Tisza's days as the most powerful man in Hungary were also numbered. Baron Koerber already knew on the day before the coronation that Tisza would soon be gone. In January and February 1917, Karl made his doubts about Tisza known in the Imperial Cabinet Office and Military Chancellery. However, he did not yet know whom he could name as Tisza's successor.<sup>1516</sup>

The Czech delegation, which had travelled to Budapest to take part in the coronation celebrations, had no opportunity to declare the testimony of loyalty that it had prepared, since it was not even allowed an audience with the Emperor and King. The disappointed members of the parties that had joined together in September 1916 to form the Czech Union then assumed that Karl would not wish to have himself crowned in Prague – at least not in the foreseeable future. And they drew their own conclusions.

The coronation of King Karl IV did achieve the desired result, however, in that the Hungarian efforts to resist a somewhat more centralised structure of the Empire, at least for the duration of the war, had lessened to a certain degree. This was the case particularly whenever feeding the population of the two halves of the Empire was at issue. After months of delays, the Hungarian Prime Minister declared himself willing to agree to a committee to which representatives of the Hungarian and Austrian Food Agency, the Army High Command and the War Ministry were to be sent in order to collect the necessary data, compare it and if necessary to render it consistent.<sup>1517</sup>

Since this represented the lowest common denominator, finally, everyone agreed. General Ottokar Landwehr von Pragenau was installed as the chief of this joint food committee. His book written after the war, *Hunger* was intended as an eloquent portrayal of the almost hopeless battle that he had to wage. He regarded his task as being 'to bridge the period of time in which the war would still of necessity have to be waged without a major famine'.<sup>1518</sup> It was Tisza's wish that the Chief of the Joint Food Committee should be directly subordinate to the Emperor, and Landwehr also expressly requested the same. After all, an official body without executive powers only had a chance of successfully asserting its aims if it could call on the authority of the Emperor. On the other hand, this was one further step, which was being energetically pursued by Karl, towards autocratic rule. It was anyway already evident that this was the direction he was taking, in which he would assume control of all important functions.

At the time of the coronation in Budapest, Karl could still allow himself to hope that he would go down in history as a prince of peace. This hope was founded in the fact that it was considered a possibility that after the setbacks and crises of 1916 had been over-

come, Austria-Hungary would be militarily unchallenged and closer to victory than the Allies. The symptoms of crisis among the Allies, which were also becoming evident during the late autumn of 1916, appeared to point to the fact that the Central Powers had withstood the worst. From the dispatches from Petrograd and Rome that were intercepted, it was clear at the beginning of December 1916 that the crisis among the Entente powers was worsening. The Italian ambassador in Petrograd stated that Russia was no longer capable of conducting a larger-scale campaign on one section of the German-Austrian front. The poor supplies of ammunition and the domestic situation would prevent such a move. The desire for peace, he said, had spread from the lower levels of the Russian population through to the middle and upper classes. Italy for its part assumed that a joint attack on the Central Powers was imminent, and General Cadorna regretted the fact that the declaration of war against the German Empire had clearly been a premature act.<sup>1519</sup> Russia's waning strength and, finally, the defeat of Romania by the Central Powers caused the Allies to fear the worst.

### The Victory over Romania

It would be incorrect to waive aside Romania as an issue that was not of grave concern to the Central Powers. In Austria-Hungary, the most gloomy prognoses could be heard, which went so far as to claim that the entry by Romania into the war would bring the death blow to the Danube Monarchy. For Germany, too, the declaration of war by Romania came as a shock. And the military facts in Romania were certainly impressive.<sup>1520</sup> After mobilisation, it had 23 infantry and two cavalry divisions, as well as numerous independent brigades. The Romanians' military and political goal was clear: Transylvania and part of Bukovina were to be wrested from Austria-Hungary and the Dobruja region from Bulgaria. The Russians offered sufficient support from the rear and offered to supply 300 tons of war materials daily. Also, Romania had been able to exploit its neutrality during the previous years, as well as the attempts to woo it by the Central Powers and the Entente in that its army also had modern weapons, including aeroplanes and Danube monitors of French origin. At the first attempt, the Chief of the Romanian General Staff, General Vasile Zottu, succeeded in directing 370,000 men towards Transylvania. After several days, it was hoped that an advance could be made across the line that was only meagrely fortified by the Austro-Hungarians along the Mureş and Târnava Rivers towards Cluj-Napoca (Klausenburg). This was designed to enable the southern wing of the Russian Army to break through into Hungary. Zottu already wanted to see his troops standing in Debrecen in the east of Hungary on the 39th day of mobilisation. No resistance of any significance was anticipated from the Imperial and Royal forces.

The number of troops mustered since the summer as the Imperial and Royal 1st Army under the command of General Arz von Straußenburg, who originally came from Transylvania, and which reinforced the screening forces and the Gendarmerie in particular, ran to 34,000 men. To this extent, the Romanian calculations appeared to be correct. The Bulgarians were to be kept at bay until a Russian auxiliary corps arrived, and of the Germans, against whom the Romanians had no intention of declaring war, it was assumed that they would be bound to their fronts and that in the west in particular they would not be able to intervene.

However, the campaign unfolded very differently. The most favourable opportunity for entry into the war, which would have been at the climax of the Brusilov Offensive, had now passed. Germany remained undeterred by Romania's attempt to avoid a state of war, and declared war against Romania itself. Turkey followed suit, as did Bulgaria on 1 September. When on 27 August, Romania began the advance towards Transylvania, it was conducted slowly and with little resolution, quite differently to what had been envisaged in the contract with the Entente, where an advance 'with the utmost energy' had been agreed. However, the Allies also failed to keep to their side of the agreement, since instead of a 'decisive offensive of the Salonika Army', only weak advances were made.<sup>1521</sup> In the meantime, everything that could be spared had been withdrawn from the German and Austro-Hungarian fronts, and already on 19 September, the German 9th Army under the command of Erich von Falkenhayn, who had only just been dismissed as the Chief of the German General Staff, began with the counteroffensive and reconquering of Transylvania. In the Dobruja region, Army Group Mackensen attacked using predominantly Bulgarian troops. The Romanians, who had little experience of war, developed only a low fighting capability: the air force was not used, the Danube Flotilla did not intervene, and the German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian troops compensated for their inferiority in numbers by better leadership and a far greater fighting capability. The Romanians repeatedly succeeded in entrenching their positions in the Transylvanian passes, and in defending their positions on the passes at Vulcan (Wolkendorf), Surduc (Szurduk) and Câmpulung (Langenau). They also tried to make relief attacks here and there, but in particular, the attempt at crossing the Danube to the south ended in the bombardment of the Imperial and Royal Danube Flotilla. As a precautionary measure, Conrad had directed it to the lower Danube and also supplied it with bridge material in order to create a river crossing. On 23 November, German, Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian and Turkish troops from Army Group Mackensen began to cross the Danube at Svishtov and pushed forwards towards Bucharest. The capital city was taken on 6 December. Following the Romanian debacle, the Russians and the French General Henri Berthelot who had been sent to Romania as a military advisor could suggest no other course of action than to surrender Wallachia and save at least a remnant of the army. 105,000 men came for reorganisation in the Iași area.

The Russians, however, were forced to extend their front further southwards, and use 40 divisions for the purpose. In so doing, they forfeited any capability of taking offensive action along other sections of their front.

In Austria, special editions of the newspapers were again printed, and once more, the emotional upswell could be felt, in Hungary even more so than in Austria, after an enemy that had once been an ally, which had played so many tactical games and which now, hoping to exploit the weakness of the Central Powers, had appeared on the scene, could now so clearly be defeated after just three months. Redlich wrote: 'I am certain: in centuries to come, there will still be admiration for what Mackensen, Falkenhayn and their chiefs of staff under the command of Hindenburg and Ludendorff have achieved in terms of mental and moral strength; they with their soldiers, who in a campaign of scarcely 25 days have conquered Romania. These are feats that will be comparable to Caesar's campaigns or Napoleon's achievements at most – and even these are of lesser merit!'<sup>1522</sup> There was no mention of Conrad, Fischer, Arz, Archduke Joseph, Goiginger or other Austro-Hungarian commanders on the eastern front or in Romania. This entry is extremely telling.

The victory over Romania was regarded by those who had achieved it as a useful prerequisite for starting the peace initiative that had been the subject of discussion for some time. Emperor Karl placed a great deal of hope in it, since his goal, after all, was to be a prince of peace. This was something that Conrad von Hötzendorf was unable to understand. And he characterised Karl's efforts as a sybaritic impulse: 'Emperor Karl was no fighting spirit. He dreamed of the gentle pleasures of a peaceful reign, and for this reason was keen to see the war ended as soon as possible.'<sup>1523</sup> Naturally, this was far from being the case. Even so, the fact that despite all the signs of exhaustion the nationalist circles did not hold the 'prince of peace' in much esteem was due to the fact that a peace with the continued existence of the state structures was not in their interest. And a sacrificial peace even less so.

### Steps towards Peace

In principle, Karl's first steps towards peace came about by chance. It was only due to the fact that a delay occurred in the discussion with the German Empire on a peace initiative by the Central Powers that resulted in the fact that the message of 12 December 1916 was in fact the first step taken in this direction by the new Emperor, and not perhaps the last act by Emperor Franz Joseph. After the list of war aims had been drawn up by Count Burián in mid-October, during the second half of October, negotiations had taken place regarding the content and timing of a peace initiative. Leading the initiative – and it could not be expected otherwise – was Germany. Here, all pos-

sible considerations played a role. Should the initiative be close in time to the Polish Proclamation by the Central Powers, or made subsequently after a clear time lapse? Should a sacrificial peace possibly be intimated? Should the peace initiative go hand in hand with the clear statement that the Central Powers were certainly still in a position to intensify their efforts? Indeed, Germany was on the threshold of taking a next step towards the totalisation of war within the framework of the 'Hindenburg Programme'. Even before a peace note was issued, the Supreme Army Command intended to pass an Auxiliary Service Law, via which the Hindenburg Programme would also receive the necessary manpower – an unequivocal step towards total war. Or as Hindenburg put it: 'The entire population must proclaim its decision – its wish to continue to arm and continue to fight – in a ceremonial manner.'<sup>1524</sup>

The American component also played a significant role. The German Empire faltered between the desire to engage the Americans in the efforts for peace and the rejection of an intervention of this nature. For Austria-Hungary, the matter had been complicated by the fear that the American President might interfere with regard to the nationalities in the Monarchy. In a speech in front of the American League to Enforce Peace on 27 May 1916, President Wilson had proclaimed that 'every people has the right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live' as one of the principles of peace, and this could – as Americans and Austrians alike were all too well aware – mean revolution and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary.<sup>1525</sup> However, this was only a paraphrase of the statement made by Woodrow Wilson in the autumn of 1914, when he said that the Danube Monarchy should 'zum Wohle Europas in ihre Teile zerfallen'.<sup>1526</sup> While American politicians subsequently proved amenable to the argument that in the light of the strong mixture of nationalities in Austria-Hungary, the right to self-determination of the peoples could turn out to be a chimera,<sup>1527</sup> this made no difference to the very different principles and traditions in which American politics were rooted.

In the interim, Minister Burián had been forced to acknowledge the fact that the German Empire was by no means willing to go so far in specifying the war aims as he was himself. The German Empire wished to issue a note in which no specific proposals were made for initiating negotiations. By contrast, in Burián's view, there should be at least an internal stipulation. It would make no sense to enter into negotiations before the Central Powers had agreed on their own line. Burián only wanted his proposals of 18 October 1916 to be understood to the extent that they offered a clear framework for the Central Powers' own discussions. On this basis, the enemy powers would be given to understand that the Central Powers were entering the negotiations with clear-cut recommendations.<sup>1528</sup> This reflected the concern that was also familiar to the Bulgarians and Turks that the German Empire might conclude its peace at the expense of the others. Interestingly, the speculation in Berlin ran along similar lines: since Aus-



tria-Hungary was in fact not in conflict with Great Britain and France, it would be easy for the Danube Monarchy in particular to conclude a peace at Germany's expense.<sup>1529</sup>

During the negotiations that then took place within the German leadership as to what the war aims agreement might contain, the Austrian desire for a completely new regulation of the situation in the Balkans was accepted, in return for which Austria was to cede territories to Russia and Italy. However, when negotiations were held again in Berlin on 15 and 16 November, they categorically ended in complete disagreement. The German Empire was not interested in naming any specific war aims, and certainly not in concluding an agreement that was tantamount to a mutual guarantee that the territorial status quo would be maintained. Austria-Hungary wanted a long and detailed list of war aims and a mutual guarantee pledge between the Allies. Ultimately, Bulgaria and Turkey and their aims would also have to be taken into account. However, was it realistic to think that Austria-Hungary might guarantee Turkey the territorial status quo in Egypt, and in return to ask the High Porte to agree to make the retention of South Tyrol by Austria one of its own war aims? Once this point had been reached, the German Imperial Chancellor regarded it as more prudent to encourage the American President to take a step towards peace, since then, the dilemma of the war aims could be avoided.

For Austria-Hungary and for the German Empire, the death of Emperor Franz Joseph presented an opportunity for a new beginning. The hopes that had been placed in Berlin on an initiative by the American President were dashed, however, when Woodrow Wilson, who was re-elected on 7 November 1916, showed no inclination to take on the role of mediator and instead did quite the opposite by starting to apply pressure on the German Empire. The view was then that a step towards peace was not appropriate immediately following the death of Emperor Franz Joseph, since otherwise, the impression might be created that Emperor Karl was unwilling to continue the war. While this was indeed the case, it was not permitted to say it out loud. Finally, the decision was made to wait until Bucharest fell.

In principle, everything had turned in circles. There were no specifically agreed war aims. Altogether, the Turks and Bulgarians were only given the most general information. Under its new ruler, Austria-Hungary also attempted to reach a binding agreement with the German Empire regarding a solidarity pact. They were all staved off by Berlin. The Habsburg Monarchy received no agreement from Germany that Berlin was willing to obligate itself to securing Austria-Hungary's current borders, while for its part, Austria-Hungary by all means declared itself willing to give a corresponding assurance to Germany. In light of the fact that the German Empire had not forfeited territory anywhere, and that everywhere its troops had in fact penetrated deep into enemy territory, this was a very noncommittal offer, however. However, the German refusal was correctly interpreted in Vienna. Now, time was certainly running out. In

Russia, the successor to Prime Minister Stürmer, Alexander F. Trepov, had appeared before the Duma stating that final victory was of paramount importance. Russia had also been offered Constantinople and the Turkish Straits. In Great Britain, Prime Minister Asquith had been replaced by David Lloyd George, who sounded extremely determined. In the German Empire, the Navy Command threatened with an expansion of the submarine war. And news came from Washington that a peace initiative by the American President was imminent. If an independent step was indeed to be taken, action would have to be taken immediately. Now, every day counted.

On 12 December, following a final exchange of information, the peace note drafted by the Central Powers was transferred to the neutral protecting powers to be forwarded to the Entente and its allied states. The most important passage ran: 'Supported by their awareness of their military and economic strength and their readiness to continue the war (which has been forced upon them) to the bitter end, if necessary; at the same time, prompted by the desire to avoid further bloodshed and put an end to the atrocities of war, the four allied powers propose to enter forthwith into peace negotiations. The propositions which they bring forward for such negotiations, and which have for their object a guarantee of the existence, of the honour and liberty of evolution for their nations, are, according to their firm belief, an appropriate basis for the establishment of a lasting peace. [...] If, in spite of this offer of peace and reconciliation, the struggle should go on, the four allied powers are resolved to continue to a victorious end, but they solemnly disclaim responsibility for this before humanity and history.'<sup>1530</sup> This was not in fact a peace note; it was a blatant threat!

Ten days later, Count Burián was replaced as Foreign Minister by Count Ottokar Czernin. There were several factors at work here. Burián clearly did not enjoy the confidence of the new Emperor; as Karl put it, he was 'somewhat ossified'.<sup>1531</sup> The German Empire had applied strong pressure for his dismissal, and Czernin, whom Karl evidently expected to pursue an active foreign policy, was therefore to take over this most important ministry. He was conceivably willing to take on the role. There was another element, however. Emperor Karl was angered by the German refusal to sign a solidarity pact. And on the day after the negotiations on the subject had failed, he notified his brother-in-law, Sixtus Bourbon-Parma, that he wanted to meet for a face-to-face discussion. The arrangements were however to be made not by Tisza's representative, Burián, but by Czernin, who represented the Emperor.

The great disappointment for the illusionary peace policy, in which dreams were still nurtured of wide-reaching conquests, came at the beginning of 1917. On 5 January, the response of the Entente powers to the peace note issued by the Central Powers arrived in Washington, and from there, was communicated to the Quadruple Alliance.<sup>1532</sup> The war aims of the Entente included everything necessary to make it clear to the Central Powers their unbending will to continue the war. Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy,

Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russia and Serbia demanded punishment, reparations and pledges, the acknowledgement of the nationality principle and, specifically, 'the liberation of Italians, of Slavs, of Romanians and of Tchecho-Slovaques'. One could stumble over the pleonasm 'Slavs and Tchecho-Slovaques', which originated from the fact that Edvard Beneš had called for the phrase 'Tchecho-Slovaques' to be added into the response when it had almost been completed.<sup>1533</sup> However, it was clear anyway what was meant. The note not only destroyed hopes for negotiations. The intention and diction of the peace note issued by the Central Powers was also negated. The Entente and its allies also repudiated the idea of a defensive war that was formulated in the peace note. Germany and Austria-Hungary had wanted the war, and had elicited and declared it. Bulgaria and Turkey were not mentioned. The Allies stated 'that peace is impossible so long as the restoration of the violated rights and liberties, the acknowledgement of the principle of nationalities, and the free existence of small states are not guaranteed 'hat no peace is possible so long as the rights and freedoms that have been infringed are not reinstated, the nationalities principle is not recognised and the free existence of small states is not guaranteed, so long as no security is offered for regulation that is capable of finally removing the causes that have continuously threatened the peoples for such a long period of time, and which offers the only effective guarantees for security in the world '. Here, just as the Central Powers had done, they elected to use overblown note rhetoric. Over nine-tenths of the response related to the German Empire, and only brief passages dealt with Austria-Hungary. Nonetheless, the war aims of the Entente with regard to the Danube Monarchy had been specifically expressed for the first time. It was simultaneously the official notification that one of the Allies' war aims was the annihilation of the Habsburg Monarchy. And this carried far more weight than anything else that was stated over several paragraphs in relation to Germany and Belgium, for example.

The nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy that were addressed by the Entente reacted in varying ways. The chairman of the Croat-Slovenian Club in the House of Representatives, Anton Korošec, presented the Foreign Minister with a declaration, the subject of which was the 'duplicitous assurance by the Entente regarding the liberation of the Slavs in Austria', and the fact that the 'Croat-Slovenian people are now, as ever, firmly determined, in times of need and death, to remain devoted subjects of the House of Habsburg'. The Romanians declared that 'the Austrian Romanians are not ruled by a foreign power [...] and in traditional devotion remain loyal to the Dynasty and to their affiliation to the Imperial state.' The representatives of the Italians made similar statements, offering assurance that throughout the centuries, their 'legitimate representatives' had never made 'efforts towards separation'. The Czech Union found itself in the greatest difficulty, producing a series of draft texts that included a statement to the effect that the Emperor should honour the fact that the Czechs had pledged

an oath of allegiance by arranging for a coronation in Prague. Czernin was unable to accept any of the criticisms, and finally forwarded to the Czech Union a text that the Association itself had written, in which it was stated in rather convoluted terms that the 'Presidium of the Czech Union [rejects] the insinuation [of the Entente] that is founded on entirely false assumptions [...] and declares that the Czech people, now as always in the past and in the future, regards their future and the foundation for their development as being solely under the Habsburg sceptre'. The Czech Union accepted the text without demur, although clearly, a coronation of Karl in Prague was no longer under consideration. Even so, for Masaryk and the Czech émigrés, the reaction of the Czech Union was a severe blow.<sup>1534</sup>

Emperor Karl responded to the note from the Allies with an order to the army and fleet that spoke of the four empires that had been conquered by the Austro-Hungarian soldiers and their allies, with reference to Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and Belgium. 'In spite of all this, the enemy powers time and again pretend to their peoples and armies that there is hope that their fortunes will still change. Take courage; it lies in your power to continue with the iron reckoning. Filled with proud confidence in my armed forces, I stand here as your leader. Forwards with God!'

Now, the task was to calculate once again how the war could continue to be waged, how the losses among the armies could be compensated, and whether it would be possible to muster additional contingents. Conrad characterised the situation of the Monarchy at the beginning of 1917 by saying that: 'If the decision in the spring is not made in our favour, with the forces still available to us, we shall hardly be able to reckon any longer that a change will come about to our advantage.'<sup>1535</sup> Based on the figures from 1916, around 1.5 million men would have to be replaced. While Tisza claimed that this estimate was too high, since it was highly unlikely that a catastrophe such as the one at Olyka and Lutsk as a result of the Brusilov Offensive would occur again. However, for better or worse, it would have to be assumed for the time being that between 1.3 and 1.5 million men would be needed. Every feasible possibility for mustering soldiers was considered. In Hungary, attention had long since been drawn to the Roma and Sinti in this regard. It was claimed that they were becoming increasingly violent, and that they were above all exploiting the fact that the men were disappearing from the villages. The Hungarian Minister of the Interior, János von Sándor, therefore submitted an application 'for the Gypsies throughout the entire country to be made eligible', that those suitable for war service should be called up and the others left to work. Furthermore, in line with the stipulations of the Law on War Contributions, their draught animals and carts should be taken away from them. There were two goals that lay behind the measure. The Roma and Sinti were to be forced into becoming sedentary, and as such, would also be available as additional soldiers and manpower. The Hungarian Council of Ministers agreed to the proposal.<sup>1536</sup> Since more was required than simply offsetting

the men who had been lost, the principles of the Joint Supreme War Command were also applied when it came to providing people, and a new Landsturm (reserve forces) law was drafted by means of which 17-year-olds were also subject to enlistment for the Landsturm. Furthermore, compulsory service in the Landsturm was to expire not at the age of 50, but to still apply to 51 to 55-year-olds.<sup>1537</sup> Now, the last reserves were gradually being put to use.

### The Unrestricted Submarine War

The arrival of the response from the Entente powers and their allies had clearly marked the failure of the carefully constructed peace initiative by the Central Powers. Nonetheless, a further episode still followed. Since on 18 December 1916 the American President had pronounced his long-awaited message of peace in front of the Senate, and had invited the belligerents to make their aims known, the German Empire and Austria-Hungary were again presented with a challenge. What would they say to the Americans? Simply re-delivering Burián's list would probably not be an appropriate measure. For this reason, only a vague response was given to the American initiative. Since Zimmermann, the German Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, who had succeeded von Jagow, no longer had faith in the success of an independent measure, however, what he wanted most was a rapid clarification and, in this connection, an equally rapid decision regarding the start of the unrestricted submarine war while ignoring the rules of prize warfare. Finally, however, Berlin still conveyed to the Americans a list with highly moderate aims, albeit ones that related only to the German Empire.<sup>1538</sup> The Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) was only informed of this when the German envoy in Washington was already holding the relevant instructions in his hands. The German Empire had quite cold-bloodedly left its allies high and dry. At the same time, the definitive decision had been taken regarding the unrestricted submarine war, which was due to begin on 1 February 1917.

With the acceptance of American mediation in bringing about a peace and the dispatch of a moderate list of war aims, the Germans had made an attempt to avoid disrupting its relationship with the USA, despite the decision to initiate unrestricted submarine warfare. However, the USA did anything but acknowledge this trapeze act. On 3 February, the German envoy in Washington was presented with his passport. Diplomatic relations had been broken off.

Two days later, on 5 February 1917, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Czernin, arranged for a note to be handed to the American Secretary of State, Lansing, in which he expressly gave his support to the formula suggested by Wilson of a peace without victors or losers, and requested that the American President persuade

the governments of the Entente powers to accept this fundamental principle.<sup>1539</sup> The USA did not break off its relations with Austria-Hungary. However, this is probably less due to the fact that Czernin had been more amenable to the American proposals than Zimmermann, than that Austria-Hungary did not in fact wish to wage an unrestricted submarine war any more so than Turkey and Bulgaria. What was of interest in Czernin's note to the American Secretary of State was that the German government was only informed of it retrospectively. In light of the absence of a solidarity pact and despite mutual assurances to vouch for the territorial integrity of the empires, Berlin and Vienna had begun to go their own separate ways. However, while the German path brought a further escalation, and was possibly the step that led to the defeat of the Central Powers in the war, the Austrian leadership chose a different direction. And here, there was no doubt that the Emperor was leading the way.

What Czernin had communicated to Secretary of State Lansing was nothing other than the basic tenet of the meeting of the Privy Council on 12 January 1917.<sup>1540</sup> Under the chairmanship of Emperor Karl, the peace and war aims were discussed alongside the Polish question. Since the death of Franz Joseph, peace had most certainly been a subject of discussion. Two versions were addressed: a maximum and a minimum programme. For the latter, the Emperor only wanted to name Mount Lovćen, the massif to the south of the Bay of Kotor, as a territorial goal. Otherwise, however, efforts were to be made to preserve the integrity of the Monarchy and to bring about a dynastic change in Serbia. The others attending the meeting did not quite agree. With the exception of Count Czernin, they argued for more ambitious aims and in fact did nothing other than discuss Minister Burián's list. Then the Emperor again took the floor. The protocol of the Privy Council reads as follows: 'It then so pleased His Majesty to raise the issue of an alliance with Russia, which his Supreme Highness describes as highly desirable, in particular with regard to the evident impossibility of making an approach to the western powers or to disloyal Italy. Russia should be offered a part of Romania, and Turkey would be amenable on the issue of the Turkish Straits.' When the minimum and maximum programmes were again discussed, and the Chief of the General Staff, Field Marshal Conrad, was given the opportunity to speak, his response was blunt: it was pointless to establish such programmes, since it was not yet possible to say what could be achieved if peace were to be concluded. From a military perspective, a maximum programme would be permissible. When it came to Russia, Conrad's tone was downright coarse and lecturing: 'Russia is hardly likely to forfeit the two cardinal items of its foreign policy programme, namely the possession of Constantinople and the unification of all Slavs under its supremacy; however, according to Count Ignatev's statement, the road to Constantinople passes through Vienna and Budapest.' Finally, the Emperor closed the debate in an extremely strange manner: '[...] that the status quo should be maintained with regard to the Polish question, that our main war aim is

to preserve the integrity of the Monarchy, that Serbia must be assured of opportunities for its continued existence, and that finally, efforts should be made to approach Russia.' However, there was one final item that Karl could not fail to acknowledge: all members of the Council of Ministers had spoken out in favour of intensifying the submarine war, and wanted to see it waged not only in the Atlantic, but also in the Mediterranean. The Emperor had made no statement of his own on the matter, but had simply gathered opinions.

However, Karl and his Foreign Minister quite clearly shared a different view. On the same day, 12 January, Czernin sent a first *démarche* to Berlin, in which it was stipulated that the Danube Monarchy had the right to express its opinion when it came to the decision regarding the submarine war.<sup>1541</sup> The German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zimmermann, provided reassurance and was so adept at explaining the necessity of the intensified submarine war that the head of department sent to Berlin by Czernin, Flotow, was won over entirely to the German point of view. This was a re-enactment of the bluff theory that had played so great a role in the July Crisis of 1914. Now, the opinion was again that the Allies were not really serious. In fact the Entente powers had at that moment reached the limits of their options, it was claimed, since they were cut off from supplies from overseas. As a consequence of the unrestricted submarine war, Britain would lose 600,000 Gross Register Tonnage every month. This meant that it would be forced to capitulate within five or six months. In this case, the Americans would certainly arrive too late. The view in Berlin was that they were aware of this fact, as were the British. It was all a bluff. Flotow was impressed and convinced by the arguments. Czernin was 'receptive'. However, it was not only Czernin who had to be persuaded by the German argument, but also Emperor Karl. And he certainly did not share the view that the USA were only bluffing.

Subsequently, Zimmermann, the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the Chief of the German Admirals' Staff, Admiral Holtzendorff, the main proponent of the submarine war, was sent to Vienna. Karl refused to admit him to the court table. (There it was again: the matter in hand and the emotional response, the rationally comprehensible and the reflex reaction). Zimmermann and Holtzendorff had come to convince the Austrians. However, aside from the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Haus, no-one could really be persuaded. Now, the Supreme War Command again came into play, and for the first time under Emperor Karl in relation to an issue of substance. Since the supreme military bodies were unable to reach an agreement, with the Austro-Hungarian leadership against the submarine war and the Germans in favour of it, the decision lay in the hands of the two monarchs. If there was disagreement, Emperor Wilhelm II had the final say. Finally, Karl received Holtzendorff in a private audience. And here he learned that the issue of the submarine war could no longer be the subject of debate *per se*, since it had long since been decided on 9 January. Holtzendorff in-

formed the Emperor that the German Submarine Fleet had already departed with the new order, and that even if radio telegraphs were used, it would be impossible to inform it of a counter-order. The situation could hardly have gone more awry: the Emperor and King had been duped. Now, the only alternative was either to precipitate a major conflict with Germany by hindering the German submarines in the Mediterranean, or to comply.

And Austria complied. On 22 January 1917, the Privy Council also agreed to the participation by Austria-Hungary in the unrestricted submarine war. The Habsburg Monarchy complied not least because in light of the response note from the Entente to the peace initiative of the Central Powers and the intention expressed of destroying the Monarchy, a sense of helplessness had set in that left no room for hope. Thus, the continuation of the war was imbued with a very different meaning. If before the war and during the July Crisis of 1914, the reduction of the Danube Monarchy to its core territories had played a role, now, a prospect loomed that had far graver consequences: dissolution. And so, for better or worse, Austria-Hungary was forced to accede to the German move towards unrestricted submarine warfare. Also, the German arguments that only the total deployment of all forces and the ruthless use of human resources and material goods could enable the Central Powers to survive this war, and perhaps even to win it, were convincing. Czernin drew back to the position that he, as he told the Bavarian State Governor Count Hertling, who was also opposed to the submarine war, had no understanding of these 'technical matters'.<sup>1542</sup> He wanted to believe what Holtzendorff had told him, that the British could be forced to their knees within the space of five months. And what about the USA? If they entered the war, then the new approach would be directed against them, since the submarine war would then be waged against them with full force.

However, Holtzendorff's strongest argument had been that he claimed that the Entente powers were already waging an unrestricted naval war against Austria-Hungary. They were doing so directly and indirectly, he said, when they transported ammunition on passenger ships sailing under the flag of neutral countries, or by disregarding the rules of prize warfare. Overall, nine cases could be cited in which unarmed ships and even a hospital ship had been torpedoed by Allied submarines.<sup>1543</sup> However, in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, a situation had developed overall in which it was almost impossible to obtain an overview of what was happening.

Since Italy's entry into the war, the German Navy had increasingly brought submarines to the Adriatic, where it was able to use Austro-Hungarian port facilities as well as supply and escort services that the Dual Monarchy's naval forces were capable of providing. However, the Germans had given the naval war a new character. The Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean had become the preferred zone of operation for the German submarines. The naval war intensified visibly. Finally, the Imperial and



Royal Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Haus, began to adjust to the idea that this war might be of a longer duration and at last agreed to the construction of additional submarines. However, there were also difficulties here. Hungary objected to the programme of construction, which was anyway limited to just four boats, since Hungarian companies were not involved in building the boats. A solution was then found whereby the new boats were constructed in Pula (Pola) and Linz and assembled either in Pula or Rijeka (Fiume), ports that were at any rate considered to belong to Hungary. Austrian and Hungarian companies also competed with each other when within the scope of the extension of this programme of new construction, the types that had been built so far were abandoned in favour of German boats. In this way, six more submarines were produced.

However, it was also questionable whether these submarines, once they had been put into service, would succeed in crossing the Strait of Otranto and on into the Mediterranean. After all, one consequence of Italy's entry into the war was that the Strait of Otranto had become much more difficult to pass, and as a result of British and French blockade measures, it had become an exceedingly dangerous route.

The mingling of German and Austro-Hungarian submarines, which had already begun in 1915 when German boats began to fly Austrian flags while at the same time being subordinate to German command, resulted in the fact that Austria-Hungary was repeatedly called to account for incidents in which the Imperial and Royal Navy was almost never involved. After the sinking of the *Medusa* and the Italian armoured cruiser *Amalfi* in June and July 1915 respectively, the next incident of this type – as described earlier – was the sinking of the Italian steamer *Ancona*. The U 38 (under Valentiner) had officially been entered in the list of Imperial and Royal warships on 21 October 1915 and was flying the Austro-Hungarian flag. While Admiral Haus had immediately assumed responsibility for the sinking of the *Ancona*, this use of 'guest workers' was not without its problems. However, if one was inclined to uphold the fiction that Austro-Hungarian submarines were also operating in the Mediterranean, then this type of alliance warfare would perforce have to continue.<sup>1544</sup> The sinking of the *Ancona* had however also led to the loss of several American lives. The American government announced that international law had been violated, since the ship had not been treated as a prize, and not enough time had been given for passengers to leave the ship.<sup>1545</sup> The American Secretary of State, Lansing, dispatched a vehement letter of protest to Vienna. Count Burián was shocked. He had clearly had no idea how generously the German-Austrian agreements regarding naval warfare were being interpreted. The incident had enormous repercussions. The USA demanded that the submarine commander responsible be punished, and that compensation be paid for American citizens who had suffered injury or damage or had lost their lives. The affair dragged on, and numerous notes were exchanged before Foreign Minister Burián was able to provide even a more

detailed alternative account. It was not until 29 December 1915 that Burián could hand a note to the American Ambassador in Vienna, in which the incident was depicted in such a way that the *Ancona* had attempted to flee, that the lifeboats had been let down into the water, but that, clearly, the crew had abandoned the ship before the passengers. After about an hour, and in light of the fact that a steamer was travelling towards the *Ancona* at full speed, the *Ancona* had been torpedoed, but in such a way that it sank slowly, and allowing sufficient time for the passengers who had perhaps not yet been able to reach the lifeboats. The steamer had not sunk until a further 45 minutes had passed.<sup>1546</sup> However, Austria declared itself willing to pay compensation to the relatives of those American citizens who had died.

Scarcely had it seemed that this problem had been plausibly explained, when the next incidents occurred. As first publicised in January 1916, a ship belonging to the Standard Oil Company, the *Petrolite*, had been stopped by an Imperial and Royal submarine, and several shots had been fired. When the captain of the *Petrolite* came aboard the submarine and his papers were found to be in order, the captain of the submarine demanded that he sell him fresh meat and eggs. The Americans then delivered the goods requested without asking for payment. However, on their return to New Jersey, they informed the State Department about what had happened, describing the incident as an act of piracy. The Austrian portrayal of events was given no credibility, since most of the American media, as well as very many authorities and individuals, were against the Central Powers, and made no further attempt at differentiation.<sup>1547</sup> The matter dragged on over months.<sup>1548</sup> And once again, an incident occurred that highlighted the problems associated with the deception use of flags and identifications. On 30 December 1915, the U 38 under the command of Max Valentiner sank the British ocean liner *Persia* off the coast of Crete. 343 people died. Since the American Consul in Aden had been on board, in the USA, hostility towards the Central Powers reached new heights. However, Germany and Austria denied responsibility for the sinking of the *Persia*.<sup>1549</sup> Then a Russian freighter, the *Imperator*, was sunk close to the Spanish coast, and an American was injured. Ambassador Penfield was a constant visitor to the Foreign Ministry. He also complained that in Austria-Hungary's newspapers, criticism of the USA had intensified while the censors stood by and watched.<sup>1550</sup> Here, the fact was overlooked that conversely, almost all reports published in the USA were hostile to Austria-Hungary, and that organisations were freely permitted to be in favour of the destruction of the Monarchy.

However, the Allies had their equal share of problems, too, in differentiating between ships that were serving military purposes and those used to carry innocent civilians. During the course of 1916, a whole series of Austro-Hungarian ships were sunk, including the hospital ship *Electra* on 18 March 1916. Most of these ships, which were sunk by Italian and French submarines, were torpedoed without prior warning. In

Austria, it was noted with considerable bitterness that President Wilson did not take these incidents into account, probably because these ships were not carrying American citizens on board. From whichever perspective the unfolding of the naval war was seen, no-one could say that the state of affairs was entirely satisfactory.

Overall, only sixteen ships were sunk by Austro-Hungarian submarines throughout the course of 1916, most of which were in fact small coastal steamers or sailing vessels. This stood in clear contrast to the favourable balance of 1915, during which in the case of Italy alone, two armoured cruisers, one destroyer, three torpedo boats, and four submarines had been sunk. When the battleship *Benedetto Brin* was blown up in Brindisi and sabotage was suspected, the incident was considered to be the final straw. However, the Allies then appeared to gain the upper hand. It transpired that the Imperial and Royal Navy was not in a position to prevent the evacuation of the Serbian Army to Corfu. A raid on Durrës at the end of December 1915 almost ended in fiasco. The Allies got wind of the fact that German submarines were flying the Austrian flag. The blockade of the Strait of Otranto was promptly intensified in that with the aid of cutters, steel nets were let down to great depths, with the intention of preventing submarines from breaking out, or at least to make it significantly harder for them to do so. Immediately afterwards, in May 1916, the Imperial and Royal submarine U 6 became caught in a net and was lost. Although the naval forces of the Central Powers were able to book some successes in the Adriatic during the further course of the year, the result remained mixed, and the increasing effectiveness of the blockade of the Strait of Otranto gave the Austro-Hungarian Navy only very few opportunities to act, reducing its role to that of a coastal protection force. The loss by the Italians of the dreadnought *Leonardo da Vinci* in Taranto as the result of an explosion, the greatest loss of a warship throughout the course of the entire war, could be traced back to sabotage, but certainly not to an intervention by the Imperial and Royal Navy. The submarines failed to make any significant improvement to the balance. While they made a daring exploit and on 1 August 1916 had capsized the Italian submarine *Giacinto Pullino* and towed it to Pula, and could count the sinking of the auxiliary cruisers *Principe Umberto* and *Città di Messina* and the destroyer *Impetuoso* among their successes. For its part, the Imperial and Royal Navy lost two submarines during the course of 1916.

The Germans had been far more successful in this respect. Already by mid-1916, it was registered that the level of success of the German submarines in the Mediterranean in particular was extremely high, and that they were hindering the movement of Allied ships to a significant degree. When Italy declared war on the German Empire on 28 August 1916, it also no longer became necessary to sail German submarines under the Austro-Hungarian flag. However, Admiral Holtzendorff had one substantial argument on hand as to why it would still be favourable to sail the German submarines under the red-white-red flag. He claimed that if this practice were not continued, the Aus-

tro-Hungarian flag would disappear entirely from the Mediterranean.<sup>1551</sup> Furthermore, if at least some of the German boats were to continue to do so, it would be easier to conceal the number of German submarines. On 10 September 1916, therefore, six German submarines were officially added to the list of the Imperial and Royal Navy with a pre-dated note. Three other submarines were excluded, however.

The great German successes and the far lesser ones of the Imperial and Royal submarines naturally gave pause for thought, and played a role in the discussions surrounding the unrestricted submarine war. Perhaps it was also indeed not that simple to acknowledge the significance of unrestricted submarine warfare and to balance the number of successes against the political implications. Also, it was impossible to predict that the Germans would not keep to their promise of deploying over 40 submarines in the Mediterranean. However, as is frequently the case on such occasions, figures were suddenly being thrown about, and what was technically feasible was also presented as being possible to put into practice in everyday warfare. The politicians, who were loath to take a stance, suddenly withdrew from the debate, claiming that they were not specialists in the field, and purported to be unable to make any statements. Ultimately, they came to accept the idea, or agreed to it out of complete conviction. With the extension of the unrestricted submarine war to the Mediterranean, it was, with the exception of a narrow shipping lane along the African coast for use by the neutral countries, to become a maritime exclusion area in which torpedo attacks were made indiscriminately. From 1 February 1917 onwards, the war would of necessity assume a different nature.

Czernin refused to believe that this was the case, however. Since an American attempt at brokering peace between the major alliances had become obsolete, Emperor Karl turned to the Spanish Monarch, King Alfonso XIII, who was a distant relative. He was also happy to act as arbitrator. One difficulty was posed by the Spanish Prime Minister, Count Alvaro de Romañones. However, since he was known to be open to bribery, Czernin was prepared to buy him out if necessary. From now on, the formula that Austrian foreign policy was keen to put into effect under Czernin was consistently 'no victor and no loser'.<sup>1552</sup> The difference between this and the phrase being used simultaneously by Wilson was that by this, Czernin meant that Europe could be brought back approximately to the state of affairs that had existed before the unleashing of the war, while Wilson desired a new peace order, taking as its basis the dissolution of inter- and intrastate traditions in Europe.

The German government was anything but pleased with the new line taken by Austria. In particular, it was suspicious of the continuation of diplomatic links between the Danube Monarchy and the USA, which had even intensified, since precisely at the time when diplomatic relations were broken off between Washington and Berlin, Austria sent an ambassador, Count Tarnowski, to the USA, thus ending a state of affairs that had lasted fourteen months, in which Austria-Hungary was only represented by

a chargé d'affaires. The Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Zimmermann, then made three demands: Tarnowski was not to hand over his letter of appointment. Instead, the Habsburg Monarchy was to protest to Wilson that the USA were inciting hostility against the German Empire among the neutral countries. And finally, if war were to break out between the USA and the German Empire, Austria-Hungary was to recall its ambassador. Czernin was only willing to concede to this last demand.<sup>1553</sup>

The independent policy being pursued by the Danube Monarchy clearly made an impression on the government in Washington, since it now began to consider the possibility of the Entente making a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, and what was more, that Great Britain and France should take into consideration the fact that they had no causal conflict with the Habsburg Monarchy. The new British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, regarded the situation in a different light, however, and replied to the proposal, which was presented to him by the American ambassador in London, Nelson Page, that such a separate peace would strengthen Germany, since it would then lose the ever-increasing burden of Austria-Hungary. 'Deutschland wird mit der Last Österreich-Ungarns am Buckel wahrscheinlich früher aufgeben, als wenn Österreich aus dem Krieg ausscheidet.'<sup>1554</sup> However, Lloyd George came under pressure from the British military leadership, which regarded the prospect of a separate peace with Austria as highly appealing. The British Premier therefore agreed to talks with the Habsburg Monarchy, on condition that they would indeed be conducted in secret.<sup>1555</sup> The Americans then took soundings in Vienna. The American ambassador visited Czernin in his private apartment and assured him that if peace were agreed, the Entente would by no means adhere to its intention of separating Hungary and Bohemia from the Monarchy.<sup>1556</sup> However, this cryptic statement was not interpreted by Czernin to the effect that not a single word had been said with regard to the southern Slav and Italian parts of the Monarchy, and Galicia and the Polish problem were also left unmentioned. The Minister's interpretation of the initiative was fundamentally incorrect, since he was of the opinion that the American ambassador was acting on behalf of a war-weary Entente. Czernin then told him that the Danube Monarchy would only enter into peace negotiations jointly with its ally.<sup>1557</sup> The Minister had also received information from Russia that indicated that a dramatic development was taking place there. For this reason, a proposal aimed at establishing a two-thirds monarchy was no longer worthy of consideration. For all that, the question also arose of whether the Monarchy was in a position to simply exit the war. There were already severe supply shortages, and on the other hand, an immensely overheated war economy. Even so, Count Czernin refused to countenance any war-weariness. In his view, a radicalisation of a population oriented towards a peace with victory could however equally be used against its own leadership and against the Monarch. There could be civil war. How would the German Empire, or the army leadership, react? After all, in 1917, Hindenburg had stated that it would be

a thoroughly satisfactory end to his career if he 'were honoured with the command of the German Army when it entered Bohemia'.<sup>1558</sup> Would the Imperial and Royal troops also turn against Germany if necessary, and would they – as before – allow themselves to be used on the domestic front? It was impossible to find an answer to these questions. However, whatever was going to happen and whatever the war, which had become a part of everyday life, had disrupted: a surge towards greater polarisation and radicalisation was inevitable.

In March 1917, the discussions between the USA and Austria-Hungary had run out of steam. Between the end of January and March, Wilson had declined to give the Austrian ambassador the opportunity to hand over his letter of appointment. Public opinion in the USA measured Austria-Hungary and the German Empire by the same yardstick, particularly when the so-called 'Zimmermann dispatch' became public knowledge, which had been encrypted by the British intelligence service and immediately communicated to the Americans. In this dispatch, the German Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs had made promises to Mexico if it were to agree to an alliance with the German Empire and embroil the USA in a two-front war. Now, the American government was clear in its intention of immediately precipitating the war. The American ambassador in Vienna advised his compatriots to leave the Habsburg Monarchy. On 6 April, the USA declared war on Germany, but not on Austria-Hungary, to whom President Wilson conceded that while the latter was complicit in waging war with words against the USA, it was not doing so with actions. The American ambassador, Penfield, was 'recalled for debriefing purposes', as it was so elegantly put, while the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Washington, Tarnowski, received instructions on 6 April to notify the American government of the severance of diplomatic relations, while at the same time, however, referring to the fact that this was due solely to the alliance, and that it was hoped that following the restoration of peace, the traditional friendly relations could be resumed.<sup>1559</sup> These were very similar words to the ones that had been spoken at the beginning of August 1914.

### The Conrad Crisis

Emperor Karl's peace policy appeared to have reached a dead end. After several months of rule, he was forced to admit that almost nothing of what he had set out to achieve with such high ambition had been accomplished. Relations with the German Empire had developed in such a way that Austria-Hungary had become even more strongly bound up in the German conduct of war than it had been previously. In terms of domestic policy, no decisive breakthrough had been possible, and the foreign policy had failed, both with the 'peace note' and with the phrase 'peace without victors or losers'.

It could no longer be expected that Austria-Hungary would take important decisions on its own initiative. However, it was quite possible that the day would come when the Imperial and Royal Army would be involved as the last stabilising factor on the home front. This was one reason why Emperor Karl was keen to play a stronger role in the army leadership, and to redesign the Army High Command to make it more his own personal instrument. His goal was to take over the political and military leadership of the Monarchy himself. This tendency was so obvious that even at the turn of the year, in other words, after around a month on the throne, the autocratic inclinations of the Monarch were criticised.<sup>1560</sup> Josef Maria Baernreither called it 'suddenness' and he wrote that Emperor Karl reminded him of Kaiser Wilhelm.<sup>1561</sup> In turn, Redlich felt that Karl's inclination to bring the absolutist ruler to the fore was also influenced by the subservient nature of all the classes in Austria, which is why in 1917 the ideas of 1850 were coming into effect. And as was the case with neo-absolutism, the role of the army was paramount. For this reason, it was important to bring it firmly under control.

Karl had the Prime Minister of Austria that he wanted, he had the Minister of Foreign Affairs that he wanted, he was the Army Supreme Commander and had relegated Archduke Friedrich to the role of representative and mediator. For this reason, it is hardly necessary to stress that the time had passed in which the Army High Command wrote extensive memoranda on domestic and foreign policy issues. And the Emperor had issued instructions that the Army High Command was to be transferred to Baden near Vienna. There was one man who had put up resistance, and who continued to do so, and that was Conrad von Hötzendorf.

The Field Marshal had his reasons for doing so. To a certain degree, they were purely of a personal nature. He had no liking for the new Emperor – and this was well-known. What had been forgotten was that in the context of his conflict with Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which had broken out in 1913, he had spoken quite differently of Karl, and claimed that: 'He is a prince whom I [...] would serve with great pleasure.'<sup>1562</sup> However, he then came to regard him as an overseer ordered to monitor the work of the Army High Command and as an informer, viewed him as being utterly useless militarily and was, as a result, unwilling to offer him a higher level of command. What made matters even worse was that for religious reasons, Empress Zita nurtured a heartfelt dislike of Conrad's second wife Gina, and also felt that her presence in Cieszyn (Teschen) was a scandal. Conrad therefore understood Emperor Karl's instruction that wives and relatives of the Army High Command had nothing to lose from moving to Baden, as being directed quite openly against him personally. The Chief of the General Staff had put forward every argument possible against transferring the High Command to Baden, even the most banal. For example, he had let the Emperor know that a move away from Cieszyn would mean that all the telegraph connections would have to be re-established. In order to obtain the wire necessary for the purpose, he claimed, the production of the

barbed wire so essential for use at the front would have to be restricted.<sup>1563</sup> More subtle was that in the Operations Division of the Army High Command, intense planning was underway for the spring, and attempts were being made to interest the German Supreme Command in a major offensive against Italy. If this were to succeed, one could have argued that precisely during this important phase of the preparations for such an offensive, it would be necessary to avoid interrupting communications with the German Headquarters in Pszczyna (Pless).

But it was of no use: on 3 and 4 January 1917, the Army High Command was ordered to relocate to Baden and Bad Vöslau. The Operations Division was installed in a grammar school, however, while the Emperor set up accommodation in a villa on the main square in Baden. The Quartermaster Division was installed in Bad Vöslau. However, the disempowerment and metamorphosis of the Army High Command to become the exclusive instrument of the Emperor and King continued. First, Conrad lost his support in the Military Chancellery, since General Baron Bolfras, who was due to turn 80, requested to be relieved of his post. His successor, Major General Marterer, had repeatedly acted as Bolfras' deputy, and had not least been obliged to take on the less gratifying tasks of dismissing commanders and implementing disciplinary measures. However, Marterer had also been a fulcrum for all types of personnel and political intrigues, and he was certainly no supporter of the Army High Command. Theodor von Zeynek called him a 'hothouse plant of the Hofburg Palace'.<sup>1564</sup> On 8 February 1917, the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Haus, died of pneumonia, which he had caught during a cold overnight train journey from Pszczyna to Pula. This suddenly opened up this post for reappointment, and the man named as Haus' successor was Vice Admiral Maksimilijan Njegovan. On the same day, Karl created the post of 'Chief of Replacement Services for the Entire Armed Force', entrusting the role to the current Honvéd Minister, Baron Hazai. Conrad protested vehemently, causing Marterer, whom we also have to thank for an informative diary for 1917, to note '[...] that Conrad [feels] insulted in his godlike self-image'.<sup>1565</sup>

The next step was the removal of Archduke Friedrich from his post of Deputy Army Supreme Commander on 11 February 1917. The 'Archduke Friedrich Crisis', as Marterer termed it, had been brewing since January,<sup>1566</sup> or, rather, since 24 November 1916, when the Emperor had taken over the Army Supreme Command himself. According to the concept envisaged by the Military Chancellery, Friedrich was to become inspector of all replacement and new formations on the home front, yet this prospect did not appeal whatsoever to the Emperor and he promptly placed him at 'the disposal of the Supreme Commander'. Until the end of the war, Friedrich was only occasionally sent on tours of inspection.

Ultimately, there was still one change left to be made, and this was the most important one. The Emperor wished to remove Conrad from his post. One might have



thought that it would be no particularly difficult task to dismiss a Chief of the General Staff. However, there were also potentially unpleasant consequences. In Germany, Moltke, Falkenhayn and finally, Hindenburg, had been in office. However, due to the length of his period of service in this role, from 1906 to 1911, and again from 1912 to 1917, Conrad had become such an epitome of the genial military leader that his removal would surely have a very different signal effect. Everyone knew that he was responsible for the military leadership of this war. He had been the subject of more or less veiled criticism, which had indeed been extremely harsh: for his remoteness from the troops, his disregard of the number of casualties involved in his style of waging the war, his interventions in domestic policy, and even for his personal relations. Even so, when asked for example whether a change in the operational leadership would not be appropriate, Colonel Baronet Theodor von Zeynek, newly appointed by Emperor Karl in January as Chief of the Quartermaster Division, told the Monarch in his first audience, knowing full well that the Emperor wished to hear a different response, that any officer could be replaced with the exception of Conrad, who was 'the outstanding embodiment of leadership in Europe'.<sup>1567</sup> This statement reflects the excessive approval and respect in which Conrad was held by the mass of officers. The new Chief of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor, Marterer, was one of the few who knew no deference. He was keen to play his part in ensuring that the man with the 'godlike self-image' was replaced.<sup>1568</sup>

The Emperor had certainly taken into account the special regard in which Conrad was held, and had therefore saved his dismissal until last. First, everything else was to be reorganised along new lines. On 22 February, Marterer was called to the Emperor, who wished to discuss Conrad's removal. Karl complained to Marterer that he could no longer work with Conrad. 'He annoys him too much, does silly things, is one-sided and allows himself to be guided by those around him.'<sup>1569</sup> However, it was clear to him that it was not only Conrad's dismissal that was at issue, but also that a new Chief of the General Staff was needed. Marterer proposed Alfred Krauß, who had not only made a name for himself at Chief of Staff of the South-Western Front, but who also – like Conrad – was a politicising general. However, when Archduke Eugen was asked, he warned against Krauß, whom he considered to be very able, but equally disliked. As such, this would not necessarily have been a particular handicap for a Chief of the General Staff, although Krauß could certainly not be regarded as submissive. This was the more important point. Karl therefore opted for a man whom he knew from his role as Army Group Commander on the Romanian front, General Arthur Arz von Straussenburg. An apolitical, inconspicuous and above all, pliant man, he was to be Conrad's successor.

At this moment, the extent to which the high-ranking generals of Austria-Hungary had been used up in this war also became crystal clear. In 1914, there was still specula-

tion as to who could become Conrad's successor, and who possibly outdid him in terms of intellect and genius. Potiorek and Tersztyánsky had been at the top of the list. Where were they now? Krauß was unpopular and an 'obedient poodle', as Borojević called him. Of the army commanders serving at the beginning of the war, only Böhm-Ermolli had retained his post; Frank, Dankl, Auffenberg, Brudermann and Archduke Joseph Ferdinand had been dismissed, while others such as Pflanzer-Baltin had been relocated to posts in which they were not able to come into too much contact with the German Supreme Army Command. Major General Maximilian von Csicseric was a potential candidate, but he was a Hungarian, and the Chief of the General Staff was to be a German Austrian. This left only very few men. Hardly anyone had perhaps thought of Arz, who originally came from the Transylvanian city of Sibiu (Hermannstadt).

Contrary to misgivings, the entire procedure was completed without any particularly dramatic interludes. Conrad was informed by Archduke Friedrich, who had already been sidelined, that he himself was to be thrown out. Conrad then reported for an audience with the Emperor on 27 February, and requested permission to withdraw completely and not, as had been recommended to him, to take on Army Group 'Archduke Eugen'. The Emperor presented him with the Knight Grand Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa. Marterer noted that Conrad had been moved. However, he was merely observing decorum. Now, he steadfastly refused to take over the command in Tyrol. War Minister Baron Krobatin, who was sent to Conrad on behalf of the Emperor in order to persuade him to take command of the south-western front, was unsuccessful. Karl finally sent Marterer, who expressly presented Conrad with dynastic reasons, and outlined the effect that Conrad's appointment would surely have on the Italians. It was this argument that finally won Conrad round. The prospect of taking on a high command against the 'perfidious' Apennine state, and to begin a major offensive that had already been sketched out in general terms, in which the use of German troops in South Tyrol and at Tolmin (Tolmein) was also planned,<sup>1570</sup> was possibly the only thing that could still enthuse Conrad. And so, on 28 February 1917, he succumbed and agreed to what was required of him. The Emperor was relieved and heaped public praise on Conrad. However, Krauß, who had almost become Chief of the General Staff, was given command of an army group on the Russian front. Thus, with regard to the military also, the conditions had to a large extent been created that would remain binding for the final one-and-a-half years of the war.

It very quickly became clear, however, that Conrad's dismissal and the nomination of General Arz had changed more than simply switching a few faces. The 'second' Army High Command was, as the Chief of the Quartermaster Division, Colonel von Zeynek, wrote: 'so dependent on the German Supreme Army Command that it is no longer entirely free in making its decisions. This resulted in a fatalistic move in the supreme leadership, which was frequently described as a frivolity, and which damaged the repu-

tation of the Army High Command.<sup>1571</sup> Since a series of the most highly regarded and probably also best people from the old Army High Command had been removed at the same time as Conrad, including the Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Operations Division, Major General Metzger, it was no wonder that the new military leadership initially only gradually familiarised itself with its new role, and only very falteringly began to make its presence felt. No major offensives were being planned, and the one that had been intended for Italy, together with the German Empire, was rejected by Hindenburg on behalf of the Joint Supreme War Command.<sup>1572</sup> However, while discussions were being held as to how to continue fighting the war, in Russia, everything suddenly spun out of control.





**22 The Consequences of  
the Russian  
February Revolution**

22. The Russian February Revolution very quickly caused hopes to emerge in 1917 that the war was approaching an end. Russian soldiers crossed the front lines and attempted to fraternise, which was initially joyfully reciprocated but gradually prohibited. The Russian call to 'topple your bloodstained emperor' went unheeded. As early as June 1917, it was clear that the war would also be continued in the east.

## Strategic Harmony

After two-and-a-half years of war, the strategy of the belligerents was still intact, but the operational theories were repeatedly called into question. If at the beginning it had been believed that it would be possible to encircle field armies or even entire land armies in large-scale envelopment operations and force them in this way to surrender, then this method had failed in France and Russia. One failed envelopment operation was followed by another, until the fronts had widened to such a degree that it was no longer possible to discern a flank; on maps, only a continuous line was recognisable. By means of the corresponding massing of armed forces – which could be achieved as a result of what initially appeared to be an inexhaustible human reservoir – and with wire entanglements, field fortifications and machine guns, the fronts proved to be stable and largely invulnerable.<sup>1573</sup> In order to be able to carry out operations again, formulas were sought for the breakthrough. The most straightforward option seemed to be the massing of artillery. In Flanders and on the Isonzo River, but also in Russia, the large-scale concentration of artillery took place in order to destroy enemy positions and to achieve a breakthrough in this way. This succeeded only in Russia. The limited depth of the front and thrusts that built on the element of complete surprise had enabled a successful transition to a war of movement for the Central Powers at Gorlice–Tarnów and for the Russians at Lutsk. Both times, however, the offensives had petered out after a few weeks without the battle having been decided either way. Thus, aside from the Balkans, where the strategy of bringing down the enemy had been crowned with success, attrition had become a characteristic of the war. It was consciously applied at Verdun, but elsewhere it more or less merely occurred of its own accord – and with effect. In this way, all belligerents had been forced to accept a strategy of fatigue as the sole strategic foundation. The war consumed the people, the economy, a part of history and a part of the future.

With its blockade measures, Great Britain aimed at the paralysis and exhaustion of combatants and non-combatants alike. No questions were posed as to the humanity and legitimacy of such a strategy. The German Empire and, to a modest extent, Austria-Hungary attempted by means of the submarine war to provide relief and to decimate the Allied fleets. Here, as well, humanity and international law got caught under the wheels.

In the abstraction of the war theorists and strategists, the war in its absolute form not only drew closer but also emerged as that which Clausewitz and his interpreters

had described: a conflict where the aim was to impose one's own will on the other. The will to fight was supposed to be lastingly undermined and the military war, if it could not be decided directly at the front, was to be spun out in order to bring about a moral and material exhaustion. The enormous losses and the gigantic consumption of the armies, which drew on the most substantial part of the war economy, increasingly called into question the will to hold out. The total war 'aimed at the "psychological unity" of the states'.<sup>1574</sup>

The rejection of the Central Powers' peace note by the Entente and the description of the Allied war aims, which was vague but nonetheless emphatic, had made it clear that the Allies wanted to demand more than the Central Powers were prepared to grant them without being totally defeated. London, Paris, Rome and Petrograd took the view that those who favoured a compromise peace were only playing the German card.<sup>1575</sup> Such a peace was regarded with suspicion because it would ultimately have left German capabilities untouched, and it was believed that an empire such as Germany, with its autocratic structures, could sooner or later start another war. The contrast between the advocates of a negotiated peace and those who wanted to continue the war at all costs and strove for peace with victory, made it inescapably clear that both the Central Powers and the Allies continued to radicalise. The exponents of peace with victory could claim first and foremost that they still possessed a series of possibilities to extend the war and, above all, to stoke it at the periphery. The British and the French believed that they could succeed without further ado in bringing Greece into the war on their side; the Middle East could prove to be a theatre of war, and then there was always the hope that the USA would soon enter the fray. In their response to President Wilson's offer to mediate, the Entente powers had endeavoured to strike the right chord in the hope that it would have the desired effect on Wilson and to put forward those arguments that were designed to make sense precisely to the Americans. They informed the American President that they were waging war 'in order to liberate Europe from the brutal grip of Prussian militarism'. It was furthermore a question of liberating the Italians, the Slavs, the Romanians and the Czecho-Slovaks from foreign rule.<sup>1576</sup> Independently of this, the Russian Tsar again informed his troops of his war aims on 25 December 1916 by referring to Constantinople and the Turkish Straits and by holding out the prospect of a united Poland. The Russians and the French came to an understanding to the effect that the French would support Russia's territorial desires on the latter's western border, whilst the Russians likewise showed understanding for French demands for the Saarland.<sup>1577</sup>

The moment the Central Powers set about deploying Polish forces in the wake of their Polish Proclamation, the Allies did not want to wait to see whether this undertaking would actually be crowned with success. They began for their part to be on the lookout in prisoner camps and émigré circles for the purpose of establishing legions and



voluntary formations. There were enough Poles in France, as well as those who could be brought west via Russia, in order to bring into being a Polish legion in France. There were also enough Czechs who could at least be used in the fight against German troops. The Russians had hundreds of thousands of Czech prisoners and defectors at their disposal, and believed as early as the end of 1916 that they could predict that in the event of a clear victory for the Entente there would be an independent 'Czecho-Slovakia'. In order to prevent it falling into France's sphere of influence, it was intended to deploy a noteworthy Czecho-Slovakian legion in Russia as soon as possible. Thus, by the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, a start had been made, although both the steps of the Central Powers and those of the Allies aimed not only at formulating a policy and making their own standpoint clear, but also aspired above all to take the wind out of the sails of those who claimed that more decisive action needed to be taken.

When the Entente's answer to President Wilson became known, the War Surveillance Office in Vienna argued that this response could be published in Austrian and Hungarian newspapers without further ado, since everyone could discern from it that the Allies were not interested in peace.<sup>1578</sup> As it turned out, certain passages were then in fact left out.<sup>1579</sup>

### The Fall of the Tsar

In view of the balance of power, Great Britain and France felt very certain of the Allied cause. As early as November 1916, it had been decided at a conference of the Entente powers in Chantilly to go on the offensive again in February 1917. It was intended that subsequent conferences would persuade their allies, Italy and Russia, to strike at the same time. In Rome, a conference between 4 and 7 January 1917 concerned the question of the next Italian attack at the Isonzo River. Italy also wanted in this way to pre-empt a feared Austrian attack from Trentino or via Switzerland. At the beginning of February, a conference in Petrograd addressed the question of the timing of the Russian attack.<sup>1580</sup> The core problem seemed in this case to be the supplying of the Tsarist Army with guns and ammunition in view of the deteriorating performance of the Russian railways. It had to be asked, however, whether the Russians would even still be capable of attacking.

At the same time, reports grew stronger of a looming revolution in Russia. In Berlin and Vienna, and all the more so in London and Paris, it was assumed that there would be an imminent onset. When the revolution then broke out in mid-March (February in the Russian calendar), this initially appeared to merely confirm the reports. Just as it was impossible for the Entente powers to prevent a revolution, nothing had been undertaken on the part of the Central Powers to unleash a revolution or to prepare the terrain

by means of systematic underground activity. The notion of a deliberate revolution was actually integral to the war and had been floating around in the strategic concepts since the beginning of the conflict. Austria, for example, had already considered in 1914 unleashing revolts in the Arabian territories controlled by the British. Conversely, the Russians had given thought to revolutionising Galicia and, beyond that, the Slav territories of the Dual Monarchy. When, however, such things came up in the context of political concepts, it was a long way from the idea to its implementation. Ultimately, only very little of this was actually realised. It was all, furthermore, based on a completely different revolutionary concept than the upheaval in Russia, which was to create a new historical gauge. Rebellion, insurrection, revolt, nationalistic agitation with the aim of weakening the regime – all of this was typical. The French Revolution had created a new type, since France had erupted from within, turned the revolution outwards, believed that Napoleonic rule could only be secured by means of war and, finally, again achieved a new order by means of several restorative phases. For the European peacekeeping powers, revolution became a type of bogeyman and a swearword. For those who then struggled against the attempt to rigidly cling to the existing order not least for nationalistic reasons, revolution became a vehicle of protest. It could be repeatedly observed, however, that the new global order of states was almost always accompanied by wars and revolutions.

Perhaps revolution is too familiar to us today as a historical phenomenon for us to still be able to understand the cautious approach to the revolutionary semantics of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, everyone has their own private revolutions in the field of fashion, spiritual development, sport or any number of areas. Added to this are the diverse social and political upheavals, not least those of the year 1989, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, around 80 revolutions in the Arabian world and even the proclamations of permanent revolution, which no longer have anything to do with those sudden, fateful and intense changes in a state that are inherent in a historical concept of revolution.<sup>1581</sup> Only these changes, however, are to be defined as an element of the 'acceleration of history', just as cabinet wars or border disputes cannot be equated with the forces of the acceleration of historical events that ensued from the two World Wars of the 20th century. With the February Revolution in Russia, the oft-cited global change in 1917 began to clearly emerge.

The outbreak of revolution initially appeared to be merely a sign that supply catastrophes resulting from the war had also taken place elsewhere and that the people were no longer prepared to simply accept the war and its consequences. It was thus by no means a phenomenon that was unique to Austria-Hungary. Starvation, poverty and social inequality in a war that had already cost millions of victims in dead and wounded found its analogy on all sides.

In February 1917, however, war weariness in Russia had consolidated itself in such a way that already called into question a continuation of the war. The adversity allowed

an explosive, revolutionary mood to emerge. If there had been 183 strikes in 1914, most of them for economic reasons, the industrial actions and demonstrations escalated and became increasingly political. In 1915, there had been 1,946 strikes, in 1916 it was 2,306, in which around 1.7 million people already participated, and in the first weeks of 1917 there were 751 strikes, of which 412 already had a political background.<sup>1582</sup>

Along the entire Russian front, reports multiplied to the effect that the troops no longer obeyed orders as they had before, and that, for example, the VII Siberian Corps had refused to leave the trenches south-east of Ternopil (Tarnopol).<sup>1583</sup> The rear areas of the front and, above all, the cities suffered from enormous supply difficulties. Then desertion began. Thousands, tens of thousands of soldiers poured into the hinterland and into the territories and cities that were undersupplied as a result of the scarcity of foodstuffs and the collapse of the transportation system, and in turn increased the problems there.<sup>1584</sup> The deserters took a wave of violence with them to the rear. They knew that the penalty for desertion was death, and were prepared to fight back and to sell their life as dearly as possible. They furthermore transferred the feeling of the hopelessness of their struggle into the hinterland and the cities. The flame spread to the replacement personnel and to those who had scraped by with a particular type of military existence, namely the sailors in the Baltic Sea. They had been drafted at the beginning of the war, but since there had hardly been any naval war to speak of in the Baltic Sea, their service had only been characterised by drill, chicanery and, finally, poor provisions. Here, for the first time, we observe the phenomenon that the non-utilisation, the long idle periods and the fact of being enclosed on the ships in the ports had caused conditions to emerge in the navy that created a revolutionary climate like scarcely anything else. One year later, very similar phenomena could be observed in Kotor and, then, in Wilhelmshaven.<sup>1585</sup> The Russian Revolution originated as a revolution of the base zone and the hinterland, was communicated to the front and passed on from there in two directions: further to the rear, but also forwards to the enemy positions, those of the Germans as well as the Imperial and Royal troops.

At the beginning of March 1917, the workers in Petrograd went on strike. It was intended that the Petersburg garrison be deployed against them. The bulk of the soldiers refused to shoot at the demonstrating workers. The Speaker of the House in the State Duma, the Russian parliament, suggested to the Tsar that a new government be formed. The Tsar declined and wanted to adjourn the Duma. The Duma, however, established itself on a permanent basis. At this point, the Tsar departed from Petrograd and sought refuge in the headquarters of General Rusky, who commanded the northern front. On 15 March, the Tsar abdicated in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Michael, who shortly thereafter likewise passed over the throne. Under the leadership of Duke Georgy Lvov, a provisional government was formed, which, however, confirmed its alliance loyalty to the Entente and called for the fight against the 'reactionary' Cen-

tral Powers. But even the appeal to the Russian soldiers to oppose a possible advance of the Germans and the Austrians to Petrograd and far into the heart of Russia could not accomplish any change in the situation at the front and in the base zone.

At the front, the indications of the revolution on 15 March and in the days that followed were noticeable least of all. The war diaries of the Imperial and Royal divisions and corps contain corresponding entries only from 21 March onwards. They had been forewarned, however, since a report from their superior commanders had already reached the divisions on 15 March, according to which a 'military revolution' had taken place in Petrograd. Evidently, however, the Russian troops at the front were also without definite news for days on end. Deserters then related the unusual degree of unrest. Prisoners reported that a regimental commander had described the Tsar as a 'coward', since he had allegedly attempted to flee to Germany and was being pursued.<sup>1586</sup> During the days that followed, the news was circulated among the Russian soldiers to the effect that a type of president was ruling in Petrograd who had proclaimed equal rights and an alleviation of military penalties.<sup>1587</sup> Only in April 1917 did the information increase. For a period of time there was a ceasefire, and finally there was only routine harassment fire on the part of the artillery. In the positions of the Central Powers, shouts were heard and white and red rags were seen. They allowed for the conclusion that the revolution had spread to the front. Leaflets then appeared, and eventually it could be observed on numerous parts of the front that the Russians emerged from their trenches without weapons and attempted to fraternise with their opponents. This was often crowned with success, and at precisely these moments at least the Austro-Hungarian command authorities were aware that this was by all means a double-edged affair: the phenomena among the Russian troops, the waning of the will to fight and the signs of disintegration were naturally met with sympathy; the decomposition was to be encouraged for obvious reasons. Conversely, the fraternisation was nothing that would have imparted only a one-sided disgust with the war and a singular feeling of dismay. The matter was recognised as problematic at the moment when it became clear that those who wanted to fraternise were also pursuing the revolutionisation of the soldiers of the Central Powers.

Delegations of Russian soldiers travelled through no-man's-land and attempted to begin negotiations. They spoke of removing their officers and electing soldiers' councils. The government of Duke Lvov did seem to be a good thing to them, but it could not be allowed to continue the war. The soldiers no longer wanted to attack and proposed instead that the Germans and the Austrians also abandon the fight and begin a revolution themselves. In this way, the war could be ended very quickly. On 6 April 1917, therefore, the Austro-Hungarian army commanders issued orders that involved the rejection of all attempts at ingratiating. Such attempts were expected above all during the Easter holidays.<sup>1588</sup> However, since they wanted to give the Russians the opportunity to

revolutionise their own front, the Eastern Front High Command ordered on 13 April the curtailment of hostilities.<sup>1589</sup>

The picture was still not the same everywhere. Some Russian troop formations continued to behave in a hostile way, in spite of the restriction on combat operations mandated by the Central Powers. The artillery did not cease firing everywhere, especially where French, British and – as was claimed – Japanese soldiers operated the guns.<sup>1590</sup> This then led to Russian soldiers calling information across no-man's-land. They announced the identity of their troop bodies, shouted that they no longer wanted to shoot and had nothing in common with those who did not stop firing. If they were relieved, they would desert. There was raucous merriment and flags were waved repeatedly.<sup>1591</sup> The Germans distributed spirits and the Austrians likewise rum. 'The simple Russians thus associated peace with finally being able to booze.'<sup>1592</sup> The reduction of the longing for peace to mere alcohol consumption had a straightforward reason: the Russian soldiers (though not the officers!) had been prohibited since the start of the war to drink alcohol. The ban could never really be forced through at the front, but it at least resulted in making it more difficult to gain access to liquor. In the case of the soldiers in the hinterland, as with the civilian population, the abstention campaign was designed to promote thrift, diligence and a readiness to make sacrifices – and prevent rioting.<sup>1593</sup>

It simply could not yet be determined, however, whether and to what extent the Russian Revolution would have longer-term effects on the fighting capacity of the Russian Army. The German and Austro-Hungarian storm troopers along the entire eastern front were therefore commissioned with the task of clarifying matters by means of thrusts over the Russian lines.<sup>1594</sup> It was not possible, however, to obtain an entirely accurate picture. There were merely selective insights. But the conclusion was that the opportunity should be seized; therefore, the troops of the Central Powers attacked in some sections and were able to improve their positions without serious losses

As soon as the senior commanders and, above all, the Army Command recognised that what had been called – accurately and from the outset – a 'revolution' was not an isolated phenomenon on a few sections of the front, political and strategic considerations won the upper hand. The German Supreme Army Command ultimately prohibited large-scale operations, since the prospect of a separate peace with Russia, which had suddenly become a concrete possibility, was not to be endangered. German and Austro-Hungarian troops were only to respond to attacks on the part of the Russians.

What initially prevented an assessment of the revolution was the fact that it had not begun, for example, because the Russian Army had been on the verge of succumbing and then in view of a defeat, signs of disintegration and revolution had manifested themselves, as would later be the case, for example, in France and, ultimately, in Austria-Hungary and Germany. The Russian armies had been relatively successful in 1916, with the exception of the setback they had suffered in Romania. During the winter, it

had been possible to completely consolidate their situation. Weapons were available in entirely sufficient numbers, the Entente powers delivered war materials that were lacking, and the resumption of the offensive under the popular Brusilov had been planned for spring 1917. The purely military state of affairs in the war was thus not the cause of the revolution. And this was precisely the special thing about the situation.<sup>1595</sup>

It should now not only be asked why the February Revolution could not initially be accurately appraised by those who evidently became its beneficiaries. It should also be asked why these revolutionary discharges were not also communicated to the people in Austria-Hungary and, above all, the soldiers at the front in such a way that they were also carried away by the revolution. Not even a tightening of military discipline or other special disciplinary measures were necessary. The troops remained in the hands of their superiors and there was no desertion movement. There was a 'wait and see' attitude. The answer to the question as to why in the aftermath of the Russian February Revolution there were no notable effects on the troops of the Central Powers probably cannot be answered with a single sentence. A less inhumane leadership than the Russian one, a comparatively better supply with essential items, stronger confidence in victory and, above all, incomparably better conditions within the political structures of the hinterland all played a role. At least for Hungarian and German-Austrian troop bodies, neither the war aims nor the prerequisites for the respective personal contribution to the war had so decisively changed that the troops were a priori ready to be revolutionised. And it was precisely they who regarded the army as undefeated; indeed, the army had been able to report extraordinary victories in Romania. Furthermore, both for the field army and for the hinterland, the effects of the revolution were not foreseeable and they were thus primarily linked to the hope for a separate peace with Russia or to a general peace. Therefore, it was more or less with astonishment that people monitored what was taking place in an army with which they had been familiar for almost three years, or so they thought. It would be appropriate at this point to insert an observation from Viktor Frankl, who – in a psychological extension of Werner Heisenberg's theses – argued that the mere observation of a process leads to this process being influenced.<sup>1596</sup> This applied all the more in the case of a process in which one actively intervened.

### **Peace without Annexations and Contributions**

In view of the ongoing unclear situation, the Central Powers left it at the cessation of hostilities and only wanted to encourage in every way the decomposition of the Russian Army by means of propaganda measures, though at the same time to isolate their own troops as far as possible in order that they were not infected by the spirit of the

revolution. Wherever the Army High Command and the army commanders were not sure of their troops, all precautions were taken to prevent fraternisation. At Easter, on 15 April 1917, in spite of all precautionary measures, there was widespread fraternisation along the front. The Commander of the 7th Army, General von Kövess, reported on this: 'The Russians emerged in groups along the entire lines; they came with their officers, called across to us and waved white flags. At Sumarem, the Russian artillery then shot at its own people.'<sup>1597</sup> Germans and Austrians gave the Russians leaflets and proclamations to read. As a rule, however, officers were sent to the Russians who were supposed to speak with them and send them back to their own lines.

At the end of April, the German Supreme Army Command proposed the following guideline for conduct towards the Russians: it was to be suggested to the Russian soldiers that they demand from their commanders a three- to four-week-long ceasefire in order to be able to participate in elections. For their part, the Central Powers wanted to refrain from launching an offensive, even if the Russians stopped hostilities. The Russians were also to be told that they would not have to pay any war indemnities and that the Central Powers merely desired frontier revisions. The German Empire had Courland and Lithuania in mind here. Berlin argued that Austria-Hungary should also declare its wishes. But Emperor Karl decreed that the Habsburg Monarchy should inform the Russians that it demanded neither territories nor reparations.<sup>1598</sup>

The discipline of the Russian troops rapidly deteriorated. They could not overcome the contradiction that lay in the fact that, on the one hand, a democratisation of the army had begun and soldiers' councils been formed, which decided whether orders from military superiors should be obeyed or whether they contradicted the resolutions of the delegates to the workers' and soldiers' Soviets, which had not in fact yet been formulated, whereas, on the other hand, those whom the revolution had appointed as the new leaders demanded the continuation of the war. Most soldiers did not have a clue about democracy and the idea that was so controversially imparted to them was lost on them. The saluting of officers when off duty was dropped and the traditional address 'Your Highness' yielded to the simple 'Sir'. There was even less to eat, whilst the supply of weapons and ammunition came to a standstill for a period of time. Evidently, no more artillery ammunition was required. The abolition of the death penalty for desertion led to around a million Russians deserting.<sup>1599</sup> Only now did the most far-reaching measure come into effect, with which the German imperial leadership intervened in the Russian Revolution after all: from his exile in Zürich, Vladimir I. Ulyanov, known as 'Lenin', together with hundreds of emigrants, was brought to Russia by special train via Germany, Sweden and Finland. Lenin immediately intervened in the revolution. In the newspaper of the Bolsheviks, *Pravda*, he published his April Theses, ten points that argued, among other things, that the continuation of the war on the side of the Allies would constitute an unchanged participation in a predatory, imperial war.

Let us also take a look at the reactions to the February Revolution in other contexts. For one, there were the hundreds of prisoner of war camps in Russia, in which members of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces, as well as other camps, in which Germans were awaiting the end of the war. The news about the revolution also spread here like wildfire. On 16 March, the camp commanders were still very unsure as to the impact the events in Russia would have and how much they were permitted to tell the prisoners of war. But in the days that followed, special readings from newspapers began. Then, Russian soldiers also crossed the camps with music and red flags; they blended in among the prisoners and proclaimed: 'Now oust Wilhelm, just as we have ousted the Tsar, then no more blood will flow and we are brothers.'<sup>1600</sup>

Within political circles in the Danube Monarchy, it took time before the meaning of the events could be understood even to a limited extent. Redlich's first entry concerning the abdication of the Tsar and doubts about whether Russia would continue to bow to the wishes of the Entente was on 22 March. He wrote: 'There is still no clarification regarding the Russian Revolution. I find the matter similar to a huge repetition of the Decembrist revolt of 1825 [which, as we know, was an enormous error of judgement]. Is there a possibility to organise Russia on a liberal, democratic [and] parliamentary basis? The first determined senior general will be master of the situation: the question, however, is whether he will then bring the imperial family back to power.'<sup>1601</sup> On 25 March, Redlich wrote: 'The Russian Revolution is more puzzling than ever. [...] If a dictator has arisen, they will kiss his hands again. [...] In the meantime, everyone is waiting anxiously to see whether the army of Russia will soon disintegrate.'<sup>1602</sup> This was precisely the hope that very quickly flickered and electrified the people. 'Even in the otherwise so pessimistic Vienna, the political situation is now regarded as by and large more favourable', reported the Saxon envoy in Vienna, Alfred von Nostitz-Wallwitz.<sup>1603</sup> But it was only a flicker. Since at the same time the food crisis broke out in Austria-Hungary with all force, the hinterland very soon lost any interest in Russia. 'Under such circumstances, the mood in the broad strata of the population is worse than just depressed; it is frequently acrimonious', wrote the Saxon envoy a few weeks later.<sup>1604</sup> And Josef Redlich remarked on 16 April: 'I still do not believe there will be a good end to the Russian Revolution. But "up here", where we are, it's becoming very social democratic out of sheer fear.' Redlich could also already report on 24 April what was then confirmed in the memoirs of Ottokar Czernin, namely that the Foreign Minister wanted to win over the Social Democrat leaders Viktor Adler and Karl Renner to advocate a separate peace in talks with the Russian Social Democrats.<sup>1605</sup>

The Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, noted on 21 March: 'The revolution in Russia and the events there, which haven't entirely been clarified, engage our entire attention. The peace party wins ground in Russia on a daily basis.' Czernin saw the Russian Revolution as an opportunity to achieve a general



peace via a preliminary separate peace with Russia, and if the German Empire did not want to participate, then Austria-Hungary would seek a separate peace.<sup>1606</sup> Bethmann Hollweg had namely rejected Czernin's proposal that the Central Powers accept the Russian peace formula. This appeared to him to be entirely inappropriate, since if there was one standpoint that had begun to assert itself, above all within the German imperial government and the Supreme Army Command, then it was that the revolution in Russia was to be used for prying out an opponent without this changing anything about Germany's policy of peace with victory.

On the part of the German Empire, therefore, the revolutionisation of Russia was systematically pursued. Several people with military and political authority in Austria-Hungary argued the case for emphatically promoting the internal disintegration process in Russia from outside. Major General Alfred Krauß, for example, regarded it as a mistake and as a characteristic lack of understanding on the part of his superior command that he was initially not supposed to commence with propaganda in the area of his corps. His opinion was shared by many Imperial and Royal commanders. Emperor Karl was once more rather isolated with his stance. 'He feared', Glaise-Horstenau then wrote, 'that the work of disintegration that we looked for in the case of the Russians could turn into a boomerang that rebounds on us'.<sup>1607</sup> Contrary to some intentions, Austria, therefore, did nothing that would have been comparable to the German psychological warfare, and was ultimately not even sufficiently well informed to be able to influence German measures in any way worth mentioning.

Since the Army High Command had been relocated away from Cieszyn (Teschen) and the German Supreme Army Leadership had moved for its part from Pszczyna (Pleß) to Bad Kreuznach, information had become scarce. The south-west of Russia had in any case long since ceased to be an Austro-Hungarian theatre of war. The Austro-Hungarian troops deployed there were dependent primarily on the German Eastern Army and on the German Supreme Army Command. Both advocated that separate ceasefire negotiations be conducted directly at the front, section for section. In this way, the line to be taken was fixed for the time being.

The consequences of the bourgeois revolution in Russia naturally did not set in overnight, but the slogans gradually took hold, were varied and adapted, and also placed in relation to something that took place parallel to this process, namely the entry of the USA into the war. And with that we are once more back with our observation of the global change in 1917.

The war had now entered a phase in which decisions were in the offing that lay beyond the traditional politics of the European cabinets. But the reaction to this was actually the same everywhere: cluelessness. The toppling of a monarch and the revolutionisation of an empire that was admittedly ripe for revolution but only possessed a relatively small revolutionary potential, had to result in an enormous redistribution

of power and, for a time, in a power vacuum. The radical assertion of the concept of the nation state, as propagated by the USA, likewise possessed an explosive power that no-one could conceive of; for what was so simply called the self-determination of nations was an ideal-typical model, but not a reality. To this were added economic factors. When the USA determined on a severance of diplomatic relations and then on 6 April 1917 on a war against the German Empire, in this part of the Americas the war industry only began to move into gear and it opened up new dimensions of political and military power. Mentalities that partially ran contrary to the European mentality were pressed into ideal-typically formed agreements. The war had already previously had its theatres of war beyond Europe, but those were sites of exotic skirmishes, aside from the warfare of the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain and France raised troops in their extra-European territories and multiplied in this way their manpower resources many times over. The material foundations could also be controlled with the help of the colonies in such a way that the Entente powers did not collapse. With the entry of the USA into the war, however, an entire continent came into play by throwing its initially not yet appreciable value into the war. As a result, the First World War, as Richard Plaschka memorably stated, became 'in the form and depth of its impact the starting point of movements and developments that have traversed the image of the century'.<sup>1608</sup> It ultimately remained a European war, however, and appeared only to give proof of the usefulness of fifty and more years of imperialism. Disintegration, the departure from multinational statehood and revolutionary change in another sense than the French Revolution had intended, were further prominent aspects. Russia, however, stood on the threshold of a socio-economic experiment, though it was not yet known which forces would be set free here and which capacity for destruction could turn against its own people.

The revolution briefly marked up the inhibition level for mass killing. The fraternisation and the sudden realisation that a man in the trench was facing a creature that suffered just as he did, struck like a thunderbolt. But this applied for only a relatively brief moment. Then, everything was done to lower the inhibition level again and to wage the war to its end with the totality at one's disposal.

In the context of war and revolution, the very obvious 'what if' question has been asked: how would the Russian Revolution have developed if the revolution had spread to Germany and a government with a majority in the Reichstag (Imperial Diet) would have accepted a peace without annexations and contributions? Would there, after the February Revolution, even have been an October Revolution? We can extend these thoughts just as well to Austria-Hungary. If the movement that welled up in Russia, and of which Austria was not only aware but was also after a time relatively accurately informed by the newspapers on a daily basis, had had its equivalent in Austria – what would have happened then? In pursuing this counterfactual reading of history, however,

we cannot avoid observing that neither in the German Empire nor in Austria-Hungary was there a population at the time that was already receptive to the revolution. There was poverty and war weariness, but they had evidently not flourished so much that a danger of an assumption of revolutionary objectives really existed. And the speculation especially becomes hindered where it must be asked whether there would have been a majority in the Reichstag in Hungary and a majority in the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) in Austria that would not only have accepted a peace without annexations and contributions but also have forced this through.

The special nature of the effects of the February Revolution, however, could certainly also be found where the discussion revolved for the first time not only around the question of the continued existence of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, war aims and staying power, but also around whether a peace without annexations and contributions was even possible. If the Habsburg Monarchy crumbled during the simultaneous application of the right of nations to self-determination, then every single part was endangered wherever it had— on its own — to face the war aims of the enemy powers. The World War could be followed up by a sheer endless European war. It thus suddenly became clear that the parallel of the Russian Revolution and formulas found by the USA in the case of Austria-Hungary were almost identical and could have unforeseeable consequences. In the event of a consistent application of the right to self-determination, practically every nationality in the Dual Monarchy ran the risk of sinking into war and civil war. This affected Hungary in Transylvania, Slovakia and Croatia, Austria in South Tyrol and the Adriatic, the Czechs were affected in the Sudeten territories and in Silesia, the Poles in Ukraine, and so on. Was it not better to remain in an imperial federation that offered protection? For the time being, it could not yet be foreseen whether the American and the Russian formulas would mutually force themselves through or only one of the two. This was all the more reason for caution to be exercised; in fact, it should have been cause for alarm.

### **Workers of the world, unite!**

If there was cluelessness in the beginning and above all the question of influencing the events in Russia was considered a central military policy problem, after a few weeks the moment came in which the repercussions of the revolution for the Central Powers and especially Austria-Hungary dramatically increased and forced a completely different assessment of the revolution. This was no longer the case, however, where it had perhaps initially been expected and also feared, namely at the front, but instead in the hinterland. The famous proclamation of the Petrograd Workers' and Soldiers' Council from 27 March 'To the People of the Whole World' with the closing appeal 'Workers

of the world, unite!' had a gradual effect. The appeal, which was brought across the fronts as a leaflet and smuggled by the soldiers into the hinterland of the fronts of the Central Powers, contained passages that held an almost suggestive impact: 'We address ourselves to our brothers from the proletariat of the Austro-German coalition. [...] From the first days of the war, the attempt was made to convince you that your weapons, which you raise against Russia's arbitrary monarchy, protect Europe's culture from Asiatic despotism. Many of you saw therein the excuse for the support that you rendered the war. From now on, this excuse no longer applies: democratic Russia cannot be a threat to liberty and civilisation. [...] We challenge you: cast off the yoke of your semi-despotic state order, just as the Russian people have cast off the despotism of the Tsar; refuse to be a tool of annexation and violence [...] and with harmoniously united efforts we will put an end to the terrible carnage. [...] Workers of all countries! We give you our fraternal hand across mountains of brothers' corpses, across rivers of innocent blood and tears, across smoking ruins of cities and villages, across destroyed cultural treasures. We challenge you to the restoration and consolidation of international unity. It is the guarantee of our coming victories and [the] lasting liberation of humanity. [...] Workers of the world, unite!'

The signals that came from the Russian Revolution were still uneven, and they were varied. Their addressees were just as diverse, however. Thus, for the Poles, the revolution set signals that extended beyond the Two Emperors' Manifesto of 5 November 1916. On the same 27 March 1917 on which the appeal to the 'Comrades of the Proletariat and the Workers of all Countries' was issued, the Petrograd Workers' and Soldiers' Council directed a manifesto towards the Polish people, in which they were promised complete independence. The Soviets wished the Polish people success 'in the imminent struggle for the introduction of a democratic, republican system in independent Poland'.<sup>1609</sup> This concession was admittedly then retracted by the Provisional Government, but the signal had already been sent and received. And it was not limited to Poland.

In Hungary, the radical opposition forces around Oszkár Jászi and Mihály Károlyi voiced their views in March 1917 on the nationalities problem and condemned any oppression of nationalities. Jászi was also certain that the nationalities would orientate themselves on the Russian model.<sup>1610</sup>

Some of the Czech émigrés who were active in Russia were directly affected by the revolution. But the far more important Czech emigration movement in Great Britain also involved itself immediately. Masaryk had been pledged the support of a Czecho-Slovakian committee by the Tsarist government. Now Masaryk saw that the moment had come to achieve much more. He hoped to exert a stronger influence on the Czechs in Russian prisoner of war captivity. This should be seen not least in the context that Masaryk, like any other, had to ask himself what would happen if the Central Powers concluded a separate peace with Russia. Would the prisoners of war

then be sent home and serve to strengthen the other fronts? The announcement of the Provisional Government that it intended to continue the war on the side of the Entente apparently relieved the Allies of the concern regarding this development, but Masaryk wanted to be certain. He travelled to Russia and ultimately received permission to establish Czecho-Slovakian units. Masaryk himself was allowed to recruit in the prisoner of war camps. It turned out that initially only a tenth of the approximately 210,000 Czechs and Slovaks in captivity were prepared to join a Czech corps and fight against the Imperial and Royal and the German troops.<sup>1611</sup> The circumstance that some of them had deserted did not mean that they already wanted to shoot at their compatriots, and furthermore the revolution had not failed to have an impact on the Czechs and Slovaks.

In April, most of the senior commands of the Imperial and Royal troops were instructed to report to the Army High Command on 'social democratic symptoms as well as the influence of the Russian Revolution on the spirit of our troops'.<sup>1612</sup> The atmospheric picture put together thereafter mostly called the spirit 'very good', but it was by all means more nuanced. It would be most expedient, claimed the Organisational Group of the Army High Command, to send all the Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian and Czech troops to the south-western front and to substitute them with German, Hungarian, Polish and Italian troops. This had already been recommended before the Russian Revolution, however. The only army that had noticed anything at all was the Imperial and Royal 4th Army. The 2nd Infantry Division, which was subordinated to it, could not always be counted on 'with confidence'; the Ruthenians of Infantry Regiment No. 40 in particular boasted several socialists, 'who make themselves felt by their displeasure and reluctance to work'. The 13th Rifle Division was 'not fit due to inferior big city material (lots of Czechs) and [a] less capable officer corps'. The Army High Command did not consider this all that tragic and said that overall, the Russian Revolution had only exerted an influence to the effect 'that the hope of an imminent victorious peace was enhanced'.

On 2 May 1917, the Provisional Government was reshuffled. The idea of a separate peace was scrapped and the new War and Navy Minister, Alexander Kerensky, wanted to make the armed forces ready for action again in the shortest time possible. Desertion, refusal to follow orders and mutiny were to be punished with forced labour. Everything was done to consolidate discipline again and to furnish the officers with prestige and authority. Kerensky visited the troops at the front for weeks and attempted to convince them. He was also able to inspire and accomplished the feat of actually making the armies fit for action again. Finally, General Brusilov, the almost legendary victor of summer 1916, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. Now at the latest, it was clear that it would not be possible to simply pry Russia out of the front of the Allies, that propaganda only had a limited effect and that it was evidently only a

question of on which section of the front the war would resume. Here, the revolution already appeared to be over and the military day-to-day of war returned.

Attempts to boycott the war and to end it by means of a type of fraternisation were over, and it could certainly be understood as a threat what Russian soldiers then wrote on a wooden tablet and placed in front of the Imperial and Royal troops: 'Soldiers of the German and Austro-Hungarian Army! If you would like to take up peace negotiations, address our government, which comprises our best men. Act with honesty. Every attempt on your part to reach agreements with us will become a hard lesson for you: we will shoot! This is our last word! – We are ready to conclude peace if you accomplish the same great deed that has been achieved here: topple your bloodstained Emperor, the author of all the bloodshed, and we are ready to conclude peace! The Russian soldiers.'<sup>1613</sup>

The willingness of the Provisional Government to continue the war could not mean anything more for Russia than the end of the first phase of the revolution, nor was the resumption of the war tantamount to the impact of the revolution on the Central Powers being over. A spell had been broken. The argumentation of the Entente and the USA that the war had now become a war of democracies against autocracies fell somewhat short, but the argument could also not simply be swept aside; instead, it gradually took effect. It could, above all, not be overlooked that the qualification that had applied since 1914 was no longer valid, namely that Russia was governed autocratically and restricted civil liberties to a far greater extent than, for example, Austria-Hungary. It was no longer Russia that appeared to be the stronghold of repression, but Austria. It was, therefore, imperative to react to the February Revolution with domestic policy measures. The attempts to make peace also received a different accent. They became more independent, since ultimately the threat to the existence of the Habsburg Monarchy was also something that had no equivalent.

This altered situation was expressed in a very informative report by the new German ambassador in Vienna, Count Botho von Wedel. On 15 April, he reported to the German Imperial Chancellor in Berlin: 'Ich habe in Deutschland oft sagen gehört, Österreich sei von uns vollständig abhängig; ob es wolle oder nicht, es habe uns zu folgen und zu gehorchen. Das war früher zutreffend. Doch wer glaubt, das wäre auch heute noch so, verkennt die Situation.'<sup>1614</sup> In Austria, he continued, the tendency towards peace was increasing considerably, and indeed peace with or without the German Empire, linked with an almost 'pathological' fear of German domination.<sup>1615</sup> In Vienna – as the outgoing American chargé d'affaires Joseph Clark Grew recounted – a type of witticism was being circulated in March 1917: it would take five years before the Germans would again be allowed to travel to France, ten years before they would again be allowed into England, and twenty years before they are again let into Austria.<sup>1616</sup>

The German leadership had to struggle with a double problem. It continued to attempt to pry Russia out of the front of opponents, whilst on the other hand, it could not afford to simultaneously lose Austria-Hungary for the continuation of the war. German criticism of Austria-Hungary's willingness to make peace was so strong and so widespread that at the beginning of May 1917 the War Surveillance Office eventually stopped German newspapers from being sent to Austria and ordered an intensified censorship of letters for post leaving the German Empire.<sup>1617</sup> Berlin was not only alarmed by the open attempts to make peace but perhaps even more so by the changes in Austrian domestic policy. It was there that the dramatic effects of the February Revolution could be felt most strongly.

An imperial edict from 12 March had demanded the speedy meeting of parliament.<sup>1618</sup> This expression of the imperial will occurred almost simultaneously with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and was, therefore, not a consequence of the latter. The parallel events in Russia brought forth their consequences almost instantly.

### The Reopening of the Reichsrat

Until March 1917 there had repeatedly been plans for an octroi on the constitution for the Austrian half of the Empire; the plans were even on file, already worked out. Suddenly, however, all relevant considerations became obsolete. Since the autocracy in Russia had for the time being come to an end in such dramatic circumstances, it was almost unthinkable to apply such a measure by force. It would have been met by the strongest resistance from practically all non-German parties, but also among German Austrian parliamentarians, who were urgently needed in a completely different context. This applied above all to the Social Democrats. Adler and Renner wanted to lend themselves to contact with the Russian Social Democrats only if the government abandoned its plans for an octroi. Czernin promised this and wanted to win over the Emperor for a corresponding decision.<sup>1619</sup>

It was not only the Foreign Minister, however, who evinced an altered stance in the negotiations with the leaders of the Social Democrats. The same thing could also be observed in others, since with the end of tsarism an eminent bogeyman had fallen away for the Social Democrats, as was well-known. With regard to tsarist despotism, the Social Democrats had backed the war up to this point. Now, however, this important incentive ceased to exist. The Tsar had been removed and Russia, or so it seemed, was on the path to democracy. And now it had to be asked whether the party truce could be maintained in the event of a continuation of the war in the east. There was also another specific problem: before the Austrian Reichsrat met, the trial of Friedrich Adler was due to begin.

Perhaps too much importance had been attached to the question of the octroi, since it turned out that this question only played a marginal role for the non-German nationalities. What did it now matter for those who were prepared to fundamentally reject the Monarchy, whether Bohemia was divided into districts, Galicia and Dalmatia were removed from the Austrian half of the Empire or the Emperor swore an oath on the imposed constitution? There were now bigger things at stake.

From March 1917, first of all orderlies, then transportation personnel, and finally workmen and cleaners had come into the Reichsrat building on Vienna's 'Parlamentsring', in order to relocate the military hospital that was situated here and to arrange the building once more for the parliament of the Austrian half of the Empire. The clubs moved into their meeting rooms and prepared themselves for the first session. For many of them, it was to be a day of reckoning. Instead of a possible 516 deputies, however, only 421 were able to come. They – all of them men – could only invoke the parliamentary seat that they had received before the war, but they were very well aware of the mood among the nationalities and the social classes. And, as far as was necessary, the last grain of uncertainty was glossed over by radicality.

First of all, the resolution on the reconvention of the Reichsrat had exerted an electrifying and, for some, also an alarming effect. The latter had been the case, for example, for the Czech émigré organisations, since they had lost an almost stereotypical argument that they had used for years. But the émigré movement recovered itself just as quickly as it had briefly lost its orientation. Masaryk and Beneš recalled the Czech deputies from their exile in London; they were to resort to the method of rejecting the budget and the funds necessary for waging the war. Not all deputies were permitted to return to the Reichsrat; the radicals, at least, were to stay away. If the Emperor intended to swear an oath on the constitution, it was not to be acknowledged. Instead, the 'historical rights' of the Czechs were to be demanded. Similar sentiments could be read in a 'Manifesto of Writers', which was published on 17 May and signed by 222 Czechs.<sup>1620</sup>

It was less this call for non-compliance that influenced the parties in Bohemia and Moravia that were united in the Czech Union. And it was also not the influence of émigré organisations and Entente policies that was to then find its expression in the preparation for the first Reichsrat session. It was the questions that had merely been pent up and had increased during the course of the war. Questions relating to the octroi were no longer of interest. It was also automatically accepted that the Emperor – on the recommendation of the Clam-Martinić government – did not intend to swear an oath on the constitution. The Cabinet had claimed that the Emperor could not be expected 'to swear an oath to a constitution that has proven to be useless and indeed in view of the impossibility of altering and improving it in a constitutional way'.<sup>1621</sup> Karl left it at that. Other things also did not develop as they had been envisaged and prepared for. The radicals' renunciation of the state was not yet definitive, but they were well on their way to this.



The radical programme ultimately played no role in the Czechs' preparation for the meeting of the Reichsrat. Instead of resorting to the detailed presentation of the established rights of the Bohemians and Moravians, it was finally decided to attack dualism head-on on 30 May 1917, the day on which the suspension of parliament after more than three years was to come to an end. It had been created, they claimed, for the purpose of oppressing the peoples. The transformation of the 'Habsburg-Lorraine Monarchy into a federal state of free and equal national states', based on the free right of nations to self-determination, was to be demanded.<sup>1622</sup> The Czech Union did not yet want to go so far as to demand the dissolution of the Empire, as the radicals had done in agreement with the émigrés, but whatever was to be said in the speeches had to sound threatening enough, at least for those who believed in the state as a whole.

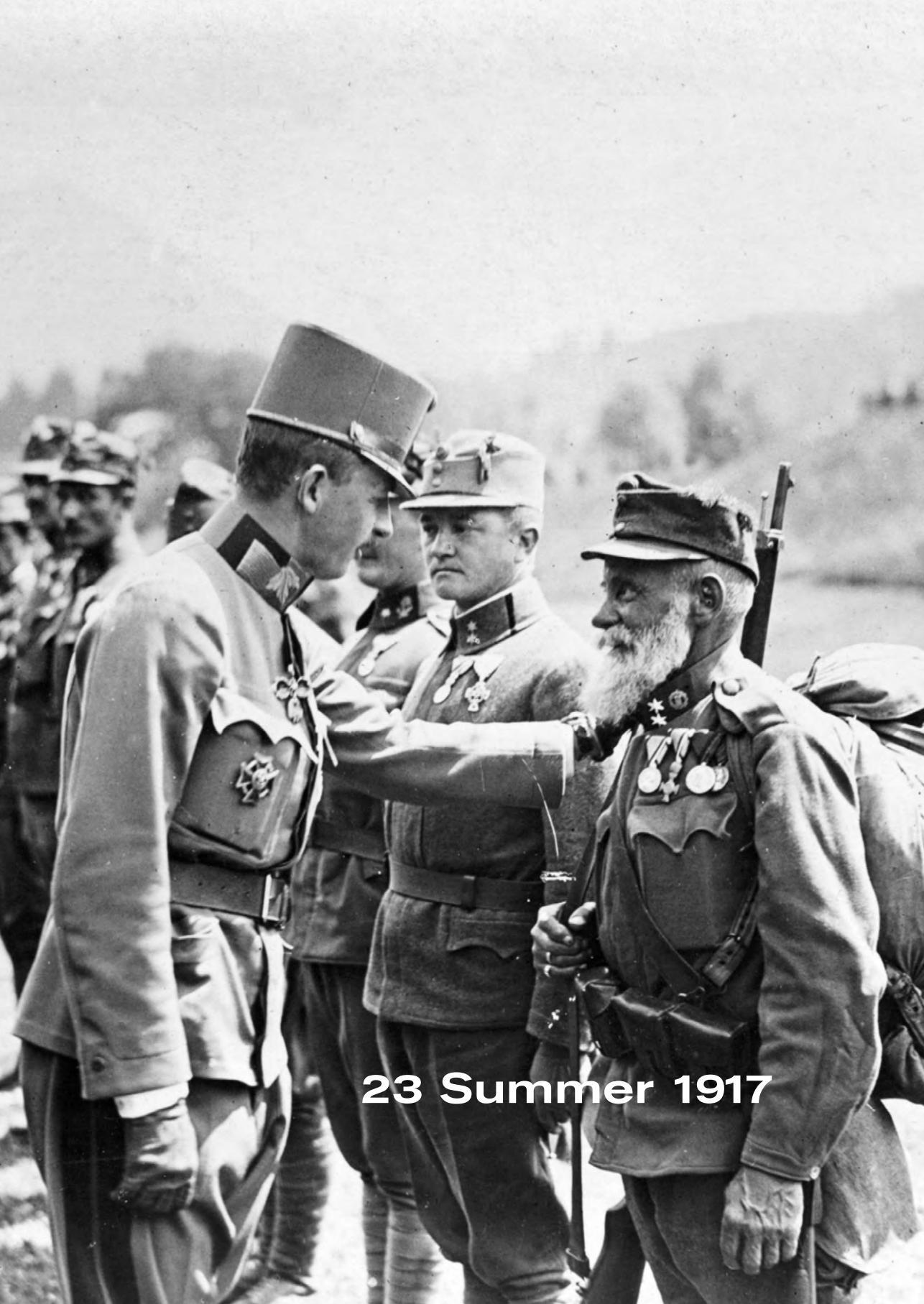
The southern Slav deputies also wanted to take the national principle as their starting point and demand in the Reichsrat the unification of all territories of the Dual Monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in a state body constructed on democratic foundations under the sceptre of the ruling dynasty.<sup>1623</sup> Ruthenians and Ukrainians made it clear that they wanted to break away from Polish Galicia. The Poles, however, spoke of a united and independent Poland and ultimately addressed something that affected them like no other country: none of the crown lands had suffered even remotely as much as Galicia. The Poles, therefore, wanted to demand the re-establishment of the civil administration, urgent economic measures and 'moral compensation for the evaluation and condemnation of conditions in Galicia as well as those of the Poles in Galicia during the war'.<sup>1624</sup> Everything was summarised in this list for which above all the Army High Command could be blamed. Now, individual cases were no longer examined but instead blanket judgements were made, just as the Army High Command had done: the extension of the war zone, the summary courts-martial and the military governors had all been wrong, and now reparations were demanded for them. Others also complained about the military authorities and had just cause to do so. The action taken against deputies who had been treated vexatiously and arrested was mentioned, as were the caprice and the cruelties. It was above all the case of their colleague Cesare Battisti that rankled with the Italian deputies. Like other prominent Italians, he had fled to Italy in 1915 and had enlisted in the Italian Army. Battisti had been taken prisoner at the beginning of July 1916, convicted a few days later of high treason and garrotted.<sup>1625</sup>

The German parties, which had just as much reason to complain, because arbitrary acts had also been committed against their deputies, generally saw themselves forced on to the defensive. They encountered Czech attempts to threaten millions of Sudeten Germans as well as the efforts of the southern Slavs and the Italians.

And there were repeated references to the Russian Revolution. It was suited more than any other event of the previous months to be taken as a benchmark and a model.

It was again the Czechs who most clearly gave expression to it. According to the deputy Kalina: 'The Bohemian nation welcomes with boundless admiration and enthusiasm this great victory of the fraternal people, which has liberated the whole of Eastern Europe with one titanic blow.'<sup>1626</sup> If in the days before 30 May 1917 an adherence to the Empire had still been noticeable, this threatened to be lost within the space of a few hours. A number of things that had been prepared without notable radicality for the opening speeches were devalued by the explanations and justifications issued by degrees as well as by the simultaneous verbal contributions.<sup>1627</sup> Only hours before the meeting of the Reichsrat, the Saxon envoy in Vienna, Alfred von Nostitz, summarised the situation in Austria as follows: 'The Germans [of Austria], who aim to alienate everyone that gets in their way, have made an enemy of all other nationalities. [...] The passions of the Czechs are more aroused than ever, on the one hand because of events in Russia and on the other hand as a result of the intentions for an octroi, which have become known, even if they were not carried through, and the intended trials for high treason against their Bohemian leaders. The Poles, for their part, are upset because their special demands, which are by the way very dangerous for the Monarchy [...], are not to be satisfied [...] [and] furthermore due to the multiple blunders of the Austrian military administration in Galicia. The Ruthenians, on the other hand, feel abandoned by the government to the Poles, the Romanians and southern Slavs partially sympathise with foreign countries, and this applies all the more to the Italians. And this glowering sea is confronted by Count Clam-Martinic with his Cabinet. [...] he [is] also not free of the amateurism that clings to more or less all the leading personalities of the new regime – including His Most Supreme Highness himself.'<sup>1628</sup>

It was not in 1918 that the nations began to turn away from the Habsburg Monarchy, but already at the end of May 1917. Here it was not questions of equitable self-determination that were important, as Viktor Adler also still wanted and let it be known, but merely questions of real power relations. The demands that were made were completely irreconcilable with the preservation of the Empire. As the Petrograd Workers' and Soldiers' Council had formulated it: 'We maintain that the time has come [...] for the peoples to take the decision over war and peace in their own hands.' This now also applied to Austria-Hungary.



23 Summer 1917

23. Emperor Karl during a visit to a 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles' regiment on the Tyrolean front, 1917. The Emperor and King frequently visited the troops at the fronts, particularly in the south-west. It was partly this that made him popular, not least among the soldiers, and his popularity only began to wane in the summer of 1918. The approachability of the Monarch also contrasted strongly with the war years under Emperor Franz Joseph.

**O**n 30 May 1917, the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) met again for the first time since 1914. To set the mood, as it were, the representatives were given registers of all emergency decrees that had been passed since 1914: 198 in total.<sup>1629</sup> This was followed by the formal opening in the Reichsrat chamber of the Viennese parliament, and the first requests to speak. On the following day, the Emperor's speech from the throne was read out. The words that the Monarch had selected for the occasion, and which had been elaborated by the Austrian government, had however been formulated before the Reichsrat reconvened. For this reason, they made no single reference to the statements made by the representatives in the Reichsrat on the previous day.<sup>1630</sup> The formulations by the Emperor, which had been expected to provide an insight into how the Empire would be reorganised, were oracular, and even worse: they were vacuous. The Emperor summoned the representatives to work with him to create the conditions needed 'in order within the framework of the unit of the state and with the secure assurance of its functions, also provide room for the free national and cultural development of the peoples who are equal before the law'. These were at best platitudes, and on this 'day afterwards', they were also wrong. They had been written by a Cabinet that was already finished after just five months, since the Austrian government under Prime Minister Clam-Martinić was facing failure. It was however certainly also in a position to claim successes, but this was of no interest to the representatives, who instead took him to account for everything at once.

### **Clam-Martinić Faces Defeat**

Since the suspension of the Reichsrat in March 1914, and its closure on 25 July 1914, democratically passed laws had been replaced solely by imperial decrees. An act by the government granted the governors of the Austrian half of the Empire the authority to suspend basic rights and issue emergency decrees. With the aid of the emergency regulations legislation (Art. 14 of the state constitution of 1867), Count Stürgkh had passed a further, second emergency regulation act, which was used to issue 510 decrees on the control of the economy.<sup>1631</sup> In 1915, the area of authority of the jury courts was suspended, freeing the way for example to immediately arrange hearings in military courts in cases of high treason. Kramář, too, was initially sentenced to death before a military court. From the documents that had been presented to the House of Repre-

sentatives, and from which the abundance and scale of the emergency decrees emerged, it was not difficult to determine how far the authoritarian approach had interfered in the life of every individual. Thus, grist was added to the mills of the various national associations and, in particular, of the radicals. Clam-Martinić was in this way also made accountable for the measures taken by his predecessor. Furthermore, he was exposed to the severe criticism from all those who had been angered by his own measures for the elaboration of dualism.

The first great task undertaken by the Austrian Cabinet was the Compromise with Hungary. While it was not due to expire until 31 December 1917, the opportunity of an economic union with the German Empire had led to the initiation of negotiations as early as 1915. Austria wanted to conclude a new Compromise agreement not for ten years – as had been the case until then – but for at least 20, and if possible, for 30 years, and convert the ‘Monarchy subject to cancellation’ into a ‘joint stock company’. In this respect, Hungary was keen to secure long-term advantages for itself. While a great deal of progress had been made prior to the murder of Count Stürgkh, there was still much that needed to be finalised. For Prime Minister Koerber, the Austrian concessions had gone too far, and he pushed through new negotiations. When, finally, Clam-Martinić had become Prime Minister, the process began again from the beginning. On the Austrian side, it was above all the indisposed Prime Minister Alexander Spitzmüller<sup>1632</sup> who now as Imperial-Royal Finance Minister led the negotiations and finally achieved a solution in the most difficult area, the issue of quotas. It was agreed with Hungary that the contributions made by the two halves of the Empire should be altered within a period of twenty years from 63.6:36.4 to a ratio of 65.6:34.4, with the increase of the burden to be borne by Austria. New negotiations were planned should there be any territorial changes. However, Hungary had also made substantial concessions, particularly in that it waived internal customs duties and compensatory charges. This agreement had been signed on 24 February 1917.<sup>1633</sup> However, the Compromise not only had its detractors in both halves of the Empire (in Hungary even more so than in Austria): since the Compromise could not come into effect until a deal was signed with the German Empire regarding trade, finances and transport, it did not initially come into force. In fact, it would never come into force again.

In the declaration by the Clam-Martinić government, however, it was not only the Compromise with Hungary that was listed as an urgent problem, but also the establishment of constitutionality. The key problem areas were Galicia, Bohemia and Moravia. A national political model was developed ‘relating to the general state language of communication, then the regional language and the commonly used regional languages in Austria’.<sup>1634</sup> The German language was to be specified as the official state language of communication. For Bohemia, language areas were planned, with German, Czech and mixed language zones. The drawback, however, was that no Czech had officially been

involved in the negotiations. After that, the Polish problem demanded attention. The Polish Club had developed a draft plan for the status of Galicia, which was designed to correspond roughly to the Hungarian Compromise. During the negotiations, which were conducted between the individual national groups of Galicia and the member of the Polish Government, the Minister without Portfolio, Michael Bobrzyński, however, there was a hardening of positions on both sides following the Russian Revolution. The formula of the right to self-determination for the peoples and the prospect of a Greater Polish Empire caused the willingness to make concessions on the Polish side to evaporate. The talks ran into the sand.

For a while, it had been considered by Imperial-Royal prime ministers whether an octroi should not be used to at least push through the use of German as the language of communication and a division into language areas for Bohemia. However, Emperor Karl let it be known to the Prime Minister that an octroi was out of the question. Even if the Emperor had also not confirmed the constitution, he said, he also regarded unconfirmed obligations with too much respect than to override them to the benefit of a national group.<sup>1635</sup> This rejection came when everything had already been worked through and prepared. Count Czernin had in all likelihood also influenced the deliberations of the Emperor. In light of the rejection by the Social Democrats of all matters related to an octroi and because, on the other hand, he needed 'those on the left' for talks with the Russian Social Democrats, the Foreign Minister had advised against compulsory decrees. Now, Clam-Martinic had no further options left available. He also no longer knew where he should take action at the same time, and since he was unable to delegate and took on too many routine tasks, there were not enough days left. On 15 April 1917, Clam-Martinic tendered his resignation. The Emperor refused the demission, and is said to have claimed that the resignation would be of no benefit, since he would immediately nominate Clam-Martinic again as prime minister.<sup>1636</sup> On the following day, Czernin also participated in the Council of Ministers, and attempted to justify the rejection of the octroi by presenting the already familiar arguments: first, the effects of the Russian Revolution were spreading. For this reason, nothing must be done now to contradict the democratic trends that were currently prevailing. Second, he wanted to send several prominent Social Democrats to a conference in Stockholm, where they were to make contact with Russian Socialists and attempt to pave the way for peace negotiations. Therefore, nothing should be undertaken in the domestic arena that might be unacceptable to the Social Democratic Workers' Party. Also, if an octroi were to be implemented, it would be difficult to prove to the Russians that the Slavs in Austria were not being suppressed. Finally, Czernin claimed, everything must be done to avoid creating the impression that Austria was dependent on the German Empire in all matters, since the Great War had become a crusade by the world against Germany. The implementation of an octroi would namely be regarded as being done at the

dictate of Berlin. However, he said, since the war was nearing its end, the impression must not be created that Austria was merely a German vassal.<sup>1637</sup> Clam-Martinic said that he agreed with Czernin's position. However, three ministers – two Germans and one Pole – spoke out vehemently against this view: the Trade Minister Karl Urban, the Minister without Portfolio Josef Maria Baernreither, and the minister for Galician affairs, Bobrzyński. They demanded of Clam-Martinic that the Cabinet resign. The Prime Minister refused. In response, the three tendered their resignation from their functions. Clam-Martinic sent them to the Emperor. He promptly rejected these attempts at resignation and assured the three ministers that they had his confidence. Thus, the government remained in office and was obliged to present itself to a House of Representatives that accused it of lacking tenacity.

The very first legislative act completed by the Reichsrat was to pass an order of business to tighten up the procedures somewhat and to block any attempts at obstruction. The period in office of the representatives was prolonged, since otherwise, most of them would no longer be eligible to sit in parliament in the first place. Finally, a provisional budget with a period of validity until December 1917 was passed. After that, however, business really began in earnest. There were not only 181 emergency decrees that had to be converted into legislation or annulled; there was a flood of government regulations, bills, requests and interpellations. Only the smallest portion of these could possibly be dealt with by 1918. The major part of the emergency decrees never became law, since the decrees were assigned to committees, where they remained as unfinished business.

The Clam-Martinic government not only had failures or unfinished business to report, however. In the area of social provision, it had in fact achieved a real breakthrough. As early as December 1916, Clam-Martinic had drafted a social policy programme. This covered care for the elderly and sick, the establishment of soldiers' homes and youth facilities. Empress Zita was particularly interested in this topic. However, strangely, the only minister to support the scheme was the Minister for National Defence, Baron Georgi. Finally, preparations were made for the creation of a new ministry, on which the Prime Minister reported to the Emperor on 31 May. It was to be named the Ministry for People's Health and Social Provision. However, first, the foundations for the new portfolio had to be drawn up, and the Clam-Martinic government then resigned even before the new ministry was created.

On the last day in May, the Minister without Portfolio, Bobrzyński, took the consequences of the fact that following the opening of parliament, the Polish Club had quite clearly positioned itself in opposition to the government. The accusation was not only directed at the Army High Command that emergency legislation had been used to recklessly cause havoc with a bevy of decrees; the governments from Stürgkh to Koerber to Clam-Martinic were also accused of tolerating all of this, and that they had done nothing, in spite of repeated promises. The Polish Club declared that it



was no longer in a position to support the government. On 1 June, Bobrzyński was dismissed.

However, it was not just the Poles who were unwilling to continue supporting the direction that domestic policy was taking. The southern Slavs, too, began to show their defiance. The 33 representatives for the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs of the Austrian half of the Empire had agreed to form a combined club, and that this was to be a southern Slav one. As such – in a similar manner to the Czechs and the Ruthenians – they prepared a programmatic declaration. At the first meeting of the House of Representatives, the new club chairman, Anton Korošec, read out the 'May Declaration' of the southern Slavs, in which it was stated that 'on the basis of the national principle and the Croatian constitution, [we] demand the unification of all territories of the Monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs to form an independent state body, free from all foreign rule, under the sceptre of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty'.<sup>1638</sup> The May Declaration was not paid much attention, since at this meeting, so much was demanded, voiced and urged, and usually in a far more radical form, that the more moderate statements no longer aroused any interest. However, here, there must have been a sense that a time bomb was ticking. Soon, it was claimed that the May Declaration should only be regarded as a minor demand. If necessary, it could be implemented without Austria and the Habsburgs. A campaign to gather signatures, in which women in particular also took part, was intended to give greater substance to the May Declaration.

Clam-Martinić did not give up yet. The first reading of the provisional budget was planned for 12 June. On the same day, Clam was also intending to issue a government declaration.<sup>1639</sup> He talked of the peoples of Austria, who 'at no point in their history [have] more powerfully exhibited their indissoluble sense of belonging together, their great will to support the state, or succeeded in evolving their victorious power of defence and attack with an elementary force, than in this global conflict in our time'. Then, Clam-Martinić moved on to the national agitation, which had immediately begun unhindered. These programmes of the nationalities, said Clam-Martinić, could not be realised alongside each other, simply for the reason that they came into conflict with each other and were contradictory. The attempt to implement them would provoke new, never-ending and hopeless conflicts. The government had a programme, however, that offered 'instead of a wavering prospect, a steady one; instead of parts, the whole; instead of nebulous, floating state structures the successful, tested, powerful state. [...] The programme of the government is Austria [...] as an honourable, proud, strong and eternal bastion of its people.' It was important to stick together, he said, since after the war, the country would face huge economic tasks. Just as important as the further development of the constitution was the continuation of the war economy until the fight had been successfully concluded and preparations could be made for the transfer of the economy to peacetime conditions. Parts of Clam's government declaration were

unclear and, overall, no goal and no time limits were specified. 'The government retains the right to come forward at a suitable point in time with its own comprehensive recommendations as to how in its view a satisfactory balance can be achieved between the needs of the state and the justified wishes of its peoples', Clam-Martinić said. If one disregards the syntax and choice of words, one must ask, however, what the government declaration would have had to say and, specifically, what date it would have had to specify, in order for it to win the agreement of the representatives. Unlike them, the Prime Minister was not able to come with radical phrases. He was only in a position to speak for the state as a whole, indeed, he was not even able to make specific statements about the war situation, and certainly not present an offer of peace. For this non-programme with its vague statements, the government gained no support from any side. It appeared to have nothing to offer.<sup>1640</sup> The German middle classes held back. The Slav parties were up in arms. However, they would have reacted in the same way to any government declaration issued by Clam. In so doing, they would have known that Clam-Martinić had no room for manoeuvre and that, not least, they themselves had taken this away from him. Clam-Martinić explained his ideas for the Austrian Monarchy of the future, which would be based on federalism. He talked of 'autonomist centralism', but this, too, was nothing more than a rather peculiar and empty verbal shell. The issue that had dominated the House of Representatives right from the start, and that was being discussed with increased bitterness, was the status of the nations in relation to the state, and after the future of the Empire, the greatest obstacle was ultimately also dealing within an acceptable period of time with the countless individual items that could be regulated only by ordinances and emergency or exceptional decrees. Indeed, one could gain the impression that for many representatives, this had now become completely unimportant. However, there were some things that could not be avoided. According to the valid constitution, parliament had to be presented with the emergency decrees that had been issued in the interim for confirmation or rejection. The most important of these was the decree authorising the war economy of October 1914. Only very few people were satisfied with it. The emergency decree could not be annulled, however, since it formed the basis of the entire war economy, including the working conditions during the war, as well as countless edicts from the ministries that would all have needed to be annulled as well. The war would literally no longer be manageable. Therefore, the only course of action that remained open was to pass an authorisation act instead of the authorisation decree relating to the emergency ordinance clauses in the constitution. In the deliberations over the advantages and disadvantages of the decree that had been valid until then, it also by rights had to be acknowledged that with its help, the most urgent social measures had been taken and, indeed, had been enforced. One notable example of this was the tenant protection measure, which drastically reduced the rights of property owners. The authorisation decree had made it possible to introduce the

tenant protection measure, which in many Austrian municipalities brought about a restricted right to give notice and the monitoring of increases in rental interest by rental agencies. The political regional authorities were also tasked with monitoring the rate of interest for mortgages in order to in turn protect property owners from the banks.<sup>1641</sup> The necessity of this intervention and others led to very broad support for the war economy authorisation act. Nonetheless, it took until 27 July 1917 for the act to be able to come into effect. Before then, it was discussed in the committee, voted on, passed on to the upper house of the Reichsrat, from which it was returned, was revised and finally definitively also passed with the votes of the German Social Democrats.<sup>1642</sup> (The latter is a strange detail, when one considers the fact that the arbitrary application of the act in the First Austrian Republic and even the May Constitution of 1934 were based on this resolution, in the drafting of which the Social Democrats had also been involved. However, this act was originally intended to apply solely to war, and not to civil war.)

Clam-Martinic also continued to follow his general course, which was in essence to drastically limit the emergency decrees, to return to the normal legislative basis and to drive forward the restitution of the army. On 16 June, the decree on the 'extension of military force to the regions adjacent to the theatres of war', which had been issued on the basis of the emergency decree clause, was annulled in the form in which it had been applicable until then. With this latest decree, the commanders were also transferred civilian administration duties.<sup>1643</sup> Censorship was relaxed and rules regarding activities relating to meetings and associations were significantly liberalised. In order to find a way out of the crisis that had been created by the resignation of the Minister without Portfolio, Bobrzyński, and refusal of the Polish Club to support the work of the government, Clam offered the Poles a cabinet reshuffle and two ministerial posts. Simultaneously, the idea emerged of a government of national unity, in which every nationality was to be represented by one minister. Equally, the major parties were to provide one minister each for the government.

This idea was certainly worth considering, since in times of crisis, many states make use of a government of national unity, and besides, it would have been foreseeable that decisions in the Council of Ministers would be easier to make than in the parliament, where the general public repeatedly had to demand its demagogic rights. The first to refuse were the Austrian Social Democrats, from whose ranks Clam-Martinic had hoped to gain Karl Renner as a minister. In its response to the Prime Minister, the Social Democrat leadership stated that it was a matter of principle that 'leads the Social Democrat Party to preclude participation in the government of a warmongering state'.<sup>1644</sup> The next group to reject the proposal were the Czechs. The Poles hid behind the Czechs and informed the Prime Minister that they would only participate in a government of national unity if all Slav parties were represented. The leader of the southern Slavs, Dr Korošec, who was even given an audience with the Emperor on the subject

of participation in a government of national unity, appears to have told the Monarch that while the idea in itself was not bad, he did not wish to see it implemented under the current Prime Minister.<sup>1645</sup> When Clam-Martinić heard of this, he submitted his resignation on the same day. This time, the Emperor accepted it. The Austrian Cabinet was to remain in office only until a new government had been formed.

The resignation of the Austrian Prime Minister played a not insignificant part in causing hopes for a thriving future for the Habsburg Monarchy to dwindle further. In particular, the Germans living in the Monarchy gave up hope.<sup>1646</sup> Now, everything came together: the less than satisfactory domestic political situation, the prospect of another war winter, the anger among farmers over the requisitions and, on the other hand, the hunger that in some cases had already become unbearable. Seed stocks were too low, and finally, an unusual drought destroyed all hopes for a better than average, and even good harvest. All this caused confidence to disappear entirely, and also reduced any hope that lay in a change under a new government.

Clam-Martinić was given the task of finding a successor. One of many who were regarded as being a particularly suitable candidate was the former prime minister, Baron Max Wladimir von Beck, whose recall had already been debated several times. However, Clam was decidedly against him. Instead, he looked to the higher-ranking officials, and finally opted for the Minister of Agriculture, Baron Ernst von Seidler, who had only joined his Cabinet three weeks previously. Before that, Seidler had been a head of department in the Ministry of Agriculture, and was no doubt an excellent bureaucrat, but was also what one would today call a 'run-of-the-mill' functionary.<sup>1647</sup> Even in the Clam-Martinić Cabinet, he had been entrusted with no more than the temporary leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture. Now, he was to create a transition cabinet. However, as is so often the case in Austria, temporary arrangements are exceedingly durable. Seidler remained in office as Prime Minister for an unexpectedly long time – a whole year, in fact. Irrespective of this, it could be seen, however, that since the reshuffle in October and November 1916, the personnel carousel had begun to turn. The constant coming and going of people in positions of responsibility and who were tasked with finding a way out of a crisis is a well-known symptom, however. It is not only revolution that eats its own children; other systems can be cannibals, too.

### **The System Eats its Own Children**

For the Austrian half of the Empire, the reconvention of the Reichsrat not only gave an impetus at a higher level. Now, noticeable political changes also began to be made in the regions, and here, too, a process of polarisation and radicalisation was set in motion. Everywhere, it became evident that the catchwords and slogans born of the Russian

Revolution were taking hold. Almost every local Landtag (regional diet) began to discuss the events in Russia, usually when they were related to the war. In Carinthia, for example, the German Freedom and Christian Social parties, who argued against peace at any price, soon came into open conflict with the Social Democrats, who, in their own words, were no longer willing to 'be driven on to the bayonet' on behalf of the bourgeois parties.<sup>1648</sup> Since the authorities exercised caution precisely towards the Social Democrats, envy and rejection on the part of the other parties were soon directed in equal measure against the Social Democrats, the 'new darling of the government', as well as against the authorities.<sup>1649</sup>

In reality, the accusation of being the 'new darling of the government' was not well-founded, but there is no doubt that, for its part, the government was keen to satisfy the requirements of the Social Democrats and for this reason acted with particular care. Also and in particular, the Foreign Minister had become aware of the sudden significance of the Social Democrat movement, and defended the wooing of the party to the Hungarian Prime Minister. His letter to Tisza from the spring of 1917 was very telling, in which he explained his position on the issue of the dispatch of Renner and Adler to Stockholm. Czernin wrote: 'Either they will bring peace, in which case it will certainly be a "socialist" one, and the Emperor will pay a heavy price for it. Of this, dear friend, I am also aware. However, if the war cannot be brought to an end, the Emperor will pay much more – of that you can be sure [...]. You, dear friend, are making a double mistake. First, after the war, we shall be obliged to implement a social welfare policy, whether any one individual wants this or not, and it is in my view essential to enlist the Social Democrats for this purpose. Social policy is the valve that we must open in order to vent the excess steam – otherwise, the casket will explode.'<sup>1650</sup>

Some issues were indeed treated in such a way that the impression could be created that steam was to be released. In almost three years of war, in which it had been repeatedly argued that for reasons of 'unity', and in order to show no 'weakness', so much had been pent up that it had to come out at some time. And when it did, the tone was blunt and emotional. There were certain things that could hardly have been portrayed differently, however, even following extensive discussions, than they were, for example, in the petitions made by the Tyrolean Landtag representatives on 23 April 1917. They contained an application to inform the Emperor by telegraph of the desperate situation in Tyrol. A petition was submitted to send representatives to Munich and Berlin in order to request additional food supplies for the people of Tyrol from German areas. The representative, Michael Mayr, requested that foreigners be denied food ration cards, and public warnings already be issued against spending holidays in Tyrol. The tourists, he said, would be given nothing to eat, military hospitals and convalescence homes – except for those used for Tyrolean troops – should be relocated to other crown lands, all refugees who were not in regular service or employment should be expelled, maximum

prices should be increased, and a ban on illegal trading should be imposed with the aid of the military. All consumers, be they officers' rations or civilians, should be delivered immediately and in full in the hinterland. Farmers should be released from their soldier's status in order to put the agricultural sector back on track and to distribute food through regional organisations that operated independently of the central authorities. Finally, Mayr wished to have an appeal sent to Hungary to help Tyrol with flour until the next harvest.<sup>1651</sup> The information received by the Imperial-Royal Ministry of the Interior from Upper Austria sounded similar. There, complaints were made that larger quantities were having to be delivered than the Czechs to the north of the crown land borders, and that naturally, the hardships suffered were greater. However: 'The average farmer is beginning to waver in his belief in God, he draws conclusions from the overall situation that betray a severe shock to his most holy sensibilities'.<sup>1652</sup> This was made worse by the annulment of the Mondays after Easter and Whitsun as public holidays. The foundations appeared to be shaking.

Frequently, the regions had the same concerns as the two halves of the Empire. Until the summer of 1917, they were primarily administered using imperial emergency decrees. The regional budgets were in ruins. The provisional budgets closed respectively with deficits of millions of kronen.<sup>1653</sup> Wherever demands from different nationalities crossed within the regions, the conflicts became more severe. The parties became more radical, and the worsening privations exhausted nearly everyone. Any mandatory measures could be used in order to procure essential goods and, if possible, to distribute them evenly, had already been tried. Price controls, rationing, the obligation to deliver goods and seizures became everyday occurrences, as did profiteering, illegal trading, foraging trips, incidents of theft from the fields, and smuggling.<sup>1654</sup> Some measures that had still been willingly accepted during the first years of the war were now met with hesitation, scepticism and rejection. 'I gave gold for iron' had been a campaign that the population had been very ready to support. Schoolchildren alone had helped gather hundreds of kilograms of scrap gold and silver. Collections of old iron had brought excellent results. Now, there was nothing left that had not already been used. However, the Hindenburg Programme had to be fulfilled. The Army Administration turned its attention to the metals that could, it seemed, still be surrendered. On 22 May 1917, a new delivery decree for bells was publicised, stating that all church bells were to be removed. This was more than the people were willing to give. Objections were made. Yet the Imperial and Royal War Ministry replied laconically: 'In light of the stipulations of this decree, Imperial Law Gazette 227, dated 22.V.1917 and the increased need for ammunition for the army in the field, it is not possible to issue new provisions.'<sup>1655</sup> There was nothing that could be done; the majority of the bells had to be delivered. In this way, between 1916 and 1918, over three million kilograms of metal were provided by Tyrol and Vorarlberg alone. However, in 1917, copper roofs and lightning conductors

made of copper wire also had to be delivered.<sup>1656</sup> Chandeliers, lamps, ciborium crowns, crosses from processional banners, etc. all fell victim to the requisition measures.<sup>1657</sup> For this reason, it was almost a mockery when at the end of 1917 and 1918, the ban on the ringing of bells was lifted for a large portion of the area that until then had been the hinterland behind the war zone. There was nothing left to ring! In the meantime, the bell ropes had also been removed and sold to the treasury at the specified prices.<sup>1658</sup>

From the summer of 1917, the fields were guarded. In some places, the farmers erected protection for their own fields in order to be able to harvest anything at all.<sup>1659</sup> The discrepancy between the towns and cities and the countryside worsened. The non-agrarian population accused the farmers of making no sacrifices and that their patriotism did not extend beyond their parish or district borders.<sup>1660</sup> The farmers hit back. And everywhere, it was suspected that the others were faring better. Accusations of parasitic behaviour were made in the most irrational contexts, such as against refugees. For the most part, they came from Galicia, Bukovina and Italy (see Chapter 26). Naturally, provisions had to be made for their sustenance. Why hadn't they returned home long ago? The simple answer, that they no longer had a home, and that they would not have survived the next winter, was accepted least of all or, if so, then only grudgingly. Little by little, the pressure on the refugees increased until enforced repatriations were begun.<sup>1661</sup>

The process of polarisation continued almost unabated. Wherever one looked, the willingness to endure further hardships during this war and, above all, without any evident goal and without knowing how long things would continue in this way, had reached its limits. In some cases, these limits had already been exceeded. Groups and individuals who until then had not counted among the politicisers, housewives, day labourers or female workers, discussed in detail the events in Russia and their own situation. Almost immediately, therefore, the censorship reports from the War Surveillance Office took on a new and different tone.<sup>1662</sup>

In Austria, there was almost nothing more that could be achieved by the Hindenburg Programme. The capacity increases were by no means sufficient in order to even come close to meeting demands. From March 1917 onwards, the Army Administration demanded 70,000 pieces of artillery ammunition daily, and received only 50,000. During August, production even decreased dramatically to just over 18,000 pieces. The boom enjoyed by the armaments companies had vanished, as had the period of vast profits that had been possible in this sector of the industry. In 1916, taxation on war profits was decreed and made retroactive to 1914.<sup>1663</sup> In individual cases, the dividends were still increased, for example for the Prager Eisenindustrie-Gesellschaft (Prague iron industry company), which increased its dividends for the financial year 1916/1917 from 38 to as much as 40 per cent. However, during 1917, the Alpine Montan company only raised dividends of 13 per cent, against 25 per cent during 1916. Overall, there was

clearly a downward trend, and the shortage of raw materials made itself increasingly felt. The capacities alone were not enough if there was nothing to process. However, to this extent, the Hindenburg Programme and all the other emergency measures adopted by the state had been a success in that during the first half-year of 1917, the situation did not deteriorate significantly. The entire situation was a closed circle. If it were possible to provide the industry with sufficient raw materials, then it could continue to produce, and if no even more severe supply shortages were to occur, the provision of food for the population could be secured. Only then could a loss of loyalty that posed a danger to the state be prevented. However, all this depended on how long this war would still last.

In May 1917, there were extended strikes and workers' demonstrations in Vienna. They were triggered by other issues than the unrest during the first months of the year or before, which had been classifiable as purely hunger demonstrations. Now, the Russian Revolution and the trial of Friedrich Adler were making their presence felt. At times, it must have seemed as though he were the prosecutor. His accusations against the leadership of the Social Democrat movement did not remain without effect. Why had the Social Democrats – like everyone else – allowed themselves to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the masses in July 1914? Was there really a justification for the truce? What role was being played by the trade unions? The workers were no longer willing to be led by the trade unions, and the good relationship between the War Ministry and the workers was gradually being lost. In order to be able to implement the Hindenburg Programme, an extension of the obligation to work was ordered. An imperial decree was also designed to counteract the lack of discipline among women working in the war industry. For this purpose, complaints committees were set up, which were given the task of intervening in wage issues and when social conflicts occurred. The Army Administration deduced from this that work stoppages were inadmissible. After all, the complaints committees were there to act as arbitrators. The announcements that the strikes were prohibited were again made on 26 May 1917, just after 15,000 male and female workers at the Arsenal in Vienna, one of the largest production sites of the state armaments industry, had staged a walkout.<sup>1664</sup> The reason was not an eminent one, if one regards the cancellation of an additional weekly ration of ½ kg of flour as being of no import during these times. Ultimately, the specific reason itself did not matter. The workers wanted to vent their feelings. They felt exploited.<sup>1665</sup> The number of people in employment had increased twenty times during the course of the war. Instead of 30 buildings, there were now 100 in the Arsenal, a steelworks, tin and copper works, and huge production facilities for artillery guns, in which production continued for 24 hours a day. The walkout was merely a warning signal. And when the Emperor, unaware of what was happening, drove past the strikers, they all greeted him respectfully. This was after all not only an 'Imperial and Royal social democracy', but also an 'Imperial and Royal workforce'! The people demanded an eight-hour working day, instead of



working ten, twelve and more hours, as well as improved food provision for the same pay. They were granted a reduction in working time to eight hours on Saturdays and 'urgent consideration in the apportionment of provisions'. Then, the Arsenal employees returned to work. However, shortly afterwards, strikes were called at the Škoda factory in Pilsen, in the ammunition factories on the edge of the Steinfeld region, in Vítkovice (Witkowitz) and in Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau). Everywhere, it became necessary to 'intervene', something that also became an eminent test of strength for the military.

The station commander of Prague, Major General Eduard Zanantoni, understood only too well what was going through the workers' minds. As he noted in his private log: 'From 31 May [1917] onwards, there was not a single month that passed in which I did not witness some wicked and difficult days in Prague. Strikes followed each other in quick succession, in particular among the metalworkers, who were primarily tasked with producing the ammunition. On repeated occasions, all the factories in Prague stood empty and it was only through the use of force that the workers could be made to resume their work [...]. I had the task of creating order myself with force of arms when the situation in the factories got out of control [...]. I could empathise with the concerns and efforts of the worker myself, and could privately well understand how he must feel when he had to work and neither he nor his family had any proper food to eat.'<sup>1666</sup>

Railway workers walked out, even though the railway industry had been militarised. Threats, punishments and reassurances caused them to return to their duties. However, railway workers and employees had become aware of the essential role they played in waging the war, and exploited the situation and their newly found sense of importance. The policy of reassurance by the Imperial-Royal Ministry of National Defence was proving increasingly ineffective, and hardly anywhere did the announcement on the prohibition of strikes bring the desired result. Attempts were therefore made to haul the workers in outright. 'The fact that under such auspices, work cannot be flourishing and fruitful, is self-evident, which is why I have never fully supported such measures, and was following only higher commands and not my own conviction', Zanantoni wrote. 'And so, together with the Gendarmerie and military patrols, I must repeatedly fetch the workers in the early morning (5 o'clock) from their homes and have them taken to the factories. The extensive authorisations that were needed for this purpose with respect to the details can be imagined by anyone who knows that it was always thousands and tens of thousands of workers for whom these measures were required, who lived in the suburbs of Prague and in the villages in the surrounding area, which were at times a great distance away, in hundreds of houses. To me, this method of hauling in the workers recommended by the War Ministry appeared undignified.'<sup>1667</sup>

Finally, on 8 July 1917, the industrial companies were militarised throughout.<sup>1668</sup> Landsturm (reserve forces) detachments were posted in the factories that were impor-

tant to the war effort. All workers who were liable for military service were enrolled in these detachments and made to swear the military oath. With the exception of women, workers over fifty, foreigners and prisoners of war, almost no-one was exempt from this militarisation. From now on, all workers who were enlisted into the Landsturm detachments carried out their duties in the industrial companies as active military personnel, and were subject to military discipline. They were also no longer permitted to participate in political activities. Thus, precisely at a time when there was talk of the end of the military dictatorship and a wave of democratisation, a movement in the opposite direction had been initiated, which began with an intervention that had particularly long-term effects.

Whoever might have thought that the radical dismantling of the military dictatorship, democratisation and parliamentarianism would perhaps have contributed towards raising the level of the commitment to the state among the broad section of the public, and to increasing interest in the events of the war, was to be surprised and even disappointed. It could be ascertained through censorship of letters that the population away from the front and its direct hinterland was hardly any more interested in developments there. In this regard, something of a very unusual nature had to occur in order to arouse emotions and interest once more. Most people had become apathetic. The fact that East Galicia had been regained through the fighting and cleared of the Russians, that the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo was raging and that Trieste (Triest) was at stake, may have been felt here and there as something that was of some significance, and that had its direct consequences. Still, this was conveyed to almost no-one who was further away from these events. In general, it was also hardly surprising that they now attracted almost no attention. From the moment at which positional warfare began, the excitement that had been generated by mobilisation and then on repeated occasions by the emergence of new theatres of war, by particular successes or failures, ebbed away and dwindled, and the level of interest waned. This apathy or oversaturation with the unchanging news, and at the same time, the peoples' own concerns, are a feature of any longer war, and lead to a situation in which the population turns its attention away from the military events and towards civilian needs and the everyday hardships. Already during the First World War, this led in turn to a widening chasm between the front and the homeland, which had the potential to grow into boundless incomprehension. There was hardly anyone who understood what it was like to live in lice-infested accommodation, in dugouts, with the screams of the wounded and the constant presence of death. And for their part, many soldiers could not understand how life in the hinterland could deteriorate and how the privations suffered on a daily basis, and which every individual had to overcome in their own way, could be so dominant that finally, all that was of interest was whether there was still a small amount of coffee substitute available, or bread that consisted of 70 per cent maize flour and had to be carried home

by the women in their aprons, since it fell apart, or whether as an exception it might be possible to get hold of some meat and fat.

Mourning had also become an everyday occurrence. Women in black clothes, children who were trying to come to terms with the death of their fathers, the news that someone had gone missing... all this was hardly noticed any more. And in the newspapers, now only those who could afford to pay were placing death notices.

The war no longer seemed to revolve around how positions were held militarily, or whether battles were won or lost but instead, primarily on securing life's essentials. A significant portion of the correspondence between the higher-ranking commanders was also dedicated to this subject. And time and again, the amount of food that was left to eat was calculated, re-calculated and mentally scraped together. Here, it was not only the produce that could be provided domestically that counted. Almost more attention was paid to obtaining food from the occupied territories. The success of the administration of these territories was then also measured in terms of what could be gleaned from them.

### The Military Administration in the Occupied Territories

From the summer of 1915, Austria-Hungary maintained occupying troops in Russian Poland, who were to be followed in 1916 by similar troops in Serbia, then in Montenegro and Albania, and finally in Romania, Italy and Russia. Just as no preparations had been made for waging a long war, the same was true of existing anywhere as an occupying force over a longer period of time, stationing occupying troops, monitoring the entire administration and, while not squeezing the countries dry, at least exploiting them intensively in economic terms. There were no personnel available who had been thoroughly prepared and trained for the administrative role. This was not the only problem, however.<sup>1669</sup> There were competing interests in almost all areas. In Poland, the German and Austro-Hungarian interests clashed, as they did in Romania, where Bulgarian wishes and demands also came into play. In Serbia, a conflict of interests between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, which enjoyed a certain degree of support from the German Empire, was inevitable. As if that were not enough, the Hungarian declared Serbia to be within the 'Hungarian sphere of influence', and at the same time made its lack of interest in Poland known. The only places where there was no dispute were Montenegro and Albania, since these countries were so poor that they had no attraction as occupied territories and certainly not as 'colonies'.<sup>1670</sup>

On 25 August 1915, a Military Government General was established in *Poland*, which established its headquarters in Lublin.<sup>1671</sup> Russian Poland – and this was all that was affected – was, therefore, divided. The north became a German zone of occupation,

while the south came under the control of the Austrians. Subordinate to the Governor General, who was first Brigadier Baron Erich von Diller, and then from May 1916 to April 1917 General of Artillery Karl Kuk, were regional commands, base station commands and Gendarmerie post commands. Their task was to ensure that an 'appropriate exploitation' occurred, that calm and order ruled and that the requirements at the front were met. However, the image that they repeatedly attempted to portray of the 'good and informed occupiers' developed numerous cracks.<sup>1672</sup> Ultimately, the occupation was essentially rule by force, which while being formally oriented to the Hague Convention on Land Warfare, repeatedly inclined towards arbitrariness. This was exacerbated to no small degree by the disastrous competition between the Army High Command and the civilian posts. For the military, the repression could not go far enough, while the civilian authorities were far more concerned with what would happen 'afterwards'. An economic section had been established to oversee the economic exploitation of the occupied territory. However, and this was clearly a particular wish of the Austro-Hungarian authorities, schools were set up and the medical services for the population were intensified, with everything possible being done to improve care in this area. While this was not least intended to stem the epidemics that were spreading in the hinterland behind the front through inoculations and the establishment of cordons, but it also benefitted the population that measures were taken against typhus, smallpox and cholera. In the autumn of 1915, civilian worker divisions began to be created, who were to play a role in the roads and railways in particular.<sup>1673</sup> For this purpose, volunteers could be used, since unemployment in Poland was so high that there was certainly no lack of available manpower.

In 1915, there was not yet much profit to be made from the harvests in Poland, since the modalities for delivery and sequestering were still not functioning sufficiently well. Potatoes, which would have been available, could to a large extent not be transported due to a lack of personnel and carts, and the only option was to wait for the next harvest. However, the Government General had more to offer than just crop yields. In August 1915, the demand for coal had already increased to 555 wagons daily.<sup>1674</sup> And during 1916, thousands of wagons in total were transported from the mining regions, filled with zinc, lead, sulphur, copper and iron. During the summer of 1917, this section of the war economy was reflected by the following figures: from Russian Poland, during one year, 6,000 wagons of grain, 14,000 wagons of potatoes, 2,000 wagons of solid feed, 19,000 horses, millions of eggs, 1.7 million solid cubic metres of wood and above all, 300,000 wagons of coal could be 'shunted off' to the Danube Monarchy. The coalfield at Dąbrowa Górnicza covered a substantial part of the coal needed for the railways, and the entire coal requirements of the Imperial and Royal armies in the north-east.<sup>1675</sup>

Despite the indisputable achievements and successes of the Austro-Hungarian military administration in Poland, the troops and government officials from the Danube

Monarchy were an occupying force in Poland. To this was added the fact that as a result of the division into a German and an Austro-Hungarian military administration zone, Russian Poland had experience a type of further 'Polish division', while the ties to Russia could also not simply be made to disappear. This was particularly apparent during the Brusilov Offensive, which had immediately awakened Russophile sentiments. It was not least the experience of this offensive and the memory of the Polish Proclamation, which had been issued by Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich right at the moment when Russia entered the war, which then on 5 November 1916 moved the Central Powers for their part to announce the Polish Proclamation mentioned previously. While what was promised with regard to a kingdom at the mercy of Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns was not due to become reality until after the war, at least the Poles were being offered a future and a prospect. However, since nothing had still been said as to the extent to which Poland might not again experience territorial changes, and how its dependencies would be regulated after the war, intensified Polish scepticism was inevitable.

Austria-Hungary had also gone one step further in order to make its sincere intentions clear and at the end of April 1917 dismissed the Military Governor General, General of Artillery Kuk. In his place came the Polish Brigadier Count Stanislaus Szeptycki. The pressure was to be reduced in other areas, too, although the installation of a Polish organisation for the supply of grain and potatoes already indicated that its degree of success lagged far behind the expectations of the Imperial and Royal military administration, and recourse was taken to the system of friction reduction through the use of military bodies.<sup>1676</sup> Since the provision of food and the removal of essential goods from Poland for the benefit of the Habsburg Monarchy just in the same way as was being done for the benefit of the German Empire also generated increasing hardship in Poland, the Polish Proclamation by the Central Powers ultimately never came into effect. Decisive errors had however already been made previously, since Polish hopes of the creation of a Polish government in Russian Poland, which was to be used to help recruit a legions division, had been dashed. Since it proved impossible to reduce the tensions between the not uncontroversial, albeit already almost legendary leader of the Polish Youth Rifle Association, Brigadier Józef Piłsudski, and the Austrian, and particularly the German authorities, Piłsudski was dismissed from his command by the Imperial and Royal Army High Command on 26 September 1916. The Russian February Revolution, which the Provisional Government in Poland imagined would lead to extensive freedoms, contributed fully to the change of mood, and the joy with which the agreements by the Central Powers to the creation of a new Kingdom of Poland vanished entirely.<sup>1677</sup> News of imminent acts of terrorism circulated. This led to a tightening of the repression. Finally, the Germans arrested Piłsudski and the radical leaders of the Polish independence movement for activities that posed a threat to the state, and brought them to a German fortress. Thus, in July 1917, Poland was again re-

duced to the status of almost entirely an occupied territory, and its worth was primarily assessed in terms of its mineral deposits and crop yields. The image that presented itself in 1917 was anything but rosy. The results and the gathering of the harvest had fallen far below expectations. Of the potatoes, around thirty per cent were inedible following a severe frost. Lupine flour was used in order to make the bread cereals go further. To do this, the lupine seeds in concentrated feed factories were 'de-bittered', then dried and ground before being added to the flour. In Przemysł, birch flour had been tried, and now it was joined by lupine flour – and all this was still called 'bread'.

While in Russian Poland, the Austro-Hungarian and German military presence had not yet developed the bitterest aftertaste of an occupation, but to a small degree also that of liberation, this element was missing entirely since the presence of troops in Serbia and the establishment of the military administration there at the beginning of 1916. When on 7 January Major General Count Johann Ulrich Salis-Seewis took office as the Military Governor General, he was acting as representative of the Emperor and of the Army High Command. Legislative measures, fundamental regulations and all types of rights to freedom were issued by the Emperor and were then subject to the Army High Command.<sup>1678</sup> As in Poland, in Serbia, also, the working language of the Imperial and Royal Army, in other words, German, was the official language. In Serbia, first 12, and then finally, 13 regional command centres were established, which were then converted into 57 district commands. The Government General installed by the Austro-Hungarian Military Administration essentially extended to the region west of the Morava Valley and through to Macedonia. The old Serbian territory to the east of the Morava – Macedonia and Kosovo Polje – had also been transferred to Bulgaria for administration. It was precisely in the north and west of Serbia that a great deal had been destroyed by the offensives of 1914 and the campaign of 1915. Since the privations were so severe, the most essential provisions first had to be brought in so that the population could at least be offered a chance of survival.<sup>1679</sup> Since Major General Salis-Seewis attempted to exert as little pressure as possible, he was even willing to waive the collection of taxes. This led to the curious circumstance that Serbia was probably the only country in the world, in which for a period of time in the middle of the war, there was no taxation.

After Count Tisza had travelled to the three north-western regions of the Military Government General of Serbia, he then reported to Emperor Franz Joseph that the 'administration [was] too Serbophile and economically incompetent', and requested that the military leaders be recalled. As early as July, the military administration of the Government General of Serbia was dismissed. The new Governor General was General of Infantry Baron Adolf von Rhemen. Now, Austria-Hungary's own troops were disciplined and the occupation zone came under the control of centralistic, authoritarian military administration, which however also held authority itself. A civilian

regional commissioner, the former head of department von Thallóczy, was to prepare the collection of taxes. Then, statistics were prepared, a population census was conducted and, since there was neither a land register nor cadastre records, the potential revenues were calculated and cattle were counted. Since the beginning of the war, the population losses in Serbia, which it was possible to assess on the basis of this census, totalled around 360,000 people. As a result of the war, epidemics and, finally, the flight of the Serbian Army to Albania and on to Corfu, in some regions almost 80 per cent of the men had disappeared.<sup>1680</sup> Even so, thanks to the hard work by the women, Serbia managed to produce agricultural surpluses, which could then be used by the Austro-Hungarian occupying power not only to feed the troops but also to transport the produce out of the country.

There was no doubt that Serbia had something special to offer. The Muslims in the southern regions of the Government General very soon came to accept the presence of the Austro-Hungarian troops, and were even willing to continue to cooperate with them. An additional reason for this was probably that the Sultan Caliph had proclaimed a jihad and, as a result, the Orthodox Serbs were considered to be enemies of Islam. The allied armed forces of the Caliph, he claimed, were fighting a just 'holy war'.<sup>1681</sup> They were joined by the Albanians living in Serbia, who were equally willing to support Austria-Hungary. After Romania's entry into the war, the Albanian notabilities proposed that in the southern regions of Serbia and in the Albanian territories, volunteers should be recruited; Muslim dignitaries from other regions, particular in Novi Pazar, also declared their support and offered to establish volunteer formations with the assistance of former Turkish officers and NCOs. In this way, over 8,000 volunteers were recruited in the territory of the Government General. However, any further use of Serbian volunteers was evidently blocked by the Foreign Ministry. In Montenegro, too, there were over 2,000 new Muslim volunteers, while in the Military Government of Lublin, for example, only 273 volunteers could be recruited for the Polish National Army under Austrian leadership.<sup>1682</sup>

Prisoner of war labour companies were used in the forests, for road and railway construction, for unloading work and in Serbia's mines. They were joined by internee labour companies, which were recruited from the section of the male population that was fit for military service, so that the total number of labourers provided by the military administration in Serbia came to almost 20,000 men. The sight of the Imperial and Royal soldiers and the Serbian cadres at work, and watching them cultivate the fields, mow the meadows, bale the hay, thresh the grain, feed the pigs and guard the sheep, was a reminder of the times when this was military frontier. From January 1916, all Serbian railway lines were back in operation and, subsequently, an intensive development of new narrow-gauge tracks began, in order to create a complete network throughout occupied Serbia.<sup>1683</sup> Now, in October 1915, the Serbs had not succeeded in repairing the

electrical facilities and lines after the electricity works in Belgrade had been destroyed by the Austro-Hungarian artillery in August 1914. The occupying troops managed to complete the work in just three weeks, by the end of October 1915.<sup>1684</sup>

From September 1916 onwards, farmers were subject to mandatory cultivation regulations, while those able to work were obliged to do so. Now, the goal was also the 'apportion of provisions'. Wheat and, above all, maize brought high yields, and in many regions rye was grown for the first time, while sunflowers began to be cultivated for oil production. Even after the war was over, members of the Military Government continued to eulogise the incredible wealth of agricultural produce that Serbia had to offer, and the wide variety of basic and luxury foodstuffs that could be found in the country. However, since the demands made by the Army High Command to increase deliveries knew no limits, in Serbia, also, the substance of the country was increasingly resorted to, and from then on, was merely exploited.<sup>1685</sup> Of all the occupied territories, Serbia delivered the most meat, with 170,000 cattle by mid-1917, 190,000 sheep and 50,000 pigs, as well as lead and iron disulphide.<sup>1686</sup>

Once again, therefore, positive mixed with negative, and the burdens were added to the noticeable improvements. However, one thing had to be acknowledged: in just a very short space of time, the Austro-Hungarian military administration had managed to get the epidemics under control and had indeed brought several major epidemics to an end. During 1914 and at the beginning of 1915, typhus had claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, alongside cholera, dysentery and other epidemics, which were also conquered by extensive inoculation programmes and improvements in preventive medical services. Another consequence of the epidemics was that schools had all but entirely been shut down, and from the late summer of 1915, teaching had to be re-established. On this issue, extremely harsh words were again exchanged between the Military Government and the Hungarian government, which would not be won round to the schooling plans.<sup>1687</sup> However, in the long term, the education offensive by the Imperial and Royal Army could not be stopped, and not only were the old schools refurbished and opened for lessons, but they were also issued to some degree with new teaching materials. After all, re-education was also an important aspect. Secondary schools were built, and in the southern areas of the country, which had only become part of Serbia in 1912, regulated school education was introduced for the first time ever. All the well-intentioned establishments, however, were unable to prevent the fact that as early as the second half of 1916, a partisan movement began to form that caused young men to flee into the mountains and forests to the 'comitadji'.<sup>1688</sup> The comitadji relocated the centres of their rebellion to the Bulgarian-occupied territory, although there were partisan activities in the Austro-Hungarian Government General of Serbia, which then escalated and also spread to Montenegro. The rebellion would never be entirely crushed, even though there were indications that at



the beginning of 1918, the Serbian government in exile was prepared to begin real peace negotiations.

In *Montenegro*, the Imperial and Royal Military Government was not installed until 1 March 1916, since the country had been occupied later than Serbia. It should actually have been easy to anticipate that the 'country of the black mountains' would only be fully occupied for a short period of time at best, but two factors prevented this: the King and the government fled and, instead of capitulating, King Nikola I had ordered his army to continue fighting. While the order was not obeyed, it did create a sense of uncertainty. Many members of the Montenegrin Army therefore resolved the dilemma by morphing from soldiers into farmers and hiding their weapons. The second reason for the installation of a full occupation regime was that the authorities in Vienna were unclear about what should happen with Montenegro. Should it be allowed to remain independent, or should it be annexed? And so it was occupied in the interim. The Governor General became Major General Baron Viktor von Weber, who oriented his administration measures closely to those of the Government General of Serbia. For the first time in its history, Montenegro received a comprehensive and, above all, functioning administrative apparatus. In order to be able to control the country at all, and to keep the largely inaccessible regions in check, the Imperial and Royal military administration for the Government General of Montenegro needed far more occupying troops than for Serbia. There, the number of troops had decreased in 1917 to 21,000 men, while in Montenegro, it rose to 40,000 men and more.<sup>1689</sup> Since Montenegro was not in a position to provide sufficient food in order to even feed its own people, let alone the additional troops who needed to be garrisoned there, it was necessary to build road and railway connections in as short a time as possible in order to create the basic logistical framework for an occupation. Until then, there had been just one narrow-gauge railway from Antivari to Virpazar and a single good road from Kotor over Mount Lovćen to Cetinje. Now, more roads were built, particularly between Andrijevica and Peć via the Čakor Pass. A cable railway and a series of horse field railways were built. Postal and telegraph facilities had to be installed from scratch, since there was not a single functioning post office throughout the entire country.<sup>1690</sup> Montenegro continuously imported food from the Danube Monarchy or Serbia, and only supplied small quantities of meat in return. Hunger was an everyday phenomenon. Some Austro-Hungarian occupying officers appeared to develop highly ambitious notions, however, of modernising the country and creating a modern economic structure. The head of the economic section, Lieutenant Colonel Eugen von Englisch-Popparich, achieved a real innovation impetus. The usual measures to combat epidemics were also implemented, schools were founded and so on. However, Austria-Hungary was still the occupying power. And the Montenegrins already began to rebel against it in mid-1916. There was talk of 'robbery and banditry', which were attributed to a form of

tradition. However, it could not be denied that the attacks on the Gendarmerie posts were increasing, and that precisely in the particularly thinly populated regions, supply deliveries were being raided with increasing frequency. And, gradually, everyone began fighting against everyone else.<sup>1691</sup>

Without doubt the most difficult country where the Imperial and Royal Army had to set up a military administration was *Albania*.<sup>1692</sup> Here, however, no Military Government was formed, since Albania was not a conquered country. Instead, it was merely established as a base area for the Imperial and Royal XIX Corps. The corps had occupied Albania as far as the Vjosë River. The few existing structures in the 'land of the Shqiptars' had been created and left behind by the Ottoman Empire; hardly anything else had been added. 'Its remoteness and lack of resources, the dangers of its climate [and] the state of its culture cannot be compared to any other theatre of war in Europe, but, at best, with a colonial theatre of war', wrote Lieutenant Colonel Georg Veith, who at the time was Commander of the 94th Infantry Brigade in the XIX Army Corps.<sup>1693</sup> 'And the poverty of means that we had at our disposal in the "auxiliary theatre of war": a clear inferiority in terms of quantity, almost no heavy artillery, almost no weaponry to speak of, a lack of ammunition and provision, terrible supply conditions, very few if any aeroplanes, only improvisation and remedial measures of all kinds, in the face of the superior enemy, that dominates the sea, and is well fed and well equipped.' The only law that had common validity was the law of blood vengeance. And this was the last thing that the Austrians were willing to authorise.<sup>1694</sup>

The troops were hindered by many different factors: the inaccessibility, the torrential rivers and above all, the marshes. With the onset of the rainy season in October, normal traffic became almost impossible in the lowlands; the roads became unusable. Only towards the end of May did the road conditions improve, although then, the soldiers had to cope with the intense heat. However, the greatest problem was malaria. Troop numbers and labour formations were reduced to half of their normal levels within just a few weeks, and the fact that the military presence of the Imperial and Royal Army in Albania was at times given as 100,000 men (which corresponded to around 20 per cent of the Albanian population) was by no means an accurate reflection of reality. Of this number, only the Albanian volunteer groups were halfway fit for use. Their task was to keep the guerrilla groups fighting on the side of the Allies at bay and, in particular, however, to carry out the work needed to first create any kind of durable connections in this country. Roads and light railways were built and attempts were made to re-organise agricultural production. The only product that was cultivated to excess in the country was tobacco. Now, cotton and cocoa were planted, and the cultivation began of castor-oil plants and sunflowers. The items that were exported tended to be curiosities, such as 50,000 turtles in 1917, as well as nettles, sweet chestnuts, poppy seeds, and wild chicory.<sup>1695</sup>

In Albania, too, the Austrian military administration attempted to create things that would last, made geological investigations in order to trace mineral resources, modernised the salt works to obtain sea salt, waged what appeared to be an almost hopeless battle against the epidemics and, above all, against malaria, founded schools and introduced general mandatory school education.<sup>1696</sup> The upper section of Albanian society sent their children to the new schools and, later, in many cases, to the University of Vienna. In July 1916, a uniform tax system was introduced, although attempts very soon failed to raise the taxes independently. For this reason, in keeping with ancient tradition, the collection of tithes was leased.<sup>1697</sup>

At first, the local potentates and notables waited to see what would happen; although some sided with the Austro-Hungarians, the relationship cooled with increasing speed when they realised that the system that had been commonplace until then of enrichment, personal power gains and dubious business schemes would no longer be able to function in the same way as before. The use of 'political disposition funds' paid to the likes of the Mirditë leader Prënk Bibë Doda, Irfan Bey, Ahmet Zogu Bey and others did little to change the situation, and the interment of Albanians even less so.<sup>1698</sup> If the term had already existed at that time, then Albania would have been classifiable as a developing country at a very low level.

The situation in Romania was entirely different. There, Austrian participation in the administration was restricted to the nomination of a General Commissioner for economic affairs, whose task was to cooperate with the economic staff sent by Germany. The military administration in the country, which was neither entirely conquered nor entirely occupied, was conducted exclusively by the German Empire. The Supreme Commander in Romania, Field Marshal von Mackensen, was assigned General Tülf von Tschepe as Military Governor.<sup>1699</sup> However, Turks and Bulgarians were also involved in the occupation of Romania. A contribution of 250 million lei was imposed on the occupied zone, which covered around 80 per cent of the state territory, which was intended to cover the costs of the military administration. The economic staff, in which Austria-Hungary and Germany were represented in equal measure, was not only supposed to ensure in its 18 departments that the Romanian economy was returned to normal, but also to exploit all possible resources for the benefit of food provision and the war economy in the German Empire and Austria-Hungary. There were the spoils of war, in other words everything that was found in the national arsenals and in the Romanian war industry, as well as grain, wood and mineral oil. The distribution of these spoils was organised by a 'War Spoils Commission' of the Central Powers.<sup>1700</sup> All other raw products, goods and materials were declared sequestered and then purchased at fixed prices. In this way, Austria-Hungary obtained 54,000 wagons of grain, pulses and maize, as opposed to the 40,000 wagons that were sent to the German Empire, and several thousand distributed to Bulgaria and Turkey. This was of course a great deal,

although the comment by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, 'that the success of the entire economic blockade against the Central Powers has been rendered void by the defeat and occupation of Romania' was very far from the truth.<sup>1701</sup> What proved far more difficult was namely the securing of a continuous influx of goods from Romania, since naturally, the population rebelled against the seizures, and many facilities first had to be put back into operation with a great deal of effort. A British destruction mission had attempted to demolish drilling towers and refineries, and in the case of around 200 mineral oil wells, it only gradually became possible to begin drilling again.<sup>1702</sup> The quantity available ran to 1,000 tons daily, of which Austria-Hungary was to receive a quarter.<sup>1703</sup> In order to bring the agricultural sector back on track, a quarter of the Romanian prisoners of war were allowed to go home. The farmers were guaranteed payment for their harvests at fixed prices; livestock was paid for immediately and in cash, and attempts were made by the Austrians in particular to present themselves as 'good occupiers'. The most severe conflicts were in fact taking place at another level, since the joint exploitation of Romania provided a great deal of potential for disharmony and led to an outright dispute between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary.<sup>1704</sup> And it is likely that the Austro-Hungarian representatives were only able to defend their position at all due to the fact that they were much better able to cope with the conditions, and as a rule were able to speak the local language far better than their German counterparts.

### Tisza's Fall

While 'backward' calculations were being made, and the next war winter was already being taken into account, at the front the dominant mood was of hope for an armistice and peace. In April 1917, the War Surveillance Office summarised its impressions: 'It must at any rate be ascertained that the stoicism and confidence that could formerly be observed among the soldiers no longer prevails, or at least, the soldiers cannot forebear for the duration to suffer their silently borne hardships any longer without imparting them to their relatives.'<sup>1705</sup> Everyone knew what was happening. The Chief of the General Staff made reference in May 1917 to the fact that 'the mood among the general public in all parts of the Monarchy [is] dominated less by confidence in victory than primarily by the hope and yearning for peace'.<sup>1706</sup> The censorship reports, however, also claimed to have found that the political statements and broad speculations were decreasing. Only the desire for peace was felt everywhere. Although the newspapers were forbidden from writing anything about wishes for peace, the editors simply ignored the ban. The loosening of the censorship measures and the changes in domestic policy had also enabled the newspapers to mention the war weariness that was being felt

ever more clearly. With parliamentarianism enjoying a new beginning in Austria, an inspection began of the judgements reached in the military courts, which went hand in hand with the emergence of articles that took a hostile tone towards the army.<sup>1707</sup> In the socialist newspapers, in particular the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, an increasing number of slogans were printed that referred to the class struggle.

Instead of providing a transfer to more peaceful developments, the measures towards democratisation had led everywhere to further radicalisation and polarisation. However, this phenomenon was not only prevalent in the Austrian half of the Empire. In Hungary, also, it was becoming increasingly clear that a new era was dawning. In March and April 1917 the breathing space that Count Tisza had created through the coronation of King Karl in Budapest came to an end. The Hungarian Prime Minister and his party regarded the outbreak of the Russian Revolution as a justification of their foreign and domestic policy. To the Hungarian opposition, however, the events in Russia were confirmation that it was high time for reforms.<sup>1708</sup> Not even in Russia was it possible to survive without democratisation measures! The Hungarian newspapers carried detailed reports day after day on developments in Russia, and were hardly restricted by the censors. However, Tisza saw no reason to take more decisive measures. He was opposed to the proposal to send Hungarian Socialists to the conference of the International Socialist Bureau in Stockholm, and he only withdrew his resistance after being persuaded to do so by Czernin, allowing six Hungarians to travel to Stockholm. They met with their Austrian comrades, Adler, Ellenbogen, Renner and others, and like them, were of the view that peace must not be allowed to be concluded at the expense of the territorial integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>1709</sup>

Tisza regarded himself, and Hungary, as symbols of continuity, stability and the division of power in an increasingly chaotic world. He was of the opinion that 'every war makes people more sombre, more religious and more conservative'.<sup>1710</sup> However, his days at the head of the Hungarian Cabinet were numbered. Since Emperor and King Karl had ascended to the throne, the Calvinist Count had repeatedly been named as the next person who should go at the next available opportunity. Yet he had remained, and appeared to be unshakeable. On 6 February 1917, he was told that the Monarch wished to see him replaced by Archduke Joseph. Tisza threatened to go into opposition with the entire parliamentary majority of which he was the leader.<sup>1711</sup> Then another event occurred that would prove decisive as to whether Tisza would remain or be dismissed from office as Prime Minister. Karl, as mentioned above, had written to King Alfonso XIII of Spain and requested that he act as peace broker. King Alfonso had agreed in principle, but recommended that Prime Minister Tisza be removed from his post, since any step towards peace would certainly be made easier when those who had been responsible for unleashing the war were no longer in office.<sup>1712</sup> Again, Tisza protested, saying that his dismissal could provoke a government crisis, and that this

should be taken into greater consideration than the fact that he had already been in office in 1914. In this way, it was therefore impossible to persuade him to step down. Karl wanted to make a further move towards democracy in Hungary, and demanded that a new election law be drafted. However, when Tisza produced the draft, Karl disagreed with it. He wanted a general, uniform and direct right to vote, as had been the case in Cisleithania since 1907, even though – as Redlich put it – ‘nobody among the Magyars in Hungary wants it’.<sup>1713</sup>

Ultimately, Tisza became thoroughly entrenched in the voting rights issue, and expressed so little willingness to make concessions that it was an easy step for the opposition to portray him as a reactionary. Tisza and the ‘Party of Work’ embodied the hard line. The Hungarian Prime Minister argued that only four years previously, election reform had been implemented in Hungary. The only matter on which he was persuaded was the extension of the right to vote to small landowners, industrial workers and those who had been awarded the honorary title of ‘*vitéz*’, or ‘brave’.<sup>1714</sup> Karl, like the Hungarian opposition, remained dissatisfied with this. Demonstrations against the Hungarian Prime Minister grew at an increasing rate, while the counter-demonstrations attracted fewer supporters.<sup>1715</sup> Tisza’s National Party of Work was divided on the issue of election reform. After the Emperor and King demanded one final time that the Prime Minister present him with a new election law for Hungary, and Tisza again refused to do so, on 22 May 1917, Karl asked Tisza in no uncertain terms to step down. Tisza did as requested. However, what Karl had certainly not intended was the triggering of a chain reaction: on 10 June, the ban of Croatia, Skerlec, and the governor of Rijeka (Fiume), Count Stephan Wickenburg, also requested permission to be relieved of their posts in light of the new political circumstances.<sup>1716</sup>

The fall of the Hungarian Prime Minister was not without its consequences. There was regret at his removal in the German Empire in particular, and the Saxon envoy in Vienna, von Nostitz, concluded that: ‘In the interest of the Monarchy, it would have been advantageous, however, to put the change of cabinet into effect only after the end of the war – if only to take into account the outstanding significance with which Tisza as a personality is acknowledged abroad [...]. However, anyone who is even only slightly familiar with the Hungarian situation will doubt strongly whether the game played by the opposition is really meant in earnest, since the Andrassy and Apponyi [families] are at heart just as equally opposed to an emancipation of the non-Magyar nationalities, as would result from a free right to vote, as Tisza.’<sup>1717</sup> The regret expressed with regard to Tisza’s demotion to the opposition was different in every way to the remarks made in passing following the death of Prime Minister Stürgkh or the government restructuring in Austria. He was again credited with being by far the strongest personality in Austria-Hungary, an independent spirit and a consistent advocate of the alliance with Germany.<sup>1718</sup> Only Emperor Karl felt that for him, a nightmare was over.<sup>1719</sup> In Hun-

gary, also, there was not only regret at his departure, and the newspapers vied with each other to point out that his resignation could be compared to a great military victory. Tisza's successor was Prince Moritz Esterházy. His Cabinet met for its first session on 15 June 1917. About two months later, it met for the last time. The opposition smelled an opportunity, and Count Károlyi did not tire during his frequent trips to Switzerland of assuring that much would be changed under his leadership. The ties to Germany in particular would be immediately loosened, and all dreams of Central Europe brought to an end.<sup>1720</sup> In order to become leader of the government, however, a new election law would have to be passed. Yet, whoever might have believed that the general and uniform right to vote would be introduced immediately in Hungary was to be severely disappointed. In this light, Tisza's overthrow had in fact been unnecessary. And in Transleithania, too, the era of willingness to compromise and acceptance had passed. The radicals were pushing to take power.







## 24 Kerensky Offensive and Peace Efforts

24. People waiting in front of a wood and coal shop in Vienna, 16 August 1916. Waiting in line for a little fuel in mid-summer was a matter of course in 1916 as was waiting for foodstuffs. In order to reduce the consumption of coal, it was even proposed to prohibit cooking in small households and only permit it in large kitchens. In autumn 1916, the first food demonstrations took place in Austria.

**S**ummer 1917 was a summer of the century, 'a summer of fierce sun', as Josef Redlich wrote, 'which simply roasted the vegetable plants, potatoes [and] corn to death. [...] We face the terrible prospect of a complete destruction of the entire potato, turnip, cabbage and vegetable harvest in the fourth winter of the war in addition to this dreadful inflation. [...] All markets in Vienna are empty, [whilst] the central office for vegetables and fruit prevents by buying up and requisitioning – evidently to the benefit of the army commissariat, the jam factories and other bulk buyers – anything in the way of fruit and vegetables from reaching Vienna. [...] our poor people, and incidentally also the workers in the Xth and XIth districts of Vienna, live off cucumbers, which cause many illnesses of the intestines. The situation becomes ever more threatening [and] terrible!'<sup>1721</sup> Hungary, which had since 1914 successfully struggled against requisitioning with the aid of the military, had to make a 180-degree about-turn at the end of June 1917. In Prague and in Brno (Brünn) the workforce was seething, whilst in Pilsen martial law was proclaimed, likewise in Vitkovice (Witkowitz). In Salzburg, 'an organisation of the middle class is raging against tourism! Berlin only recommends one remedy against this and related symptoms: "Keep going!"'<sup>1722</sup>

The message was that, if they had already held out for so long, it would be possible to hold on a little longer: until the next harvest, until the moment that the unrestricted submarine war forced England to make peace, until a separate peace was concluded with Russia, and so on. Since everyone clung to specific hopes and indefinite deadlines, and dates were repeatedly cited, it was believed that the slogan of keeping going could fight the war weariness. The question was only for how long. There were constant changes that made it difficult to say that one had reached this or that point. It was precisely the constant fluctuation between reports of victory and catastrophes, and even more so the emergence and disappearance of people, that made orientation difficult and generated confusion. Only when there was hopelessness, however, would the slogans of holding out lose their effectiveness.

### **The Naval Victory in the Strait of Otranto**

Among those things that repeatedly gave reason to hope was, to a special degree, the naval war, and if something was still capable of provoking excitement and enthusiasm in Austria-Hungary, then it was reports of events at sea. In spite of some undeniable

victories on the part of the Navy and not least by the surface vessels, the Army High Command was anything but satisfied with the Navy. The controversy had been smouldering for a long time and had intensified when Conrad had demanded an operation by the Commander of the Fleet Admiral Haus during preparations for the South Tyrol offensive in the second half of March 1916 in order to deliver a telling blow to the Italians. Haus had rejected this request and had relied in the process on a paper from July 1915, according to which the High Seas Fleet would not be capable, even with the full utilisation of the range of its guns, of providing the left flank of the Austro-Hungarian land forces with any noteworthy support.<sup>1723</sup> If there had been a possibility of supporting the land forces, however small, argued Haus, the Fleet would naturally not have remained inactive for nine months. As it was, however, even the destruction of coastal fortifications, for example in Venice, would not improve the situation of the land forces. By way of contrast, the danger to which the Fleet would have to expose itself was incomparably large, since the Italians had of course not been idle, but had instead created so many defensive possibilities through the construction of minefields and by their own presence at sea that such an operation could hardly have the desired effect. The Imperial and Royal Navy was furthermore lacking destroyers and torpedo boats.

These remarks demonstrate that the Navy's fleet construction programme had in fact for decades been going in a completely wrong direction.<sup>1724</sup> In the Adriatic, it clearly did not need any large battleships, but instead considerably smaller entities, and it was precisely the vulnerability and the inactivity of the battleships – which were condemned to inaction not least because the heating-up of the vessel and making it ready for use took several days – that showed that here the wrong path had been trodden. In addition, the in any case only theoretical sailing of all the coal-fired vessels would have required 1,000 tons of coal each hour – which were not available.<sup>1725</sup> With all ambition to emulate the German Empire, Great Britain and France, following the reduction of its radius of action to the Adriatic, Austria-Hungary simply lacked the necessary 'pond'. Therefore, aside from submarines, only torpedo boats, destroyers and mines played a notable role any more in the Adriatic, just as naval aviation gained in importance; a series of Allied submarine losses was also caused by the naval aviators.<sup>1726</sup> Thus, the course already set on was left unchanged. Haus, who had been promoted to Admiral of the Fleet in 1916, a rank that no-one in the Imperial and Royal Navy reached before or after him, became an ever stronger advocate of the German naval strategy and ultimately argued the case for unrestricted submarine warfare.<sup>1727</sup>

Haus and his Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Rodler, assured the German admirals' staff that the operations of Austro-Hungarian submarines in the Mediterranean would be intensified. In January 1917, it was also agreed that the German submarines U 35, U 36 and U 39 would continue to fly the Austrian flag, although they were

manned by exclusively German crews.<sup>1728</sup> It was Haus' final decision before his unexpected death.

His successor, Admiral Njegovan, who was of Croatian descent, had the task of waging unrestricted submarine warfare. Austria-Hungary's own underwater forces had been reduced to only nine boats, but at the shipyards in Pula (Pola) and Rijeka (Fiume) there were ten boats on the stocks and these could be gradually brought into service. To these were added the German boats. The unrestricted submarine war could begin.

Italy's navy was at this time in a serious crisis. There were dismissals and personnel shake-ups from the Minister of the Navy all the way down. The British announced that they would withdraw three of their four destroyers from Taranto. The French wanted to offset the withdrawal of the British, but only on the condition that the Italian naval forces in the Adriatic were placed under French command. And there was only one message of success: the Italians succeeded at the end of February 1917 in forcing their way into the Austro-Hungarian consular section in Zürich, which under the leadership of Captain Rudolf Mayer had conducted extremely successful espionage activities against Italy and had also prepared the acts of sabotage that had led to the sinking of the *Benedetto Brin* and the *Leonardo da Vinci*. The Italian commando operation was able to force open Mayer's safe and acquire the papers stored away there. The cover was blown on the entire network of Austrian agents in Italy.<sup>1729</sup> For the activities of the Imperial and Royal Fleet, which had known nothing of events in Zürich, this was initially unimportant, but in the long term it constituted a serious setback.

Like their German counterparts, the Austro-Hungarian submarines achieved their greatest successes in April 1917. With 23,037 tons of shipping space, the number of ships sunk reached an unprecedented high point in that month. Thereafter, the tonnage figure for the ships sunk by Imperial and Royal boats dropped again in May to just over 10,000 tons and in June 1917 to little more than 6,000 tons.<sup>1730</sup> Responsible for this was not least the far greater consideration given by Austro-Hungarian boats. The German Empire did not want to understand this and, above all, not join in. Germany accused the Allies, and rightly so, of using hospital ships to transport ammunition, and deduced from this the right to attack hospital ships of the Entente. In Austria-Hungary, opinions were divided on this matter. Eventually, Emperor Karl firmly prohibited on 21 April 1917 that Austro-Hungarian submarines attack Allied hospital ships, and decided furthermore that submarines that intended to carry out such attacks were not permitted to fly the Austro-Hungarian flag.

For the naval war in the Mediterranean, it was above all the Strait of Otranto that proved to be one of the most decisive points. With Italian, French and British ships, the Allies had set up a blockade that admittedly remained porous but constituted a considerable obstacle to sailing in and out of the Adriatic. All attempts, and particularly British efforts, to strengthen this barricade so that all surface and underwater traffic

could be prevented, failed, but the blockade nonetheless fulfilled its purpose. The loss of one, and perhaps two, Imperial and Royal submarines was attributable to this net.<sup>1731</sup> It seemed natural, therefore, for the Imperial and Royal Fleet Command to take the decision to eliminate the naval blockage in the Strait of Otranto. The operation was fixed for 15 May 1917 and was to be carried out with the cruisers *Novara*, *Helgoland* and *Saida* under the command of the Ship-of-the-Line Captain Miklos von Horthy.<sup>1732</sup> Parallel to this, and in order to confuse the Allies, an attack by two destroyers against the maritime traffic off the Albanian coast at Vlorë was envisaged.

The operations commenced at 3:30 in the morning and lasted until sunrise. The destroyers under the command of Johannes Prinz von Liechtenstein sank an Italian destroyer and a freighter off Vlorë and damaged two others, so that they had to be abandoned. At the same time, Horthy's formation attacked the cutters in the Strait of Otranto and sunk 14 of 47 boats; four others were partially heavily damaged. Then, however, the hunt began for Horthy's squadron, which succeeded, in spite of a temporary superiority of British, French and Italian ships, in reaching the protection of the ships approaching quickly from Kotor. Finally, the Allied pursuers turned away. Simultaneous attacks by Austro-Hungarian submarines and the laying of sea mines off Brindisi inflicted additional losses on the Allies, so that this day has gone down in the history of Austro-Hungarian naval forces in the Adriatic during the First World War as doubtlessly one of the most successful. The large vessels of the 'Tegetthoff' class had remained inactive.

The most important result of the operation was that the Strait of Otranto had become at least temporarily 'open', since it took until July for Italian warships to once again bestow some protection on the cutters with their net in the Strait.<sup>1733</sup> To this were added six Australian destroyers, a Japanese cruiser, and fourteen further Allied warships that were transferred to the Mediterranean and for a time strengthened the blockade at the exit to the Ionian Sea, and in this way the situation had reverted after a short time to the accustomed scene. The Allies could not completely close off the Strait of Otranto, and they were also unable to provide complete protection to the tugboats, but as a rule it was enough when the Strait, which was more than 40 nautical miles wide, was blocked and monitored for a distance of 24 miles. The Austro-Hungarian naval forces remained trapped in the Adriatic. It was precisely this naval battle that had demonstrated that the proud dreadnoughts were condemned to inaction; not only that: they were useless. The plans for an even more powerful class of destroyers, the 'Laudon', were put on ice, and no more vessels of the 'Tegetthoff' class were commissioned. Only the model of the Fleet's flagship, 'Viribus unitis', continued to be built. It would still not be ready at the war's end.

### The 'Hand of the Child'

The resignation of Tisza and Clam-Martinić and the bewildering personnel changes, which were in such clear contrast to the first two-and-a-half years of the war, did not pass by without having an impact on the public image of the Monarch. The impression of an amiable, young, fresh, especially polite and obliging Emperor and King was supplemented by his unsteadiness and skittishness being criticised, as well as his unpunctuality and above all his style of ruling the Dual Monarchy virtually from the train as a result of his many journeys. It began with the recounting of brief episodes and a systematic 'humanisation' of the Monarch,<sup>1734</sup> and perhaps these were things that the Emperor was pleased to see. He endeavoured to bring about relaxations in all areas, and every measure in itself was equally correct and worthy of criticism. There was unrest everywhere and a historical phenomenon confirmed itself to the effect that it is much easier to let violence escalate and to increase pressure – and also repression – than to reduce violence and remove pressure.

Had it been right to reconvene parliament? Had it been correct to belittle the Army High Command so much in its prestige? Had it been right for the Emperor to assume immediate responsibility for all military and political matters? If this had all been the case from the outset of the war, it would not have constituted a change or triggered any unrest. As it was, however, every step was welcomed, rejected, discussed, and criticised as too late, wrong, too far-reaching or insufficient. But there was neither peace nor more to eat and always only vague hopes that there was some point in holding out. Was it correct that per imperial order in March 1917 the punishment of tethering was rescinded for soldiers, by means of which a man could be bound to a tree with his arms crossed behind his back for no more than two hours? During the war, beating with a stick had been reintroduced, though unofficially, of course.<sup>1735</sup> Karl strictly forbade this. One side wondered why such anachronistic punishments still existed, whilst others asked themselves how an unruly lad was to be made to see reason without a military prison – tethering was only foreseen in the event that there was no prison. An extension of military justice was, at the same time, rejected as well. The Imperial and Royal Army did not yet have any penal battalions. On 19 June 1917, the punishment of locking someone in shackles was repealed, which involved the right hand and the left foot of a simple soldier (the punishment could only be imposed on them) being chained to each other for a maximum time of six hours per day.<sup>1736</sup> Months later, Emperor Karl annulled the regulations again, since being tethered or locked in shackles appeared more harmless to him than the tightening of military justice demanded by the Army after the French model. 'It just was not easy to be the prince of peace and Supreme Commander', as Edmund Glaise-Horstenau formulated it.<sup>1737</sup> Other measures were far less controversial and above all long overdue, such as the decree of 18 September 1917,

according to which fathers of six or more children who were not provided for were not to be subjected to 'constant exposure to the enemy'. Even if this formulation still allowed a great deal of room for manoeuvre, consideration was finally visible in it.<sup>1738</sup> Though why six children?

All these greater and lesser changes atrophied the idea of the inviolability of the ruler. 'Karl the Sudden', as he was named in the Army High Command,<sup>1739</sup> was not the kind of monarch who stood far above things. It was only a small step from the description of minor weaknesses to the circulation of untrue rumours, for example the alcoholism of the Emperor and sexual excesses.<sup>1740</sup> Very soon, connections to the Entente were also assumed and the Empress, two of whose brothers served in the Belgian Army, was brought into play. Another brother, Elias, had admittedly served in the Imperial and Royal Army and fallen in battle in 1916. But this was not enough to silence even the most senseless rumours. It was noticed by the politicians, military men and diplomats who attended court that the Empress occasionally sat somewhere in the corner during discussions of high politics and listened or had the Emperor called away from a conference.<sup>1741</sup> Even the 'Press Service for the Most Senior Gentlemen', which was set up in February 1917, could not prevent the circulation of rumours.<sup>1742</sup> Until July 1917, however, there was hardly anything that would have unleashed massive criticism of the Emperor. Then, however, on 2 July the Emperor announced an amnesty decree for political offences. And with a single blow, the pent-up resentment broke loose.

Days earlier, the Emperor had begun to ponder how the judgements passed by the military courts could be examined. They were frequently not only draconian but unjust, argued Karl. A report, according to which in Tyrol a landlady had been sentenced to death for high treason and then ultimately 'reprieved' by means of the sentence being commuted to a prison term of several years because she had been insulted by officers and had insulted them back, was apparently the final straw.<sup>1743</sup> The new Prime Minister, Baronet Ernst von Seidler, believed that an amnesty would improve the parliamentary situation and thus make his own work easier. The Polish deputy Adolf Gross had already proposed a motion in the judiciary committee for the examination of all judgements passed by military courts.<sup>1744</sup> Above all, however, the Pope and the Curia had by means of silent diplomacy been attempting for some time to induce Emperor Karl to retract death sentences. As early as spring 1916, the Pope had intervened in favour of 16 Serbs in Banja Luka who were sentenced to death for espionage. Since their pardon had failed due to the opposition of the Army High Command, the Vatican renewed its efforts. In July, the Pope extended his intervention to the leader of the Czech radicals, Karel Kramář. The arguments of the Holy See and evidently also the influence of Alois Musil, who had returned from the Ottoman Empire and was now court chaplain, made an impact, and Emperor Karl finally addressed the matter.<sup>1745</sup> Prime Minister Seidler and the Chief of Staff to the Emperor, Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, urged a generous solu-



tion, so that Karl, who was en route from Munich to Vienna at the time, decided on 2 July 1917, the name day of his son, Crown Prince Otto, to announce a far-reaching amnesty. The decisive passage in the imperial handwritten letter to the Prime Minister read: 'I exempt those persons who have been convicted by a civilian or military court for one of the following punishable acts committed in civilian life from the punishment imposed: high treason [...], lèse-majesté [...], insulting members of the imperial family [...], disturbance of the peace [...], insurrection [...], sedition [...].'<sup>1746</sup> Very few people had known of the Emperor's intentions. The Foreign Minister and the other joint ministers, close advisors of the Emperor and the Army High Command had all been uninformed. After only a few days, it was general knowledge in Vienna that the resolution on the amnesty had been adopted behind the back of Czernin, who, as Foreign Minister, also fulfilled the role of Minister of the Imperial and Royal Household, and that he had therefore submitted his resignation. It was not accepted. Instead, Czernin was given the task of defending the amnesty, which could not have been easy for him. He argued that a 'German peace' was no longer achievable, and for this reason a negotiated peace was to be striven for. Great Britain, he continued, had provided an example of how all strengths could be pooled when it decreed an amnesty for all radical followers of the Irish independence movement, Sinn Féin. Furthermore, the military courts had 'committed egregious injustices'. Emperor Karl's recent reception in Munich had been so pointedly friendly because his inclination towards peace was well-known. Finally, Czernin added: 'The Monarchy must be in order domestically before peace is made, otherwise the peace negotiations would also address our internal affairs and we would have a regulation dictated to us.'<sup>1747</sup> But Czernin was evidently unable to convince. When Prime Minister Seidler read the Emperor's letter on 3 July, there was uproar in the House of Representatives of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly). Then a storm blew up in the chamber. What Seidler then said was incomprehensible due to the noise. Things became physical.<sup>1748</sup>

Aside from, initially, the Czechs and the Social Democrats, the amnesty was met with the most strident rejection. Karel Kramář and around 1,000 Czechs were released.<sup>1749</sup> But no-one thought of even remotely acknowledging this step.<sup>1750</sup> Whilst Seidler read the imperial volition in the House of Representatives, German Nationalist deputies called 'Long live high treason!' and 'Kramář for Prime Minister!' German Austrian circles saw the amnesty in general as confirmation 'that their loyalty to the dynasty is repeatedly disappointed, [whilst] the subversive stance of the Slavs, by contrast, is rewarded', as the Saxon envoy wrote.<sup>1751</sup> What should have been an example and a special sign of reconciliation was understood merely as the unfortunate gesture of an inexperienced and frightened monarch. Now the Emperor himself was ridiculed (or had he done it himself?), since some of the formulations in the amnesty decree could be maliciously extrapolated: 'I select today [...], on which my most dearly beloved, eldest

son, granted to me by the grace of God, celebrates his holy patron saint. Thus, the hand of a child, who is destined one day to control the fate of My peoples, leads strays back into the parental home.<sup>1752</sup> The 'hand of the child', which was understood to be Karl's own and not that of Crown Prince Otto, was scoffed at.<sup>1753</sup> It was still believed that the Emperor had simply been poorly advised. This argument was awry, however, since for one thing Karl had selected his advisors himself and for another the amnesty corresponded absolutely to his own wishes and ideas. Karl did not let himself be deterred by the criticism of the amnesty decree from 2 July. The next pardon, which affected 73 soldiers this time, occurred on the occasion of his birthday on 17 August 1917; 46 of them had been sentenced to death for desertion.<sup>1754</sup>

Karl was enthusiastic about the idea of accommodating the demands of the Austrian nationalities and in this way of achieving peace without disintegration. He engaged himself with the federalist concepts of the Vienna Professor for International Law Heinrich Lammasch, who formulated these ideas ever more stridently and struggled against attempts at centralisation. Karl thoroughly accepted what Lammasch said regarding the state of nationalities and the right to self-determination. According to Lammasch, the right to self-determination did not mean 'that all relationships that have settled over the course of centuries, the relationships that are economically deeply anchored, are torn [and] merely sacrificed to the fetish of language'.<sup>1755</sup> Emperor Karl also found the thoughts of the German philosopher and educator Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster very persuasive, and he requested him in summer 1917 to travel from Munich to Laxenburg. In the initiation of contact with Lammasch and with Foerster, the Chief of Staff to the Emperor, Polzer-Hoditz, had played a role that would result months later in his dismissal.<sup>1756</sup> It was via Polzer that the so-called 'Chocolate Party', the Austrian Political Society, which was significantly promoted by Julius Meinl, had gained access to the Emperor. Foerster strongly criticised Bismarck's idea of the nation state and argued that the Danube Monarchy had also allowed itself to be captivated by this, since instead of the old federalist imperial idea it aspired to realise a centralist great power regime with German nationalist hegemony.<sup>1757</sup> Yet, all attempts to implement this concept, which aimed at imperial reform and peace, failed, and the Emperor saw himself increasingly confronted by the resistance of most political forces. He was experiencing the same fate as Lammasch, who had been attacked most severely by his own party, the German *Mittelpartei*, due to his remarks on domestic peace and reconciliation, and then resigned from the party.<sup>1758</sup>

Josef Baernreither noted in his diary: 'The pardon of the ringleaders of the subversive tendency that encourages our enemies, subverts our domestic conditions and costs the lives of thousands of brave soldiers, has done immense damage and robbed the Emperor of a large part of his popularity.'<sup>1759</sup> Here Baernreither referred to a factor to which too little importance had been attached in the context of the amnesty, which had

been issued out of consideration for the parliamentary situation, namely the army in the field and at the front. There, the dubiousness of the measure taken by the Emperor was felt very strongly and, in a sense, at first hand.

### The Czech Legion

The situation on the Eastern Front had been characterised for months by the attempts to achieve a partial ceasefire and a general armistice with the Russians. Vigilance could not be allowed to wane and the troops were routinely engaged, but otherwise the soldiers enjoyed unaccustomed calm. It had been observed in April that the spirit of the troops was consistently satisfactory. Then, supplies had been taken care of and it had been proposed to give the soldiers more leave and more often. The regiments and divisions continued to feel normal and did not appear to have been infected by the revolution. In the meantime, they were also informed about the events in the interior of their own country and on the, at least hinted at, renunciation of the entire state by some nationalities. Whether this would have an impact on the conduct of the soldiers could not yet be known. *Vis-à-vis* the Russians, homage was paid by and large to the principle of live and let live. This is illustrated, for example, by the following passage from a letter: 'The Russians sit on the parapet in broad daylight, remove their shirts and search for lice. There are no shots from our side [...].' Only the Russian artillery fired occasionally: 'The artillery command over there is a Frenchman. The Russians have sent word to us that they want to kill him.'<sup>1760</sup>

The Chief of Staff of Army Group 'Erzherzog Joseph', the German General Hans von Seeckt, was requested by the German Supreme Army Command in May 1917 to put together a report on the Imperial and Royal troops, which was then submitted on 1 June.<sup>1761</sup> The report was connected to the persistent rumours about a war between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, as were many other reports composed at this time and requested by the German Supreme Army Command or the imperial government in Berlin.<sup>1762</sup> Seeckt's report paid attention primarily to the contrast between Hungary and the rest of the Empire, but this singling out of Hungary alone was distinctive. The Hungarians had also not been left unaffected by events. The resentment manifested itself in many different ways. The Hungarian officers and soldiers no longer wanted to be ordered around by Germans, Czechs and Poles. The army, Seeckt wrote, was in some places a thoroughly foreign body. Especially in Hungary, it was anything but enraptured by the political conflict, but rather the subject of national ownership and an 'object of trade within domestic politics'. Decisive in the army was the Austrian influence, which was exerted by the purely German lands. But 'Germanism has recruiting power neither in the state apparatus of the Monarchy nor in the

army'. Hungary had been repeatedly snubbed and discriminated against, for which reason it had 'not even remotely achieved for the army what was to be demanded from its physical and moral strength'. A consequence of the anti-Hungarian current had been the permissiveness towards Czech propaganda. Even the Poles had been favoured by Vienna, which had manifested itself in turn in an 'unbridled oppression' of the Ruthenians. Seeckt also observed that the 'self-confidence and the deep aversion of the Hungarians, soon increasing to hatred, soon increasing to contempt, against the current Army Command [had] grown strongly'. He argued the case, under the influence of the army group commander Archduke Joseph, who was conspicuously Hungarophile, for a national Hungarian army. However, the concessions were not to be extended to other nationalities in the army.

Seeckt was in this way in line with other spoken and written statements when he emphasised Hungary and the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) as stable elements and wanted particular consideration given to them. It was more the secondary points, however, that deserve our attention: Austria's Germans, who no longer had any 'recruiting power', the permissiveness towards the Czechs, who were particularly in Hungary neither understood nor approved of, and the oppression of the Ruthenians. The sentence about the concessions that could be made to Hungary but not to other nationalities was particularly significant, however, since it assumed that the existing division of the Empire and rule would remain constant. The army was to also look like this. If there was one thing that had been clear since 30 May 1917, however, it was that the Dual Monarchy was not only to be understood as the orbit of two nationalities, who still encountered each other with some respect and consideration, but whose status and also whose relationship to one another could ultimately be maintained only at the expense of the other nine nationalities. Both the Germans of the Monarchy and the Hungarians had to acknowledge this. Seeckt himself was lacking not least in understanding for Czechs and Poles, but also for the fact that the soldiers from Bohemia and Moravia, as well as the Slovaks, no longer simply let themselves be disciplined and 'punched down' into other troop bodies. In some cases, they still tended to desert. The Russians also did everything to propagandistically promote this latent inclination to desert.<sup>1763</sup> In Russia, there were by now hundreds of thousands of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war, whilst the number in Serbia was 30,000 and in Italy more than 10,000. They constituted a potential that could not remain without consequences for the Imperial and Royal Army.<sup>1764</sup> And this was not only in true in the sense that these people left their own ranks. In view of the brisk activities of the Czech émigrés and the effective Russian propaganda, which took care to refer to the democratic changes in Russia, a considerable factor of uncertainty crept in that could not be dealt with using the classic methods of leadership within the Imperial and Royal Army. What would happen if the Russians were to deploy Czechs against their own compatriots? Who would then describe whom as 'traitors'?

On 30 June 1917, under the new Russian Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Front, Aleksei Brusilov, an offensive began that bore the name of the Minister of War and the Navy Alexander Kerensky: the 'Kerensky Offensive'. Brusilov intended to repeat his success at Olyka and Lutsk in June and July 1916. The Russian 11th Army was to attack in the direction of Zolochiv (Solotschiw) and topple the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army (Böhm-Ermolli). The Russian 7th Army was given the area around Berezhany (Bereschany) and the German South Army (Bothmer) as its target. After a few days, the Russian 8th Army was also to step up against the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army (Tersztyánszky), which was situated south of the Dniester River. The objectives were not very far-reaching, but if they were achieved, the Russian soldiers would regain their confidence in victory and the Kerensky government a high degree of approval. In some places, the Russians were hardly recognisable. Attempts had been made to change many things in order to make the soldiers ready for war again. The military administration had been trawled for men that were fit to fight on the front, since around one million people were busy administering the war (aside from the 2.9 million people who kept the war going in the civilian sector). Whatever could be made available in terms of weapons and ammunition was sent to the western front. The treatment of soldiers had improved somewhat, at least action had begun to be taken against excessive beatings, which had been widespread. The creation of female so-called 'battalions of death', for which around 2,000 women volunteered in May 1917 alone,<sup>1765</sup> was intended not only as a sign to women but also to be understood as a signal that the manliness of the warrior was being called into question, and many other things. Ultimately, what mattered was whether the offensive was successful and the disintegration of the Russian Army stopped.

At Berezhany, the Russians could not force their way through. German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish troops achieved a clear defensive victory. In the direction of Zolochiv, however, the Russians gained ground. Brusilov had gathered divisions on the offensive front that had not been influenced by the months-long propaganda of the Central Powers, either because they had proved to be resistant or because they had been in the reserve and hence not reached by the propaganda at the front.<sup>1766</sup> On 30 June, the preliminary artillery fire commenced that was characteristic for offensives. Shortly thereafter, the Russians climbed out of their trenches and stormed the Austro-Hungarian lines. After three days, some Imperial and Royal divisions showed signs of disintegration. There was a crisis in the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army, when parts of the 19th Infantry Division crossed over to the Russians. On 4 July, the Russian army report read: 'The brave troops of the 4th Finnish Division as well as the Czecho-Slovakian Brigade took possession of the heavily fortified enemy positions on the hills west and south-west of the village of Zborov and the fortified village of Korchilow, after they had broken through 3 enemy trench lines. The enemy withdrew to the other side

of the Mala Strypa River [...]. The Czecho-Slovakian Brigade captured 62 officers and 3,150 soldiers, and seized 15 cannons and a large number of machine guns, which were for the most part turned on the enemy.<sup>1767</sup> A gap in the front emerged. What had happened?

The Czecho-Slovakian Brigade had been systematically established. As early as 1914, Czech units had begun to be formed in the Kiev military district, which the Russians called the 'Hussite Legion', whilst the Czechs themselves called them 'Česká družina' (Czech Fellowship) or, generally, 'dobrovolnici' (volunteers).<sup>1768</sup> In November 1914, several dozen people began to systematically bring in Czech prisoners of war and to attempt to induce them to join the Russian Army. For a period of months, however, the 'družina' had met with no noteworthy success. Czech organisations and individuals, such as the then Second Lieutenant Vladimir Klecanda, had repeated success in persuading Czech soldiers to desert.<sup>1769</sup> Since the Russians had clearly hesitated, however, to set up and deploy Czecho-Slovakian troops, the establishment of actual Czech units proceeded only very sluggishly. In order not to come into conflict with the Hague Convention on Land Warfare, the Czechs that then joined the 'legion' were forced to adopt Russian citizenship and, of course, wear Russian uniforms.<sup>1770</sup> For the Imperial and Royal Army, however, they were still guilty of high treason. Czech members of the Imperial and Royal Army were repeatedly prepared to lay down their arms or even to desert, but they did not show much inclination to be recruited by the Russians. They were also content to be treated better by the Russians in prisoner of war captivity as a type of investment in the future than, for example, the German Austrian or the Hungarian prisoners of war (see Chapter 26). By 1916, a Czecho-Slovakian rifle regiment and, eventually, a rifle brigade with two regiments had been established. The Russians still hesitated to deploy these formations on their south-western front, even under Russian command and with Russian officers. Émigré circles, therefore, considered forming a Czecho-Slovakian corps in Russia but transporting it to France to fight against the Germans. The Czech offer to set up Czecho-Slovakian army components was met with such enthusiasm by the western Allies that the Russians ultimately agreed to a transfer even before the February Revolution. Subsequently, intensive recruiting took place among the prisoners of war in Russia. Pamphlets and appeals flooded the camps; pressure was also exerted.<sup>1771</sup> The changes brought about by the bourgeois revolution in Russia also had the effect, however, that the Czechs were to be deployed in the framework of the Russian Army after all. Thus, two of the three Czecho-Slovakian regiments that had been set up by then joined the 49th Corps of General Selivachev in the structure of the 11th Army.<sup>1772</sup> They saw themselves as the first Czech troops to fight for their homeland since the Battle of White Mountain in 1620.

The Battle of Zborov (Zborów) immediately, and in fact very differently to all previous events, shed light on how precarious the inner fabric of the Imperial and Royal

Army had become in spite of a long lull in the fighting, and how comparatively easily the unstable conditions could be exploited. The two overwhelmingly Czech regiments of the Imperial and Royal 19th Infantry Division, namely the Infantry Regiment No. 35 and the Infantry Regiment No. 75, had initially fought quite normally and had not even been aware that the Czecho-Slovakian rifle brigade had been brought into position opposite them. Then there was contact, heavy fighting and, finally, a deep incursion into the 19th Infantry Division. The causes of this incursion were explained in different ways. The divisional commander, Major General Böltz, emphatically defended the impeccable conduct of his regiments. However, on 2 July alone, there were fifteen dead and 330 wounded as compared with 2,595 missing and twenty prisoners. The army commander, General Böhm-Ermolli, was convinced that the missing were largely 'cowardly deserters'. As in the case of Infantry Regiments Nos. 28 and 36, in the framework of investigations by the military justice it was observed that the troops were not in fact at fault and that they had fought bravely and devotedly. The fact that the Czech brigade took up the cause of victory at Zborov and very much endeavoured to invoke a nationalistic harmony seemed once more to prove those right who were ready to condemn the conduct of the Czechs in the World War.<sup>1773</sup> Apparently, there were also human tragedies, since it was not simply Czechs fighting against Imperial and Royal troops, but also compatriots against one other. Relatives were suddenly confronted with each other. By no means all Czechs of the 19th Infantry Division laid down their weapons or deserted. In one case, a father is said to have shot his son.<sup>1774</sup> Nonetheless: a myth had been created.

For the Imperial and Royal Army, the Kerensky Offensive had by no means become such a catastrophe that it could be compared with Lutsk. The Russians had only succeeded in breaking through the Austro-Hungarian troops, and crisis had again arisen in a section that was held predominantly by Czech regiments. And this was precisely on the day on which the amnesty of their national leaders and the pardon of their offending compatriots had been announced. But it should not be overlooked that there was not a real connection between the two. The amnesty had been decreed on 2 July, on the same day as the crisis emerged in the 19th Infantry Division. The soldiers could not yet have known about events in Vienna. The conclusions that linked them to what occurred at Zborov were, therefore, largely incorrect. Notwithstanding this: the perspective was askew.

The Chief of Staff of the Army Group 'Erzherzog Joseph', the German General Hans von Seeckt, again came forward and expressed more than only his own personal opinion when he wrote: 'In the moment that the Russians deployed a Czecho-Slovakian division, which they were able to form with deserters, their instigators and friends are pardoned.'<sup>1775</sup> The fact that it had been Czechs who were made responsible for the military setback was thoroughly instrumentalised. Evidently, everyone was to know of

it, even if it was, at best, only half the truth. 'It could be read in French newspapers that the 81st ("Iglau") Infantry Division [had] deserted to the enemy in droves', wrote Lance Corporal Robert Nowak to his mother; he had gained knowledge of this information through official channels.<sup>1776</sup> And the *Grazer Tagblatt* commented on the events of 6 July as follows: 'Czech soldiers who during the three years of war have either deserted to the enemy or been captured by the Russians, form a brigade within the Russian army units, not to serve in the Russian hinterland but instead to raise their weapons at the front against their fatherland, against their national comrades. [...] Perhaps this occurrence at Tborov is the most ignominious crime that has been committed in this war by the sons of Austria. We have known for a long time that the captive Czechs are not treated as enemies in Russia, but that they will sink so deep as to take part in an offensive on Austrian soil ordered by the English and the French – this had to become clear at a time when the Russian regiments are being presented with red flags. Is that the thanks of the House of Libussa for the magnanimous deed of our Emperor?'<sup>1777</sup>

The front had to be withdrawn. The 19th Infantry Division was substituted with German troops, and the crisis had then been mastered for the time being. On 6 July, however, the Russian 8th Army (Kornilov) advanced south of the Dniester as far as Stanislau and was able to force back the Imperial and Royal 3rd Army at Kalush (Kalusch). The cause was established as the failure of the predominantly Hungarian 15th Infantry Division. Reinforcements from the German South Army were also able to bring about a stabilisation here, until additional German troops could be brought in from Transylvania. In this case, it was not the members of the division that were reprimanded but instead the commanders. The Commander of the 3rd Army, General Tersztyánszky, was above all dismissed and replaced by the current Commander of the X Corps, General Křitek.

The short-term failures of the troops of the Central Powers did not have any lasting effect on the situation on the Eastern Front, since already a few days later not only was the offensive power of the Russians exhausted but the countermeasures of the Central Powers also made themselves felt. Also in this case, however, the pattern of 1916 was retained: the army commander and other Austro-Hungarian commanders and chiefs of staff were relieved of their posts. German commanders and chiefs of staff were increasingly brought in. German divisions that had already been transferred to the east at the first signs of an impending Russian offensive were inserted into the front. Finally, on 19 July a counter-attack took place and hit the Russians, who were in the meantime on their last legs. The Eastern Front High Command forewent a stronger participation on the part of Imperial and Royal troops.<sup>1778</sup>

Kerensky and Brusilov had hoped that the offensive would initiate a lasting turnaround and also absorb something of the revolutionary potential. This, however, would have required a sweeping success – and that was not achieved. After the brief consol-



idation of the front, therefore, despondency and insubordination spread once more among the Russians. The cases of desertion, which had temporarily become fewer in number, quickly increased again, especially since the Russians had to cope not only with the failure of their own offensive but also the counteroffensive of the Central Powers. German troops pierced the front of the Russian 11th Army. After a few days, the entire 11th Army had been forced to retreat. To the south, the fronts of the Russian 7th and 8th Army were also wavering. The German and the Imperial and Royal troops did not have sufficient forces, however, to immediately follow up and begin a general offensive. To blame for this was above all the desperately poor state of supplies. By 1 June 1917, 45,000 horses had died of starvation and exhaustion in the area of the Austro-Hungarian armies alone.<sup>1779</sup> Since oats and corn had been reserved almost exclusively for human consumption, the horses could only be given grass and a very little grain. The hot summer had also scorched the grass. The horses found next to nothing in the fields. The use of the motorised troops was rapidly increasing, but a further expansion reached its limits because the necessary petrol was not available either. It was furthermore in dispute where an offensive should be directed.

The Russians sought to delay the collapse of their front a little longer. They conducted relief offensives on both flanks in the north and in the south, but these brought little success. The Russians were forced back once more. The Imperial and Royal 7th Army linked up with the 2nd Army. The Army High Command summarised developments on 17 August as follows: 'The enemy frequently resisted tenaciously against the 3rd Army, but particularly in the mountains against the 7th Army. By means of the pursuing troops quickly taking hold and the insertion and mutual support of the columns in the mountains, the enemy resistance could repeatedly be quickly broken. Imperial and Royal troops took Stanislaw on 24 July, Kolomyia on the 26th, Zalischyky on the 29th and finally Chernivtsi early on 2 August after bitter fighting. Desolation and plunder mark the route of the retreating Russians. Of great significance is also the destruction of numerous railways, which subsequently impacted heavily on the delivery of our supplies. Particularly the supply of ammunition suffered from the long distances between the final rail stops, which also expressed itself in hostilities and in the slowing down of the tempo of the pursuit.'<sup>1780</sup> The German Eastern Front High Command carried out limited offensive thrusts both in the far north and in Romania with the Army Group Mackensen. They achieved only limited success. The possibility of encircling 100,000 Russians in the area of Ternopil (Tarnopol) also failed, since too few troops were available. Controversy arose between the commanders at the front over the continuation of the war in the east. There were scenes whose emotional power was only comprehensible to those who were aware of the simmering and, in part, open conflict between Germans and 'Oyster Hungarians', as the Prussian War Minister had once called them. Ternopil had been taken by Prussian guards. Kaiser Wilhelm hastened to the scene in order to

praise the troops. He entered the city before Emperor Karl, who did not arrive until a little later. At this point the Imperial and Royal War Press Bureau was instructed to portray the victories south of the Dniester exclusively as Austro-Hungarian military feats. Emperor Karl once again decorated officers and enlisted men in his army ostentatiously and in excess. East Galicia and Bukovina had been occupied by the Russians since 1914. Now they came under Austrian administration again. Was this to the credit of the Germans or an independent Austrian achievement? For Austria-Hungary, in any case, one war aim had been taken care of, since from this point on there was nothing left in the east to reconquer. For the German Empire, however, this was by all accounts not the case. There were other objectives in the east, which the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, General Cramon, summarised as follows: Germany and Prussia 'stood at the end of a victorious struggle and could not simply forego aspirations that, furthermore, overlapped with the desires of the Russian border population'. Vienna, however, had accepted the formula of a peace without annexations or contributions. The fact that Vienna 'would be prepared to yield to this formula could be expected; the unaltered retention of the eastern border constitutes for Austria in itself a very favourable conclusion; especially as it had already been inwardly determined to sacrifice East Galicia for the sake of peace'.<sup>1781</sup>

The Russians still boasted considerable numerical forces, but they demonstrated such overt signs of collapse that the internal process of decay was visible. When the Kerensky Offensive had already passed its peak, a Bolshevik coup attempt was made in Petrograd. It was unsuccessful, but the Lvov government resigned and Kerensky assumed power. Russia was heading for the second phase of its revolution.

### **A German General on the Danube Monarchy**

When the summer battle of 1917 ended and the military situation no longer gave any cause for alarm, Hans von Seeckt wrote another report to the Chief of the German General Staff, Field Marshal von Hindenburg.<sup>1782</sup> In this report he addressed not so much the field army as political conditions in the Danube Monarchy.

For a long time, and increasingly for the previous three months, according to Seeckt, in both halves of the Monarchy 'attempts [had been] underway that ultimately in part aim at, and must in part result in, the loosening or the dissolution of the alliance with Germany'. These endeavours had a direct impact on the conduct of the war. 'With a strength that is suspected by only few departments, forces have dared to emerge in Austria itself that declare as their aim the application of the principle of nationality and, with it, the foundation of a federalist state. [...] It may be noted that in the Austrian House of Representatives it has been openly stated on the Czech side that they are

fighting on the wrong side. The response was the amnesty decree [...] [;] the amnesty exempted the treasonous machinations from punishment. [...] The prospect of a further accommodation of national desires is certain. [...] From our point of view, one could again regard this development as an inner-Austrian one, if it did not stand in the direct context of foreign policy. An Austria with decisive Slav influence will be neither capable of an alliance nor willing to engage in one. This could also be left to future developments if the same anti-German elements were not urging a peace that they are prepared to sign any day at the expense of the German Empire.' Seeckt then addressed conditions in Hungary. The raising of the question of suffrage and the toppling of Tisza had changed everything. The incorporation of supporters of Count Károlyi, who wanted to steer a strictly democratic course and was also prepared to sacrifice the Magyar hegemony, meant that the pro-German elements were being increasingly forced back. 'The Crown demands the adoption of the amnesty in Hungary as well, which would mean here the immunity of the Romanian traitors and the suppression of the investigation being conducted against them. [...] the danger also exists here in the calls for peace by the wearer of the crown and in the fact that he is inclined to accept things that are undesirable in pursuit of this aim.' Károlyi was also able to say in the presence of Emperor Karl 'that in his opinion Austria-Hungary is now only fighting for German interests and the sooner peace can and must be concluded, the better'. The central role naturally belonged to the Emperor and King. Seeckt, who had got to know Karl over a long period of time at close proximity and who, like his Chief of Staff, had by all means thought highly of him, revised his former assessment drastically: Karl, he claimed, was very easily influenced. Seeckt argued that he had underestimated how much Karl had been shaken in his self-confidence due to the frequent failure of the Imperial and Royal troops, but had developed from that a feeling of animosity towards Germany. 'The big picture is so unclear to him, just as he overlooks the consequences of his measures. [...] The following emotions are decisive for him at the present time: anxiety about a revolution at home, concern for a military defeat, a yearning for peace.' These aims could well win the upper hand over loyalty to the alliance. And then what would happen? Seeckt did not know, either. He was just the messenger.

Whilst it had looked in spring 1917 as though peace would come about after all, it became increasingly unlikely in summer 1917 that it would be possible to exit the war. In April, the formula of peace without annexations and contributions had been seized upon by the Social Democrats in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and informal contacts alone were by and large able to bring about a rapprochement. Since the Russians had swung towards continuing the war, the Social Democrats saw themselves cheated of a mighty hope. But the threads otherwise knotted together in a very lasting way. Since the German imperial government had proved to be flexible regarding the demands of the Supreme Army Command and the Kaiser, in April 1917 the war aims

in Germany had been further fixed instead of being dramatically revised. Towards Russia, only an alteration of the borders in Courland and Lithuania had been demanded, and Germany otherwise wanted to come to terms with Russia. In return, following a thorough discussion of war aims in Bad Kreuznach, the German imperial leadership let it be known, among other things, that Austria-Hungary was to forego any influence in Poland, whilst the Russians were to be given East Galicia and be reimbursed in Moldavia at the expense of the Romanians. Austria-Hungary would also have the opportunity to expand there and, apart from that, was to strive for a realisation of its war aims in the Balkans.

At the end of April, Foreign Minister Czernin had unmistakably and openly expressed the Habsburg Monarchy's renunciation of annexations. The Monarchy, as Czernin officially announced in the Viennese *Fremdenblatt* on 26 April, did not intend above all to expand its territory at the expense of Russia.<sup>1783</sup> Berlin thereupon reproached Austria-Hungary heavily. Czernin let it be known, however, that a revolution would make Austria worthless to Germany. During food riots in Moravia, it had already been necessary for the military to make use of its weapons. 21 dead, including half-starved women, had remained where they lay.<sup>1784</sup> With this, Czernin wanted to make it clear that Austria-Hungary was on the verge of a revolution. The German Empire did not want to understand this, and the conflict between Berlin and Vienna could not be eliminated. The result was a week of fruitless negotiations back and forth, during which everyone was scheming against everyone else. Not until mid-June did the situation ease, when the first signs of the Kerensky Offensive were spotted and Czernin verbally relented, since he did not want to put at stake the necessary cooperation with the German Empire in the event of a revival of the fighting.<sup>1785</sup>

But the problems naturally remained and the threads tangled even further. Russia had spoken out against a separate peace, but it lost its alliance capability. Czernin intended – like the Turkish Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha – to expand the formula of a renunciation of annexations brought to bear vis-à-vis Russia and extend it to the west. Just as he had also done in a memorandum for the Privy Council on 22 March 1917, the Foreign Minister argued the case that Austria-Hungary should no longer pursue its ideas for a solution to the Polish question but instead vacate Poland, as it were, for the Germans. In return, the latter had indicated to France that they did not harbour any annexation wishes towards their western neighbours, Belgium and France.<sup>1786</sup> Czernin had also made it known that Germany was to forego Alsace-Lorraine, but the German Imperial Chancellor had flatly dismissed this idea. It was quite clear that they found themselves in a cul-de-sac. At the end of June, Czernin turned to the German parliamentarians, above all the deputy of the Catholic Centre Party Mathias Erzberger and the Social Democrat deputy Albert Südekum and explained to them that the Habsburg Monarchy was prepared to forego annexations in general. He let the

German parliamentarians know that Berlin would also have to be content with the status quo, including the surrender of the German colonies. Czernin applied all means of secret diplomacy. The Bavarian State Governor Hertling, the Chief of the Admirals' Staff Henning von Holtzendorff and the parliamentary deputy Erzberger were all recruited in order to overcome the gridlock and to show a clear stance at least towards Russia. Czernin was unsuccessful. His foray into the inner-German political landscape accelerated a process, however, that had been unleashed by the conflict surrounding the Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. The majority in the Reichstag (Imperial Diet) also voiced the desire to reduce the war aims. Bethmann Hollweg lost support in parliament. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, however, made their stay at the top of the German Supreme Army Command dependent on the government continuing to support the annexationist stance. Otherwise, they would request that Kaiser Wilhelm discharge them. Instead, the German Imperial Chancellor offered to step down; the Kaiser dismissed him. With the departure of Bethmann Hollweg, a man had gone who had repeatedly and successfully opposed the Supreme Army Command, and who had led what had ultimately been a forlorn struggle against the annexationist desires of the Army Command in the formulation of war aims, but had ultimately always backed down for the sake of political unity. Everywhere, the problem was that it was believed that at least some aims could be achieved by continuing the war. Czernin acted in a particularly contradictory fashion. Scarcely had he informed Berlin of the general renunciation of annexations and the attainment of the status quo, when he told the Turks in July that Austria-Hungary was not willing to forego any territorial expansion and reparations, either. In the meantime, the preconditions had shifted again because the Kerensky Offensive appeared to prove that the Russians were evidently renouncing the formula of peace without annexations, which they had in fact called into existence. As a result, the question of the purpose of the war again came to the fore, and peace with victory was once again aspired to.

Uncertainty also reigned in the Entente camp. The Russian Provisional Government had attempted to make clear to its allies the connection between the renunciation of annexations and the right to self-determination. In that case, Austria-Hungary would definitely succumb to decomposition. The Russians wanted to hold a conference on war aims and also hoped to be able to induce the western Allies to moderate their objectives. Then, however, as a result of the failed Kerensky Offensive, they forfeited the claim to be counted among the full-value allies. The first Bolshevik coup attempt was made. Last but not least, there was a conflict between Kerensky, who had risen to Prime Minister, and the new Supreme Commander, General Kornilov. As a result, Russia gradually fell away not only as an ally but also as a negotiating partner for the Entente. The possibility of an agreement between the Central Powers and Russia, on the other hand, again became more likely. Russian policies were geared towards a general peace.

But it was up to the western powers to make a decision on the continuation of the war. The Russians could no longer influence them.

Following the defence against the Kerensky Offensive, the whole of East Galicia and Bukovina were once more in Austrian hands. For Austria, it was thus no longer necessary to make territorial concessions, although for a time the option had actually been contemplated of giving the Russians the eastern territories of the Danube Monarchy in return for relinquishing Courland and Lithuania to the Germans. Haggling and discussions took place as though there were a lasting peace and one day, one week, one month more or less was irrelevant.

### Peace Feelers

The impossibility of resuming political intercourse between the belligerents resulted from the diversity of interests. At the same time as the conclusion of a separate peace entered the realm of possibility in Russia and all attempts were to be made to achieve a general peace, developments within the western coalition led again to contrary tendencies. In France, there had been extensive mutinies after Joffre's successor in the High Command, General Nivelle, had ordered reckless attacks against the German front in spring 1917. The mutinies were quelled and there were numerous death sentences. Nivelle was substituted for General Pétain. Then, however, a wave of arrests took place in order to silence socialists and pacifists who had committed themselves to the formula of peace without annexations. In Great Britain, no let-up in the war effort was noticeable either. France and Great Britain had, however, had it in their hands for a short time to bring about a separate peace with Austria-Hungary.

On 17 April 1917, a meeting had taken place with the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George at the urgent request of the French President Alexandre Ribot. The contents of a letter from Emperor Karl were discussed, which had been brought to the attention of the French government by Karl's brother-in-law Sixtus Bourbon-Parma.<sup>1787</sup> The French and the British were aware that a discernible offer of Austro-Hungarian concessions and a separate peace had to be discussed above all with Italy. But the Italian Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino proved to be completely unamenable. Instead of exerting pressure on him, however, Ribot and Lloyd George contented themselves with an Italian 'no'. The matter was to have consequences.

After nothing had come of the separate peace, Lloyd George recommended a change of strategy: instead of striking the 'strongest positions in the enemy armour' with their swords, as they had been doing, the Allies were to attack the weakest. Instead of beginning a new offensive in Flanders, they were to transfer all available troops to Italy and drive Austria-Hungary from the field.<sup>1788</sup> The British Premier had concluded from

Emperor's Karl's attempts to make peace that the enemy coalition was close to crumbling. If strong pressure were exerted on Austria-Hungary, it would collapse. A subsequent separate peace with the Dual Monarchy would then, in a type of domino effect, force Bulgaria, Turkey and finally also the German Empire to their knees. Only in this way, as Lloyd George believed, would a lasting peace in Europe be possible, since such a peace would have to impose conditions on Germany that would decisively paralyse its offensive power.<sup>1789</sup> The thrust of the Allies was thus retained and the attempt was made to offset the loss of Russia.

With the end of tsarism in Russia, Serbia had lost its most important backer. It had been Russia that had persuaded Serbia to reject the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum in July 1914, Russia that had formulated ambitious war aims with Serbia, and Russia that had also attempted to safeguard Serbia's interests during the negotiations on the entry of Italy into the war. Russia's Provisional Government let it very soon be known, however, that a Kingdom of Serbia was of no concern to it, and merely a Yugoslavian solution based on democratic principles would find support.<sup>1790</sup> The Serbian government in exile was forced to adapt itself to these altered circumstances. Prime Minister Pašić invited representatives of the so-called Yugoslav Committee to Corfu. In mid-June, the delegations of the Committee and the Serbian government in exile met on the island and negotiated there until 20 July 1917. By then, they had reached an understanding, with which the creation of a Yugoslav state was agreed on. Croatian circles in America disagreed with the agreement, since they feared that it would not contain sufficient guarantees against Serbian attempts at centralisation and supremacy. But the 'European' Croat leaders in exile, Trumbić and Šupilo, were thoroughly satisfied with it. With the Corfu accord, things had changed for Serbs, as well as for Croats and Slovenes. From then on, Serbia wanted and was to fight not only to reconquer its lost tracts of land and, if need be, incorporate additional areas into its territory, but also for an independent Yugoslavia and the unification of Croats and Slovenes. And the Yugoslav or Croatian and Slovenian representatives no longer aimed at an Austria organised trialistically or howsoever, but instead at partition. The Entente, however, focussed completely on its own peace with victory and appeared to be further away from achieving a negotiated peace than ever.

Those in Austria-Hungary who wanted to pursue a policy of peace got repeatedly caught up in the intricacies of alliance politics and in the snares of domestic affairs. This applied in particular to Emperor Karl. In Czernin he had a Foreign Minister who took a view that ultimately levelled out at a policy of status quo. On the other hand, it was precisely Czernin who had moved over in June and July 1917 to influencing not only German internal politics but, even more so, those of Austria. In doing so, he drew on German components and ultimately entered so thoroughly into his own political game that he banked on the Germans even more so than his predecessors. He once compared

a separate peace with the Entente to the suicide of a man who shoots himself out of fear of death.<sup>1791</sup> Emperor Karl, on the other hand, feared nothing more than a German peace. That would be 'our ruin', as he had already written to the Foreign Minister in May 1917.<sup>1792</sup>

Czernin attempted to consolidate his position by pursuing the candidature of an Austrian prime minister who was acceptable to him. He also regarded Seidler as only an interim solution. But he was alarmed by the Emperor's consultations first with Redlich and then with Lammasch. Both of them were from the Austrian Political Society and most certainly did not count among the unconventional and power-conscious Czernin's partisans. A few days before Lammasch was summoned to the Emperor in July, he had advised Czernin to issue the German Empire with an ultimatum to consent within 48 hours to the secession of Alsace-Lorraine or Austria-Hungary would otherwise conclude a separate peace. Czernin promptly passed this demand on to the German ambassador in Vienna, von Wedel, and added that he, Czernin, would not create a 'mess'.<sup>1793</sup> The influence of German people in power on the Emperor, Czernin's arguments that the alliance politics were a vital matter for Austria-Hungary and a deviation from them would inevitably lead to its demise, as well as the indecisiveness of the already elderly Heinrich Lammasch, led to the failure of the project to make him prime minister. Once again, a 'July Crisis' had been overcome. This was not only merely a triumph for the Foreign Minister, however, but also at the same time the transition to a phase of politics in which it was the Foreign Minister and not foreign policy who dominated, and in which the Austrian half of the Empire was administered but not really led.

Czernin attempted for a time to install Baron Max Wladimir von Beck as prime minister, but then he was entirely satisfied with Baronet Ernst von Seidler. He was more easily guided. The temporary became the permanent. And Czernin could extract himself from supporting his Emperor as long as in the latter's efforts to make peace. This was nowhere more deeply noticeable than during talks conducted between the Bavarian Professor Friedrich Wilhelm von Foerster on behalf of Emperor Karl and the representative of the American President Wilson, David Herron. At a meeting in Switzerland, Foerster had indicated to Herron that the Austrian Emperor was looking for support among the western powers for his reform plans. Foerster related the difficulties that Karl had experienced with his ministers in the wake of the amnesty decree. The Monarch had a mind to turn away from Prussian militarism. Austria-Hungary was not a German empire but a multi-national state in which Germans comprised a hopeless minority. Given the size of the Dual Monarchy, the best solution would be a confederation, which would serve as an 'antidote' to Germany.<sup>1794</sup>

Herron forwarded Foerster's account to London. The Munich professor returned to Vienna in order to report to the Emperor. But here, not only had Czernin been able to

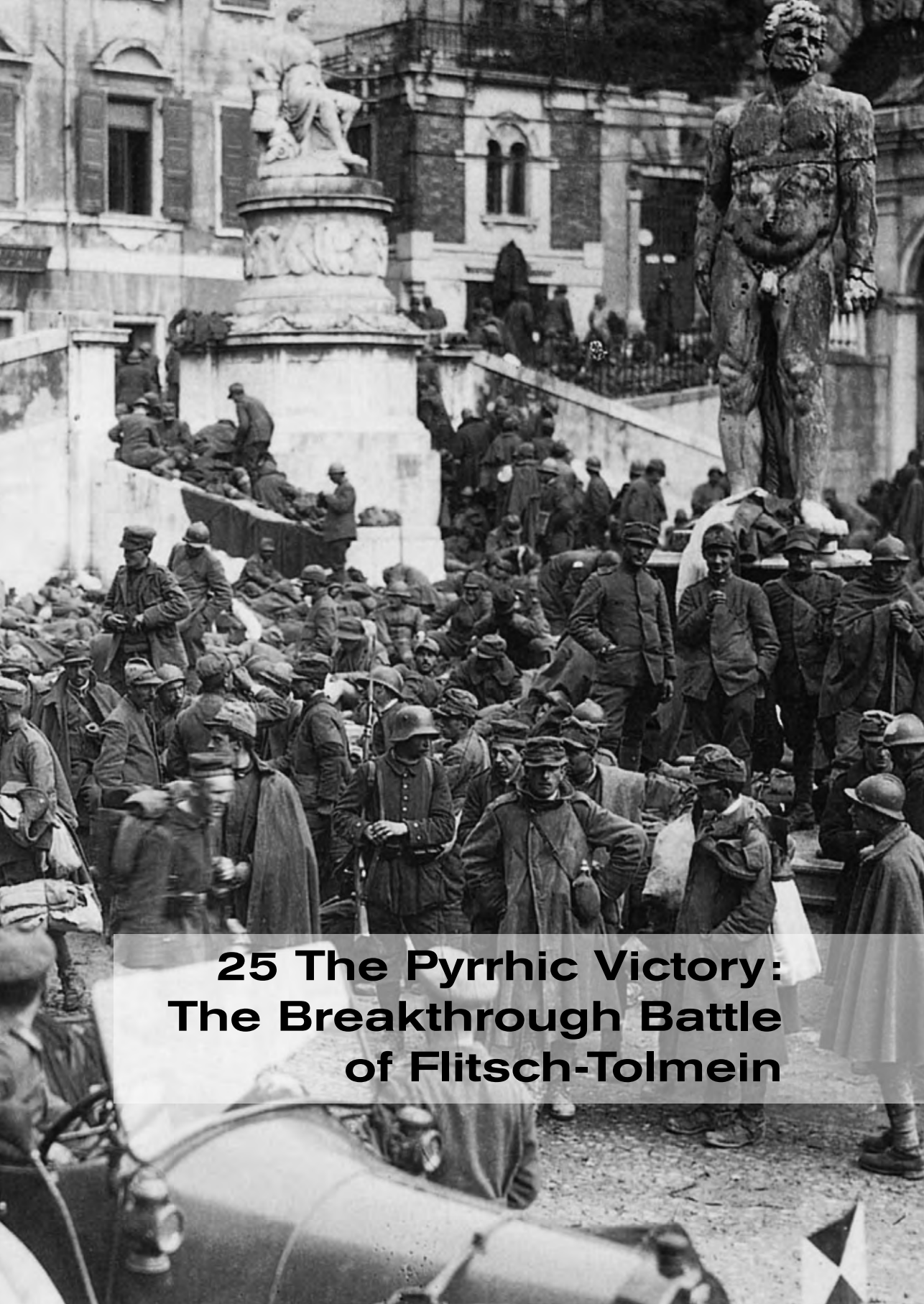


decisively consolidate his position; the Germans had not been idle either. Forester was no longer allowed to see the Emperor and the Chief of Staff Polzer-Hoditz turned him away with the words from Dante's *Inferno*: 'Lasciate ogni speranza.'<sup>1795</sup>

The failure of Czernin's attempts to enter into negotiations with the Entente powers certainly played a strong role in the changes that could be observed not only in his politics but also in himself. To this was added jealousy, since when Czernin failed, the others should be unsuccessful as well. The Foreign Minister was anxious beyond any sensible and necessary extent to be the only person responsible for policy, so that he became harsh and impatient towards everyone who attempted at the same time to put out peace feelers. He also mistrustfully took heed that the Emperor did not embark on any 'excursions'. A willingness to make peace and engage in negotiations had been repeatedly signalled during the spring. This was a genuine chance and – as it was to turn out – one that would never be repeated. At this moment, a clear policy of renunciation, without wanting to interfere simultaneously in German affairs, as well as a decisive imperial reform, would perhaps have been able to save the existence of the Monarchy. But at the time no-one saw this clearly enough and acted with the necessary consistency, least of all the Foreign Minister. Even Lloyd George, who had for a period of time campaigned so emphatically for the destruction of the Monarchy, faltered in view of the breakdown of Russia. Now it was, after all, suddenly a question of the European balance of power in a completely different way. Italy's Sonnino was already afraid that Great Britain would drop Italy. Thus, here we can place our finger on the point where the judgement can be passed, though only in historical hindsight: in May and June 1917, Europe began to kill one of its own.

Shortly thereafter, France had to go through a critical period and relied not least for domestic policy reasons on intransigence. Italy did not distance itself from the demands fixed in the Treaty of London, and Russia again endeavoured to continue the war on the side of the Entente. With this, the opportunity to reopen the political intercourse and to reconcile the political purpose with the military objective had passed.





**25 The Pyrrhic Victory:  
The Breakthrough Battle  
of Flitsch-Tolmein**

25. Italian prisoners of war on the Piazza della Libertà in Udine, November 1917. The offensive on the Isonzo front led by Austro-Hungarian and German troops, which began on 24 October, led to the collapse of the Italian 2nd Army after just two days. The Allies succeeded in advancing across the Tagliamento and through to the Piave River. Around 300,000 Italian soldiers were taken prisoner. The 'human spoils' were divided between Germany and Austria-Hungary.

## The Fortress Syndrome

The unsuccessful efforts to break free of the war gradually created a 'fortress syndrome' in Austria, which dominated large parts of the population and would never again disappear.<sup>1796</sup> For years, attempts had been made to 'break out' of the fortress, and to create space to breathe through a massive military sortie. They had all failed. Now, negotiations were arranged. Still, the occupiers demanded surrender. This does not reflect the full picture, however. Among parts of the fortress garrison, the feeling grew that they had been taken hostage by the commanders of the fortress themselves, that not everything was in reality being done in order to achieve an end to the siege, to secure supplies of food once more and to create a minimum degree of normality. Instead, the sorties had to be continued, while the energy and the stockpiles were coming to an end. And there is something else to be added to this image: among some nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, particularly among the Germans, the impression was created that while in the war they had held out and had not been conquered in the field, the enemy was beginning to hollow out the country from the inside. Hatred welled up as a result. However, in most cases, the dominant mood was apathy, recalcitrance, and disinterest. The conclusion drawn in the reports on the general mood by the War Surveillance Office was that: 'Apathy and resignation are increasingly spreading. Utter disappearance of any joy of living, disappearance of the sense of purpose in work and earning are becoming increasingly evident as a characteristic symptom. This gloomy state of mind is colouring the view of the future and is also clouding any objective observation of external events. Political resentment, resentment in reaction to any new official decree, angry or hateful diatribes regarding the forthcoming war bond, charitable activities such as public collections, [or] even the exchange operations [of prisoners of war] currently underway, appear as outlets for this inclination.'<sup>1797</sup> From then on, the variations on this 'theme' appeared in every analysis.

It was an open secret that Austria-Hungary was not in a good state. This fact was known not least to its enemies in this war. Politicians and newspapers in the Entente countries also came increasingly under the influence of the Czech and southern Slav émigrés, 'who did all they could to portray the situation as dramatically as possible, and to exaggerate it for propaganda purposes'.<sup>1798</sup> The depictions of the repression of the Slavs and of the desire among the Slavs in the north and south to leave the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy reinforced the intention among the Allies to regard the de-

struction of Austria-Hungary and conscious support for the process of dissolution from within as one of their most important war aims. The fact that this was targeted not only at Austria-Hungary, but possibly to an even greater degree also Germany, had already been emphasised by the British Foreign Office in a memorandum presented in May 1917. The memorandum contained highly controversial issues for observation and consideration: Austria-Hungary, it claimed, was entirely dependent on Germany, whose primary interest was in securing its continued existence. The greater the increase in irredentism, the greater was the need in the Habsburg Monarchy for German assistance. And if a separation of Galicia, Bukovina and Italian territories were indeed to occur, ultimately, only the German element in Austria would be strengthened, to the inevitable detriment of the non-German nationalities. This was the one aspect. However, this was not all. The Russian Revolution had changed this major Slav power. Russia, according to the opinion held in London, would no longer fight to retain its dominance, but instead – if at all – would do so with the aim of securing independence for the states of East Central Europe. A series of sovereign states in the Balkans would finally deny both Germany and Russia access to the Mediterranean. As a result, the power ratio on the Continent would also be balanced to a certain degree following the dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>1799</sup> The purpose now was therefore to wait and see how events unfolded, but also to influence them as far as possible. And in relation to Austria-Hungary, this was relatively easy to put into practice.

For the Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister, Count Czernin, the Kerensky Offensive marked the point at which it was necessary to strengthen the ties between Vienna and Berlin, and indeed to make them appear stronger than ever before. Until June 1917, he had emphasised the separate policy of the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery) from that of Berlin; from July onwards, he stressed the unshakeable nature of the alliance. However, on one issue, he remained firm: he advocated a peace without annexations. He saw himself confirmed in this goal by a majority decision in the German Reichstag (Imperial Diet) on 19 July, and also vehemently argued in favour of it to Ludendorff, who by contrast wished to pursue a pro-annexationist policy.<sup>1800</sup>

Czernin went one step further. When at the end of July 1917, contact was again made with the Entente, and Count Nikolaus Revertera-Salandra met with the French Count Abel Armand in Fribourg in Switzerland, Czernin urged the new German Imperial Chancellor, Georg Michaelis, to seek an understanding with France, even at the expense of Alsace-Lorraine. He offered the Germans Galicia if they agreed to forfeit Alsace-Lorraine. The offer had already been made earlier by Emperor Karl when he had met the German Kaiser and his wife in Bad Homburg on 3 April.<sup>1801</sup> This created a situation similar to that of 1915, when the 'Silesian offer' had been made. At that time, Germany had offered Silesian territory if Austria declared itself willing to forfeit Trentino to Italy. However, just as Austria-Hungary had rejected this offer at the time,

so now the German Imperial Chancellor and the German military leadership refused the proposal with the words: 'We are currently not interested in a relinquishment of Galicia by Austria-Hungary.'<sup>1802</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm was clearly of the same opinion.

During the Fribourg discussions between Count Armand and Revertera, the Austrians were told of the conditions set by the Entente for peace: the cession of Trentino, the conversion of Trieste (Triest) into a free port, the restructuring of Poland in line with its borders from the year 1772. Furthermore, the demand was made for the federative reorganisation of Austria. However, France also had something to offer. Bavaria and Poland were to be brought under the control of Austria, and Prussian Silesia was to fall to Austria as a hereditary land. According to his instructions, Revertera was to announce that Austria-Hungary was not prepared to conduct separate peace negotiations. For this reason, he also wanted to know the Entente's conditions for peace in relation to the German Empire and the other allies. The response came promptly: the reinstatement of Belgium, the cession of Alsace-Lorraine, reparations, the neutralisation of the left bank of the Rhine, the cession of Helgoland, and the opening of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. A further demand on Austria-Hungary was the reinstatement of Serbia and Romania; in addition, the Habsburg Monarchy was to grant Serbia a port on the Adriatic. In return, Austria was again reassured that in return the price paid for separation from its great ally, it could regain the dominance in Germany that it had lost in 1866.<sup>1803</sup> Although Czernin did not even comment on these proposals, they were of a somewhat explosive nature, since the negotiators for the Entente increasingly played on the issue of German-Austrian relations.

In light of the increasing war weariness and the war symptoms that had become clearly evident within the Habsburg Monarchy, the plans in the German Empire for a military intervention against Austria-Hungary, which had initially been only very vague, must have adopted a clearer form.<sup>1804</sup> The question was, what would the German Empire do were Austria-Hungary to conclude a separate peace? It was debated whether the German Austrians would revolt if German troops were to march into Bohemia and Galicia.<sup>1805</sup> However, the opportunity was available to develop these notions further. On the eastern front, the troops were so enmeshed that simply pulling out had become practically impossible. Even if the troops obeyed at all, might it come to a bloodbath among the former allies? What economic consequences could be anticipated? On 18 July 1917, the Army High Command had compiled the most important data that sketched out the material situation in Austria-Hungary, but which also showed how little chance there was of abandoning the ties with Germany.<sup>1806</sup> The possibility of surviving the next war winter depended on whether sufficient goods could be imported from Poland, Romania and Serbia. Almost everywhere in those countries, German troops dominated. Austria-Hungary would therefore only be able to survive economically with Germany at its side. What might happen if the coal pits

in Dąbrowa in Poland, which covered the needs of the railways in the Monarchy and on the north-eastern front were no longer available? What would be the consequences if the Romanian imports, which helped overcome the severest of shortages in supplies no longer arrived, or if there were no more mineral oil from Ploești and Pitești? And so it went on. Basically, it was almost impossible for Austria-Hungary to leave the alliance.

The foreign policy of the Monarchy had become a rubber cell: outwardly, a demonstration of the will and the ability to carry on was demanded and needed. Internally, confidence must be nurtured that the Monarchy would emerge from the war intact. In the spring, emphasis had been placed on the waiver of annexations and the retention of the status quo, while in the summer, they had been directly offered. In the same way, however, everyone was prepared to take up the old war aims once again and mentally to allow the Monarchy to expand. In the spring, the alliance with the German Empire had been questioned, and in the summer, it had again been attested. The conditions announced by the Entente gave hardly a clue. While in the spring, they had still talked of destroying Austria-Hungary, in the summer, they stated that the only firm conditions were the territorial cessions to Italy, Romania and Russia, which had already been agreed. In return, Austria-Hungary was to recoup German territory and become the dominant power in Germany.

For the Foreign Minister, the moment had come at the beginning of September to declare for himself 'that following the emphasis already amply placed on our willingness for peace, it is now advantageous to speak in a tone that leaves no doubt among our enemies that we can and shall hold out as loyal allies until the end'.<sup>1807</sup> He informed those diplomatic missions still intact in the non-belligerent countries that he was considering adopting a 'very severe tone' with the enemy powers. Some ambassadors voiced their concern, since this would of necessity burn the bridges. However, they were unsuccessful in dissuading Czernin from his idea. The Entente merely replied to the tentative steps towards peace by Austria-Hungary that it wished to split the Dual Alliance, and had set conditions for the Danube Monarchy which, according to Czernin, 'one could not meet and still remain alive'.<sup>1808</sup> The slogan of an Austria-Hungary that would have to be destroyed, which the former Croat representative Hinković had made his guiding principle, the 'Detruisséz l'Autriche-Hongrie' of Tomáš Masaryk, the agitation by Ante Trumbić and Frano Šupilo, who in the Corfu Declaration envisaged the conjoining of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to form a single state, and the agitation by the Czechs and Slovaks, which was supported by the Allies, were all leading in a similar direction.<sup>1809</sup> Now, it was to be made clear to the enemy powers that Austria-Hungary was not minded to conclude a peace with sacrifices and, on top of that, would not consider a break with the German Empire, which might furthermore lead to a war with its former ally. This was, after all, the hypothetical outcome when it was thought through to its logical conclusion.



On 2 October 1917, Count Czernin gave a long since prepared speech in Budapest. If the Entente were to force it to do so, he said, the Monarchy would continue the war, revise the 'pacifically modified programme' and demand war reparations for its part. The vast majority of states in the world wished for peace, while only a few were hindering it. 'With cold blood and calm nerves, we shall pursue our path in this case. We know that we can hold out; we can hold out in the field and in the hinterland.' Czernin made reference to another notion: Pope Benedict XV had issued a message of peace on 1 August 1917, in which he had made calls for a peace that would lead to a new order in Europe, to an effective international court of arbitration and to overall disarmament, to which Czernin also agreed. This was met with great disapproval from those in authority in Berlin, in particular the German Kaiser, in whose view the statements made by Czernin were 'incredible'.<sup>1810</sup> In the eyes of Kaiser Wilhelm, Czernin had gone too far even with these cautious words, which indicated a continued openness towards peace, while at the same time intending to demonstrate a determination to continue the war. This word 'incredible' at the same time anticipated the German response to the Pope, which was in essence that for their part, the Germans would make no substantial promises, but would however do everything they could to exploit the effect of the Papal message to fuel pacifism among the Entente powers and to use the peace movement as a propaganda weapon.<sup>1811</sup> Germany and Austria each acted for themselves. Both had been told the price of peace and, for both, this price was too high. Conversely, for the Allies, the peace with victory that they had been expected to accept was out of the question. And so, the war had to go on.

Czernin continued to use his chosen means. He did not want to break off the contacts with the enemy powers entirely and, at the same time, hoped to influence the German domestic policy scene. The new German Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Richard von Kühlmann, who was now the third in office during the course of the war, following Gottlieb von Jagow and Arthur Zimmermann, showed as little inclination to make concessions as Imperial Chancellor Michaelis, who was the successor to Bethmann Hollweg, or at least to compromise on the issue of the reinstatement of the full sovereignty of Belgium. For this reason, Czernin both openly and discreetly did everything possible to influence the German position. In October, one subject of discussion among representative circles in Germany were the records made by the German representative Haussmann of conversations with a mysterious 'Count X'. In the records, it was claimed that Great Britain would only conclude a peace if Belgium were to become fully neutral. The Austrians had apparently become irritated by the lack of clarity in the statements being made by the Germans. 'Tell everyone that this is a highly critical hour, that the majority of the Reichstag holds peace and the future of Germany in its hands, and that what is needed now is all hands on deck.'<sup>1812</sup> There is almost no doubt that 'Count X' was none other than Czernin. Wilhelm II then had Emperor

Karl informed that he would rather forfeit the alliance with Austria than Liège. He would also be prepared to continue the war against the will of the German people for the sake of retaining Liège.<sup>1813</sup> The German plenipotentiary at the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, Cramon, had something else to add. He was to demand of the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, General Arz, to provide written assurance to Ludendorff that the Danube Monarchy identified itself with the German war aims; otherwise, the German Empire would refuse to support Austria-Hungary in the offensive that was already being planned against Italy. This was blatant blackmail. However, General Cramon only told Emperor Karl half the truth just as he, conversely, forwarded the Austrian response to Berlin in a more palliative form. In this way, the affair was set to one side. However, aversion and suspicion remained on both sides.

Czernin, who had predicted in a memorandum in April 1917 that the Monarchy would meet its end in the autumn of the same year, had lost credibility to the extent that the Monarchy, as could be seen, had not come to an end during the autumn of 1917, that there were still enough soldiers to continue to wage the war, that the output of the armaments industry was sufficient to produce the weapons needed, and that there was just enough to eat to ensure that most of the population would survive. And there was one thing more: there was also just enough hope left in order to continue fighting the war.

Finally, there was also a curious coalition of proponents of the war: those who were interested in the survival of the Monarchy, and who regarded the continuation of the war as the only possibility of ensuring this survival, had found new allies in the form of the radical representatives of the national groups. The radical nationalists had to assume, after all, that only the continuation of the war until victory was won by the Entente would so weaken the Habsburg Monarchy that it would no longer be able to prevent the internal process of dissolution. When it came to the issue of the war, therefore, the aims of those such as Kramář and Arz, Beneš and Czernin were by all means identical. The upward and downward swings of mood were also reflected by Masaryk: if there were signs that peace talks might take place, or if Emperor Karl took a spectacular step towards conciliation among the nationalities, Masaryk and the political émigrés in Great Britain, France, Italy, the USA and Russia became alarmed. When the war continued, and the attempts failed to initiate negotiations on the possible exit by the Monarchy from the war, or even on a general peace, and the war regime was again tightened in Austria-Hungary, this conformed entirely to the long-term goals of the émigrés. They needed the war, and it was of almost no importance to them how the events of the war unfolded in detail, as long as the battles could be continued somehow and resulted in the unstoppable weakening of Austria-Hungary.

Sometimes, however, one might think that history was following the narrative pattern of Gustav Freytag. When the action appears to have long passed its culmination

point, and when the reader already believes that they know how the story will end, a moment of final tension occurs, when everything again appears in a different light, and the conclusion of the plot that had appeared so inevitable until that point suddenly takes a dramatic new turn. Until this moment of final tension, too, dies down.

### Operation 'Loyalty to Arms'

In order to overcome the unclear situation in the alliance, thoughts began to be aired in the German Empire of taking a harder line with Austria-Hungary through intensified military commitment. This purpose was to be served by an offensive against Italy, in which German troops would also take part, in order to remove from this theatre of the war the sense that it was a private affair for the Imperial and Royal Army. This was a turnaround in German policy in that until the autumn of 1917, German diplomats had repeatedly attempted to mediate between Italy and Austria-Hungary by referring to the fact that Austria would only have to relinquish Trento (Trient) for Italy to be willing to conclude a peace. At the same time, the German readiness was also a military novelty, since from 1915 to 1917, the German Empire had after all refrained from supporting Austria with troops at the Isonzo or in South Tyrol – aside from the episode with the 'Alpine Corps'. Now, preparations were to be made to defeat Italy in a joint offensive. This would also prove that the Entente, and Britain in particular, were incapable of effectively protecting Italy. Perhaps the Apennine state would be ready for peace – or a revolution might break out, which was also considered a possibility.<sup>1814</sup> Furthermore, it was felt in Germany that by conquering Italian soil, Austrian covetousness would be awakened, thus automatically causing it to abandon its formula of 'peace without annexations'.<sup>1815</sup>

The notion of conducting a fatal attack against Italy was as old as the war against Italy itself. In 1916, the Austro-Hungarian solo campaign had failed. Then, there had been months when the Imperial and Royal armies were fully occupied with staving off the Italian offensives at the Isonzo at almost regular intervals. And this was becoming increasingly difficult. Nonetheless, the Operations Division of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command was already again working intensively on plans for a new major offensive. However, it was based on the assumption that between twelve and 16 German divisions and 42 artillery regiments would be involved, which they had been informed would be available from April 1917. However, on 25 February, Field Marshal Hindenburg announced that the situation in the west prevented the deployment of German troops in Italy.

When, following his dismissal in February 1917, Conrad von Hötzendorf had become Army Group Commander for the Italian front, the post had been made palatable

to him when the Chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery told him that the Italians would certainly conclude from this that Austria-Hungary was already preparing for a major new offensive. However, the Italians were not fooled for very long. Between 10 May and 4 June, they waged the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo, with the aim of conquering Trieste. However, they only succeeded in occupying a mountain ridge to the east of the Isonzo River.

What must have appeared to the Austro-Hungarian troops as a defensive success was for the Entente a reason to direct increasingly harsh criticism towards the Italian war leadership. According to a weekly summary for the British War Cabinet, 'The Austrians suffer more from a lack of food and drink than from the Italian fire'.<sup>1816</sup> The supply of auxiliary weapons in the form of around thirty batteries of heavy French artillery were to be withdrawn and brought back to France in light of the Italian 'inactivity'. The Italians would have to fend for themselves.

The Comando Supremo reacted to the lack of success from the thirty months of fighting with increasing harshness. Since the soldiers were no longer willing to allow themselves to be sent unconditionally into the fire, martial law was applied in excess. Insubordination was treated as a war crime. Soldiers were increasingly shot for cowardice. But even such relatively minor misdemeanours such as smoking a pipe during an inspection were punished by death. There was hardly any leave, and almost no rest. The Commander of the Italian 2nd Army, General Luigi Capello, justified this by saying that the soldiers must be kept continuously at work, since they were too southern in temperament in order to do anything of their own free will.<sup>1817</sup> As soon as formations were replenished and the necessary fighting equipment became available again, the next offensive was begun. The Italians had become used to attacking. However, the Austro-Hungarian troops were extremely experienced and tough defenders.

In June 1917, the Italian 6th Army attacked northwards towards the plateaus. The Battle of Mount Ortigara began, a struggle with enormous losses for the sake of a bleak mountain ridge in the Austrian-Italian border area. At the Isonzo, Italian losses during the Tenth Battle totalled almost 170,000 men, of which 36,000 were killed. During the Battle of Mount Ortigara, 23,000 men were killed and wounded. The Austro-Hungarian losses were significantly lower than those of the Italians, but what did that signify? At the Isonzo and in the Dolomites, the strategy of 'bleeding dry' was no less consistently applied as had been the case at Verdun. Even so, the British General Staff was of the opinion that it was above all the fault of the Italian conduct of the war that the page had not already been turned long ago. Instead of carrying out an artillery barrage lasting three or four days and nights, the Italians stopped after just a few hours. They made insufficient use of the situation, it was claimed, and – this was incomprehensible to the Allies – they were unable to succeed against the half-starved Imperial and Royal troops. At the same time, before the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo, over 500,000 people

had been killed or wounded on both sides. The dead account for around a third of the statistics. And the strategy of bleeding dry continued. Here, the British analysts noted that while the Imperial and Royal troops showed far greater war weariness than the Germans, they were very far from breaking or even showing any noticeable signs that morale was sinking. While there were deserters, compared to what had happened at the front in Russia, these were merely individual cases. The soldiers who were taken prisoner also kept their composure and usually made a good impression, regardless of whether they were Germans, Hungarians or of southern Slav origin.<sup>1818</sup> It was only among the Czechs that it was believed that similar symptoms could be observed as had previously been displayed in Russia. The Chief of the Italian General Staff, Cadorna, was said to have claimed, however, that he would prefer troops from the German Empire as opponents, since they fought less fanatically. The Austrians, he said were above all focussed on killing their opponents.<sup>1819</sup> And from this, no-one was excluded.

In the eyes of the western Allies, the only means of making the Italian style of warfare more effective was to support the Italians to a greater degree than before, and in particular to also intervene more intensively with their own troops. As early as January 1917, the Chief of the British Imperial General Staff, General W. R. Robertson, was presented with Italian requirements and plans for a joint offensive, but since Flanders and France took priority, the British General intended only to 'make a note of the matter.'<sup>1820</sup> At a meeting of the Allied statesmen in Paris on 24 July, the option was then however sketched out by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George of conducting a joint offensive by the Allies against the Austro-Hungarian front. It was the 'soft underbelly', which appeared to be behind these deliberations. There, as the others also felt, the outcome of the war might possibly be decided.

For the Allies, the Mediterranean area was quite clearly becoming increasingly attractive. After the first deliberations, which were still vague, Lloyd George, in light of the anything but satisfactory development of the war situation for the Allies, again proposed that the front in France should be held only to the extent that the Germans were unable to pull away troops, but otherwise, to focus all efforts on the other fronts in order to prise the allies of the German Empire, which were indeed its weak points, out of the alliance.<sup>1821</sup> However, the French saw nothing in this idea that might conform to what they had envisaged. And so, this proposal also ran into the sand.

In the search for a new strategic approach, the German Supreme Army Command had however also begun to turn its attention to Italy. Clearly, it was in the air. In December 1916, the Chief of the Operations Division, Major Georg Wetzell, who at that time was new to the post, went through all the possibilities in a memorandum for the First Quartermaster General, General Erich Ludendorff, and saw the deployment of larger German troop formations in Italy as a highly interesting opportunity of finding a way out of the impasse in the west. Ludendorff showed only disinterest. Half a year later, in

June 1917, Wetzell again turned his attention to the Austro-Hungarian south-western front. The conclusions were similar to those of December 1916: in northern France and Flanders, no long-term military success was in sight. In Italy, however, success might come more easily. The consequence would probably be that the British and French would have to withdraw troops from the German western front in order to hurry to Italy's aid. And that would be the moment when the German troops deployed on the western front could go on the offensive in the northern sector. Aside from this, a joint offensive by German and Austro-Hungarian troops would prevent Emperor Karl from concluding a 'lazy peace'. Ludendorff remained sceptical, but Wetzell did not give up. A success was needed to conclude the year 1917 well and to bring in a victory before the Americans could intervene on the side of the Allies. The best approach for an offensive in Italy would be an advance from Tyrol, although since it would not be possible to launch an attack there until late in the year, the Isonzo front would be a better option. Wetzell calculated that the force required would be twelve to fourteen German divisions, together with 500 heavy and 100 light pieces of artillery. He had therefore either adopted the ideas discussed within the Imperial and Royal Army High Command as his own, or had independently reached an identical conclusion. However, in Wetzell's view, the formation of the focus would still have to be decided, although with a certain amount of luck, it would be possible to cross the Tagliamento River. It would be essential to use a new gas weapon, known as mustard gas.<sup>1822</sup>

At the same time, the Army High Command in Baden was also taking up the ideas, which had by now become old, of an offensive against Italy. In a memorandum of 31 July 1917, the Army High Command summarised its deliberations, stating that an attack should not be attempted from the plateaus in the manner of the South Tyrol offensive of 1916, as Conrad von Hötzendorf had repeatedly demanded, but instead, that an offensive should be begun from the area of Bovec (Flitsch) and Tolmin (Tolmein). Linked to this was the issue of participation by German troops, and additionally, a common offensive of this nature depended on the agreement of the Joint Supreme War Command, in other words, it was ultimately dependent on the German Kaiser. Now, the ideas began to intersect. However, General Ludendorff was dismissive of the Chief of the Operations Division of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, General Waldstätten. Ludendorff wanted to crush Romania entirely and, to him, this was more important than anything else. Italy could wait. Then came the Eleventh Battle of the Isonzo. The Austro-Hungarian front faltered and for the first time showed signs of an imminent collapse.

The Italians had gained a large area of territory between Gorizia (Görz) and Tolmin, to some degree against new and inexperienced troops. A leadership crisis had then emerged within the Austro-Hungarian command, since the commander of the army group, General Borojević, had already ordered the withdrawal of the entire front.

However, two corps commanders, Goiginger and Scotti, had overcome the crisis. The success of the Italians on the Banjšice Plateau – the greatest since the start of the war on the south-western front – nevertheless came as a shock, and at almost all levels of command, the question was posed as to whether the Isonzo armies would be able to withstand another attack. The same question was also being asked by the German Supreme Army Command.

Major Wetzell changed his line of argumentation. Now, he said, the purpose was to prevent the alliance partner from 'snapping'. Wetzell suggested forming a new army from seven German and three Austro-Hungarian divisions, to be inserted at the Isonzo and with orders to go on the offensive. General Arz, who it can be imagined was pleased with the offer of German troops, immediately proposed that an even larger army be formed, and thirteen divisions be inserted: eight German and five Austro-Hungarian. Then, an unexpected objection was raised: Emperor Karl was not against the offensive per se, but was unwilling to accept support from German troops. He wrote to Kaiser Wilhelm on the matter: 'You will surely understand Me when I place particular emphasis on the fact that I wish to conduct the offensive against Italy with My own troops alone. My entire army calls the war against Italy "our war". Every officer has from his youth onwards the feeling inherited by his forefathers, the yearning in his breast, to fight against the hereditary enemy. If we were to be aided by German troops, this would be oppressive, and would dampen the enthusiasm [...]. Time is pressing. With a successful attack against Italy, we can perhaps bring a rapid end to the war.'<sup>1823</sup>

Karl recommended releasing Austro-Hungarian divisions from the Eastern Front and replacing them with German ones. This was to be sufficient in order to conduct the offensive and to continue to fight against the 'hereditary enemy' alone. At a discussion in the German Grand Headquarters in Bad Kreuznach on 28 August, an attempt was made to find a solution. Ludendorff continued to be sceptical, but the possibility that the Austro-Hungarian front in Italy might collapse caused him to falter. And Kaiser Wilhelm now began to apply pressure directly and was naturally in an unshakeable position, since according to the agreement on the Joint Supreme War Command, he had the last word in cases when the monarchs differed in their opinion. He disagreed entirely with the proposal to release Austro-Hungarian divisions in the east and replace them with German troops. 'Dear friend', he wrote, 'in congratulating you on the bold attitude of your brave Isonzo army, which is fighting under the most difficult of conditions against a superior force, I endorse your view that there, relief can be most effectively be brought only by means of a forceful offensive.' However, he said, the German Supreme Army Command wished to point out that Imperial and Royal divisions in the east could not be released. A replacement would only be possible by the only operative reserve of the German Army that could be sent at short notice to the east, and this reserve was intended to fight not against Russia or Romania, but to be

sent back to the west as soon as possible. The overall situation would be most sustainably influenced by an offensive between Siret and the Prut River, he claimed, but an offensive at the Isonzo could also be considered. If the fighting in the Riga area and the season permitted it, then an offensive could indeed be conducted at the Isonzo. 'You can be assured that it would be a cause of jubilation not only for my army, but throughout Germany, if it were to be possible for German troops together with your brave Isonzo fighters to deal the death blow to treacherous Italy. God grant that this day is approaching.' This was followed by a snipe at Czernin: 'I hope that the possible joint offensive by our allied armies will also lighten the mood of your Foreign Minister. On consideration of the overall situation, we have in my view no cause for any other mood than one of confidence. In loyal friendship – Wilhelm.'<sup>1824</sup> In order to convince Ludendorff of the advantage of sending German troops and to remove his misgivings that the Austrians were deliberately dramatising the situation, the commanding general of the German Alpine Corps, General Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen, was sent to the Isonzo front. Krafft von Dellmensingen then presented a comprehensive report and made an emphatic case for a joint offensive. He also contradicted Ludendorff, since following long discussions with Generals Scotti and Goiginger, of whose competence and honest opinion he was firmly convinced, he felt that the situation for the Austrian armies at the Isonzo really was already dire, and to a certain degree that this was already the eleventh hour.<sup>1825</sup>

On 4 September 1917, German troops entered Riga. Thus the conditions were met that Kaiser Wilhelm had set out in his letter to Emperor Karl as a requirement for sending troops to the front in Italy. Russia had been crippled by domestic events and the resulting leadership crises, but militarily, it had still not been beaten entirely from the field. For this reason, the phrase 'unconquered in the field' applied first and foremost to the collapsing Tsarist Empire. The impossibility of surviving the war economically, of organising and conducting the 'factory war' in a similar way to the military one, had however led to the internal disintegration of Russia. The first to benefit from this collapse were the Central Powers. The one made to suffer was Italy, since without the collapse of Russia, the divisions that were then used as the German 14th Army against Italy would not have been available. They would in all likelihood also have been available for use against Romania, as Ludendorff had originally planned. In this way, however, their strategic impact would have dissipated, since the full occupation of Romania would have remained of no consequence to the overall situation. Now, however, it was possible to make a surprise strike against Italy and – once again – to secure the gratitude of Austria-Hungary. This would then also make it easier to persuade Austria-Hungary to agree to engage directly in a theatre of war that until then had been regarded as a 'German' one in just the same way that the Italian theatre had been 'Austrian', namely in the west. The use of German divisions against Italy would therefore



of necessity have a direct impact on the alliance between the German Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, lead to even greater enmeshment of the two empires, and once again chain Austria-Hungary to German strategy.

The obstinacy of the Germans certainly came very close to a humiliation of Austria-Hungary, since, quite clearly, the Imperial and Royal Army would not succeed in keeping the Italians in check on its own. There were further strings attached to the matter, however. German troops on the Italian front could, indeed almost of necessity, automatically lead to a reinforcement of the Italians by the British and French. If this were to be of long duration, the Imperial and Royal troops would be in an even worse position than they had been previously. A further question was: how would the USA react to the presence of Germans in Italy? America was at war against the German Empire, but not against Austria-Hungary. It was therefore to be feared that the USA would extend its war efforts to Italy, and would also enter the war against Austria-Hungary. What therefore appeared at first to be logical and relatively simple needed to be carefully considered. However, once Ludendorff had decided that German troops with over six divisions should participate in the war against Italy in the short term, the matter was closed. Ludendorff also coined a code name for the operation: 'Loyalty to Arms' (*Waffentreue*). Once the Chief of the Operations Division in the Army High Command, General Waldstätten, had been informed of the decision and had telegraphed to Vienna 'Loyalty to Arms assured', for the time being, everything had been clarified.

During the second half of September 1917, Emperor Karl visited Army Group Conrad. The Field Marshal had to be made to understand that he would not be playing a significant role during the offensive, and that it was not to be carried out in accordance with Conrad's favourite idea. It is likely that on this occasion, Conrad decided to call a spade a spade. After all, a great deal of frustration had been pent up. The Field Marshal spoke his mind, saying everything he could to the Emperor without becoming insulting. The conversation culminated in a discussion about an incident that had occurred just several days previously. A Slovenian reserve officer, Ljudevit Pivko, had attempted to guide the Italians towards the rear of the Austro-Hungarian troops on the plateau of the Sette Comuni. The attempt failed and the Slovene had deserted, but there had been some extremely critical moments. The Emperor asked Conrad what on earth such people might be thinking of. The Field Marshal replied: 'They will be thinking that they will be amnestied after a short while anyway.'<sup>1826</sup> However, it was by no means just the reserve officers who were the problem. The entire officer corps was in crisis. In August, such clear signs of resignation had been observed among those who had sworn to remain 'loyal unto death' that the Chief of the General Staff, Arz von Straußenburg, formulated his own order with which he attempted to return to the professional officers their belief in the purpose of the war and encourage them to hold out.<sup>1827</sup> That it had come to this already spoke volumes. And a glance at the faces of the soldiers could in

fact only lead one to conclude that there was not much more that could be put right by 'boosting morale'. In the autumn of 1917, the regiments were supplemented by March Battalions XXXI to XXXIV, and in September, young men born between 1897 and 1899 were mustered.<sup>1828</sup> Thus, the number of men enlisted since 1914 approached the eight million mark. However, the figures spoke for themselves. Following a high point in 1915, the soldiers had steadily decreased in number. The figures for newly mustered soldiers were as follows:

1914	528,408
1915	1,565,544
1916	599,524
1917	548,044
1918	139,373 <sup>1829</sup>

At the same time as the new soldiers were being mustered, the oldest, who were born in 1867 and 1868, were in the process of being released. However, they only totalled 37,000 men, in other words, 18,500 soldiers for each year of birth. Fresh cohorts accounted for around 100,000 men. The difference between these two figures was 81,500 men, a type of human wastage figure. Eleven Battles of the Isonzo had already been waged; at the last one, the Italians could be seen in many places to have at least four times as many troops.<sup>1830</sup> The Italians had more aeroplanes, artillery and mine-launchers. The Austro-Hungarian troops had expanded several fortifications in succession. The furthest forward of these comprised three lines, albeit often only shallow trenches, since they had still not dug deep into the karst. In front of the trenches, hundreds of kilometres of barbed wire had been laid. The soldiers suffered even when the fighting had died down. During the summer, they had to endure the unbearable heat. Then there was malaria and other diseases on a massive scale. Water was supplied in lead pipes, which were frequently ruptured by fire. Then, the heat was accompanied by thirst. In the autumn, it rained endlessly. And it was necessary to prepare for the next battle.<sup>1831</sup>

The soldiers feared the barrage of the artillery. In the caverns, the air had become pestilential through gas, smoke, dust, faeces and the stench of corpses. Some soldiers had been unable to cope with the nervous tension and had already committed collective suicide in the caverns. Yet once the barrage was over, it was felt that the worst had passed. In close combat, the Italians were less feared. Hand grenades, bayonets, knives as well as truncheons and spiked mace-like clubs were used until this phase of the eternal battle of attrition was also over. 'We keep our clubs and daggers to hand', in case the Italians attack, noted an NCO in the Slovenian-German Landsturm (reserve forces) Regiment No. 27, Hans Hartinger.<sup>1832</sup> And time and again, there was one hope

that kept the Imperial and Royal soldiers going: of their own great offensive against the Italians.

What had been prepared in September and October 1917 was on a scale that went beyond purely military dimensions, and placed an emphasis on the dependency of the hinterland on the front in a particular way. Very quietly, and almost in passing, a catastrophe was brewing there. What was happening here was not recorded until 20 October, and covered four pages. The report, with the file reference number 'AOK Op. geh. 1917, Nr. 421', which was then annotated with the handwritten comment: 'Presented to the group chiefs. A[d] A[cta]', was a ticking time bomb. Under the file reference number, an overview of the transport situation was given by the railways expert of the Army High Command, Brigadier Johann Straub, apparently only as a supplement to the operational plans, but with unequivocal conclusions. Straub wrote a list: of the approximately 105,000 covered goods wagons available to the Monarchy, on average, 60 to 70 per cent were being used for the deployment for the offensive against Italy, with 40 per cent being used for the same purpose of the 170,000 open goods wagons. This increase in demand for military transportation would lead to a drastic reduction in the transport of civilian goods, while at the same time, the requirements in the autumn were in general greater, since additional supplies had to be transported for the winter. Heating materials and food needed to be conveyed in great quantities. However, during the deployment process, eighty trains would have to be driven every day in the Villach area and in the hinterland behind the Isonzo front. Straub wrote that after the deployment had been completed, the need would not be lower, but instead would increase. Every day, as long as the offensive continued, ammunition, provisions, war materials of all kinds, as well as more soldiers, would have to be brought forward, and the wounded taken to the rear. Now, however, aside from coal and relatively durable foods, between 600 and 800 trains with potatoes would need to be freighted and brought to the designated storage houses before the frost period began. If transportation could not be completed before winter closed in, the potatoes could no longer be taken, since they would freeze. 'According to the information provided by the National Food Agency and the Imperial-Royal Ministry of Railways, over the coming period, 85,000 covered goods wagons with potatoes will be needed to be freighted in Austria alone', Straub noted. If transport were to begin immediately, this would have required between 20 and 28 trains daily. During this period, Vienna alone needed 200 to 300 wagons of potatoes every day. As a result of the shortage in rolling stock, however, for weeks on end, only between 20 and 50 wagons (not trains!) were available. 'The food situation among broad sections of the population in Vienna will become unsustainable if this low level of potato delivery continues. The same is true in all other larger cities, where the conditions are similar.' Their intensive use of the locomotives had also led to a repair quota of between 36 and 40 per cent, compared to 14 per cent during peacetime. As a

result, in light of the problems with supplying food in the large cities, as well as in rural areas, which were dependent on additional supplies, Austria could not afford such operations as these ones, where deployment was being conducted carelessly and without any regard for the consequences.<sup>1833</sup>

What looked like a bureaucratic headache that put a damper on the hopes for success against Italy, was in fact far more than that. Straub had given to understand that the offensive would be conducted at the expense of the hinterland. And it could already be calculated that the greater its success, the longer the means of transport would have to be committed. In other words, no locomotives, and no wagons, would be available to transport civilian goods. Paradoxically, the greater the victories by the troops at the front, the more difficult life would become for the hinterland. However, by 20 October, no changes could be made to the plans. And who was to have made them, anyway?

At the beginning of September, the High Command of the German 14th Army had been established, which was to lead the offensive against Italy under the command of General of Infantry Otto von Below. In order to coordinate the battle procedures, in mid-September, the Germans were given 100 copies of the Austrian guidelines for mountain war.<sup>1834</sup> However, the German general and his chief of staff, Major General Krafft von Dellmensingen, by no means intended to use only the Austrian experience of mountain fighting. They were far more interested in carrying out a strategy that – if not already frowned upon by the Imperial and Royal Army – was at least almost entirely left out of the operational deliberations: the so-called ‘valley thrust’. Here, in contrast to the standard practice of the Austro-Hungarian troops, which had been attempted during the South Tyrol offensive in an already strategic approach, the focus was to be placed not on the ridges of the mountains, but in the valleys. Only the support operations were to be led over the mountain heights. Operational theorists had long argued over whether a thrust over the mountains or through the valleys was preferable. Now, an attempt was primarily to be made at pushing forwards through the basins and gorges.

Naturally, friction soon arose, since operation ‘Loyalty to Arms’ did not begin entirely as the High Command of the German 14th Army and the German Supreme Army Command had envisaged it. The Germans complained about the slowness of the Austro-Hungarian transportation. The railways were too sluggish and did not travel far enough. The onward transport only continued slowly. The apparent cosiness of ‘Comrade Lace-Up’ was once again the subject of criticism. Indeed, not everything did function properly, but it should have been taken into account that the workers in the labour battalions and the members of the Landsturm who were tasked with the major portion of the transportation work were older, emaciated men. Supplies to the 14th Army alone required 2,400 wagons to be loaded. Furthermore, additional supplies to the Isonzo armies and for the Imperial and Royal troops who were not subordinate to the German

14th Army were also needed. From the unloading stations in the Villach area to Tarvisio (Tarvis) and from Jesenice (Aßling) to Ljubljana (Laibach), weapons, ammunition and war materials had to be transported approximately 40 kilometres on in some cases poor mountain roads, and finally in areas which, while not visible to the Italians, could certainly be subjected constantly to harassment fire. First came the attack artillery, then a million shots of ammunition for the guns, the heavy war equipment and the provisions. Finally, the infantry was to advance. The mountain fortifications were reinforced in the same way, while the materials were provided in the basin areas. In the higher regions, this meant that around eight days were needed in order to transport a heavy gun to its pre-arranged position. Once the canons, mortars and howitzers were at the top, thousands of cartridges, powder and grenades had to be brought up after them. This took time, and naturally also meant that the Italians would not fail to notice.

By mid-September, the Italians had recognised the reinforcements on the Austro-Hungarian front and the influx of fresh troops. However, they failed to take their own reconnaissance results sufficiently seriously. Here, the problem for the Italians was that they had in the interim already gained years of experience of the operational procedures of the Imperial and Royal Army, but were unable to imagine how they might be changed to any significant degree. It had all become very familiar. In eleven Battles of the Isonzo, and in several limited offensives on the mountain front, the Italians had always been the attackers and, only once, during the South Tyrol offensive of 1916, had they been forced into a defensive position. With the exception of this one offensive, the Austrians had always been the defenders. The soldiers on both sides had become used to surviving in the mountains, had attempted to dig into the karst and conducted positional warfare that was occasionally interrupted by heavy raids. The experience of the Eleventh Battle of the Isonzo, which allowed the Italians to conclude that the Imperial and Royal front was in the process of collapsing, gave them confidence and, aside from this, the commanders at the front also failed to implement the precautionary measures recommended to them by the Chief of the General Staff of the Italian Army, Luigi Cadorna.

However, overall the Allies succumbed to an erroneous estimation of the situation, since they reckoned that the chances of an Austrian-German offensive were very low. The strength of the troops of the Central Powers between the Isonzo and Natisone Rivers was classified as dangerous, and the prospect of the Italians withstanding an attack was not regarded as very high. However, what might cause the Austrians to wish to conduct an offensive was not apparent, at least to the British liaison officer at the Comando Supremo, General Delmé-Radcliff. In his view, beyond their losses to date, they would also suffer further heavy setbacks, and would, therefore, be in thoroughly weakened by the end.<sup>1835</sup>

The Central Powers planned to attack in a section which until then had been part of the front zone, namely the territory between Bovec and Tolmin, in the area of the upper

Isonzo, but where, until that point, no major fighting had occurred. Everything had been concentrated on Trento and Trieste. While planning for the offensive from the area between the two major operational sections to date, no more ambitious goals had been addressed. The aim had merely been to eject the Italians from the Bovec Basin and, in so doing, to threaten the sectors to the south of it. In the most favourable scenario, an advance up to the Tagliamento River was envisaged, thus removing the risk of an Italian breakthrough to Trieste once and for all. To the north of the Bovec Basin, the area around Gemona and Cividale was given as a possible long-term objective.

Naturally, it was not only fresh troops that were mustered for the undertaking; alongside these troops, weapons were used that had either not been seen on this front at all or, if so, at least not to this degree of concentration. The breakthrough forces were gathered in the Bovec Basin, to the south and above all in the Tolmin area. With the insertion of an army, however, a massing of artillery was also achieved that had never occurred before. 1,845 guns, of which 500 were of heavy to extremely heavy calibre 44 mortar batteries, including the German 24-cm mortars that were intended for the destruction of the obstacles in the Bovec Pass, and finally, a German gas projector battalion, created a local superiority of forces that corresponded to a ratio of 3:1 or more.

All this took place in the utmost secrecy. Even the staffs themselves were not to be informed for a long time of the deliberations that formed the basis of the deployment. And the soldiers were given no specific information until the last. However, they also interpreted developments in their own way. Suddenly, poison gas grenades were assigned to the artillery. For the first time, all troops at the front were given helmets. It was noted with alarm that the postcards that had been obligatory since the end of August 1916 with the pre-printed statement: 'I am healthy and well' were being distributed in all languages of the Monarchy.<sup>1836</sup> Every soldier was issued with ten of these cards. Even so, they continued to be in short supply. There was too little to eat, no salt, and no cigarettes. Instead, on 28 September, the 'Red Baron', Manfred von Richthofen, suddenly appeared, and clearly sent shock waves through the Italian ranks.<sup>1837</sup> Word spread of an Austrian-German offensive. Now, the Italians were also using poison gas – the first occasion had been on the upper Isonzo. The Imperial and Royal troops were then given beer, matches and potato soup. Unsalted. Warm meals only reached the positions at higher altitudes every three to four days. It rained. The Bora blew. And the ammunition kept arriving.<sup>1838</sup> Everyone expected that the offensive would begin any day.

On the other side, the Italians were also certainly aware that something was being prepared and, naturally, they had also not failed to notice the presence of German troops. However, in their deeply staggered, excellently constructed fortifications from the Carinthian border through to the Adriatic, and in light of the possibility of being able to move troops quickly on the inner line in the lowlands of Friuli and Veneto, they felt secure enough to tolerate even this threat. However, they had only insufficient

knowledge of the effect the weaponry and tactical procedures would have that the German 14th Army was planning to use. In particular, the Italians were least of all aware of the effect of the poison gas grenades that the German gas projector battalion was due to launch. How could they be? Not even the Germans knew whether the grenades would be a success.

Since poison gas had begun to be used in April 1915, and had gradually been introduced on all fronts, new chemical warfare agents, with new compositions, were being developed continuously. But it was not only gas warfare, but also protection against gas, that was making progress, and the gas masks with filter inserts made of activated carbon and special materials such as urotropin provided increasingly effective protection against warfare agents containing chlorine, and even against phosgene.

For this reason, from July 1917, the German Army decided to use a new generation of chemical warfare agents that were designed to act as 'mask breakers'. Their most important representatives became diphenylchloroarsine agents, known as 'Clark', which due to the coloured marking on the gas grenades were also referred to as 'blue cross'. Unlike the poisonous gases that had been used before, and which were marked with a green cross, this toxic substance did not affect the lungs, but consisted of toxic crystals based on arsenic, which when detonated were so finely distributed that they penetrated the filters in the gas masks and led to severe asphyxiation attacks, coughing, sneezing and nausea.<sup>1839</sup> This forced those affected to tear the masks from their faces, which left them fully exposed to the chemical payload affecting the lungs that was simultaneously activated. 'Colour shooting' (*Buntschießen*) had been discovered. And only days later, the Germans came up with another surprise development: mustard gas, or 'Lost' [from the names of the two chemists, Lommel and Steinkopf, who first proposed its military use], which acted as a contact poison and which led to highly severe chemical burns. 'Lost' penetrates the clothing, shoes and skin of those affected, is undeterred by gas masks and leads to months of lingering illness, unbearable pain and often considerable long-term effects.

For their part, the Allies had developed new ways of using poison gas missiles, the gas projectors, which were steel pipes of about one metre in length, from which high-volume warfare agent missiles could be fired across short distances of approximately one or two kilometres. Their preferred use was for attacking the foremost front lines of the enemy, since these were more difficult to reach with artillery guns.

The new gas projector method was quickly adopted by the Germans, and now they had the 'ideal' combination. On the Western Front, they had not yet managed to put the *Buntschießen* with gas projectors to the test. In Italy, they would avail themselves of the opportunity to do so. And the Italians had in fact nothing to protect themselves against it.

On 9 October, the Italian reconnaissance and the military intelligence service had not only detected the preparations on the Austrian side, but had also correctly predicted that

the attack would begin during the last week in October. On the eve of the offensive, one Romanian and two Czech officers deserted, and informed the Italians of the imminent attack and what details they knew of the plans. Krafft von Dellmensingen was furious: 'With such a mish-mash of people, containing such contradictory and inferior elements, it really is impossible to conduct any further joint enterprises. These are the fruits of Emperor Karl's amnesty for traitors to the country! We shall be obliged to send a very serious report to our Army Command as to how matters stand in this "state"'.<sup>1840</sup>

Despite the fact that the reports were indeed alarming, the Italians remained confident that they could repel the offensive. When the new battle, the twelfth at the Isonzo, conflagrated, the Italians were not surprised by the offensive itself, but by the masses of attack troops, and they had above all almost no opportunity to escape the destructive artillery fire in the narrow Isonzo valley. Sleet and fog created the ideal conditions for the gas projectors, whose deadly poison spread out mainly to the south of Bovec in the Naklo gorge. The swathes of gas were so dense that no breathable air was left. Then, the infantry attack began. In the narrow Žaga valley, the Imperial and Royal I Corps under the German 14th Army broke through the network of trenches of the Italians, who in some cases had been killed or were unable to fight as a result of the poison gas. To the south, the three German corps of the 14th Army stormed through the narrow valley sections and over the adjacent heights of the Kolovrat mountain range, Monte Matajur and Monte Mia. The challenge for the troops attacking over the mountains was not to lose contact with the divisions advancing in the valleys. However, after the first breakthroughs, and after the Italian 2nd Army had given way, they pushed further and further forwards. The main thrust and the accompanying attacks had been a success. The breakthrough in the valley also made it possible to advance across the mountains. On the third day of battle, the Italian front collapsed. After 72 hours in all, the 2nd Italian Army faced destruction.

Soldiers, who after years of suffering and hardship were now able to leave the area of ground that had been contaminated by violence, began to storm forwards. In the Austrian towns along the Isonzo valley, there was jubilation. 'When we marched into Kobarid, the population already welcomed us with indescribable enthusiasm', noted Franz Arneitz of Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 7. 'On both sides of the road stood countless numbers of people, since here, there are also refugees from the war zone. In many places, flags have been hoisted and we are greeted with never-ending calls of "Živijo Austria", which ring out from the large crowds [...]. Many soldiers from our regiment come from here, and now they are marching as liberators into their beautiful homeland [...]. The command gave the people of Kobarid a day's holiday, and then they are to follow us.'<sup>1841</sup>

On the second day of the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo, the two armies of Army Group Borojević joined the offensive and advancing together, pushed forward towards



the Adriatic coast. This forced the Italian 3rd Army to beat a hasty retreat. At the Tagliamento River, the armies of the Central Powers briefly came to a halt.

While the allied Central Powers were still approaching the Tagliamento, Ludendorff informed the Imperial and Royal Army High Command that they should make provisions for an imminent withdrawal by the Germans. However, Ludendorff was then clearly enthused by the reports of success in Friuli and agreed to continue operations through to the Piave River, and to leave the 14th Army in Italy. Over the coming days, it was envisaged that the Brenta and Adige Rivers could be reached, and Ludendorff considered whether a German army corps headquarters should not also be sent to Army Group Conrad, which was not making the progress that had been hoped for during its advance southwards from the Sette Comuni. Ludendorff wanted to drive the Italians far enough in order to enable Imperial and Royal troops to be released for a major offensive in the West.<sup>1842</sup> In this way, the demand for gratitude for the aid of the German troops against Italy could also be made. Following the tank battle at Cambrai, no doubt remained that more forces were needed in northern France and Flanders. However, the first task was to make the most of the triumph in Italy.

For six weeks on end, the Austrian newspapers in particular outdid themselves with reports on the success of the allied troops. As Karl Kraus described it in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* ('The Last Days of Mankind'; Act 4, Scene 1), in a not entirely exaggerated way: 'Extra edition – ! Devaastating Difeet of the Italianos [...]. Daily nooz! Our Troops Advaaance with no Rezistans [...]. The Suxess of the Offeensif!' However, even those who had already cultivated a type of professional reticence, such as the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) representative Josef Redlich, could hardly find sufficient opportunity to express their almost unbelievable joy: 'Here, we are hoping for a "Sedan-isation" of part of the Italian troops. Until now, 75,000 prisoners and 800 cannon have been seized. The Emperor spends his time in Ljubljana and has the supreme command over our and the German troops. What can England and America do with the broken-winged Italians? For us, however, it is wonderful that after 3½ years of war, naturally with German support – it would not be possible otherwise – we are in a position to decisively beat Italy on the only front on which it is fighting, and in four days to reap the rewards from eleven Battles of the Isonzo.'<sup>1843</sup> And as fate would have it, in November 1917, the seventh war bond was issued. In light of the Austrian victory, the amount subscribed was an extraordinary success. Ultimately, even bishops such as the prince-archbishop of Bressanone (Brixen), Franziskus Egger, called for subscriptions to be made, and even blatantly linked the war and victory with the bond, as Egger wrote in a pastoral letter in November 1917: 'Our glorious armies have in recent days opened a shining offensive against our hereditary enemy, and have not only torn away from him fully the fruits of his 11 Isonzo battles within just a few days, but have beaten him back deep into his own territory. Heaven is clearly on our side [...].

God himself has thus put us in the right frame of mind for the forthcoming 7th war bond.<sup>1844</sup>

And the success continued. On 2 November, the Imperial and Royal 55th Infantry Division was able to cross the Tagliamento River at Cornino. Thus, it became possible to cross the river in a broad front. Now, a race began to the Piave River. The Italians won it, crossed the Piave and on 9 November, blew up all bridges.

A glance at the maps clearly revealed the extent to which the situation on the Italian front had fundamentally changed. The front, which since 1915 had run in direct proximity to the Austrial Littoral, Carinthian and South Tyrolean border, had been pushed far back towards the south-west down to the Monte Grappa at Bassano. The Grappa massif had suddenly become the cornerstone of the Italian front. The catastrophe for the Italians could not initially be recorded in figures. The triumph was coloured by disputes.

Despite the 'wonder of Kobarid', the animosities against the German Empire had by no means disappeared. Quite the opposite, the Germans were accused of denying the Austro-Hungarian troops the reinforcements they needed just at the decisive moment, in order to also take the ridges of the Montello to the west of the Piave River and the massif of the Monte Grappa.<sup>1845</sup> Among the troops, who had just achieved joint success, there was usually a mood of close camaraderie, but the Chief of the General Staff, Arz von Straussenburg, was tasked by the Emperor with drafting an army command that purely in order to avoid expressly mentioning the participation of the Germans, was to state at the end: 'Thanks to you, every one and all.' The command was then 'rewritten', since the Army High Command wished to avoid such a subtly rude treatment of its German alliance partners.<sup>1846</sup> Even before the offensive was begun, however, an extremely odd measure had been specified, as the Austrian liaison officer assigned to General Below, Major Alfred Jansa, had discovered. Brigadier Waldstätten had among other things issued him with the following instruction: 'Your position will not be easy, since His Majesty has arranged for the establishment of a surveillance commission among the German detachments and troops, the purpose of which is to protect our population against German requisitions.'<sup>1847</sup>

Emperor Karl travelled post haste to liberated Gorizia. Kaiser Wilhelm heard a presentation by a General Staff officer on the Podgora plateau. Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, of whom Karl and Wilhelm spoke in highly dismissive tones, and who was clearly derided by both, also came.<sup>1848</sup> The turnaround appeared to have arrived. The monarchs and the highest-ranking commanders were not miserly with their decorations, but there was also the occasional one that stood out. It was to be expected that gold, silver and bronze medals for bravery would be issued in large number, and that German and Austro-Hungarian officers would be decorated with *Pour le Mérite* and Iron Cross medals. However, one medal, the highest military decoration of the Imperial and Royal Army, the Military Order of Maria Theresa, was only issued three times. Aside from

Major General Josef Metzger, the longstanding Chief of the Operations Division of the Army High Command, and commander of the Imperial and Royal 1st Division in the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo, who was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa, only two subaltern officers, Lieutenant Baron Florian Passetti von Friedenburg and Second Lieutenant Árpád Bertalan, received the medal. They accounted for three of around 120 recipients of the Order who were awarded the decoration either during or after the war. Passetti had succeeded in crossing the Piave River with Infantry Regiment No. 26, and had then distinguished himself in the fighting at Monte Tomba; Bertalan was decorated for the capture of Santa Lucia units of the 7th Mountain Brigade. However, it was almost incomprehensible that not a single German officer was presented with the Order. This was by all means regarded as an insult, and as a result, the Germans refrained from decorating Austrian officers with high awards.<sup>1849</sup> General Krafft von Dellmensingen was decorated with the Military Merit Cross 2nd Class, which was entirely inappropriate, and which Krafft felt to be a mistake. Emperor Karl merely commented curtly: '[...] I do not decorate the German gentlemen with any higher award than our own generals.'

For the Austro-Hungarian troops, at the moment of the breakthrough it was not only the prospect of being able to punish the Italians that was of importance, although this still played a role, but also the hope of war spoils.<sup>1850</sup> To the delight of the soldiers who were storming, and finally merely tumbling, forwards, the Italian hinterland really did emerge as a kind of paradise. There was food available in abundance, including things that they had only been able to remember from years before. This also presented a certain impediment to a rapid pursuit. Everyone wanted to fill his bread bag and all his pockets from the Italian storehouses before moving on.<sup>1851</sup> Some were beside themselves with everything there was to be had, and what opportunities there were for 'boozing' and 'guzzling'. And the Italians didn't even seem to mind. Quite the opposite: the Austrians were received in a friendly way, or at least with understanding. Only 'They [the Italians] are murderously angry at the Germans, and rightly so', as Robert Nowak wrote to his mother.<sup>1852</sup>

The images were not easily forgotten: on the edges of the roads and at their sides, Italian pieces of artillery, dead horses, and hastily destroyed war equipment could be seen en masse. In the villages, the population was afraid of the conquering armies. Occasionally, there were excesses: 'It must be admitted that the men were overtired and half-starving. Now, they have lost all moral sense', noted Constantin Schneider. 'The vast quantities of rice and flour that are being scattered over the road should not go unreported, and neither should the frenzied murders that the livestock and poultry have been the victims of [...]. The soldiers wanted only a tasty morsel and left everything else to rot. Unprecedented crimes are being perpetrated here. I have been forced to ask myself: have we earned this great victory at all? Are we worthy of it?'<sup>1853</sup>

It became evident on the Piave River that the Italians were not demoralised to the same degree everywhere. The 2nd Army had almost been extinguished, but the 3rd Army under the Duke of Aosta, which had been caught up in the retreat, had only had to fight smaller battles against Borojević's Isonzo armies. However, Borojević failed to destroy the Italian 3rd Army, since he had managed to prevent the German formations from advancing in his area of command, and the newly-formed Archduke Eugen army front command could not intervene quickly enough.<sup>1854</sup> It had remained in Maribor (Marburg an der Drau), where, as had previously been the case in Cieszyn (Teschen), the high-ranking officers on the staff had arranged for their families to follow them.<sup>1855</sup> Clearly, it had been more than difficult to leave the idyllic surroundings. Eugen had also remained in Maribor during the South Tyrol offensive of 1916.

Italian divisions, which had been quickly brought in, prevented the Imperial and Royal troops from establishing their positions to the west of the Piave River. At first, however, General Cadorna had misjudged the situation to the extent that he believed that the Austrians would for the main part attack from the Asiago-Arsiero region, as they had done in 1916, and that from there, a far greater danger threatened. The British and French were urgently requested to send troops, and although the Allies showed no particular enthusiasm for bringing not only artillery, but also a significant number of troops to Italy, they finally consented. The first two of four French divisions were entrained on 28 October, and arrived in Italy three days later. They were followed by 24 batteries of heavy artillery. And the British also deployed two divisions, but were only prepared to place them under the command of a British general, and not an Italian one. The Chief of the French General Staff, Ferdinand Foch, met with Cadorna in Treviso on 30 October. On assessing the situation in which their alliance partner found itself, he and the Chief of the British Imperial General Staff, General William Robertson, made a comparison with the Russians and the Battle of Gorlice-Tarnów.<sup>1856</sup> Cadorna's feelings during this meeting were similar to those of Conrad when he had met Falkenhayn. The criticism voiced by the French made him incandescent with rage. Yet he had to remain civil, since the French and British were needed in order to prevent another collapse of the front. Four French and four British divisions were finally brought to the area to the west of the Piave River. 200,000 soldiers provided the Italians with support. This offset the German troops deployed in Italy with the 14th Army. However, the French and British doubted whether the Italians would again recover, and calculated that two further French and one British infantry division would be needed, as well as vast quantities of artillery and aeroplanes, in order to stabilise the Italian front again. 'With the Italians we have an additional burden to bear', it was noted in the British General Staff, which came to the curious conclusion that 'and besides, Italy is similar to France in terms of its unreliability. A report by the commander of the British forces in Italy, General Frederick Lambart, according to which countless numbers of

men of conscription age were loafing about in civilian clothing with nothing to do in Lombardy and Veneto, did nothing to lessen the fury that the British felt towards the Italians. In the view of the British delegation, the layabouts should simply be rounded up and 150,000 Italians sent as military workers to France.<sup>1857</sup> However, this was naturally no solution to the current problems. The western Allies would quite simply have to relocate troops to the south and if revolution were to break out in Italy, would have to consider further displacements of their forces. The condition that the French and British set for the deployment of their troops was formulated very clearly, however: Cadorna had to go. The new Italian Prime Minister, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, who had been in office since 29 October, made no hesitation in agreeing. On 8 November, Cadorna was replaced by General Armando Diaz.

However, more important for the Italians than the Allied support troops, who were gradually arriving, was the fact that the troops of the Central Powers were also unable to move further forward, although attempts were still being made at the start of December to cross the Piave River. The Austrians and Germans had no more guns at the front and, above all, no ammunition. The supply convoy had not caught up with them. The railway lines had been destroyed. There was no supply bridge. As had been the case in the east, the rain turned the roads to mud, and the carts became stuck. It was calculated that the process of hauling up the guns and supplying additional ammunition in order to be able to resume activity would take days, if not weeks. As a result, there was almost no prospect of continuing the advance.

On 3 December, the offensive was officially brought to a halt, and the order given to move to suitable positions. The troops were also at the end of their strength. 'Haggard Austrian soldiers in torn, filthy uniforms, without underclothes underneath, the vacant gaze ahead from reddened eyes – in this way, they panted and hastened forwards, without rest, without sleep, without food – for days on end – only forwards, forwards'. This was how the painter and drawer Ludwig Hesshaimer described the sight that had already greeted him in the Codroipo-Latisana area. 'What was once a crowd of fresh-faced youths had now become aged, emaciated men from our Alps, heavily laden and bent, a piece of tent cloth pulled over their heads as miserable protection against the storms and rain, grotesque figures [...]. The embittered Austrians, maddened by over-exertion, could no longer be held back by their officers [...]. On the evening of this terrible day, the fighters lay below and between the dead, half-dead themselves, groaned and lay in cramped positions in their sleep before the next day dawned.'<sup>1858</sup>

However, the balance was impressive. Around 10,000 Italians had fallen, 30,000 had been wounded, 294,000 men were taken prisoner and, at least temporarily, hundreds of thousands (a figure of 400,000 soldiers was given) had run away, either going home or simply disappearing, in order to avoid having to continue fighting.<sup>1859</sup> The Germans in particular claimed the credit for the success. Boroević had only been able to make

a minor contribution, and the success of Army Group Conrad von Hötzendorf was not even remotely comparable to that of the German 14th Army. This also provided an excellent opportunity for criticising Conrad. Since the troops in his army group had also made further progress southwards, but had then been brought to a halt at the Valstagna, Val d'Assa line, Conrad was accused of rendering the 'Sedan-isation' of the Italians impossible.<sup>1860</sup> This made no sense in that Conrad was to release troops, was simply to offer a show of force, and that initially, it was absolutely out of the question that the troops of the Central Powers would reach the Piave River. Since, furthermore, the Italians did not manage to withdraw formations from their northern front in the first place, thus making it easier for Conrad to push southwards, for him nothing much had changed.

Redlich's comments on the 'Sedan-isation', which the Austrians had then apparently bungled, expressed the ignorance of the observer sitting in Vienna, who could not and would not understand what it meant to be faced with the task of attacking at heights of 1,500 metres, in November and, unlike the breakthrough army, without having been given sufficient provisions. On 9 and 10 November, when Conrad's troops attacked, the first heavy snowfall came. The troops advanced several kilometres on the plateau before being driven back to Asiago.<sup>1861</sup>

At the beginning of December, the fronts came to a standstill. Thus, while Conrad's soldiers began to feel the malice directed towards them, in the lowlands, the fruits of victory were being enjoyed.

Despite the withdrawal of the Germans, which had already begun at the end of November, the occupied area was divided in the same way as the prisoners of war. The separation of the territory into zones of occupation was conducted so efficiently that it became difficult to travel from a location in one occupation zone into its neighbouring location in another. In some cases, real border blocks were imposed.<sup>1862</sup> Then, the occupied area was placed under the control of Army Group Command Boroević. There were disputes between the victorious allies. Here again is Karl Kraus (Act 5, Scene 5): 'Yes, the Germans! [...] Practical, they are, that you have to admit. Booty officers, they have, they've got it all organised, while our lot has to scrape together what bits of stuff we can find [...]. Today, I requisitioned three carpets, 30 kilos of rice, a bit of meat, two sacks of coffee and a few pictures, nicely painted they were, just like in nature! [...] Today, I got hold of a gramophone, 20 kilos of macaroni, 5 kilos of cheese, two dozen tins of sardines and a few little pictures, in oil! Bye.' Looting was commonplace. The Commander of the 2nd Isonzo Army, General Baronet Johann von Henriquez, who ultimately became a kind of epitome of looting among the higher ranks, was dismissed and was obliged to answer for himself in court. It is naturally difficult to believe what the Chief of the Administration Division at Army Group Boroević, Hermann Leid, then wrote – that the Italian population was bowing 'gracefully' to the inevitable. They

gave way 'willingly and obligingly'. There is no doubt that the population suffered heavily from the requisitions. 'In the streets [of Majano, north-west of Udine] all types of goods possible had been trodden in the dirt', wrote Franz Arneitz in his diary. 'Materials, clothes, porcelain, clocks, etc. are all testimony to the lovely manners of our military [...]. The people stand most despondently in the streets and see their goods being ruined, but are not permitted to say a word [...]. The Imperial German military loots particularly heavily [...]. After three days, what had been such a pretty little town now bears sad images of looting. The poor civilian folk, from whom everything is being taken.'<sup>1863</sup>

Austria also demanded levies and customs duties. And since Austria had always been an orderly country, everything was recorded according to the most stringent standards. Only when it came to the food and goods carried off that were needed for everyday use did the Austrian military authorities remain strangely imprecise. It was sufficient, as Hermann Leidl then wrote, to supply not only the 'armies during the operations and for a substantial period of time thereafter', but also to deliver 'significant quantities to Austria-Hungary and Germany'.<sup>1864</sup> As a result, food supplies to the local Italian population were set at Austrian standard levels, and decreased rapidly.

The data was certainly more precise in relation to proud achievements: 300 wagonloads of technical equipment were acquired, 7,000 supply convoy and special carts, 900 wagonloads of different types of kit and equipment, 100 wagonloads of medical materials, and so on.<sup>1865</sup>

From September 1917 onwards, all available locomotives and wagons in the Habsburg Monarchy had been pooled in order to secure and implement the deployment of the troops for the offensive. German locomotives also travelled with them. It had however been conceived and planned that all rolling stock would soon become available again, since supplies to the hinterland also had to be secured. Yet as it turned out, the wagons and locomotives were needed for far longer in order to continue to transport war equipment and troops. And the distances became increasingly longer, while breakages to the rolling stock occurred more frequently. When the trains did return to the hinterland, and ceased to be used only for important military transport operations, starvation had already begun to spread; there were no potatoes, and no coal.

The huge number of prisoners of war was regarded as a clear symbol of the success, and the fact was ignored that these prisoners of war not only had to be accommodated, but also provided for, fed and clothed, and that in winter, they could also not be used as a replacement for the shortage of manpower. No-one was aware that this victory, which in military terms was no doubt on an enormous scale, and the largest to date with regard to the number of prisoners that any of the belligerent powers had been able to achieve during the course of the war, was consummately a Pyrrhic victory. Although the offensive had been well thought through in political and strategic-operational terms, it

was equally misguided when it came to the overall conduct of the war. From September to December, the military in fact sequestered up to 70 per cent of the 105,000 goods wagons and 40 per cent of the open goods wagons belonging to the Austro-Hungarian railway companies.<sup>1866</sup> For this reason, the 85,000 covered wagons were not available that were needed to supply the Austrian half of the Empire – let alone Hungary. After it had reached the Piave River, the German 14th Army was transported back. Once again, locomotives and wagons were needed to secure the transport of soldiers and war equipment, while in the storehouses in the cities and larger towns in the Habsburg Monarchy, there was hardly any coal to be found, no flour, no potatoes, and almost no other food. It was here that the catastrophe loomed.

### War against the USA

Italy had indeed been driven to the edge of the precipice. At first, there was not much more that the new Chief of the General Staff, Armando Diaz, could do than gather together the ruins of his army. His predecessor, Cadorna, had been a man who had made decisions unilaterally. Diaz wanted to involve his staff more closely. He named General Pietro Badoglio and the former Italian Defence Minister, Gaetano Giardino, as his deputies, and attempted to restore order to the work of the Italian Supreme Command. The officer corps also needed reassurance, since what had already been regarded as an exception in the Imperial and Royal Army for a long time, prominent individual cases notwithstanding, was the norm for the Italians: officers were rigorously dismissed on even the slightest suspicion of failure in their duty. This procedure had already begun in the summer of 1915, and continued until the late autumn of 1917: from brigade commanders upwards, during the course of the war, 669 high-ranking Italian officers, including four army commanders, were dismissed, and usually in an unpleasant manner.<sup>1867</sup> This was now to come to an end. Almost more important was the need to lift the morale of the soldiers again. Gradually, the troops who had fled in vast numbers were brought back, and attempts made to discipline them with a mixture of obduracy and understanding. Summary executions on the one hand and an improvement in living conditions on the other, leave and better provisions, led the Italian soldiers to bow to the inevitable once more. The newspapers played their part in the reinforcement of morale, and since money was clearly able to contribute significantly to increasing the level of commitment, money was indeed invested. From the autumn of 1917, the editor of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, Benito Mussolini, received the respectable sum of 100 British pounds per week in order to continue writing in favour of the war.<sup>1868</sup>

At the Allied conferences at Rapallo and Peschiera, Italy was granted immediate assistance by the Entente. Italy did not just need soldiers. The deep crisis in the Italian



Army and, in particular, the despondency among the Italian politicians, had to be compensated. In this case, too, the nomination of new men at the top was intended to offer hope. Sidney Sonnino remained Foreign Minister, however. He also went through a severe crisis, as could only be expected. The balance for the two-and-a-half years of war was more than shocking, and those who had pushed for war were now being deluged with accusations. A confidante of Cadorna, the dismissed Chief of the General Staff, Angelo Gatti, a colonel, writer and journalist, noted in December 1917: 'The entire war was nothing other than one great lie [...]. It is idiotic to regard war as a means of cleansing [...]. Even worse is the extent to which the military leadership misjudged the enemy. How could Cadorna ever have lured us with the promise that in six months, we would be in Vienna? What were our military attachés saying about the strength of the enemy? All a dream [...] all lies and illusions.'<sup>1869</sup>

Interestingly, the breakthrough battle of Kobarid, the 'miracle of Caporetto', dampened the enthusiasm of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, for appearing on this auxiliary front in force. To him, it seemed all the more important that a joint supreme command be established for the Allies, since the war council that had been in place until then had not fulfilled the hopes that had been placed in it. The weakness of both the Italians and the French, and the fact that the Russians had become inoperative, led to these considerations being quickly developed at the Conference of Rapallo on 7 November, and the 'Supreme War Council' of the Allies was established. There was a further development, however, which had far greater consequences.

By the end of October, the Italians had not relished the prospect of military engagement by the USA on Italy's behalf. Now, they came with a cry for help. The American ambassador in Rome, Page, sent a dispatch to Washington on 27 October 1917: 'Alle Berichte weisen darauf hin, dass die deutsch-österreichische Offensive ... sehr ernste Folgen zeitigt ... Wenn es die Verhältnisse erlauben, würde es hier mit großer Erleichterung gesehen werden und sehr wesentlich zur Hebung des Widerstandswillens beitragen, wenn wir Österreich den Krieg erklärten.'<sup>1870</sup> On 1 November, Page reported: 'Ich habe heute Morgen Sonnino getroffen. Er bemerkte in diesem inoffiziellen Gespräch, dass eine amerikanische Kriegserklärung gegen Österreich beträchtliche Auswirkungen haben würde.'<sup>1871</sup> On 2 November, Prime Minister Orlando requested that Page report 'dass jegliche Hilfe, die wir [die USA] aufreiben könnten, einschließlich der Entsendung von Truppenkontingenten, dankbar angenommen würde.'<sup>1872</sup> 8 November: 'Hier gibt es eine zunehmend lebhaftere Diskussion darüber, warum wir uns nicht mit Österreich im Krieg befinden.' On the same day, 8 November, the *Giornale d'Italia* stated this openly, and claimed that the absence of the USA in the coalition against the House of Habsburg was weakening the Allies immeasurably. 10 November: Orlando and Sonnino again had Ambassador Page report to Washington what an enormous help it would be were the USA to declare war on Austria-Hungary, or even to send

troops: 'Auch 5.000 Mann unter amerikanischer Flagge hätten sofort bedeutende Auswirkungen.'<sup>1873</sup> In Washington, the idea began to take hold.

The crisis among the Allies in the late autumn of 1917 led to President Wilson increasingly taking on the role as spokesman of the enemies of the Central Powers. This situation also caused Wilson to abandon his initial refusal, and to agree that the USA should also be represented in the Allied Supreme War Council. He sent his personal confidante, Colonel Edward Mandell House, to the conference in Paris in November.<sup>1874</sup>

The Italian ambassador in Washington, Macchi di Cellere, telephoned Secretary of State Lansing almost every day in order to ask whether the USA had finally also declared war on Austria-Hungary. The French government, which was at that time in crisis following the resignation of the Painlevé Cabinet on 15 November, also began to put pressure on the Americans to declare war on the Danube Monarchy. The former American President, Theodore Roosevelt, began a high profile campaign in the USA, in which he demanded that his country enter the war against Austria-Hungary. In this regard, a step had anyway already been taken, since Wilson's decision to actively participate in the Supreme War Council of the Allies meant that the USA wished to be involved in the coordination of the Allied troops, and not only against the German Empire, but also against its allies, in particular Austria-Hungary. Roosevelt wrote a leading article, in which he claimed that the USA was supplying money, coal and ammunition to Italy in order to enable it to wage war against Austria. 'Wenn wir mit Österreich wirklich noch Frieden haben, verletzen wir unsere Pflichten als Neutraler in flagranter Weise und sollten dafür von einem internationalen Gerichtshof verurteilt werden.' However, he went on, if the USA were already at war, then they had made a cardinal error by only dealing a soft blow. 'Hätten wir zum Zeitpunkt des Bruchs mit Deutschland auch Österreich-Ungarn den Krieg erklärt und entsprechende Maßnahmen gesetzt, hätte es das Desaster für Cadorna wahrscheinlich nicht gegeben.'<sup>1875</sup> A widespread campaign against Austria-Hungary was begun in the USA, in which it was accused of having established a vast espionage network and of acts of sabotage.<sup>1876</sup> The accusations were unfounded, and there was no organised intelligence activity, but this was of no interest in the general war hysteria, which needed its victims.

However, the Americans faced significant problems in revising their policy towards Austria-Hungary, since Wilson had still stated – upon declaring war against the German Empire – that the allies of Germany had taken no hostile action against the USA. Since then, the Austrians had consistently been at pains not to provide the USA with a pretext for opening hostilities. Furthermore, there were individuals and groups in America who repeatedly spoke out against a blanket judgement of Austria-Hungary. They also made attempts to counter the Czech propaganda, which called for the destruction of the Monarchy. The leader of the Czech émigré groups, Tomáš G. Masaryk,

blamed his own problems in having a huge influence on American public opinion primarily on memories of Kossuth and the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, which continued to engender sympathies, as well as on the Catholic Church.<sup>1877</sup>

In Washington, however, the war theorists were also at odds with each other. At issue was the precipitation of a decision as to where American troops brought to Europe should be deployed. There were some who were of the opinion that it could already be seen in the writings of Napoleon that if it came to an operational standstill in a theatre of war, a new approach had to be sought, and this would most likely be found in the eastern Mediterranean. Others were vehemently opposed to the idea and brought the problem of the delivery of supplies into the argument. The establishment of supply lines to France was difficult enough, they claimed, without creating additional problems. Wilson agreed. This was no way to begin the war against Austria-Hungary, however.<sup>1878</sup> Wilson also supported the view that while a declaration of war against Austria-Hungary would boost Italian morale, it would ultimately be only a symbolic act. The outcome must be decided in France, and against the main enemy.

While still under the impression that the American President was refusing to declare war on Austria-Hungary, the first conference of the Allied Supreme War Council began on 29 November 1917 in Paris, which the Americans also attended. The allies they encountered there were concerned and in some cases almost desperate.

The Italian Foreign Minister, Sonnino, who was only too aware how history would judge him were Italy to lose the war, a war into which it was not least he who had led the country, had lost all confidence. According to the records by Aldrovandi-Marescotti, Sonnino claimed on 29 November: 'I no longer hope for Trieste. Italy will perhaps be dismembered.' Ambassador Nitti took the same line: 'Whatever might happen, we shall always be able to turn Italy into an industrial state.' Sonnino replied: 'It would no longer be worth living there.'<sup>1879</sup>

However, between 29 November and 4 December, Wilson changed his mind. As had already been the case in April 1917, when the declaration of war on the German Empire was imminent, he decided against long discussions within his government. When he began work on formulating his traditional message to Congress, which was to be read out on 4 December, he incorporated a recommendation to Congress to declare war on the allies of the German Empire, namely Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. Finally, he took into account the interventions made by American missionaries and American cultural institutions in Bulgaria and Turkey and again removed any mention of these countries from his message. However, it came somewhat as a surprise on 4 December 1917 when he said: 'Ich empfehle daher [...] Österreich-Ungarn den Krieg zu erklären. Österreich-Ungarn ist zur Zeit nicht Herr seiner selbst, sondern ganz einfach ein Vasall der deutschen Regierung.'<sup>1880</sup> Congress was wild with enthusiasm. There were several voices, however, who claimed that war should have been declared

against Bulgaria and Turkey at the same time. Roosevelt spoke of a cherry that was being attempted to be eaten in four bites, and that this was nonsense. A cherry was popped into the mouth all at once. However, on 7 December, Congress voted unanimously for a declaration of war against Austria-Hungary alone. Once again, the dice had been thrown.

In Austria-Hungary, only very few people were aware of the significance of the American declaration. The victory at the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which had now finally led to armistice and peace negotiations in the East, had lulled many into a sense of security. America was not important. Josef Redlich did not even think it worth noting this event in his otherwise so detailed diary. Yet, just one month later, there was a rude awakening.



**26 Camps**

26. A column of Russian prisoners of war marching to a collection point, 1 July 1917. Prisoners of war were regarded as a visible symbol of military success. Their accommodation in camps containing several thousand men was customary as was their deployment for work and their replacement of some of those men who had departed for the war. Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia ultimately held huge masses of prisoners of war. There were probably around six million in total.

**T**hree days before the end of the breakthrough Battle of Flitsch-Tolmein, the repatriation commenced of those evacuated from the area bordering Italy. Eight-hundred refugees were transported to Rovinj in Istria. They were above all women and men fit for work. Children and old people remained in the camps in which they had already been accommodated for two-and-a-half years.<sup>1881</sup> A start had been made. Bit by bit, the refugees from Friuli and Slovenia were also returned. But even with the best will in the world, the clock could not be turned back, since the repatriates were brought to mostly ravaged localities and farmsteads, were left with nothing and were nonetheless expected to continue where they had left off. This was impossible. And the news of the conditions the home-comers were now confronted with was probably circulated rapidly. Nevertheless, the hope that something might just remain of their property and that what had been destroyed could be quickly rebuilt, kept everyone going – then, as later.

In spite of some preparations and legislative foundations for the application of exceptional laws and emergency regulations, most European countries before the war had given thought least of all to what would happen with the civilian population in the deployment zones of armies, which had suddenly become a foreign body in its own homeland. Austria-Hungary was no exception in this respect. The fact that a kind of European harmony emerged here was least noted, and up to the present day we delve primarily into individual fates and those of regions, notice the generic patterns and still tend to want to add up the balance on each side.<sup>1882</sup> In Austria-Hungary, flight was taken against Serbs and Russians, then against Italians and Romanians. Russians fled from Austrians, Germans and Turks. Serbs and Montenegrins escaped Austrians and then Germans and Bulgarians. Italians took flight against Austrians and Germans, Frenchmen, Belgians, etc. All of these states, at least temporarily, had their refugees and forced evacuees. Naturally, their individual fates cannot be measured by the same yardstick, just as little as those of the interned civilians or, even more so, those of the prisoners of war can be. Comparisons are drawn with the Second World War, and the two wars do indeed lend themselves to such comparisons. The fact that many millions of human beings were deprived of opportunities in life is beyond doubt. In short, it is a broad field for historical research and moreover one in which statistics appear to dominate.

## Strangers in the Homeland

Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia and the start of the deployment in the south, as well as the beginning of the war against Russia in its entirety, triggered almost immediate evacuation measures. Flight and expulsion commenced. This applied to the territories of the Habsburg Monarchy bordering Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the crown lands in the east.<sup>1883</sup> Around Kotor and the war ports on the Adriatic coast, civilians were also evacuated, since bombardments from the sea were expected. The members of the naval crews had to leave harbours and garrisons. As many as 8,000 people were forced to look for new homes. If they did not find their own accommodation, they were distributed predominantly among Croatian and Slovenian farms. Then the areas bordering Serbia and Montenegro followed suit. Whereas the civilian population was forced to flee from Sylvania, Bačka, the Banat and Bosnia-Herzegovina, around 10,000 people after all, was mostly housed not far from its homes, a mass migration to the interior of the Dual Monarchy began in Galicia and Bukovina in August 1914. Initially, this was all still manageable and had its own logic, which was based in the conduct of the war. In accordance with an imperial decree, civilians were to be 'forcibly removed from their places of residence for the purposes of conducting the war'.<sup>1884</sup> The establishment of a war zone commenced, as well as the transfer of most civilian functions to the military authorities. The imperial decree, however, had prefixed the formulation on the forced removal of civilians from the war zone with an important and frequently overlooked word, namely 'protection'. In this way, at least in terms of intent, attention was by all means given to the human aspect. It was a question of protecting the population endangered by hostilities. The fact that the people were to be removed from the probable base zone or operations areas in order to conceal the Austro-Hungarian movements and the identity of the troop bodies was an unspoken but, at least in the eyes of the military, additional and indeed dominant consideration. The regions directly at the borders were emptied. Around 1.2 million soldiers were to be brought into a country that mutated from Austria's settlement area and granary into a deployment zone, and a supply organisation set up there that was needed in order to equip four armies with everything they needed. For this task, barely two weeks were available. Ruthlessness was one of the side effects of this deployment. If we take the city and fortress of Przemyśl as an example, then in spite of the fact that the Army High Command was accommodated in this city and the fortress – as a storage fortress – boasted a garrison that rapidly shifted but barely dropped below 100,000 soldiers, the forced evacuations certainly did not initially have priority. To begin with, Przemyśl had in turn become a destination for refugees. It was only the defeats in the battles and encounters at the end of August and the beginning of September 1914 that led to the spread of chaos. At this point, all refugees and some of the inhabitants were forcibly evicted. In the city's



surroundings, 104 small localities were completely evacuated and some of them razed to the ground. The people fled. Many Galicians attempted to escape the veritable evacuation and the forced removal by taking to the road themselves, but strove to remain as close as possible to their settlements and houses.<sup>1885</sup>

The next thing to happen was the setting-in of deception and self-deception, which was not least a result of the war correspondence: the Imperial and Royal Army appeared to hasten from one victory to the next. Further compulsory measures for the 'protection' of the civilian population were thus not considered to be necessary. The truth was not deemed acceptable, at least until it was – almost – too late. The news of the first setbacks, which gradually filtered through, the fact that the Russian troops had reached Brody and Ternopil (Tarnopol) on 22 August, the circumstance that the Battle of Zborov (Zborów) was just beginning and the fact that only a week later the capital city of Austrian Poland, Lviv (Lemberg) was under threat, provoked complete flight and evacuations. The shockwaves could be felt as far as the Habsburg hereditary lands. And the local legislation and the poor laws were not sufficient to ensure the survival of the refugees. The fugitives would have had a theoretical claim for material support against their home municipalities, but this counted for nothing, since these municipalities would soon be located somewhere in territory occupied by the Russians. Thus, it was the job of the ministries of the interior in both halves of the Empire to organise and finance welfare assistance for refugees. Streams of refugees had to be channelled and directed to the individual crown lands that had been instructed to admit them.

The first forced stop was normally at the examination stations that had been established in order to carry out a selection at the borders of the crown lands. If anyone arrived without any belongings and, above all, without financial means, they were assigned to a refugee transport. If someone had the necessary funds in their possession, they were allowed to proceed. For farmers, the examination stations generally meant an end to their disorderly flight, since their possessions were land and cattle. They had been forced to leave both of these behind. Now they were destitute. The continuation of their journey took place first of all with scheduled trains, though they stopped in Oderberg (Bohumín), Cieszyn (Teschen), Marchegg, Bruck an der Leitha and Uherský Brod (Ungarisch Brod) in order to inspect once more the masses flooding back from the north-east of the Dual Monarchy, and where careful attention was taken to ensure that the refugees did not simply scatter into the countryside and the cities. The first camps had to be built. There were not just a few thousand of these, however, but instead hundreds of thousands. Ever more localities in Galicia and Bukovina were evacuated, but the population was, to the extent that they could not flee, 'abandoned to the enemy'.<sup>1886</sup> Those who remained behind – provided it survived – subsequently encountered endless suspicion and very frequently regretted not having fled. The Russians, who had proceeded in their deployment zone no less radically, ruthlessly and indeed

pogrom-like,<sup>1887</sup> tormented the people in the border regions unless they showed themselves to be unconditionally Russophile, and were guilty of numerous assaults. They commenced not least with a mass resettlement and expulsion to the interior of Russia, which was then continued in Austrian Galicia. Around three million people lost their homes in this way. In the process, the Polish Count Georgy A. Bobrinsky, who had been appointed by the Russians as Governor in Galicia,<sup>1888</sup> collaborated with Russian officials, who aspired to a Russification of Galicia and also began to make mass arrests. Furthermore, hostages were taken, above all among those members of the Jewish population who had not fled. The Russians were also able to make use of the strife and the animosities that quickly broke out between Poles, Ruthenians and Jews, since under the cover of the Russian occupiers it was possible to plunder on a large scale and take action against unpopular people.

Those who had fled to Austria had saved their lives, but in many cases their fate differed only gradually from that of those who had been deported to Russia. They were especially accompanied by distrust at every turn. Between 200,000 and 300,000 Ruthenians and Poles in Galicia left their country during the first great exodus or were evacuated. In the process, a type of three-way split may have occurred: one third wanted to get to safety and thus fled; another third was evacuated as a precaution, in order not to expose the inhabitants of a war zone that was expanding ever further westwards to the danger of the fighting; the other third was forcibly resettled in order to get rid of civilians and reduce the risk that military measures might be spotted and reported to the Russians. Probably, each measure was overdone: some people fled who had not at least initially been endangered; others were evacuated who were less endangered in cities like Lviv and, above all, Kraków (Krakau) than the villagers and farmers – and it was especially they who vehemently opposed the forced removal. The fear of informers and spies was certainly justified, but it degenerated into a dangerous hysteria. The question was asked least of all as to what those people whose settlement areas threatened to become a war zone were afraid of and what they had suffered. Far more often the question was posed as to what induced them to remain. To cite just one example: when the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 7 reached the small village of Novy Čindra near Novemiasto in the Beskid Mountains on 4 November, the order was given for the civilian population to leave its houses within twelve hours. ‘Everyone is getting in each other’s way, each one wants to take away his own [possessions], carts are loaded up. [...] It is sad to watch how the people leave their native soil with difficulty and how they must go but don’t know where to. [...] Everyone cries, whether a man or a woman, a child or an old person; these poor people are expelled from their dwellings, and now with the winter just around the corner. The twelve hours are up and our patrols roam through the village, and where they encounter a civilian he is arrested as a spy and each one is hanged without even being questioned. [...] Naturally, a lot of people are still to

be found in the village, since one forgot this, another that, [whilst] others came back to search for their relatives, who did not come back, and had to suffer death on the gallows for it. It is sad when one considers that they are also Austrian citizens and the state they belong to deals so terribly with them.<sup>1889</sup>

The bulk of the refugees took the shortest route to the west or via the Carpathians and ended up in Hungary. They were sent further on their way. Those, however, who were actually evacuated or deported, had in any case no choice in the matter. They were robbed of their freedom of movement.

The question of gathering and accommodating the refugees degenerated in the shortest space of time into the squaring of the circle. The Imperial-Royal Ministry of the Interior had been informed by the Army High Command only in mid-September of the scope of the evacuation measures.<sup>1890</sup> Galicia and Bukovina were part of the Austrian half of the Empire. Therefore, the Hungarian government argued that it was responsible merely for those refugees coming from the areas bordering Serbia and for the adjoining territories of Slovakia south of Galicia, then known as Upper Hungary. The Hungarian government, therefore, decreed in mid-September the expulsion of the inhabitants of East Galicia who had fled to Slovakia. It above all fought tooth and nail against the accommodation of Jewish refugees. Other transports, however, were also actually threatened. When a refugee transport arrived in Košice (Kaschau) at the beginning of October 1914, the populace stormed to the railway station in order to prevent the refugees from disembarking.<sup>1891</sup> These refugees, who came to Hungary mostly clueless and were pushed back and forth, were literally without rights and had only the option of making it to Austria or of being repatriated in the middle of a changing war situation.

Subsequently, an imbalance occurred that could never again be corrected, since as a result of the war, Austria had to accommodate many times the number of refugees that Hungary had to manage. Regulatory measures that might have been able to achieve a balance foundered on the division of the Empire. It was irrelevant that Hungary then declared itself ready after the second evacuation of Kraków to take in 5,000 of the approximately 90,000 evacuees (though it was not permitted that any of these be Jews).<sup>1892</sup> Ultimately, Hungary also offered only about 30,000 refugees temporary accommodation in its half of the Empire.<sup>1893</sup> Consequently, the Austrian half of the Empire had to take care of finding alternative quarters for a million people. There could be no talk whatsoever of a 'substitute homeland'.

The Army High Command also took this into account, since the Chief of the General Staff demanded the evacuation of civilians from the war zone, but recommended separating out those capable of work and transporting all others to Uherské Hradiště (Ungarisch Hradisch) in Moravia.<sup>1894</sup> No mention was made of Hungary.

A contributing factor in the greater allocation to crown lands in the Austrian half of the Empire was also the fact that it was intended that the refugees, evacuees and forced

detainees be taken as far as possible into the hinterland. A few regions in the interior of Austria, as well as Bohemia and Moravia, therefore had to take in the bulk of the refugees. The initial transports here also made it clear that it was first necessary to find one's bearings in this new situation. As a matter of priority, railway employees were brought first of all into the reception area, since it was intended that they continue to carry out their duties. All transportation personnel, but also artificers, depot clerks, boiler makers, painters and decorators, therefore, soon continued to pursue their occupations but were simply relocated to another railway division. They were not welcome everywhere. Thus, the Governor of Tyrol, Count Toggenburg, argued that in his administrative ambit there was insufficient accommodation and food shortages, and the mood towards the Ruthenians was anything but friendly. The railway workers arrived – with a certain degree of naivety – with cows, pigs and chickens. The people of Styria, however, were evidently untroubled by this.<sup>1895</sup> Then the first real refugee transports arrived. They had needed weeks to reach the reception areas. Soon, little was left of the initial generosity and the partial understanding. The Galician refugees arrived with a few possessions. Like the soldiers going to the front, they were transported in freight trains, which bore the following inscription typical for military transports: '40 men or 6 horses'. Those who, like the railway employees, received a regular income because they had been in the civil service somewhere in Galicia or Bukovina, or already drew a pension, were housed in private quarters. The destitute refugees, however, were to be accommodated in camps, which had mostly been constructed by captive Russians and private firms. Most of them, however, were not yet ready to move into even in October 1914.

Poles and Ruthenians who had fled to the west to escape the Russians naturally sought out the large cities. In November 1914, Vienna already counted around 140,000 refugees from Galicia and Bukovina, and in Prague, Brno (Brünn) and Graz there were a further 100,000 destitute refugees.<sup>1896</sup> In Vienna, there were days in November 1914 on which as many as 3,000 refugees arrived. A large proportion of them were Jews. Then, on 10 December, the influx into Vienna was stopped. Prague, Brno and Graz followed with similar measures. At the turn of the year, however, Vienna counted almost 200,000 refugees, of whom around 150,000 had to be accommodated and fed in a makeshift way, since they were penniless.<sup>1897</sup> For a short time, the flow of refugees appeared to dry up, but the advance of the Russians in November as far as Kraków and the fighting in the Carpathian Arc again forced 250,000 people to flee. Once more, a large proportion of them had to seek accommodation in the camps in Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Bohemia and Moravia.

The barrack camps, in which they arrived en masse, did not have any solid buildings, but instead at best provisional, hastily erected structures that had been set up within the space of two or three months. Until then, the refugees were accommodated in empty buildings, barns and tents. In Wagna, near Leibnitz, to take one of the largest

camps as an example, the first Polish refugee transports arrived at the end of November 1914. One month later, the camp already boasted a population of around 14,500 refugees.<sup>1898</sup> This camp especially clearly reflected all problems arising from such emergency shelters: they had been set up in great haste. At the beginning, adequate sanitary, disinfection and washing facilities were lacking. There was no talk yet of schools and workplaces. It was vital only to find shelter for people. In December, typhus broke out. In January, there was already a typhus epidemic. There was a lack of doctors, since they had frequently been drafted, and the doctors who had fled with their compatriots from Galicia were not regarded as destitute and therefore avoided being accommodated in a camp. Consequently, emergency measures also had to be taken here. Only after half a year was the typhus epidemic brought under control. 49 people had died; ten times as many had been taken sick.

The Ministry of the Interior certainly did its utmost to avert a catastrophe. For the Austrian Interior Minister, Baron Heinold, and likewise his successor, Count Toggenburg, two aspects were to the fore here: the humanitarian and the security factors. In any case, the Ministry of the Interior did everything to make sure the avalanche of refugees did not result in chaos and violence.<sup>1899</sup> In the case of many of the measures decreed for the reasons cited above, the officials repeatedly met with bitter opposition on the part of district and national authorities, but also from the municipal council in Vienna. Appeals to comprehend the suffering of the refugees and to alleviate their presence as strangers in the homeland were often not understood.

Only initially were the refugees willingly accepted. Thereafter, however, the argument was soon heard that 'the boat is full', or words to that effect. Wherever camps were set up, the tradespeople and suppliers of building materials derived some benefit from them, since materials and workmen were naturally required for their construction. Then, however, tensions also increased in the rural reception areas, people became suspicious that the refugees were better off than the locals, and envy in particular was aroused that the refugees were equipped with a fixed sum of money and, above all, with food (without having to wait in line), whilst the local residents could not expect nourishment, free clothes, footwear, underwear, straw mattresses, blankets and medicines.<sup>1900</sup>

In December 1914, 291,459 refugees already had to be supported in the Austrian half of the Empire; in January 1915 it was 321,478. For a brief time at the end of September and the beginning of October 1914, there had been cause for hope. Przemyśl had been relieved and the evacuation of Kraków had been stopped. Those willing to return prepared themselves. Then, however, Przemyśl had to be evacuated a second time and remained occupied by the Russians until its re-conquest in June 1915. Only the victory in the Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive brought the turnaround, at least for western and central Galicia. By then, the masses of refugees had grown to around 400,000 people. At this point, Vienna and Lower Austria hosted around 186,000 refugees in

camp and otherwise, Bohemia (including Prague) more than 96,000, Moravia 57,000, Styria over 25,000, Upper Austria 12,000 and all other regions far fewer.<sup>1901</sup> Then the peak appeared to have been reached. At the end of May 1915, there were 'only' 224,460 refugees from the east in Austria.<sup>1902</sup>

Here and there, people had grown accustomed to the sight of the refugees. Above all in the large cities, they – at least occasionally – got lost in the masses. Wherever their accommodation was crowded, however, they were doubtless a foreign body. In the smaller towns and in the rural communities their strange appearance, especially of the refugees from the east, repeatedly caused a stir. Despite all the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior, the level of acceptance did not increase during the course of the months and, eventually, years. On the contrary: people were irked by the unfamiliar clothing and the languages that had been unknown until then, and they sneered at the conventions and customs. Who had ever seen the Polish and Ruthenian Galicians or the Hutsuls before, or knew something about the Lipovans or the Mennonites?<sup>1903</sup> Anti-Semitism was encountered wherever large groups of Jews were found in the reception areas. It should be kept in mind, however, that rejection and resentment only began to express themselves more strongly once the flow of refugees appeared to be never-ending and the locals were doubtlessly overwhelmed here and there. It is also correct, however, that spontaneous aid committees were set up, and that national authorities did everything to generate understanding for the exceptional situation and to urge consideration for the religious, social and cultural otherness. Here it was a question of finding employment for the refugees, teaching the children, improving the accommodation and countering the burgeoning tensions between the refugees and the locals, but also among the refugees themselves.<sup>1904</sup>

This seemed easiest to accomplish in camps. As problematic and far-reaching as it was, the systematic registration was therefore in the interests of the refugees and forced evacuees. This had to be acknowledged above all by those who had sought to go into hiding whilst still in Galicia or somewhere on the run from the war, since they could of course not make a claim for financial support. Neither option was ideal: going into hiding and remaining on the run or residing in a camp. And, of course, the solution of accommodating the same and like-minded people together also had its drawbacks.

New categories were repeatedly created and new places of abode sought and assigned. From May 1915, refugees who did not receive a secure income had to prove that they had at least 500 kronen in cash for each family member. If this was not the case, they were sent to a camp. Since the camps were soon overcrowded and new refugees were thronging into the interior of Austria, at the beginning of May 1915, as many as 5,000 Poles were distributed among different summer resorts in Styria, 1,500 Poles were sent to the city of Salzburg, and 1,500 to Linz and its surroundings. 5,000 Jews were divided between different summer resorts in Carinthia. Apartments in Graz, Linz

and Klagenfurt were rented at the expense of the state and made available to 8,000 Polish refugees of a higher social standing, as well as 500 Jews.<sup>1905</sup>

Within a very short space of time, the provision of foodstuffs gave rise to rivalries and envy. Russian prisoners of war were to receive meat three times a week. Galician refugees, provided they were accommodated in camps, received meat – if possible – twice a week. Otherwise, the customary ‘specialities’ dominated; in Styria these were, for example, beans, barley, potatoes and, above all, polenta. But the ‘bread envy’ showed no mercy. Refugees were unnecessary eaters.

When the time came to return, many were quite rightly sceptical that they would find a secure existence. Strangely enough, life in an Austrian camp appeared more desirable. Many, however, had a very different dream and wanted to follow the stream of emigrants who had poured into the USA in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>1906</sup> And the route still appeared open, since there was as yet no war against the United States.

Until summer 1916, the number of refugees from the east would sink further. Then, however, it shot up again for half a year. Around 200,000 inhabitants of Galicia and Bukovina once more had to leave everything behind and again abandon to destruction what they had just built. This time, Hungary also committed itself to taking in 25,000 refugees for a short time.<sup>1907</sup> In any case, other refugees long since had priority for Austria, namely those from the south-west.

In the territories of Tyrol, Carinthia, Slovenia, Istria and the Austrian Littoral bordering Italy, the mass migration only began later. In May 1915, however, the images of the region of Trento (Trient) and the territory of the upper and mid-Isonzo began to mirror the well-known images from the east of the Dual Monarchy: the population in the localities and farmsteads close to the border were asked to leave their houses. The first notices had arrived as early as the end of February 1915. At that point, it had been said that in case of emergency the ‘politically unreliable elements’ would be evacuated. It then appeared almost Kafkaesque, however, that there were to be court proceedings against those inhabitants of the frontier region who spoke about a possible Italian entry into the war, since they were in this way guilty of the offence of spreading false rumours. The District Commissioner in Bolzano (Bozen), who was responsible for compiling the list of unreliable people, then claimed that two-thirds of the population would have to be imprisoned for such offences.<sup>1908</sup> From 17 May, the evacuation of the Italian-speaking population of Istria began.<sup>1909</sup> The non-Italians followed. On 19 May, the evacuation orders reached the Austrian Littoral on the Adriatic. Finally, it was the turn of the Trento region and the localities on the plateau of Folgaria and Lavarone. Whoever did not go willingly was evacuated by force. ‘The population is asked to leave the area. [...] Everyone [must] take a suitcase with the most necessary items – a woollen blanket and provisions for five days.’<sup>1910</sup> Such and similar announcements were published by mayors

up and down the land. No territories nearby were chosen, however, to take in the refugees and evacuees, but instead cities and localities located deep in the interior of the Dual Monarchy. The quasi deportees were the last ones to learn of their destination. The implementation of the operations was, as in the east, a matter for the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry had instructed the governors of the crown lands already selected for the refugees from the east as early as the beginning of April 1915 – at a time when it was still being negotiated how an Italian entry into the war could be prevented – either as a precaution or perhaps also pessimistically, to make public the municipalities that would accommodate the refugees. In May, a central transport administration was established. The distribution centres were Salzburg and Leibnitz. These two cities had their own examination stations, which acted, like at the borders of the crown lands in the east, in accordance with the ‘Cinderella principle’: the ‘good ones’ were sent to refugee camps or were distributed among refugee communities; those, however, who were regarded as irredentists, spies or informers, or at least considered unreliable, were taken to internment camps. As in the case of the refugees from the east, the allocation at the examination stations also took place according to national, confessional and, not least, social and material criteria. If the refugees did not have any funds, they were allocated to fixed refugee communities. If they were destitute, they were sent to a camp. One transport followed another. If the evacuees were sent to camps, it was generally those that already existed and had been erected previously for Polish and Ruthenian refugees. Wherever this was not the case, new barrack camps were built. A rough calculation revealed that from the territories of the Dual Monarchy bordering Italy, 150,000 people would have to be accommodated elsewhere. With this, the total number of destitute refugees swelled to 550,000, not including those who were endowed with some cash but were at any rate also uprooted and counted a further 300,000 to 400,000 people. All in all, they amounted to a round figure of a million refugees.<sup>1911</sup> In order to enable important social contact, keep down the linguistic barriers and assuage confessional needs, the camps were separated according to national, linguistic and religious groups. After all these things had been sorted out – albeit not very well – the following distribution of the large refugee camps emerged:

- Braunau am Inn housed South Tyrolese of Italian nationality
- Bruck an der Leitha – Slovenes
- Chocẽ (Chotzen) in Bohemia – Poles and Ukrainians of Christian confessions
- Havličkũv Brod (Deutschbrod) in Bohemia – Jews
- Enzersdorf im Thale in Lower Austria – Romanians and Ruthenians from Bukovina
- Gmũnd in Lower Austria – Ruthenians
- Pottendorf-Landegg in Lower Austria – inhabitants of the Austrian Littoral of Italian nationality



- Mitterndorf near Grammatneusiedl in Lower Austria – Italian South Tyrolese
- Oberhollabrunn in Lower Austria – Romanians and Ruthenians from Bukovina
- Reisenberg in Lower Austria – Poles
- Steinklamm in Lower Austria – Croats and Slovenes
- Unterwaltersorf in Lower Austria – Poles
- Wagna near Leibnitz in Styria – initially Poles, then inhabitants of the Austrian Littoral of
- Italian and Slovenian nationality
- Wolfsberg in Carinthia – Ruthenians
- In addition, there were camps for Galician Jews in Pohořelice (Pohrlitz), Mikulov (Nikolsburg) and Kyjov (Gaya) in Moravia.<sup>1912</sup>

The fact that Hungary continued to refuse to take in a large number of refugees understandably created bad blood in Austria. The issue was eventually addressed in the 22nd session of the Austrian House of Representatives on 12 July 1917 and subjected to massive criticism by several Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) deputies. Hungary naturally saw things differently.

From January 1917, it became easier for the destitute refugees to leave the camps, find their own accommodation – if they wanted to – and take employment. It had become vital to parcel out the refugees ever more and thus minimise the burden. Salzburg and the district of Eferding were added.<sup>1913</sup> Nonetheless, Vienna, Graz, Brno and Prague remained blocked to any influx. These were joined by Linz.<sup>1914</sup> The tensions also increased rather than decreased in the case of the refugees from the south-west of the Dual Monarchy, and every arrival of refugees generated defence mechanisms, which could turn into a veritable hatred. The homeless masses also aroused fear. In the Braunau refugee camp, for example, around 12,000 people were accommodated in 129 barracks, three times as many as the number of Braunau residents.<sup>1915</sup> In Wagna near Leibnitz, as many as 30,000 people were counted.<sup>1916</sup>

Mayors, district commissioners and governors referred with generally unchanging arguments to the difficulties and dangers of camps of such size: first of all, valuable farmland was lost, the provision of foodstuffs could not be guaranteed, a risk of infection existed and the ground water would be contaminated. The accommodation of the refugees in camps was nevertheless consistently regarded by the Ministry of the Interior as more advisable than their referral to quarters that had no suitable sanitary facilities, where the supply problem was practically insoluble and – though it was not expressed in quite this way – guarding and monitoring the refugees was impossible. Camps, by contrast, ‘offer[ed] economic and social benefits’, as the Styrian Governor argued.<sup>1917</sup> A socio-political and educational purpose was also ascribed to the camps: here, an ‘often culturally inferior population’ was familiarised with the ‘highly-developed sanitary and

hygienic facilities' that they had not known before. Coexistence also made sense, since it contributed 'to a deepening of the understanding of the individual peoples of the state for each other and the elevation of community spirit'.<sup>1918</sup>

From 1916 at the latest, the coexistence became an existence of one against the other. The refugees and, to an even greater extent, the internees were not seen as compatriots, but in view of the rapidly deteriorating conditions instead as 'rivals in the daily struggle to survive'. The food shortages were reduced to the simple formula that the refugees were consuming everything and that, for this reason, nothing remained for the locals.<sup>1919</sup> Nevertheless, in 1917 the Reichsrat deputy Alcide Degasperi believed that at least the Ministry of the Interior had done everything possible for the refugees and 'outcasts' had ultimately become 'citizens'. They had also encountered a lot of love, he continued, in equal measure in Bohemia, Moravia, Upper Austria, Lower Austria and Styria.<sup>1920</sup> Ultimately, however, the refugees had been treated like objects and not like human beings: 'They were evacuated, ordered to march, searched, provisioned [and] quartered in barracks, as though they did not have their own will [and] as though they did not have any rights.'

Life in the camps could not have been more varied. The barracks differed in size. In Wagna, the standardised temporary buildings housed 400 refugees. In Braunau, the wooden huts measuring 40 x 10 m were designed for 100 people. Both cases were the norm. For a period of time, 600 people were stuffed into the hall-like barracks, however, and up to 170 in the smaller ones.<sup>1921</sup> The rooms were divided up into larger units, which were in turn subdivided into compartments for individual families. The very simple quarters were supplemented with stoves in the central aisles, baths and toilets. Beds were mostly iron military beds with straw mattresses laid on them. There were no cupboards. Possessions were stored in suitcases or baskets or hung from the beams. Two-thirds of the occupants comprised women, youths and children, whilst one-third consisted of middle-aged and old men.<sup>1922</sup> The inadequacies generally balanced each other out. The barracks were shabby, the sanitary conditions left a lot to be desired and were sometimes catastrophic, whilst communication was a problem and already caused difficulties wherever the camp leadership did not understand the language of the occupants (and vice versa). There were primary school lessons but no secondary education. Secondary schools at which pupils could also take their school-leaving examinations were established only for the refugees living in the large cities and generally as a result of individual initiative. After that, however, the young men were expected to join up.

Bit by bit, the camps of course changed, attempts were made to plant greenery in them, school, sanitary and hospital barracks were added, whilst churches and nurseries were built. At the end of 1915, 1,600 children attended the Istrian school in Wagna and 1,500 children the Friulian school there.

The job opportunities were modest. There were cobblers, carpenters and basket weavers, as well as knitting and carving schools. What, however, did the fishermen from coastal territories do, or farmers who now no longer had fields or cattle? What about the salaried employees, tradesmen or innkeepers? It was clear, however, that it was desired that the refugees work and, if necessary, be forced to do so. In Austria, to take 1915 as an example, as many as 135,000 war refugees were then employed – or ‘utilised’ – in the most varied economic sectors.<sup>1923</sup> The younger men who were fit for military service or were mustered at some point between 1915 and 1918 then joined the military. There was nothing left for the middle-aged and older men to do but kill time. In Wagna they could watch how the Roman city of Flavia Solva was unearthed partially inside and partially outside of the camp. Forty Serbian prisoners of war also participated in the uncovering of the Roman remains.<sup>1924</sup> Whether or not they proceeded with great care was probably irrelevant. Some of them were busy, in any case, and the others watched them.

Scarcely had Lviv been reconquered when the Ministry of the Interior began to send the Galician refugees back home. It initially seemed to be nothing more than an administrative act. A ministerial decree divided Galicia and Bukovina up into three territorial zones, A, B and C, and gave clearance for the return of the refugees.<sup>1925</sup> Zone A was largely free for returnees, B to a restricted extent and C only for persons who could provide very specific reasons as to why they wanted to return to their homeland at a time when the fighting had not yet finished. For the time being, the entire Bukovina region was part of this zone.

The discord could not have been greater. Naturally, those who had left behind their belongings and perhaps owned property forced their way back. The authorities wanted to see the refugees return home as quickly as possible so that they could re-establish order, commence the reconstruction and, above all, cultivate the fields. But an endless amount had been destroyed after the front had passed through twice and especially where hundreds of thousands of soldiers had been at war for weeks and months. Entire villages had been obliterated. It was not possible to simply return home, and of course those willing to try asked themselves whether they would find conditions that were even remotely fit for human beings. They received the pledge that the state benefit payments they had been given during their forced stay in other crown lands would be continued. But, as so often, there were repeatedly delays and difficulties.

In June 1917, at a time when all three zones had already been given clearance for the returnees, 421,745 refugees were still housed in barracks and private accommodation in the Austrian half of the Empire. In addition, around 37,000 Poles, 88,000 Ruthenians, 82,000 Italians and 177,000 ‘Israelites’ were counted, of which 41,000 were registered in Vienna, 71,000 in Bohemia, but only 354 (!) in Lower Austria. Most of them had been taken in by members of the Jewish community, however, whilst Ruthenians and Italians had to be housed in large part in barracks.<sup>1926</sup>

From 1917, repeated attempts were made to forcibly repatriate those who had defied a voluntary return. These attempts were not very successful, however, since the total number of refugees could be reduced by only around 100,000 people over the course of an entire year. Finally, a conflict continued that had been smouldering for a long time: the governors, municipalities and mayors repeatedly attempted to carry out forced evacuations. They were not least under the increasing pressure of the respective local population, which did not tire of expressing its rejection of the refugees. They were 'parasites' and to blame for the 'unhygienic conditions' and thus for the outbreak of contagious diseases. They, and above all the Jews among them, were forcing up prices and supplying the black market.<sup>1927</sup> They were regarded as work-shy, but were expected conversely to heed the ban on work that was effective, for example, in Vienna.<sup>1928</sup> Here, the established lawyers, among others, had successfully resisted the admission of their Jewish colleagues as lawyers, since they simply feared the competition. The door had been opened for anti-Semitic rhetoric. But there were also other targets.

When a law 'regarding the protection of war refugees' was discussed in the Austrian House of Representatives on 22 July 1917, it was the correspondent, Dr Janez Evangelist Krek, who – somewhat polemically – stated: 'I am surprised that not all refugees have turned into criminals. I admire their passive bravery in enduring the hardships. I admire that they have not completely despaired of everything, since [...] these people have indeed been discouraged by the state, by justice, by the law, by order, by the world, by God.'<sup>1929</sup> The House of Representatives adopted the bill. Until the parliamentary process was over and the Law for the Protection of War Refugees could actually come into effect, however, another half a year passed.<sup>1930</sup>

The law changed nothing in respect of efforts to get rid of the refugees, however. Let the Galicians and, above all, the Jews return to where they had come from! The methods used to induce them to return home oscillated between the application of enacted regulations, promises, financial contributions, aid cuts, eviction and sheer hatred. There was nothing left of the initial sympathy and understanding. If there was something akin to a feeling of community, then it was limited to a most narrow group of people who shared the same fate and companions in misfortune. Feelings of thankfulness did not surface.

The return transports of the refugees appeared, therefore, at least as dramatic as the forced evacuations. The report of the Imperial-Royal Governor of Galicia, Witold von Korytowksi, from the end of December 1915 made this all too clear: around 70,000 square kilometres had been ravaged. Approximately seven million people had been affected by the devastation and some of them were left without any possessions. Evidently, however, this was not seen as a reason to abandon the repatriation. Galicia had to be rebuilt, whatever the cost. The reports that arrived at the beginning of 1918 to the effect that hundreds of repatriated refugees were dying every day in East Galicia<sup>1931</sup>

were either not believed or had no impact. So many people were dying anyway in this war.

### The Internees

Alongside the refugees and the forced evacuees who were accepted into the communities and camps in the crown lands to which they were assigned, there was another category that encountered from the outset far more distrust and rejection than even the refugees: the internees. They embodied a grave difference to the 'normal' refugees.

Most things that applied as a rule to the refugees did not apply to the internees, namely an at least official welfare support and a certain freedom of movement. It was also not the case for the internees that they were to be repatriated at the first available opportunity. They were quasi prisoners.

First of all, the members of the nations waging war against the Habsburg Monarchy – hardly surprisingly – fell into this category. This was a few dozen British and French on whom enforced stays in Lower Austria and Upper Austria were inflicted. There, in Drosendorf, Raabs, Waidhofen an der Thaya and Kautzen, they encountered Russians, most of them refugees and deserters who wanted to escape service in the army of the Tsar. Literally from one day to the next, they had become enemy foreigners. Their fate was not very different, however, to that of the members of the Habsburg Monarchy who had the misfortune of being at the outbreak of the conflict in one of the states now waging war against Austria-Hungary. Hundreds and then thousands fulfilled the criteria in Great Britain, France and, above all, Russia of 'enemy foreigners'. Austro-Hungarian citizens were likewise interned in Algeria, Cyprus and Madagascar. Hardest hit were the 80,000 (!) Ruthenians working in Canada, of whom 6,000 were sent to camps.<sup>1932</sup> Women, children and men over the age of 60 were as a rule permitted to return home. If those remaining were not subsequently repatriated, however, or – which frequently happened – were exchanged for internees of the enemy states, they remained incarcerated for years. This applied above all to the men of military service age, since of course no state had a particular interest in augmenting the number of enemy soldiers.

Within the space of weeks and months, the measures taken against the 'enemy foreigners' by the Austrian authorities were tightened. Initially, they were only instructed to report regularly, but then those fit for military service were hindered from departing, those who appeared suspicious were arrested and brought to prison, and eventually the authorities began confining them to certain localities or detaining them in empty barracks or other buildings. In the end, internment camps existed that differed from the refugee and prisoner of war camps primarily in that they were considerably smaller.

Not only foreigners were interned, however, since the suspicion of hostility towards the Monarchy was directed to a far greater extent against certain groups of non-foreign nationals. Some of them were to be found in lists that had already been compiled years before the war, so that it was now only a question of setting up card indexes. At the very top were Ruthenians accused of being Russophiles. Those foreigners regarded as hostile, the suspects and those who had been evacuated from the war zone had to be repeatedly transported elsewhere due to the overcrowding of the prison houses, garrison courts and emergency accommodation, and in this way the first internment and confinement stations were filled up in Esztergom in Hungary, in Vienna, in Karlstein an der Thaya and in Göttweig. At the end of August 1914, 3,600 internees were already recorded in the Austrian half of the Empire. The Army High Command, however, and above all the War Surveillance Office, which was primarily responsible for the internees, made sure that more were added. Thus, 6,700 Ruthenians regarded as Russophiles were brought from the deployment and war zones in the north-east to Graz-Thalerhof and Terezín (Theresienstadt). More than 3,400 Serbs were interned in Arad and 600 in Bihać.<sup>1933</sup> Only in very few cases was an attempt made to verify whether the suspicion against the deportees was justified. They were dispatched 'as a precaution', as Count Herbert Herberstein noted with a shake of his head. 'Among them were better people, women and girls and small children. [...] I would just like to know what we imagine will happen if we ever get Galicia back. [...] We cannot presume that the people treated in this way will simply become good and loyal subjects again.'<sup>1934</sup>

The third offensive against Serbia led to a further swell in the number of civilian internees.<sup>1935</sup> This was then followed by the war against Italy. To a certain extent, the events of August 1914 repeated themselves. Thousands of Austrians lingered in Italy and were interned, whilst thousands of 'imperial Italians' resided in Austria-Hungary. In Cisleithania alone, 11,600 men from the new enemy who were fit for military service were counted. Most of them had been listed in registers even before May 1915, together with the 'politically unreliable elements' who then met with internment following the Italian declaration of war on Austria-Hungary. They were sent to Leibnitz, Linz, Waidhofen an der Thaya, Steinklamm, Oberhollabrunn and Hainburg.<sup>1936</sup> Barracks were built and camps set up. If anyone had funds at their disposal, they had to pay for their livelihood largely out of their own pocket. The destitute were maintained. In order that they did not remain idle and also contributed something to their upkeep, they were employed and forced to work. All men who were not eligible for military service and had not yet reached the age of 50 were to work. This regulation affected roughly a third of the internees and those otherwise confined.

In May and June 1915, 5,700 'political unreliaables' from the Austrian Littoral and Trentino were deported into the interior of the Dual Monarchy. There were sent above

all to Katzenau near Linz.<sup>1937</sup> In Katzenau there was already an infrastructure, since a prisoner of war camp had already been established for Russians. There were 38 barracks.<sup>1938</sup> If we take the number of people arriving in Linz from the south-west of the Monarchy as our yardstick, on 27 May 1915, 600 of around 2,400 evacuees were regarded as politically suspect or identified as 'imperial Italians' and sent to the internment camp in Linz-Katzenau. Two days later, 250 of the more than 5,000 arrivals from the territories bordering Italy were transferred to the Katzenau,<sup>1939</sup> and in the days and weeks that followed the internment camps near Linz, Graz and Oberhollabrunn filled up. On balance, five per cent of those evacuated from the regions bordering Italy were thus sent to the internment camps.<sup>1940</sup> Others were sent to confinement stations, i.e. places they were not allowed to leave, where they had to report regularly and where they had to submit their correspondence for attestation.<sup>1941</sup> Their transfer to the camps and the confinement stations was justified with reference to the emergency decrees. The arrest of women and, above all, children could hardly be justified, however. The greatest problem though was that – in contrast to the interned foreigners – neither protecting powers nor the Red Cross took care of the members of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and private aid organisations did so only relatively late in the day. The camp inmates could only hope that the suspicion and accusations raised against them would prove to be unfounded. Petitions could be drawn up, reasons invoked, attempts made to refute allegations and to prove that one was not a spy, had not conspired with Serbs, Russians or Italians, and was no irredentist but instead a completely normal citizen.<sup>1942</sup> Some of the internees were indeed actually released in this way. Eventually, aid committees were established that took care of the internees and, above all, pursued their repatriation.<sup>1943</sup> Many of them were downgraded to the category 'harmless'. From February 1917, a proportion of the internees was pardoned by Emperor Karl. Immediately afterwards, the internment camps began to fill up again.

Like the war refugees, the internees were repeatedly relocated until at the beginning of 1917 a comparatively clear distinction emerged: around 6,000 people were counted in the Austrian internment camps. Russophile Ruthenians and Poles were accommodated in Graz-Thalerhof, whilst Italians, but also Belgians, French and British were in Katzenau near Linz and in Oberhollabrunn. Ultimately, these were only the survivors, since in the camp in Thalerhof a large number of internees were said to have died during the first winter of the war alone.<sup>1944</sup> As in the refugee and prisoner of war camps, epidemics raged among the camp inmates, whose resilience had been dramatically impaired by the external conditions of the camps and, above all, by the poor nutrition and care. Since the internees were regarded as particularly dangerous individuals, however, for whom neither refugee aid nor a certain goodwill felt towards a defeated and captive enemy should apply, the guards often showed no regard. In 1917 it became known that there were punishment stations where internees who had behaved defiantly or had ac-

tually become offenders were 'terribly beaten', as a letter to the War Surveillance Office alleged. The allegation was not disputed.<sup>1945</sup>

The long periods of internment certainly did not result in the development of positive feelings towards the Habsburg Monarchy. In a report by the Ministry of the Interior, Katzenau was described 'as a veritable academy of irredentism'.<sup>1946</sup> It was therefore prohibited to repatriate the internees. As a result, they generally had to remain in their enforced locations until the end of the war or accept massive restrictions. Their fate was not dissimilar to that of the prisoners of war.

### **On Ivans, Serbs and Wops**

Since the Swiss mill owner Henry Dunant, in search of new sales markets for his flour in 1859, accidentally witnessed the consequences of the Battle of Solferino and then founded the Red Cross on a humanitarian impulse, the prisoner of war problem had also been recognised as something that had to be incorporated into the rules for waging war. This admittedly required time. At the two peace conferences in The Hague in 1899 and, above all, 1907, the terms were then codified. Accordingly, prisoners of war were to be treated humanely, though they were permitted, with the exception of officers, to be put to work. The custodial state was responsible for maintaining the prisoners of war and for treating them like its own troops in respect to food, clothing and shelter. Prisoners of war also had to adhere to the laws, regulations and orders of the state under whose control they were. From August 1914, therefore, the Habsburg Monarchy was obliged to observe these provisions – in the drafting of which Austrian and Hungarian international law experts and military personnel had participated – and to apply them. As in practically all other areas of waging war, experience was lacking, and for this reason the principle was repeatedly applied that one had to defer to the normative strength of the facts at hand. It soon became very clear that the provisions of the Hague Convention on Land Warfare were not sufficient to make the situation bearable for hundreds of thousands and millions of prisoners of war who were in the hands of the enemy not only for a short time but rather for a period of years. Here, regulations were not enough.

Since Austria-Hungary assumed as a matter of course that a large number of Serbs and probably also Russians would have to be detained, in July 1914 the search began for suitable spaces in which camps could be set up. Then, the first prisoners of war were brought in. Room was initially found for a few hundred, then a thousand and finally 20,000 prisoners of war on military parade grounds such as Kenyérmező near Orăștie (Broos) or in the casemates in the Fortress of Arad. They were left to camp in the open, dig holes in the ground, erect tents and build simple huts. They starved, froze



and fell sick. The first epidemics broke out. The conditions became notorious. Prime Minister Tisza intervened and ultimately introduced an argument that could not simply be dismissed: humane treatment and corresponding care were desirable 'in view of the fate of our own prisoners in enemy territory'.<sup>1947</sup> Spain, which had volunteered to act as protecting power for the Russian prisoners in the Danube Monarchy, was engaged. Spanish delegates toured the first Austrian and Hungarian camps. They did not discover anything unusual. It is possible, however, that they were led past the misery and did not notice that in Mauthausen and Milovice (Milowitz) in December 1914 the prisoners were sent into the surrounding area in order to beg, since the supply of the camps was not working. Evidently, they did not learn, either, of the large-scale deaths of Serbian prisoners of war in Mauthausen. In reality, Mauthausen was a 'mortuary'.<sup>1948</sup> Like so many things, the number of those who died here alone cannot be established exactly. It is said to have been between 7,000 and 12,000 people. But this is only one figure among many.

Naturally, work on larger and better camps had already long since commenced, but away from the reception centres those responsible were very slow to get to work. Even when prisoners of war were deployed in building barrack camps, it was the accommodation of the Galician refugees that had priority.

In searching for suitable pockets of land and also buildings, perhaps unexpectedly the notable willingness emerged of estate owners to offer their properties, though of course in return for a reimbursement of costs.<sup>1949</sup> Guest houses and boarding houses, which – as a result of the war – no longer had any guests, were by all means prepared to rent their rooms out to prisoners of war, though naturally only to officers. Stables and sheds would suffice for captive soldiers. Members of veterans' associations wanted to assume the responsibility of guarding the prisoners. It was clear that no-one had yet really given any thought to what the war would bring and, aside from Kenyérmező, Arad, Mauthausen and Milovice, there was also no real concept of the reality of the prisoners' misery.

The prisoners were to be accommodated as far away as possible from the theatres of war, in order to impede their escape. That much was clear. The camps were to be erected for expedience close to railway lines, away from large wooded areas, since attention of course had to be given to visibility, and they needed space and the potential for an infrastructure to be built that was simply necessary. Unlike the refugee camps, the division into different nationalities was immaterial, provided that the camps could be constructed far enough away from the front. Prisoners of war were more welcome than refugees, since both Austria and Hungary intended a priori to employ them as workers and in this way wanted to offset those soldiers whom their own economy had lost. Thus, the prisoner of war camps sprang up like mushrooms. Some of them attained only the character of transit camps, since it was intended that the deployment of the prisoners

would not only take place in the hinterland but also, increasingly, in the vicinity of the front as forced labourers.

Building work took place predominantly in Styria, Lower and Upper Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, as well as in the military command area of Bratislava (Preßburg), whereby it was not only the region that played a role but above all also the capacities that were kept in mind, since it was intended that the prisoner of war camps would have large-scale dimensions. In Milovice, 19,000 prisoners already had to be accommodated in the winter of 1914/15, whilst it was 15,000 in Terezín and 14,000 in Liberec (Reichenberg).<sup>1950</sup>

Just how the space requirements increased in leaps and bounds can be seen, for example, in Knittelfeld, where in August 1914 negotiations began regarding the erection of a camp for 1,500 prisoners of war. In September a demand of 5,000 persons was assumed and, ultimately, 15,000 were reckoned with. In mid-October 1914, accommodation needs for 20,000 men were already cited.<sup>1951</sup> In Styria, another camp was established in Feldbach. It was supposed to take in 32,000 prisoners of war.

The establishment of the camps was then generally a matter for the prisoners of war themselves, who were deployed as construction workers and set up barracks in which 400 persons were to be housed. The actual population, however, was for a time 50 per cent higher. Epidemics broke out, like in Mauthausen. The Diocesan Bishop of Linz, Rudolf Hittmair, also died of typhus following a visit to Serbian prisoners of war in Mauthausen.<sup>1952</sup> The same picture emerged as in the refugee camps. This meant that an overload could be expected the next time, since neither the hygienic nor, above all, the sanitary facilities could be changed overnight, nor were the medical care and medicines sufficient to achieve a rapid improvement of the situation. The death that the soldiers had escaped at the front found its way into the camps on a mass-scale. The relocation of the prisoners of war was begun, likewise the rigorous adherence to hygiene regulations, which had been laxly handled up to winter 1914. Gradually, the authorities got to grips with the epidemics. A certain harmony could be observed here, since in Germany and in the camps of the Allies devastating epidemics during the first winter of the war were also a deadly companion to prisoner of war captivity.<sup>1953</sup>

The construction of camps did not stop after the first ones had been erected. The next were built and, above all as a result of the victory at Gorlice–Tarnów, there was a mass arrival of Russian prisoners of war. Germany and Austria shared the human war booty of 140,000 men. In Sigmundsherberg in Lower Austria, and in Freistadt and Marchtrenk in Upper Austria, large new camps were established. Space for additional accommodation repeatedly had to be found or the existing camps expanded.

In Sigmundsherberg near Krems, accommodation was required for 30,000 enlisted men and 200 officers.<sup>1954</sup> There was the usual haggling over rent per acre and year. In late summer 1915, a further expansion was contemplated by the War Ministry. Now

40,000 prisoners of war were to be sheltered. Once again, building work was carried out in stages. The first Russian troops had to build accommodation barracks, in which they themselves were then housed. Then the work on the actual shanty town commenced. The sawmills and the owners of the haulage carts earned money. The number of skilled craftsmen was insufficient. Therefore, workers from Hungary, Silesia and Bohemia were also deployed. In November 1915, it was possible to house 25,000 men, but the infrastructure and above all the sanitary facilities were still deficient. Sewage works, disinfection units and laundries were still missing. A camp hospital did exist, but the barracks did not yet have any ovens.<sup>1955</sup> A cemetery was set up, since the local cemeteries were too small. Workshops emerged and the Sigmundsherberg camp gradually became a small town.

Like everywhere, however, the organisational and material dimension of prisoner of war captivity was overlaid by the human dimension. Whilst attempts were made as a rule to fulfil the prisoners' most primitive needs, their emotional distress could not even be understood, just like that of the refugees and internees. Camps were everywhere. Admittedly, one prisoner was not simply the same as any other. Most of the Russians had been defeated during one or another battle and had been compelled to surrender in the hopeless situation, since they no longer had any ammunition, much like, for example, many Russian soldiers during the spring 1915 offensive of the Central Powers. Others had succumbed to Austro-Hungarian front propaganda and hoped for humane treatment until they could return home. Others still – and not so few – had deserted. Those wounded and the sick who had since recovered filled the camps, as did those who were afraid of returning home someday, since they would have been threatened with a court-martial and their prisoner of war captivity would have been equated with cowardice. Corresponding announcements by the Russian High Command led them to fear the worst.<sup>1956</sup> In Russia, a veritable campaign started in 1915 that equated being taken captive with treason. Lists of names of 'deserters' were to be published, their families were to be deprived of state welfare support and, after their return home, the 'cowards' were to be shunned. The campaign went so far that it was intended to divest the Russian prisoners of war in Austria-Hungary and Germany of any support, since the Russian authorities assigned a demoralising effect to the sending of money or food and portrayed it as an invitation to desert.<sup>1957</sup> In this case, there was also a type of harmony, since both the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian propaganda targeted identical ways of thinking and behaving. It was merely a question of the interpretation. Prisoners of war and deserters were always welcome. Austria went one step further and made a film, *Kriegsgefangenenlager* (Prisoner of War Camps), which was screened in 1916 in the framework of the Vienna War Exhibition in the Prater Park and was designed to demonstrate the extraordinary humane treatment of the prisoners of war.<sup>1958</sup> The Russian prisoners of war never saw the film. They would probably have been surprised by

it. The Russians are hardly likely to have known that until the winter war in the Carpathians bonuses had been paid for the capture of Russian soldiers and even later real bounties were offered. In order to gather accurate information on strength, structure and troop division, bonuses of 25 kronen were paid in March 1916 for bringing in a Russian prisoner, for example. When this still did not yield the desired success, the patrols were promised silver and, allegedly, even gold bravery medals for the capture of Russians.<sup>1959</sup>

After the construction of the prisoner of war camps had become established and the first problems brought under control, a type of normality also ensued here. Towards the end of 1915, the number of prisoners of war in Austria-Hungary exceeded the one-million mark. Russians and Serbs received scarcely any food parcels from their homelands, which had a catastrophic effect from winter 1916/17, since at this point in time the food crisis was breaking out in Austria. The number of dead again soared. Charitable donations of another kind, which came from 'Russian committees' in the Netherlands, France and Great Britain, as well as from American and other organisations, ensured, however, that camp libraries were established in the larger camps.<sup>1960</sup> The approximately 50 camp libraries were equipped with around 20,000 books by means of donations of money and in kind. Admittedly, intellectual sustenance could not compensate for the hunger. Camp life was diversified when members of the Phonogram Archives of the Imperial Academy of Sciences made an approach and admitted songs of Russian prisoners of war, or when artists such as Egon Schiele, Wilhelm Thöny and other particularly distinguished prisoners drew and painted. Theatre groups, orchestras and above all educational establishments and presentations served the same purpose of making camp life more bearable. The fact that in the process literacy was achieved for some of the prisoners and several of them were even brought up to university level was a by no means planned but certainly welcome side effect. A special position is occupied by the Russian prisoner of war newspaper *Nedelya*. It was modelled on the newspaper *Russkie Izvestia*, which had been issued for Russian prisoners of war in Germany since 1915. It took until June 1916, though, for the first issue to appear. 180 were to follow it.<sup>1961</sup> The newspaper had to be purchased, however. It is not really surprising that an Austrian perspective on matters was the only editorial policy. Lead articles, comments and reports of any kind withstood examination by the censors. The fact that, as co-editor Ernst von Streeruwitz wrote in his memoirs, 'in the lead articles of this newspaper it was endeavoured to make especially our enemies on the western front unpopular among the Russians' was almost self-evident.<sup>1962</sup>

In 1917 and 1918, Austria-Hungary was not entirely satisfied with *Nedelya*, however, since something could be read in the newspaper about the rights of the prisoners of war, and then the Imperial and Royal Army High Command felt it could accuse the editorial team of raising false hopes with its account of revolutionary events in Russia and furthermore that the cause of the increase in escapes from prison camps was the

fact that prisoners of war were forcing their way through to Russia in order not to arrive too late and miss out on the distribution of goods.<sup>1963</sup> In 1917, around 30,000 Russian prisoners of war had escaped from the rear areas of the north-eastern front alone. Some of them were captured again, but others were able to beat their way through. Those who were recaptured justified themselves not only by arguing that they hoped to receive something in the distribution of land, but also by pointing to the poor provisions and the miserable conditions in the camps and, above all, with the army in the field.

The latter contributed significantly to the negative nature of memories of prisoner of war captivity, just as the use of prisoners of war by the field army was a contributing factor in the lack of accuracy of the statistics. During the course of the war, ever more prisoners were demanded by the military authorities and the high commands in order to carry out work in the army rear areas. Increasingly, however, prisoners of war were frequently not sent to the rear but instead remained in the vicinity of the front. There, they not only eluded the prisoner count but also had to accept a type of legal defencelessness, since they could not be visited by the delegations of the protecting powers or charitable organisations. Their fate depended more or less on the conduct of the individual commanders. In autumn 1916, more than 80,000 prisoners of war were employed in the rear areas of the front in Russia alone.<sup>1964</sup> In spring 1917, to take another date as an example, 295,000 prisoners of war were utilised by departments and commands of the Imperial and Royal Army. At the beginning of 1918, the number had risen to 362,000 people, two-thirds of them Russians.<sup>1965</sup> They were deployed in the context of labour battalions and above all for the construction of roads, paths and cable cars. They carried ammunition, worked on field fortifications, searched for mines and cleared the battlefields after the fighting was over.

Military and civilian departments occasionally engaged in furious exchanges, since it was not a question of statistics but rather, above all, of the manpower that everyone wanted – and needed – to deploy for their own benefit. There were often no alternatives any more. In the case of those who remained in the camps, a long-known picture manifested itself that was not dissimilar to the one that could be sketched in the context of the refugee camps. The civilian population had initially demonstrated sympathy towards the prisoners of war and had been happy to occasionally engage in trade. Bit by bit, however, the picture began to change. The provisioning of the prisoners seemed to be better and their existence more assured than that of the civilian population. The prisoners also appeared to have enough money in order to buy themselves food, tobacco products and commodities. The problem of security was addressed, since it bothered a local community counting only a few thousand people that there was a multitude of captured enemies in the neighbourhood. The 2,000 residents of Feldbach, for example, were confronted with 42,000 prisoners of war. They fought tooth and nail against a further increase of 20,000 people.<sup>1966</sup> Nonetheless, the Serbian, Montenegrin and,

above all, Russian prisoners of war were also repeatedly seen from the perspective, and accordingly treated, that a rapidly escalating number of Austro-Hungarian soldiers had conversely also fallen into the hands of the enemy and it was hoped that they would be treated similarly (well) to those who were in one's own custody. This of course did not exclude that during the course of the so-called 'retaliatory measures' an inhumane treatment was positively ordered. When, in January 1916, it became known what kind of fate the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war had suffered who had been taken to Albania by the Serbs on the run, the Imperial and Royal Army High Command decreed that the Serbian prisoners of war detailed to work in the rebuilding of the Przemyśl fortress were to be treated 'with no regard for humanity' and forced to work 'using the most severe methods, possibly [also] with physical punishment'.<sup>1967</sup>

The tensions subsided again, and Russians, Serbs, Montenegrins and then Italians and Russians replaced the servants and agricultural hands, worked in industry both in the vicinity and further afield, produced goods for the army's requirements, regulated rivers and were employed in the construction of roads and railways. During the spring cultivation of the fields, most of the other occupations had to take a back seat in favour of the field work. Then, however, the prisoners again produced commodities in the workshops, weaved shoes and crafted carvings. In this way they were occasionally able to earn a few extra heller. It was above all the Russians who were ultimately regarded not only as a sort of necessary evil but also as honourable fellow human beings, 'quiet, harmless [and] somewhat slow in their work'. Eventually, it was above all those who were almost indispensable labourers who were 'in no way [made to] feel like they [were] in enemy territory'.<sup>1968</sup>

Initially, the Russians had been negligibly remunerated, as was foreseen by the Hague Convention on Land Warfare. Subalterns received 4 kronen and soldiers a mere 24 heller each day. Since the news came from Russia, however, that the Russians for their part denied the Austro-Hungarian prisoners the payment of wages, this was also abolished in Austria. From mid-1915, money was paid again, since the intention was to create an incentive. The farmers and the factories utilising prisoners of war had to pay the treasury a basic wage per head and per worker. Capitalism thus found its way into the prison camps. The prisoners were also to be paid for overtime, i.e. work that exceeded eight hours a day.

Since the prisoners were so evidently useful, the transfer of prisoners of war and their evacuation, for example that of the camp inmates from Feldbach to Hungary from June 1915 on, was viewed with regret. If the camps were emptied because the prisoners of war were drafted for work duty or relocated, then it did not as a rule last very long before the camps filled up again.

Sigmundsherberg, for example, was converted from May 1916 from a Russian camp into an Italian camp. On 18 June 1916, it was once again filled to capacity.<sup>1969</sup> Four

months later, it was already overflowing, since around 56,000 Italians had been accommodated.

Upon their arrival, the Italians differed from the Russians already in their appearance, since they arrived in fine uniforms and, above all, good footwear, whilst many of the Russians had been barefoot and had remained so until late autumn of the first year of the war. The Italian prisoners of war were also marginally better off than the Russians in the sense that the latter had to initially manage without a functioning infrastructure, build the camps themselves and also produce their own basic needs. For the Italians, it was considered necessary 'only' to bring about a type of 'Italianisation' by exchanging the contents of the camp libraries and printing the newspaper *Il Lavoratore* (The Worker) instead of *Nedelya* (The Week). This proved to be a grave error, for which a disproportionately large number of Italians in camps such as Mauthausen, Terezín or Sigmundsherberg paid for with their lives. Initially, everything appeared to be more or less on the right track. The Italians, who could make known their arrival in whichever camp with the help of the prisoner of war postal service, subsequently received masses of parcels from their homeland,<sup>1970</sup> above all foodstuffs. Requests to the Italian government to avoid individual consignments and instead deliver certain amounts of goods for collective supply, just as France did for their prisoners of war in Germany, were not complied with by Italy, which instead pointed to obligations under international law. According to Italy, Austria-Hungary was alone responsible for the orderly and adequate supply of its prisoners. The fact is that the number of consignments declined and the physical condition of the Italians deteriorated from the beginning of 1917. The suspicion cannot be entirely dismissed that Italy had caused or contributed to the starvation and death of thousands, since with its reference to the fate of the ailing prisoners of war it wanted to prevent desertion.<sup>1971</sup>

Then Flitsch-Tolmein happened. Austria-Hungary captured 140,000 men in 'human booty' and initially regarded them as evidence of its military victory, but soon thereafter as a problem that eclipsed everything that had gone before. The Imperial and Royal War Ministry had in fact originally expected to capture far more prisoners of war. The Germans, however, insisted on a ratio of 1:1. The camps were overcrowded. Ultimately, 468,000 Italian prisoners of war were recorded in the Austrian and Hungarian camps.<sup>1972</sup> It was impossible to construct new prisoner of war camps so quickly. The number of prisoners in Austria-Hungary was approaching the two-million mark. Around 60 per cent of them were Russians, namely between 1.27 and 1.33 million in absolute figures. Serbs and Montenegrins were reflected in the statistics with 167,000 prisoners of war, whilst the Italians totalled 370,000 to 468,000 and the Romanians 52,800.<sup>1973</sup>

The camp administrations literally begged that no further prisoners be sent. Alone the accommodation of the Italian general and staff officers was a problem, since they

were to receive better quarters according to the Hague Convention. This was at the expense of the subalterns. The conditions of the barracks for the enlisted men frequently defied description. There were no longer any plank beds, nothing with which to heat, nothing to eat, no straw mattresses and no blankets. The barracks – in which around 400 men were housed – often had only three ovens, in winter! The sick barracks were bursting at the seams. Of the approximately 140,000 additional Italian prisoners of war who had to be accommodated in the winter of 1917/18, around 35,000 were wounded, sick or at least not capable of working. The mortality rate among the captive Italians shot up. They wrote home, seeking to give expression to their misery. The censors, however, intercepted most of the letters and did not forward them. Italy furthermore displayed an attitude that was not dissimilar to that of Austro-Hungarian authorities towards the Czechs in the first year of the war (and subsequently): they doubted that the soldiers had surrendered in hopeless situations and regarded them instead as deserters or agitators, who had gone on strike against the war and were not, therefore, entitled to any aid.<sup>1974</sup> At this point the Apostolic Nunciature in Vienna stepped in with the intention of determining to which camps Italian prisoners of war had been sent, but they were often only able to send the message to Rome that someone had succumbed to his wounds or had died in captivity. Nuncio Valfrè di Bonzo, who represented the Holy See in Austria from the end of 1916 until 1920, also visited the prison camps but was unable to detect any abuses and – to the satisfaction of the Austrian authorities – sent positive reports to Italy. The Nuncio was also unable to do anything about the starvation. Finally, captive Italian generals took action. However, the Imperial and Royal War Ministry reacted to the complaints of the highest-ranking Italian officers with the observation that the food shortages were a consequence of the Allied blockade measures, whilst the lack of clothing and equipment was down to the vandalism of the prisoners themselves. Nonetheless, there was no way to counter the alarming increase in mortality and diseases.<sup>1975</sup> The fact that the Italian prisoners had been veritably robbed before they even reached the predetermined camps and that they had been divested not only of their valuables but, above all, also their overcoats, capes and items of warm clothing was a scandal, which then became the subject of an army order issued by the Command of the 11th Army in February 1918, the clarity of which left nothing to be desired: it could be established, the order read, ‘that a not inconsiderable percentage of the newly accrued Italian prisoners of war has arrived in the prisoner of war camps without these items of clothing, so that the War Ministry felt compelled to contribute uniforms and underwear from its own stores even to the officers. [...] In regard to the captive Italian enlisted men, the circumstance was added that they often have to be left behind in the camp and cannot be sent out to work due to inadequate clothing, as a result of which vital economic and military interests appear to be endangered. [...] Without exception, the troops are to be strictly prohibited from removing items of clothing of any kind.’<sup>1976</sup>



In Mauthausen, the Italians did not have any blankets and many soldiers had neither shirts nor underwear.<sup>1977</sup> It may be the case that the Austro-Hungarians still wanted them to be made to feel the ‘treason’ of 1915. It is more probable, however, that even – and especially – the prisoners of war were not spared the progressive barbarisation.

Only in April 1918, i.e. with the arrival of the warmer season, did the situation improve somewhat. At this point in time, the population of the Sigmundsherberg camp alone, the largest of the six prisoner of war camps occupied by Italians, was 120,000 prisoners, of which 20,000 remained in the camp itself; the rest were deployed for work outside the camp. Among those who stayed behind were more than 5,000 sick.<sup>1978</sup> The increased deployment of the Italians for work was not connected to the overcrowding only being manageable in this way. The peace negotiations with Russia and Romania were decisive and restored the hope that there would soon be an exchange of prisoners. Until this happened, however, both Russians and Romanians had to accustom themselves to enduring prisoner of war captivity in the same way as Serbs, Montenegrins and Italians.

In Austria-Hungary there were around 50 prisoner of war camps. They were not – with one exception – divided into officers’ camps (*Offizierslager*) and main camps (*Stammlager*), as they would be in the Second World War, though there was a separation of the respective accommodation itself for officers and soldiers. The main camps provided the basis for countless generally ad hoc satellite camps, which were established in the vicinity of the front near mines and industrial complexes, near business enterprises and, above all, in the countryside. The fact that Mauthausen, Terezín (Theresienstadt) and Oświęcim (Auschwitz) are among the names of the camps, but also Strnišče (Sterntal) near Ptuj (Pettau), appears – at least in retrospect – to be a giveaway, but it invites comparisons that are inadmissible.

Overview of the Prisoner of War Camps in Austria and Hungary<sup>1979</sup>

<b>Military Command Area</b>	<b>Camp</b>
Vienna	Sigmundsherberg
	Spratzern near St. Pölten
	Hart near Amstetten
	Mühling
	Purgstall
	Wieselburg
Graz	Knittelfeld
	Feldbach/Mühldorf
	Lebring
	Klagenfurt
	Strnišče (Sterntal) near Ptuj

Innsbruck	Braunau am Inn Anif/Grödig St. Leonhard Grödig Freistadt Marchtrenk Aschach Mauthausen Kleinmünchen
Prague	Jindřichovice (Heinrichsgrün) Planá (Plan) Cheb (Eger)
Leitmeritz (Litoměřice)	Broumov (Braunau in Böhmen) Most (Brüx) Liberec Jablónné v Podještědí (Deutsch-Gabel) Terezín (Theresienstadt) Milovice Josefov (Josefstadt)
Bratislava	Csót Hajmaskér Zalaégerszeg Ostffyasszonyfa Sopronnyek Boldogasszony (Frauenkirchen) Nagymegyér Dunaszerdahely Somorja Kenyermező Czászárköbanya
To these were added the following camps in 1918:	
Innsbruck	Aschach an der Donau
Bratislava	Bruck-Királyhida (Bruckneudorf)
Kraków	Wadowice (Frauenstadt)
Košice	Satu Mare (Sathmar) <sup>1980</sup>

Already abandoned were the first transit camps in Kenyérmező and Arad as well as the camp in Oświęcim (Auschwitz), which was erected later. Unlisted is also the camp in Šamorin (Sommerein).

Of the approximately two million prisoners of war who were brought to the countries of the Habsburg Monarchy, 5.9 per cent – according to other calculations, up to 10 per cent – did not survive their captivity. They died for different reasons. In the German

Empire (5.3 per cent) and above all in Great Britain (3.9 per cent), proportionately fewer prisoners apparently died. In France, 6.1 dead were counted for every 100 prisoners of war, in Italy 6.6, in Turkey 13 and in Russia 9.9 (though a figure of 20 dead per 100 prisoners of war is arguably more accurate). Ranked at the bottom of the statistics were Romania with 23 and Serbia with 26.8 dead per 100.<sup>1981</sup> The Second World War was to completely dwarf all these figures.

### Siberian Clarity

From the first day of the war on, Austria-Hungary was confronted not only with the question of accommodating Serbian and, above all, Russian prisoners of war. For their part, the Imperial and Royal armies suffered enormous losses as a result of the capture of countless soldiers and officers. Initially, the numbers were very vague, but then the Casualty Lists Group in the Imperial and Royal War Ministry began to gather the numbers to be delivered to the War Statistics Bureau more accurately and to revise them upwards. The approximate figures were ultimately retained, however, since above all the category 'Missing and taken prisoner' did not undergo a differentiation, and indeed could not. Calculations went back and forth, the 'Information Office for Prisoners of War' made appeals for clarification and finally, at the end of June 1915, after such and such a number of corrections, the decision was taken to divide the missing among the lists of those fallen in battle and those taken prisoner. 'The majority of the "missing" must be counted among the "prisoners"', as the War Statistics Bureau concluded.<sup>1982</sup> The numbers suddenly jumped upwards.

It had initially been assumed that in the Serbian theatre of war and almost exclusively during the course of 1914, 66 officers and 1,980 men had fallen into Serbian or Montenegrin prisoner of war captivity. 656 officers and around 74,000 men were regarded as missing. After the statistics had been adjusted, 902 officers and 58,705 men were counted as prisoners.<sup>1983</sup> Since, during the course of Potiorek's third offensive alone, around 70,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army were said to have been taken prisoner, there was still a huge discrepancy.

It was a similar story in the case of the figures for the Russian theatre of war. Again, tens of thousands of missing were alleged. Only at the beginning of June 1915 was it calculated that up to that point 6,470 officers and 457,800 men had been taken captive by the Russians. Until the end of the war, these figures increased to between around 1.5 million (lowest estimate) and 2.1 million (highest estimate). These are only two examples, however, from a wealth of partially unverifiable data that is based on the most varied sources, and in the case of which it must be kept in mind that the figures have been repeatedly used to support certain claims and emphasise arguments. Statistical

data was used not only to quantify suffering but also to express particularly inhumane conduct, victories, defeats, bravery and cowardice in figures.

Scarcely any of the members of the Imperial and Royal Army will have given serious thought in July 1914 to what would happen if they were taken prisoner. There were hardly any codes of conduct for such an eventuality. When the predominantly Czech Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 75 in Salzburg was mobilised, the possibility of captivity was broached during an officers' discussion. The regimental commander, Colonel Wiedstruck, argued that, since nothing good could be expected of the Serbs, every officer should carry a dose of poison with him. Hardly anyone took this seriously, however, and thus went to war without any thoughts of being taken prisoner, and without poison.<sup>1984</sup> Depending on the course of the fighting, the leadership and the devotedness of the officers and the troops, a greater or smaller number of soldiers fell into enemy hands. None of the regiments deployed escaped such losses. What then took place in countless variations was described by Wenzel Ruzicka of the aforementioned Infantry Regiment No. 75: if one fell unwounded into the hands of the Serbs, a march away from the direction of the front began that lasted for hours. Frequently, one was 'relieved' of one's cash and, to a greater or lesser extent, one's valuables: watches, money, gaiters. Then the march continued for days. The men slept in the open air and the officers on the floor of some form of accommodation. Occasionally, it was possible – for those with money – to buy something. The food was very poor. Whilst en route, the respective paths crossed of the prisoners of war and Serbian refugees fleeing from the Imperial and Royal troops, who had been advancing since November 1914. The failure of the third offensive against Serbia in December allowed most of the refugees to return home. For the prisoners of war, the march continued southwards to the labour camps, since the prisoners of war were to be put to work as soon as possible, primarily in the construction of roads. On 21 December, Ruzicka learned the fate of the members of his company and 'how badly off our men are. The accommodation is so crowded that there are scuffles over the places on an evening! The night is passed on some straw, without blankets. The vermin is out of control. The mortality rate is high: twice a week the men receive some meat, and otherwise half a portion of bread and 15 grams of bacon.' Then the division according to nationalities took place. Hungarian- and German-speaking soldiers were deployed in the construction of roads and railways. Czechs and Serbs were given preferential treatment. The officers of the Slav nationalities were also treated better. Regardless of which ethnic group the prisoners belonged to, however, their treatment by the Serbs – aside from cases of caprice – remained relatively correct, and occasionally downright lax. Officers and enlisted men were given a little money, not quite the sums they should receive according to the Convention on Land Warfare, but enough to be able to buy something; newspapers, for example. Officers – regardless of their nationality – also had a certain freedom of movement. Many of

them were brought to Niš and accommodated in the Turkish-built fortress there. Then a period began that one of the captive officers, Robert Salomon, described as the 'boredom of a bleak life in captivity'. 'It was not the Serbian rulers who particularly soured our lives here, either', but the Czechs had a bad reputation, above all when they had devoted themselves 'to the Russian or the Yugoslav cause'.<sup>1985</sup>

In October 1915, there was an abrupt change. With the progression of the German-Austro-Hungarian-Bulgarian offensive in autumn 1915, not only the Serbian King, the government and the remains of the army set off for Montenegro and Albania. They also took the prisoners of war with them. As many as 110,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army had fallen into Serbian captivity in 1914 until the evacuation marches. Fewer than 100,000 of them were still alive, since typhus had also raged among the prisoners of war in winter 1914/15. Some of the prisoners, above all most of the 5,840 imperial Germans and 8,000 Bulgarians, were left behind, but the Serbs wanted to take the larger part of the Austrians with them. Thus began the great mortality. It can no longer be ascertained how many prisoners of war died. Figures fluctuate between around thirty per cent and half of those who set out on the evacuation marches. Their journey lasted 58 days, of which 29 days were spent marching. Around 7,000 kilometres were walked. Some of the soldiers no longer wore any shoes. Their uniforms were in tatters. The supply system collapsed, whilst diseases, especially typhus and cholera, raged.<sup>1986</sup> When the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war reached the coast in Albania and were transferred to the Italians, fewer than 20,000 prisoners were brought on to the ships of the evacuation fleet. That was only twenty per cent of those who had set out from former Serbian territory. But the odyssey was still not over. The Austrian prisoners of war were brought to the Italian prison island Asinara off the coast of Sicily. Those who were suffering from cholera were herded together with all the others. In addition, dysentery broke out. On one transport of the *Duca di Genova* alone, around 500 of the more than 3,000 prisoners contracted dysentery, of which 200 died.<sup>1987</sup> After their arrival on Asinara, the dying continued on a massive scale. The Italian doctors were powerless. A Vatican dignitary, however, who visited the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, found no fault with the conditions and sent a reassuring letter back to Rome.<sup>1988</sup> Finally, in summer 1916, around 12,000 survivors were brought to France.<sup>1989</sup>

To date, little attention has been paid to the prisoners of war of the Imperial and Royal Army who were in Serbian custody. The most plausible explanation for this is that this group was numerically much smaller than those who fell into Russian and Italian captivity. Therefore, after the war, the memories of the 'Siberian clarity', as Heimito von Doderer called it in his account of captivity, as well as those of the Pontine Marshes, were dominant.

For the troops on the Russian front, prisoner of war captivity had also been a mental taboo. But from the first day of the campaign on, prisoners were exchanged. The Rus-

sians also had to accustom themselves to this element of waging war. However, they had not entirely forgotten their experiences of the Russo-Japanese War.

At the time of the first fighting in Galicia, the Command of the Russian South-Western Front decreed the transfer of Austro-Hungarian prisoners to Kiev. Collection points at the front were assigned and, ultimately, Penza in the Volga region was designated as the place to which prisoners were to be transported. On 11 September, Moscow was also named.<sup>1990</sup> A few days later, the point of overload had already been reached. The commander of the fortress in Kiev reported that since the end of August, as many as 3,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war had passed through his collection point. To 'pass through' was a curiously incorrect turn of phrase, since the prisoners had to march on foot for days and even weeks before they were transported further by railway. The sick and the lightly to moderately wounded often failed to survive these exertions. Diseases similar to dysentery further decimated the columns.<sup>1991</sup> The evacuation of the prisoners caused ever greater problems until, on 15 November, the main administration of the General Staff gave clearance to use Siberia for holding the prisoners. From then on, the members of the Slav nationalities, as well as Romanians and Italians, were to be accommodated in the European districts of Russia and not further eastwards than Omsk, whilst the Siberian military districts were expressly assigned to the Germans and Hungarians, but also Jews and Turks. The better treatment of the prisoners of war of Slav nationalities had been worthy of a separate ukaz by the Russian General Staff on 22 October 1914.<sup>1992</sup>

The overcrowding in the Russian reception areas was enormous. Time and again, cities such as Moscow refused to accept more prisoners of war. Thousands had to remain temporarily in freight cars. The hospitals in the base zone had been overstretched since September. At the beginning of 1915, the flood of prisoners diminished somewhat, but then the winter war in the Carpathians began and again between 4,000 and 5,000 prisoners of the Imperial and Royal Army arrived in Kiev on a daily basis. A tenth of these were sick and in need of hospital treatment.<sup>1993</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian Army High Command instrumentalised the well-known overextension of the Russians in the supervision of prisoners of war by composing a two-page report on the conditions in an attempt to put a stop to desertions; the report was to be brought to the attention of the troops. The report mentioned the inhumane treatment of prisoners of war in Siberia, the Caucasus and in the Don region. The report was to be read to the regiments of the 3rd Infantry Division, above all Infantry Regiment No. 28, expressly in their mother tongue, Czech.<sup>1994</sup>

Przemysł surrendered on 22 March. Around 120,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army multiplied the flood of prisoners. They were first of all taken to Kiev by train. Only the sick and the wounded remained for weeks in the ruins of the fortress before they were also evacuated at the beginning of May.<sup>1995</sup>

It must have been especially satisfying for the Russians that with the occupation of Austria-Hungary's largest fortress they were also able to capture nine generals, since the seizure of the highest military ranks underlined the victory in a special way. Conversely, only three Russian generals fell into Austro-Hungarian captivity during the course of the entire war. Only two of the Przemyśl garrison, one of which was the fortress commander General Kusmanek, were interned in the Moscow military district. All the others were sent to central Asia, like most of the soldiers. Kusmanek himself was transported via Kiev and Kovel to Nizhny Novgorod and was subjected to increasingly uncompromising treatment. The opportunity to send and receive correspondence was restricted, the accommodation deteriorated, every Russian officer, even the youngest ensign, had to be greeted first, and the general was then increasingly persecuted. The reason he was given for this was that it was believed that the high-ranking Russian officers who had fallen into Austro-Hungarian hands were treated poorly and not in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Hence, the Russians wanted to resort to retaliatory measures. When the rumours proved to be false, Kusmanek was again treated somewhat better. Overall, however, the generals had much less cause for complaint than the enlisted men.

The soldiers from Przemyśl were poorly housed, suffered from undernourishment, were decimated by epidemics and were subjected to retaliation all the more when an incident became known such as the shooting of Russian prisoners of war in Colle Isarco (Gossensaß) at the Brenner Pass who, in June 1915, had encouraged their co-prisoners to refuse to carry out the work of digging trenches demanded of them.<sup>1996</sup>

Kusmanek hoped to be exchanged for a Russian general. But this was denied him, unlike Major General Wilhelm Nickl von Oppavár, who was exchanged due to sickness and by virtue of his age, and likewise Brigadier Wilhelm Raft von Marwil, who had fallen into Russian hands on the occasion of the capture of Lviv whilst in the garrison hospital there, became increasingly sick during the course of the war and then, in July 1916, was permitted to return home. This was granted to Kusmanek only in February 1918, after the armistice of Brest-Litovsk. By then, the flood of Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war had risen into the millions.

Surprising the Austrian command authorities, and probably also for the Russians, was the fact that the latter took masses of prisoners at the time of the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive, namely more than 62,000 men, of which only 2,000 soldiers were from the German 11th Army. The Russians were evidently able to hastily withdraw and still take tens of thousands of prisoners. The cases of desertion in the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 36 ('Jungbunzlau') made a significant difference, but the mass of the prisoners of war came from other formations. It had to be asked again and again why members of the Imperial and Royal Army fell far more often into prisoner of war captivity than those of their German ally. The assumption that the troops were poorly

trained, inadequately armed or simply badly led could no longer apply.<sup>1997</sup> Now the Germans were leading, the Imperial and Royal officers were experienced in battle, the troops were different and distributed according to their national origin, the weaponry was good and the level of training of the troops was, as a rule, no poorer than that of the Germans. There must, therefore, be other reasons to explain why they surrendered to the Russians.

At the Moscow collection and evacuation point of Ugreshskaya, which was initially intended not for Austro-Hungarian prisoners but for Germans, the Imperial and Royal soldiers also ultimately comprised the majority of the 20,000 people registered there. In Darnytsia on the banks of the Dnieper, a new collection and distribution point was created. Marching columns of up to 7,000 prisoners set off for there. The collection point fulfilled only the function of a transit camp but still earned itself a particularly poor reputation, since the selection took place here of those who wanted to remain loyal to the Habsburg Empire and those who declared themselves to be deserters and began to plunder and persecute their own comrades.<sup>1998</sup> The many Czechs who were utilised as camp personnel in Darnytsia, participated in the 'filtration' and bullied their comrades gave the camp the label 'Czech household'.<sup>1999</sup> Abuse by the Russian guards, a lack of infrastructure, starvation and cold also made the camp a terrible place. The onward transportation to the governorates in Ukraine and the Russian interior was then something akin to salvation. It took place with trains containing up to 2,000 men. At the collection points Kharkiv and Yekaterinoslav (now Dnipropetrovsk) conditions were then similar to those at the distribution stations. The final destinations were generally, and after many months had passed, camps along the construction sites of the Kirov Railway and in Turkestan. In Turkestan, there were already more than 200,000 prisoners of war as of September 1916.

Following the evacuation of the German Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war from Darnytsia, those who remained – predominantly members of Slav nationalities as well as Romanians and Italians – were divided up among the camps in the European part of Russia. The Tambov camp, for example, situated 500 kilometres south-east of Moscow, was a camp for Italians.<sup>2000</sup>

In the camps for enlisted men, 25,000 to 35,000 people were packed together like sardines. Officers' camps were considerably smaller, but reached sizes of 3,000 to 4,500 prisoners.<sup>2001</sup> The Russian hopes that the northern and southern Slav prisoners of the Imperial and Royal Army could be turned into compliant supporters of the Tsar by means of better treatment proved to be wrong, however. They found enough people who volunteered for guard duty, but most of them showed no inclination to join the Czech Legion. Many attempted to flee the camps and were eventually sent to Siberia, just like the German Austrians and the Hungarians.<sup>2002</sup>

From the end of June 1916, tens of thousands of Imperial and Royal soldiers swelled the population of the main camps. In July and August, the prisoners of the Brusilov



Offensive then arrived in their entirety and dwarfed everything that had gone before: depending on the method used to count or estimate, between 266,000 and 400,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army were regarded as 'captive and missing'.<sup>2003</sup> Most of them had fallen into prisoner of war captivity. In Darnytsia, the camp leadership was at this point largely in the hands of members of the Czech Legion and Serbian volunteers. The essentials of the selection process remained the same: German Austrians and Hungarians were to be chiefly evacuated to Siberia. The Governor of Siberia, Suchomlinov, had long since reported that he no longer had the capacity to take in any more prisoners and urgently requested the expansion of the camps in Omsk, Tomsk and Novo Nikolaevsk.<sup>2004</sup> But the expansion was still not enough to keep up. The camps grew and grew. In total, it was to be almost 300.

The Austrians had often been captured in their summer uniforms and frequently did not receive any warmer clothing. Between 1915 and 1918, the Imperial and Royal War Ministry sent 43 trains with relief supplies to Russia via Sweden, including 375,000 uniforms, 150,000 pairs of shoes, 300,000 blankets, and many other items.<sup>2005</sup> In view of the perhaps two million prisoners of war, however, this could only suffice for the needs of a small number. The comparison with the consignments that reached the German prisoners of war provoked feelings of envy and could be depressing.

How the prisoners were housed, which reprisals they were occasionally subjected to, as well as how the discord between nationalities spread to the camps, were all the subject of reports that so-called 'sister delegations' of the International Red Cross compiled. The initiative to tour the prisoner of war camps had not been taken by the Central Powers but instead by the mother of the Tsar, Maria Fedorovna, a Danish princess by birth. Indirectly via Denmark, a corresponding agreement came into effect that guaranteed mutual tours. Siberia was accessible for sisters such as Countess Nora Kinsky, Princess Cunigunde Croÿ-Dülmen or Andorine von Huszár, whilst it remained inaccessible for the German sister delegations. First and foremost, it was hoped that the aristocratic sisters in the service of the Red Cross were able to convey. The view that Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war should also be asked about the conditions of their captivity is likely to have provoked little joy among the sisters. This was perhaps desirable from the perspective of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, but from the viewpoint of the sister delegations it was quite an imposition. They did not provide aid as informers but rather as ambassadors of a life after the war, who were above suspicion, and doubtlessly contributed significantly to the improvement of the treatment of the prisoners of war after 1916. It also contributed to the humanisation of the fate of the prisoners that Russian delegations were able to tour the Austro-Hungarian camps and, on the basis of what they had seen, correct the rumours about the poor, or even inhumane, treatment of Russian prisoners of war.<sup>2006</sup> There were hardly any lasting improvements, however, since exchanged invalids continued to report on the conditions in the Siberian camps

to the effect that they were in a catastrophic condition and that the barracks were 'bristling with vermin'. In Beresovka near Irkutsk, the conditions were said to be particularly dreadful, in Paratsky near Kasan there was neither a doctor nor a hospital; blankets made available by the Red Cross were used as saddle rugs for the Cossack horses. Finally, in July 1917, twenty Austrian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) deputies requested that the Foreign Minister intervene with the neutral powers and the Red Cross in order to align conditions in the Russian camps with those in the Austrian camps for Russian prisoners of war, which were described by the deputies as 'truly humane'.<sup>2007</sup>

One should not, however, take at face value the reports in the Austro-Hungarian newspapers on conditions in the Russian prisoner of war camps, since they were obliged to strictly adhere to the guidelines issued by the War Surveillance Office. News of 'downright unbearable or humiliating treatment' was to be omitted out of consideration for the relatives, as were 'all too rosy accounts', which not only ran contrary to attempts to improve the situation of the prisoners of war<sup>2008</sup> but could also be understood, if anything, as a type of invitation to desert.

The February and October Revolutions of 1917 naturally also made themselves felt among the prisoner of war. Initially, it was least of all a question of an armistice, peace or a return home, but the slogans of the Bolshevik revolution did subsequently take effect. This ultimately went so far that Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war contributed to the shooting of the Tsar's family, although they were not necessarily required to. Prisoners in the officers' camps experienced the declared class struggles, since the Bolsheviks discontinued the newspapers, to which the officers were entitled in accordance with the Geneva Convention. However, the prisoners could move increasingly freely and even establish modest trade and commercial enterprises. A not insignificant number set out to reach their homeland via the indirect route across China.

The Russians had only begun in 1916 to systematically deploy the prisoners of war for work, but then declared the priority of the European part of the Tsarist Empire and accordingly initiated the return transport of the prisoners. There was an enormous fluctuation. Until summer 1917, a large proportion of the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war initially transported to Siberia was returned to the European part of Russia in order to make it possible to deploy them for work there. As of the end of 1917, a third of all prisoners of war appear to have been working in Ukraine. The camps could no longer fulfil the desires for manpower. The Ministry of Agriculture requested ever higher numbers, whilst the industries in the Donets Basin were crying out for prisoners of war. A quarter of a million (according to other data: 440,000)<sup>2009</sup> carried out work in the vicinity of the front. Thus, at the end of the year, fewer than half a million Austro-Hungarian soldiers were still in Siberia.

The masses of prisoners that had to be dealt with, the significance the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war had for Russia, where they were deployed for work behind the

front and in the prisoner of war camps and, by the same token, the Russians in Austria, and the enormous losses in terms of people that the Habsburg Monarchy had to accept in the category 'prisoner of war captivity' alone – all these things only become clear when we begin to read the statistics from the end of the war. During the course of the conflict, the Russians – according to the figures of the Swedish philanthropist Elsa Brändström, known as the 'Angel of Siberia' – took 2,050,000 men and 54,146 Austro-Hungarian officers, including doctors, apothecaries, military officials and military chaplains. There is also data, however, according to which only half, i.e. a million members of the Austro-Hungarian military, fell into Russian captivity. The explanation that as many as 40 per cent of the prisoners of war had somewhere and sometime disappeared, would certainly explain the discrepancy, but whether the statement is well-founded is another question.<sup>2010</sup> A comparison with the prisoners of war of the German Army is in any case illuminating: 165,000 men and 20,082 officers of the ally were taken captive by the Russians. One can assume, therefore, that Austro-Hungary forfeited at least ten times as many prisoners of war on the north-western front as the German Empire. During the war, 22,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, most of them invalids, were repatriated in the course of the various prisoner exchanges. Approximately 10,000 of them succeeded in escaping. The Russians transported 40,000 Czechs, Serbs, Romanians and also a number of Alsations to the Entente states.<sup>2011</sup>

## Italy

Italy should actually have been prepared for prisoners of war. For one thing, it had been able to follow for long enough how the question of the accommodation and treatment of prisoners of war had developed into a problem and how the dimensions were also a cause for concern. Furthermore, Italy had been able to gather direct experiences itself during the course of the war in Libya. Finally, and this must also have played a role, the Italian Army Command envisaged advancing via the Ljubljana Basin and Klagenfurt as far as Vienna within a few weeks. And this would have involved the capture of a large number of prisoners of war.

The reality looked different, and one gets the impression that thought was given to many things, but least of all to the provision of shelter for a large number of prisoners. Only in June 1915 was a Military Commission for Prisoners of War created under General Paolo Spingardi. It was to attend to the prisoners in Italy, just as a commission under Senator Giuseppe Frascara with the help of the Red Cross would take care of those Italians who had fallen into Austro-Hungarian captivity. This appeared adequate to the Italian Army Command. It provided for the evacuation of the prisoners and for their custody, and it strove to adhere strictly to the provisions inferred from the Ge-

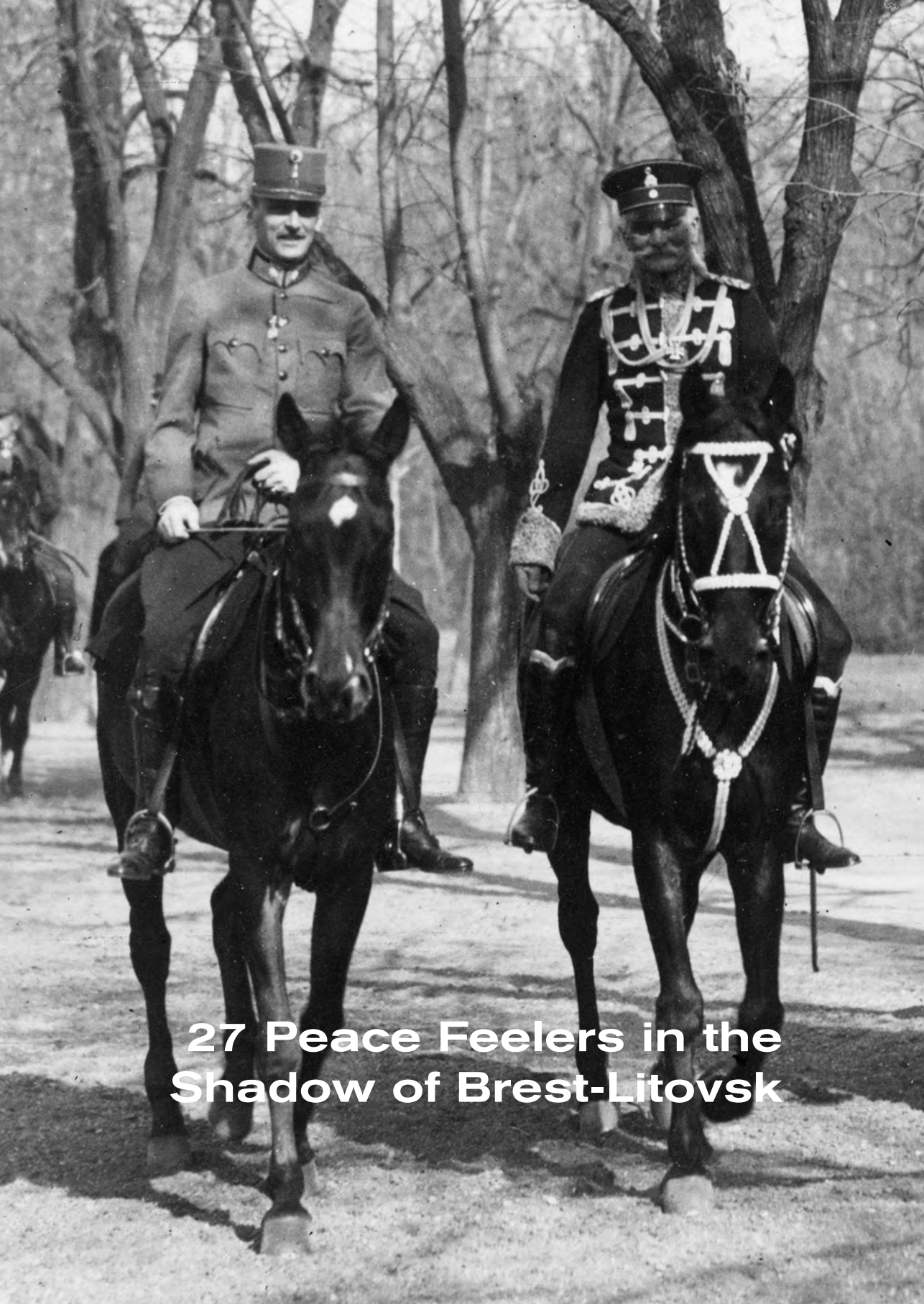
neva Convention. Prisoners were to be detained, fed, clothed and medically supervised. They were to receive the necessary commodities and a few lira in order to be able to buy themselves something, and indeed until the restoration of peace and their release. Initially, this system functioned to some extent because the number of prisoners of war stayed within manageable limits. Fortresses far from the front were filled, such as the Sforza Castle of Novara, barracks and monasteries. Not entirely surprisingly, the available buildings were not sufficient, since the war dragged on and the number of prisoners increased. They no longer received uniforms but instead grey and khaki overalls, were accommodated for a time in tent camps until barracks were built, and – in harmony with the prisoners in other countries – required to work. They were decimated by diseases and epidemics and could only hope that it would at some point come to an end. Until January 1917, that is until after the Ninth Battle of the Isonzo, almost 80,000 prisoners were counted. The approximately 12,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army who had survived the deadly marches from Serbia to the Albanian coast as well as the subsequent transportation by ship were apparently no longer counted. As mentioned above, they had been transported to France in summer 1916.

With the exception of more than 300 prisoners of war who were accommodated in the corps area of Verona, most of the prisoners were transported far into central and southern Italy to the region south of Rome, to Naples and Sicily or to prison islands such as the island of Asinara, located off the north-west coast of Sardinia.<sup>2012</sup> At the point of time in question, 111 prisoner of war camps existed in Italy, the largest of which, Padua, in the area of the Italian X Army Corps ('Napoli'), housed 13,000 prisoners.<sup>2013</sup> There were many camps, however, where only a few hundred prisoners were accommodated. The longer the war lasted and the more the number of prisoners increased, however, the bigger camps became. The Avezzano camp in Abruzzo, for example, was expanded in such a way that it could hold 15,000 prisoners, although at the beginning of 1917 not even 7,000 prisoners were housed there. It was assumed, however, that the additional space would be needed. In April 1918, twice as many prisoners were counted in Italy as one year previously.

The members of the Imperial and Royal Army were increasingly deployed for work until around half toiled in agriculture, 30,000 in coalmining and in the extraction of fuel, and others in the construction of roads and the drainage of swamps. The period of internment in the Pontine Marshes south-east of Rome had resulted in many prisoners contracting malaria, which accompanied them for the rest of their lives. Prisoners were deployed in the areas to the rear of the front and had to contribute to the removal of corpses and the re-establishment of trenches and positions. As previously in Russia, recruiters went through the camps and attempted to persuade above all Czechs, Slovaks and Serbs to enter the legions. The success was not overwhelming, until in October 1918 the floodgates opened and as many as 3,000 prisoners volunteered for

the Czecho-Slovakian Legion. It would eventually grow to over 19,000 members, most of them prisoners of war who wanted to evade long-term captivity by volunteering. The changing of sides did not go unnoticed, even in Italy.<sup>2014</sup> The mass of the Imperial and Royal soldiers who filled Italian camps, more than 300,000 after all, did not fall into Italian prisoner of war captivity until the end of October and the beginning of November. It was no longer of particular importance when and under which circumstances they had fallen into the hands of the enemy, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, wounded or unhurt, as deserters or fighting to the last for God, the Austrian Emperor and King and a disintegrating fatherland.





**27 Peace Feelers in the  
Shadow of Brest-Litovsk**

27. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Ottokar Czernin (left) and the German Field Marshal August von Mackensen on a ride out in early 1918 in Buftea, Romania. Parallel to the peace negotiations with Russia in Brest-Litovsk, a separate peace with Ukraine and an armistice on the Romanian front were being negotiated by Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire.



## The Russian October Revolution

Between 6 and 8 November 1917, or 24 and 26 October according to the Russian calendar, the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership seized power in Russia, and on the evening of 8 November, the Second All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies agreed to the proposals for peace by the new revolutionary government. Thus, an event occurred that the German Empire had been working towards for some time through targeted measures to support the revolutionisation of Russia, and which the Central Powers had been waiting for.

In the east, hardly any more fighting had occurred since September 1917. In October, the events of March and April 1917 had been repeated. The Russians drastically reduced their own military activities. For the most part, they behaved very calmly, sought to begin negotiations and pleaded for an end to hostilities. Only in some sections were attempts made by individual Russian officers or divisions, known as 'battalions of death', to continue the war. Time and again – and this too was similar to the situation in March/April 1917 – individual batteries attacked and subjected Austro-Hungarian and German positions to harassment fire. In order to avoid being surprised by an offensive by the Central Powers, the Russian higher commands arranged for movements at the front to be monitored by aeroplanes; this also frequently led to air battles. However, essentially, the Central Powers remained passive. Only the Germans had exploited the situation in order to occupy further territories, and had taken control of the Baltic Sea islands of Osel, Muhu and Hiiumaa.

There was one single section of the eastern and south-eastern front where the image of a front at war had remained unchanged, and this was the southern wing in Romania. The revolution had not spilled over to the Romanians and, for a time, the threat made by the new French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, that he would abandon any support for Romania during future peace negotiations if Romania failed to fight through until the end, appeared to be having an effect. Clemenceau announced via the chief of the French military mission in Romania, General Henri Berthelot, that if the Moldavia region were to be lost, then fighting would simply have to continue in Bessarabia and even further east. However, the Romanian request to compensate for the loss of the Russians by sending Czech legionaries and Serbian troops was not met.<sup>2015</sup> At the end of the day, it would have made no difference anyway.

The October Revolution in Russia changed matters dramatically. Now, it was difficult to assess the situation, however. The Imperial and Royal Army High Command saw the main reason for the development in Russia as the failure of the Provisional Government to fulfil the hopes for peace that had initially been awakened. And whether the Bolsheviks would succeed in taking and asserting power in reality was assessed as being just as doubtful. The demands by the Bolsheviks for an immediate ceasefire and the initiation of peace negotiations was categorised by the Austrians as simply 'demagogic'.<sup>2016</sup> In the opinion of the Army High Command, given in an initial statement, the success of the revolution would be decided by the front armies and the Cossacks. With regard to the nationalities in Russia, however, its analysis claimed that: 'The different peoples of Russia, who in their striving for independence or autonomy have already achieved significant advantages, are now preparing to make the final blow. The Ukrainians are siding with the Bolsheviks, since they are the most sincere supporters of an independent Ukraine. The same is likely to be true of the Finns, although in Finland, there are currently severe disputes between the Socialists and the middle-class parties. The Finns may exploit the current situation in order to separate themselves from Russia entirely. All the Cossack clans are joining together to act in unison out of concern for their future. From this side, the Bolsheviks, even after having attained unlimited power, are likely to face the greatest threat. We have also received reports from Siberia about attempts to achieve autonomy. The Caucasus, Lithuania, Estonia, etc. will certainly not allow the favourable opportunity of achieving national advantages to pass by unexploited.' With regard to the Russian economy, it was determined that the agricultural committee would destroy large-scale landed property, but without increasing farmer ownership. The farmers had lost their confidence in Russian paper money, it was claimed, and were keeping their grain hidden. Industries were being closed, and the crisis in the coal and transport sectors continued. Strikes in the Donets Basin and 'in the petroleum regions' could only be brought to a halt with effort and by means of significant sums of money, which far exceeded the financial power of the state.

Assessments and forecasts made on one day were already rendered obsolete by the events of the next. Emissaries came to no-man's land with increasing frequency with the aim of negotiating local ceasefires. Since these attempts at making contact initially came from the Russian troops, however, they bore no fruit. The Russians were informed that negotiations could be initiated immediately when authorised representatives arrived. Simultaneously, there were mass desertions; even higher-ranking officers went over to the Central Powers. An increasing number of Russians retreated, tore gaps in the front, burned obstacles and destroyed weapons.<sup>2017</sup>

What here appeared to point to complete dissolution was at the same time relativised by the formation of a revolutionary army. Item 2 of the deployment order already made it evident that the Bolshevik government not only wanted to do its utmost to

obtain power in the state, but also to keep hold of it through military means. This item 2 in the guidelines for the deployment of the Red Guards ran as follows: 'The voluntary regiments shall at a time specified by the army committee be appointed by an order to the front armies to regiments of the Red Guards, and will from this time on be introduced to revolutionary discipline and mandatory service; all volunteers will receive increased pay. On entry into the regiment, the volunteer enters into the obligation before the entire regiment to serve for at least six months with the Red Guards and to fulfil all the duties of a revolutionary soldier [...].' And item 4 ran: 'The volunteers are only obliged to fulfil field service; in base establishments and for commercial work, only freely recruited workers will be used.' The Austro-Hungarian observers also received first-hand information on the efforts of the Ukrainian parliament, the 'Central Rada' (Central Council) to attain independence, to establish its own army and to set up a state administration. It was known that attempts at gaining independence, and independence declarations, were being made among individual regions and peoples such as those in the Caucasus, Siberia, Bessarabia, Turkestan and in the Black Sea and Danube region, as well as among the Bashkirs and Terek Cossacks. Estonia and Belarus were striving for autonomy within the Russian Empire.<sup>2018</sup> The disintegration of the old central power, and the attempts at creating a new one, went hand in hand. This could also be regarded with satisfaction by the Central Powers, since only if the Bolsheviks came to power and pushed through their claim to leadership would the contract negotiated with them be tenable.

In Vienna, the peace proposal from the Second All-Russian Congress had been published immediately. In the German Empire, it took another day, since Ludendorff was at first reluctant for the news to be spread. However, it could not be suppressed. Shortly afterwards, there was a real sense of alarm in Berlin, when contacts between German Social Democrats and Bolshevik representatives in Sweden became known, which were aimed at winning German backing for the October Revolution. Germany's Socialists were to support the movement in Russia as far as possible through 'large demonstrations and strikes'. Philipp Scheidemann and Friedrich Ebert had refused to stab the imperial government – which had been led since 1 November 1917 by the Bavarian Count Georg von Hertling – in the back in such a way. However, they declared themselves willing to read a Bolshevik appeal at mass gatherings, and to answer it through supporting rallies.

Suddenly, there was talk of conducting the negotiations with Russia as peace negotiations straight away, and using peace envoys. However, this was by no means in line with what the Germans had envisaged. There was therefore a palpable sense of relief in the German imperial government when a Russian radio message was intercepted, via which the Council of People's Commissars directed a formal proposal for an armistice to all belligerents. In Berlin and in the German Supreme Army Command, the conclu-

sion was that this would mean that there would be no parliamentary, and still less a 'Socialist' peace. To a far greater extent, armistice and subsequent peace negotiations would need to be conducted in the areas of contact at the fronts.<sup>2019</sup> However, then the formal Russian application for the initiation of armistice negotiations was delayed, since the Supreme Commander of the Russian Armed Forces, General Nikolai N. Duchonin, refused to convey such an application. Following his refusal, he was dismissed, and immediately afterwards, was murdered. He was replaced by one of his murderers, Ensign Nikolai Krylenko, to whom the command of the Russian troops was transferred. Krylenko then sent peace envoys on the march in order to agree the time and place for armistice negotiations. On 29 November, it finally became clear that armistice negotiations would take place. It was agreed that the Russian commission would arrive on 2 December at midday on the Vilnius–Daugavpils railway line, and that the negotiations should be conducted in Brest-Litovsk. The Soviets again invited the western powers to participate, but they failed to respond to the corresponding request from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Leon Trotsky, just as they did to a note from Lenin.

Despite the four weeks that had passed between the proclamation of the Second All-Russian Congress and the beginning of the formal armistice negotiations, Berlin and Vienna had been unable to overcome their fundamental differences in opinion regarding the appropriate policy to be pursued, since Czernin wished to reach a general peace through negotiations with Russia, and again took the forfeit of annexation as a basis for general peace negotiations with the Entente powers. However, the German Empire wanted something entirely different here, again asserting its war aims and behaving more cautiously only in relation to Russia – and even that only subject to a series of conditions – while refusing all concessions when it came to the western powers.

The governments in Berlin and Vienna finally decided that first of all, an armistice agreement should be concluded. This was a matter for the military. For this reason, all issues requiring regulation through peace treaties were to be excluded from the negotiations, and the relevant discussions held at a later date by diplomats and politicians. On 3 December, talks began regarding a formal armistice. By 13 December, they had been completed. The armistice was to last from 17 December to 14 January 1918, with an automatic extension with a seven-day notice period. According to this agreement, the Central Powers were not permitted to relocate troops to other fronts, except for those relocation operations that had already been underway at the time the armistice was concluded. This applied to around a third of the German Eastern Army, which had already begun transportation westwards as a precautionary measure.<sup>2020</sup>

The Brest negotiations did not apply to the Russian-Romanian front. The Romanians therefore initially continued with hostilities, although they were certainly aware of the hopelessness of their situation. To the south of the Dniester River, Romanian troops took up positions that had been left by the Russians. On 2 December, the com-

mander of the Russian troops in Romania, General Dimitry G. Shcherbachev, reported to the chief of the French military mission, Berthelot, that four Russian army corps had already concluded a local armistice, and that he could no longer even count on 100 loyal soldiers. The Romanian government then again attempted to obtain agreement from the western Allies for opening armistice negotiations; in vain. Now, King Ferdinand I and Prime Minister Brătianu had no other choice than to request a ceasefire from Archduke Joseph and Field Marshal Mackensen. In this way, Romania was able to retain at least a part of its army, which would have been either annihilated or taken prisoner if the fighting had continued. The negotiations between the Central Powers and Romania had already been completed after just a few days, and a ceasefire agreed. The Truce of Focșani, which was signed on 9 December 1917, also ended the fighting in this section of the eastern front. What had been set in motion on 1 and 6 August 1914 and on 27 and 28 August 1916, namely the war against Russia and then against Romania, appeared to have come to a victorious conclusion for the Central Powers. But was it not already too late?

### New Discussions in Switzerland

In Austria-Hungary, the mood was electrified. Josef Redlich noted on 29 November that on this morning, Russia had made an offer of an armistice. 'The armistice is to apply from 1 December: we shall withdraw 80 divisions and leave 40 at the front. What an immense turn of events this is! Brought about by Communists to save foundering Europe. How will England and America survive this situation? The truly great time, that of peace, will perhaps already dawn over the coming weeks!'<sup>2021</sup>

However, all this was still overshadowed by the question of whether the Bolsheviks would have the legitimisation and, above all, the power to conclude a peace treaty. Yet once an armistice had been agreed, it only made sense to continue, and to exploit the situation. The Central Powers were quite simply not in a position to wait and see whether or not the civil war that was catching fire would sweep away the Bolshevik regime. Here, the revolutionaries had named one of their goals as peace without annexations, in other words, 'without the illegal appropriation of foreign territories, without the violent assimilation of foreign peoples, and without restitution'.<sup>2022</sup> According to the interpretation of the Lenin government, an annexation also occurred when against their will as stated in the press, at public meetings, party resolutions and insurrections, peoples were denied the right to free expression of their opinion, and were forcibly held back on the fringes of a state.

As much as Vienna had been waiting for an armistice and peace negotiations with Russia, so was it also alarmed by this interpretation of 'annexation'. In light of this for-

mula, which was also applicable to all those already living in an imperial federation, it had now become all too clear that the Bolsheviks were also aiming to revolutionise the nationalities in Austria-Hungary. And this could only lead to an exacerbation of the already precarious domestic political situation.

According to the proclamation, the peace negotiations were to be conducted in public. The new government also wished to publicise all secret agreements that had been concluded and approved by the Provisional Government since the February Revolution. This could only be beneficial to the Central Powers. However, the initiation of peace negotiations did create several problems.

First, it was necessary to take general stock of the peace efforts. For over a year, attempts had been made to create contacts with the western Allies. Here, Austria-Hungary had developed far more initiatives and, for its part, had far more frequently been the target of western efforts to initiate talks than the German Empire. However, in fact, these had more or less come to nothing. The Habsburg Monarchy had repeatedly waited for a sign as to whether hopes for a general peace might not surface. However, at the moment when from inner necessity and in order to guarantee the continued existence of the Monarchy, the German course had begun to be steered, the impossibility of a separate peace, and even more so of a general one, had become increasingly evident. It makes no sense to simply attempt to reduce all this simply to blind loyalty (*Niebelungentreue*). The Habsburg Monarchy had no further possibility of concluding a peace without the agreement of the German Empire. The Allied hints that Austria-Hungary could under certain conditions even become the dominant power in German once again were nothing less than a mirage. Finally, even Lady Walburga Paget had joined the ranks of the initiators of peace contacts, a Saxon by birth, who sometimes directly, and sometimes via the Spanish court, had sent messages from Britain with proposals for mediation. However, her keen efforts probably stemmed more from a hatred of Prussia than from an authorised mediator function. She was also unable to offer any new recommendations and, for her part, suggested that Slav, Romanian and other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy should be swapped for Silesia. She also envisaged a federation of the new Austria with the southern and central German states. Lady Walburga generously also added Saxony as members of such a Habsburg-German confederation with Silesia and Bavaria. However, the Foreign Office rigorously rejected peace attempts of this nature, since in London, as well as in Vienna, the view was that such talks should not be conducted by amateurs.<sup>2023</sup> If contacts were to be made, then not through unauthorised, marginal figures.

Only in November 1917, following the breakthrough by the Central Powers in the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo, did the British show a certain willingness to compromise. Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour authorised the British envoy in The Hague, Sir Walter Townley, to again obtain specific information on the Austrian proposals for a negoti-

ated peace. His Austrian colleague, Count Lajos Széchenyi, had nothing to tell him, however. Thus, this initiative, too, came to an end. However, there was still one contact remaining, and at a much higher level. This was the meeting between the South African general and statesman, Jan Smuts, and the Austro-Hungarian ambassador Count Albert Mensdorff-Pouilly in Geneva on 18 and 19 December 1917. The meeting took place following a long period of preparation, and occurred rather by chance at the time following the armistice on the eastern front and the beginning of peace negotiations with Russia.

The contacts had been established via the mediation of the Austro-Hungarian legation councillor Baronet Ładisaław von Skrzynno-Skrzyński. However, an Egyptian prince (Mohammed Djemil Tussun Pasha), and several people with contacts to the intelligence services also played a role, as did the British envoy in Bern, Sir Horace Rumbold, whose father had been ambassador in Vienna for many years. Despite the fact that the British documents relating to the meeting have now been released, it is still not clear what conclusions should be drawn about the contacts. At any rate, it could also be observed prior to these talks that many people had the ambition or the understandable desire to establish contacts, whether their motivation was to one day present themselves as the great hero of peace, or to fulfil a personal moral obligation. Czernin agreed to a further contact on condition that the British really would send a competent negotiator to Switzerland. The contacts that had been cultivated until then, in which frequently talks were sought and held beyond the framework of official responsibility, and did not even succeed in providing reliable information on the respective differences of opinion. For their part, the British still made no progress. At the conference of the Supreme War Council of the Allies, Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour only managed to secure the agreement of the Allies to hear what Austria-Hungary had to say about a separate peace.<sup>2024</sup> Once again, there was a willingness to listen, but not to negotiate. Even so, a man was sent to Geneva in the form of General Smuts who was not seen as a type of postman, but who also had weight. Smuts was a member of the British War Cabinet. His aim, as he wrote in a memorandum before he left for Geneva, was to work towards a political end to the war. At the same time, he assumed that the Central Powers had proven themselves to be strong militarily, and that the entry of America into the war would do nothing to alter their military successes. Following the withdrawal of Russia and the loss of strength in Italy, a purely military victory on the part of the Entente was no longer to be expected. Everything possible had to be done in order to prevent the Germans from gaining additional strength. After Russia had fallen away as a counterweight, Austria-Hungary should take on this role by being removed from German dominance and being given greater independence and strength. For this purpose, the Habsburg Monarchy could be converted into a four-member confederation. Galicia and Poland would form a state, which was to be attached to Austria and Hungary via

a personal and economic union. Serbia could be enlarged by adding Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, and then added to this new federation as the fourth state. In order to at least partially fulfil the Italian demands, Italy should be given Trentino. However, Smuts also did not forget Bulgaria. This was to be enlarged by the Dobruja region in Romania and Macedonia in Serbia. This should then be sufficient, together with the Entente powers, to stand up to the German Empire. However, he was also willing to make concessions to the Germans. For the cession of Alsace (without Strasbourg) and a part of Lorraine, and the clearance of north-western France and Belgium, he was willing to allow Finland, Courland and Lithuania to come under German influence. In addition, France was to relinquish the French Congo to Germany as compensation for Alsace-Lorraine. Foreign Secretary Balfour reacted promptly and contradicted him in no uncertain terms. Smuts should and could express an opinion on the issues relating to Austria-Hungary, but not on the future structure of the German Empire. And so, the talks were in fact again doomed to failure from the start, since Austria-Hungary was unwilling to engage in negotiations that aimed only at concluding a separate peace and would have resulted in the not inconceivable possibility of a war against the German Empire. As a result, only a hearing was possible, but not negotiations.

Even so, Smuts had raised an issue that had already been of concern to Austria-Hungary for some time, and which – regardless of the talks in Bern – was of significance precisely with regard to the negotiations with Russia, namely the position of a future Polish state. Prior to the Brest negotiations, it was after all not only the peace policy of the Central Powers that was again to be subjected to scrutiny and amendment; the same also applies to the war aims, and it was here that Foreign Minister Czernin in particular found himself in difficulties with his often repeated willingness to conclude a peace without annexation. Once again, the Polish issue surfaced. However, developments had already been set in motion before the October Revolution.

### Poland Again

Since it had become evident in Austria with the reconvention of parliament, and even more clearly so since the beginning of the autumn session in 1917, that the Poles in the Monarchy were now far from being unconditional supporters of the Austrian government, as had been assumed was the case even until May 1917, the Polish question gained a new and different character. The Poles in Galicia, like the other Slavs, issued a rebuff to the Monarchy and, suddenly, everything was thrown into doubt that had previously been agreed about the Kingdom of Poland in the Two Emperors' Proclamation. At that time, it had been assumed that a Polish kingdom would fall within the German sphere of power, but that Galicia would remain Austrian. Now, however, the Poles



in Galicia were also pushing for unification with the other Poles. This would in itself have remained within the framework of foreign policy manoeuvrings, since in August 1917, Czernin had renewed an offer by Emperor Karl that had already been made four months previously at the meeting of the monarchs in Bad Homburg, and offered Germany Galicia if Berlin were to relinquish Alsace-Lorraine. However, as was known, this cession had not come about and, as a result, Czernin had withdrawn his offer again. However, the affinity felt by the Austrian Poles towards a Polish kingdom could not be overlooked. In order to avoid losing Galicia entirely, ideas suddenly again took hold according to which a united Poland could be incorporated into an Austrian federation. There were also German voices that supported this solution. The proposal made by the German ambassador in Vienna, Count Botho von Wedel, that Berlin return to consideration of the Austro-Polish solution, was aimed at reducing the anti-German trend in Austria.<sup>2025</sup> However, the conditions in Poland were in no way made easier. Austrians and Germans attempted to gain influence, and inevitably got in each other's way. Areas of dispute were the position of the Polish State Council, the troops of the Polish Legions, among whom 700 Imperial and Royal soldiers were already serving, the question of the oath and, naturally, the future of Poland. Even so, plans by Archduke Karl Stephan to take on the regency in Poland were certainly obsolete from the start.<sup>2026</sup>

However, there had been one further development. Kaiser Wilhelm had discovered his love for Romania, although in a very different way than in the sense of the former alliance. The German Kaiser had visited the Romanian front in September, and had been so impressed by the natural riches of this country that he had telegraphed to the German Imperial Chancellor on 23 September 1917 that the German Empire should abandon the German-Polish solution and instead make efforts to attain domination in Romania. The German imperial government would have agreed to this solution, but the Supreme Army Command raised objections. Poland was significantly closer to its own sphere of influence, and should not simply be left to Austria-Hungary. The condition for any other arrangement should be the unification of the German and Austro-Hungarian economic area, in order to economically merge the two empires. Poland and Central Europe again became two facets of one and the same problem.

However, Austria-Hungary was only willing to grant Germany preferential customs duties, and avoided all further considerations regarding an economic union.<sup>2027</sup> Nonetheless, at several conferences in Vienna on 22 October and then in Berlin on 5 and 6 November 1917, a breakthrough was achieved in that the war aims that had been agreed at Bad Kreuznach on 23 April 1917 were revised. Then, the Austro-Polish solution was approached under somewhat altered conditions: the conclusion of a 20-year protection and defence alliance, as well as a military convention between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, close economic association between the two powers, the economic annexation of Romania to Germany, which would have ended in a type of

colonisation of Romania, and a guarantee of the transit of goods from and to Romania through Austria-Hungary.<sup>2028</sup> Furthermore, autonomies were specified for Courland and Lithuania, with the simultaneous annexation of these territories to the German Empire. Thus, the demands to be presented within the framework of peace negotiations with Russia and Romania were already being fully discussed. The aspect of peace with victory could not be ignored. Basically, however, it was equally frivolous to talk of an abandonment of annexation plans while Austria-Hungary was aiming to rake in Poland in its entirety, even if this was with the most sincere intention and perhaps in the form of a Habsburg secundogeniture.

### The Turn of the Year, 1918

The occupation of Italian territory as a result of the advance through to the Piave River had only worsened the position of the Habsburg Monarchy. Austria-Hungary had made only inadequate preparations both in terms of accommodating the additional 140,000 prisoners, and when it came to administering the Italian territories. The relocation of the front forwards towards the south-west had led to a significant shortening of the lines, but had equally made it necessary to establish military control of the occupied territories. And a further problem was caused by the fact that the area under occupation had in the meantime been eaten bare.

The area occupied by the armies of the Central Powers following the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo covered the provinces of Udine and Belluno, as well as parts of the provinces of Veneto, Treviso and Vicenza. This area, which until the end of 1917 had been a base area for the Italian armies, was now being used as a base area by the Austro-Hungarian Army.<sup>2029</sup> Since during the winter of 1917/1918, neither staff nor materials were available in order to set up an Imperial and Royal military administration, the Italian institutions were essentially left as they were, and only a few laws and regulations were issued. Furthermore, a Military Governor General was not installed and no uniform Government General was established; to a far greater extent, the conquered Italian territory was placed under the control of Army Group Commands Borojević and Conrad.<sup>2030</sup> On 15 December 1917, Austria-Hungary and the German Empire concluded a limited agreement regarding the distribution of war spoils and goods, according to which a distribution ratio of 1:1 was to apply for items not subject to separate regulations. The Germans withdrew; the Austrians remained.

Now, an exhausting battle began, with each side fighting against the other. The troop commands were anxious to provide everything needed to feed their soldiers through requisitions, while the district commands also had to make sure that the population did not perish.<sup>2031</sup> The largest portion of the industrialists, bank employees, businessmen,

engineers, doctors, lawyers and civil servants, as well as almost all mayors, had fled; only the priests had stayed on. The population in the towns and villages along the new front on the Piave River and to the north-west of Bassano was evacuated and had to be distributed among other localities. There were also 'retorsion measures', or retaliation, since wherever the Italian occupation of Austrian territory had left its scars, and particularly when houses had been looted and furniture and other domestic items removed, attempts were made at compensation by offering the returning Austrian population such furniture and household objects as had been requisitioned by the Italians.<sup>2032</sup> However, the most long-lasting effects of the Austro-Hungarian occupation in Italy were felt in the livestock-breeding, agriculture- and fruit-growing industries. The number of cattle was drastically reduced, and a type of egalitarianism was attempted by also applying the food rations that were in place in broad sections of the Austrian half of the Empire to the Italian population in these areas. Since Italy had until that point been far better supplied, however, the setting of the flour ration at 150 grams per head and per day, for example, must have appeared catastrophic. However, not even these portions were available for issue everywhere, and in the mountainous regions of the occupied territory, hunger very quickly spread. In the factories, workshops, shops and apartments, all raw materials were seized that could be got hold of. Domestic items made of copper and tin had to be surrendered, as had been the case in Austria for a long time already. Four bell removal detachments brought the bells down on ropes, and the pipes were removed from the church organs.<sup>2033</sup>

A particular type of retorsion measure was applied to the art treasures. In general, the removal of precious works of art from the occupied territory of Italy was strictly forbidden. Particularly valuable objects were securely stored in an art group especially created for the purpose in Udine. However, since during the Italian occupation of Austrian territory, works of art had been taken away, a part of the valuable objects found in Italy was brought to the Military Museum in Vienna, and kept there as collateral.<sup>2034</sup>

It had been clear from the start that the Austro-Hungarian occupying troops would not be particularly popular. However, unlike the fighting troops, the presence of hundreds of thousands of soldiers in the new base area was not explained by military necessity; instead, it was the occupying power that was primarily regarded as the enemy. And this resulted not only in rejection, but in hatred, in some cases very long-lasting hatred, which became intermingled with the other problems.

While the troops at the front remained largely unaffected by the events in the hinterland, after the reserve supplies had been used up and the food had been eaten, they too returned to everyday life. The successes in the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo had fatal consequences to the extent that – if one disregards the effects on the hinterland described above – there had been a significant over-estimation of their own strength. When therefore in the spring of 1918, the Chief of the General Staff Arz requested

information from Brigadier Waldstätten regarding the defensive stamina and strike capability of the army even before the offensive had come to an end, the Chief of the Operations Division sent him almost effusive information:

a) Own strike capability in spring 1918: as the current results prove, our army continues to maintain full strike capability. In the spring of 1918, its morale will be raised further by the current successes. By then, animal power will have been replaced by engine power to a further degree than to date.

b) Defensive stamina against enemy offensives will not be lower in spring 1918 than it is now. Troop levels are likely to remain similar to current ones, 10,000 additional m[achine] g[uns] will be deployed, and allocation of mortars will be incomparably greater.

c) Holding out without attacking: this is also guaranteed in spring 1918, so long as all this peace nonsense in the press etc., which acts like a poison on the spirit of the army, does not undermine the armed forces. When the last bleat about peace has died down, and the people and the army are convinced of the urgent necessity to continue in the fight that has been forced upon us (a matter for a sensible press policy, education, etc.), then the brave army will hold out in positional warfare!<sup>2035</sup>

An anonymous letter of 17 November 1917 filed in the archives of the Military Chancellery of the Emperor described the situation in a very different and far harsher light. However, the subject here was not the future attitude among the troops on the south-western front, but the tristesse of everyday life in war away from the fighting troops. 'The general mood is low; no, it is miserable! And it is not only miserable among the workers, but is also evident among the middle classes, even among the military in the hinterland. All the signs of desolate resignation can be seen; the smallest trigger, an accidental interruption in the supply of coal or potatoes, can cause the bottom to be knocked out of the barrel and generate a blaze that cannot be brought under control even by violence, since violence leads to counter-violence [...]. The victories of the army are hardly noticed, an incomprehensible state of affairs, which can also partially be explained by the fact that absolutely nothing is done in order to improve the mood in the hinterland [...]. Matters have come so far that an increase in the number of prisoners directly infuriates the population; the people regard them simply as increasing the number of eaters; they view the expansion of the enemy territory occupied by us as no more than a restriction on our anyway no longer adequate railway stock; to them, progress in our offensives merely means more people to feed in the occupied territories. Now, the only thing that anyone thinks about is their belly, and about peace, since it is hoped that it will bring an improvement in the food situation. This even takes precedence over domestic policy conditions. Most of the population has no interest in parliament [...]. The people see that instead of occupying itself with how to improve the supply of food, parliament is discussing constitutional declarations

and counter-declarations, and in the dispute over the upholding of certain judgements made in military courts, forgets the real desperation among the people [...].<sup>2036</sup>

The lack of interest in parliamentary proceedings may have been true to a certain extent, but there is certainly no doubt that the population was not particularly encouraged by what emerged from the sessions of the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly). In the Reichsrat, in light of the victories in Italy, and above all following the re-conquering of Gorizia (Görz), something akin to obligatory jubilation had arisen, although then it was necessary to run through the order of business, and there was no time left for celebrating.

There were equally few positive signals from the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet). The Reichsrat and Reichstag were increasingly becoming platforms for national agitation, which was also directed against the state overall. The prime ministers were unable to prevent this development through regular invocations, nor by developing visions of their own.

On 25 September 1917, the autumn session of parliament had begun in Vienna. In his inaugural address, Prime Minister Baronet Ernst von Seidler had sketched out his programme of government. Economic, cultural and political reconstruction were named as goals. For the first time since the beginning of the war, the 'Upper House' was presented with a budget recommendation to be passed. Seidler had talked of the problems feeding the people, of youth criminal law, public welfare, teacher training, an improved agricultural policy, the demobilisation of the farmers, the nationalisation of the private railways and much more before, with clever tactics, he moved on to an area where not only the hardships of the war and their alleviation were reflected, but also where the impression inevitably arose that this organism, Austria, would still certainly be in a position to take on large projects, to shape the future and to present itself as a dynamic state. Seidler proposed an initiative to begin the 'systematic, far-reaching organisation of our water management'. The government wished to promote initiatives in order to remove 'all technically feasible sources of power' from the barrages ... 'The final goal remains that all of Austria will be spanned by a broad mains system in the same way that it is traversed by a railway network, which with manifold distribution will bring cheap light and cheap power to the largest and the smallest enterprises, to localities and peoples' homes.'<sup>2037</sup> At that time, Austria certainly needed visions, but least of all technical ones. By comparison, the political programme had less content: the continuation of dualism, the division of the crown lands into administrative districts and loyalty to the alliance were the main issues addressed. The former Prime Minister, Koerber, commented on the government programme that it made him think of someone who wanted to persuade 'a Catholic and an evangelical cleric to reconcile their religious views by inviting them both to an opulent dinner'.<sup>2038</sup> And for Josef Redlich, what most stood out was how hateful the mood among the German deputies

was with regard to the Czechs. The Poles appeared 'peevisish. Who can possibly form a majority there?'<sup>2039</sup>

Thanks to concessions made to Poles, Ruthenians and Romanians, the budget was approved for a period of four months. The Slovenes also agreed, 'since the Emperor has trust in the southern Slavs'.<sup>2040</sup> Finally, the German National League (*Deutscher Nationalverband*) also agreed to the bill, as did the Christian Socialists with regard to several items. Otherwise, however, Seidler's programme was rejected almost in its entirety. The Prime Minister was given no room for manoeuvre. The long-term programmes that he had developed aroused no interest at all. All that did attract attention was what might happen in the short term, and here, Seidler had announced nothing that would have taken into account the divergent wishes of the nationalities and parties.

Seidler also had no luck with his attempts at constitutional reform. The Czechs simply blocked the negotiations in the Constitutional Affairs Committee by staying away from the discussions, and thus fulfilling the wishes of the Czech émigrés. Already, Beneš had written to Prague on the occasion of the rejection of the budget by the Czech National Union: 'The vote against the budget created a marvellous impression, continue in this manner [...] do not negotiate any compromise with Austria.'<sup>2041</sup>

In light of the radicalisation in the interior, which continued its progress regardless of the successes at the fronts and the conclusion of the armistice with Russia, the Foreign Minister increasingly took it upon himself to exert influence on domestic policy. However, following the signing of the armistice, he first had his hands full with efforts to justify himself, since the Emperor was by no means keen on conducting negotiations with the Bolsheviks. He probably rightly feared that attempts at revolutionising the Habsburg Monarchy might be made from Russia, and at the same time was concerned about possible reactions on the part of the Social Democrat movement, should the talks fail. Czernin attempted to calm Emperor Karl, but the tensions remained, and the removal of Polzer-Hoditz as the Chief of Staff of the Emperor, who was discharged at the instigation of Czernin, contributed nothing towards the process of normalisation.<sup>2042</sup>

On 23 December, Czernin implored the Hungarian Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle, who had been in office since 20 August 1917, to allow additional food supplies to be delivered to Austria from Hungary, since the people were facing a catastrophe. He wrote that Vienna only had enough food to last for a few days.<sup>2043</sup> In response to the allegations made by Austrian deputies due to the attitude of Hungary, which was criticised as indolent in light of the looming hunger catastrophe, the Hungarian Food Minister, Count Hadit, had coolly explained: 'If Austria has nothing to eat, then it shouldn't wage war.'<sup>2044</sup> Since the resignation of Tisza, and precisely because it now had weaker prime ministers, Hungary had become less and less willing for domestic policy reasons alone to use its harvests to feed the Austrian half of the Empire as well. Follow-

ing Tisza's fall, the grain rations in Hungary had even been increased, instead of being reduced, as would have been necessary in the interest of the state overall.<sup>2045</sup> In January 1918 in Austria, however, there was a sense of desperation, and in order to make the reserve supplies go further once more, it became necessary to reduce the per-head ration for flour from 200 grams per day to 165 grams. The meat ration was cut to 160 grams per week. This was to be supplemented by between one and one-and-a-half kilograms of potatoes per week, but in many places, potatoes were not, or not always, available.<sup>2046</sup> This was a result of the railway calamity that had been created by the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo. Certainly, however, it was not only the overall shortages that were to blame for the spreading food supply crisis, but to an equal extent the incapacity of the state to take drastic measures and to secure the requisitioning and transportation of food. In Poland, Moravia and in the Alpine regions of the Austrian half of the Empire, not even 165 grams of flour per day could be provided. By contrast, in Croatia, which belonged to Hungary, there were not even bread cards in 1917, since bread did not have to be rationed.<sup>2047</sup>

Increasingly, it was attempted to make a connection between one's own situation, the hunger and the hardships, and conditions in the other parts of the Empire and peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy. Accusations hailed down, and hatred spread to an ever greater degree. The hatred was directed at those who had it better, the wealthy and the war profiteers, but also at those in the towns or in the country, the refugees and internees, as well as the prisoners of war. Hatred towards Germany was also expressed with increasing openness, which with its merciless will to gain victory and its dominance prevented the conclusion of a peace agreement, and thus an end to the desperate situation. Hungary was frequently regarded as a type of vassal of Germany. The Czechs conformed to every possible prejudice, and their deputies did little, either in the House of Representatives or in the upper house of the Reichsrat, to win over the Germans. The same was true in reverse. The Poles were important for forming a majority, but did not lose sight of their own interests for a moment. And when it came to the southern Slavs, the May Declaration of 1917 had led to a gradual change of mood. Thus, a Yugoslav perspective was presented alongside or even in opposition to the various position papers of the Germans and Czechs. However, aside from the fact that the formulations offered a great deal of room for interpretation, it could be ascertained that both halves of the Empire were affected by the declaration. In Hungary, therefore, greater attention began to be paid to the Croats, while in Austria the Slovenes became a subject of interest. While the commitment to the ruling dynasty gave the declaration a minimum of legality, everything else could be regarded as nothing other than a type of balancing act, since the declaration also contained an unmistakable commitment to Yugoslavism. The fact that an attempt was being made to find a solution to the southern Slav question within the Habsburg Monarchy was what made the May Declaration different

from the Corfu Declaration, which was passed months later by the groups of exiles. However, there was also a significant difference in focus, since in Corfu it was the Serbs who set the tone; by contrast, the May Declaration was initiated by the Slovenes and conformed to their self-concept, since the Slovenes regarded themselves as the leading nation among the southern Slavs. This became clear not least in the requests to speak by the Slovenian Reichsrat representative, Ante Korošec, who was regarded as the leader of the Yugoslav movement. The term itself was still diffuse, however, and already, there was disagreement with the Croats over the definition of 'Yugoslavia'. For the Croats, it meant rather an extension of their constitutional law.

The May Declaration also reflected another quite different special feature, however: it was supported particularly strongly by women, who in this way distinguished themselves as bearers of political ideas and in so doing, by also setting an obvious example. Now it was clear that the majority of men who were fit to fight had been drafted for military service, and for this reason were largely lacking as pillars of a political movement. However, it was of key importance for the supporters of the May Declaration that it was disseminated by those who were having to battle against the increasing hardships. It was also women who began to collect declarations of support for the May Declaration in the form of signatures.<sup>2048</sup> From the autumn of 1917 onwards, the number of supporters of the Declaration increased, particularly in Slovenia, Istria and Dalmatia. This was connected to the regional collapse of supplies. In May 1917, General Ottokar Landwehr, who was responsible for providing food, had been in Zagreb and had determined that the supply of bread was adequate. However, the supreme chief of the civilian administration, Ban Iván Skerlecz de Lomnicza, refused to relinquish bread cereals to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Months later, Landwehr returned to Zagreb. Bread had disappeared from the markets, and the black market was flourishing. The new ban of Croatia, Ante Mihalovich, was more willing to give something up, but even before his inaugural speech, he stated that his government would be 'democratic and Croatian'.<sup>2049</sup> On 4 December 1917, the Slovene Verstovšek attacked the Hungarians directly in the Reichsrat. He used the negotiations on the extension of the Compromise to argue against the 'dominance of the Germans and Judeo-Magyars', but then focussed on Hungary, which he accused of only having its own advantage in mind throughout the entire course of the war. For deliveries of livestock to Austria, they had taken double the amount in payments as in Hungary itself, and had unscrupulously worked to build up the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army), which had now grown to the extent that it could march against Austria as it had done in 1848. In so doing, the Hungarian 'Soldateska' had made itself widely hated, and had behaved 'as the Huns had formerly done in all areas in which it [has] resided'.<sup>2050</sup> Verstovšek's polemic was repeatedly interrupted by applause, and the impression was created that for both the northern and southern Slavs, the Hungarians were hated most of all, and primarily for economic reasons.



In Pazin, in central Istria, 47 people died of starvation during the winter of 1917. The supply of food had collapsed entirely. Then, the half-ripe grain was harvested. Nettles were boiled, as were many types of grass. It is not surprising that the May Declaration issued by Slovenia met with enormous support in Istria. Until the autumn of 1917, the willingness among the population to support the declaration by providing their signature had only been hesitant, but after the prince-bishop of Ljubljana (Laibach), Anton Bonaventura Jeglič, had issued an open declaration of support on 15 September 1917, and in doing so had referred to the peace initiative by Pope Benedict XV, support for the May Declaration turned into a real movement. From September 1917 until the spring of 1918, the declaration movement swelled. In March 1918, Anton Korošec was presented with 200,000 signatures by women in Ljubljana.<sup>2051</sup> Most of the signatories felt the same way as Jeglič. Support in southern Styria was even greater than in Carniola. One characteristic hand-written comment to a signature read: 'Long live Yugoslavia, long live our Emperor Karl'.<sup>2052</sup> Events took a different turn only in the Slovenian parts of Carinthia, since the Deputy State Governor, Count Lodron, attempted to suppress the May Declaration movement. Croatia distanced itself from the declaration movement, which was regarded primarily as a Slovenian protest. The group was even weaker in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most Muslim leaders in particular remained opposed to the May Declaration, and were not disappointed that the declaration movement was banned after eleven months. Before being banned, the declaration had gathered around 300,000 signatures.

The parameters continued to shift, and this at a time when military victory appeared to be within reach. However, for the Foreign Minister, the increasingly frequent food demonstrations and the dilemma, which was almost impossible to resolve, of transporting supplies, was not merely something that concerned him greatly in general terms. The drifting asunder of the parts of the Empire put him under real pressure, since he was also obliged to strive to help stabilise the Monarchy via the circuitous route of concluding a peace with Russia and Romania. Once again, foreign policy was subject to the demands of domestic policy.

### The Negotiations in Brest

When in December 1917 the peace negotiations were due to begin in Brest-Litovsk, Czernin fell ill and had to send Ambassador Kajetan von Mérey as his representative. Czernin simply issued him with guidelines that were to be binding for the Austro-Hungarian delegation. The peace was to be secured by the military, and was to enable food and raw materials to be brought from Russia. Poland was to be removed from the Russian sphere of influence. Russia was to provide assurances that it would

not interfere in the domestic affairs of Austria. Then, however, there was also a quite unmistakable reference to the position of the Germans: 'Your Excellency is aware that the peace with Russia must be brought about under all circumstances, and that all eventualities are possible, with the exception of the collapse of the negotiations through the fault of the Central Powers [...]. It is naturally of cardinal importance that the boundless ambitions of the German Supreme Army Command do not put the peace at risk [...]. Even a separate peace between ourselves and Russia would be preferable to the eventuality of failure resulting from German demands.'<sup>2053</sup> However, Mérey was not obliged to expose himself on this issue. Czernin followed him to Brest even before the negotiations had become substantial.

Hardly had Czernin arrived in Brest when he made it clear to the German chief military negotiator, Brigadier Max Hoffmann, that Austria-Hungary would conclude a separate peace with the Bolsheviks if necessary, were Germany's desire for annexation to cause the conference to fail. Czernin's position had been agreed with Emperor Karl. The Monarch appeared set on risking the alliance with the German Empire. In the Emperor's view, once American troops became involved in the war in Europe, the submarines would not suffice to maintain the balance of forces. Finally, Czernin had to apply the utmost pressure in order to dissuade Karl from taking unilateral steps that were also directed against Germany. Moreover: he referred the necessity of accepting the Austro-Polish solution in order to be able to maintain a balance in relation to the German Empire, since the Germans had immediately arrived in Brest with demands for Courland and Lithuania. If Poland were also left to them, Austria-Hungary itself would also be in an inferior position compared to the German Empire, even if the war were to end in victory.<sup>2054</sup>

Czernin now found himself in an extremely curious situation. He wanted and was bound by duty to promote the relinquishment of all possible annexations, and yet at the same time to work towards the dissociation of Russian-Poland and the creation of a Polish kingdom, of which it was now being said that it was to become dependent on Austria-Hungary. If he did not do this, Poland would be reclaimed by the German Empire without Austria's renunciation of annexations accelerating the negotiations. If on the other hand he did so, he risked being accused of delaying, of tactical manoeuvring and annexationism. In this regard, even the Chief of the General Staff, Arz, was concerned, and had a remarkable statement forwarded to Czernin, in which he claimed that: 'I regard the annexation of Poland to Austria-Hungary as a sacrifice that we are making for the general situation in Central Europe; specifically from a military perspective, the planned creation of Poland should be regarded as a weakening of Austria-Hungary.'<sup>2055</sup>

Czernin was anything but confident when it came to what would happen after a possible peace had been concluded. In a letter that was probably addressed to Tisza, he gave free rein to his pessimistic view. Peace in the east would enable the Germans to

conduct a major offensive in the west. Austria-Hungary would have no choice but to support them. The First Quartermaster General of the German Army, Erich Ludendorff, had already informed the Army High Command that a decisive military success was being planned for the spring of 1918 on the German western front, and that the participation of Imperial and Royal divisions and the provision of Austro-Hungarian heavy artillery in advance would be welcome. The request was again made on 15 and 23 December, and was met with the approval of Emperor Karl in principle on 26 December.<sup>2056</sup>

If the Germans were to take Paris, their demands would, in Czernin's view, become extortionate. The Entente must quite simply make efforts to continue the war. And what would happen then? Even an appeal to the peoples of the Central Powers would be of no use, since in light of such a victory, they would no longer be amenable to sensible arguments.<sup>2057</sup>

The noticeable military successes of the Central Powers naturally caused the Allies to hold hectic consultations and to re-think their situation. However, they saw no reason to feel beaten. Great Britain felt that its will to resist had been strengthened, since it had withstood the toughest phase of the submarine war, and the troops under General Haig, for example at Cambrai, had at least proved themselves to be an equal match for the enemy. In France, there had been a change of government, and Prime Minister Painlevé had been replaced by Georges Clemenceau, who was even more decisively geared towards victory than his predecessor. In Italy, the former prime minister, Giolitti, who in his time had done all he could to keep Italy out of the war, had sided with the Orlando Cabinet. Reactions to the victory of the Central Powers at the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo such as those of the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Cadorna, who had underhandedly made Austria-Hungary the offer that if Austria-Hungary were to forfeit Trento (Trient), it could retain Trieste and Dalmatia, had been made without the knowledge of the relevant Cabinet members and had in the interim become redundant.<sup>2058</sup> For the immediate future, there was only one single concrete source of hope in Rome, and that was the arrival of the Americans. For this reason, everything possible had to be done to survive the period of time before the American divisions intervened. With regard to Russia, the British and French agreed to plan the deployment of intervention troops in the former Tsarist Empire in precisely specified zones, less in order to de-stabilise the Lenin government than to consolidate the 'White' forces and, in this way, to retain both anti-German and anti-Bolshevik troops who would be able to continue the war against the Central Powers. This began with the mission by Berthelot in Romania, which attempted to continue the war in eastern Romania and in southern Russia with Romanian, Czech and Russian troops. The British took over responsibility of the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Kurdistan. In order to broaden the scope of the war, and to gain new forces, the Allies granted the Czechs the status

of regular troops. The Czecho-Slovak Legion was regarded as the military organisation of the Czecho-Slovak National Committee in Paris, whose status was thus enormously enhanced by the French.<sup>2059</sup> In December, the first Czecho-Slovak contingents were established in France. Italy also cleared the way for the establishment of Czech legionaries.<sup>2060</sup> In turn, the Serbian Army, which had been reorganised in exile, successively began to intervene in the fighting on the Greek border and in Albania, and gathered together all willing Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian nationality who could be enlisted in the Italian camps to form a '1st Yugoslav Division'.<sup>2061</sup> However, all these measures could only serve first and foremost as a stop-gap to make the period of 'waiting for Uncle Sam' easier to bear.

### Wilson's Fourteen Points

When the American presidential advisor, Edward House, returned to Washington from Paris on 18 December 1917, he had to report to the President that he had not succeeded in persuading the Allies to formulate a direct declaration of their war aims. In light of the Russian proclamation regarding the abandonment of annexations and contributions and the repeated declarations of peace also being issued by the Central Powers, in the eyes of the American government such a declaration had become extremely urgent. Wilson then decided that the USA should formulate a declaration of its own.<sup>2062</sup> House suggested only a general re-wording of the American war aims, but Wilson wanted to formulate a programme of war aims that contained specific demands and, above all, also moral elements. Not least, it was intended to provoke the German people to take a critical view of the policies of the German imperial government and the Supreme Army Command. The points formulated by Wilson as a result were certainly not limited to simply an isolated list of American doctrines. They were also not formulated in such a way as to exclude scope for subsequent interpretations. After all, what kind of politics would that be, which permitted no alternative readings! However, it was of decisive importance that Wilson's catalogue of war aims was written against the background of the negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. Therefore, it was not so much an idealistic programme as first and foremost a tactical trick in the great process of psychological warfare.

The Fourteen Points became all the more important when a week before the opening of the peace conference, the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Trotsky, already read out a new appeal for the conclusion of a general peace. He demanded the application of the right to self-determination, not only for the peoples of Alsace-Lorraine, Galicia, Poland, Bohemia and the southern Slav provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy, but also for the Irish and the peoples living under colonial rule in Egypt, India, Madagascar, Indochina and elsewhere. The American Secretary of State, Lan-

sing, commented on the appeal by saying that it would bring 'international anarchy'.<sup>2063</sup> President Wilson did not entirely share this view, and by all means sympathised with the self-determination formula used by the Russians.<sup>2064</sup> However, the result for him of the approach taken by the new people in power in Russia was that the Bolsheviks were competing with him in an area on which he placed great value, namely that of moral authority. The right to self-determination of the peoples, and the abandonment of annexations, were after all not only revolutionary goals with no small degree of explosive potential, but also substantially corresponded to what the USA was claiming to be the uppermost principles of its statehood. The Bolshevik version was however clearly targeted at revolutionising the world. And this was something the Wilson also did not want. For this reason, he felt confirmed by Trotsky's appeal in his decision to announce an American peace programme and, in so doing, to counteract the Bolshevik propaganda.<sup>2065</sup> The American President aimed to set out on paper point for point his vision for the containment of the war, for the curtailment of the power of the German Empire, and for the future of the peoples of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. While he was still making his initial deliberations, Wilson was informed of the details of a peace proposal that had been submitted by a certain Julius Meinl, a 'Kommerzialrat', as he was called in an American report from Bern.<sup>2066</sup>

Meinl, a Viennese businessman, had sought opportunities during several visits to Berlin and in the neutral states, and above all through contacts to American diplomats and confidantes of Wilson, to create a breakthrough for a negotiated peace. He was interested less in issues relating to Austria-Hungary than in the problems between the Germans and the French. Meinl, who had the support of Heinrich Lammasch, Josef Redlich, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster and others, had agreed with the businessman and confidante of Wilson, David Herron, as well as the American chargé d'affaires in Bern, Hugh R. Wilson, that several questions should be asked of the German Empire via the indirect route of Switzerland. These questions focussed primarily on the validity of the resolution passed by the German Reichsrat on 19 July 1917 and the German willingness to accept peace, on the declaration by Bethmann Hollweg on 4 August regarding the return of Belgium and, finally, on whether Germany would be prepared to grant autonomy to Alsace-Lorraine. The Americans and the British felt that on this basis, they could also persuade the French to agree to peace negotiations. Meinl returned to Vienna electrified, and wanted to report immediately to Czernin in Brest-Litovsk, but the Foreign Minister was not inclined to allow Meinl to join him there. However, since Czernin came to Vienna at the start of the year in 1918, Meinl took this opportunity to report to him. Even while doing so, he gained the impression that Czernin was anything but enthusiastic about his Swiss mission. Berlin had already made it clear that it did not wish to take any steps in the direction that had been brokered by Meinl. Except among the Americans, amateurs were not wanted, regardless of whether they

were a Lady Paget or a Julius Meinl. On the following day, Meinl received a letter from Czernin that must have had the effect of a cold shower: 'Your High Well Born', it read, 'Your verbal analyses, as I have already told you, have greatly interested me. I [...] come to the conclusion, however, on closer reflection of your reports, that for tactical political considerations, it would not be prudent at the current moment, and in likelihood also in the near future, to continue to spin the threads that you have taken up. I thus have the honour of requesting you to refrain from travelling abroad until further notice [...]. May Your High Well Born receive expression of my [...].'<sup>2067</sup>

In contrast to Count Czernin, the American President was highly taken with Meinl's recommendations. On 1 January 1918, Wilson passed on their contents to Secretary of State Lansing, saying that they corresponded almost entirely to his own views.<sup>2068</sup> On 2 January 1918, the British Foreign Secretary, Balfour, gave a report to the American presidential advisor, House, on the discussions between Count Mensdorff and General Smuts, which had taken place on 18 and 19 December. One of the core passages in this report was that Mensdorff had thoroughly agreed to the suggestion of giving the nationalities of Austria-Hungary the opportunity 'to autonomous development', and that this also conformed to the intentions of the Austrian Emperor. Wilson adopted word for word the passage relating to the 'opportunity to autonomous development' into his publication, and only left it open as to whether this should occur inside or outside the Monarchy. The American President also refused to take specific demands into account, and in point 10, which related to the peoples of Austria-Hungary, therefore left out any reference to the Treaty of London of 1915 and the Italian demands for Dalmatia, as well as Czech and Slovak aims.<sup>2069</sup>

The State Department had been excluded from the formulation until the last moment. Just one day before the points were announced, Wilson called in Secretary of State Lansing and gave him the list of his Fourteen Points to read. Lansing agreed, but noted in his diary: 'Der Präsident hat nach einer Möglichkeit gesucht, die Doppelmonarchie intakt zu erhalten. Ich halte eine solche Vorgangsweise für nicht gescheit und denke, der Präsident sollte diesen Gedanken fallen lassen und die Errichtung neuer Staaten auf dem Territorium des Kaiserreichs ins Auge fassen und die Aufteilung Österreich-Ungarns fordern. Das ist das einzig sichere Mittel, um die deutsche Vorherrschaft in Europa zu beenden.'<sup>2070</sup> In Lansing's view, Austria-Hungary was to become a lever against Germany, and the destruction of the Habsburg Empire, which precisely at that point had appeared to have become obsolete as a war aim, was to be sought in order to cripple the German Empire in the long term.

On 8 January 1918, Wilson announced his Fourteen Points. This was his reply to the Bolsheviks. Almost immediately, their slogans were faced with a rival voice. For Austria-Hungary, however, the declaration by the American President was both a destructive and a revolutionary force.



## 28 The Inner Front

28. Austro-Hungarian sentries in the port of Odessa, spring 1918. In February 1918, Ukraine, which had gained its independence from Russia, requested the assistance of Austro-Hungarian troops in order to consolidate its independence internally and externally. Among the Austro-Hungarian formations that were sent to Ukraine after considerable hesitation, there were not only army troops but also the monitors of the Imperial and Royal Danube Fleet.



If the twin terms of 'triumph and tragedy' were not already so hackneyed, one would have to apply them to the first weeks and months of 1918. The collapse of the Danube Monarchy began parallel to its greatest military and political successes. On an almost daily basis, peace settlements were dictated, there were mass strikes, the Imperial and Royal troops reached Odessa and the Black Sea, the alliance with the German Empire in its existing form shattered, and fleet units and replacement personnel revolted. The end loomed. One thing was always rooted in another and would have been unthinkable without it.

### The January Strikes

It began in Brest-Litovsk. Before his renewed departure to the peace negotiations with Russia, Czernin had urged that as little information as possible be announced regarding the progress of the negotiations; in particular all news from Russian sources that did not correspond to the Minister's bulletins was to be censored and its appearance in newspapers under no circumstances approved. This measure was unsuccessful, however. The news filtered through – and stirred things up. The unrest grew daily.

During the first days of January, short-lived strikes flared up in Hungary, Transylvania and Poland. In themselves, they were not particularly significant, since there had always been short strikes in 1916, 1917 and now also 1918. The reasons for these were first and foremost supply issues. This time, however, noticeable political slogans intermingled with the strikes, above all Bolshevik ones. In Brest-Litovsk it was claimed that 'the counts and generals, supported by the sword, have brutally rejected the will to peace of our Russian brothers. The masses want neither victory nor glory of arms – they want immediate peace, peace at all costs. [...] The Russian workers and soldiers have fought not only for their freedom with the most extreme means of class struggle, with mass strikes, mutiny and street fighting! They have shed their blood for the liberation of all peoples of the Earth from the suffering of war and the yoke of capitalism. [...] Workers of the world, unite!<sup>12071</sup>

However, it was not only the social components that created a stir. The nationalities, above all the Slav ones, were agitated. Here the Pan-Slavists joined hands with those who clung to the demand for the right to self-determination. Czechs and southern Slavs were in agreement in December 1917 on wanting to demand the participation of

representatives of non-German nationalities at the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. On 6 January 1918, all Czech Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) and Landtag (regional diet) deputies from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were summoned to Prague for a 'general regional diet' in order to formulate a protest against the stance of Austria-Hungary at the peace negotiations. The document adopted by them was named after the day on which the gathering took place: the 'Epiphany Declaration'. The declaration, which was well thought out and addressed in equal measures historical and current concerns, stated: 'We Czech members of the Reichsrat, which has been deprived by the judgements of incompetent military courts of a whole series of its Slav members, and likewise we Czech deputies of the dissolved and not yet re-convened Regional Diet of Bohemia [...] affirm most emphatically as elected representatives of the Czech people and its downtrodden and politically muzzled Slovak branch in Hungary our standpoint on the new settlement of international relations. [...] We submit a bitter complaint [...] and protest [...] solemnly against the rejection of the right of nations to self-determination at the peace negotiations and demand that in accordance with this right all nations, including ours, are assured the participation and complete freedom to assert their rights at the peace congress.'<sup>2072</sup>

The 'Epiphany Declaration' was not only in the eyes of the Czech government in exile the first public revolutionary proclamation. Due to its subversive character, it was not to be published to begin with. Its temporary confiscation only contributed, however, to increasing its impact within the lands of the Bohemian Crown. In view of its confiscation, foreign states could again fall back on their earlier accusations against the autocratic regime in Austria, which was trampling liberties under foot. Due to the confiscation, the Czech deputies introduced a vote of no confidence against the government. In the meantime, however, Seidler had released the Declaration and the recorded vote resulted in a vote of confidence in his favour. Southern Slavs, Social Democrats, Poles and Ukrainians had voted with the Germans in favour of the Prime Minister.<sup>2073</sup>

The 'Epiphany Declaration' and worker unrest appeared to be unrelated incidents, isolated acts whose identical connections were merely coincidental. The crucial point would not turn out to be the reference to the peace negotiations, however, or even the supply crisis. The significant factor was the commotion itself, which was expressed in different ways.

On the morning of 14 January 1918, the workers of the Daimler Works gathered in Wiener Neustadt in their factory courtyard in order to protest against the renewed cuts in flour rations. It was the aforementioned reduction from 200 to 165 grams of flour per day for a normal consumer. The workers moved to the town hall. Workers in other factories joined them. The city council telephoned with the Food Ministry. Minister Höfer wanted to speak with a delegation of the workers. This did not happen for the time being, however. On the next day, the strikes spread to other industrial enterprises

in Steinfeld and in the Alpine foothills, as well as Styria. Unrest was next reported in Trieste (Triest). The workers announced that they would resume work only when flour and fats were distributed. There was enough for everyone, they claimed; it just had to be correctly collected and allocated. The strikes spread to Vienna and the demands became ever more radical.

The leadership of the Austrian Social Democrats succeeded once more, however, in taking the sting out of the radicality. A direct link was established between the peace negotiations and the hardships. The discontent was recast in four demands: the government was to be called on to not let the peace negotiations in Brest be derailed by territorial desires. Next, a fundamental reform of the food system was demanded, furthermore universal suffrage for elections to the local councils and, finally, the suspension of militarisation for a series of businesses. At the same time, the party leadership published in their *Arbeiter-Zeitung* appeals to the workers of the food industries, gas and electricity works, and the transport services, as well as the miners, not to strike. Nevertheless, an expansion of the strike to Moravia, Silesia and Bohemia threatened. Starvation was also still regarded as the main problem.

Czernin subjected the Emperor to fierce allegations because he had not forced Seidler to establish order. These were the same accusations that had been made against Count Stürgkh. Czernin requested that the Emperor immediately send the Chairman of the Joint Food Committee, General Landwehr, to Kaiser Wilhelm to ask for assistance with foodstuffs. At the same time, Czernin argued, they also had to proceed with the utmost determination in Hungary and ruthlessly requisition. The next day, Czernin once more wrote to the Emperor and described the food situation as 'currently the most important problem in domestic politics, [...] since if we do not succeed in preventing the outbreak of famine, all is lost'.<sup>2074</sup> For Czernin, the peace negotiations were at stake.

It took days before the direction became clearer. The demands for better rations receded considerably and made way for the more causal demands for an end to the war, but also for revolutionisation and the enforcement of workers' control. In this way, a group became recognisable that stood left of the Social Democrat movement and was to also cause its leadership discomfort. Viktor Adler had refused on 13 January to direct the strike into revolutionary channels.<sup>2075</sup> Therefore, it was important for the Social Democrat party leadership to curb the strike and bring it to an end, since uncontrollable developments might otherwise occur. On 15 January, unrest was also reported in Kraków (Krakau).

The military commands wanted to clamp down, since very many of the enterprises involved in the strike were militarised. Planned walkouts were described as mutiny and the worker-soldiers were threatened with the most severe punishments. As soon as the local strikes developed into a mass industrial action, violence was no longer a means of control.

By 19 January, around 600,000 workers had downed tools in Austria alone. Most shops closed, whilst the newspapers – with the exception of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* – had to suspend their publication. In Budapest, tram lines were torn out during the night of 17/18 January. The German Consulate General there reported: '[The] movement begins to exhibit revolutionary traits.'<sup>2076</sup> The strikers protested loudly against the slow progress of the Brest negotiations, whilst the abrasiveness and the Germans' obsession with conquest were castigated. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote on 16 January that Russia was prepared to vacate Poland, Lithuania and Courland if the respective local populations wanted this. It added that the people had borne the sacrifices of the war so far in the belief that they had been fighting a defensive war. The continuation of the war for annexationist purposes, however, contradicted the will of the peoples of Austria.<sup>2077</sup> A further radicalisation threatened and one had to ask whether the Russian Revolution might not perhaps expand to become an Austrian one. How was it to be countered, though?

As in most comparable situations, the call rang out for the most significant instrument of power in any state, the military. A military government was prepared. General Prince Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein was to become its head. The Emperor was not yet completely decided and his undertaking also met with resistance from the Chief of the General Staff, Arz, and the Joint War Minister, Stöger-Steiner. Nonetheless, preparations were pressed ahead. Schönburg and another general who was regarded as particularly strong, Baron Karl von Bardolff, until 1914 Chief of the Military Chancellery of Franz Ferdinand, were brought into positions that were supposed to enable them at any time to bring about a change of government. Schönburg became Inspector General of Mobile Troops on the Home Front. These included meanwhile not only the replacement formations, above all the march battalions, but also gradually the formations of the field army sent to strengthen the hinterland, temporarily over fifty battalions.<sup>2078</sup> Bardolff, who was envisaged as Interior Minister, became Schönburg's deputy. Further generals were appointed commanders of mobile troops on the home front. No consideration was given to the possibility, however, that these troops might themselves mutiny. Instead, they were to be deployed in the event of a continuation of the strike movement and a general revolutionisation of the Dual Monarchy. In this case, Schönburg-Hartenstein would have acquired a position comparable to that of Kerensky. The settlement of the January strikes and Emperor Karl's abhorrence of any kind of military dictatorship, however, derailed the project. The Inspectorate General was dissolved again.<sup>2079</sup>

On 19 January, Seidler received Viktor Adler, Karl Seitz, Karl Renner, Franz Domes and Ferdinand Hanusch as representatives of the Austrian Social Democrats. They presented him with the aforementioned four points, the fulfilment of which they made as a condition for the ending of the strike: renunciation of territorial demands at the

negotiations in Brest, improvement of the food situation, the early election of local councils and an alleviation of the military regime. Seidler promised to do everything to bring about peace in Brest. During the meeting, Czernin was contacted, who declared that he would renounce territorial demands in Brest-Litovsk. What appeared to be a concession to the Social Democrats had actually long since been fixed. In all the other points, the Social Democrats were made promises and the wool was pulled over their eyes.

In Hungary, the strikes were also ended by Prime Minister Wekerle promising the workers that he would fulfil their demands, though without saying in concrete terms what he would actually undertake.<sup>2080</sup>

On 21 January, the party leadership of the Austrian Social Democrats called for a resumption of work. The result actually amounted to nothing. Seidler had promised something that was beyond his power to achieve. The improvement of the food system was in itself not a question of reforms but rather of the available quantities. The election of the local councils could only take place once the national constituencies had been fixed. And in the case of the suspension of the militarisation of businesses, no progress was made either. The January strikes were only a prelude, however.

The radicals were in no way satisfied with the solution. They insulted and abused their comrades who had negotiated the compromise; there were tumultuous scenes. Karl Renner was briefly detained by furious workers in Wiener Neustadt.<sup>2081</sup> Wherever the people did not feel bound to the compromise, above all in Bohemia, the strikes only now truly set in. A temporary calming was only visible at the point when the deployment of the military or a German invasion of Bohemia was feared.<sup>2082</sup> During all of this, the rumour circulated that the entire movement had been organised at the instigation of German socialists, who in view of the impossibility of gaining support for a compromise peace in the German Empire had appealed to their Austrian comrades.<sup>2083</sup>

### Continuation in Brest

On 19 January 1918, the Foreign Minister assured the Austrian Prime Minister that he was consistently striving for a peace without annexations. However, as had been seen at the opening of the peace negotiations in December, the absence of annexations could be interpreted in many ways.

The negotiations in Brest-Litovsk had been resumed on 9 January following an interruption over the New Year, which was supposed to enable a final invitation to be directed at the western powers to participate in the talks. The situation had changed. The Russian delegation was no longer led by Adolf Abramovič Joffe, but instead by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Trotsky. Ukraine wanted to abandon its state

of belonging to Russia and sought separate peace talks. The right to self-determination proved to be a huge stumbling block. Russia demanded the consultation of representatives from Courland and Lithuania, if Germany claimed that these provinces on the periphery wanted to free themselves from Russia. The Chief of the General Staff of the German Supreme Army Command and 'host' of the negotiations, General Hoffmann, whose role was to take the radical view of the Army Command within the German delegation, put on the airs and graces of a victor. It was not the Russians who should be setting conditions: 'The victorious German Army is on your territory', as he pointed out to Trotsky.<sup>2084</sup> But Trotsky attempted repeatedly to avoid adopting a clear position with dialectical manoeuvres and was already prepared to break off the negotiations. But Lenin wanted them to be continued.

Czernin's position at the talks was markedly complicated by the January strikes and the looming famine catastrophe. His repeated declarations that he would rather conclude a separate peace than see peace founder on German demands, no longer had any effect. Emperor Karl had now resorted to only making appeals. Growing aversion towards the Germans and the widespread belief that Austria-Hungary was now only fighting for German conquests, but was for its part to be fobbed off with mere crumbs, and that Germany would ultimately conclude peace on the back of Austria, made his decisions conceivably difficult. The conflict could hardly be greater: Czernin openly threatened with a 'reorientation in alliance policy' after the war. Germany returned the aversion. 'The wider public here naturally does not speak well of Austria-Hungary', wrote the German diplomat Albert Bernstorff in January 1918 to the editor of the *Österreichischer Volkswirt*, Gustav Stolper. He even had to cancel a planned presentation in Dresden, since the mood had turned so much against the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>2085</sup> The Central Powers, however, were evidently condemned to unity. It was Austria-Hungary that had to come begging. Since Czernin was assailed by the Austrian government, the head of the Joint Food Committee and, ultimately, the Emperor to obtain deliveries of cereal crops from Germany and Bulgaria, he could not do anything other than act accommodatingly. The German Empire granted a loan of 45,000 tons of wheat flour, and eventually there was also a veritable accord on additional German deliveries. Czernin's room for manoeuvre, however, had again been constricted.<sup>2086</sup> The Minister reproached Seidler for not having suppressed the press reports. Czernin criticised the Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle strongly and openly advocated the establishment of a military dictatorship.<sup>2087</sup> But this could not give him back his scope of action. Czernin became increasingly bound to German policies. First of all, he had to indulge Ukraine, which claimed the Chełm Governorate from the Russian part of Poland for its emerging state.<sup>2088</sup> Czernin had to concede, even if unforeseeable difficulties were to result with the Poles, who regarded Chełm as an integral part of Poland. The Ukrainians furthermore succeeded with the demand for the creation of Ruthenia as a separate crown land

within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which was to comprise the Ruthenian parts of Galicia and Bukovina and would thus likewise be at the expense of a possible future Polish state. In return, Ukraine was to deliver considerable amounts of cereal crops to the Habsburg Monarchy on the basis of an existing, separate economic agreement. The calculation was clear: exchange land for food.

On 22 January 1918, Czernin reported in the Joint Council of Ministers on the Brest negotiations. He met with only partial agreement for his approach. Some ministers feared the end of the Austro-Polish solution. The Chief of the General Staff doubted that so much grain could actually be obtained from Ukraine as had been promised to Czernin. Above all, the question remained open as to how the grain was to be dispatched. The Emperor cast his lot in with Czernin. He confirmed that, if necessary, the Dual Monarchy would sign a separate peace with Russia and that, in view of the looming food catastrophe, further concessions were to be made to Ukraine, whilst Galicia was to be partitioned. The Austro-Polish solution would have to be abandoned, if need be, since Romania had more to offer. Evidently, Karl had also arrived at the same conclusions as Kaiser Wilhelm. Now, neither the German Empire nor Austria-Hungary wanted to take a Polish kingdom in tow; instead, they both wanted Romania. However, developments brushed these thoughts aside. After a renewed interruption of the Brest talks, Trotsky returned to the negotiating table with the formula 'neither war nor peace'. The Bolsheviks were furthermore determined to put a stop to the process of decay in Russia, and reclaimed Ukraine. Accordingly, the Ukrainian People's Republic was to be part of the Russian Federation. There was a breach between the Ukrainian Central Rada (Central Council) and the Bolsheviks. The Central Powers, however, immediately declared their recognition of the sovereign Ukrainian People's Republic.<sup>2089</sup>

It bothered Czernin, and likewise the diplomats and officers in Brest, that it was not clear just how much real power the Russian negotiators possessed.<sup>2090</sup> Trotsky furthermore met with so much mistrust and rejection that the German Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs Kühlmann wanted to prohibit Czernin and the economic expert attached to the Austro-Hungarian delegation, Richard Schüller, from engaging in personal communication with the Russians. On 7 February, 1918, preliminaries for a peace treaty with Ukraine were signed, in which the prospect was held out of a removal of a million tons of cereal crops from Ukraine. On 9 February, the peace treaty with Ukraine was signed in Brest.<sup>2091</sup> The next day, the Russians broke off negotiations with the Quadruple Alliance. The recognition of Ukraine, the German intention to advance further into the Baltic region and the obvious failure of the delaying tactics had contributed in equal measure to the rupture. The Bolsheviks called on the German soldiers to murder their Kaiser and the German generals, and Trotsky issued the long since prepared declaration that no annexationist peace would be signed. Regardless of this, the Russian Army was demobilised. He declared the state of war with the German

Empire, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria to be over. There was 'neither war nor peace'. The Bolshevik delegation departed.

The Central Powers had not been prepared for this breach, but they quickly gathered themselves. For Ludendorff, it was clear that the opportunity to advance into the Baltic should be used. The whole of Livonia and Estonia from Riga to Lake Peipus was eventually occupied by German troops. Prime Minister Seidler declared in the Reichsrat that the Danube Monarchy would not participate in the German military operation. He also announced that Russia had declared that it was no longer at war with Austria-Hungary. However, as it turned out shortly thereafter, this did not mean the end of Austro-Hungarian involvement in the east. After the conclusion of what Czernin had so pithily and exaggeratedly called the 'Bread Peace', Ukraine had been informed that in the event of a military threat coming from Russia, it was to turn to Austria-Hungary. This military threat was real. The new regime in Russia did not simply want to relinquish Ukraine either. Together with Ukrainian Bolsheviks, Russian Red Guards conquered ever larger parts of the country. The Central Rada under Mykhailo S. Hrushevsky was trapped in Kiev and in danger of being liquidated. Only with the help of the Galician-Ukrainian Legion ('Sicovi stril'ci'), which primarily comprised Austrian soldiers of Ukrainian nationality who had escaped from Russian prisoner of war captivity, did the Rada succeed in slipping out of Kiev following days of street fighting. On its own, the People's Republic could not survive. An appeal for help promptly arrived on 16 February, which was just as promptly used by Czernin for political blackmail. He only wanted to promise military support if Ukraine at least partially renounced the Chełm territory conceded to it in Brest. Ukraine did as it was asked. The border between Poland and Ukraine was again uncertain.<sup>2092</sup>

When, however, the Army High Command was already gearing itself up to order Austro-Hungarian troops to advance into Ukraine, the Emperor refused to grant his consent. He saw in such an invasion a breach of treaty. Prime Minister Seidler assisted him, since he needed the Social Democrats more than ever for the in any case weak parliamentary support that his government enjoyed. After the back and forth of the Chełm Governorate, the Poles of Austria were no longer prepared to agree to an extension of the provisional budget. Thus, the Social Democrats had to be won over, although they strictly rejected a revival of the war in the east. Therefore, the invasion of Ukraine was not to take place.<sup>2093</sup>

As a result of this, Czernin was now in an awkward position, since he had expressly made it known to Ukraine that not German but Austro-Hungarian troops would march in; only on this condition had Ukraine been prepared to renounce the Chełm territory – and now it was only German troops who came. The pledge of the Danube Monarchy turned out to be an empty promise. In this way, it had also become questionable whether Austria would have a notable share in the immediate Ukrainian de-



livery of a million tons of grain. The dilemma could hardly be greater. The Chief of the General Staff eventually ordered on his own responsibility the participation of several Imperial and Royal formations in the advance into Ukraine in order in this way to salvage whatever they still could and fetch at least some grain.

The fact that there was suddenly a ray of hope was least of all the achievement of the Danube Monarchy. Russia declared that it wanted to return to the negotiating table. Lenin enforced the acceptance of the peace conditions of the Central Powers, although the German Empire had expanded its territorial demands to include Estonia and Livonia. Czernin could no longer exert any influence. When Trotsky wanted to know whether Austria-Hungary would associate itself with the German approach, Czernin merely informed him that the Imperial and Royal government was prepared to conclude the peace negotiations together with its ally. There was no longer any mention of a separate peace; by all accounts, the Germans had succeeded with their politics.

On 25 February, the last phase of the negotiations with Russia began. Austria-Hungary no longer influenced the amendments to the already negotiated text of the treaty. Since Ambassador Kajetan von Mérey remained part of the delegation of the Central Powers on behalf of his minister to the last and signed the completed treaty, however, Austria-Hungary also assumed full responsibility for its conditions.

Russia had to regard the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as a dictated peace. It was just as the leader of the Russian delegation to the negotiations, Grigori Sokolnikov, clearly stated: 'The peace that is now to be concluded is not the fruits of an understanding between the two parties. It is a peace that [...] is dictated to us with a gun in the hand.'<sup>2094</sup> The Russians were eventually given three days for the final editing of the text of the treaty. According to the German conditions, the treaty had to be signed on 3 March. Russia only lost non-Russian territory, from Finland via the Baltic and Poland to Batumi on the Black Sea.<sup>2095</sup> Nonetheless, it was a clear signal for a division of a multi-nation state. The severed belt on the periphery was either completely incorporated into the sphere of influence of the Central Powers or at least came under their protection. Article XII of the treaty stated that the respective prisoners of war were to be returned to their homelands. Accordingly, Austria-Hungary had more than 900,000 people to repatriate, and it must of course be asked who was to replace the 438,000 prisoners employed in agriculture alone. For this reason, it was intended to at least start off slowly with the repatriation. The dilemma remained, however, since ultimately an estimated two million members of the Imperial and Royal Army were to be repatriated as soon as possible. In the end, the figures spoke for themselves: by summer 1918, 500,000 Austro-Hungarian soldiers had returned home, i.e. around 25 per cent of those who had fallen into captivity, whilst in the opposite direction only 50,000 members of the former Tsarist Army departed, with Ukrainians given preference.<sup>2096</sup>

## The 'Bread Peace'

After the back and forth regarding the participation of Austro-Hungarian troops in the advance into Ukraine, General Arz had, as mentioned, cut the 'Gordian knot' and informed Field Marshal Hindenburg on 26 February that Austria-Hungary intended to occupy the railway lines to Odessa.<sup>2097</sup> Two days later, the troops of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army set off. The commander of this operation, Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli, did the accepted thing in such situations: he instructed his troops that the entry into the neighbouring country was a case of peaceful assistance for a friendly and not yet consolidated state.<sup>2098</sup> Baggage train and combat troops were loaded on to railway carriages and trundled off to the south-east. The country, into which the Imperial and Royal troops advanced, however, was anything but peaceful.

Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa, Zhytomyr and other large cities in Ukraine were occupied by the Bolsheviks, and the Ukrainian government was on the run. Suddenly, the peculiar situation arose that the western Allies and the Central Powers had a mutual enemy: the Soviet regime in Russia. However, the troops that resisted the Central Powers could not be regarded as a serious opponent.

German and Austro-Hungarian divisions advanced successively into Ukraine, whereby the Germans, who had commenced their advance earlier, certainly bore the main brunt of the fighting, but also occupied the most interesting territories, above all the Donets Basin and Crimea. Occasionally, hostilities also occurred during the advance of the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army. Disruptions in the railway lines also had a delaying effect. Overall, however, the Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff stated that 'in view of the complete disruption of the Russian Army, its sensitive deficiencies in trained leaders of all ranks as well as the total lack of discipline of the Russian soldiers, [the operations could] be carried out with particular speed'.<sup>2099</sup> On 13 March, Austrian and German troops were in Odessa. The Imperial and Royal Danube Flotilla cleared the final mines from the Danube Delta and entered the Black Sea via the Sulina mouth of the Danube.<sup>2100</sup> The Russian Black Sea Fleet steamed to Sevastopol.

On 28 March, an agreement was reached with the German Empire, according to which Austria-Hungary was to occupy the Podolia, Kherson and Yekaterinoslav Governorates. All other governorates fell to the Germans.<sup>2101</sup> However, if it had been assumed in February 1918 that conditions in Ukraine would relatively quickly normalise following the entry of the troops of the Central Powers, the contrary turned out to be the case. The administration had collapsed, the 'Central Rada' of Ukraine could not assert itself and local councils refused to cooperate with the troops of the Central Powers. Odessa did not even feel part of Ukraine. The farmers, who had taken possession of the land, were interested in receiving protection from the troops of the Central

Powers in order that they did not lose again what they had acquired, yet they stubbornly refused to sell supplies to the protecting powers.<sup>2102</sup> The Imperial and Royal 2nd Army was unable, therefore, to obtain large quantities to send to the Danube Monarchy. On 25 March, the Army High Command telegraphed the Commander of the 2nd Army, as Emperor Karl ultimately also did himself, on 1 April: 'The seizure [of food] in Ukraine is insufficient. The continuation of the war will be called into question if the results of the requisitioning do not soon improve. The most important task of the troops sent to Ukraine is the capture and dispatch of foodstuffs. It is not only a question of supplying the army but also, first and foremost, of alleviating the food famine on the home front.'<sup>2103</sup> After that, no attention was paid any more to the export bans issued by the Ukrainian government, but instead the occupation zone was divided into two seizure territories in each of which an army corps was responsible. Thereafter, the grain transportation offices were to commence with the evacuation. Inspectors and buyers from the cartels fanned out in order to seize, buy and shunt off as much as possible in Podolia and Kherson. In return, agricultural machinery and equipment, but also textiles, leather goods and paper, were to be brought to Ukraine. However, there was a shortage of the latter items in the Danube Monarchy itself, so that a degree of equilibrium in this exchange only gradually emerged. For a short time, Vienna was satisfied with the deliveries from Ukraine. On 5 May, the Army High Command even commended Böhm-Ermolli for the 'satisfying seizure and the evacuation of foodstuffs from Ukraine'.<sup>2104</sup> Shortly thereafter, however, it became critical again. Austria-Hungary and the German Empire wanted to divide up the Ukrainian grain deliveries at a ratio of 1:1 and the deliveries of other foodstuffs at a ratio of 4:6 in favour of Germany. However, the evacuations resulted in no more than a tenth of the expected and agreed amounts. The matter became a squaring of the circle, since not one single German or Austro-Hungarian department took the management of the flow of goods in hand, but instead the most manifold jurisdictions resulted. The Foreign Ministry regarded itself as responsible, since fundamental questions of post-war relations had been negotiated in Brest-Litovsk. As a result of Austria-Hungary's two-way division, both the Austrian and the Hungarian Finance Minister came forward, as did the respective trade ministers of Austria and Hungary. The Joint Food Committee appointed by the Emperor also responded. After that came the representatives of the various 'Central Offices', above all those for bread grain, wool, pharmaceuticals, coal, rubber and skins. If all the departments were added together that claimed jurisdiction over Ukraine, the total number came to over 200 departments that wanted to concern themselves with trade relations and the exploitation of the occupied territories. This was, furthermore, in a country in which at least temporary chaos reigned.

The situation became even more confusing when a Habsburg archduke interfered in the matter. The 23-year-old Archduke Wilhelm had arrived in Kiev and demon-

strated the ambition of turning Ukraine into a secondogeniture.<sup>2105</sup> This caused the Imperial and Royal authorities additional problems, since the attempts of the Archduke naturally found little favour with the Germans, the Ukrainian government led in the meantime by Pavlo Skoropadskyi and, of course, with the Bolsheviks, who now called themselves 'Communists'. The diary entries of Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli shed light on the mood with only a few words: 'The actions of [...] Archduke Wilhelm, like his mission, are carped at and derided in Kiev. The Archduke also made a very inept impression, however, [and] surrounds himself with dubious individuals. I expected something different, which is why I was also against the mission at that time. I've reported to the AOK [= Army High Command] to this effect, but it will be to no avail.'<sup>2106</sup> On the occasion of a visit to the 2nd Army Command on 15 May, German Lieutenant Colonel Baron Stoltzenberg recounted the 'dismissive and scornful manner' in which the members of the Central Rada spoke about the Archduke.<sup>2107</sup> Archduke Wilhelm also had brought with him a very colourful 'bunch', namely the aforementioned 'Ukrainian Legion'. In spite of a 'corset' of regular Imperial and Royal troops, however, this legion contributed only marginally to stabilising the military situation, since Ukraine was teeming with armed men. On 10 May, a state of war was declared in the Yekaterinoslav Governorate due to the ongoing rebellion,<sup>2108</sup> and in a city such as Odessa, which counted around 800,000 inhabitants at the time, not only was a substantial part of the populace positively disposed towards Communism, but there were also tens of thousands of rifles, several pieces of artillery and tons of ammunition. In order to undertake the disarming of these people, the Imperial and Royal 2nd Army Command requested additional reinforcements. Even with these, however, the real problem, namely the 'fructification' of the Bread Peace, could not be achieved.

Austrian contingents advanced as far as the Donets Basin. Troops of the Central Powers were at the eastern border of Ukraine and the monitors of the Imperial and Royal Danube Flotilla, which had entered the Black Sea, steamed up the Dnieper and Bug Rivers. Nevertheless, the chaos could not be mitigated.

It was now attempted to bring the matter under control by means of a change of command. Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli was replaced on 16 May by General of Infantry Alfred Krauß and the 2nd Army was renamed the 'Imperial and Royal Eastern Army'.<sup>2109</sup> Krauß wanted 'absolute authority'. But he did not get this. An agreement reached in Berlin between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary stipulated that the troops were only to serve to provide assistance if obstacles were encountered by the organisations 'Ukrainian Nutrition Council' and 'Ukrainian Food Council' whilst bringing in the harvest.<sup>2110</sup> Now nothing else worked. It was not even possible anymore to adequately supply the troops. Little by little, 500,000 German and 250,000 Imperial and Royal soldiers had advanced into Ukraine, in order to implement the 'Bread Peace'. At least the Imperial and Royal officers behaved peacefully and wore their black

caps, as they had done before 1914. On 1 April 1918, the first international airmail line in the world was opened: Vienna-Olomouc-Kraków-Lviv-Proskurov-Kiev, which was flown until the end of the war, and thereafter until 1921, with military aeroplanes no longer fit for service at the front.<sup>2111</sup> Each day, however, the 750,000 German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers consumed 300 coaches of supplies, so that hardly anything remained for removal. Furthermore, the underground organisations increasingly made their presence felt; they sought to prevent the deliveries to the Central Powers and to support the farmers in hiding the stores. In calculating the one million tons of cereal crops agreed on in Brest, the Central Powers had persistently forgotten to include those amounts that three-quarters of a million soldiers consumed on the spot. Therefore, the amount delivered corresponded overall roughly to the agreements. But who was interested in knowing this exactly?

Also in the case of the second country that could be regarded as defeated and showed a willingness to make peace, namely Romania, not everything went according to plan. Austria-Hungary's clearly paraded intention to demonstrate a renunciation of annexations had a blemish. During the talks with Romania, which had taken place parallel to those in Brest-Litovsk, Hungary demanded 'frontier revisions' from Romania, by which it understood above all the cession of Turnu Severin and several fertile oil fields in Moldavia. In this question, there was complete agreement between Wekerle and Tisza. To compensate for the territories to be ceded to Hungary, the prospect was held out to Romania of acquiring Bessarabia from the bankrupt assets of Russia.

Events in Russia had made Romania ready for peace, and especially Emperor Karl's threat did not fail to have the desired effect on the Romanian King Ferdinand I. The collision again threatened in another area, namely where Austrian and German interests clashed. On 20 February, Emperor Karl telegraphed Kaiser Wilhelm: one could not expect Romania to give up the most important economic assets it possessed. Otherwise, the Danube Monarchy would be the victim of a desperately hateful neighbour.<sup>2112</sup> It was not these formulations that brought Kaiser Wilhelm to boiling point, however, but rather other statements: 'The alliance loyalty and the desire to hold out with Germany until the general peace are no less dear to me than to you', wrote Karl. 'But I most urgently beseech you once more to commission your representatives not to overstretch the economic demands and to help me in the endeavour to conclude a definitive peace with Romania. A disappointment in the Romanian question as well would trigger a mood here that would without fail have exceedingly critical consequences.'<sup>2113</sup> On account of – what he saw as – the insinuations and the laxness of his ally, Wilhelm was furious. His notes in the margin of this telegram reflected the entire range of emotions: 'He threatens to drop out. We have heard this joke before. But I will not allow anything to be wrested from Me against the interests of My country and in disregard of the successes and losses of My army. The departure of Austria does not daunt Me. It would

sink to the same level as Italy. [...] [That is the] thanks of the House of Habsburg! One more traitor!<sup>2114</sup> Wilhelm's reaction can be explained in part from the fact that already since the beginning of the peace negotiations it had been repeatedly suggested that Austria-Hungary might break ranks with the alliance. The German ambassador had even asked Emperor Karl directly about this on 5 January 1918 and received the answer 'that after the multiple declarations regarding the will to make peace, it would have been difficult for the Most Supreme to make it conceivable to his peoples to continue fighting, if need be, only so that Germany receives Lithuania and Courland as the victory prize', as Ambassador von Wedel reported so perfectly to Berlin.<sup>2115</sup> Now the next instalment had begun. The Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Kühlmann, sought out the German Kaiser in order to explain the stance of Emperor Karl: 'The idea that Germany wants to patronise and oppress him and his Empire is deliberately nurtured by opponents of the alliance near to Emperor Karl.' It was precisely for this reason that Emperor Karl was to be treated with particular friendliness. This was only one aspect, however. The Austrian Emperor was also in favour of renouncing annexations because – as he openly stated – of 'how the Monarchy will look after the war'.<sup>2116</sup>

Also in the case of Romania, the German Empire remained faithful to the existing model of the peace negotiations. Since Romania did not appear amenable to the wishes and demands of the Quadruple Alliance, a resumption of military operations was threatened. Austria-Hungary could not oppose this, so it instead attempted to make the best of it. Arz talked on the telephone with Ludendorff in order to induce the latter to transfer the supreme command this time to Archduke Eugen, because he had been available since the dissolution of the Command of the South-Western Front.<sup>2117</sup> In the event of a resumption of hostilities, Arz wanted to drastically increase demands towards Romania. 'He will face a lot of resistance from the Emperor', as the Chief of the Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, laconically responded.<sup>2118</sup> But Romania backed down. On 5 May 1918, the preliminary peace of Buftea was concluded, and two days later the Treaty of Bucharest. Now Bulgaria could also claim its prize in the war: the Dobruja region. Since the Ottoman Empire wanted to see such an enlargement of Bulgaria compensated for by means of Bulgaria renouncing territories on the Maritsa River in favour of Turkey, a further conflict between the Central Powers threatened. Ultimately, only Southern Dobruja was taken from Romania, as a result of which Bulgaria felt itself cheated of its reward in the war and very quickly lost any interest in continuing the war on the side of the Central Powers.

In spite of Czernin's long-term opposition, Hungary forced through its demands and eventually succeeded in forcing Romania to cede a territory of 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which was then allocated to the Hungarian half of the Empire, whilst Austria received 600 km<sup>2</sup> of Romanian territory in Bukovina. Since Emperor Karl had not been unbending towards these aims, the protestations of a renunciation of annexations completely be-

came an empty platitude. In this way, Karl became for a short time 'augmentor of the Empire'. Until the peace treaty came into effect, troops of the Quadruple Alliance were to remain in Wallachia.<sup>2119</sup> Railway, telegraph and post were administrated by Germans, Austrians and Hungarians. Romania was also to pay war reparations. What was more important, however, was the fact that foodstuffs were to be immediately transferred from Romania to the Central Powers. For their part, the Central Powers wanted to deliver industrial surplus goods and coal to Romania. Neither of these even remotely reached the quantities stated in the treaty.

It soon became clear that even the peace in the east could not solve the problem of survival for Austria-Hungary. Since the peace furthermore threatened to remain a scrap of paper, the Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister did not submit the peace treaties for ratification to the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) or the Reichstag (Imperial Diet). Also, Austria did not undertake anything to make a crown land out of Ruthenia and the question of Chełm was addressed even less. The 'Bread Peace', the Treaty of Bucharest and above all the treaty with Russia could thus be reduced to the fact that a front – and by far the longest one in terms of expanse – had ceased to exist for the Central Powers. In spite of the peace settlement, however, peace did not reign.

Around a million German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers remained in the east and the south-east. Nonetheless, three times as many had been freed up. All efforts by the Allies and also by T. G. Masaryk that aimed to at least partially 'reconstruct' and activate the eastern front, even with the help of a Czecho-Slovakian army corps, failed.<sup>2120</sup> The Germans were brought to the western front from December 1917. However, the Imperial and Royal troops, whose total number in January 1918 amounted to 4.41 million men, only partially came to Italy – provided that they were freed up in the east. An additional and eminent need for soldiers had suddenly emerged in the interior of the two halves of the Empire. A revolution threatened to accelerate the disintegration of the Danube Monarchy far more so than had been the case in January.

## Mutiny

The Russian February and October Revolutions had made practically no discernible impact on the morale of the Austro-Hungarian troops. For a time, the feeling of having achieved one of the most important war aims, namely victory over Russia, assuredly masked all other sensations. This triumphant feeling and the prospect of an imminent end to the war made it easier for the troops on the eastern front to remain there, and this was also granted to the soldiers of the south-west with victory in the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo. They had also triumphed, overcome themselves and forced their enemy to the verge of collapse, or at least to a visible catastrophe.

This emotional support lasted for several weeks, but in January and February 1918 it had already again given way to a huge disillusionment. The Russian and Romanian examples showed that there no longer needed to be a war; but in Austria-Hungary nothing pointed to a quick end to the conflict. On the contrary: work had already begun in 1917 to reorganise the Imperial and Royal Army and the two standing armies and to familiarise them with new fighting methods;<sup>2121</sup> the immediate comparison with the German troops in the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo had accelerated the implementation of these changes.

The regiments lost one battalion apiece; they consequently only had three, so that a division possessed only twelve battalions of infantry and a storm battalion, as compared with 16 infantry battalions hitherto. The storm battalions received special tactical training. The number of machine guns in the companies rose and submachine guns were introduced. The increased firepower was designed to prevent a decline in combat strength. At a tactical level, the combat zones were reorganised. An 'preliminary zone' was intended to force the opponent to deploy its forces before the battle in the so-called major combat zone began, which was then to be fought up to the furthest core positions. All zones consisted of small strongholds with machine guns, flamethrowers and artillery, were reinforced with barbed wire, and were connected with each other via trenches. The soldiers were trained to apply the new fighting methods. They were to pierce the enemy position close behind the friendly artillery fire using hand grenades and penetrate the trenches. Artillery had meanwhile risen to become the actual 'queen of weapons'. There had been a steady increase in the number of guns. The models used at the beginning of the war had been largely replaced by modern guns with recoiling barrels, field cannons, field howitzers, long-barrel cannon, mountain cannons and mortars. The number of batteries had been considerably augmented and in such a way that an infantry division now possessed two field artillery regiments, a mountain artillery battery and a mortar battalion with approximately 100 barrels altogether, which was almost twice as many guns per division as in the preceding years. All of this required not only corresponding military training but also an unbroken will to fight. It depended not least on psychological and physical factors whether this was merely theorisation or whether attack and defence were really provided for. Of course, all these changes pointed to a continuation of the war, and this must have been conspicuous to every soldier. Some things no longer fitted together.

When the Army High Command took stock on 21 January 1918 in an 'army conference', mention was in fact only made of worries and a serious sense of oppression.<sup>2122</sup> The scraps of conversation contained in a transcript are also indicative of this: 'People on the eastern front also want to live and are not in an easy situation, namely at the eastern border of Hungary; maintenance organisation can barely be reduced anymore, so long as we must keep our troops in the trenches; only when we can take them back



to the railway will the situation improve. [...] Albania: problem child of the AOK [= Army High Command]. [...] Absorbs a large number of workers by virtue of the medical conditions there [...]. South-west: AOK takes the view that the Piave front is now the most decisive. [...] Human material: whatever can be gathered will be sent to the army right down to the last man. [...] We are living from hand to mouth. [...] Now it might become law that all discharges of 19- to 25-years-olds are annulled. [...] Food: Waldstätten says that it's not possible to scream and apply the revolver than the AOK is already doing. The current situation is: the army in the field has on average 1-2 normal portions [and] 1 reserve portion: War Ministry in the hinterland 2 army days [...]. These are starvation rations, we're scraping through though; but no reserves; in 14 days we're finished with the last that the AOK has at its disposal. [...] Enormous difficulties in Austria. [...] Food question cannot be solved because the stocks cannot be raised. [...] Railways: Our various railways are not achieving even remotely what they did years ago due to a lack of coal, machines, poor rolling stock and substructure. [...] Fatigue and undernourishment of the staff, lack of coal [...]. Shortage of doctors: number of doctors dropped from 7,500 to 5,500.' Finally, it was also mentioned that the factories were not keeping up with the production of decorations. This, however, was a more marginal problem.

On 16 January, the War Ministry had requested front troops in order to reinforce the 40,000 men who were at the disposal of the Monarchy for assistance operations. They were also needed soon. Now the roundel of assistance operations began for the suppression of unrest, mutiny, flaring revolutionary movements and national protests, which was not to stop until the war ended.

In February, there were riots in Poland, above all in Kraków. The agreement made first of all in Brest to cede Chełm territory to Ukraine had met with furious protest on the part of the nationalists in Poland. If it had been possible until then to assume in Galicia a feeling of belonging to the Habsburg Monarchy and to locate tangible pro-Austrian sympathies in the Government General, this had now ceased at a single stroke. Instead, anti-Austrian sentiments burst through.<sup>2123</sup> Across the land, a 'national day of mourning' was held on 18 February. The reaction to this was the local proclamation of martial law. However, the Polish nobility visibly began to replace the double-headed eagle. The unrest remained within limits and even if soldiers joined in the tumult here and there, the military fabric of the hinterland remained by and large intact. Elsewhere, it was seething in a very different way. On 1 February 1918, a revolution started almost overnight in Kotor, the war port of the heavy vessels of the Imperial and Royal Navy. Thoughts passed immediately to the parallels: mutiny in Petrograd and the role of the sailors in both phases of the Russian Revolution. Had it also reached this stage in Austria?

Like the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet, the Imperial and Royal Navy had also been rarely deployed. For the majority of the time, the squadrons and above all the battleship divi-

sions lay at anchor in the bays and harbours and had to suffer day after day the tedious drill and the excesses of long lay times. Since the attack on the Italian coastal cities at the beginning of the war with Italy in 1915 and the attack on the Allied blockades in the Strait of Otranto on 15 May 1917, there had been hardly any other large-scale operations. Only some units had bombarded the coast during the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo. There had also, however, been very few gratifying events. On 5 October 1917, a Czech and a Slovenian sailor had locked the officers of the torpedo boat *Tb 11* in their cabins and brought the boat from Sebenico to Italy. On 10 December, in turn, Italian torpedo boats penetrated the harbour in Trieste and sunk the old battleship *Wien*. Treason could have played a role, so that the Italians were able to pass the blockade of the harbour entrance unseen.<sup>2124</sup> There was audible criticism of the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Njegovan, who was accused of complacency and sloppiness. He appeared to have already given up.<sup>2125</sup>

Whoever could afford to, and this was above all the officers, indulged his idiosyncrasies. Bears and monkeys, any kind of two- or four-legged animals, served to pass the time; the enlisted men felt disadvantaged. The rations left a lot to be desired. Instead of 500 grams of bread, for a period of time there were only 400 grams. (In the interior of the Dual Monarchy, the levels were admittedly already down to approximately 230 grams or 300 grams for heavy workers.)<sup>2126</sup> There were also lots of other things to find fault with. Punishments were allocated very liberally, so that the normal rhythm of 'four hours on duty, eight hours off' could easily change to 16 hours of uninterrupted duty. Detention sentences were imposed for the slightest offences.<sup>2127</sup> On 1 February, the mutiny started; by the evening, it had spread from the cruiser division to the battleship and torpedo boat flotilla. In the evening, the mutinying sailors announced their demands: measures for the immediate initiation of peace; peace on the basis of the Russian proposals, without annexations, etc.; the right of nations to self-determination and a faithful response to Wilson's Fourteen Points; the democratisation of the government. For the duration of the war, there was also to be some relief, such as extra rations, six weeks of holiday each year, more cigarettes, the fulfilment of special wishes and other things. The mutineers, however, had little success. The Regional Commander of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, General Sarkotić, had the Bay of Kotor encircled from the land. On 2 February, the units that had remained loyal jumped ship in the inner bay. The ships with the mutineers, who also had the Commander of the Cruiser Division, Rear Admiral Hansa, in their hands, remained in the central area of the bay. Maritime encirclement forces from Pola, however, entered the outer bay. On 3 February, the revolts were at an end. 800 men were disembarked as suspect. Four days later, four members of the fleet, one Czech and three southern Slavs, were sentenced to death for 'insurrection' by a summary court-martial and executed four days after that.<sup>2128</sup> (The sarcophagus with the remains of the four is located in a small church on the outskirts of Kotor.)

Due to an immediate news blackout and rigorous censorship measures, next to nothing trickled through of the sailors' revolt. Overriding military interests prevented a discussion of the events in the Reichsrat until October 1918. For the command of the war fleet, however, the Kotor sailors' mutiny had immediate consequences. Njegovan was dismissed and replaced after ten days by the still relatively young Ship-of-the-Line Captain Miklos von Horthy, who went on to become vice admiral and Commander of the Fleet. From this point on, the navy was led more ably. Nonetheless, it was calculated that it would need two months before it was once more operational.<sup>2129</sup>

However, the mutiny among units of the war fleet in Kotor was not to remain an isolated case. The revolution spread to the hinterland and the replacement personnel. When it began in the command area of General Sarkotić, he claimed that it was a case of an external operation carried out and directed by the Entente troops, whose slogans had been circulated by 'highly treasonous individuals'. With this, Sarkotić had certainly failed to recognise the true causes. It was rather the case that he hit the nail on the head when he appealed to officers and NCOs not to put their privileges at risk and instead to do everything to help improve the supply situation. The War Ministry had already instructed the military commands in December 1917 to – ruthlessly – provide the army with all available stocks. '[The] supply situation for the armies requires that available flour stocks in the hinterland are transferred to the army in the field without consideration for the requirements in the hinterland', as the War Ministry had telegraphed.<sup>2130</sup> But the supply was not enough and the seizure could not be increased with the methods already in use. The 2nd Army in the east, therefore, helped itself in view of the hunger of the soldiers and requisitioned in the rear areas of the front. This very much found its emulators and how it ended could be seen, for example, in June in Stryj in Galicia, where uncontrolled food demonstrations flared up, after there had been no flour in the city for ten weeks and no bread for two weeks and the civilian population had been deprived of their last potatoes by military requisitioning.<sup>2131</sup> Here, the drifting apart of the front and the hinterland was visible in its most extreme form; all consideration disappeared. It was now a question of survival.

Requisitioning was also taking place elsewhere. Since it was assumed that considerable quantities were still present above all in Hungary, the Chairman of the Joint Food Committee, General Landwehr, agreed with the new Hungarian Food Minister Prince Ludwig Windisch-Graetz to expand requisitioning in Hungary. Landwehr wanted to make the incursion less painful by making available to Hungary in return all the sugar, petroleum and tobacco that he could find in the Austrian half of the Empire. It was clear, however, that the implementation of the requisitioning required approximately 50,000 men in replacement units and additional field troops. In this way, for those affected – who saw only their distress and not that of the others – their own soldiers became the enemy. In the countryside, the silent revolution was gathering momentum.

The strikes did not stop, either. The Bohemian and Moravian, the Hungarian, Silesian and Polish industries, pits and factories were repeatedly boycotted. The workers of the Manfred Weiss Works in Budapest demanded a daily wage of 36 kronen and an eight-hour day. In order to lend weight to their demands, they simply went home after fulfilling their allotted workload. The city commander, Major General Lukachich, deployed 15,000 men to end the strikes. The government imposed a news blackout,<sup>2132</sup> but information of course very quickly trickled through. One request for assistance was followed by the next. There were repeated deaths.<sup>2133</sup> In the Alpine countries, Carniola and Vienna – everywhere was seething. Here it was the industrial workers, there the fixed-salaried low-income workers or also the women who rebelled. If 150,000 people queued up on one day in Vienna in order to get hold of a little meat, fat, eggs or vegetables, and more than 20,000 went away again empty-handed, then this meant a proportion of 15 per cent. The dramatically growing impoverishment of large sections of the population also led to plundering; shops were demolished.<sup>2134</sup> Hostility towards the military grew. Soldiers requisitioned, intervened in strikes and dispersed crowds. In the process, a fatal dependability of the troops was demonstrated: Hungarian troops showed no reluctance when they were deployed in Bohemia, and both Czech and Bosnian units willingly allowed themselves to be used to suppress strikes and demonstrations in Hungary.<sup>2135</sup> Agitators were arrested. Investigations were carried out against trade union functionaries. Trade unionists were arrested or called up to the military. The military was again deployed to quell unrest and strikes. Decorations were awarded to soldiers who willingly let themselves be deployed.<sup>2136</sup> And then the next incident occurred.

In this situation, heated up by strikes and assistance operations, the repatriation of the prisoners of war from Russia commenced.<sup>2137</sup> The return of the prisoners of war initially began in an unregulated fashion. Many had already returned after the February Revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks had simply released them. Most of the prisoners remained in the Russian camps, however, since they had in this way an orderly living. They rightly feared that, no sooner had they returned home, they would be sent straight back to the front. From December 1917 and, increasingly, from March 1918, a systematic repatriation commenced. Nonetheless, by summer 1918 only a few hundred thousand men had been actually repatriated. For the vast majority of them, their return was a shock. The bureaucratic registration, the renewed oath to Emperor Karl, the approximately three-week quarantine, and after that the assignment to the replacement troop bodies, the detailed questioning regarding the conditions in captivity, and many other things were so different to how most of them would have imagined their return to be, and generated a deep-seated resentment. Only when their captivity was acknowledged as justified did they receive a four-week holiday; otherwise, the returnees were subjected to another examination or simply arrested on a charge of desertion.

The reintroduction of military coercion, the delayed holiday, the prospect of returning to the front and having to continue the war in the south-west against Italy, but above all the poor rations, gave rise to an explosive mood among the re-drafted home-comers.<sup>2138</sup> When the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, August von Cramon, then claimed that officers and enlisted men were downright eager to return to the Italian front, as they had been in 1915,<sup>2139</sup> then he confused something to the extent that the desire to be sent to the Italian front meant for many only the hope of better rations, booty and, under certain circumstances, the opportunity to desert. Even if an attempt was made by Austro-Hungarian propaganda intelligence departments to re-educate the home-comers, the indoctrination of the Russian Revolution was generally enough not only to make the people rebellious but also to put the actual slogans in their mouths. One did not have to have come into noteworthy contact with the Bolsheviks to understand slogans such as 'peace' and 'bread'. Revolts flared up in Żurawica in Galicia on 25 April, then in Sambor on 2 May. A march company of Infantry Regiment No. 40 had been used as an auxiliary unit in order to collect food-stuffs. The civilian population had put up a sustained fight and there had been shocking scenes. Under such circumstances, no trained demagogues were needed in order for the replacement troop bodies and the re-drafted home-comers to revolt.

It was a similar story in Lublin. Repatriates revolted. During the obligatory four-week holiday, they had often searched in vain for their relatives. Their houses were destroyed and their families were living in part in indescribable misery in the abandoned trenches. They were fading fast, and the administrative authorities did hardly anything to ease the people's lot. The unsettled future of the Polish Government General delayed any effective measure for reconstruction. Ruthenian-Polish antagonisms did the rest. Generally, a ridiculously insignificant incident was then sufficient to break the spell.<sup>2140</sup> In garrisons around Litoměřice (Leitmeritz), repatriates rebelled, as they did in Trenčín (Trentschin). Ruthenians mutinied in the east of Slovakia. In countless places, unrest flared up simultaneously. Everywhere, however, the unrest was at first relatively small and limited, even if there were some deaths. But when a series of factors then intensified, the explosion occurred.

In retrospect, it was observed what elements had to come together: soldiers who came from the territories with a strongly nationalist movement, whose replacement troop bodies were moved to industrial territories near to their own homelands, in which strikes among the workers and food demonstrations repeatedly took place, were predestined for a military revolt. If some agitation was then added, a spark was normally enough.<sup>2141</sup>

The explosion occurred in Styria. In the late evening of 12 May, replacement personnel from Infantry Regiment No. 17 mutinied in Judenburg. The reduction of the rations and the distribution of new uniforms, from which an imminent deployment

on the front could easily be deduced, had been enough. In the night of 12/13 May, several home-comers aroused the primarily Slovenian replacement personnel from their sleep and announced that they wanted to break out in order to return home. The war was over, they said. They stormed the Jesuit barracks, plundered supply magazines and ammunition depots, and then beat their way through to the railway station. The communications installations were destroyed. Civilians joined the plunderers. However, the military command in Graz had already been alarmed and it sent auxiliary units to Judenburg. The mutiny collapsed. Almost all of the approximately 1,200 soldiers who had attempted to force their way through to Slovakia were captured. But a rebellion in Murau followed and then on 23 May another in Radkersburg. It was again above all Slovenes who were involved, this time from the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 97. There were also disturbances in Pécs and Kragujevac, in Rumburk (Rumburg) and again in Litoměřice. The pictures resembled each other everywhere: hatred for the war, hatred for those who were waging it – though with a clear sparing of the Emperor, who was generally still regarded as untouchable – poor rations and a lot of alcohol. A few revolutionary slogans and an appeal to national sentiment were enough to induce the outbreak of a mutiny among the home-comers and replacement personnel.

The upshot was also the same: auxiliary troops, which were consciously selected because they had a different national composition to the mutineers, moved in. The rebellions collapsed, summary courts-martial and ordinary military courts began to officiate, and a few days later executions of the ringleaders, or those who were regarded as such, followed. Czechs were shot by natives of Salzburg, Slovaks by Bosniaks. The national fragmentation went so far that the members of one people then gunned down the mutineers from another nationality.<sup>2142</sup> As a result of the mutinies during the course of the first months of 1918, the number of trials before military courts almost doubled. Most of them dealt with offences of withdrawal and non-compliance. In May alone, 133,040 soldiers offended. The cases were dealt with by 3,000 justice officers.<sup>2143</sup>

Attempts were made to find out who was guilty for the incidents and the results were generally correct. The officers in particular were not relieved of their responsibility. They had often contributed to triggering the mutinies, and during the riots they proved themselves to be militarily and personally inadequate. It had generally been reserve and not career officers, with little or no experience at the front, who had failed and often reacted in completely the wrong way. They were called to account, whilst the enlisted men of the rebelling troop bodies rapidly swore the oath again and were sent either to the front or to garrisons as quickly as possible, where they were nationally isolated. If they were placed on the troop transports rolling south-west, they were given patriotic texts to read in order to re-arm them morally and ideologically.<sup>2144</sup> The 'editorial group' of the War Press Bureau undertook last-ditch attempts to coordinate and systemati-

cally apply the propaganda, and since March 1918 it also had doubtlessly an especially talented leader in Robert Musil.

The mutinies deep in the hinterland had another consequence: it had been all too clearly brought home to everyone – and also consciously used as a means of redress – that the nationalities were prepared to shoot at one another. What had once united them, namely the common enemy and the belonging to an Empire, was no longer binding. They already thoroughly hated each other.<sup>2145</sup> The person who was supposed to be the figure of integration for everyone and had for a year been doing nothing but attempting to bring about a compromise between the nationalities and to seek peace, the Emperor and King, was still outwardly esteemed, but at precisely that time he had just experienced an enormous loss of authority. To blame for this was the often described ‘Sixtus Affair’.







**29 The June  
Battle in Veneto**

29. Fallen Italian soldiers in a position on the banks of the Piave on the fourth day of the Austro-Hungarian offensive, 18 June 1918. The War Press Bureau of the Imperial and Royal Army High Command reported that the divisions on the Montello had advanced 'fighting towards the west'. However, at this point, it had already been clear for a long time that Austria-Hungary's final offensive had failed.

‘**A**ustria-Hungary’s final war’ was also by no means free of banalities. Still, however banal silence, errors and white lies may have been, it was not immune to being categorised as being ‘small cause, big effect’.

### The ‘Parma Conspiracy’

By 1917 at the latest, it had become clear that the ‘August experience’ of 1914 had received a counterpart. At that time, the aim had been to achieve ‘deliverance through the war’. Now, however, what was needed was ‘deliverance from the war’. The meaning of the war, which at the beginning had seemed unproblematic, now needed to be written about and discussed with increasing frequency. It still appeared to be easiest to substantiate the will to continue fighting the war with the argument that the enormous sacrifices should not have been made for nothing. Russia was the first country to question this line of argumentation. However, it proved difficult to make the decisive step backwards. The Concert of Europe was dead – or, to use the diction of war – had remained ‘on the field of honour’. It is probably out of the question that Emperor Karl wished to consciously take action to counter the unleashing of the war. However, this is what it amounted to. Karl knew nothing of the steps that had led to the unleashing of the war. For that reason, what he had been keen to set in motion with a certain degree of naivety, and for which to him, neither the ‘official’ Austria-Hungary nor Germany appeared to offer the necessary leverage, may not have been a systematic counter-activity, but Karl certainly wanted to ‘unleash’ the peace. For him, it was clearly the case that while in military terms, Austria-Hungary had not yet reached the end, its civilian resources had been used up. After a year of attempts at concluding a peace, the Austrian Emperor was forced to acknowledge that his efforts had been futile, however. The peace would not be unleashed. And in a highly critical moment, when the secure world of the Imperial and Royal Army suddenly transformed into the opposite, Karl was overtaken by the past from just one year previously.

What became known as the ‘Sixtus Affair’ was of importance far less as a result of the peace feelers on which it was founded, than due to the fact of its becoming known and the consequences resulting from it. The contact between Emperor Karl and his wife’s brothers, who were to help raise attempts at taking steps towards peace at a

higher level, was accordingly only a sideshow to the attempts at peace that were being made during 1917. As an affair, it belonged to 1918.

The key facts and the content of the discussions and correspondence are sufficiently well-known.<sup>2146</sup> At the end of January or in mid-February 1917 (here, the information already becomes muddled), the mother of Empress Zita, Maria Antonia von Bourbon-Parma, met with one of her sons (or both), Prince Sixtus von Bourbon-Parma (and Prince Xavier) in Neuchâtel in Switzerland. Both were officers in the Belgian Army. The Archduchess spoke of her son-in-law's desire for peace, of which Sixtus had already been informed by the boyhood friend of Emperor Karl, Count Tamás Erdödy. However, Sixtus felt that something substantial was needed in order to set a peace initiative in motion. He wrote a list for his mother: Alsace-Lorraine, Belgium, Serbia. The Emperor was to state his position on all three points. Strangely, Italy was left out. Had Sixtus forgotten about it? With the agreement of Count Czernin, Karl then wrote a letter on 17 March in which he gave his response to all three points, as requested, in very general terms, and also made no mention of Italy. This was no way forward, as the French President Poincaré also told Prince Sixtus. In order to be able to create a more solid foundation, Sixtus and Xavier Bourbon-Parma travelled to Vienna. They met Emperor Karl and probably also Minister Czernin, who subsequently appeared to want to forget the incident. The next day, Sixtus was also handed a letter from Emperor Karl. ('Mon chère Sixte', written in ink pencil throughout), which was probably written by Karl himself, but was without doubt signed by him. Czernin knew nothing of the letter. In this letter, which was presented as a personal communication, Sixtus was requested to assure the French President that Emperor Karl would 'support the justified claims for restitution [by France] with regard to Alsace-Lorraine'. This was not entirely what Sixtus had been looking for, since the word 'justified' was open to a wide range of possible interpretations, but for the time being it had to suffice.<sup>2147</sup> Belgium was to be reinstated and retain its African territories, Serbia was also to be preserved and possibly receive access to the sea. And again, there was no reference to Italy. This subject appears to have been addressed on another sheet of paper.

At the end of March, Sixtus forwarded the letter to the French President, Poincaré. Shortly afterwards, on 19 April 1917, talks were held in St. Jean de Maurienne between the French Prime Minister Ribot, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Italian Prime Minister Orlando and his Foreign Minister Sonnino.<sup>2148</sup> Lloyd George and Poincaré knew of the Austrian venture, but did not reveal the correspondence of the Austrian Emperor to the Italians. Certainly, however, they were anxious to know whether Italy might lower the demands it had made regarding the price of peace agreed in the Treaty of London. Sonnino replied with a clear 'no'. This would trigger a revolution in Italy. Did Orlando and Sonnino really know nothing of the fact that the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Cadorna, had indicated to Austria-Hungary just over two

weeks previously, at the end of March 1917, that while Italy demanded the cession of Trentino, it was certainly prepared to lower its aspirations overall? On 12 April, the offer was repeated and specified in Bern by an Italian colonel acting on Cadorna's behalf: now, all that Italy wanted was Trentino and Aquilea.<sup>2149</sup> Cadorna had apparently been acting on the orders of the Italian King. At any rate, no agreement was reached in St. Jean. Even so, Ribot requested that Prince Sixtus again contact Emperor Karl directly. This time, Italy was apparently also discussed.

The visit took place in May. Once again, both brothers came to Vienna. Who then spoke to whom and on what subject, was depicted differently in retrospect, as was the case with the first meeting. Certainly, the Emperor met with his brothers-in-law, but Sixtus also talked to the Foreign Minister. The subject of the discussions was the possibility for concrete peace negotiations. Czernin remained reserved, and finally issued only a typewritten note in which he rejected a unilateral relinquishment of territory by Austria-Hungary in the name of the Imperial and Royal government, and demanded guarantees for the integrity of the Danube Monarchy if a peace were to be concluded.

However, the previous events were destined to repeat themselves. On the following day, the princes again met with the Austrian Emperor, and Karl again gave them a letter in which he ascertained that France and England clearly shared his views regarding the basis for a European peace. And when it came to Italy, the demands would have to be re-examined.

The Parma princes travelled to France via Switzerland, and Sixtus again met Poincaré and Ribot, but their willingness to continue the contact had stalled. They had clearly only been interested in finding out how far the Austrian Emperor was prepared to go. In London, where Sixtus also spoke to King George V, the desire to take the matter forward was in general greater, but it was clearly felt that there was no opportunity to do so in light of the position disclosed by Sonnino and the hesitation of the French. The contact then petered out. This was perhaps not because Emperor Karl would not have been willing to continue pursuing it, but rather because the French and British were unable to persuade the Italians with their desire to enter concrete discussions and negotiations. However, only very few people were informed about the first and second letters issued by Emperor Karl, and they chose to remain silent.

It was not until almost a year later, after Brest-Litovsk and the failure of all attempts at concluding a peace in the west, and against the background of a situation in which the Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister in particular found it necessary to express a particular degree of compliance towards the German Empire and an increase in loyalty to the alliance,<sup>2150</sup> that this brief incident was turned into a scandal.

Following the relocation of troops from the east to the western front, the German Empire appeared to want to force a decisive military victory there, too. On 21 March 1918, the battle began in France that was known as 'Operation Michael'. In this re-

gard, Czernin had promoted not only the relocation of Austro-Hungarian troops to the western front, but also support for the German offensive by a renewed attack by Imperial and Royal troops in Italy, so that the Allies would be unable to easily remove their forces there in order to send them to France. Czernin did still more. He initiated a newspaper campaign against the Meinel Group and, above all, against Lammasch, in order to discredit this group, which was a source of trouble to him and to Berlin in equal measure. Finally, he threatened the Emperor with his resignation if Karl were to decide to pursue his peace contacts, while not making use of his minister.<sup>2151</sup>

Karl had indeed tried again to begin talks with the Americans, and had turned to Heinrich Lammasch for the purpose. Lammasch did what was requested of him and established the required contact. Indeed, President Wilson also reacted by making a conciliatory interpretation of his Fourteen Points, and of Point Ten in particular. Wilson was all the happier to do this, since he had been forced to acknowledge that, aside from Austria-Hungary, none of the belligerents had reacted particularly positively to his declaration of 8 January 1918. And so, the American President arranged for Austria-Hungary to also be granted extensive financial aid from the USA if a separate peace were to be concluded.<sup>2152</sup> However, since he had not been informed of the background, Czernin could not agree with the American statements that were published. After quickly noticing that Lammasch was behind this development, he disavowed the international law expert to the Emperor. Karl was unwilling to admit his own role, and in an unseemly way had Lammasch dropped.

Finally, on 2 April, Czernin gave a speech before the Viennese municipal council, which not only served to sketch out the foreign policy situation, but was at the same time Czernin's reckoning with his opponents. He castigated the Hungarian and German proponents of a naked peace with victory as well as the pacifists in the style of Lammasch, the Czechs and those guilty of high treason.<sup>2153</sup> Then, however, he addressed the western powers: 'Some time before the start of the western offensive, Monsieur Clemenceau asked me whether I would be willing to negotiate and, if so, on what basis. I immediately replied, following agreement from Berlin, that I would be prepared to do so, and that I could see no obstacle to peace with regard to France other than the desire of the French for Alsace-Lorraine. Paris replied that on this basis, no negotiations were possible. Hereupon, no further option was available.' The minister had presented the Emperor with the speech, and it had been approved. Hardly had the speech become known when the French Prime Minister responded. It was not France who had made enquiries with regard to negotiations, but Austria-Hungary. Czernin now thought that Clemenceau was referring to the discussions between Counts Armand and Revertera. Clemenceau again replied that two months previously, an attempt at initiating talks had been made by a far higher-ranking individual than Revertera, and that he had evidence to prove it. Now, Czernin thought that by this, he meant the type-

written note that Czernin had given Prince Sixtus. Once again, Czernin thought he could lecture and expose the French Prime Minister. However, then, the 'Agence Havas' published a report with reference to Clemenceau to the effect that Emperor Karl had recognised France's right to Alsace-Lorraine in writing.

Emperor Karl indignantly denied the reports. It was all a lie. He would not agree to further discussions with such a 'type as Clemenceau'. The French then published the letters. Karl claimed they had been forged, and at the same time adjured his Foreign Minister to take responsibility for the letters and for the affair. Czernin refused to do so. He threatened suicide and again brought home to Karl the prospect of the Germans marching into Bohemia and Tyrol.<sup>2154</sup> And then, Czernin went all out. He not only wanted to oust the Monarch from the area of foreign policy, but to silence him in the political arena entirely. He therefore suggested that Karl withdraw from power for a period of time and transfer the regency either to Archduke Friedrich or Archduke Eugen.<sup>2155</sup> In this regard, he believed that among the Habsburgs, the dynastic interest had already clearly begun to wear off. Archduke Friedrich and his wife, Archduchess Isabella, who were both very far from being ardent admirers of the Emperor, but rather tended to view their nephew with scepticism, had immediately beforehand told the German Plenipotentiary General, Cramon, that 'the dynasty of the House of Habsburg' was 'facing the abyss', and 'the dissolution of the Danube Monarchy [...] [was] inevitable' if no sudden turnaround were to occur.<sup>2156</sup>

As early as 14 April 1918, a conference of ministers was planned in order to discuss the regency. However, in the interim, Karl had found new self-confidence – clearly thanks to the Empress – and refused to accept his 'enforced rest'. After a severe argument, Czernin submitted his resignation.

The questions surrounding the Sixtus Affair actually centre around two problems: on the one hand, whether it amounted to the Habsburg treason that German historians in particular – including a certain Gerhard Ritter – have been keen to portray. And on the other, whether in the interest of the Monarchy and in light of the fact that he was not only Foreign Minister, but also Minister of the Imperial and Royal Household, Czernin should not have taken on the responsibility himself.<sup>2157</sup> In evaluating the German position, it should be taken into account that it made little sense to reproach Emperor Karl for his desire for peace, which had never been concealed. Alsace-Lorraine was never sacrosanct, even in the deliberations made by German politicians. Czernin himself, who had suddenly become a hero for the Germans, had also brought the issue of Alsace-Lorraine to the table in the spring of 1917. Karl was also, as, for example, his second letter to Sixtus shows prepared to relinquish territory on the part of Austria. Finally, it should also not be overlooked that all this had happened in the spring of 1917. However, when it came to Czernin's attitude, it should be considered that he was forced to choose between loyalty to the Emperor and other responsibilities. Robert A.

Kann has not least drawn attention to the fact that the minister was responsible not only to the Emperor, but also to parliament, and could only poorly conceal an activity that had occurred outside of his field of influence or knowledge. Even so, there are several factors that clearly point to the fact that Czernin was certainly aware of the role that Emperor Karl had played during the course of the affair; yet he was not willing to soft-pedal. He wanted to expose the Emperor. Karl then became caught up in contradictions, attempted to protect himself with claims that were accurate merely in formal terms, according to which he had not been the author of the first letter. This may have been the case, since it had probably been penned by the Court Chaplain Alois Musil.<sup>2158</sup> However, this of course said nothing about the intention and the original authorship. Czernin coerced the Monarch into giving his word of honour that he had had nothing to do with the matter. To the strongly religious Monarch, his threat of suicide was tantamount to direct blackmail.<sup>2159</sup> Yet the fatal matter was that the Emperor did indeed give him his word of honour. Even more than that: he handed Czernin a document in which he stated that: 'I give my Foreign M[inister] my Imperial word of honour that I wrote only one letter to Prince Sixtus Bourbon-Parma [...]. Baden, 12.4.1918.' An act that had certainly been justified in political and moral terms was now turned into a thoughtless act of psychological warfare, and through the dishonesty and desire for prestige on both sides into an affair.

Let us turn once more to the counter-factual perspective. What would have happened if Karl had confidently pointed out that he had sought the contact to the western powers with the aim of reaching out a hand to them with the moral authority of a monarch who bore no blame for the outbreak of the war, but who wished to lead the people of his empire out of this war? This attempt had been repulsed. Would Karl not have been able to count on the agreement and full understanding of his people?

As it was, however, the reputation of the imperial central power was destroyed. This was far worse than a government crisis in one of the halves of the Empire. Once again, the vacuum created for the German Austrians and Hungarians living in the Monarchy was filled by German Empire. And wherever Germany could not fill this vacuum, where the German definition of this war as a conflict between Slavs and Germans itself stood in its way, this led to the creation of the future east-central and south-eastern European nation states. It was a drop into the void.

The army was outraged. The Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin, Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe, sided with Czernin and offered to resign from his post. He claimed that the Emperor had acted like a 'schoolboy'.<sup>2160</sup> In the wake of his resignation, Czernin was met with an immense wave of sympathy. He was praised in the newspapers, and colleagues as well as opponents expressed their respect. In Innsbruck and Salzburg, black flags were flown after he stepped down.<sup>2161</sup> Never during his period in office had he found so much approval. Czernin even came out well in the assessment of the situ-



ation by the Czechs, and Edvard Beneš later described him as the last foreign minister who had still pursued Austro-Hungarian policy. According to Beneš, his successors, Burián and Andrassy, were no more than the 'liquidators of a ruined enterprise'.<sup>2162</sup>

Although Karl had hastened to reassure Kaiser Wilhelm that the entire affair had been a shameless forgery by the Entente, and his denials culminated in the much-quoted phrase: 'Our further response are My cannons in the west', he failed to brush off the odium of lies and treachery. General Arz apparently told the German Plenipotentiary General, Cramon, that: 'I have discovered that my Emperor is lying.' Cramon was called to the Emperor, who gave him a document that he described as a draft of a letter to his brother-in-law Sixtus and, indeed, the contents did not contain everything that had been included in the published letter. In the draft, it was stated that Karl would offer anything to fulfil the French claims for Alsace, if these claims were justified, 'mais ils ne le sont pas'.<sup>2163</sup> However, as is the case with such draft documents, the question remained open as to whether the decisive sentence might not have been excluded from the document as it was written out, or whether the draft had been 'post-edited'. In Cramon's view, the only way of clearing the matter up would be for Karl to seek a meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm, make an apology, ban the Parma princes and, as he dispatched to Hindenburg on 14 April, 'place all measures here of both a political and military nature under German control. One can now no longer have trust, and we must therefore demand guarantees'.<sup>2164</sup>

The consequences of the Sixtus Affair were widespread – and not only in Austria-Hungary and for the alliance of the Central Powers. The 'Czernin-Clemenceau Affair', as it was known in the west, also came as a shock to Great Britain, France and Italy, and, for a time, the leading statesmen of these countries had their hands full trying to play down and conceal the matter. In the British House of Commons in particular, Foreign Secretary Balfour was bombarded with questions. For days on end, the minister replied with the standard phrase that this matter could not be the subject of questions and answers in the House of Commons. Then, a secret analysis was made in which the leading figures in the British Cabinet admitted that probably a unique opportunity had been missed when, in 1917, the Italian wish that no separate peace negotiations should be conducted with Austria-Hungary was respected. There was a similar feeling in Rome. The following could be registered in chronological order:<sup>2165</sup>

on 17 April 1917, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George and the French Prime Minister Ribot had met in Folkestone. Ribot had urgently sought the meeting, and handed his British colleague a copy of the first Sixtus letter. Ribot wrung a promise from Lloyd George to keep the matter secret even from members of the British Cabinet. Only the King was permitted to be informed. On 18 April, Lloyd George came to Paris, where he met with Prince Sixtus. On the following day, the meeting described above between Ribot and the Italian Prime Minister Orlando and Foreign Minister Sonnino

took place in a railway carriage near St. Jean de Maurienne. Sonnino in particular was vehemently against a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. Ribot and Lloyd George in turn concealed the contents of the letter from Emperor Karl under the pretext of the oath of secrecy. On their return to Paris, Ribot and Sixtus had met again. Then, Sixtus came to Laxenburg, the second letter was written dated 9 May 1917 and handed to Ribot, who in turn informed Lloyd George. Since both were dissatisfied with the result of St. Jean de Maurienne, they wished to arrange a meeting between King George and President Poincaré and King Vittorio Emanuele. Although no word was said to the Italians that the talks were also to focus on Austria-Hungary, Sonnino immediately came with a pretext and saw no reason for such a meeting to take place with his King. Lloyd George threatened to lose patience. 'Baron Sonnino should not be permitted to stand in the way of a possible separate peace with Austria'. If the Italian King was not available for a conference, then Sonnino would have to come. The intention of agreeing to the Austrian recommendations was finally formally debated in the British War Cabinet, and the opinion was expressed that this opportunity must quite simply be grasped, since if this one peace were to be concluded, then the German Empire would no longer be able to withstand the pressure to sign a general peace.

The idea of a meeting between the monarchs and the French President was subsequently dropped, and arrangements were made for discussions between the prime ministers. In Italy, however, it was clearly known what the subject was to be, and Baron Sonnino therefore immediately announced in advance that he would not agree to have the issue of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary brought to the table. After Italy demanded several delays, the conference finally took place in Paris on 25 and 26 July 1917.

However, the Sixtus letters were not discussed here. There was an extensive debate on how Austria-Hungary could be made amenable to a peace, and there was talk of providing greater British-French support troops for Italy in order to conquer Trieste (Triest). This would have meant taking a city that Emperor Karl had refused to give up. The remaining Italian demands would anyway be fulfilled. However, then the French succeeded in putting forward their objectives of renewing the offensive in Flanders instead of attacking jointly on the Karst and in the direction of Trieste. Now, there was no longer any talk of the peace proposals contained in the Sixtus letters – at least, until the affair surfaced and attempts were made on all sides to do the best they could with lies and at best half-truths. This applied not least to the French, since the 'Clemenceau Affair' could now be judged against the background of Wilson's Fourteen Points. The American President had been deeply disappointed that Clemenceau and Lloyd George had pushed their objectives through at the Allied Supreme War Council, and had effected the decision that despite Austria-Hungary's clearly expressed wish for peace, no step had been taken towards ending the war.<sup>2166</sup> Now, it threatened to become public

that the attempts at peace had by no means failed solely as a result of the stubborn attitude of the Central Powers and their demands for a peace with victory. And so, attempts were made to sweep the matter under the carpet.<sup>2167</sup>

In April 1918, a committee was already established with the remit of examining on behalf of the foreign policy commission of the Allied Supreme War Council whether decisive errors had been made in 1917 that had prevented a separate peace from being concluded with Austria-Hungary. On 9 May 1918, the committee voted on the report by the commission and its consequences: 14 members agreed with the French motion, according to which it could be determined that the discussions between the French and the Austrians had at no point in time offered the opportunity for concluding a separate peace, while five members were of a different opinion and voted against it.<sup>2168</sup>

In retrospect, when the 'Czernin-Clemenceau Affair' was also debated in the Italian Chamber, Sonnino portrayed his role in such a way that he had acted in full accord with the Allies, and that there had never been anything to negotiate. In the Chamber, the deputy Ciriani wished to obtain information from Sonnino regarding what had happened. Sonnino argued in a similar manner to his British colleague: the subject should not be discussed openly; the entire matter was an attempt by its enemies to split the Allies. And in any case, it had quickly transpired that this was not a real offer, but an entirely vacuous communication. Sonnino therefore requested that the deputies refrain from insisting on a detailed response or even a discussion.<sup>2169</sup> It had been nothing, since nothing had been allowed to happen!

In Austria-Hungary, it was not so easy to return to everyday business. 'Crisis in Austria, crisis in Hungary', wrote the Swiss envoy Bourcart to Bern. 'The resentment caused by the fall of Count Czernin runs deep in German Austrian circles; the popularity of the Emperor has suffered badly and that of the Empress even more so.'<sup>2170</sup>

The result for the alliance was that the German Empire now felt free to do as it pleased. The alliance in its old form, which had been difficult enough to uphold, was dead. Kaiser Wilhelm was in fact pleased about the Sixtus Affair, since now he could finally accuse the Habsburg Empire of betrayal.<sup>2171</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm is said to have told General Cramon, who had travelled to Spa and Avesnes to present his report, that in the depths of his soul, he no longer believed a word Karl said. 'My trust is broken.'<sup>2172</sup> Wilhelm demanded that Karl come and apologise. He was also to promise in writing, and in the presence of the new Foreign Minister, Count Burián, that he would from then on make no approaches or offers of peace to any foreign power without the knowledge of the German Kaiser. The alliance must be deepened and broadened, and the willingness to agree to a very close military convention declared. Wilhelm raised himself to the level of moral judge over a monarch whose empire he regarded as hardly existing any longer, and showed his satisfaction that Hungary was so clearly keen to break loose.<sup>2173</sup> However, he continued to expect gratitude, and was repeatedly able to

present a long bill of payment that listed the political, military, material and financial aid given to the Danube Monarchy by the German Empire.

On 12 May, Karl left for Spa to eat humble pie, and did everything that the Germans had long been asking of him. While Kaiser Wilhelm was also en route to Spa from Berlin, news reached him of an alleged further letter written by Emperor Karl to Prince Sixtus, the publication of which was designed to estrange the Germans and Austrians even more. However, Wilhelm immediately dismissed this publication as a forgery.<sup>2174</sup> Nonetheless, the incident caused the Austrian Monarch to approach the meeting with particular nervousness. Discussions were held for a day before the extension of the alliance, particularly in the economic area, was agreed and a military convention, which was in fact the most important document, was signed. With this, Karl made himself fully dependent on the German Empire. The Supreme *Joint War Command* now became a 'Supreme War Command'. There was no more talk of any joint commonality. The American Foreign Secretary, Lansing, claimed that Karl had forfeited his right of primogeniture, and was no longer held in any esteem.<sup>2175</sup> This appeared to bring the Sixtus Affair to a close.

The reactions of the enemy powers left nothing to be desired in terms of clarity. The disclosures led to the immediate destruction of any opportunity for any further peace talks. Within just a few weeks, the Entente powers again examined their position towards Austria-Hungary and came to the conclusion that the right to self-determination by the peoples living in the Habsburg Monarchy should be recognised in full. For the Americans, also, the decision to recognise the goal of the Czechs and southern Slavs of attaining independence resulted directly from the Sixtus Affair.<sup>2176</sup> The death sentence on the Monarchy had been passed.

### The Collapse of the Armaments Industry

Two days after Czernin's resignation, Emperor Karl named his predecessor, Count Istvan Burián, as his successor. The 'somewhat ossified' Burián may have primarily felt satisfaction on his appointment, and talked of the necessary trust that the Emperor must place in him, and of the 'further attempt to save the Monarchy through political means'.<sup>2177</sup> To Burián, it was quite clear that the prospects for attempts to conclude a peace were extremely poor. The Germans were putting their trust solely in the victory of their weapons, and had just begun an offensive in Flanders with the aim of separating the British and French forces. Austria-Hungary was discredited and had forfeited such a great deal of negotiating capability and credibility that, for this reason alone, talks could no longer be continued. Nearly all the threads had been severed. In the wake of the Sixtus Affair, there was for the time being no possibility of the contacts being con-

tinued. Besides, the new Foreign Minister was convinced that Austria-Hungary had certainly not yet reached the end. The Allies for their part had no further reason to conduct negotiations regarding a separate peace with Austria. To a far greater extent, they relied on American help, were able to say to themselves that the unrestricted submarine war had failed to achieve its goal, and that precisely the situation in Austria-Hungary had become so precarious that this apparently weakest link in the chain of the Central Powers could sooner or later be destroyed. Now, the talk on all sides was only of battle and victory, and hopes were placed in radicalism and totalitarianism. However, in this area, also, Austria-Hungary had little left to offer.

The signs were also increasing that precisely those who just a short time before had been in positions of high authority were already abandoning the notion that the Monarchy would survive. Thus, in London, it was noted with interest that several families from the high aristocracy were selling their property in Bohemia and Moravia. The first to do so was Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic. He was followed by Count Czernin, and then Count Manfred Clary, and the only real surprise voiced in London was that they were not also joined by Prince Schwarzenberg.<sup>2178</sup>

There was ferment everywhere one looked, and not only among the nationalities and the lower social classes somewhere in a remote corner of the Empire, but in a way that was visible to everyone, literally right in front of the door, and among those who until that point had at least outwardly shown nothing other than the will to hold out and solidarity. The political leadership of Tyrol was accused of 'agitational' nationalism.<sup>2179</sup> In the Innviertel region in Upper Austria, the farmers wrote on the church doors: *Boarisch warn mer, boarisch wolln mer wieder sein* ('We were Bavarian, and we want to be Bavarian again'). The Upper Austrian farmers were embittered due to the increasingly rigorous requisitioning, particularly since they believed that the Czechs were being treated less harshly.<sup>2180</sup> It was observed that farmers would 'steal' their own produce from the fields at night, sell it to dealers and then report the alleged theft the following morning.<sup>2181</sup> Indeed, even with the war bonds, it was reported that now, only certain circles were subscribing, and that the Styrian lower middle classes, for example, could no longer be motivated to subscribe, since they appeared to be deeply embittered about the political situation and, following the imperial amnesty decree and certainly after the Sixtus Affair, only felt rejection.<sup>2182</sup> This insight into the Habsburg hereditary lands is revealing, since it shows that even these regions, which had always been regarded as particularly reliable, were in the process of abandoning their loyalty to Emperor and Empire.

The Sixtus Affair had opened the floodgates. Now, even the militarisation of the hinterland no longer had any substantial effect, since here the military so obviously had to battle with its own eminent problems that its omnipotence and omnipresence were no longer feared.

The signs of dissolution, surrender and resignation appeared to be in stark contrast to the events on the front, and the impressive data of which the Army could continue to boast. However, this was already a case of the famous colossus with feet of clay. At the beginning of 1918, the Imperial and Royal armed forces consisted of almost four-and-a-half million men, of which almost three million were allocated to the army lines in the field.<sup>2183</sup> However, only 915,000 men were now deployed at the front; in other words, for every man at the front, there were five men 'at the back'. Austro-Hungarian troops were positioned on the eastern border of Ukraine, at Galați on the Danube estuary, in the south of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, in the Veneto region and with several contingents in Palestine. However, the condition of the army in the field and, even more so, the situation among the one-and-a-half million soldiers in the interior of the Monarchy, could now only be a cause for concern.

The economy's need for replacements in human resources could only be covered by half. In order to counteract nationalist agitation, the tactic of demixing, discarding and removal to other locations was again employed. If, for example, there were still up to 48 per cent Italians in the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles in 1915, now, the figure was six per cent at most. Some troop bodies that had formerly had a high proportion of certain nationalities had been 'de-nationalised'. Instead, new formations were created such as the 'south-west battalions', in which the Italians were gathered together, for example. However, these were not used on the south-western front, but in Ukraine and Bukovina.<sup>2184</sup> Soon, sickness accounted for 90 per cent of losses, and even when it is taken into account that due to the decline in fighting, the number of dead and wounded had decreased dramatically, the figure was alarming: the emaciated soldiers had little immune capacity left. In September 1917, a female auxiliary corps had even been created in order to free up more soldiers for the front. Initially, around 28,000 women applied to join the corps, but, even then, it was not possible to relocate many more men to the trenches.<sup>2185</sup>

The replacement battalions sent reports of a lack of discipline at regular intervals, and the situation did not improve. In Prague, for example, the station command had reported around 5,000 complaints, including 676 cases of desertion, in December 1917, which was even so regarded as 'quiet'.<sup>2186</sup>

Taking disciplinary action was impossible, except in isolated cases. It was fortunate that the march battalions and squadrons could still be assembled and sent to the front, and that the requests of the enterprises for 'commands' could still be met. Even so, month by month, the number of enterprises that were being shut down was increasing. They had no more workers, no raw materials, and no fuel left.

From the summer of 1917 onwards, an increasing lack of metals had become noticeable. The iron contributions were reduced by a quarter. The lack of coal meant that large-scale enterprises in the steel industry were forced to halt production from 1 May

1918. Several shortages could be overcome using replacement metals, but the loss of production was massive. Then, there was a lack of rare metals such as manganese, which again led to a reduction in the production of steel. All this had long-term effects on the production of ammunition. Following the delivery of the church bells, and after more than three years of collecting non-ferrous metal objects, in 1918, all that was left for use in copper production, aside from the few metal roof sheets that had remained, were display window frames and door handles made of brass. And so, the metal provision agencies, which fell under the responsibility of the military, were instructed to gather together these objects, too. As had been the case in the German Empire, where they had already been requisitioned, in Austria window and door handles were in this way also sacrificed to meet the demands of war.<sup>2187</sup>

Coal production decreased dramatically. The exhaustion of the workers through over-exertion and poor nutrition, and finally the beginning of the strikes, caused production levels to shrink. Then, there were no wagons available to take away the coal lying on the tip. During 1917, the production capability of a blast furnace worker was reduced from 365 tons to just 225 tons compared with that of the previous year, 1916.<sup>2188</sup> The lowering of production could not only be traced back to the insufficient food rations, excessive workload and shortage of raw materials. There was another factor that played a role. The workers could not be made to work, even with higher wages and more generous social benefits. The coercive nature of the militarisation measures had only led to an increase in insubordination. The workers were hardly interested in anything anymore; war aims and the situation on the fronts had long since ceased to be the subject of discussion. They wanted peace, normality, and – to the extent that they were open to nationalistic arguments – the realisation of nationalist goals.

As could be seen among the soldiers, who were choosing to remain in the hinterland in increasingly large numbers, who 'got lost', only rejoined their troop bodies after periods of leave at the last possible moment, and presented and exploited sickness and infirmity as excessively as possible in order to get away from the partially already hated military and to flee the war, among the workers, too, the level of sickness increased to a vastly disproportionate degree.

Following the political turmoil of the first months of 1918, and after the revolts and large-scale strikes that flared up, following the conclusion of peace with Ukraine, Russia and Romania and, finally, in the wake of the Sixtus Affair, the issue of what further role Austria-Hungary should play in the war presented itself with the utmost urgency. The Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo had long since belonged to the past, but Austro-Hungarian troops were still deployed on the Piave River and in the Sette Comuni, along the lines that had been established at the beginning of December 1917, and which had been consolidated in the interim. It was the only front on which something might still be achieved, since after all, some kind of action had to be taken if no peace were

possible. For this reason, following the severe humiliation as a result of the Sixtus Affair, the very thought took hold in Austria-Hungary that must of necessity contribute – as indeed it did – to also destroying the last bastion, the Army. However, this was something that no-one was willing to accept, even if it was precisely among the military that sharp criticism of a new offensive was voiced. What was more important was the desire to again take the initiative with such an offensive, to give the troops something to do and perhaps to counteract the slow decline. It was also hoped that this would provide a distraction from other problems. In January 1918, for example, Hungary had made it blatantly clear that it wished to create its own national army. It certainly had plausible reasons for doing so. The issue had not been raised entirely unexpectedly, since in the summer of 1917, General Seeckt had already reported that suggestions of this nature were being made. For this reason, an offensive appeared to be a tried and tested measure in order to prevent the successive disintegration of the Army. This argument was also used by the Emperor.<sup>2189</sup>

### The Idea for a Final Offensive

It was naturally tempting to begin another offensive against Italy, since the experience of the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo spoke for itself: a major success had been achieved and the troops had been caught up in the enthusiasm, for weeks the most pressing supply problems had been resolved, while Italy had been brought to the edge of collapse. If this achievement could be repeated, and Italy perhaps be forced to capitulate, it would be the equivalent of a triumph. However, on closer inspection, it had to be admitted that certain basic preconditions were not in place. The Orlando government again had the situation firmly in hand following several difficult weeks during November and December 1917. The suppression of pacifist and socialist tendencies, an even more rigorous censorship policy than that which had been implemented until 1917 and the enforcement of military order in the hinterland had nipped the unrest in the bud. The Italian military leadership, which in the autumn of 1917 had shown inclinations to revolt and take over power, was again firmly under the control of the political authorities. The Germans and citizens of Austria-Hungary still living in Italy had been interned in the southern Italian cities of L'Aquila, Avellino, Benevento and Cosenza.<sup>2190</sup> In the interim, Italy had also become a British, French and American theatre of war. The arrival of the British and French divisions had almost immediate positive effects on troops in the hinterland.<sup>2191</sup> The Italian Army had been reorganised and had regained confidence through smaller offensive thrusts. British and French troops had been inserted into the fronts on the plateaus of Asiago and Arsiero, in the Monte Grappa region and on the Piave River. In January 1918, British aerial forces had already succeeded in bringing the



Austro-Hungarian air supremacy to an end. At that time, 28 Imperial and Royal aeroplanes had been shot down, compared to only four British losses.<sup>2192</sup> However, there had also been an interesting change in the Central Powers' camp. While until that point, unilateral Austro-Hungarian action had been accompanied by suspicion, rejection and barely veiled criticism on the part of the German leaders, on 15 March 1918, Hindenburg had made it clear in a telegram that he would be grateful for an Austro-Hungarian offensive in Italy in order to make it impossible for the Allies to withdraw troops from Italy and relocate them to the west. On the following day, Arz immediately sent a dispatch to the Chief of the German General Staff that he would attempt to fix the date of an attack in discussions with Conrad and Borojević. And on 27 March, he already gave a binding offer: 'I have the honour of reporting to Your Excellency that I shall lead an attack against Italy with all personnel and material means at the disposal of the Imperial and Royal Army. The preparations for this operation will be completed by the end of May. As a result of this operation, which is intended to take us to the Adige [River], I anticipate the military collapse of Italy.'<sup>2193</sup>

Internally, Arz radiated far less optimism. He clearly held the fighting capability of the Imperial and Royal troops in such low esteem that during the preparations for the offensive, which had now been agreed and which had also been assigned an approximate date, he abandoned all plans that amounted to a decisive operation, but which appeared to be far too risky. Thus, in January 1918, Conrad had already begun to push for permission to advance southwards from the Astico and Brenta Valleys in the north with his army group, which consisted of the 10th and 11th Armies. This was aimed at driving the Italians into a crushing battle. General Krauß, who at that time was still commander of the Monte Grappa section, and who was also included in the plans, wanted to make an even wider-reaching operational advance, break through on both sides of Lake Garda and then force the Italians to fight a final, all-deciding battle in approximately the same place where Radetzky had so successfully conducted his campaign in 1848. For Arz, all these ideas were far too risky. He referred to the Piave, with the intention of crossing the river in a section to the south of the Montello area before advancing towards the Adige River.<sup>2194</sup> The first plan to be rejected by Arz was the one proposed by Krauß. The operation from the Asiago area had the potential to bring total victory if it succeeded, but it depended on many different factors, not least on the ability to provide on time and then maintain the necessary flow of supplies to the troops. It could also be anticipated that the operation from the plateaus and against the Grappa massif would present far greater challenges to the commanders and soldiers than the operation in the Piave lowlands. In Arz' view, only such an operation would not overstretch the capacities of the Habsburg Monarchy.

However, the Chief of the General Staff was not in a position to ignore his predecessor, and Conrad ultimately succeeded in persuading Arz to order an attack between

the Astico and Piave Rivers. Army Group Borojević was to support the offensive with the Isonzo Army and the 6th Army by advancing towards Treviso. Immediately upon learning that he was to lead the offensive, Conrad made it known what forces he would need: 30 ½ divisions, in other words around ten corps, and thus double the number of soldiers that his armies had possessed until that point. On 11 April, Conrad was called to the Army High Command in Baden. He made a sceptical impression, and did not believe that success would be possible. The Army High Command wanted to give him reinforcements, but by no means as many as he had demanded.<sup>2195</sup> Where were the missing divisions to be found? Conrad immediately knew the answer: they would have to be taken from the Isonzo armies. Furthermore, he wanted to conduct the offensive further in the west, between the Astico and Brenta Rivers, in the Asiago area. He presented his plans in detail to the Emperor, Arz and the Chief of the Operations Division, General Waldstätten. No-one immediately wrote down the results of the discussion, there was no protocol, and gung ho, alternative, transverse and counter plans then began to be cheerfully made across the board. Arz and Waldstätten continued to support the idea of focussing the attack further eastwards between the Astico and Piave Rivers. During the discussion, however, the Emperor had agreed to Conrad's ideas. However, scarcely had Conrad returned to Trento (Trient) when Arz and Waldstätten began to change the Emperor's mind and win him round to their ideas. It was a familiar, yet unsatisfactory game: whoever presented the Emperor with one idea and knew how to defend it would find that Karl was in agreement – but only until the next person came.

The conference in Baden was held at the height of the Sixtus Affair. Emperor Karl was confronted with the possibility of abdication and a regency, and now Conrad came with his idea of conducting the offensive somewhat further westwards, and Arz, who wanted to lead it further to the east. Despite his indisputable military experience, Karl was certainly not qualified to deal with issues relating to the leadership of major operations. As soon as he had agreed to Conrad's plan, he declined to involve himself with the situation overall. This was indeed the duty of Arz and the Chief of the Operations Division. However, both did not wish to abandon their plans, and began to undermine Conrad's concept by refusing to give him the troop reinforcements and supply goods that he needed. However, the Army High Command played an even stranger game: instead of deciding itself how the operation should be led, it outwardly supported Conrad's plan while at the same time letting it be known that a decision could not be taken regarding the distribution of forces until Army Group Borojević had also provided information on its requirements. Thus, the decision appeared to depend on what Borojević needed. When Waldstätten sought him out on 15 April in order to find out what he wanted, Borojević, from whom nothing else could be expected on the basis of his personality, did not demonstrate any kind of self-denial. He agreed with Conrad to the extent that he claimed that the offensive could only be led with one focal point.

However, this point was to be on the Piave River, where the forces of his two armies were concentrated.<sup>2196</sup> Waldstätten informed him that the offensive was due to begin in mid-June. Boroević took note of this. However, at the bottom of his heart, he was against an offensive. He had developed a type of trench mentality, and in the interim had become convinced that Austria-Hungary was not only no longer able to conduct an offensive, but would no longer be in a position at all to continue the war in military terms.<sup>2197</sup>

When matters had developed further, a coincidence occurred that was to Waldstätten's benefit. The 11th Army (under General Count Scheuchenstuel), which was part of Army Group Conrad, and which according to Conrad's plan was to be assigned the most important role, reported that it would not be ready to deploy its artillery before 10 July.<sup>2198</sup> This was grist to the mill for Boroević, who wanted to be ready for action sooner. On 25 April, Boroević conveyed his plan for the offensive to the Army High Command and, in so doing, took the game surrounding the offensive in the Veneto region, which was frivolous in itself, one step further: a man who had already reported fundamental doubts regarding the fighting capability of the Imperial and Royal troops, and who on principle no longer wished to lead an offensive, demanded that if an attack were to be begun, the focus of the offensive should kindly be placed among his troops on the Piave River! Conrad, who had possibly indeed overestimated the offensive capability of the Austro-Hungarian troops, and who since 1914 had repeatedly delivered examples of over-ambitious plans, began an embittered battle for the approval and realisation of his idea. And the Army High Command, which had provoked this nonsensical situation, now did all it could to exacerbate the dilemma even further. Here, the fact should not be ignored that for this Army High Command, this was the first time that it planned a major offensive independently, since everything that had occurred during 1917, including the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo, could not be regarded as the product of plans forged by the Army High Command. Now, however, a major offensive was due to take place – and, as it would turn out, it was to be the final one taken by Austria-Hungary.

### The Alliance of Arms

In his operational plan of 25 April, Boroević had also not forgotten the fleet, although Vice Admiral Horthy, the new Commander of the Fleet, declined to be involved. He was just as unable to agree to effective intervention from the sea as his predecessor had been during the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo.<sup>2199</sup> Boroević felt that Conrad's plan was doomed to failure due to the difficulties in terrain in the Sette Comuni, while Conrad called the approach taken by Boroević 'irrational'. While, after a serious calculation of forces, the original plan had resulted in the possibility of attacking along a front of

between 35 and 40 kilometres, he claimed, in the interim the concept was to extend attack operations over a front of 300 kilometres if both Conrad's armies and both armies under Borojević were to become active. Conrad had had 16 divisions at his disposal, and had demanded double that figure. In his calculation of forces, Borojević had assumed that he would have 14 infantry divisions and demanded 23 or 24 in order to overcome only the first phase of the offensive. Both only received a fraction of what they had asked for. In terms of artillery, it became apparent that there were enormous shortages everywhere and, not least, 20,000 more draught horses were needed.<sup>2200</sup> A calculation made by the Army High Command of the necessary railway transportation revealed that the material that had been freed up in Russia must most urgently be delivered to the Italian front. This meant an additional 1,050 trains, which under the most favourable conditions could be provided in 50 days, and even this would only be possible if there were no shortage of coal, and no railway strikes, and, in particular, only if there was a sweeping halt to civilian transport. Naturally, the normal supplies to the front troops would also have to be maintained. This meant that one infantry division would require on average seventy tons of food supplies, thirty tons of ammunition and thirty tons of all possible other types of armaments and commodities, and always based on the needs during positional warfare, without any particular climax in the fighting.<sup>2201</sup> Battalions were relocated from the Tyrol region to the Isonzo River and vice versa. The hinterland resembled a seething anthill, and the increase in military transportation caused the stocks of coal to shrink further. And so, the situation was the same as it had been before and during the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo: a deployment on this scale would have to be conducted at the cost of the civilian hinterland, a hinterland for which supplies were collapsing at about the same time. Finally, the Army High Command granted itself one further capital error by ordering the troops to be sent immediately, with the additional supply goods not due to arrive until later. The reason for beginning the troop transport so early was not least the fact that in light of the mutinies in the hinterland, the soldiers were to be brought to the front as quickly as possible. However, the consequences had not been thought through: the reinforcements created a situation in which the need for food at the front grew from day to day. Large quantities of food, which had already been difficult enough to provide for the offensive and transport to the front, were eaten up there instantly.<sup>2202</sup> It was a fruitless cycle in which it was not the front, but the hinterland that threatened to collapse first.

In mid-April, the only means available to the chairman of the Joint Food Committee, General Ottokar Landwehr, in order to maintain the supply of the crisis regions, was to resort to the safety stockpiles – 20 wagons of flour – for the naval port of Pula (Pola). Even so, this was only enough to last a few days. Landwehr turned to the German Supreme Army Command with a dramatic appeal. He wanted an immediate redistribution of the Romanian grain. The Germans refused to enter into negotiations.

Then, Landwehr ordered German grain tugboats that were travelling up the Danube and which were loaded with 2,455 wagonloads of maize, to be taken by Austro-Hungarian troops on 30 April. This was to help get the situation in Vienna and in the army back under control. While the fury this caused in the German Empire was enormous, the Germans showed themselves willing to negotiate.<sup>2203</sup> Moreover: they were forced to swallow their anger and rage against this show of strength by the Austrians, since on 9 April, the offensive in France, in which so much hope had been placed, had had to be brought to a halt. The confidence within the German Supreme Army Command of winning a decisive victory over the Allies was now buried. This meant that restraint was also advisable when it came to Germany's ally. Even so, this did not entirely prevent Kaiser Wilhelm from playing off his triumphs. On 10 May, Emperor Karl – as mentioned earlier – travelled to Spa in the company of his Foreign Minister and Chief of the General Staff to meet Kaiser Wilhelm. The main topics of discussion were the Sixtus Affair and the German-Austrian alliance.

Karl knew that he would have to make concessions, since it was not sufficient for 'his' cannons to give the Allies in the west their response to the affair. The German authorities had made it clear time and again that they required guarantees, and not simply promises. And it was to their advantage that Karl left for Spa in an extremely despondent state of mind. The reception was rather frosty, but then the Germans made a surprising show of generosity. The Alliance of Arms was signed, which did however bind Austria-Hungary more tightly to German decisions than had been the case with the Joint Supreme War Command until that point.

The Alliance of Arms had been thoroughly thought through by the German side. In particular, the German draft had been formulated in such a manner that the agreements took place within the power of command of the rulers in order to avoid parliamentary debates on the subject in Austria-Hungary. Otherwise, however, the agreement had been honed for so long in order that no loophole would be left open to Austria-Hungary.<sup>2204</sup> A joint command authority was created and the harmonisation of the basic principles of the armed forces was agreed, including the standardisation of weaponry. Item two of the 'General Principles for the Alliance of Arms' ran: 'Every man capable of bearing arms must pass through the army training school.' In order to relieve the troops, formations of less able men were to be created. This stipulation would certainly have a significant impact on the domestic policy of the Danube Monarchy, since before the war its military strength had not been exploited to the full. Ultimately, the most important stipulation was a detailed plan for the exchange of officers, with the aim of achieving an extensive alignment of officer training. With regard to this item, the First Quartermaster General of the German Army, General Ludendorff, subsequently demanded that Jewish officers in the Imperial and Royal Army be excluded from the exchange programme.<sup>2205</sup> The negotiations at the German Grand Headquarters in Spa

were supplemented by parallel talks in Berlin, which focussed on specific economic issues. The German Empire agreed to the supply of 10,000 wagons of grain from the east, but requested compensation in the form of German command over Ukraine as a whole, the partial withdrawal of Imperial and Royal troops from the east, increased deliveries of livestock and the relinquishment of all eggs from Ukraine and Romania.<sup>2206</sup> It was agreed that talks regarding a customs union should begin immediately. Then the Polish question was brought to the table, and indeed was given a certain priority, since the military convention was only to become effective when the Polish problem had been solved. As it soon emerged, it was no longer solvable, however, and it was not least the Germans who prevented a solution from being found.<sup>2207</sup>

While the Allies were not aware of the stipulations made in the Alliance of Arms and the other agreements reached in Spa and Berlin, they correctly surmised that Emperor Karl 'had signed a type of capitulation of an independent foreign and military policy'.<sup>2208</sup> In the eyes of the Allies, the Danube Monarchy had thus forfeited its final room for manoeuvre. The first reaction of the Allies was to make binding promises to the representatives of the Austrian émigrés. Not only was self-determination to be guaranteed, but German Austrian dominance was to be brought to an end. This was the Allied response to the resolutions agreed in a congress of the 'oppressed nationalities' in Rome in mid-April 1918, in which Poles, Romanians, Czechs, southern Slavs and Italians had taken part. The Italian delegates included the editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, Benito Mussolini. The final resolution had stated the following:

1. Each of these peoples proclaims its right to form its own and coherent nation or to perfect this unit, and to achieve full political and economic independence [...].

2. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, all these peoples see a tool of German domination, the greatest hindrance to the realisation of their own claims and rights [...].

3. The Congress recognises as a result of all these circumstances the necessity of the common fight against the common enemy, so that every people can achieve its own full liberation and full national unity of the state.<sup>2209</sup>

The specific goals of the congress now only needed recognition by the Allies and confirmation through a peace treaty. The leader of the Czech émigrés, Tomáš Masaryk, took a triumphal tour through American cities. On 30 May 1918, he signed the Pittsburgh Agreement, which assured the Slovaks their own Landtag (regional diet) in the new state of Czecho-Slovakia that was to be founded, as well as an autonomous administration. On 9 June, the French government confirmed the right to independence of Czechs and Slovaks, and officially recognised the Czecho-Slovak National Assembly in Paris as the 'first foundation of a future government'. From there on, it was just a small step to recognising the Czecho-Slovak legions as 'Allied troops'.<sup>2210</sup> The Allies assumed that 60,000 Czecho-Slovak legionaries could be stationed in the Asian parts of Russia. Between 200 and 300 Czecho-Slovaks were serving in the British Army,

and 12,000 with the Italians.<sup>2211</sup> The latter were also to be deployed on the Piave front when the fighting broke out there again. Contingents were also being formed from southern Slav prisoners of war and troops who had changed sides, who were to fight on the side of the Allies in order to further shake the fabric of the Habsburg Army. The British delegate at the Comando Supremo, General Delmé-Radcliff, already saw a full 'paralysation' of Austria-Hungary within reach: 'The breakup of the Austro-Hungarian military machinery is a real possibility he claimed.'<sup>2212</sup> Allied propaganda then tailored itself to making changing sides even more attractive. An inter-Allied propaganda mission, which was connected to the Italian Supreme Command in Padua, published a weekly newspaper, of which Czech, Polish, Serb, Croat and Romanian versions were dropped over the Austro-Hungarian lines from aeroplanes. Handbills were shot away with rockets and rifle grenades. In no-man's land, loudspeakers and gramophones were set up. 'Contact patrols' were formed, which usually consisted of deserters and who distributed their material 'with wonderful success'. The effectiveness of these methods was reflected in the fact that an increasing number of deserters were picked up with handbills in their pockets.<sup>2213</sup> The Imperial and Royal front began to crumble even before the offensive had begun.

## The Attack

During Emperor Karl's visit to Spa, the Austro-Hungarian offensive in Italy was a very important topic of discussion. The German Empire expressly demanded that it should begin, since for its part, Germany planned another attack in the west and at least wanted to be sure that the Allies would be hindered in sending troops from Italy to France and Belgium. The temporal planning of the Austro-Hungarian offensive was also influenced by the news that the Americans were already on their way to Italy. Haste appeared to be of necessity – and yet, in reality, the American contingents were initially restricted to medical personnel such as Ernest Hemingway, who was then wounded in June 1918, and to pilots who in part jointly flew British aeroplanes and, in so doing, became familiarised with the conditions of deployment.<sup>2214</sup>

News of a resumption of the German offensive in the direction of the Channel coast and of a possible withdrawal from Italy by the Allies, together with rumours of an imminent Austro-Hungarian offensive, were a cause of very great concern in Italy. When the statements made by prisoners were assessed by the Imperial and Royal authorities, a remarkably low level of morale within the Allied camp emerged, from which the French were also not excluded, according to statements made by prisoners of war who had been brought in near Asiago. However, could all this compensate for what was happening in the Austro-Hungarian camp?

The German Supreme Army Command increased the pressure on the Imperial and Royal Army High Command to finally begin the offensive. Now, a decision had to be made regarding the focus. A first indication was the distribution of the aerial forces. Conrad was assigned 50 fighter aeroplanes and 90 observation planes.<sup>2215</sup> He promptly registered a complaint and said it was laughable to provide him with fewer aeroplanes for the main attack than Boroević. The Army High Command countered by claiming that in the mountains, the conditions fell far below the favourable conditions for deployment that existed in the lowlands. However, the position of the Army High Command only became clear at the beginning of May. Conrad was to continue to believe that he was to lead the main attack with his 11th Army (under General Count Scheuchenstuel); in reality, however, both army groups, that of Boroević and that of Conrad, were to conduct completely equal-ranking attack operations. This was a compromise solution that already condemned the offensive to failure right from the start.

Both army groups were reinforced, the Isonzo armies somewhat more so than the armies under Conrad. Until the last, Arz and Waldstätten remained silent on their not intending to realise Conrad's plan of attack and that they had placed the army reserve at the disposal of the Army High Command in such a manner that in practical terms, it would only be able to reach Army Group Boroević. Until the last day before the attack, objections were made and confusion reigned. Now, Conrad wanted to be ready for action by 15 June after all, while Boroević set a date of 25 June. The Army High Command decided to attack on the 15th. The commander of the XXIV Corps, Major General Ludwig Goiginger, expressed concern that the ridges of the Montello to the west of the Piave River would be left out, since from there, the Italians could observe and dominate the entire area of attack. Goiginger was then ordered to take the Montello, but for this operation, which in effect was likely to decide the entire outcome, he received no additional soldiers. On 13 June, Boroević reported that the weather was worsening by the day. In this weather, the deployment of gas would be useless in the lowlands and, furthermore, the Piave River was swelling continuously. He proposed postponing the attack by three days, but the agreed date of 15 June could not be changed, since in the interim, a diversionary attack by Conrad's 10th Army (under Field Marshall Krobatin) had begun on the Tonale Pass and the troops of the Imperial and Royal 11th Army had already been installed in their initial positions. A retreat from the storm positions would have had catastrophic psychological consequences.<sup>2216</sup> Furthermore, the Emperor had already arrived in the area of attack, and had moved into his headquarters in a special train in Schnalstal near Merano. He was accompanied by the Chief of the General Staff, General Arz, while the Chief of the Operations Division, Brigadier Waldstätten, had set up his headquarters in Belluno. The remainder of the Army High Command had been left in Baden.



Intuitively, it was probably felt by many people that this was to be a decisive operation, that everything was being put at risk and, accordingly, more hopes and greater concerns were voiced than with comparable offensives. Yet could the June offensive be compared to the others at all? It was begun with four armies, more than had ever collaborated for an offensive by Austria-Hungary in one single theatre of war during the entire course of the conflict. In terms of numbers, this was the greatest battle operation of all. More soldiers, more cannons, more aeroplanes... Yet the soldiers were weakened, had no other goal in mind than that peace would finally come, and the artillery had less ammunition than before; once everything had been used up, that would signify the end. The shortages in supplies had fully spread to the armies at the front. In February, the provision of bread to the Isonzo armies had completely collapsed for a short period of time. Generally, around a third of the specified foods containing carbohydrates was available. Meat, which was almost entirely only horsemeat, was issued only every few days, and in insufficient quantities. The hunger led to a lack of discipline and apathy. Among the non-Hungarian troop bodies, fury repeatedly broke out when the Hungarian troop bodies, which were supplied directly from the Hungarian half of the Empire, could be seen to be enjoying better rations than the others.<sup>2217</sup> Soldiers asked their commanders for permission to conduct shock troop raids in order to fetch something to eat from the Italians.<sup>2218</sup> Finally, the Army High Command issued the statement in a propaganda instruction that the Austro-Hungarian soldiers should be told that if the offensive were to succeed, they not only had the right, but also the duty, to seize war booty and to send it home in order to also make life easier for their relatives. There was also an increase in monetary rewards. A Hungarian patrol was paid 50 kronen for bringing in a French prisoner of war. For the certified shooting of an enemy aeroplane, the personnel of an air defence gun received 500 kronen. A pilot who shot down an enemy plane was given between 500 and 1,000 kronen, and one who had forced another aeroplane to land in his own hinterland, 3,000 kronen.<sup>2219</sup> This amount not only reimbursed the capture of a modern military machine, but also honoured the achievement of preventing an air reconnaissance mission. Even so, the insights far into the hinterland could not be prevented, and the Austro-Hungarian aerial forces also made attempts to bring as much reconnaissance information back home as possible.

For the June offensive, all available aerial forces were to be put to use. In theory, they comprised 395 fighter planes, 198 reconnaissance and ground attack aircraft, as well as 30 bombers.<sup>2220</sup> The Allies had fewer fighters, but significantly more reconnaissance aircraft and bombers. And, what was more important: they had the better machines. The aeroplanes belonging to the Imperial and Royal aviation troops were in some cases outdated and suffered very severely from technical defects due to the increasing shortages of replacement materials needed for engine construction. In the interim, the average lifespan of a machine amounted to no more than four months. Pilots and observers

complained about the slowness of the machines, particularly the 'Hansa-Brandenburg C.I.'. The 'Aviatik C.I.', 'Phoenix C.I.' and 'Ufag C.I.' were regarded more highly, and were all single-engine reconnaissance and bomber aircraft. However, in reality, only the 'Phoenix' aeroplanes were by now suitable for use in the aerial war in Italy. Problems were also created by the machine guns, whose low rate of fire was a cause for concern, as well as poor ammunition and bombs that failed to explode. Flying had long since ceased to be an adventure, but instead presented a huge risk, for which there were too few pilots and too few ground crew.

In general, the Austro-Hungarian leadership was concerned about the physical fatigue among the soldiers, as well as the state of their morale. Nationalistic slogans, the actions of their representatives abroad, as well as their own deputies in the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) and Reichstag (Imperial Diet) had had a significant effect, which was only increased by the use of legionaries. As had already been the case in Russia, in Italy, too, the Czech Imperial and Royal troops also faced troops from Czech legions, and while they may have been few in number, their existence was known. If a legionary was captured by the Austro-Hungarian side, he was executed on the spot by firing squad.<sup>2221</sup> Finally, the returnees from the Russian prisoner of war camps only worsened the war fatigue. Incidents such as that in the march company of Infantry Regiment No. 25 were commonplace. During their transportation, soldiers fired indiscriminately from their moving train. A reserve battalion of Infantry Regiment No. 71 mutinied and could only be disciplined again with other troops using machine gun fire and artillery.<sup>2222</sup> However, it was neither correct nor justified to talk of Bolshevik sentiments, although the suspicions and disciplinary punishments caused the men to become recalcitrant and ultimately more renitent and radical than they had been before. During the nights leading up to the beginning of the offensive, it is estimated that hundreds of soldiers deserted and informed the Italians. Aside from this, the Italians had also tapped the Austro-Hungarian field telephone lines close to the front, and were therefore up-to-date with developments.<sup>2223</sup> As a result, the Allies no longer had to relocate troops at the last minute, since all preparations had already been made for defensive action. The knowledge of the hour of attack of 'Operation Albrecht' also enabled the Allies to clear the lines furthest to the front in good time, ensuring that the Austro-Hungarian artillery would fire into a void.

The army groups at the Isonzo River and in Tyrol had been preparing for the offensive for weeks. Conrad dreamed of an advance on Veneto. Borojević wanted to reach Padua via Treviso. The main concern of the leadership, however, appeared to be 'the exploitation of the conquered territory', according to a summary given later by the General Staff major, Constantin Schneider. 'The entire organisation revolved around this measure, which was dictated by concern that the booty would be seized. The procedure for recording the food stocks found was regulated in log books'.<sup>2224</sup> For all larger

locations that it was hoped would be reached, local commanders were nominated as a precaution. There was already a 'Governor of Treviso'. Several booty commands were formed, and now all that was left was to wait for the attack. Censorship of letters was intensified. Even General Staff officers were forced to spend hours rummaging around in correspondence. Usually, there was nothing there, 'only harrowing stories of ruptured souls and tragic family fates', as Constantin Schneider recorded.

The collection of weapons, ammunition and, above all, people, entailed the usual problems, although now, questions as to how long such an amassment could be maintained were substituted for concerns as to how long the troops would prove resistant to nationalist and peace propaganda, and how long they could continue to be fed at all. With regard to the 5th Infantry Division, for example, Colonel Karl Schneller, the former Italy specialist at the Army High Command, noted: 'Indications from all sides that the Czech and southern Slav propaganda is penetrating ever deeper into our army [...] the people have had a corrupting influence on our troops and the Russian prisoners of war.'<sup>2225</sup> This last comment threw light on an additional aspect of this offensive, which had not been taken into account at all during the preparations: since as a result of the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk Austria-Hungary was obliged to repatriate the Russian prisoners of war, but this was accomplished according to categories, it was probably the last time that the work capacity of the Russian prisoners of war would be able to be used. It was therefore also the obligations set out in the peace treaty that made it unadvisable to delay the offensive, since by the autumn all the Russians would have to be transported back home.

On 13 June, the attack began on the Tonale Pass that was intended to divert the Italians' attention. Army Group Conrad moved into action. Since 11 June, it had been pouring with rain. The troops that formed up were wet and without much enthusiasm. Shortly before, soldiers from the 4th 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles had deserted to the Italians. As it was then discovered, with disparagement but also with a sense of relief, the soldiers in question had been Czechs. Even so, most of the troops appeared not much impressed by the order of the day issued by Army Group Commander Field Marshal Conrad. It had only been issued immediately before the start of the attack, and began in the same way as the famous order by Napoleon of 1796, when the commander presented to the soldiers the beauty of the Italian lowlands.<sup>2226</sup>

The attack on the Tonale was a complete failure. The Italians felt so unthreatened that they did not even take any noticeable steps to relocate troops in order to strengthen their forces in this section. Then, the focus of the fighting moved elsewhere. However, it was not the Austro-Hungarians but the French troops who opened up artillery fire on the enemy artillery positions shortly before midnight on 14 June. They had such precise information regarding the point in time of the attack and the troop distribution that just before the attack began, the French redirected their artillery fire on to the staging

areas and initial positions. The Austro-Hungarian artillery did not begin firing until hours later. Their fire, and the poison gas that was used, had no significant effect. At 4 o'clock in the morning on 15 June, the main attack began on the plateau of the Sette Comuni. Here, Italians, British and French were lying in well-fortified positions. The front extended through to the massif of the Monte Grappa, which in the traditional manner of mountain warfare was to be attacked. Two Austro-Hungarian corps, I Corps (under Kosak) and XXVI Corps (under Hersetzky) reported that they had only found four dead, who had fallen victim to the artillery, and 36 suffering from gas poisoning.<sup>2227</sup> Aside from several exceptions, including the Imperial and Royal VI Corps in particular, most of the corps were hardly able to move beyond their initial positions. By and large, Conrad's hopes had already been dashed on the first day of attack. A lack of artillery support, and the attack on well-fortified and tenaciously defended positions cost many lives. It was precisely those troop bodies that wanted to give their best and also claimed limited successes that paid for this with high, indeed exorbitant, losses. The 52nd Infantry Brigade lost two-thirds of its soldiers. By the end, only eight soldiers remained of the 'Feldjäger' Light Infantry Battalion No. 22.<sup>2228</sup> The 11th Army was also able to sustain the pressure on the Italian front over the following days, but it was already clear on 15 June, when Borojević's troops began their attack, that the offensive by Army Group Conrad had failed.

The first enemy that Army Group Borojević had to face was the turbulent Piave River, which had swelled to three times its original size, and which made crossing and bridging a hellish task. The artillery had not been supplied with sufficient ammunition in order to keep up effective fire for a longer period of time. An hour before the start of the artillery preparation, the batteries became fogged in. Then gas projectiles were to be fired for two hours, followed by three hours of effective fire. The order to attack came at 3.15 a.m. Almost everywhere, the signs were the same: the ammunition was in some cases of poor quality, and there were several incidents caused by faulty ammunition. The artillery fire was furthermore inaccurately directed, since it could not be observed. The aerial troops faced double the number of enemy aeroplanes. The ground troops had been promised effective air cover, but the aviation companies were only able to do so in individual cases. The Italians, British and French embroiled the Imperial and Royal fighter planes, reconnaissance aircraft and bombers in countless aerial battles. The phosphorous shells fired by the Allied air defence guns set the linen cloth coverings of the aeroplanes alight, so that one machine after another was lost. The water-cooled machine guns of the fighter planes froze at higher altitudes, and communication lines hardly functioned at all. All this was not only a reflection of the operational errors and catastrophic negligence of an Army High Command and rival army group commanders: the Imperial and Royal Army was no longer able to keep up with the Allies when it came to modern warfare and leadership. Just in the same way as the German Army

now found itself confronted with a large number of 'tanks', which it was in the interim incapable of opposing, either with a sufficient number of its own tanks, or with effective anti-tank weapons, the Imperial and Royal Army was faced with a level of modern technology and armaments for which it was no longer a match.

The June battle in the Veneto region also petered out on the Piave River to isolated individual skirmishes within the space of just a few hours, and with conceivably alternating success. At San Doná di Piave, the XXIII Corps (under Csicsics) succeeded in crossing the turbulent river and in keeping the war bridge intact, despite the fact that it was naturally immediately fired on by the Allied artillery and was a prime target for the bombers. However, the transfer by this corps was intended only as a demonstration in order to deflect the Allied forces away from the corps of the Isonzo Army, which were located further north. Yet the troops of these corps failed in their attempts to cross the Piave. The war bridges were shot down, and the divisions subjected to crushing artillery fire and held fast on the river. The Italians had created a deeply staggered defence zone, which could only be successfully attacked with the support of high-angle firearms. Where this was not possible, the infantry was unable to advance and suffered heavy losses. The Allied aeroplanes bombarded the few bridgeheads. And, in most cases, the air defence guns were so widely distributed that they were unable to be effective. Only the Imperial and Royal 6th Army (under Archduke Joseph), which began an attack even further north, already succeeded in crossing the river in the early morning. Two divisions of the corps were able to cross the Montello ridge, but they were too weak to break through the Italian front. From fear of the anticipated Austro-Hungarian gas attack, the Italians had fled their positions in several sections, not knowing that this time the gas would be almost entirely ineffective. In this way, the Imperial and Royal XXIV Corps (under Goiginger) was able to seize artillery that would otherwise have not been available at all, since it had been impossible to bring it across the Piave. The corps, which was concentrated in a small area, advanced on to the Montello ridge with two divisions with unexpected speed. Borojević demanded two further divisions from the reserve of the Army High Command to support those of Goiginger. Waldstätten refused to provide them.<sup>2229</sup> Goiginger's divisions remained left behind.

What the armies, including the commanders on the Piave River, could not know was that on 16 June, Colonel Ottokar Pflug, Chief of Weapons and Ammunition at the Army High Command, sent a dispatch to Brigadier Waldstätten to the effect that on the morning of that day, 29 trains with supplies had left for the front; after that, only sporadic supplies would be possible. The entire army was threatened with 'defencelessness' if immediate measures were not taken to prevent the worst possible scenario.<sup>2230</sup> The troops had been told that between the Brenta and Adige Rivers, and elsewhere in the Italian hinterland, they would find everything they needed in terms of food and weaponry.<sup>2231</sup> If the soldiers failed to achieve these goals, then the war would no longer

be able to feed the war. At the Army High Command, it was therefore already clear on the second day of the Piave battle that only its abortion could prevent a catastrophe.

14 divisions had crossed the Piave. They fought in part in the lowlands, and in part on the mountain ridges of the Montello, over which extended air battles also then took place. The Commander of the 6th Army, Archduke Joseph, also failed in his request for reservists to be supplied for his successful troops. He wrote on this subject that: 'On the afternoon [of 15 June], we had the highest point of the Montello under our control, yet here already, there were huge losses in transportation, and we were unable to supply the attack as planned and remained where we were; our brave troops were forced to dig themselves in as a result of physical weakness [...]. Supplies were fully hindered, since no means of transportation were available and, with great effort, I was able to transport some ammunition, although some battalions were already fighting with bare weapons [...]. The Montello is littered with corpses!<sup>2232</sup> Indeed, there was no option but to regard the June offensive as a failure, even after just two days. Wherever it was still possible, troops began to be withdrawn. On the Montello, the retreat threatened to turn into a catastrophe. Goiginger urged the Emperor, who had joined the 6th Army on 20 June, to hold the Montello ridge, since it would be more dangerous and lead to higher losses to give up the Montello and return across the Piave than to remain there. Even so, on the same day, he was ordered to retreat – as was everyone else.

When the soldiers returned to their initial positions and prepared themselves for defensive action, they were at the end of their strength, and were understandably deeply depressed. All their efforts appeared to have been for nothing. Above all, however, it was the change that had come about that was so obvious, and which could hardly be explained: even in November 1917, they had still been able to drive the Italians out, had been superior to them and had also had the better weaponry. Now, one only had to look at the statement made by the Imperial and Royal 6th Army with regard to the ratio of forces in the air to know how great the defeat had been. The statement read: 'With regard to the ratio of forces on both sides, the Albrecht fighting has shown beyond doubt that superiority is on the side of our enemy [...]. However, the battle for supremacy in the air depends not only on numerical superiority, but also on the technical flying properties of the aeroplanes, on the quality of the personnel and the nature of the deployment [...]. Since January 1918, the Army High Command has provided the 6th Army with 155 R[econnnaissance] and 227 F[ighter] planes. Of these, 14 R and 16 F aeroplanes have been lost as a result of enemy action, and 101 R and 168 F aeroplanes have been lost for the main part due to inadequate training of the pilots'.<sup>2233</sup> From a total of 382 aeroplanes, 269 had been lost – more than two-thirds!

The accusations rained down. Almost every commander wanted it to be known that he had anticipated the failure. They had been robbed of success by indolence. Conrad was castigated, and Boroević was criticised for having no 'grit'. The General Staff major

Alfred Jansa, who was sent to the 6th Army by the Army High Command as 'plenipotentiary staff officer', more or less bluntly accused the Chief of Staff of the Isonzo Army, the General Staff colonel Theodor Körner, of bearing responsibility for falsely positioning the army. 'By contrast, he was of the opinion that restriction to a narrow area of attack was unnecessary [...].'<sup>2234</sup> Everyone had reason to hurl accusations at the Army High Command, which had provided neither a focal point for the operation, nor sufficient reserve troops. The last phase of the Piave battle was also already accompanied by urgent German demands to halt the offensive. On 21 June, Hindenburg declared: 'From the perspective of the Supreme War Command, I therefore express my view that the Austro-Hungarian Army should halt its attacks in Italy, and bring all forces made available by this act to the western theatre of war.' (This will be discussed below.) There was something that could have been added in passing to this statement: if the Germans took on responsibility for supplying several divisions on the western front, then at least it would no longer be necessary to worry about their provisioning. The more than 11,000 dead and 25,000 missing soldiers also no longer needed to be fed. But the balance could not be drawn in such a way! Over 80,000 Austro-Hungarian soldiers had been wounded. The total losses in the June battle in the Veneto region thus amounted to over 118,000 people. Then there were the enormous quantities of weapons and equipment that had been lost; in addition, everything that had been shot and used up, and that was no longer retrievable, also had to be added to the balance. And it had not even been possible to bring in the hoped-for provisions from the enemy.

On the eve of the Piave offensive, Austria still had 430 wagons of grain in stock. From 17 June, no more flour was available for Vienna.<sup>2235</sup> The German Empire was also unwilling to help, since the flour requisitioning in Ukraine and Romania had only brought a part of what had been hoped and planned for. Emperor Karl then declared the Berlin agreements of May 1918 to be invalid.<sup>2236</sup> The situation became increasingly chaotic. Here, several wagons with grain were brought in, were shunted about and sent to their destinations, while there the same was done with a few potatoes. Requisitioning took place in Hungary, while at the same time a voluntary support campaign was conducted under the banner: Budapest helps Vienna. The public kitchen initiatives were extended, and in Vienna, for example, around 100,000 more meals were issued to the poorest citizens every day. However, the word 'more' was an only too clear indication of the catastrophic situation. All possible precautions were taken in order to harvest the grain at the earliest possible date, and to thresh and grind it immediately in order to be able to prepare flour from the new harvest one month early. The fact that this was an encroachment on the stocks for 1919 was common knowledge, but the main task was to survive today, with no thought given to tomorrow.

The Allies referred to the June offensive as a 'hunger offensive', and to a certain extent, this was accurate.<sup>2237</sup> For the western powers, the outcome of the offensive was

significant, since they correctly regarded Austria-Hungary as being weakened in the long term, and felt it no longer necessary to bring American troops to Italy. The American liaison officer in Italy, General Swift, informed General Pershing that for the time being, there was no need to deploy American fighting troops in Italy. All contingents of the US Expeditionary Force were to be sent to France.<sup>2238</sup>





## 30 An Empire Resigns

30. The 180th promotion of commanders and knights of the Military Order of Maria Theresa by Emperor Karl I in Villa Wartholz, 17 August 1917. On the occasion of his 30th birthday, the Emperor, in his function as the Order's Grand Master, presented four officers of his army with the insignias of the Grand Cross and 20 officers with those of the Knight's Cross of the Order of Maria Theresa, the Habsburg Monarchy's highest military decoration.

## Brigadier von Bolzano is Missing

It is a very inconspicuous entry that can be found in the Austrian War Archives in the 'Register of Generals and Flag Officers 1911-1918': 'Heinrich Bolzano Edler von Kronstätt, born 14.8.1868 in Slaný/Bohemia, Colonel, Infantry Regiment No. 88, I.XI.1917 Brigadier, Commander of the 88th Infantry Brigade, missing since 17.6.1918 on the Montello.' The entry by Antonio Schmidt-Brentano in the work *Die k. k. bzw. k. u. k. Generalität 1816-1918* (The Imperial and Royal and the Imperial-Royal Generals 1816-1918), printed in 2007 as a manuscript, is very different: 'Bolzano Edler von Kronstätt, Heinrich (14.8.1868 - [missing Asiago] 17.6.1918).' Like the entry on General Wodniansky, who had been registered as having fallen in battle in 1914, the two entries are incorrect. The records on which they are based gloss over a set of facts that would earn the connotation 'tragic'. It cannot be ruled out that data was intentionally falsified, since the Montello and Asiago are a long way apart. Bolzano furthermore never commanded the 88th Infantry Brigade, but instead led the 25th Rifle Brigade during the June fighting in Veneto. The relevant operational files of the 25th Rifle Brigade have disappeared without trace. It was intended that the General be regarded as missing. It was assumed, however, that it was a case of desertion. The mystification hides a very clear message: a general does not desert.

Heinrich von Bolzano originated from Bohemia and was the son of a factory owner. In 1887, he had joined up voluntarily with Infantry Regiment No. 8, decided to take the path to become a career officer and went to the cadet academy in Prague. In 1893, he was accepted by the War Academy, became a General Staff officer and was Chief of Staff in the 29th Infantry Division before the outbreak of war. He counted among the personnel of Infantry Regiment No. 88 ('Beraun'). Thus, his military background was predominantly Czech. At the beginning of the war, Bolzano was a colonel and Commander of Infantry Regiment 88, subsequently commander for two-and-a-half years of an infantry brigade that was named after him, and which was then renamed the 132nd Infantry Brigade. In spite of an almost continual deployment with front troops and participation in many battle and encounters, he was not promoted. Only in November 1917 did he reach the next rank, became brigadier and was still brigade commander, now of the 25th Rifle Brigade. His then divisional commander, Major General Peter Hofmann, regarded him as suitable only for 'use away from the front'. His suitability for divisional command was denied.<sup>2239</sup> Even so, Heinrich Bolzano did

not run the risk of being dismissed from his post due to temporary failure, an acute illness or age-related frailty (he was not yet 50 years old). In many respects, however, he no longer had any prospects. He gave up. Where was his homeland? Was he Czech or German? How were things to proceed? Four years at the same hierarchical level was enough to discourage anyone. He no longer saw any purpose in his own life and perhaps no longer wanted to witness the dying on the Montello. It was out of the question for him to desert like many of his Czech compatriots. He chose another way of ending his dilemma. On the third day of the June offensive, Bolzano left his dugout and began during the late afternoon to approach upright the Italian lines. He passed the foremost Austrian sentries, was called to and warned. But he continued, apparently undeterred. Evidently, he was aiming for the Italian lines. Finally, he was shouted at: 'General, Sir, if you go any further, I must shoot!' Bolzano continued. He was called upon once more. The sentry was beside himself. But then he shot with his machine gun and killed his brigadier. Heinrich Bolzano Edler von Kronstätt lay dying between the lines.<sup>2240</sup>

This was a curiously tragic death and unparalleled. Had it really been an attempt to desert? Had Brigadier Bolzano been hoping to find death? Was he aware that he would not reach the Italian lines alive? On 18 June, the 25th Rifle Brigade reported that the Brigadier 'had suffered a confusion of the mind and, in this incompetent condition, been killed in an accident or fallen into enemy hands'. The Army High Command summarised the incident briefly and erroneously: Bolzano had 'succumbed to his grave wounds in Italian prisoner of war captivity'. The troops and the staff of Army Group Borojević knew better.<sup>2241</sup>

Since the first weeks of the war, there had been no further suicide on the part of a general. In the final analysis, it had been a suicide, even if the means of death had been different. Different, at least, to General Paukert, who had lain himself in front of a train in September 1914.

From winter 1914/15, dismissals of generals had become rarer. The fighting in the Carpathians and the subsequent months of the war had led in individual cases to generals being dismissed on the basis of the accusation that they had failed. Overall, however, the command structures appeared to have been consolidated. This did not mean, of course, that the most senior commands did not repeatedly issue strong rebukes or positively lock horns, as in the case of the Army High Command on the one side and the Commander of the 5th Army, General Borojević on the other. Even before the assumption of command on the Isonzo, Borojević had occasionally caused havoc and, like the Army High Command, was hard to beat in his directness when it came to expressing himself. Thus, Borojević explained his demand following the dismissal of Major General Anton Lipošćak in mid-January 1915, for example, with the unobvious formulation that the Major General 'did not understand the situation and seems according to his reports still not to understand it even now'.<sup>2242</sup> The Commander of the

2nd Infantry Division, Major General Lipošćak, was then relieved of his command. In May 1915, Borojević had been sent to the Italian front, Lipošćak was rehabilitated and became once more, as before his dismissal, Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division.

Generals were accused of intervening too little and of merely passing on orders, without issuing their own. Others were dismissed due to 'physical depression' – an odd ailment. In September 1915 alone, the Presidium of the War Ministry had invited 14 generals to submit a request for their retirement.<sup>2243</sup> The Commander of the 2nd Army, Böhm-Ermolli, applied for the dismissal of the Commander of the 34th Infantry Division, Brigadier Baronet Julius von Birkenhain and his Chief of Staff, Major Karl Möller, because they had not been energetic enough. In December, General of Infantry Karg had been informed that he should submit his resignation; he was 'unsuitable to lead a senior command'. No-one was relieved for too much severity or even for the senseless sacrifice of human life. The designation of a general in soldiers' jargon as the 'death of the Imperial Rifles' (*Kaiserjägertod*), however, spoke for itself.<sup>2244</sup> The army subsequently repeatedly turned out to be the opposite of the attribute it was commonly assigned, above all in Germany: it was anything but 'cosy' (*gemütlich*)! Some incidents would certainly have been punished in other armies. For example, the Commander of the 29th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Baronet Franz Weiss-Tihany, had written a letter to the Army Supreme Commander Archduke Friedrich, which was evidently teeming with insults. The War Ministry then ordered the Brigadier to be examined in respect of his state of mental health.<sup>2245</sup>

For his part, the Army Supreme Commander was inclined to reprimand generals, as he had already done during the first months of the war, even if there was only a suspicion of them not measuring up. This was often possible by means of short notifications, such as that of 10 April 1915, when Archduke Friedrich briefly reported to the Imperial Military Chancellery: the war 'has minimised the energy, resilience and hardiness to such an extent that I felt compelled recently to Most Supremely commission the relief of Generals of Infantry Hugo von Meixner and Colerus, [and] after that Brigadier Letovsky from their commands'.<sup>2246</sup> Sometimes, the notification was even briefer. In August 1915, General Böhm-Ermolli applied for the dismissal of Major General Zanantoni from the command of the 29th Infantry Division very simply by writing: 'I am convinced that Major General Zanantoni's nerves will no longer recover in such a way that he can lead a command against the enemy. – Böhm.'<sup>2247</sup> With that, everything seemed to have been said.

People had to be substituted, sent to the base zone for age and health reasons, placed on leave of absence or retired with waiting charges, commanders and staff officers replaced because they had not resonated with their superiors. In winter 1915/16, four generals and a chief of staff were dismissed from the 7th Army alone because they 'had not measured up to the challenges'.<sup>2248</sup> This was a type of normality, which had

to be accepted. Beneath the smoothed surface, there were repeatedly serious conflicts and rough interaction, but it was limited predominantly to official internal exchanges. Finally, calm was only restored when the Imperial and Royal armies were successful.

With the gradually stronger mixing of Austro-Hungarian and German troops, a new element crept in, since the German commanders, commanding generals and commanders-in-chief frequently did not get along with the Imperial and Royal officers, sometimes sought to enforce their views in an expressly arrogant way and evoked in this way above all with Conrad von Hötzendorf a previously almost unheard-of reaction: time and again, Conrad came to the defence of 'his' generals. The most glaring case was that of General of Cavalry Baron von Pflanzer-Baltin, Commander of the 7th Army, who had to report sick in September 1916, since the German Supreme Army Command 'has no faith in him and therefore refuses to place German troops under his command'.<sup>2249</sup> Neither Archduke Friedrich nor Conrad could make a stand against this, since they had to demonstrate all manner of compliance following the Brusilov Offensive and the Joint Supreme War Command demanded just such a sacrifice. 'The air was thick enough to cut with a knife, as Colonel Zeynek noted. Wherever the Army High Command could steer in the opposite direction, it did so. Therefore, aside from individual cases where German and Imperial and Royal troops were deployed in one and the same theatre, i.e. predominantly in Galicia, Russia and Bukovina, and for a time also in Serbia, there were hardly any more dismissals and if there were, then they served to re-establish peace among the quarrelling allies by means of transfers. The Imperial and Royal Army High Command did not demonstrate comparable understanding towards the army and troop bodies on the south-western front. There, 'drastic measures were taken'. Perhaps this was also connected to the fact that Emperor Franz Joseph had repeatedly rebuked the Army High Command for its actions against civilians and soldiers in the Galician theatre of war, but was evidently fully in agreement with the measures taken in the area of the south-western front. As a result, the army leadership and the civil administration were at one with their Monarch, who – as the American military attaché in Vienna related following his farewell audience with the Emperor at the end of October 1916 – wanted to fight the war against Italy 'to the end',<sup>2250</sup> even, if necessary, without German participation.

Until September 1917, no consideration was necessary in the 'Imperial and Royal private theatre of war' for the comrades from the north. From January 1918, after the German 14th Army had withdrawn again, the old set-up was once more valid. The change at the top of the Army High Command following the death of Emperor Franz Joseph, however, had yielded multiple consequences at once. Emperor Karl was able to settle many conflicts with the help of his Chief of Staff, Arz von Straußenburg. Not only that: in view of the temporary shortage of senior officers and above all generals, several of those who had not yet been definitively retired but only been placed on leave

of absence with waiting charges, were rehabilitated or at least reactivated and found a new use limited to the duration of the mobilisation. Many of the posts that had to be filled lacked the appeal of serving with the troops, but the prisoner of war camps, the bridgehead garrisons, the city commands, etc. also required generals.

It was of course the isolated cases that attracted attention every so often. The absolute figures nonetheless paint an impressive picture. When Emperor Franz Joseph was still alive, there were three full generals and 95 lieutenant generals who had been relieved 'for official considerations'.<sup>2251</sup> Very few had been retired all of a sudden, since in that way at least appearances were kept up. Some were placed at the 'disposal of the Supreme Commander'. Their number was added to in 1917 by one field marshal, namely Archduke Friedrich. Six generals had fallen in battle, four of them in 1914. Nine generals had been taken prisoner by the beginning of 1917; one of them had killed himself in May 1915 in Russian prisoner of war captivity.<sup>2252</sup> Highborn generals who were elderly or were no longer (or had actually never been) fit for service at the front were disposed of by giving them honorary posts, such as Major General Count Georg Wallis, who became President of the Swords Commission and was to adjudge in the Vienna War Archives about the decorations to be conferred for active services in war, or Brigadier Count Miecisław Ledochowski, who became the commander of a medical transport. The Imperial and Royal Guards also provided a vast field for conferring honourable ranks and impeding indignities. But did it even make sense to attend to the ancient and high nobility in a special way? Its members of course continued to be powerful and, in part, extraordinarily wealthy people. But they had played a minor role in military matters for a long time and increasingly so in political affairs. Of those who had reached the rank of general, Count Karl Auersperg, 77 years of age, was Guards Captain of the Imperial and Royal Trabant Life Guards, Count Karl Huyn Governor of Galicia, Count Albert Lónyay also Guards Captain in the Trabant Life Guards, Prince Zdenko Lobkowitz, Adjutant General of Emperor Karl, Prince Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein Commander of the Mobile Troops on the Home Front and then Commander of the 6th Army, and Count Herbert Herberstein, Adjutant General of Archduke Friedrich until the end of 1916 and then Commander of the 6th Cavalry Division. The Schwarzenbergs were the only family with a great military tradition, who provided with Prince Felix zu Schwarzenberg, the Commander of the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles Division, a high-ranking troop commander, but no Colloredo, Fürstenberg, Harrach, Hohenlohe, Khevenhüller, Windisch-Graetz, no Traun, Kinsky, Laudon, Esterházy, Apponyi, Széchényi, Palfy and whatever they were called, was to be found among those who still held a front command. As commander of the small cruiser *Novara*, Johannes Prinz von und zu Liechtenstein was the only naval officer from the high nobility who held a noteworthy command. Abensberg-Traun, Hardegg, Hoyos, Montecuccoli, Radetzky, Thun-Hohenstein, Waldstein, Festetics, Batthyány,

Csáky, etc. were only present in the military schematisms and ranking lists, however, when one or the other family members occupied a generally lower reserve officer rank predominantly in a cavalry regiment. Some older generals, for example Prince Hugo Dietrichstein zu Nikolsburg or Count Felix Thun-Hohenstein, were reactivated but they were without doubt no longer suitable for senior troop commands. Particularly conspicuous was the absence of the Hungarian high nobility, which was clearly outstripped by its Polish counterpart. Even here, however, such important families as the Potockys, the Lubomirskis and others were missing.

The retreat of the high nobility had already been looming since the mid-19th century. The fact that graduation from the War Academy and a career as a General Staff officer were necessary for high and highest ranks had not least contributed to this absence. Only very few wanted to go to this trouble. The expectations in the Navy were the same. Of course, the lack of the high nobility was also an expression of neither the majorate gentlemen nor other male members of the long-standing families wanting to connect their personal fate and that of their families with that of the ruling house. The absence of the high nobility could be understood as a partial renunciation of the Empire and, above all, the ruling dynasty. This absence went so far that some gentlemen, large landowners and industrial magnates exercised extreme restraint in the subscription of war bonds. (Reference was already made to this in the chapter 'How is a War Financed?') In the case of the moneyed (high) aristocracy, the risk assessment permitted, or so it seemed, only the most necessary payments. At any rate, money was allocated very cautiously.

Among those colonels and generals who fell in battle as members of the Imperial and Royal Army during the First World War, there was not a single member of the ancient nobility and just one member of a comital house, the Commander of Dragoon Regiment No. 2, Colonel Count Johann Bolesta-Koziebrodzki. This was a noticeable, even stark, contrast with the experiences of the German Army, where from 1915 to 1919 in the different series of the *Almanach de Gotha* the names of the fallen of the ancient noble and comital houses filled dozens of pages each.

In fact, the absence of the Austrian and Hungarian high aristocracy should have been conspicuous even whilst Emperor Franz Joseph was still alive. But this had not been the case. The aristocratic absence only became altogether clear under Emperor Karl. Not even the countless honours that the Emperor showered on aristocrats and non-aristocrats helped here. Even four new comital families (Conrad, Benigni, Scheuchenstuel and Dankl) could not compensate for the absence of the great, old names. And it made a difference whether someone was to fight in this war for God, the Emperor and the Fatherland as a lieutenant of the reserves or as a general.

At the latest by 1918, Emperor Karl had in any case the feeling that there were too many generals. In view of the discontinuation of the front in Russia and the victory



in Italy, and not least as a result of imperial attempts to cut back the war effort and to reduce the overall strength of the army, the Monarch not only dismissed the oldest cohorts among the enlisted men and certain groups of people but also launched into a thorough clearance of the generals. He ordered a personnel conference under his chairmanship for 1 February 1918, at which every single general officer was to be evaluated: assignment, age and entire period of duty were to be stated, and finally a decision should be made on every general regarding his further use or the end of his term of service, and indeed from the highest-ranking to the most junior, i.e. from Field Marshal Archduke Friedrich, who was at the disposal of the Supreme Commander, down to Brigadier Karl von Sandler, the Military Plenipotentiary in Romania. The number of generals that were to be assessed was 429.<sup>2253</sup>

It was clear that the most senior group, the field marshals and the full generals, and likewise the archdukes, remained without comment in the prepared documents. The Monarch alone was supposed to decide what happened with whom. After that, however, the whole list was sifted and it was not stinted on remarks such as 'splendid', 'very good', 'not suitable as a divisional commander', or 'might be considered for a march formation'. Baronet Josef von Rothe and Ludwig von Fabini received the comment: 'not suitable as an army commander'. On Prince Alois Schönburg-Hartenstein, Baronet Johann von Goglia and Alfred Krauß, it was noted: '[eminently] suited to be army commander'. Other comments included 'suitable' as corps or divisional commander, 'not suitable', 'has not measured up', was 'not physically equal to the challenges', 'invited by the AOK [= Army High Command] to report sick', 'requires respite' or 'objective achieved'. In the case of dozens of them, at the end of the evaluation was the word 'resignation'. One of them was the subject of a judicial enquiry, and for 64 generals the personnel conference ended with the observation that the gentlemen should resign during the course of the year and apply for their pension. Fifteen per cent of the generals were affected in this way. And there was not much hanging around. Most of them, above all the older ones, were already prompted on 1 March to apply for their retirement. Generally, dates were named by when the applications were expected. Some requested that they continue to be utilised, which was rejected as a rule; most of them complied. In summer 1918, the flood of requests was to swell once more. The original 64 generals were added to, and above all the group of field marshals and full generals was reduced. Conrad von Hötzendorf lost his army group command and became a count and a 'colonel of all the Guards'. He was deeply aggrieved. Field Marshal Borojević avoided his dismissal only out of consideration for the fact that it would look strange to remove two field marshals from the same theatre of war. The long-time Commander of the 2nd Army, Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli, had to give up his command over the Eastern Army. However, the prospect was held out of the position of Chief of the General Staff, at which point he immediately commenced the inspection of the south-western front.<sup>2254</sup>

For some general officers the observation could be made that they had barely progressed during the war. They were, however, to be left in their functions. Brigadier Bolzano was one of them. Others were retired from public life out of 'consideration for the superior numbers'.<sup>2255</sup>

Emperor Karl demonstrated considerable consistency in this clearance of the most senior ranks, which he otherwise frequently lacked. He could above all say, however, that the retirements of high-ranking, old and poorly assessed officers did no harm to his almost unbroken popularity, above all among the enlisted men. The abolition of corporal punishments, the consideration for long-serving or especially sorely afflicted soldiers – this is what the troops gave him credit for. The countless visits of the Emperor to the troops were rated by most of them as devotion and care, or at least as a special occasion. When did a soldier get to see an – his – Emperor?!

### Four Million Heroes

The uniforms of the Imperial and Royal Army had become shabby. Ever more substitute materials had to serve for manufacturing coats, trousers and above all shoes. Rucksacks had replaced the calfskin kit bags. Instead of leather straps, woven shoulder straps and body belts were used. Hardly anything remained from what had been called before the war 'shining misery' and primarily characterised an officer's social status. The officers still had their separate kitchens and better uniforms, accommodation and front or sick leave that was assessed differently to those of the enlisted men. Increasingly, however, these were hinterland phenomena. In the trenches and the mountain positions, 'those up top' and 'those down below' were assimilating ever more. Ultimately, their life depended on them not diverging in their conduct and being able to depend on each other. Whether or not they felt like 'heroes', as they had been called since the beginning of the war, was dependent on conditions on a given day and on military events. Completely burned out, distressed, wounded, sick, hungry officers and soldiers felt least of all like heroes.

The struggle itself was heroic, however, as were the army, the officers, the soldiers and all the more so those who fell in battle, died or ended up in prisoner of war captivity. However, it is necessary to differentiate here, and it was of course an endlessly big difference whether someone deserted in the Carpathians as a member of the Prague Infantry Regiment No. 28 and fell into captivity, or as one of the defenders of Premysl, whom Emperor Franz Joseph did not neglect to thank for their heroic struggle and to whom he sent his best wishes in prisoner of war captivity.<sup>2256</sup> There were no heroes in defeat. Meanwhile, however, a struggle for remembrance had in any case long since set in. Speechlessness often spread here, though, since most of the dead had been buried in mass graves and only received a shaft stuck in the landscape.

It is difficult to subject the soldiers of the World War to a uniform evaluation and to use only one word for them. There were, after all – and this should make the dimensions to some extent comprehensible – more than eight million members of the Imperial and Royal Army, of whom half a million had fallen and without doubt not all of whom were heroes. Perhaps they only became heroes as a result of the war memorials, by means of the efforts of the survivors and later generations to make sense of a soldier's death, the circumstances of which they frequently were not aware of. They died for their fatherland but they were not to have died as cowards, since they would then have violated the basic requirements of the military and everything that had been invested in them in terms of desires, hopes and faith. Many of them will indeed have died as heroes, as people who overcame their fear, saved lives but also destroyed lives. In the files of the troop and army bodies and, finally, in the reports of the armies to the War Ministry, generally the words 'dead, wounded, sick, captive and missing' appear. The numbers reflect only the final interpretation. All those who died from their wounds or in prisoner of war captivity could for a long time not be identified. How should they be defined though? Did all those cited in the files die a hero's death? Were all prisoners of war cowards? Did the sick and the wounded all die honourably? On the heroes' cemeteries and the memorials – which were already erected during the war in spite of all restrictive measures – they became anonymous masses, in spite of being mentioned by name, and it was only their comrades and relatives who remembered them as individuals.

Stephan von Madáy, who became well-known as a horse psychologist and lived in Innsbruck, attempted in September 1915 by differentiating between fighters and workers to describe the change that the soldiers had undergone during their transition from soldiers of peace to soldiers of war. The fighter was a 'soldier by inclination' (*Lustsoldat*) and the other a 'soldier by duty' (*Pflichtsoldat*). Both were necessary. Moreover, ever more soldiers were required who were constant and capable as workers. The conduct of war resembled ever more 'the character of methodical work'. The battles lasted longer and longer, whilst the fighter had to 'endure weeks and months of enemy fire'.<sup>2257</sup> In a barrage, however, perhaps no soldiers by inclination were required. The infantryman Hans Pözer described in *Drei Tage am Isonzo* (Three Days on the Isonzo) his feelings during the barrage in the (probably sixth) battle: 'At that moment I was not human but some living creature whose nerves were not enough to comprehend the fearsomeness of the moment and yet were too strong to buckle.'<sup>2258</sup> The mental components of the fighting experienced an immense increase in importance. It was no longer a question of attacks or physical strength, but only psychological equilibrium.

The soldier by duty and the military worker naturally did not embody the image of the dashing cavalier or that of the 'Kaiserjäger' imperial rifleman on the Col di Lana. This was the dilemma. Nothing filtered through of the cavalryman's life, the romanticism of the *Standeschützen* (members of rifle companies) and the volunteers, but instead

that which represented the image of the soldier towards the end of the war. The 'soldier by inclination' gradually transitioned into the storm trooper, who was then understood by Ernst Jünger to be the 'epitome of the frontline soldier'.<sup>2259</sup> It emerged from prisoner interrogations conducted by the British that Boroević divided up his army into two parts: the shock masses, into which he allotted primarily troop bodies from the German and Hungarian territories of the Dual Monarchy, and the very much larger resistive masses. In the latter were above all Slavs and Romanians.<sup>2260</sup> Perhaps this corresponded deliberately or unwittingly to the categories observed by psychologists.

Injuries, sickness and death on a mass scale had a levelling effect. There was no more depressing image than that offered in the course of and after the Piave Offensive. The 22 normal and six improvised medical transports were not enough to take away the wounded. Between 15 and 24 June, almost 64,000 wounded and sick in Army Group Boroević alone had to be transported to the rear.<sup>2261</sup> The ratio was as a rule 10:1. All the following injuries occurred: vascular injuries, injuries to soft tissue, the nerves, limb bones, joints, skull, upper and lower halves of the face, auditory canals, larynx and windpipe, oesophagus, lungs, heart, stomach, kidneys, urinary bladder, urethra, genitals, spine and spinal marrow, shoulder blade, collarbone, upper and lower arms, hand, pelvic bones, hip joint, upper and lower legs, and the feet. It made a difference whether it was a case of gunshot or shrapnel wounds or injuries from edged weapons. No body part was spared. 'Facies Hippocratica' was the name given by doctors for the pre-death facial expressions of those suffering from a shot to the stomach. The surgeons often decided beforehand on the possible continuation of life or on death. If, for example, four soldiers with bullet wounds to the stomach were in a critical condition and two dozen seriously wounded were brought in with other injuries, they frequently decided against those suffering from shots to the stomach, since a single operation required two to three hours, the result was uncertain and in the meantime others might die whose salvation would have been possible in the event of an immediate operation. Soldiers with kidney or bladder injuries could often not be salvaged due to the unspeakable pain. They were, therefore, handed over to the enemy, according to the 'War Surgery Manual'.<sup>2262</sup> Since 1915, at least the tetanus bacteria had been brought more or less under control, so that cases of lockjaw became rarer. Added to the wounded, however, were those injured by gas, those who were suffering from 'normal' illnesses such as typhus, dysentery or malaria, and not forgetting those who were in a state of severe shock, were described as 'shell-shock sufferers' and were frequently destined for the torture of 'faradisation'. After a major military event, they were as a rule only statistical material and thereafter became part of the account of the Great War.

Naturally, individual observations can be assembled in such a way that in the end doubts arise as to whether the subject is the same time, the same war, the same military or the same Austrian soldiers, or whether it is not rather a report 'from another land'.

Everything was subsumed under the term 'gigantic heroic struggle'. There were, however, more than just individual observations. And there was also another image of the soldiers. 'In the opinion of most of our officers, an Austrian regiment is recruited from nothing but pigs and other critters', can be read in the family and estate papers B/428 in the War Archives in Vienna. 'The noble gentlemen turned out to be human beings who anxiously endeavoured not to die a hero's death, since that's what we're here for', as it was stated elsewhere.<sup>2263</sup> This could be contrasted with the words of Second Lieutenant of the Reserve Josef Aschauer, who wrote in his diary that 'the good soldier is a personality [...] not behind the oven but in the wind, rain and snow, he sees himself confronted with problems that he must tackle with reflection and action. [...] His body is able to cope with all exertions and hardships. Filled with exalted love for his people, and for his homeland, he foregoes comfort and dies in the field.'<sup>2264</sup> All these types existed: the good soldiers, the pigs and the 'critters'. Most of them were soldiers by duty. In order to make use of them for the military and war service, those who were temporarily exempted from military service, eligible with restrictions or completely ineligible were repeatedly mustered anew. They were called before the inspection commissions up to five times. There were also repeatedly submissions from volunteers and the fear of joining the war too late and not being involved when the history of the twentieth century was being written.

The veterans, however, had long since begun a fight for memory. They insisted on the erection of memorials, and took advantage of positional warfare to produce stone or metal clues that they had been there, that their headquarters had been located here or there and above all that they had lost comrades. In one place, for example, were the words: 'To the fallen heroes of the Flitsch basin, 1915–1917'. Large and small cemeteries assumed the quality of memorial sites and were designed to recall the Great War, which had to end sometime. Emperor Franz Joseph had hoped that the erection of memorials would be postponed until after the war. His wishes had not always been respected, and in the meantime the initiatives had accumulated. The desire for the construction of memorials was not always conformed with, however, and there was a struggle for memory here as well. The dispute over the erection for Imperial-Royal Rifle (previously Landwehr) Regiment No. 8 could be regarded as thoroughly representative: the replacement battalion of the regiment envisaged a spot in front of the barracks in Prague's Castle Quarter, on Pohořelec square, for a memorial in honour of the fallen members of the regiment. The military command in Prague indicated a location on the grounds of the planned garrison cemetery in the district of Kobylisy. The officer corps of the regiment, however, insisted on the Castle Quarter. Once more, however, there was a strict rejection and the military command explained this with the 'not faultless conduct' of the regiment in the field as well as that of the replacement battalion at the beginning of the war, which did 'not justify a privileged location for

the memorial'. This was a reference to the fighting at Sukov on 20 March 1915. The memorial had to wait and this was understood least of all by the older members of the regiment, who could not be blamed for anything and were struggling for recognition and a sign of remembrance.

Those who had been serving longer could be recognised not only by their faces and that certain nonchalance of the 'veterans' but also by what they wore as signs of their long service and the events they had experienced in the form of badges on their caps and their uniforms, badges that betrayed an affiliation with a branch of the military or a troop body, and badges that conveyed personal achievements. Some of the badges, which were actually supposed to be visible, were covered up in order not to draw enemy fire as a result of a suspect glint. Others, and above all high distinctions, were not worn at all, but conveyed with ribbons or miniatures. It was in particular these, however, which were – if possible – not only worn with pride but were also repeatedly an incentive to expose and prove oneself again.

Officers and soldiers craved after something that testified to their conduct in war and was also understood as an emanation of Imperial and Royal favour. For the officers, there was a primary objective: the conferment of the Military Order of Maria Theresa. On 17 August 1917, the 180th conferment took place in Villa Wartholz in Reichenau an der Rax, one of the Emperor's favourite residences: 24 officers were awarded the Grand Cross, Commander or Knight of the Military Order of Maria Theresa. After this, the order's chapter collected the petitions of those officers who believed that they had performed a deed worthy of the Order. The Order was awarded for the last time in 1931.

Not dissimilar to the process for submission to the highest officer's distinction was the procedure for the most coveted accolade for enlisted men, the Medal for Bravery. Officers had also become eligible for this award during the war, but only to a very limited extent. In every case, as with the Military Order of Maria Theresa, a candidate had to enter himself and enclose references from superiors and subordinates with the application for bestowal. Since the officer corps had a high proportion of German Austrian officers, as repeatedly mentioned earlier above, it could of course never be ruled out entirely that soldiers from troop bodies who felt more connected to the superior commanders received a more positive evaluation than others, but as a rule it should be assumed that the references were objective and correctly portrayed the service of a member of the army. To a certain extent, the 'ranking' of the medals reflected the fate, dedication, willingness to make sacrifices and suffering of a troop body.

The Medal for Bravery had already in 1914 become a veritable mass award. It could no longer be compared with its forerunner, the Honorary Commemorative Medals, founded by Emperor Josef II, which had been relatively sparingly employed even during the Napoleonic Wars. The main mint had delivered over 1,500 Gold Medals

for Bravery by the end of 1916. To these were added 70,000 Silver Medals 1st Class, 190,000 Silver Medals 2nd Class and 400,000 Bronze Medals for Bravery. The Bronze Medals existed only as a result of an endowment by the Emperor on 14 February 1915. As before, it was regarded as a distinction for the enlisted men. This was to change only under Emperor Karl. By the end of the war, as many as four million applications for an award of the Medal for Bravery may have been submitted. In other words, around half the Austro-Hungarian soldiers in the First World War regarded themselves as heroes.

The Bronze Medals were conferred around 1.2 million times, the 'Lesser' Silver Medals up to 360,000 times, and the 'Greater' Silver Medals as many as 175,000 times. The rarest was the Gold Medal for Bravery, which was awarded only 4,661 times,<sup>2265</sup> of which 4,316 bestowals were on enlisted men and 345 on officers.<sup>2266</sup>

Even if we account for conferment practice and keep in mind the not uncommon multiple bestowal, at the end of the day, around 1.7 million applications were adjudged positively and thus the particularly brave conduct of more than forty per cent of the four million applicants was attested to.

The visible decorations were one thing. The related benefits were another. Knights of the Military Order of Maria Theresa received a lifelong honorarium, and the possessors of the Medal for Bravery could enjoy the progressive perks. An imperial resolution of 15 September 1914 regulated these perks. Subsequently, those who possessed the Gold Medal received a monthly allowance of 30 golden kronen, those with the Silver Medal 1st Class 15 golden kronen and those with the Silver Medal 2nd Class 7.50 golden kronen each month. Recipients of the Gold Medal for Bravery were, as a rule, to be removed from the front and only utilised in the hinterland. It was precisely the highly decorated enlisted men, however, who frequently pressed for a return to the front. And, of course, there were criteria beyond bravery and cowardice that made it clear how far identification and non-identification with this war actually went. Whether decorations could be a criterion remained to be seen. At least theoretically, the military distinctions, above all among the enlisted men, should have been distributed more or less equally across the regiments of the Common Army and the two standing armies. In addition to these, there were also the formations of the Landsturm (reserve forces) and the Navy. In fact, there were very large differences that were not only caused by one troop body being longer at the front than another, or that some troop bodies were formed only during the course of the war, that supply troops and medical facilities were generally located in the rear areas, that artillery, signallers and other branches of the military had to expose themselves less than infantry, cavalry was no more in demand than light cavalry, that bravery in the hinterland was generally barely considered a criterion and, finally, that in the case of the Navy and the aviation companies something else was emphasised than in the case of the so-called 'queen of weapons', the infantry. At least to some extent, however, several additional indications can be gained for the conduct of the troops.

It is probably not surprising that the German regiments led the way in the conferment of the highest distinction for enlisted men. The Hungarians were by no means next in line, however, and the Czechs were sometimes veritable collectors of Gold Medals for Bravery. Infantry Regiment No. 28, which was disbanded as a punishment and then reactivated, had fifteen recipients of the highest-ranking Medal for Bravery.

The ranking yields the following picture:

<b>Troop Body/Branch of Military</b>	<b>Reinforcement District</b>	<b>Regimental Language(s)</b>	<b>Gold Medals for Bravery</b>
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 7	Klagenfurt	79 % German	55
Imperial-Royal Territorial Infantry Regiment III	Brixen/Trento (Trient)	59 % German, 38 % Italian	50
Imperial and Royal Bosnian Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment 1	Banja Luka	93 % Croatian/Serbian	48
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 22	Sinj	82 % Croatian/Serbian	47
Imperial-Royal Territorial Infantry Regiment II	Brixen/Trento	55 % German, 41 % Italian	47
Imperial-Royal Territorial Infantry Regiment I	Salzburg/Innsbruck/Trento	58 % German, 38 % Italian	46
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 59	Salzburg	98 % German	45
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 11	Pisek (Pisek)	79 % Czech	43
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 47	Maribor (Marburg an der Drau)	77 % German	43
Imperial-Royal Landwehr Infantry Regiment 3	Graz/Maribor	94 % German	43
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 1	Opava (Troppau)	82 % German	41
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 4	Vienna	95 % German	41
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 91	České Budějovice (Budweis)	54 % German, 45 % Czech	41
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 3	Kroměříž (Kremsier)	83 % Czech	40
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 27	Graz	94 % German	40
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 39	Debrecen	92 % Hungarian	40
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 44	Kaposvár (Ruppertsburg)	88 % Hungarian	37
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 72	Bratislava (Preßburg)	51 % Slovakian, 28 % Hungarian	37
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 14	Linz	98 % German	36
Imperial-Royal Landwehr Infantry Regiment 1	Vienna	95 % German	36
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 2	Braşov (Kronstadt)	61 % Hungarian, 27 % Romanian	33
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 31	Sibiu (Hermannstadt)	69 % Romanian, 25 % German	33



Troop Body/Branch of Military	Reinforcement District	Regimental Language(s)	Gold Medals for Bravery
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 37	Oradea (Großwardein)	49 % Romanian 48 % Hungarian	33
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 34	Košice (Kaschau)	91 % Hungarian	32
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 87	Celje (Cilli)	86 % Slovenian	32
Imperial and Royal Bosnian Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment 4	Mostar	95 % Croatian/ Serbian	32
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 6	Novi Sad (Neusatz)	41 % German, 27 % Croatian/ Serbian	31
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 17	Ljubljana (Laibach)	86 % Slovenian	31
Imperial and Royal Light Infantry Battalion 1	Hradec Králové (Königgrätz)	74 % Czech, 26 % German	31
Imperial-Royal Landwehr Infantry Regiment 2	Linz/Salzburg	98 % German	31
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 69	Székesfehérvár (Stuhlweißenburg)	92 % Hungarian	30
Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment 76	Sopron (Ödenburg)	54 % German, 39 % Hungarian	30

All other troop bodies counted fewer than thirty recipients of the Gold Medals for Bravery, even the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Tyrolean Rifle Regiments, which boasted between nine and sixteen Medals for Bravery recipients per regiment. Some regiments, for example the Uhlan Regiment five, several field cannon and field howitzer regiments, ten of the fourteen heavy howitzer divisions, all mounted artillery divisions, ten of the fourteen supply convoy divisions and other troop bodies, did not have a single recipient of the Gold Medal for Bravery in their ranks. Were they therefore less brave? Were they cowardly?

It is understandable that the aviation companies, the Naval Aviation Corps and the units of the Imperial and Royal Navy could not touch the troop bodies of the field army in numerical terms. Other operational principles and, above all, dimensions were also in play here. Naturally, however, it could not be denied that they had also accomplished outstanding feats, deserved recognition and could claim that they had provided dozens of heroes. The members of the Polish Legion were honoured with thirteen Gold Medals for Bravery, the Ukrainian Voluntary Battalion with one, just as many as the Rifle Battalion 'Sandomierz'. His Majesty's Head Keeper received a Gold Medal for Bravery. Ultimately, he had helped Emperor Karl on the occasion of his accident in the torrent of the Isonzo to reach the safety of the shore. This was, however, another category.

Several medals were awarded posthumously. In other cases, it was observed that the Medals for Bravery tempted enlisted men and officers alike to be even braver and risk

their lives ever more. The statistics of fallen soldiers reveal a type of correlation between bravery and death. Wilhelm Winkler drew up detailed statistics after the war in which he attempted to list and order Austria-Hungary's losses in dead. He calculated that from every 1,000 people in each crown land, 36 men fell in battle in Carinthia, followed by Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Styria, Upper Austria and Moravia. He observed the numerically lowest losses for Galicia, Istria and Trieste. Winkler also calculated in parallel statistics the allocation of the dead in terms of nationalities, cited the German Austrians in first place, who were followed by the Hungarians, the Slovenes, the Moravians and all others. In last place were the Poles and the nationally mixed Ruthenian/Ukrainian territories.<sup>2267</sup> Like other things, statistics of dead can be interpreted in different ways. The fact that there were considerable differences, however, was and is just as evident as the observation that there was bravery, courage, fear and cowardice in thousands of increments. In the end, both the decorations and the numbers of losses provide only indications for how the conduct of individual troop bodies and entire divisions was evaluated away from the fronts and how the statistics, reports and individual observations then submitted to a type of overall picture of the conduct of the peoples of the Empire in this war. In 1918, however, the interpretation of this picture had for a long time no longer been a matter for the Army High Command and the military authorities. It had become a political topic through and through, which the deputies in the parliaments embraced with vehemence.

### The Army Disintegrates

Countless examples can be cited by now for the conduct of troops in the field and the hinterland. There seemed to be a continual back and forth. For a time, the mass desertions could have been taken as a gauge for the disintegration of the army. And the attempt was made to respond to the demand for loyalty towards the Empire by observing that the Empire and its organs showed a lack of loyalty to those who by no means regarded it as their duty to vindicate the Habsburg Monarchy. From summer 1915, the signs of this special type of disintegration had become fewer. But the reports of bravery and cowardice alternated at frequent intervals.

Exemplary for this are perhaps the reports on the behaviour of Infantry Regiment No. 11, which comprised approximately 80 per cent Czechs and which twice experienced cases of massive desertion in the Carpathians, but was mentioned with praise already one month later due to its brave conduct. On 29 May 1915, the regiment had been sent to the 9th Infantry Division and fought 'splendidly' at Horodok (Grodeck).<sup>2268</sup> In 1918, it could be observed that the regiment had one of the highest proportions of recipients of the Gold Medal of Bravery. Other troop bodies that had been regarded as

problematic now also gave no cause for complaint. This was perhaps related to the fact that the Army High Command had discontinued the systematic collection of reports above all on the conduct of the Czechs, which had taken place not least with the aim of installing a military governor in Bohemia, once this project failed. At the same time, Russian enthusiasm for the Czech deserters, who did not automatically consent to fight against their own compatriots in the framework of the Czech Legion, evidently also waned. Apparently, they were also named 'podlici' (villains), who had raised false hopes and spoken of an imminent revolution in Bohemia.<sup>2269</sup>

On 24 September 1915, Archduke Friedrich summarised what had happened by stating that the treasonous propaganda conducted for decades in Bohemia had also led to the failure of tried and tested troops. Alongside Infantry Regiments 28 and 36, it had been Landwehr (Austrian standing army) Infantry Regiments No. 7 in Pilsen, No. 8 in Prague and No. 29 in České Budějovice that had showed themselves to be unruly and willing to desert. The tendency to desert, claimed the Archduke, was to be countered not least by granting the Czechs generous economic assistance, in order to increase their 'staffing and material performance' and to stem the readiness to emigrate. Furthermore, everything was to be done to turn the civil service, which was fragmented into national groups, into a reliable pillar of the state. Changes in education, administration and the military were to round off the measures.<sup>2270</sup>

Desertions occurred in autumn 1915 and later, however. In East Galicia, almost 5,000 men were missing after 48 hours of fighting, and in October, a Czech rifle regiment suffered a painful defeat.<sup>2271</sup> The Commander of the IX Corps, Major General Kraliček, reported on 30 October 1915 that the mood of the mass of the soldiers was 'neither warm nor cold'. 'German and Hungarian regiments were also breached and lost prisoners, but the number of the missing compared with the number of dead and wounded is – as far as I know – never in a similar proportion to that of the infantry regiments with Czech personnel.'<sup>2272</sup> Conrad added that he inferred from the reports of the exchange of prisoners that the bulk of the prisoners of war were Czechs, of which a part had remained loyal to Austria or had now become so. All Czech and Serb Sokols, however, were without exception Russophile.<sup>2273</sup>

A little more fuel could be added to the flames. The quintessence of the Army High Command after a year of war, however, was that blanket judgements were passed: the Serbs were completely and the Ruthenians heavily Russophile. The Croats, Slovenes and Slovaks were particularly loyal to the Monarchy. The Poles were Austrophile, not on account of Austria but Russophobe on account of Russia. The Magyars were more radically Russophobe than Austrian patriots. The Italians were Russophobe, but not Austrophile. The Romanians were, contrary to expectations, Austrophile and the 'Mohammedans' absolutely Austrophile. The Jews – as usual – did not want to fall out of favour with anyone.<sup>2274</sup>

The relocation of replacement personnel had also not been the solution. In June 1915, the replacement battalion of Infantry Regiment No. 35 (Pilsen, 60 per cent Czech) was transferred to Székesfehérvár; it was substituted by the replacement personnel of Infantry Regiment No. 69, who came from Székesfehérvár to Pilsen. The Hungarians grumbled because they did not understand why they were transferred to Pilsen, and the Czechs grumbled that the officers only spoke Hungarian and do not take any consideration for the Czech soldiers. Every minor incident inflamed the mood. The replacement personnel were thus brought as soon as possible, often after not even eight weeks of training, to the rear areas of the front in the hope that the nationalist tensions would end there. They were sent into combat immediately afterwards, desertions occurred – and the loop began anew.

After several years of war, only one thing was clear: blanket judgements were nonsense. The Commander of the 93rd Infantry Division, Brigadier Adolf von Boog, was full of praise for the replacement personnel for Prague Infantry Regiment No. 28, which had been reduced to one march battalion. He had witnessed them at Monte San Michele in the vicinity of Gorizia (Görz) and was impressed by the soldiers, who had fought with courage and endurance. Boog stated that one only had to ‘enlighten [the soldiers] as to the thoroughly personal and selfish interests of some Czech deputies’. Finally, the hatred for the German language would have to be eradicated. ‘It is well-known that the Czech soldiers in Hungary, where the conduct of the Czech people – like everywhere during this war – is assessed in no way favourably, are not very esteemed and hear some rather unpleasant remarks. The same applies to the individual distribution of Czechs among the regiments of other languages. The “Deutschmeister” [Infantry Regiment No. 4] is already accustomed in general from Vienna to dealing with Czechs, though it does not exactly foster [...] deferential thoughts about them. Even if I have not heard any complaints that the Czechs who are assigned to Infantry Regiments 4 and 84 are treated badly, no-one can doubt that the Czech [...] must hear some hurtful remarks. That fills one with bitterness. One can tell from the people’s faces and must put oneself in their shoes: such a man has no-one he can talk to, he feels lonely, outcast and the severity of war service must hit him doubly hard [...]’ They were again to be collected in subdivisions, he continued, and Czech-speaking officers and NCOs assigned to them. If that was all to be of no avail, brute force would be appropriate: ‘The Czech must, like, I believe, all Slav peoples, constantly feel the lash. He is either a domestique or an anarchist.’ The Army High Command indeed gave Boog the possibility to pull together individual subdivisions in the period between the Italian offensives and to train them in accordance with his argumentation. The success was to prove him right. The analysis of the General, who was to become the first Commander of the German-Austrian People’s Militia after the war, wisely did not do the rounds.

In a similar way to Adolf von Boog, others also underwent a change of heart. Borojević, for example, who had earlier applied for the disbandment of Infantry Regiment No. 28, reported after the First Battle of the Isonzo very enthusiastically to the Military Chancellery how well his troops had proved themselves. He insisted on a revision of the disbandment of the Prague House Regiment and contributed considerably to Emperor Franz Joseph approving its re-establishment, for the time being in the form of a 'Field Battalion of Infantry Regiment 28'. The Commander of the Imperial and Royal 5th Army suggested, however, that other troop bodies might also feel the same way as the Prague soldiers at that time: 'If troops fail, that means for me [that] the commander has failed. I do not require that such commanders be deployed.' He regarded it as a physical impossibility that troops could be overwhelmed by the Italians. 'Such troops have to expect their disbandment, as I ordered in the northerly theatre of war.'<sup>2275</sup>

From the end of 1915 and entirely in 1916, the Army High Command received increasing complaints from German commanding generals and commanders-in-chief. General Count von Bothmer and General Marschall lamented the failure of Infantry Regiments No. 18 ('Königgrätz') and No. 98 ('Hobenmauth'). They had surrendered to the Russians almost without resistance. Now it was Conrad who smoothed things over and claimed that it would be a grave error of leadership to deploy the completely overfatigued personnel. The various catastrophes could be traced back, he claimed, to failures on the part of German commanders. To deploy replacement personnel immediately in post-battle scenarios was a serious mistake. In response to the demand of the Germans to disband the Czechs and replace them with Imperial and Royal troops, Conrad responded curtly that this wish 'unfortunately cannot be complied with'. The Germans subsequently deployed divisional cavalry to monitor unreliable troops, just as it had been learned from the Russians, who occasionally used Cossacks to prevent infantry from fleeing.<sup>2276</sup>

In November 1915, Army Group von Linsingen complained about the conduct of the Czechs. At Rudka in the so-called Styr bend, Landwehr Infantry Regiment No. 28 ('Pisek') had for the most part deserted to the Russians at the beginning of November.<sup>2277</sup> After that, it was again Poles and Ruthenians who were in line for criticism: it was claimed that Infantry Regiments No. 15 ('Tarnopol'), No. 58 ('Stanislaw') and No. 95 ('Czortków') had completely failed. The danger did not come from the enemy, but rather from the unreliability of one's own troops. Conrad responded to this on 24 November 1915: 'According to this report, Ruthenian, Polish and Czech personnel cannot be used at all.'<sup>2278</sup> The Germans were also unable to choose which of their ally's troops were agreeable to them. When Conrad was addressed by Falkenhayn in Pszczyna (Pleß) on 6 November 1915 regarding the desertion of Czech soldiers, he replied irritably: 'That is regrettable. But the army as a whole is solid, [in fact] more solid than at the beginning of the war. As a result of the common victories and suffering,

the peoples of the Monarchy are more intimately bound together in kinsmanship than [they were] at the outset. Naturally, the combat value has waned', but this was also the case in the German Army. The Prussian War Minister Wild von Hohenborn, who was not exactly a fan of Conrad's, noted: 'I think he is right.'<sup>2279</sup>

The criticism of the behaviour of troops shifted increasingly during the course of the war to the political level, whilst in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) and then in the Austrian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) emotions were running high. Ultimately, no-one escaped unscathed. It was also possible to follow how one nationality stirred up hatred against another and was incited. Budapest lodged the complaint that imperial German and Austrian commanders had insulted Hungarian officers and soldiers. Count Apponyi went even further and sharply criticised in September 1916 – in relation to the declaration of war by Romania – Archduke Friedrich, whom he regarded due to his incapability as to blame for the Germans being so dominant. Count Karolyi polemically asked whether the King of Hungary (i.e. Franz Joseph) had abdicated in favour of the German Kaiser.<sup>2280</sup> The language intensified. To describe the Army Supreme Commander publicly as 'incapable' was an indication of this. What practically all the peoples of the Empire had in common was that they yearned for an end to the war. The people were frustrated because the fifty-year-olds had already been mustered for the fourth time. This made no sense to them.<sup>2281</sup> The war continued, however, and one had to ask how the internal disintegration of the army was to be brought under control.

In the event of presumed or proven unreliability, was a solution to be sought whereby troop bodies with a dominant national affiliation were deployed far away from those fronts where they were subjected not only to enemy propaganda but also to their national sentiments? In the case of the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifle Regiments, for example, the route had been taken to reduce the proportion of Italians, and it had been dramatically cut. In 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifle Regiment No. 2, now only 6 per cent were Italians, as compared with 41 per cent at the beginning of the war. The first and third regiments now only had 2 per cent instead of previously 38 per cent of Italians, whilst the fourth regiment was regarded as free of Italians. Instead, thousands of Italians were stuck in Landwehr Regiment No. 5, whose proportion of Italians had been 20 per cent before the war and which in 1918 boasted more than 60 per cent. Eight so-called 'south-western battalions' had been formed that belonged to a new category, namely the P.U. units, which stood for 'politically unreliable'. They were deployed almost exclusively for security tasks in the interior of the Empire.<sup>2282</sup> Was it the solution to deploy the Italians who remained in the front formations only in Russia and the Ruthenians in Italy? Could the leadership problems, which were related to a stronger national mixing, and above all the linguistic problems be brought under control? Was it really the case – as the Russians were occasionally characterised – that patriotism was not a real concept for the Czechs, Ruthenians and other Slavs and that they therefore surrendered automatically or prac-

tically never deserted during trench warfare but in the open country quickly raised their hands and capitulated? This perhaps applied to periods of mobile warfare, but there had also been desertions on a mass scale at times when the front had become rigid. Was it a result of the identity crisis of several crown lands and the troops recruited there, which had not only been observed since the beginning of the war? Was it a question of motivation, loyalty, errors in leadership, the language problem or, after all, mentalities? Questions upon questions. The commanders of the German Army were also unable to deal with the various phenomena. And how could they? After all, the conduct of the peoples of the Empire was an utterly Austrian affair. It would not be possible to overcome the problem with disciplinary measures alone. It was also the case with the Russians that the officers had increasingly applied rigour and tried their luck by employing brutal discipline. It was precisely this example, however, that was to have a deterrent effect, since the unbridled application of violence only made officers and NCOs hated.<sup>2283</sup>

The difference in the conduct of the different national contingents continued. Here, there were also individual observations,<sup>2284</sup> and it was reported perhaps with some astonishment that the otherwise so vaunted Bosniaks also occasionally failed. But this was the exception, and the reactions to it could not have been more severe, indeed merciless: when replacement personnel of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Regiments Nos. 3 and 4 as well as units of the predominantly Czech Infantry Regiment No. 98 from Vysoké Mýto (Hohenmauth) wanted to surrender to the Italians in the karst area of Doberdó, they were gunned down by their own comrades.<sup>2285</sup> And when, in September and at the beginning of October 1916, cases of desertion also multiplied on the south-western front, the Army Group Commander, Archduke Eugen, issued an order on 8 October that culminated in the sentences: 'Particular attention is to be paid to personnel of Italian, Serbian and Romanian nationality after returning from leave, as well as Romanians who originate from territories that are currently occupied by the enemy. The provisions of martial law are from now on to be announced on a weekly basis.' The Archduke also ordered that the censoring of letters was to be handled strictly. In conclusion, however, the order stated that the overwhelming number of soldiers of all nationalities behaved 'loyally and bravely'.<sup>2286</sup> There was no mention of disbanding troop bodies or setting an example with constant punishments. As far as the mention of martial law jurisdiction was concerned, it could be assumed that it would remain a threat and nothing more. In 1916 and 1917, the war had become such a daily routine that everyday procedures also sufficed.

Martial law had only been applied to cases that were evaluated as 'crimes of desertion' from March 1915. On 16 March 1915, an announcement was made by the Army High Command, according to which deserters, if found guilty, were to be sentenced to death in accordance with § 444, Paragraph 2 of the Military Code of Criminal Procedure.<sup>2287</sup> The death penalty for desertion had been threatened during the second Car-

pathian offensive and was very evidently meant to combat the commencing desertion. The summary courts-martial had to convene quickly, if possible see through the hearing in one sitting and achieve unanimity for a guilty verdict. If any of these factors was not accomplished, due legal process had to be initiated. The commander of a summary court-martial had the right to grant clemency, though only if it had been allowed him by the Emperor. Otherwise, the death penalty had to be carried out within two hours of the proclamation of the sentence.

The maximum penalty for desertion was comparable to the extent that it had also been applied in similar cases in other armies. As it then turned out, however, Austria was far quicker to resort to execution than the German Army, where there were only 18 shootings for desertion, and also exceeded the British Army, where 269 death sentences for desertion were actually carried out. In France, Italy and Russia, on the other hand, deserters (or those who were regarded as such) were punished far more frequently. In Austria-Hungary, 345 soldiers were summarily convicted for desertion during the course of the war.<sup>2288</sup>

Until August 1917, the commanders from division upwards were empowered to pass death sentences in summary proceedings. On 10 August 1917, Emperor Karl instructed all death sentences to be submitted to him for his approval. If such approval was not issued, due legal process had to be instigated. After that, the number of summary proceedings decreased further. But a different attitude was also prevalent and made reference to the question, which could never really be answered, as to whether desertion was to be equated with cowardice.

In 1917, only twelve members of the military were convicted for proven cowardice. One military judge attributed this to cowardice being regarded as unmanly and soldiers therefore not wanting to open themselves up to such an accusation. With this assumption, however, he was unable to explain why during the course of the war there were, after all, around a million cases of members of the Imperial and Royal Army surrendering or deserting. Was the Imperial and Royal Army 'unmanly'? In those cases, however, where soldiers had been temporarily absent without leave though had not deserted, only the offence of unauthorised absence was alleged and accordingly generally mild judgments and punishments were delivered, since it was clearly taken into account that the soldiers were on occasion unable to bear the physical and psychological pressure.<sup>2289</sup> Since the captured deserters were generally granted suspended sentences in order to get them back to the front, a veritable loop began. Prison was by no means a deterrent, since it was preferable to be imprisoned and hope for amnesty than to let oneself be killed. Family members encouraged this practice, or they were even the reason for desertion, since relationships at home caused the men to flee. This took place frequently not with the intention to escape permanently, but to care for relatives or help the family – as the only surviving male member – in cultivating the field and tending to the farm.<sup>2290</sup>



Ultimately, within the Imperial and Royal Army during the course of the entire war 753 death sentences were passed in summary proceedings, of which 737 were carried out.<sup>2291</sup>

Breach of subordination	26
Mutiny	20
Insurrection	42
Desertion	345
Conspiracy to desert	19
Dereliction of duty whilst on guard	1
Self-mutilation	129
Breach of discipline and order	3

These statistics, compiled by Georg Lelewer, a former military judge, admittedly suffer from many things, since aside from the summary courts-martial there were also the military tribunals, which constituted a category in their own right and whose proceedings often ended very much more quickly in a death sentence.

Other figures also raise doubts. Thus, during the entire war, among the soldiers subjected to military jurisdiction, only 1,950 military crimes are supposed to have occurred in the aforementioned categories as well as 2,517 common crimes, ranging from theft via robbery, rape and disturbance of the peace to *lèse-majesté*.<sup>2292</sup> If this were true, the soldiers would have come into contact with criminality, crimes and delinquency of all kinds to an incomparably lesser degree than the civilian population.

The lawyer Franz Exner proved, however, that criminality generally declined in Austria during the war – not uniformly but noticeably, and remained until the end of 1916 clearly below the number of crimes and offences in peacetime. He attributed this to the absence of such and such a number of criminals, because – as soldiers – they were under special watch and able least of all to act out their criminal inclinations, and also to the fact that non-locals had returned to their homelands. Consequently, criminal tourism was no longer an issue. From 1917, i.e. with the growing adversity, the criminal cases increased again and ultimately soared.

Lelewer also described by way of example the methods used in order to evade serving at the front or military service in general. These ranged from feigning infirmity via constant changes of abode, artificially induced eczema, eye infections and chemical burning of the external auditory canal to pretence of gonorrhoea with soapy water and, above all, gunshot wounds, which were inflicted on oneself or brought about by consciously sticking extremities out from under cover in order to be hit by an enemy bullet. The death penalty threatened for each of these offences.<sup>2293</sup>

The leading Austrian psychiatrist, Julius Wagner-Jauregg, established that psychoses among soldiers were rare, neuroses on the other hand very common. Towards the end

of the war, he estimated the simulation of neuroses at 10,000 cases. It was the task of psychiatrists to cure them and make the men fit for combat again. It was no accident that Sigmund Freud called them 'machine guns behind the front'.<sup>2294</sup> Wagner-Jauregg treated in his clinic approximately 700 simulators, most of whom had been sent to him from other infirmaries. Nine-tenths of them were Czechs, followed by Poles and Ruthenians: there were hardly any soldiers from predominantly German regiments among them.<sup>2295</sup> During the first years of the war, 145 cases of simulated insanity were also assigned to him. It was by no means the case, however, that simulators had to reckon with serious punishment. They were sent back to the front. For many of them, this was probably punishment enough.

The military tribunals recognised no legal means for delaying the carrying out of sentences. They were valid for all troops assigned to the army in the field and had a spatial extension that consciously included large parts of the hinterland. From May 1915, military tribunals as a simplified form of criminal proceedings were also valid for Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, the Austrian Littoral, Tyrol and Vorarlberg. In a military tribunal, the death penalty could be applied to all crimes, and was thus less restricted in itself than summary court-martial proceedings. Military tribunals could also be applied against civilians. In the vicinity of the front, i.e. in those territories regarded as part of the war zone, most officers – or, in any case, from the function of sub-divisional commander upwards – but also Gendarmerie sergeants had the authority to have suspects executed without legal proceedings.<sup>2296</sup> Caprice was the order of the day.

The regular military courts constituted a strict contrast to the summary courts-martial and the military tribunals, and generally passed extraordinarily mild sentences. We know that the Tyrolean military courts convicted 137 deserters, but amnestied 76 of them. During the war years until 1918, the Graz military courts addressed a total of 312 cases of unauthorised absence that ended with guilty verdicts, and 148 cases of desertion. In one case, the death penalty was imposed, but then commuted to a prison sentence. The vast majority of the cases concerned theft, dereliction of duty whilst on guard, breach of subordination, non-compliance with a call-up order (148 cases), public violence, insubordination and similar offences.<sup>2297</sup>

Only with the failure of the Piave Offensive did desertion again become a mass phenomenon. The Allies had hoped for this and ultimately regarded with satisfaction how their hopes had been fulfilled. As early as January 1918, the French General Staff had expressed the assumption that the Imperial and Royal Army would probably no longer be in a position after the withdrawal of the Germans to defend itself in the long term.<sup>2298</sup> The British had also predicted at the beginning of the year that the Austrians were in the process of collapsing and would probably desert en masse.<sup>2299</sup> The Allies did everything to promote the inclination to desert and were increasingly successful.<sup>2300</sup> They paid attention to every deserter, asked him his reasons for deserting and his prognoses. Naturally, the

people portrayed their motives in the best possible, and indeed dazzling, light, mingled truth and fiction, and painted as gloomy a picture as possible of the troops they had just left. When, in February 1918, two Slovaks from Imperial and Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) Infantry Regiment No. 1 deserted, they stated that they had been treated badly, suffered from hunger and could no longer bear their German and Hungarian comrades. A Romanian from the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 64 made a similar statement: he had been treated poorly by the Hungarian officers, and 'the Austro-Hungarian soldier receives more blows than bread'.<sup>2301</sup> The prisoners of war and the deserters repeatedly cited increasing privation, deficient nourishment and also the catastrophic hygiene conditions as the cause of their very personal renunciation of the Empire.<sup>2302</sup> For the Allies and the exile organisations it was a case of following up on this. 'Our cause is flourishing', as it said on a leaflet signed by the Croat Ante Trumbić. 'Everyone is convinced that Austria will no longer exist after the war. [...] Fight fearlessly and energetically with all [your] power against "Central Europe", in order to allow a free Yugoslavia to emerge.'<sup>2303</sup> More and more officers deserted. Some of them then found themselves in Ljudevit Pivko's 'Yugoslav unit'. Troops who had been regarded throughout the war as particularly reliable, now showed signs of inner disintegration, whilst those who then deserted did not care that they were regarded as traitors. The hunger and the hopelessness were stronger motivations. Among the reasons for deserting, hunger was cited six times as often as nationalistic reasons.<sup>2304</sup> In such a situation, no propaganda was needed.

When the Italians captured the war diary of the almost completely Croat Infantry Regiment No. 96, they naturally read with interest what the War Surveillance Office recommended for keeping the troops in line. Among other things, it was urged that battalions receive patriotic instruction on a weekly basis; the Emperor's Hymn was to be practised and sung loudly, and the officers were also to be present and to join in.<sup>2305</sup> The success of such measures was not quantifiable.

During the course of the Piave Offensive, around 12,000 Imperial and Royal soldiers fell into prisoner of war captivity or deserted. In July 1918, two Czech Uhlans, evidently from Uhlan Regiment No. 11, recounted that their comrades were united in their hatred for the Germans and hoped for an Allied offensive in order that they could surrender. One Polish gunner, who had deserted to the Italians in August 1918, related that many Austrian Poles wanted to desert but they were discouraged as non-swimmers by the prospect of having to cross the Piave. Therefore, most of them took the route to the north, into the interior of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>2306</sup> Tens of thousands of soldiers were busy searching for deserters. They had barely any success – and perhaps did not want to, either.

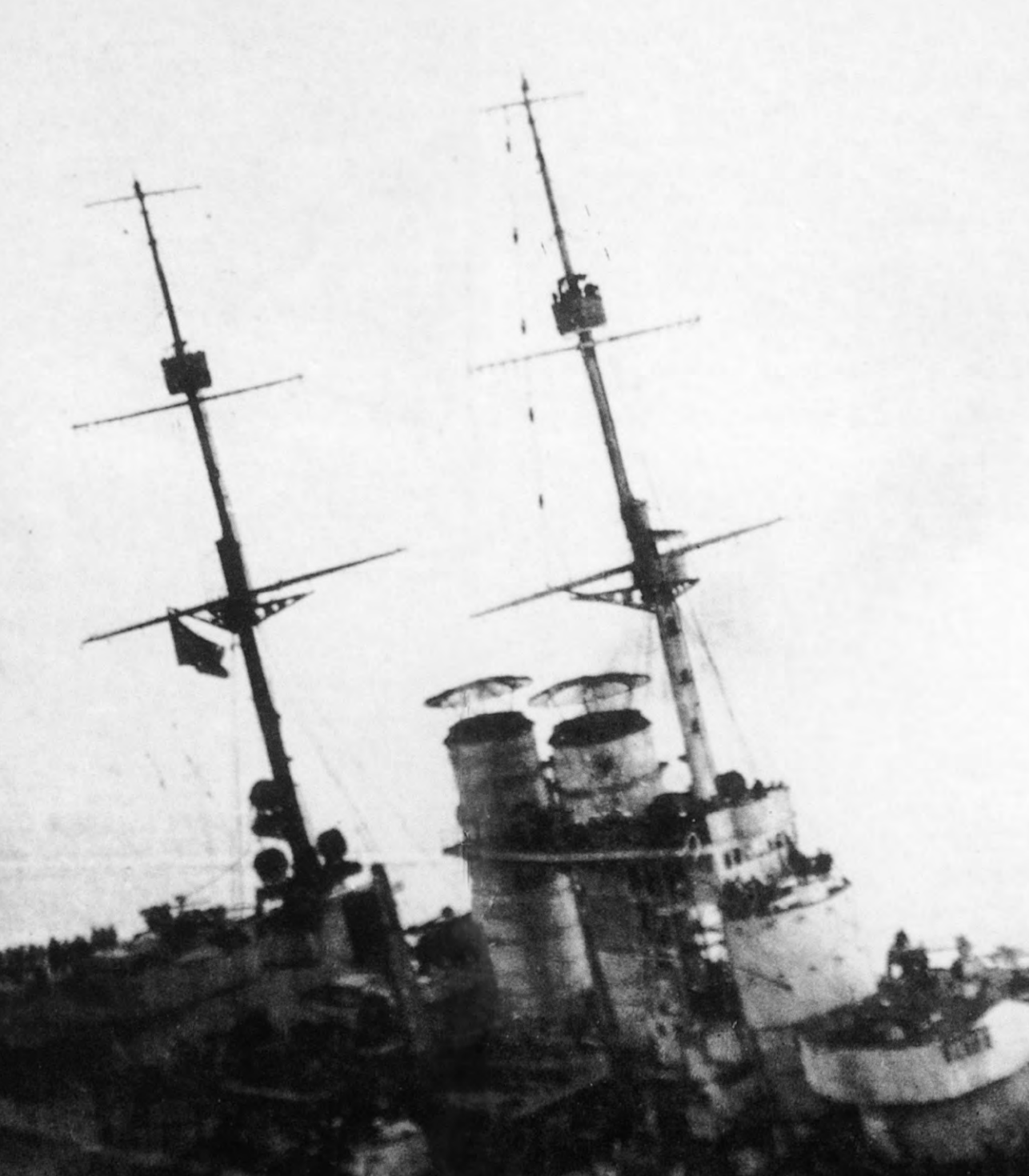
The desertion problem was also addressed in the Reichsrat. The Polish deputy Hermann Liebermann took the view that the patrols looking for deserters were complete nonsense and the damage done to the 'peaceful population' was incomparably higher

than the success of the patrols.<sup>2307</sup> Of course, doing nothing was not regarded as a solution, either. Thus, attempts were made to intensify blandishments of the troops. Patriotic instruction was expanded, bans were imposed on taking leave and promises were made about an imminent end to the war. It was all to no avail.

Two Hungarian soldiers who were sent from Italy to the German western front, recounted to the French after their desertion in August 1918 that their troop body had mutinied at the end of the Piave Offensive and refused to advance anymore. Instead of restoring discipline and motivating the soldiers, they had been disarmed and sent to the Germans in order to dig trenches there. However, the Germans, who needed every man they could get, had re-armed them and assigned them to a particularly dangerous section of the front. They would only have been cannon fodder. The desertion of the Hungarians was then also addressed in the Hungarian Reichstag, and the discussion ended with the regiment being stripped of all decorations.<sup>2308</sup>

The Army High Command naturally did everything to play down the fact of the desertions, but the Italians described at all the more length how ever more members of the Imperial and Royal Army were changing sides. Czechs and Hungarians claimed, like Poles, that they and their comrades were completely demoralised and that they only waited for an Italian attack in order to then surrender. A German Austrian stated that his comrades would not desert for the simple reason that they did not want to abandon their starving families, whom they still wanted to send something. For them, even the substitute bread and the 100 g of horsemeat that was provided at the front appeared to be a feast. One Tyrolean was said to have claimed after his capture that the morale of some troop bodies had sunk so low that they did not even shy away from murdering unpopular officers. He mentioned the concrete example of Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 17 ('Laibach').<sup>2309</sup> The disintegration of the army was palpable.

The news from the interior of the Dual Monarchy did its part in contributing to the increase in agitation. Bohemia, Galicia and Hungary but also Upper Austria discontinued their deliveries of foodstuffs to other parts of the Monarchy. Each national group made the others responsible for the looming catastrophe. In August, as many as 100,000 soldiers fled. During the first week of October, the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 65 ('Munkács') alone reported no fewer than 1,451 predominantly Hungarian deserters.<sup>2310</sup> One Polish rifle regiment mutinied and was to be disbanded as punishment and divided up among other troop bodies.<sup>2311</sup> Slovenes mutinied. Hungarians and Romanians from Infantry Regiment No. 31 ('Hermannstadt') related that their officers had attempted to keep them in line with promises to the effect that permanent, warm winter positions were being prepared and they would not have to spend another winter in the trenches. Only a very few believed this. Around 5 per cent of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers resolved during the final weeks of the war not to witness the end of the conflict in the ranks of the Imperial and Royal Army.



# 31 The Twilight Empire

31. On 10 June 1918, the newest capital ship in the Imperial and Royal Navy, the dreadnought *Szent István*, was sunk by an Italian motor torpedo boat. For the second time during the war, the fleet unit led by the *Szent István* was to break through the Allied blockade of the Strait of Otranto. After the battleship had been torpedoed, the operation was abandoned. For the Imperial and Royal Navy, this was the most severe loss of the entire war.

**D**uring the Piave Offensive, one of the rarer items included in the baggage in the imperial royal train was a marshal's baton, which had been donated by German officers, and which Emperor Karl was supposed to present following the success of the campaign in Vicenza or anywhere else in the territory that it was hoped would be conquered.<sup>2312</sup> The marshal's baton was never unpacked.

### **The Judgement of Austria-Hungary's Final Offensive**

The June battle in Veneto had ended with defeat for the Imperial and Royal troops, and had become a catastrophe to the extent that the last intact instrument of power of the Habsburg Monarchy had been given the death blow. The knowledge that the offensive had uncovered chaos among the leadership was widespread. Those soldiers who had also time and again given their best for this offensive, lost faith in the middle-ranking leadership, which in turn had no trust in the higher levels of command, and, finally, it had to be acknowledged that this had been an offensive for which ultimately, the Army High Command and the commands on the Isonzo front and the Tyrolean front had made contradictory plans. An offensive had failed that had been intended to act as a diversion from the catastrophe at home, while at the same time, nothing was to be risked, and which ultimately had been started at the wrong time, and in some cases had been miserably led. Instead of achieving at least a limited success at the end, or providing an opportunity to stock up on food provisions and military equipment from the Allies for at least a few weeks, the final strategic reserves had been used up. The loss in terms of people was almost evenly shared: around 70,000 Imperial and Royal soldiers dead, wounded or taken prisoner compared to 84,000 Italian and Allied troops. In the area of Army Group Conrad alone, thousands of Italians had surrendered.<sup>2313</sup> This had at least meant that for a time, the Italians had no further opportunity to conduct their own offensive. However, aside from this, the balance in Austria-Hungary was only negative.

Four Imperial and Royal armies had participated in the June offensive, although of course they, too, were naturally not present in full. Ten times as many soldiers had played the part of more or less well-informed observers somewhere in the hinterland, and now felt that judgements made long since were being confirmed. It was said in irony that the prohibition on duels so vehemently imposed by Emperor Karl had only

been issued for the reason that otherwise, the officers at the front would have killed all members of the General Staff, and a man who called the highest military authorities a 'lunatic asylum' was sentenced 'not for causing insult, but due to high betrayal of military secrets'.<sup>2314</sup> The worst thing was that now, all those who had until then supported the concept of empire and who had finally fought for this empire had given up hope. At the beginning of July 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was on the brink of collapse.

It was of no help that Emperor Karl made a sacrifice that must surely have not have caused him much grief: on 11 July, he relieved Conrad von Hötzendorf of the command of the army group that bore Conrad's name, and gave him the title of 'Count', as well as the honorary post of 'Colonel of all the Guards'.<sup>2315</sup> In this way, the Emperor, according to the Saxon envoy in Vienna, von Nostitz, was merely setting 'the honorary monument to a military commander whose glory is long faded'.<sup>2316</sup> However, Conrad was by no means the main culprit in the debacle and, ultimately, he had only been in a position to recommend his operational concept. The decision as to which operational approach should be selected and where the focus of the action was to be lay with the Army High Command. The Chief of the General Staff, Arz von Straußenburg, also accordingly tendered his resignation,<sup>2317</sup> since he had been largely responsible for the planning debacle. The Emperor wished him to remain in his position, however. Even so, the Chief of the Operations Division, Baron Waldstätten, saw no grounds for personal consequences.

It was already evident from the first requests to speak in the Hungarian House of Representatives that a bitter and emotional settling of accounts would ensue. 'Recklessness and unscrupulousness' was the tenor of the reactions given. Some people, such as Count Viktor Széchényi, who had taken part in the fighting as a squadron commander and aide-de-camp in the 1st Cavalry Division, was not only concerned with errors of leadership and logistical problems; he also recounted a particularly stark case of poor troop leadership, in which the Commander of the Isonzo Army, General Baron von Wurm, who in light of the retreat of the 1st Cavalry Division, and despite the fact that it had lost 5,000 Hussars, had apparently had nothing to say to the division other than: 'I express my regret to the troops over their lack of resilience.'<sup>2318</sup>

On 9 July 1918, the deputy of the Viennese Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) August Kemeter, in the name of the German Catholic Centre Party and in his role as executive member of the Union of German National Parties (*Verband der Deutschnationalen Parteien*) posed 23 questions regarding the reasons for the failure of the Piave Offensive to the Imperial-Royal Minister for National Defence, Czapp von Birkstätten, successor to Minister Georgi who had served in the post for many years. He did so in order to receive documents for a secret meeting of the House of Representatives, which was due to take place on 22 and 23 July, and was to discuss the June battle in Veneto. As 'painful'



as the responses might be, Kemeter still wanted the greatest possible openness. Why was the first offensive that Austria-Hungary had led alone since May 1916 without success? Was it correct that the 'unanimous, selfless and thus uniform cooperation of the army leaders' had been lacking, and that Field Marshal Baron Kövess and a series of other influential people from the military hierarchy had urgently advised against the offensive? 'Was it not a mistake to lead the offensive over the entire front, instead of conducting a massive, decisive blow at one or more particularly suitable points?' Had there been too little ammunition, had the aviation force really been inferior, why were Blue Cross and Yellow Cross chemical warfare agents not used, why had the medical services failed in the Trento (Trient) area, and how high were losses among officers, in particular among the higher ranks? 'Is there any recall of the superfluously mustered masses of people in the base areas and the hinterland, who were not used sensibly to provide the professional work so urgently needed for the army and the people in equal measure, for example railwaymen mustered in their thousands in the cadre of the railway regiment, who for many months have been withdrawn from any sensible activity that is appropriate to the purpose?' And, as a final item: 'May earnest efforts be made to ensure that higher officers are also cautious with messages regarding preparations for military action.'<sup>2319</sup> The interpellation response turned into a thick volume. Despite the demand for openness, the Army High Command failed to respond to a series of items, and others were only treated in very general terms, which resulted in the fact that the Minister of National Defence in the House of Representatives came out in a very good light, and the Army High Command in a bad one.<sup>2320</sup>

The memoranda written by the high commands involved in the Piave Offensive, which were gradually released, then presented the reasons of the failure in a far clearer and more detailed way than had been expressed in the materials given to the Austrian Reichsrat and the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet). Weak points, inadequacies and grotesque failure of duty had clearly been present everywhere.<sup>2321</sup> An inspection visit by the former Army Supreme Commander, Archduke Friedrich, who had been sent by the Emperor to Italy and who had written records and reports, also provided an indication of several of the reasons.<sup>2322</sup> Some things were so obvious that every soldier knew about them. The German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, General Cramon, who himself had been a witness of the failure and who had sneered thoroughly at – what he regarded as – the haphazard travelling about behind the front on the part of the Emperor, received countless letters in which he was informed about incidents at and behind the front.<sup>2323</sup> General Alois Count Schönburg-Hartenstein, who had commanded the IV Corps of the Isonzo Army during the June offensive, and who had then become Commander of the Imperial and Royal 6th Army, compiled a comprehensive manuscript that was designed to demonstrate to the Emperor with full openness and, indeed, in a directly aggressive manner, the catastrophic situation

in which the state and the army found themselves, as well as the necessity of an immediate peace.<sup>2324</sup> The Emperor acknowledged all of this, and chose to ignore the fact that the reticence towards him and the respect to which he had been accustomed had vanished; he was attacked in just the same way as the Army High Command. And the number of those who felt that he was personally responsible for the misery, and who castigated him for his indecisiveness, for making errors and showing flaws of character, rose from day to day. This notwithstanding, it was necessary to look ahead. Emperor Karl ordered a conference for 7 September of the three military ministers, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of Recruitment and the Chairman of the Joint Food Committee. All the gentlemen requested to attend the conference were to give a report of whether the necessary requirements in terms of personnel and materials were still in place in order to continue the war: on the difficult recruitment situation, the lack of war materials, the need for rolling stock, the organisation of the work forces in the hinterland, as well as on the 'propaganda for maintaining the morale of the army in the field and in the hinterland'. However, this related not to the final months of the current year, but already to 1919. The figures actually spoke for themselves: in the hinterland, there was a shortfall of 40,000 men in order to provide the materials needed by the armaments industry and to help in the fields. It was of no use to count on the half-a-million returnees, since in many cases, after their convalescent leave, they no longer re-joined the ranks. It had been hoped that a limitation in discharges from duty would make more soldiers available. 160,000 men had been anticipated. However, in Hungary, only 11,000 men could be enlisted, and in Austria, 50,000 additional men were added to those who had already been discharged.

From 1917, increasing numbers of 'female auxiliary workers' were taken on, in order to free up men for the fighting. With time, over 30,000 women were employed who fell under the 'female auxiliary workers' category, and who worked as technical assistants in laboratories, kitchens and offices, or as nurses and domestic staff in the military hospitals. They reported least of all for reasons of an increased sense of patriotism, but because they had to earn money to survive, and expected to be better provided for by the military than if they were hired as industrial workers. This applied at least to around half of the women, who came from the lower social classes and who volunteered as auxiliary staff. Ultimately, however, the use of women only offered a low degree of help when it came to replacing human resources.<sup>2325</sup> The Chief of Recruitment gave an overall figure for the number of people in the army in the field as 2,823,066. These included around 200,000 prisoners of war, 125,000 wounded and sick and 32,000 female auxiliary workers. The fighting troops now comprised only 917,000 men. If this level was to be maintained, a monthly replacement of between 100,000 and 120,000 men would be required. If the returnees, those who had recovered from injury or illness and those born in 1900 would be available and that, on top of this, 'no major fighting oc-

curs – which however does not depend on ourselves alone’, it would still be possible to muster the march formations needed by the end of August 1919. Then, however, a gap would open up that it would no longer be possible to close. 830,000 shirts, 4,770,000 pairs of trousers and 1,988,000 coats had been ordered, but not delivered. The greatest problem was naturally food, and here, all that could be offered for discussion were hopes and intentions, although the Army High Command also made it quite clear that: ‘The proposal to give an officer the same food as the men, as is the case in Germany, is not acceptable to the AOK [Army High Command], since among us, the conditions are different to those in D [Germany].’<sup>2326</sup>

### The Penultimate Cabinet of Habsburg Austria

One man who knew what was happening in the vicinity of the Emperor and in Austria, the former Foreign Minister Ottokar Czernin, wrote at the time of the Piave Offensive to the former Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza about his personal impressions and opinions: ‘We shall lose the war due to the turmoil in Austria; then, Hungary will lose it, too, and if I were a Hungarian, I would not look to the increasing anarchy in Austria with much calm [...]. Recently, I have become so terribly pessimistic; the developments in Austria are appalling, particularly in Bohemia and “South Slavia” – the beginning of the end, if things continue in this way; a headless, disorganised floundering about, with the only clear aim of keeping Seidler in his post.’<sup>2327</sup> Still, Prime Minister Seidler could no longer be kept, and his own dilemma was merely a reflection of the general misery.

If one looks at the final days and weeks of Seidler’s government, one really does have the impression that all it was now capable of was amateur dabbling and, furthermore, with a certain degree of despotism. The reluctant Prime Minister, Seidler, drew similar conclusions from the Alliance of Arms with the German Empire, as did other countries abroad. He saw this agreement and the activation of the Supreme War Command as taking the final turn towards steering a German course, and wanted to implement it rigorously within the Austrian half of the Empire. Seidler allowed an open split to occur with the Slavs, and on 19 May octroyed the regional division of Bohemia.<sup>2328</sup> This was aimed at dividing the administration of the Czech and German regions, a measure which – also among the Czechs – had received different reactions, but by no means only negative ones. However, the announcement in the non-parliamentary period in the form of a government decree inevitably presented an enormous challenge. No Czech now spoke of the fact that the matter also had its benefits, and that this meant a bothersome problem had been resolved. Now, the only thing on everyone’s minds was to attack the government in the harshest way possible. At any rate, the wrong point in

time had been chosen for the octroi, since in connection with the results of the meeting at Spa and the discussions in Berlin, Seidler's step was regarded as blatantly taking the imperial German course and, on this matter, the Slavs most certainly had no desire to cooperate.

In May, the government prohibited agitation in favour of the May Declaration by the Southern Slav Club. At the same time, Seidler and Emperor Karl assured the German parties that they would not forfeit access to the Adriatic under any circumstances.<sup>2329</sup>

However, it was not only the Czechs and Slovenes who brought down Seidler's Cabinet, but above all the Poles. Two days after Emperor Karl and Kaiser Wilhelm met in Spa, the Polish Club decided to refuse to agree to the next budget, which was due to be passed by 30 June. If this failed to occur, emergency measures and the end of parliamentarianism loomed once more. Seidler tendered his resignation to the Emperor. However, Karl refused to accept it. Seidler was forced to remain in office, and his actions became increasingly uncontrolled. From 1 July onwards, the state budget no longer had parliamentary approval. A conference of representatives of the parties was then held, which decided the order of the day for the next session of the Reichsrat. Two items were already on the list: the first reading of the provisional budget and a ministerial denouncement of Seidler and Interior Minister Toggenburg.

At the opening of the Reichsrat on 16 July 1918, Seidler invoked his government programme. He was doubtless correct when he accused the Slav parties and the Czechs in particular of not being willing to cooperate, and saying that the Czechs had refused to participate in the 'commission for the revision of the constitution'. With the division of the regions, he claimed, a start had been made in separating the administration of the national settlement regions from each other, and in creating the conditions for the autonomy of the peoples after the war. This was all very well, but Seidler then continued: 'And if under the circumstance that the government were to finally abandon the comity of nations that has been sought for so long and with such patience, there is an intimation that a German path might be taken, then I would not be inclined to go against it. Since if there is a political path in Austria, then it can only be such a one that guaranteed full protection of the justified interests of the German people. The backbone of this multi-faceted state is after all the German people, and will always remain so.'<sup>2330</sup> This was a challenge to a fight.

The house was in uproar. However, Seidler was clearly prepared to go even further and, indeed, staked everything on one card. The challenge to the Slavs was only intended to heat up the mood. Since on 23 July, the debate was due to begin on the failure of the army and individual generals during the Piave Offensive, it had been agreed with the German radicals that they could start a commotion and, in so doing, offer a pretext for again dissolving the Reichsrat. As a result, in a new version of the civilian dictator-

ship à la Stürgkh, it would have been necessary to rule by means of imperial edicts. The ministers of an Austrian Cabinet would have been exclusively radical representatives of the German nationalist camp. The population was to be kept in check by the police and, above all, the military. This did not augur well.

Then, a solution came that was in fact unexpected. The Polish Club informed the Speaker of the House of Representatives that it would approve the next provisional budget, but only on condition that Seidler finally resign. Seidler did so immediately, and the Emperor also accepted the resignation of the Cabinet. Nonetheless, the Czechs still seized the opportunity to continue to demand and justify a ministerial denouncement. Although they remained in the minority, since some of the Poles stayed away from the voting and the issue had become out of date anyway, the end of the Seidler government could hardly have been more spectacular.<sup>2331</sup> It in any case concurred with the secrete debate on the Piave battle, in which accusation upon accusation rained down, and no holds were barred even towards the Emperor, and the Empress in particular. The 'Italians' were almost flagrantly accused of treason. The hour of the demagogues had arrived.

At the moment of his resignation, it emerged that Seidler had clearly acted with the full agreement of Emperor Karl, since the Emperor not only named him his Chief of Staff, but also requested that 'the course pursued by Seidler' should be continued.<sup>2332</sup> This request was made by the same emperor who was regarded as the inheritor of the principles propounded by Archduke Franz Ferdinand, an emperor who sought an understanding with the Slavs, achieved a return to parliamentarianism in Austria and who one year previously had made every effort to loosen the bonds with the German Empire; an emperor who just a few months before had attempted to conclude a peace, and who in light of the negotiations with Russia had threatened that Austria-Hungary would sign a separate peace. Now, all that no longer applied.

However, there was one issue on which Karl had not changed his position: he was not prepared to accept a restriction on his civilian and military authority. For this reason, the man nominated as Seidler's successor was not perhaps an influential, high-profile politician, but one who had parliamentary experience, and who had good relations with non-German politicians, but who was forbidden to pursue any significant political goals, and who was to be unconditionally subordinate to the German course. The choice fell on the former Minister of Education, Max Hussarek von Heinlein.

As his immediate political goals, Hussarek named a Polish-Ruthenian Compromise and a *modus vivendi* with the southern Slavs. In this regard, however, the Emperor pointed out that agreement with the Hungarians should be sought, and this in effect made his plans impossible to realise. Hussarek claimed that it must be possible to reach an agreement with the Poles and Ruthenians and southern Slavs, since the Czechs would be isolated. Then, the Catholic Bohemians and Moravians would support the government; in this way, a federalist programme could be realised. Such considerations

were not necessarily new, however; they had already been in people's minds in the period before the war, and had repeatedly been reformulated since the Stürgkh era. However, Hussarek's programme did not amount to national autonomies, but federalism.<sup>2333</sup> Besides, however, it was clear to most that Hussarek regarded himself primarily as an official servant of the Emperor, who was obliged to obey the Monarch and who did what Karl asked of him. In so doing, he was also not in the least in a position to feel flattered that he was the key adviser to the Emperor for the Austrian half of the Empire; he was now simply one of a number of such imperial advisors, and was just as unable as they were to bring the escalating flurry of activity under control.

Initially, the new Prime Minister wanted to govern with a cabinet of civil servants, to leave most of the ministerial posts occupied by the same people who had been in place when he had taken over from Seidler, and not to incorporate parliamentarians with whom the issue of constitutional reform was to be tackled until the autumn. The Czechs could no longer be won over, but did make a slight concession by pledging a 'loyal opposition'.<sup>2334</sup> The Polish Club also promised support, while Hussarek received positive responses only from a portion of the German parties. The southern Slavs remained in opposition. Hussarek therefore took the only step that was available to him in his position: he took on the role as a type of placatory privy councillor and issued a bland governmental declaration that appealed solely to patriotism. When however he demanded justice for all peoples and social classes, the radical German representatives raised a commotion. Since the Prime Minister needed their support, he finally gave his silent approval to all demands made by the German radicals, who called for the rapid implementation of the act on the division of the regions. In this way, Hussarek achieved a majority for the next provisional budget, which was approved by 31 December 1918.<sup>2335</sup> It was the last budget of Habsburg Austria.

### The Radicals Set the Agenda

Was this now anything more than merely a historical term? The country was in uproar. The railway workers, and the telephone and telegraph offices in Poland had intermittently shut down their services. Officials went on strike, and thus even this bastion of officialdom, which continued to regard itself in Josephinist terms, began to shake. The military command in Kraków (Krakau) demanded that martial law be imposed for civilians. Legal uncertainty was rampant; the military order dissolved.<sup>2336</sup> Civilian and military authorities feuded. A significant portion of the clergy was bound to national political ideas. In Poland, a military underground organisation, the Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (POW), had been formed from the Polish auxiliary corps that had been dissolved by the Army High Command in February 1918.<sup>2337</sup> Soldiers from Polish

units of the Common Army and the Landwehr (Austrian standing army) went over to the POW with increasing frequency and went underground. During the first half of 1918, over 35,000 deserters were arrested in Galicia, which indicated that many times more this number had remained undetected. In the military command areas of Kraków and Przemyśl, the deserters became a scourge.<sup>2338</sup> Officers from the former Polish Legion acted as agitators within the Austro-Hungarian Army and sought to persuade Polish soldiers to desert.<sup>2339</sup> The Polish underground transported the soldiers to Russian territory, where they could clearly organise and operate particularly safely, and began to form Polish corps there. This was regarded as a matter of consistency, since Austria-Hungary had after all announced Polish sovereignty in the Two Emperors' Proclamation. The Poles were aware of their relatively fortunate situation, since in August 1918 the German Empire had made a type of counter-offer to the Austro-Polish solution: Germany was willing to grant Poland the Chełm region, which was also claimed by Ukraine, and offered a military convention, free access to the sea, and much more.<sup>2340</sup> Poland therefore had to decide between the German Empire and Austria. If it chose to play the German card, it would receive Chełm, larger sections of the coast and Germany's 'shimmering defence'. If Poland agreed to a personal union with Austria-Hungary, it would likely be given Galicia. But was it at all realistic to wait for an Austro-Polish solution? When the Germans increased their offer and, finally, in September 1918, also offered Poland Lithuania, the Poles lost interest in the Austro-Polish solution. Austria-Hungary would no longer have the power to push through any kind of solution.

However, while the Austrian Poles negotiated through to the last and at least outwardly indicated their partial support for the Austrian government, this was no longer the case for the Czechs. They had already set out on a path of rejection in 1917, and had become increasingly radicalised. A week before Hussarek's entry into government, the 'Czech National Committee' was formed, with the aim of preparing to take over the government in an independent Czecho-Slovak state. The way for this had already been paved by the émigrés abroad, whilst the Pittsburgh Agreement regulated the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks. The radical Czech leader, Karel Kramář, who in 1915 had been put on trial and sentenced, and pardoned in 1917, set himself at the head of this national committee. Although the Czechs refrained from dealing the final blow that would lead to the Austrian parliament being dissolved once again, they consistently refused to cooperate. When beginning in June 1918, the Entente powers recognised Czecho-Slovakia as a belligerent power, followed by the USA at the beginning of September, there was almost no further need to maintain the façade. And even if not all conditions were provided for recognising the country under international law, a territory could be delineated over which such a recognition should extend. Not least, Czechs and Slovaks and both Austria and Hungary could claim that the

Czecho-Slovak state would also have troops who had been sanctioned by the Allies as an allied military force, and who were already fighting as legionaries on the side of the Allies. If Czech claims after the war were to be believed, they were indeed large in number: the American forces counted over 42,000 Czecho-Slovaks, of whom only a few individuals were sighted at the front, however. They were not deserters, but had at most abandoned their posts. The British counted 1,102 Czecho-Slovaks, while 1,365 fought in the new Serbian Army, 9,975 in the French formations and, finally, 19,476 with the Italians, of which some had already changed sides in Russia. In Russia itself, a total of 71,310 Czecho-Slovak soldiers had apparently reported for duty to the Legion. Naturally, there were a large number of double counts, and those Czechs and Slovaks who wished to serve as part of the US forces were a category in their own right. The fact that on the Czech side, 145,614 Czech and Slovak soldiers were claimed as Legion members was after all only part of the post-war propaganda that was designed to push through the Czech demands.<sup>2341</sup> And the fact that at least four times as many Czechs and Slovaks still belonged to the Imperial and Royal Army at the end of the war was quickly pushed to one side. This was not material that could be used to 'make a state' in November 1918. But agitation was always possible.

The Imperial-Royal Prime Minister Hussarek already began at the end of July to drive forward the separation of Germans and Czechs as national groups, and to prise the German settlement area out of the federation of the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>2342</sup> The Czech side described it as 'ripping the land apart'.<sup>2343</sup> On 14 September, the next Imperial-Royal Interior Minister, Baron Edmund von Gayer, requested that the Austrian Council of Ministers agree to an act on the division of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Two days later, the Council of Ministers approved the act. At the same time, the slogan of national self-determination began to circulate, and was also used to justify the division pushed forward by the German nationalist side. Then, work began on specific organisational matters, which were intended to bring a change to the political administrative districts and the installation of regional governments. The notion of the Czech state could no longer be negated; now, only the continued national existence could be secured, or bare force applied. Hussarek opted for the former, and in so doing, was at least acting in concord with the German Freedom, German Nationalist and Christian Social circles in the German parts of the Monarchy. They held 'people's days' in all the lands, and demanded, as did the Mayor of Vienna, Weiskirchner in mid-June 1918, for example, 'that dams should be erected in order to protect our property'.<sup>2344</sup> Laws were demanded to prevent non-Germans from purchasing German land and property, as well as the extension of the German education system, which had been abandoned to 'alienation' following the influx of tens of thousands of Jews from Galicia and Bukovina. The 'immeasurable sacrifices' should not have been made for nothing. There should be no Czech and no southern Slav state, Tyrol should remain undivided, and Trieste (Triest) be retained for shipping.



In front of the Viennese City Council building, the flags of the German Empire and the colours of the Revolution of 1848 were flown.<sup>2345</sup> This sight filled a man such as Prelate Ignaz Seipel with a great sense of foreboding. Yet other representatives of the Christian Social Party, such as Prelate Hauser in Upper Austria, continued to actively support the German Nationalists. Even for a politician such as Jodok Fink from Vorarlberg, 1848 suddenly played a role, although only to the extent that on 12 August, he claimed at the Dornbirn people's day that the citizens would find it easier to be loyal to the ruling dynasty and the state if the tradition of the *Vormärz*, the years prior to the March Revolution, were no longer to dominate in Austria.<sup>2346</sup> This too was a signal.

Hussarek was unable to counter the southern Slav demands, and capitulated before the dilemma that while he required Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia to be included in a southern Slav solution, the same did not apply to Slovenia. There, however, calls were becoming louder for the Yugoslav solution, while at the same time, there were fears of German dominance that would inevitably crush the Slovenes.<sup>2347</sup> The 'Yugoslav Division' that had been fighting in the Allied Salonika Army formation since June 1918 now consisted not only of Serbs and Croats, but also Slovenes.<sup>2348</sup> Until that point, the Slovenes had always been regarded as being particularly loyal to the Monarchy. Now, however, the radicals had begun to set their agenda, too. In this, there was no overlooking the fact that part of the blame lay with the Viennese government. Since it refused to comply with the wishes of the moderate groups loyal to the Habsburg Empire surrounding Dr Šusteršič, the nationalists led by Dr Korošec were able to gain the upper hand. The Regional Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Sarkotić, was far more realistic than the Viennese government in this regard, and also demanded the inclusion of the Slovenes in a Yugoslav solution. However, an additional eminent complication in the deliberations surrounding imperial reform in the south was the fact that Croatia belonged to Hungary and Slovenia to Austria, while Bosnia and Herzegovina still fell within the area of authority of the Imperial and Royal Finance Minister. Every individual who expressed their opinion could see only partial aspects of the situation and, for this reason, Hussarek found it only right and proper to force Hungary to make concessions to Croatia, although without even recognising the problem with the Slovenes.

For Hungary, the southern Slav solution was also connected to the issue of access to the sea. Within the framework of a single economic area, such questions were not of any particular importance. However, what would happen if this framework were to disappear? Negotiations between Hussarek and the Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle on the southern Slav issue ended on 30 August by Wekerle telling his Austrian counterpart: 'Here in Hungary, nine-tenths of our body politic is in good order, and you expect me for your sake to also turn my nine good tenths into disarray.'<sup>2349</sup> However, Wekerle should not have used such forceful words, since in Hungary, too, there was ferment.

In light of the war situation and the conditions among the Imperial and Royal troops, it was inexplicable, or at any rate illusory, that on 21 July 1918, the Chief of the General Staff completed a memorandum that again concerned itself with Austria-Hungary's war aims. In so doing, he put into action the results of a discussion with the Military Governors General for Serbia and Montenegro, Rhemen and Clam-Martinic, and the Regional Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia, General Baron von Sarkotić, on 13 and 14 May. All three had spoken out in favour of the incorporation of Serbia and Montenegro into the Habsburg Monarchy, possibly joined together with Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia in the form of an 'imperial land'.<sup>2350</sup> Now, with a certain amount of goodwill, it is still possible to understand that the Military Governors and the Regional Commander were still able to formulate such thoughts in May 1918. Yet, the authorised forwarding of such a paper at the end of July bordered on a loss of reality. Arz spoke of '[...] the full incorporation of Serbia into the Monarchy [...], the full incorporation of Montenegro into the Monarchy [...], the creation of an independent Albania and subsequently [...] the creation of a federation of Balkan states under our leadership'. The Chief of the General Staff also explained why he had come to make this demand on the Foreign Minister: 'The realisation of my notion', he wrote, 'was until recently set against the slogan "Without annexations, without war reparations". It is – following the announcement of a portion of the war aims of the Entente – thank God, forgotten and disappeared. The victor has the right to present the consequences of victory according to his judgement and his discretion. And we are the victors on the Balkan Peninsula; this can be disputed by no-one.'<sup>2351</sup> Arz lagged behind developments by at least several months.

### **Austro-Hungarian Troops on the Western Front**

On 21 June, while the June battle in Veneto was still coming to an end, the German Supreme Army Command began to push for the deployment of Austro-Hungarian troops on the western front. There were to be not only more artillery divisions, as had been the case since 1914, but infantry. In the west, there was no doubt that more than the nine Imperial and Royal field artillery regiments were needed that were in the interim being used there.<sup>2352</sup> Between five and six infantry divisions were 'initially' to be provided to the German Western Army, but with the complete exclusion of Czech troops.<sup>2353</sup> Emperor Karl and the Imperial and Royal Army High Command did not agree immediately, but the failure on the Piave River and the German arguments that in light of the American forces gathering in France, the outcome would be decided in the west, made sense. 'The precipitation of an overall decision against an enemy that is continuously being reinforced in France means that we too must bring together everything

that can possibly be spared elsewhere [...]. From the perspective of the Supreme War Command, I therefore express my opinion that the Austro-Hungarian Army should halt its attacks in Italy and, as a result, bring all forces that are made available to the western theatre of war', telegraphed Field Marshal Hindenburg to General Arz.<sup>2354</sup> What for a long time had been regarded as impossible and undesirable now appeared to be a matter of course, not least under the terms of the Alliance of Arms. However, once consent was finally given to relocating troops, it was not only conformity to German wishes that emerged. To an even greater degree, the consideration was brought to bear that in this way, initiative and activity could be shown. This was important for psychological reasons, since in such a manner, the defeat could be brushed aside. The soldiers had less time for reflection. And finally, the German Empire was only prepared to grant a new emergency delivery of flour to Austria once a decision had been taken to redeploy Imperial and Royal troops to the west. Shortly afterwards, the first two divisions were marched out; two further divisions followed in September.<sup>2355</sup> A corps command was also relocated, which was then intended to lead the Imperial and Royal troops as the XVIII Corps (under Major General Goiginger). However, at the same time, Italy also began to send troops to France. There, as everyone knew, everything was at stake.

For the members of the Imperial and Royal 1st and 35th Infantry Divisions, the arrival of the first troops in the St. Mihiel area remained engraved forever on their memory. They had already collaborated with German troops many times before, and were confident of the discipline, bravery and efficient leadership of the Germans. Now, however, they were received with the reputation of being 'war extenders'.<sup>2356</sup> Those German intervention troops were incidentally also welcomed in a similar way who, following the tank breakthrough by the Allies between the Avre and Ancre Rivers on 8 August, had been thrown into the breach and had abusive comments shouted at them such as 'war extenders' and 'strike-breakers'.<sup>2357</sup>

The Imperial and Royal troops were first trained in the combat procedures that were applied in the west. They received supplementary weapons and equipment. Each division was given around 200 British machine guns that had been requisitioned. However, the physical weaknesses, the desperate failure to adjust and the impressions of the new front could not be compensated for and blurred.<sup>2358</sup> Thus, the Austro-Hungarian divisions not only experienced a new theatre of war to which they were unaccustomed, but on top of that, saw that morale among the Germans was at an end, and that the soldiers were haggard and exhausted from the fighting. In some ways, the situation in the west was even worse than that in Italy, since the material superiority of the Allies was even more clearly in evidence and, in particular, the American divisions, which were skilled at fighting and fully manned, made their own inferiority blatantly obvious.

On 12 September 1918, the Imperial and Royal 35th Infantry Division already suffered heavy losses in the battle of St. Mihiel against French and American forces. Of

the division, which consisted mainly of Transylvanian Germans, Romanians and Hungarians, 99 officers and 3,268 men were killed, wounded or taken prisoner.<sup>2359</sup> (Their commander, Major General von Podhoránsky, was unharmed however, since at that particular time, he was enjoying a six-week period of leave.) The western Allies had been reinforced month after month by 250,000 American soldiers since July. They had material superiority that in terms of armoured vehicles and aeroplanes was already utterly overwhelming, whilst they were far better fed and had almost no cause for concern as to the morale of their soldiers. To this was added the tactical experience that the war had brought in its wake, such as the fact that now, only brief but accordingly more massive, artillery preparation was made, the troops began to storm so early that they were able to run underneath the German curtain fire and systematically roll out position after position.<sup>2360</sup> Now, the Imperial and Royal troops, too, who were fighting in the west, had become all too familiar with this procedure. And in contrast to so many other occasions, this time, even the German troops were unable to help. This experience was also shared by the Imperial and Royal 1st Infantry Division (under Metzger), which at the beginning of October 1918 was hurled into battle, fought with great dedication against three Allied divisions, but then after several days and an aerial attack from 125 aeroplanes on its positions was forced to be removed from the front. It had lost over half of its men.<sup>2361</sup> In this way, Austria-Hungary's last bastion of hope began to shake. A joint war command, an alliance of arms, the German course and, finally, the experience of holding out in war overall had ultimately been justified by the fact that the German Empire was able to guarantee the victory of the Central Powers, that it would be necessary to hold out until the final victory and, that the peace would then be dictated. Now, events proved otherwise, and the only possible conclusion that could be reached was that the Germans in France and Flanders – like the Austrians and Hungarians in Italy – had reached the end.

For the Austro-Hungarian troops in Italy, a transfer had been made back to the defensive in a type of 'Isonzo mentality'. For some time, the men were haunted by rumours that the offensive might begin again. Brigadier Waldstätten made the area between the Brenta and Piave Rivers, including the Monte Grappa, the focus of a new operational study. As Conrad had done previously, he wanted to lead an offensive with around thirty divisions from the north,<sup>2362</sup> but a similar plan was designed rather to lift the depressed mood and to keep the staffs busy than it having any basis in reality. Discipline was still by and large maintained among the troops at the front, and where greater problems did occur, a remedy was sought in the form of so-called 'discipline trains'. The soldiers who were subjected to this punishment were usually sent to more dangerous outposts and to the lines furthest at the front. There, however, they were exposed to other tribulations. The worsening situation among the Austro-Hungarian troops naturally did not remain hidden from the Italians. They took prisoners, made

minor territorial gains and calculated that Austria-Hungary must of necessity conclude a peace at any price within the foreseeable future. In order to encourage the disintegration and to accelerate it wherever possible, the Italians intensified their propaganda campaigns. They presented a clever mixture of truth and falsehood, distributed leaflets with reports of heavy Austrian losses, and referred to a report in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 23 June, according to which revolution had broken out in Austria. Within Army Group Conrad (then Army Group 'Erzherzog Joseph'), claims were circulated that Army Group Boroević had been withdrawn in order to be able to fight against the revolution on the home front. The Army High Command had its hands full in an attempt to counteract the propaganda and to tell the troops that one thing or another was not true, and that, in fact, the reality was very different.<sup>2363</sup>

Rumours again surrounded Empress Zita. It was claimed that she had betrayed the Piave Offensive and for doing so had been interned together with her mother, the Duchess of Parma, in the Gödöllő Palace near Budapest. Others in turn were keen to relate that after the Piave battle had come to an end, the Empress had been far more concerned with the Italian wounded than those from the Austro-Hungarian side.<sup>2364</sup> In Germany, insults were hurled at the 'Bourbon', and in Austria at the 'Italian woman'. The Imperial and Royal War Minister, Stöger-Steiner, intervened in order to put an end to the senseless gossip, but this was done neither in a suitable form, nor was a long-term effect to be expected. Stöger-Steiner first gave the generals a dressing-down: 'I cannot comprehend that in a correctly commanded and led officer corps, the seed for such denigration can be allowed to ripen, and that it should not be possible through the influence of the higher and senior superiors, primarily the generals, to nip such destructive growths in the bud.' In the announcement to the officers ('To be opened in person by the commanders. Not to be announced in the military command order'), he clearly stated: 'It has been brought to my knowledge from a reliable source that in recent times, and in the most reckless manner, events at the front and in the hinterland are being criticised thoughtlessly and in their way out of all proportion even by officers, who regrettably even do not hold back from the hallowed and irresponsible [sic!] ruler of the Monarchy, our Supreme Commander and his Sovereign noble wife, the Empress and Queen.' The officers were not only to counteract such rumour-mongering, but also to prevent them from spreading and, if necessary, to report them to the authorities. The order had almost no effect.<sup>2365</sup>

### D'Annunzio over Vienna

Some of the campaigns conducted by the Italians in order to spread propaganda could not be obliterated entirely, however vehement the denials might be. On 9 August, seven Italian planes led by Gabriele D'Annunzio flew over Vienna at an altitude of around

2,000 metres. Only after the Italians had released leaflets instead of the bombs that had perhaps been expected and were already en route back to Italy did their identity become known. However, they could not be fired at, nor did the Austro-Hungarian aeroplanes reach the Italians on their return flight. Immediately after leaflets had been scattered, an operation was begun to collect them. By the evening, 500 kronen were already being offered for a single leaflet. The bills read: 'Citizens of Vienna! Acquaint yourselves with the Italians. If we had wanted to, we could have released whole tons of bombs on to your city [...]. Do you want to continue the war? Do so, if you wish to commit suicide. What are you hoping for? The decisive victory that the Prussian generals have promised you? Their decisive victory is like the bread from Ukraine: one waits for it and dies before it arrives [...]. Long live freedom! Long live Italy! Long live the Entente!'<sup>2366</sup> A rigorous investigation began as to how D'Annunzio could have flown all the way to Vienna without encountering resistance, but no direct blame could be assigned. At any rate, Vienna had come into contact with a facet of the war that at the front and the other war zones had already become an aspect of everyday life, namely the leaflet propaganda. However, in the eyes of the western specialists in psychological warfare, D'Annunzio's method was outdated, since as one of the most important members of staff at 'Crew House', the headquarters of the British 'Enemy Propaganda Department', Henry Wickham-Steed pointed out: 'It makes no sense to discharge propaganda documents in various parts of the world, in which it is declared what a noble people we are. [...] This is of no interest to people'<sup>2367</sup> It would be far more important, in the case of Austria-Hungary in particular, to tune the propaganda to the nationalities conflict and to accelerate the disintegration. Wickham-Steed had therefore recommended adjusting the propaganda entirely to the radical wishes of the nationalities and holding out the prospect of the breakup of the Habsburg Monarchy. Dissatisfaction was to be fomented, and the nationalities were to be set against each other in order to provoke uprisings. This would be the way to bring down Austria and, with it, Germany.

Even if the Allied propaganda only played a small part in the internal dissolution of Austria-Hungary, its content corresponded to an increasing extent to Steed's guidelines. The result was that among the army in the field, petty jealousies, aversions and nationalist agitation escalated. The German troop bodies suspected that they were always being deployed in the hot spots, and that they had to bear the consequences of the mistakes of others. For the Magyars, the accusations already made by Count Tisza two years earlier rang true, when he turned against the apparently anti-Hungarian tendencies in the army and curiously traced them back to the large number of Czech officers in the General Imperial and Royal Staff.<sup>2368</sup> Now, Hungarian soldiers accused the Czech and Polish artillery that had been assigned to them of firing at too short range, causing the grenades to fall on to their own positions. Conversely, Hungarian artillery troops were

suspected by Czechs and Poles due to poorly directed fire.<sup>2369</sup> The level of mistrust and aversion increased sharply. The gunners bore the least blame for the problems with the artillery, and to a far greater degree, the quality of the artillery ammunition deteriorated with practically every delivery, and the batteries had to fire very high in order to avoid shooting at their own lines. Yet who really knew whether the shots that then fell on to their own positions might not have been aimed deliberately? At the same time, the guns now only had four shots available per day on average;<sup>2370</sup> the Allies fired at least three times that amount.<sup>2371</sup> This minor example alone shows how many petty jealousies, accusations and even enmity had now taken hold in the Imperial and Royal Army. Some things could not even be further exaggerated by the enemy propaganda and, above all, could not be depicted more drastically.

The soldiers were almost dramatically undernourished, and it was unlikely to be of any comfort at all to them that the people living in the interior of the Monarchy, where the flour ration had intermittently been reduced in June to 82.5 g per day were possibly faring even worse. In the summer of 1918, the epidemics among the troops began to increase to a horrific degree. The first harbingers of the deadly influenza pandemic of the winter of 1918/1919, the so-called 'Spanish flu', made themselves felt. Infantry Regiment No. 73 reported that the average weight of its soldiers was 55 kilograms.<sup>2372</sup> In their state of desperation, more and more soldiers committed suicide.<sup>2373</sup> Diseases spread uncontrollably with increasing frequency. In the coastal regions, in the area of the Piave River estuary, malaria began to spread. There were times when Army Group Borojević reported 700 new malaria cases daily.<sup>2374</sup> Of the 15 divisions of the Isonzo Army, on 1 September, seven had been reduced to less than a third of their previous strength. The number of troops over the entire Italian front had been reduced to just over 500,000 men.<sup>2375</sup> The Allied troops totalled around three times that amount, and their numbers were increasing ever more, since they were now being joined in Italy by Americans after all. While they only accounted for one regiment, there were rumours circulating that they comprised two or three divisions.<sup>2376</sup>

In mid-August 1918, Emperor Karl again travelled to Spa with his Chief of the General Staff to meet Kaiser Wilhelm. After the 'black day for the German Army', on 8 August, Emperor Karl had called the German Plenipotentiary General attached to the Army High Command, von Cramon, and expressed the wish to meet with the German monarch for a face-to-face discussion as soon as possible. In Karl's view, the 'failure on the Piave River' had not made the same impression in Austria as the turn of events in the west. Cramon commented on this to the effect that, in his view, Emperor Karl was becoming increasingly 'limp'.<sup>2377</sup> Karl wanted Kaiser Wilhelm to come to Austria, but the Kaiser declared that he was needed in Germany. Karl should visit him again. On 13 August, the Austro-Hungarian delegation departed from Baden. This meeting had nothing more to do with 'eating humble pie', since Karl was now meeting a German

emperor who was anxiously facing defeat to just the same degree. However, Kaiser Wilhelm claimed that making an offer of negotiations at that particular time would be very inadvisable, and that it would be better to wait until the German retreat had come to a halt and it would be possible to indicate to the Entente powers that the Germans would still be able to inflict heavy losses on their troops.<sup>2378</sup> Karl categorically eliminated the possibility of conducting even a limited offensive in Italy. He had previously also rejected a further military campaign against Romania, which delayed the country's demobilisation.<sup>2379</sup> The war was lost, and what use could more military demonstrations possibly be? When, during the meeting with the German army leadership, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, Arz countered their statements by saying that a peace with victory was no longer an option, the Germans at least no longer contradicted him.<sup>2380</sup> However, the representatives of the German Supreme Army Command claimed that they would have to shorten the front in several places in order to take up secured positions and then to be able to negotiate the peace. Even when it came to the conditions for peace, the Germans proved more moderate for the first time: peace on the basis of the status quo would also be a possible basis for negotiations, they said. But this was 'very old hat' at best. This notwithstanding, it was also debated in even greater detail whether a step towards peace should be initiated, as the Germans wished, via a neutral country, namely the Netherlands, or whether a direct approach should be made, such as that recommended by Count Burián.<sup>2381</sup> Still, this was only the repetition of a debate that had already become irrelevant. The German Supreme Army Command continued to act as though all this could be talked through in due course, and the situation was still anything but hopeless. This went so far that at the end of October 1918, when the front was already in the process of being dissolved, Ludendorff was still making requests for several Imperial and Royal mountain brigades for deployment in the Vosges.<sup>2382</sup>

Following his return from Spa, Emperor Karl celebrated his 31st birthday in Reichenau. According to General von Cramon, 'There was a heavy sense of oppression over the celebratory mood'.<sup>2383</sup> Not only were a dozen Knights of the Military Order of Maria Theresa decorated once again; the Emperor was finally presented with the German Marshal's Baton, which had been stored away for such a long time. Then, everyday duties again took over. The Emperor's birthday was also no longer what it had once been.

On 21 August, Brigadier Waldstätten came to Belluno, where he had requested a meeting with the chiefs of staff of the army groups and armies. He had also wanted to speak to Boroević, but the latter reported sick. In Belluno, Waldstätten gave an unvarnished overview of the war situation and, in particular, informed the commanders and chiefs of the situation in the homeland. Austria-Hungary was helpless. Major General von Willerding, the Chief of Staff of Army Group 'Erzherzog Joseph', finally asked the question that was surely foremost in everyone's minds: why had the Chief of the Gen-



eral Staff not already long since borne the consequences? Waldstätten explained that Arz had most certainly tendered his resignation to the Emperor, but had been refused. The reaction among the colonels and generals was that this was not enough. He should have resigned, even if the Emperor had not wished it. Any of Arz' successors should have resigned in just the same way or, even better, not even have taken up the post until Karl had been made to see reason.<sup>2384</sup> The Navy was not represented in Belluno. Still, the picture that Admiral Horthy would have painted of the fleet would have differed only incrementally from that of the Imperial and Royal Army.

### The Sinking of the Szent István

The Navy, too, had suffered a consistent decline and severe setbacks. Since 1917, the Allies had begun to use large convoys in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic in order to maintain their supplies to the Middle East, as well as to Italy and the Salonika front, in a similar way as in the Atlantic. While escorting these convoys took up a large capacity of the naval forces, the effort was worth it. Following the entry into the war by the USA, American destroyers were incorporated into these escort operations, alongside the British, French and Italian naval forces. However, the Allies were aware that this protection was only a conditional one and that, ultimately, it came down to hitting the German and Austro-Hungarian surface and submarine vessels in such a damaging way that the threat to Allied shipping would be reduced. Attempts were made at improving the fight against the naval forces of the Central Powers in that – in the second half of 1917 in particular – everything possible was done in order to precisely monitor the radio traffic and to decipher the code words whenever expedient.

Germans, Austrians and Hungarians had long ago become dissatisfied with the development of the naval war in the Mediterranean, despite sporadic successes. German statisticians had calculated that the tonnage figures of the ships sunk by the submarines were decreasing constantly per boat and per day. Even the numbers of Austro-Hungarian sinkings since the autumn of 1917 alone were cause for concern. In October 1917, an outstanding 12,000 tons of shipping space had still been destroyed, but in November only 4,000, and in December 1917 not a single sinking. The Germans were also becoming increasingly concerned due to the Allied aerial threat to Pula (Pola) and Kotor.

On 12 November 1917, Kaiser Wilhelm had visited Pula and had made a vain attempt to convince the Commander of the Fleet, Admiral Njegovan, to decommission the capital ships and to use the crew for other purposes.<sup>2385</sup> The visit by Kaiser Wilhelm took place at a time when the breakthrough Battle of Flitsch–Tolmein had been fought, and Austro-Hungarian and German troops had crossed the Tagliamento River and advanced to the Piave.

For the Allied fleet presence in the Mediterranean, this naturally did not remain without consequences. Italy had requested additional support from its allies, and wanted it to be transported across the sea in particular. The first to react were the British, who had two monitors enter the lagoons of Venice. However, Italy had also requested that Japan send additional destroyers. This request could not be met, while instead, the British and French gave the Italians the good advice of using their own naval forces more actively. British destroyers spent 70 per cent of their time at sea, while the Italians lay in the ports for a larger proportion of the time.<sup>2386</sup> However, the Entente powers had naturally understood Italy's concern that the Austro-Hungarian troops might perhaps still wish to expand on the successes of the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo by landing in the Rimini area, or attacking Venice. The Allies were also concerned that Italy might be forced to withdraw from Albania. If Italy were to retire from the war, it was even considered how the Allies might take possession of the Italian fleet.<sup>2387</sup> But all these worries had been groundless.

The situation in Italy had continued to occupy the minds of the Allies. At a naval war conference at the end of November and the beginning of December 1917, the Italian Prime Minister Orlando pointed out that the Italian armaments industry could no longer function due to a lack of coal, and hoped that additional coal supplies from the Allied marines of at least 100,000 tons could be provided. The British and French were not in a position to fulfil the Italian requests, but they could do nothing else but assume additional tasks in the leadership of the naval war, transport more supplies across the sea and protect the convoys as best they could. Here, the Imperial and Royal Navy no longer appeared to represent a significant danger.

The activities of the Fleet continued to be reduced. Like the land army, the crews on the ships and the entire naval personnel were forced to acknowledge that the hardships were now being felt everywhere, and that the shortages caused significant limitations. In the short term, a measure appeared to take effect that had in fact seemed obvious: Vice Admiral Richard von Barry organised a fishing fleet of 650 boats and 4,500 seamen, most of them former fishermen, who were to provide additional food supplies. However, ultimately, this was also not the solution. Morale continued to sink, and lethal boredom became rife. In 1916, the Naval District Commander of Trieste, Vice Admiral Alfred von Koudelka, suggested deploying the sailors with the land army according to a type of rotation principle. This would surely stave off the boredom. He then received the inmates of the naval prison in Pula, who did indeed serve at the front, but who after completing their sentences returned to their ships. The experiment was not repeated.<sup>2388</sup>

Aside from more minor activities, Njegovan failed to disrupt the Allied fleets in the Adriatic. Neither were connections interrupted, nor were there larger naval battles comparable to the one in the Strait of Otranto, for example. With the sinking of the *Wien*, however, the calamity had already begun to descend upon the Imperial and Royal Navy.

Next came the mutiny in Kotor, then Njegovan was dismissed and replaced by Rear Admiral Miklos von Horthy. His nomination as Commander of the Fleet was accompanied by a full shake-up of the command authorities in Vienna, new appointments and reassignment of posts. Horthy began to prepare the Fleet for action, even if it was not aimed at achieving much more than keeping the people busy, and thus counteracting at least one reason for the mutiny. And when, in May, another mutiny occurred on a torpedo boat in Pula, Horthy decided to make an example of those involved, and had the two ringleaders, a Czech and a Croat, shot as a public warning. Twenty men from each ship lying in Pula were required to attend the execution.

Clearly, the measure had an effect, since until the autumn the Commander of the Fleet no longer had substantial cause for concern with regard to the discipline of his ships' crews. However, this altered nothing when it came to the lack of activity of the Fleet. Older ships were taken out of service and disarmed. Particular attention was paid to Kotor, where there had been fears of an Allied attack since the autumn of 1917. In April 1918, Emperor Karl asked Horthy whether an Austrian submarine might be sent to the Black Sea. Horthy refused; he referred not least to the fact that the Austro-Hungarian flag was already present in the Black Sea, since the Danube Flotilla units had arrived there.

In the spring of 1918, the naval war in the Adriatic had begun to take on other forms. Italians and Austrians attempted to cause damage through small forays, landing operations and penetration into the naval ports. The Allied measures for protecting their shipping, particularly the convoy system and the intensification of the fight against submarines, were taking effect. In January 1918, the Germans lost more submarines in the Mediterranean than throughout the entire year of 1917.<sup>2389</sup> In May 1918, German submarine losses in the Mediterranean again increased sharply. The British intensified their air attacks on Kotor, which had a greater effect than the British themselves were aware. The necessity of taking protective measures, and only being able to depart and come in to port under highly specific conditions had an enormous deceleration effect on the naval warfare and also obstructed the submarines in particular.

In this situation, Rear Admiral Horthy wanted to repeat his raid on the Otranto barrier. This time, however, not only a relatively small squadron was to take part, but also the 1st Battleship Division. The campaign was planned for 11 June. On the evening of 8 June, the first battleship group, with two 'Tegetthoff' class ships, left Pula. Horthy himself travelled on the flagship of the Fleet, the *Viribus Unitis*. The second group of battleships, with *Szent István* and *Tegetthoff*, left Pula on the evening of 9 June. However, the Allies had been warned. The increase in radio traffic and aviation activity had drawn their attention to the fact that an operation was being planned. Even before dawn on 10 June, Italian torpedo boats (MAS = Motoscafi Antisomergibile) fired two torpedoes at the *Szent István*. The battleship was so severely hit that it sank in less than three hours. Then Horthy abandoned the operation, since the element of surprise had without doubt

been lost. Thus, the final turning point in the naval war had been only too obvious. Of less significance was the fact that the Americans had also sent a submarine fighter unit to the Mediterranean, in order to participate in the blockade of the Strait of Otranto.<sup>2390</sup> The ships, the majority of which were manned by volunteers and crews who had no experience of naval war at all, were now no more than an outward extension of the Allied presence. Until the end of the war, they failed to sink even a single submarine.

Following the failure of the Piave Offensive, the situation also deteriorated week by week, indeed almost daily, for the Imperial and Royal Navy. The transport of supplies by sea for the Imperial and Royal XIX Corps, which was then renamed 'Army Group Albania', was already very highly at risk. No other supply and evacuation opportunities were available. Loyalty among the troops was diminishing continuously. The submarines were achieving almost no further successes. The Germans were now nowhere near being able to make good the loss of the Austro-Hungarian vessels, and an increase in their number to 28 in total in the Mediterranean in August 1918 (including the submarine UB 128 under the command of Lieutenant Wilhelm Canaris) remained without impact, since the number of vessels that were suitable for action was decreasing steadily. Horthy described the Fleet as still ready for service, and also claimed that the consequences of the revolt in Kotor had been overcome. However, he pointed out that the continuous escorts provided for the convoys sailing up and down the Adriatic coast, which were attempting to reach Albania in particular, were making extremely high demands on the torpedo boat flotilla. Since the construction of fourteen submarines and nine torpedo boats had been ordered, and that it could still not be predicted when they could be put into service, the collapse of the Fleet within a foreseeable period of time appeared to be inevitable. On 17 October, the Army High Command ordered the Austro-Hungarian submarines to end the commercial warfare and instructed them to restrict themselves from then on to standing ready to defend the Dalmatian ports.<sup>2391</sup> At this time, the Allied fleet formations were already more or less sailing freely in the waters of the Mediterranean. They even used their battleships to attack the Albanian coast and to block the Austrian ports. The last major operation conducted by the Imperial and Royal naval forces was to fire at the port of Durazzo on 2 October, which, while having no significant effect on the port itself, gave an Imperial and Royal submarine under Ship-of-the-Line Lieutenant Hermann Rigele the opportunity to torpedo a British cruiser.<sup>2392</sup> Thus, the end had also come for the Imperial and Royal Navy.

### Front and Hinterland

After the meeting in Belluno, the generals were aghast, and repeatedly made it clear that they could comprehend neither the Chief of the General Staff nor the Emperor.

However, the reactions also showed that at least the high commanders, who were considered to be relatively well-informed, had suffered from a substantial loss of their sense of reality that was in fact inexplicable. They felt betrayed, and now no longer had either the will or the opportunity to shield the front from the news that was coming from the interior of the Dual Monarchy. For a long time, this shield had functioned well and through the filters established by military and civilian authorities, hardly any information at all had reached the soldiers with regard to events in the hinterland. However, gradually, a network had come into existence that anyway made it almost impossible to maintain the screen between front and hinterland.

More and more members of the Landsturm (reserve forces) had been ordered to work in the enterprises that were essential to the war effort, and there supplemented those who had been discharged and the 'war servers' who had been forced to remain at their places of work for the duration of the war. The men from the Landsturm, who in many cases brought with them experiences from the front, naturally knew what was happening 'outside'. And they also knew how to interpret the signs. Conversely, there was increasingly detailed information reaching the front, too, about what was happening at the base stations and in the hinterland. Deserters played a major role in this flow of information. The proceedings against deserters had become almost futile. Experiences from Hungary, where in some areas, martial law had been applied due to desertion, only made the dubiousness of this measure all too obvious. Nothing had changed, and even the extension of martial law to deserters in Budapest itself had no success. Nonetheless, in July 1918, Emperor Karl also proposed imposing martial law in Vienna. The War Ministry and the Ministry of National Defence violently disagreed with this notion.<sup>2393</sup> Above all, the flow of news could no longer be stopped by threatening exemplary punishments.

The fact that people were going hungry was common knowledge. However, there were some things that were still almost impossible to imagine, such as the fact that the hardships among the armies in Italy could extend so far that Bosniaks no longer wished to make an appearance in the occupied Italian territories, since they no longer had complete uniforms, that the soldiers were squatting apathetically in their positions in ragged and haphazardly thrown together pieces of uniform, that the military hospitals had no more clothing for the patients, and the people were lying naked in their beds. When, at the request of the 6th Army, Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Kvaternik, who would later become a well-known Croat leader, wrote a description of the state of this army, and substantiated it with photographs, the images they showed could barely be believed.<sup>2394</sup> It also stood to reason that many officers and soldiers suspected that 'the people at the back' were faring far better, that incompetence was being combined with corruption and above all political manoeuvrings, the burden of which was borne entirely by the soldiers and the front. What did it matter that it was then announced in

October 1918 that the high commands wished to apply further pressure for the rations given to officers and troops to be brought more into line with each other, in other words, that officers and soldiers should be given the same food to eat?<sup>2395</sup> Wherever this was not already the case, it was in fact a scandal; however, where it had already been put into practice long ago, all that could be ascertained was that everyone was receiving too little across the board. Hardly anyone had the capacity left to share the humour of feeble jokes that had also begun to circulate, such as: "Two civilians meet in the hinterland. One asks: "What do you think, how long will the war last?" The other replies: "It's hard to say. The real heroes fell long ago, the clever types have already copped out long since or have had themselves released from military service – and God knows how long the idiots that are still lying around out there can continue to fight".<sup>2396</sup> In order to maintain discipline, a series of newspapers that contained 'tendencies that present a risk to the state' were stopped from being delivered by post to the army in the field.<sup>2397</sup> Since the majority of the press had begun a vehement campaign in favour of peace, and had pointed to the Army as the main obstacle to achieving it, though without there being any reaction from the censors, some titles increased their agitation, in some cases even expressing unbridled hostility towards the Army.<sup>2398</sup> Press cutting collections made occasionally by the War Press Bureau were dominated by articles with statements hostile towards the Army, and those in which the alliance with Germany was attacked.<sup>2399</sup> In May, the Army High Command had already begun to compile press cuttings, which were intended to prove 'that it is first and foremost our newspapers that are undermining morale in the Army and the state interest, and which are contributing to serving our enemies and prolonging the war'.<sup>2400</sup> The stab-in-the-back myth, which had already been latent, now received its final polish, and aversions that had long been fostered now erupted into hatred.

Under these circumstances, it is almost incredible that finally, in September and October 1918, the battalions and squadrons of the XLIII and XLIV March Formations could still be mustered. However, these were the last replacement troops who would leave for the front. Many of those who were deployed in the ranks here were former prisoners of war who had returned from Russia. And even though they would have had every reason to talk of hopelessness and futile sacrifices, they said hardly anything at all. The things that they had seen were beyond comparison, however. After perhaps years in prisoner of war captivity, they had witnessed the Revolution, had been brought back home, inspected, sent on leave and then re-enlisted. And while they were arriving in the barracks, they endured roll calls, repeated a little fighting and formal service and completed their equipment, outside the barracks, the reality was quite different. Therefore, when for example in Prague, the XLIII March Battalion of Infantry Regiment No. 68 was formed, the number of incidents increased. The soldiers left the barracks, refused to repeat the oath, fired shots into the air en route to the railway station and demonstrated

an immense degree of embitterment. When the reasons for this were investigated, it emerged that they could no longer understand why the requisitions were being conducted unfairly, why their relatives were so miserably provided for, and why a terrible protectionist economy had spread. The soldiers were particularly furious about the large number of discharged men who had 'done nicely' for themselves and were now making fun of those who were again leaving for the front. 'Only the fools carry on fighting, and the clever ones stay at home', they said.<sup>2401</sup> They also probably had the feeling that they would miss something.

The atmosphere in Prague was not only dominated by the striking workers, but also by the 'loafing' students. The students from four higher education institutions, Germans and Czechs, engaged in mutual provocation. Informal gatherings, beatings and disputes occurred on countless occasions.<sup>2402</sup> Since the May days of 1918, circumstances in Prague had been chaotic, and the Czechs were already displaying clear anti-dynastic and revolutionary tendencies. The station commander, Major General Zanantoni, was only too aware of the explosiveness of the situation. 'Thousands of people, Sokols [members of the Sokol movement] in their uniforms and ladies in national costume, thronged day and night through the streets of the city, which were decked with thousands of red-and-white flags, no longer sang the national anthem, but only the Czech anthem and the rousing song "Hey, Slavs", wr[o]te provocative and hateful articles against Emperor and state, and only allowed plays to be performed in the National Theatre that glorified the Czech state while denigrating the Monarchy.'<sup>2403</sup> Then, officers and soldiers were forbidden from visiting the National Theatre, or taking part in street parades and other gatherings. The entire garrison was on high alert day and night in the barracks; the soldiers' recreational leave was cancelled.

In this atmosphere and with these indelible images imprinted in their minds, the replacement troops marched to the railway stations. As a precaution, the soldiers were not permitted to carry rifle ammunition with them during their transportation to the front. Until they arrived at the detrainning stations, the ammunition remained in the safekeeping of the NCOs.<sup>2404</sup> The number of desertions again rose sharply. In the spring, around 30,000 men had already gone into hiding as 'green cadres' behind the front in a type of no-man's land. Now, they amounted to several hundreds of thousands of men.<sup>2405</sup> In Moravia, their number was estimated at between 40,000 and 70,000 men, in Bohemia 25,000, in Dalmatia 10,000, and so on.<sup>2406</sup> In the area of the military command in Graz, around 6,000 soldiers had been arrested in August, most of them deserters.<sup>2407</sup> In Budapest at the end of May, the military conducted raids and seized almost 1,000 people, of whom most were deserters. In June, operations to apprehend deserters were extended to a series of Hungarian counties. Then, thousands were again arrested, including increasing numbers of men who had originally been prisoners of war. The *Magyar Hirlap*, *Az Est*, *Agramer Tagblatt* and other newspapers reported on arrests

almost daily, but the deterrent effect was low. Most of those who were then executed for desertion had already fled six or seven times. The Allies promised deserters the best treatment and, above all, enough to eat. All of them were to be given the opportunity to eat properly first of all.<sup>2408</sup> However, it was almost inexplicable to the Italians, British and French that not even more Imperial and Royal soldiers deserted.<sup>2409</sup> However, those who continued to hold out were increasingly filled with a sense of bitterness and hopelessness, and the anger directed at those by whom they felt betrayed and let down became enormous.

In light of this melancholy, Emperor Karl finally brought himself to take the step towards peace that had been debated for a long time, and that had also been the subject of discussion in Spa. The Emperor requested that General Cramon send a telegraph to Spa to the effect that Austria-Hungary would take the planned step towards peace alone if the German Empire was unable to decide without delay to take the same action.<sup>2410</sup> Cramon received the reply from the German Supreme Army Command that he should do all he could to prevent Austria-Hungary from taking such a step. Cramon explained the reasons for the request to wait to Emperor Karl by reporting that the withdrawal operations among the German troops in France and Belgium had not yet been entirely completed. Karl was therefore to wait for a few days. However, the Germans delayed longer and longer. Finally, on 14 September 1918, Karl ordered the Foreign Minister to send a peace *démarche*. Kaiser Wilhelm was only informed of this step after it had been taken. The German Kaiser had no choice but to simply express his 'regret' and 'astonishment' in retrospect.<sup>2411</sup>

Following the note of 14 September, there could no longer be any doubt that Austria-Hungary was seeking an unconditional peace. However, the Allies showed themselves to be utterly unimpressed and again only reacted by stating that the German Empire must first surrender before they could turn their attention to Austria-Hungary. The French President gave no direct response at all, but referred to a speech to the Senate published in the *Journal Officiel*, which at the end contained the words: 'Onwards to an untainted victory.'<sup>2412</sup> Hindenburg in turn could only reply that it was the duty of Austro-Hungarian troops on the western front to continue fighting until a solution had been found.<sup>2413</sup> Now, all developments were moving towards making final offers, to final proclamations and, ultimately, to dissolution. However, one thing was evident: Austria-Hungary would shortly be joining the ranks of the failed states.





**32 The War  
becomes History**

32. Austria-Hungary's armistice with the Allies, concluded in the Villa Giusti on 3 November 1918, led to the immediate cessation of hostilities. Since the treaty did not come into force for the Allies until 4 November, however, around 300,000 members of the Imperial and Royal Army were taken captive. By this time, the Empire for which they had fought in the war no longer existed.

It seems self-evident to begin an account of the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy by turning to the events that directly brought about this end. In spite of the striking occurrences in Italy, and the internal and economic crises, the finger will have to point in another direction: it was the surrender of Bulgaria and the end of the conflict in the Balkans that led to the military collapse. Consequently, Hungary was threatened, which resulted in the Hungarian government ordering its formations from Italy back home. In a political system that was in the process of disintegrating, 'every man for himself' appeared to be the only valid maxim. The withdrawal of Hungary from Italy coincided with the last Allied offensive on the south-western front of Austria-Hungary. The end of the army was unavoidable. It is a very simple causality that manifests itself here. Ultimately, however, it only concerns more details in the death of the double-headed eagle. The great processes were no longer alterable. Here things could now only take their course. The dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy did not, therefore, have the aftertaste of the 'grand finale'. It was more a silent death. It was furthermore by no means the 'catastrophe' that Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, for example, has attempted to describe.<sup>2414</sup> Some aspects of the collapse actually appear petty, dumb and undignified – on both sides. Only in retrospect did pathos accompany the events.

Bulgaria's military collapse began on 14 September 1918. In the Austro-Hungarian newspapers, however, it was concealed for almost two weeks. The people then learned of it via the customary cryptic remarks to the effect that the Entente troops were able to extend their breakthrough to the north on the Salonika front under the command of the French General Franchet d'Espèrey. The conditions of the roads, it was explained, prevented a rapid reinforcement of forces of the Central Powers. The events in Macedonia would also have an impact on the Austro-Hungarian positions in Albania. The situation was, the reports concluded, dangerous.<sup>2415</sup> With these very general formulations, the aim was to bring attention to the possibility of an imminent Bulgarian armistice. Suddenly, everyone now turned their eyes to a front that had been secondary for years.

The Allies had considerable coordination difficulties before they were able to commence their offensive. The Serbs and French wanted to begin as soon as possible; the British and Italians had to first of all be persuaded of this.<sup>2416</sup> It was above all the British who had hoped to induce Bulgaria by diplomatic means and without another armed encounter to leave the war.<sup>2417</sup> This was not the case. However, when the attack began on 14 September, it quickly led to success. With an enormous superiority in artillery

and Serbian troops at the forefront, the Allies attacked the army group of the German General von Scholtz, which comprised German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian troops. On 17 and 18 September, signs of disintegration were evident in the Bulgarian 2nd Division. The Bulgarian Army no longer wanted to fight, for which reason the focus of the defence was from the outset on the German and Austro-Hungarian formations. The German 11th Army also had to be withdrawn very quickly from the Lake Ohrid region and from Prilep in the direction of Skopje, whilst the Bulgarians were still attempting to defend on the Vardar River. On the morning of 25 September, British cavalry crossed the Bulgarian border. A democratic revolution began, and the King had barely any reliable troops at his disposal. Bulgaria appealed for German and Austro-Hungarian reinforcements to be sent immediately and insisted on the fulfilment of the military convention from 1915. The Imperial and Royal Army High Command in Baden promptly agreed to send two divisions, but let the Foreign Ministry confidentially know that 1,000 trains would be required. In view of the railway situation, the transport would take three to four weeks.<sup>2418</sup> Sofia, Berlin and Vienna were aware that it would be too late. On 26 September, the Bulgarian government sent an armistice delegation to the headquarters of General Franchet d'Espèrey and attempted at the same time tactical manoeuvring, even hinting at a Bulgarian change of fronts. D'Espèrey was not interested.<sup>2419</sup> All that remained for Bulgaria was unconditional military surrender. On 29 September, a formal armistice was concluded. Tsar Ferdinand informed the allied monarchs of what had passed. In his response, Emperor Karl reacted with the somewhat irrational question as to whether Bulgaria's step was irreversible. In fact, he could answer this question himself and, in the draft of his telegram, crossed out the obligatory closing message 'In loyal friendship'.

With Bulgaria's surrender, a large proportion of those troops were lost who had stood as far as the Albanian border, since Bulgaria had also occupied substantial parts of the Balkan Peninsula in order to bolster its own territorial demands. The Commander of the Austro-Hungarian Army Group Albania, General Pflanzer-Baltin, began a painstaking withdrawal with Serbian, British and French troops on his left flank, and Italians and the sea on the other side. In Serbia, however, it was not possible for the German and Austro-Hungarian troops to make a stand against the Allies. Troops were hastily transferred from Italy and Ukraine to the Balkans. Evidently, however, only radical measures could help here.

General von Arz suggested to Emperor Karl that all available Austro-Hungarian forces, namely five infantry divisions and a cavalry division, together with three to five German divisions, occupy the shortest line from the Adriatic to the Danube and establish a front from Shkodër, via Peć, Mitrovica and Niš, as far as Vidin. In this way, it would have been possible to shield the Government General of Serbia. This force was to be placed as an army group under the command of Field Marshal Hermann

von Kövess. In the event that this line could also not be held, the troops would have to withdraw to their pre-war borders of the Drina, the Sava and the Danube.<sup>2420</sup> When Kövess arrived at his new headquarters in Belgrade on 4 October, Bulgaria had already concluded the armistice, the Allied main force had grown to 28 divisions, to which were added two Italian divisions in Albania, and Kövess's own forces were still only en route. Now Hungary was directly threatened in a way it had no longer been since 1914. However, the mass of the Hungarian troops was located in Italy. It was a hopeless situation, in which Kövess drafted an armistice agreement after only a few days.<sup>2421</sup>

Whilst the front in the Balkans began to collapse, final attempts were made in the interior of the Habsburg multi-national empire to rescue the union and to reach a *modus vivendi* that was also acceptable to the peoples of the Empire.

### The Emperor's Manifesto

With the session of the Joint Council of Ministers on 27 September 1918, the final stage was initiated. Emperor Karl opened it with a challenge to the governments of both halves of the Empire. 'In connection with the foreign policy situation, the necessity of an internal reconstruction forces itself upon us, namely in respect of the southern Slav question, which has to constitute the subject of discussions.' Minister Burián went even further: swift action had to be taken to avoid 'that the peoples take their fate in their own hands'.<sup>2422</sup> Instead of now acting decisively and appropriately in the spirit of the common ideals, the common history and the enormous problems, time was spent merely tweaking the details.

We should be careful not to prematurely condemn the people who could not find a solution and were, in part, viewing the events with bewilderment, since given the will of the nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy to detach themselves and the destructive will of its enemies, it was no longer possible for anyone to find a solution that would have been suitable even for a confederation. Even a man like the former Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza was clueless and perplexed when he travelled to Sarajevo to discuss the future with the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>2423</sup> Šola, Jokić, Dimović and others ultimately handed him a memorandum that Tisza regarded as nothing less than outrageous. He attempted to give them a dressing-down: 'I really cannot say what should surprise me more in this position paper, the inappropriate and unseemly tone, since, gentlemen, this is not the way one writes, or the absurdity of the contents. I do not want to dwell on the matter here, but I must emphasise individual aspects. The gentlemen say that the idea of national unity of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes has become a dogma of their national character. [...]. These are words that sound very good in a popular assembly [or] in an editorial, [they are] words that are suited to

make the running of our enemies, but not suited to creating a new order. [...] Then you continue by saying that an understanding with Hungary is to be achieved by two equal and national peoples. Are you living in a world of dreams[?] [...] You are counting your chickens before they are hatched! Perhaps we will perish, but be assured that before we do so, we will have the power to squash the men in the interior who lend themselves to making the running of our enemies [...]. At this point, one of the Bosnian representatives said 'hajdemo' (= we're going). Tisza remained behind on his own.<sup>2424</sup>

During the aforementioned session of the Joint Council of Ministers, however, the Hungarians continued to regard the southern Slav problem as a predominantly Austrian one and, therefore, not a Hungarian affair. It was above all a question of the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, argued the Hungarian Prime Sándor Wekerle. Both of these provinces were to decide themselves to which of the two halves of the Empire they wanted to belong; it was no longer necessary to engage in a debate over it. With that, Wekerle had evidently said everything that needed saying. There did not appear to be anything to be said about Croatia, and likewise Transylvania and other matters. Apart from that, it was clearly more important for the Hungarian Prime Minister to assure Hungary that, in spite of the Bulgarian catastrophe, the preservation of the kingdom was guaranteed. Wekerle's Austrian counterpart, Hussarek, merely stated that he would shortly develop his programme regarding this matter before the Austrian House of Representatives. He then did so and spoke on 1 October of 'national autonomy', which, in his view, was not a right to self-determination but was to offer autonomous starting points for the reconstruction of the Austrian territories.<sup>2425</sup>

National autonomy was to be understood as equality and self-determination in national and cultural affairs within an area of settlement. With this, Hussarek did not exceed the proposals and measures of his predecessor, Seidler.<sup>2426</sup> Another session of the Joint Council of Ministers on 2 October also failed to achieve any concrete results. The only matter that was discussed was that the planned constitutional declaration of the Emperor on the southern Slav question was to be sent in the form of a handwritten letter to both prime ministers. Once again, only a partial aspect had been addressed, and again no agreement was reached. The – as was now clear – final attempt to find a common solution to the constitutional question for the entire Monarchy had failed. Characteristic was the diction of the Slovenian Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) deputy Anton Korošec: 'We will put our own house in order, we will solve our own affairs.' His fellow countryman Ivo Benkovič conjured up the image of the 'black and yellow cage of nations', which they wanted to leave in favour of 'golden freedom'.<sup>2427</sup> On 6 October, the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was constituted in Zagreb (Agram) as the supreme representative organ of the southern Slavs in the Dual Monarchy, after a national council for the Slovenian areas of settlements and for Istria had been constituted six weeks earlier in Ljubljana (Laibach).<sup>2428</sup> In this way, there were parallels,

but no longer identical power structures. At least theoretically, political representatives could belong to several bodies and still enter the Reichsrat for the unity of the Empire, whilst separatist objectives were pursued in the new institutions. The union became increasingly an illusory world. Now the Emperor wanted to act independently.

The Germans of Austria also spoke up: the Social Democrats, who had demanded on 3 October the application of the right to self-determination for the Germans of Austria, and the Christian Social Party, which had advocated on 9 October the transformation of Austria into a league of free, national commonwealths.<sup>2429</sup> These already existed *de facto*, and not only in the south, but also in Poland. On 7 October, the Warsaw Regency Council called for the annexation of all Polish territories by a sovereign Polish state. Now the Emperor wanted to take independent action.

Emperor Karl had received a recommendation from the Chief of the General Staff, Arz, in which the latter argued the case for settling the constitutional question for the entire Monarchy by means of an imperial manifesto,<sup>2430</sup> since the Army High Command was evidently no longer willing to continue to sit by and watch the inefficient policies of the political representatives of the two halves of the Empire. The Army High Command benefitted from the fact that one of the closest advisors of the Emperor in domestic policy and constitutional matters, Baron Johan Andreas Eichhoff, functioned as the representative of the Ministry of the Interior in the Army High Command. Therefore, a draft for an imperial manifesto had already been drawn up in mid-September in Baden, and Arz had submitted it to the Emperor. He, however, continued to wait; until a crisis then forced him to act.

On 11 October, the governments of Hussarek and Wekerle resigned simultaneously. They were still entrusted with taking care of government business, but they now only had limited freedom of action. Above all in Hungary a radicalisation manifested itself of those groups that opposed all 'sub-dualistic' or trialistic solutions and a federalist restructuring of the Danube Monarchy. They – with the former Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza at their head – called the compromise into question. On 11 October, Wekerle also assumed this standpoint: 'We can see that we are not confronted by the same Austria with which we had concluded agreements in the past. In its new form, Austria is not even able to fulfil its defensive duties anymore.'<sup>2431</sup> What was said here already possessed the clear features of an eminent state crisis; evidently, however, radical formulations of people who had for years proven to be the guardians of commonality were also no longer sufficient to halt an even stronger radicalisation and emotionalisation. 'Peace, democracy, independence' were the slogans of the time. In Hungary, the hour of the left wing of the opposition came and with it the brief triumph of the 'Independence and 48 Party' under Count Mihály Károlyi.<sup>2432</sup>

The Emperor utilised the government crises and finalised his manifesto, which had, however, developed in the meantime into a document that gave consideration above

all to the German nationalist standpoint. Thus, it was no longer the draft of the Army High Command that was open to debate, but instead a draft by German nationalist deputies.<sup>2433</sup> On 12 October, consultations on the subject, which were also conducted with Czechs and southern Slavs, already showed that they would reject the manifesto. The Emperor could not expect, therefore, to initiate a conciliation of national antagonism with the manifesto. However, there was no going back for him. The manifesto was also to be a type of advance payment for the conclusion of a peace on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Since the peace offer of 14 September, thought had been given to how it could be proven to the USA that Austria-Hungary was really serious about accepting Wilson's Fourteen Points.<sup>2434</sup> Finally, on 4 October, another proposal had been made to the Allies for the conclusion of an armistice. The suggestion came about as a joint action on the part of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Now the offers of the Central Powers for an armistice came thick and fast. Austria-Hungary, which placed its hopes above all in the Americans, advocated the view of Foreign Minister Burián, which had been in need of revision for a long time, to the effect that the USA – in contrast to all other powers – had entered the war for purely idealistic reasons.<sup>2435</sup> On the day after the armistice offer was sent, General Arz had ordered the establishment of an armistice commission, which was to be on call in Trento (Trient). It was formed by the former Military Governor General of Montenegro, General of Infantry Viktor Weber von Webernau, and was to comprise ten people, eight Imperial and Royal and two German officers.<sup>2436</sup> Weber's instructions were to enter into negotiations with the Italians on an armistice at a point in time that was yet to be fixed. Only a ceasefire was to be brokered. A few days later, the Army High Command transmitted a draft of the desired conditions on land and at sea. In accordance with the ideas of the Army High Command, a long-term reduction of the front was to be negotiated, ideally within eight (!) months. Trieste was to remain Austrian. Weber added that further Italian concessions could be achieved by delaying the release of Italian prisoners of war.<sup>2437</sup> Balkan matters were not to be discussed, since a separate armistice commission under Brigadier Wladimir Laxa was set up for the Balkans. In the instructions for Weber and Laxa, Arz furthermore noted that everything was to be avoided that could create the impression that the Monarchy was no longer in a position to continue the war. Thus, nothing was to be announced to the effect that the troops were no longer deployable and that the hinterland was in the process of disintegrating.<sup>2438</sup>

Other measures had also been thought out by the Army High Command: in order to demonstrate good will, the troops were to be withdrawn from the Veneto region, if necessary. This seemed all the more appropriate once the USA had answered the armistice offer of the Central Powers on 6 October by means of a note to the German government. President Wilson named as a prerequisite for the opening of negotiations the



withdrawal of the troops of the Central Powers from the occupied foreign territories.<sup>2439</sup> As the Austro-Hungarian liaison officer with the German Supreme Army Command, Major General Klepsch-Kloth von Roden, reported, the German Foreign Ministry wanted to meet this demand, since the situation on the western front was in any case exceedingly unstable. In Baden and Vienna, however, evidently no-one was concerned at this point in time about the fact that Wilson had sent the Germans an answer but not Austria-Hungary.<sup>2440</sup> Only Burián could have become aware of this, since he noted on 10 October: 'We must strive for an armistice for Germany on the condition that we also obtain one.'<sup>2441</sup> He reminded the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Berlin that the German Empire would be obliged to come to Austria-Hungary's defence against attempts to dissolve it.<sup>2442</sup> The German course gave a final flicker.

As far as the demanded withdrawal of the fronts was concerned, Austria-Hungary saw no difficulty in evacuating Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Ukraine. The first of these had already been de facto evacuated. The Dual Monarchy wanted first to negotiate with the German Empire regarding the evacuation of Romania and Poland.<sup>2443</sup> In the case of Italy, the deliberations of the Army High Command revolved around two variations: if they withdrew quickly in order to immediately fulfil the preconditions for the opening of armistice talks, the final stockpiles would have to be left behind. If they started with their removal, however, and let the troops return at the end, then the evacuation would last longer, at least several weeks. For his part, Arz did not trust the Austro-Hungarian armies in Italy to carry out an orderly withdrawal. They would immediately disintegrate. Thus, since they could not be withdrawn, the troops were to be left where they were. Ultimately, Arz could only be prevented with difficulty by the Foreign Minister from commencing armistice negotiations with Italy on his own initiative.<sup>2444</sup>

The Army High Command was informed on 9 October by its intelligence division that on 15 October a congress of the Allies would meet in Paris, at which binding agreements regarding the future solution of the nationalities problem in Austria-Hungary were to be concluded and especially the borders of a southern Slav state fixed.<sup>2445</sup> Now it was a case of acting quickly, if the imperial manifesto on the restructuring of the Danube Monarchy was to be issued as an advance delivery.

Hussarek surprisingly shelved his misgivings regarding the issuing of the imperial manifesto. In this way, he rendered the Emperor a great service, since as much as Karl was at pains to utilise the simultaneous government crisis in Austria and Hungary, he likewise sought support for his manifesto days later. On 15 October, the Joint Council of Ministers convened again with the Emperor, on which occasion the approbation of the so-called 'Manifesto to the Peoples' took place. This did not mean, however, that nothing was changed retroactively. The current Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle did not arrive in Vienna until after the Privy Council and achieved the insertion that the

changes promised in the manifesto were to take place 'without prejudice to the rights of the Hungarian Crown'.<sup>2446</sup> Many things remained unaddressed in the manifesto and others were half-baked. The Bohemian problem could not be solved on the basis of national self-determination; the passages referring to Hungary qualified the statements that concerned the southern Slavs; as a result of an objection by the Austrian Romanians, the special treatment of Bukovina had to be removed from the text during the final editing. The expert on international law Heinrich Lammasch, who had just negotiated his entry into the government, wanted to give the closing sentences a tone that particularly stressed the peaceful intentions. Since the manifesto was conceived first and foremost as an instrument of armistice and peace politics, the request was met.<sup>2447</sup> The manifesto thus read:

'To my faithful Austrian peoples! Since I ascended the throne, I have constantly strived to achieve the peace so desired by all My peoples, and to show the peoples of Austria the ways in which they can develop the power of their national identity to their benefit and successfully exploit it for their spiritual and economic welfare, unimpaired by barriers and frictions. The terrible struggles of the World War have thus far restricted the work for peace. [...] Now we must without hesitation begin to rebuild the Fatherland [...]. [...] Austria must, in accordance with the will of its people, become a federal state [...].' The integrity of the lands of the Hungarian Crown would not be affected by the reorganisation, and the solution of the Polish question would not be anticipated. Trieste was earmarked for a special status. According to the manifesto, all forces should be united and a reconstruction of Austria and Hungary immediately begun. 'So may our Fatherland, consolidated by the harmony of the nations that surround it, emerge from the storms of war as a federation of free peoples. The blessing of the Almighty be on our work, so that the great work of peace that we construct may mean happiness for all My peoples.'<sup>2448</sup>

### The Dissolution Begins

Whilst the Manifesto to the Peoples was undergoing the final editing process, a meeting of all army chiefs of staff took place in Baden.<sup>2449</sup> There was a rare consensus: the armistice would come before the winter. Two prerequisites would have to be created, however: withdrawal from the occupied territories as far as the pre-war borders and measures for an immediate demobilisation of the soldiers. Subsequently, the chiefs of staff debated about where the Monarchy would have its borders after the right to self-determination had come into force. Evidently, no-one had any doubt that the state they spoke of would still exist. Whilst the chiefs of staff consulted in Baden, Army Group Boroević began transporting the ammunition to the rear. The fears that this

could trigger the dissolution were unmistakable. General Weber warned not to commence the removal without simultaneously negotiating an armistice. But he had to remain in Trento.

The next day, on 15 October, the Army High Command announced via open radio that the Monarchy was ready for its troops to withdraw to the pre-war borders in order to await there the results of the negotiations of a peace conference. Furthermore, the Italian prisoners of war who were still in the territories to be evacuated were to be immediately released. What appeared to be a gesture of accommodation, however, was likewise a necessary measure in order to not have to feed the captive Italians or transport them.<sup>2450</sup>

With this, the military operation appeared to have been initiated. Now, the political action had to take effect. The Emperor had intended to issue a manifesto that was conceived as a pledge to his peoples for the period when the war would be definitively over. The reactions to the Manifesto to the Peoples, however, left no doubt that no-one wanted to wait any longer. The manifesto was interpreted as a signal for the dissolution. Tisza announced: 'We have lost the war.' When a member of the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet) said: 'The homeland is in danger. The Hungarian soldier must return to defend his fatherland', he reaped furious applause.<sup>2451</sup> The nations of the Austrian half of the Empire reacted by commencing with the final disengagement. Since no-one knew, however, how the new states would be constituted, or which borders and conflicts they would have, they all wanted to call their soldiers home. Suddenly, what had been long practised out of earlier necessity and, after the revolts of the spring, also consistently, now had a negative impact: in order to not territorially relocate the troops, they had been distributed as far as possible so that locals and troops did not have the same nationality. Moreover, the regiments had been more strongly mixed. Now, however, soldiers of the same nation were needed, and the call to return home was thus directed at them. The moment a battalion or a regiment responded to such a call, entire divisional sections collapsed. For some soldiers and above all for the officers, the oath they had sworn constituted a final impediment to following the call of their homeland. They had sworn an oath to the Monarch, and the Emperor had no intention of releasing the soldiers and officers from this oath. This was done by the newly emerging states. They presumed the right to rescind the oath to the Emperor and the Empire and to make the soldiers discharge their duties for a new state.

On 20 October, Wilson's response to the Austrian armistice offer from 4 October, which had scarcely been expected any more, finally arrived. Wilson disclosed that he could no longer agree to the proposal for peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points, since so much had happened since the announcement of these in January 1918 that consequences had also resulted for the USA. The USA had acknowledged that 'a state of war exists between the Czecho-Slovakians and the empires of Germany and Aus-

tria-Hungary, and the Czecho-Slovakian national council is a de facto belligerent government, equipped with the highest authority to decide on the military and political affairs of Czecho-Slovakia. The American government has also acknowledged to the full extent the right to freedom of the national aspirations of the southern Slavs. The President is, therefore, no longer in a position to accept the mere autonomy of these peoples as the basis for peace.<sup>2452</sup>

In this way, the USA once more demonstrated its solidarity with the stance of the Entente powers and only wanted to end the war with Austria-Hungary when this state no longer existed. Not everything that subsequently happened, however, was intended by the Allies. But who was able to foresee the end of a process of disintegration and restructuring? Perhaps the Allies still assumed that Austria and Hungary would establish a real union. But this notion also became obsolete during these days. The former and now recalled Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle attempted for a short time to obtain support for the retention of dualism with very far-reaching Hungarian rights. He even argued the case for a mere personal union. The leader of the opposition, Count Károlyi, however, called into question the credibility of the Prime Minister and also the ability of the government to conclude peace.<sup>2453</sup> He trusted himself at least to obtain considerably better conditions from the Allies. The radicals therefore wanted to go even further. With this, it had not only become evident that Hungary had revoked the real union but also that there was hardly any chance of a personal union.

Such an arrangement had been under consideration for a long time, though in a very different form. On the basis of a Polish state, an Illyrian and an Austrian state, which were to be created each for itself as Habsburg kingdoms, four kings would have stood above an emperor, who was to bear this title without a constitutional status.<sup>2454</sup> A lovely, Habsburg dream!

Emperor Karl wanted to reassure the Hungarians and in the process take the first step towards creating these Habsburg empires. He decreed that his cousin, Archduke Joseph, who was very popular in Hungary, was to assume command of the Balkan front, namely Army Group Kövess. In his stead, Field Marshal Baron Kövess became commander of the army group in Tyrol. Karl himself travelled to Hungary. The nominal occasion was the opening of the university in Debrecen.<sup>2455</sup> Primarily, however, it concerned the attempt to salvage Hungary for the Habsburg Monarchy. Shortly before, it had been possible to assume that Austria and Hungary would at least pursue a joint foreign policy in post-war Europe. Now, however, it was actually only heard that both lands were to have a common monarch.<sup>2456</sup> The fact that Poles, Czechs, southern Slavs and Italians could no longer be retained was already accepted as self-evident. And what was the situation with the Germans of the Dual Monarchy? The German deputies of Austria gathered on 21 October in the parliament of Lower Austria in Vienna and constituted themselves as the people's representation of the country German-Austria.

A 20-member national committee was to assume government and administration and prepare a constituent national assembly. The Germans of Austria were preparing themselves for the breakup.

It was not yet known, however, whether there would be a total breakup. As a state entity, Austria-Hungary would also have had a certain size in the form of a confederation of states. In order to preserve cohesion, might in territorial terms was too little – actual power was also required. And this was no longer the case. When the Emperor's Hymn, the so-called 'national anthem', was played in Debrecen, there was uproar.<sup>2457</sup> In Budapest, there were open demonstrations. On 20 October, Count Károlyi demanded the conclusion of an immediate peace, the transportation home of the Hungarian soldiers and the appointment of a Hungarian foreign minister. The latter sounded odd, since Count Burián *was* Hungarian. What the radical Magyars meant by this, however, was that as a result of the reduction of Austria-Hungary to a personal union, the joint ministries had also come to an end. Burián resigned. The Emperor, however, named a new joint foreign minister and minister of the imperial household, namely Count Gyula Andrassy. He was the son of the Gyula Andrassy who had concluded the Dual Alliance Treaty with Bismarck in 1879; he was furthermore the father-in-law of Count Károlyi.

Andrassy only saw one way out: the revocation of the Dual Alliance and the conclusion of a separate peace. He was of one mind with Tisza, who had called into question the maintenance of the alliance with the German Empire because the Czechs and the southern Slavs, i.e. more than half of the Austrian half of the Empire, were inclined towards the Entente.<sup>2458</sup> Suddenly, the groups that had been so active in 1917 and had wanted to mediate a separate peace were once more on the scene: the Meinel group, but also the somewhat untransparent Ładisław von Skrzyński, who had played an important role in the initiation of contacts of von Mensdorff and Smuts. He telegraphed Vienna on 24 October 1918 to the effect that France and Great Britain had a particular interest in Austria: France did not want the German Empire to be expanded to include German-Austria following the collapse of the Dual Monarchy. Great Britain was interested in a loose confederation of states under the leadership of the Habsburgs, but would have been as equally unwilling as France to do something for Austria as long as it remained the ally of the German Empire.<sup>2459</sup> This was, however, at best 'old hat'. Who was to put it to the test? Emperor Karl was the most likely candidate, or by necessity the Minister Andrassy. Whilst the government crisis still smouldered in Hungary, Andrassy had found a new dialogue partner, since the Emperor had appointed Heinrich Lammasch as Austrian Prime Minister on 25 October.<sup>2460</sup>

Lammasch was perhaps not the Emperor's 'first choice', since Emperor Karl had initially offered Karl Renner the post of Austrian prime minister and evidently wanted to take a similar path to Germany, where Social Democrats had also joined the gov-

ernment of Max von Baden. Renner had also been inclined to accept, but the party leadership rejected the offer.<sup>2461</sup> Thus, the search for an Austrian prime minister continued. Lammasch declared himself willing to assume the office, but he discovered that Austria no longer existed. Now his only objective could be a peaceful liquidation.<sup>2462</sup> A southern Slav national council had been formed in Zagreb, which had proclaimed an independent state. Most of the Polish deputies were no longer in Vienna and in the Reichsrat, but had instead travelled to Warsaw. Disintegration and the end of institutions, some older, some newer, manifested themselves everywhere. In Prague, the situation even had something tragicomical about it. The atmosphere had been seething for a long time. The station commander, Major General Zanantoni, feared time and again that violence would break out, but nothing really serious had yet happened, even if there was a feeling of sitting on a 'powder keg'. The troops of the garrison 'were already tired of being assigned and perpetually at the ready'. On 10 October, Zanantoni was called to the governor, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, who informed him that the proclamation of the republic was imminent on 14 October. Coudenhove requested the station commander 'to do everything to prevent the proclamation of the republic at least in Prague, the regional capital'. In response to his objection that only a few battalions would be available to the station command by 14 October, Coudenhove placed the entire Gendarmerie of Prague 'at the disposal' of the Major General, as well as the state police of the city.<sup>2463</sup> Zanantoni decided not to use the police, however, since they comprised almost exclusively Czechs and appeared too unreliable to him. Eventually, seven auxiliary battalions were at his disposal for 14 October, each with approximately 600 to 800 men; a further three auxiliary battalions had been promised him as reinforcements.

Zanantoni distributed his troops across Prague in the early hours of 14 October in such a way that the access routes to the city centre were already blocked by the military at 5 a.m. When the groups of protesters gathered and wanted to move to Alstädter Ring under the leadership of Václav Klobáček in order to proclaim the republic there, they very soon recognised the impossibility of doing so and postponed their undertaking. On 15 and 16 October, the Prague station commander also had the city cordoned off. No incidents occurred, although following the announcement of the Emperor's Manifesto to the People all further measures to prevent a proclamation of a republic had become pointless. As early as 14 October, the Governor of Bohemia, Count Coudenhove, had been told by Vienna in response to his question how he should proceed: 'Avoid any bloodshed, do not make a scandal and arrange a peaceful transition to a nation state.'<sup>2464</sup>

The disintegration commenced almost simultaneously in the hinterland and at the front. On 20 October, Hungarian, Galician and Czech troop bodies, which had been relocated from Ukraine and eastern Romania, mutinied in Jagodina, Kragujevac, Rušava (Orsova) and Turnu Severin.<sup>2465</sup>

On 23 October, Croatian soldiers of Infantry Regiment No. 79 had rebelled in Rijeka (Fiume), disarmed the Honvéd (Hungarian standing army) and brought the city under their control. It was a simple, bloodless process. What had happened in Rijeka continued like wildfire. Emperor Karl reacted unusually quickly and purposefully. Since the excesses also spread to the naval district commands and the war ports, the Emperor resolved to simply transfer his war fleet to the newly founded southern Slav state. The Danube Flotilla was to be given to Hungary, and all sailors who did not belong to southern Slav nationalities or to Hungary, were to be disbanded without delay.<sup>2466</sup> Almost overnight, Austria-Hungary no longer possessed a navy. The death of the land army was a slower process.

The Emperor's manifesto of 16 October had hugely increased agitation within the army, though it did not provoke a wave of desertions. It was rather the case that the national groups wanted to remain together within the army: In uncertain times, support and unity is always sought. The Landsturm (reserve forces) Regiment No. 27 (Slovenian/German) was to be deployed in Kladovo against Serbs. The soldiers refused. The regiment was surrounded and placed under guard by imperial German troops. This was regarded as a disgrace. The Poles made their way home; they did not want to have anything more to do with the Austrian and Hungarian troops. Soldiers who had fought with one another up to this point now began to shoot at each other.<sup>2467</sup>

On the south-western front, the Italians understandably did everything to promote the decomposition. They showered the Austro-Hungarian lines with leaflets in which they called on them to mutiny and promised a rapid return home, peace and self-determination in the event of desertion.<sup>2468</sup> They did not have much success with this, however, since the national decomposition manifested itself in this final phase of the war above all through non-compliance. In the case of Army Group Belluno, the soldiers refused to move to the front from the base zone. They did not want to die at the eleventh hour.<sup>2469</sup> In cases where superiors still stressed their rank and insulted soldiers, the soldiers yelled back at them.<sup>2470</sup> On 22 October, the Zagreb Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25 refused to obey. On 23 October, Hungarians and southern Slavs from Army Group Borojević announced that they would no longer fight. For them it was a question of defending their homeland. And this was no longer the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.<sup>2471</sup> There was also non-compliance in the hinterland.

The Army High Command initially regarded this only as a 'phenomenon'. It informed the army commands that 200 Czech soldiers in the Vienna region had refused to remain in their barracks. They skilfully argued in this way that they were no longer subordinated to the Army High Command and no longer bound by their oath, but had to instead obey the new Czech government. This was a legal problem. The Army High Command informed the senior commands about this 'phenomenon' and instructed them to undertake everything to ensure that the front was spared similar occurrences.<sup>2472</sup>

Since the signs pointed to a looming Italian offensive, the Emperor turned to the Pope on 23 October with a telegram: 'Signs are multiplying that the Italian offensive against us is imminent. We await it with calm and confidence. Since the war will not be decided in Veneto, however, but will soon approach its end, I request Your Holiness to advise the Italian government to abandon this plan for purely humanitarian reasons. By means of this deed, Your Holiness could save thousands of human lives.'<sup>2473</sup> The telegram was in vain.

### The Attack by the Allies

In spite of the signs of disintegration among the Imperial and Royal troops, which had been observed for months, the Italian Army Command had seen the possibility neither in August nor in September 1918 of beginning a decisive offensive. Although Marshal Foch, the Chairman of the Allied Supreme War Council, had been urging an energetic Italian offensive for a long time, Prime Minister Orlando responded to him on 24 September that such a campaign would be too risky and that the Italian troops would not be in a position to launch a decisive offensive until spring 1919. An early attack would depend on the sending of ten additional British and French divisions. An offensive in the autumn would only be conceivable if Foch were to expressly assume responsibility for it.<sup>2474</sup> The collapse of Bulgaria, however, had also fundamentally altered the situation for Italy. Furthermore, Marshal Foch did indeed assume responsibility for an immediate Italian offensive. The Italian High Command was instructed to prepare the offensive and commence it on 16 October. The Italian statesmen understood that their position would improve significantly if the Italian troops had advanced as far as possible at the conclusion of an armistice and had at all costs reached the territories claimed by Italy. This was no longer a question of the war, but instead one of the post-war period. However, the deadline set by Foch could not be met. It was to be a week later.

Ultimately, however, an offensive was a relatively harmless undertaking, since the Imperial and Royal troops in Italy had again become weaker in September to the tune of around 100,000 men. Only 400,000 'black-yellows' now remained to counter the last Italian onslaught.<sup>2475</sup> Furthermore, only around a third of the Imperial and Royal troops were stationed at the front. In themselves, the thoughts of the Allies and the Austrians coincided with each other in one point, when the Entente troops planned an offensive whilst the Imperial and Royal armies consulted on 17 October on the modalities of a large-scale strategic withdrawal. The Isonzo army was to be withdrawn to the Ljubljana area, Army Group Belluno to Carinthia, the Imperial and Royal 6th Army to Styria, and the 10th and 11th Armies to northern and eastern Tyrol.<sup>2476</sup> However, nothing happened in the days that followed, and then it was too late.



On 24 October 1918, the Italians opened their offensive on the mountain front. It was the anniversary of the start of the breakthrough Battle of Flitsch-Tolmein. One year after their serious defeat, which had even appeared catastrophic, the Italians gathered with Entente troops to apply the death blow to the Habsburg Monarchy. The Allies had an oppressive superiority. The Imperial and Royal Airship Divisions, for example, could offer only 30 aeroplanes against the approximately 600 Allied aeroplanes.<sup>2477</sup> Almost like an ambush, the artillery bombardment commenced from the Grappa massif on Monte Tomba. Shortly thereafter, thousands of guns fired along the entire front. A phenomenon manifested itself in the process: the troops under fire defended themselves as though there were no collapsing front and no homeland drifting apart. They did what most troops do when they are attacked. They fought for their lives. The military organisation offered a quantum of security. There were regiments with losses of 30 to 70 per cent.<sup>2478</sup> Poles, Ruthenians, Czechs and Hungarians fought, even though they had already long since made it clear that it was no longer their war. The report of the Army High Command to the Emperor to the effect that the offensive had begun as expected but that there was no cause for concern, however, had to be regarded as premature after only a few hours.

The Italians had not expected to be successful with their offensive on the very first day. The fact that it was ultimately only a question of time, however, had to be clear to everyone. The losses of the Imperial and Royal troops were high, too high – and they could not be replaced. The only thing that benefitted them was the circumstance that they had prepared for months for this fighting. In South Tyrol, so-called ‘winter positions’ had been prepared, to which the soldiers could fall back. All orderliness came to an end, however, when on 24 October a new directive of the Hungarian government to the Honvéd and the Hungarian members of the Common Army arrived, calling on them to return home immediately.<sup>2479</sup> Budapest hoped with the help of the Hungarian soldiers withdrawn from the south-western front to consolidate the Balkan front and avert the danger for Hungary in the south. On the second day of the Italian offensive, the Austro-Hungarian troops began to abandon terrain. Their fighting capacity and the will to resist decreased almost by the hour. Some troop bodies no longer had any officers who had not at least been wounded.<sup>2480</sup> The last reserves were now to be thrown into the defence, but one troop body after another refused. On 24 October the Mountain Rifle Regiment No. 2 mutinied in Ljubljana. Alongside almost all Hungarian troops, the Czech troops, who had remained loyal to the last, finally also defied their superiors, and no longer wanted to advance into the fire. The personnel of the 13th, 26th and 43rd Territorial Infantry Divisions, as well as the Imperial and Royal 29th Infantry Division, the Moravian 5th Infantry Division and others, demanded a departure from the battlefield. Two Croatian divisions, the 42rd and the 57th, also mutinied.<sup>2481</sup> Only in individual cases was it possible to convince a few people to advance together. The others

remained where they were or began the march back home.<sup>2482</sup> Orders were no longer valid, and practically no one could be convinced any more by appeals to camaraderie, loyalty, a sense of honour or anything else to come to the help of the troops at the front. These soldiers fought in isolation for their survival and were ultimately betrayed. But who should be reproached by whom?

On 26 October, the Italians extended their offensive to Army Group Belluno; it was not very emphatic, but it sufficed. The Austro-Hungarian front still stood firm, but the losses were high and the ammunition ran out. Army Group Belluno reported that they now only had enough ammunition for one day of fighting.<sup>2483</sup> It finally proved possible after all to bring reserves forward; no-one, however, brought the wounded to the rear in exchange. To the surprise of everyone concerned, a counterattack was launched. The soldiers obeyed and the Italians retreated. Then the ammunition ran out, however, and the army group was ripe for the ceasefire. The Italians remained where they were.<sup>2484</sup> Now another phenomenon manifested itself: the troops had endured the fighting, but no sooner had the pressure subsided when they got into in another stress situation. They received their post, learned something of events at home and established that they had been left alone whilst the others had returned home. Since they were now no longer fighting for their own survival, they could not be held back any longer. When the elite formations of the Austrian Alpine lands, the 'Kaiserjäger' Imperial Rifles, the Imperial Infantry, Carinthians, natives of Salzburg and Austrians learned that they were to be used to replace departing Hungarian forces, they also rebelled.<sup>2485</sup> The report of Army Group Command Tyrol from 26 October stated: 'Scarcely had they been ordered to march to the plateau of the Sette Comuni, when the majority of these troops also refused, however, to obey – doubtlessly infected by the failure of the Hungarian regiments, which had quickly become known, and strengthened by their impunity.'<sup>2486</sup> The Tyrol front and Army Group Belluno no longer constituted military factors.

The Allied offensive was then expanded to the Piave front, which could also no longer be held after another day of fighting. On the Piave River, it also turned out that the Italians were not that eager to charge forwards, after all.<sup>2487</sup> They advanced only hesitantly, without urgency or a feeling of triumph. It was the British and the French who eventually took the Italian 8th Army to the centre and attacked the Imperial and Royal front. They also wanted to savour the victory.

On 27 October, they won bridgeheads east of the Piave. In accordance with normal military procedures, a counterattack could have been expected from the Austro-Hungarian troops on 28 October. The divisions were available and were to make themselves ready, but they mutinied. The word 'mutiny' is not in fact suited to describe the generally calm way in which the soldiers stated that they would no longer fight, but instead wanted to return home. Nothing was left of the emotional mood of the April and May rebellions of the same year, or of the wild, defiant protests. The soldiers simply

no longer obeyed. Admittedly, the situation had become hopeless. The Allies advanced with ease. Ultimately, a command such as that of the Imperial and Royal 6th Army could no longer lead, since no-one knew which troops were still available and loyal to orders, or which had already marched home.<sup>2488</sup> The front disintegrated and the Allies simply pierced it.

Two days after his assumption of office, the Foreign Minister, Count Andrassy, had sent a message from Emperor Karl to Kaiser Wilhelm to the Imperial and Royal ambassador in Berlin, Gottfried Hohenlohe. In it, Karl communicated that he had taken the irrevocable decision to solicit within the next 24 hours an armistice or a separate peace. On 28 October, this request was sent. The German ambassador in Vienna, Count von Wedel, had requested to see the dispatch beforehand, but the concept given to him had not contained the decisive passage, namely the sentence that Austria-Hungary requested negotiations without awaiting the results of any other talks.<sup>2489</sup> General von Arz summarised the situation in a telegram to Field Marshal von Hindenburg: 'Appalled, I report to Your Excellency the current situation: troops from over 30 divisions, without distinction of nationality, refuse to continue fighting! Parts of individual regiments autonomously leave their positions; a reserve regiment has marched off. March formations cannot be induced to line up. Hungarian troops declare that they will not continue fighting under any circumstances [and] demand to be transported home because their homeland is endangered and the enemy is at the gates of their fatherland. Commanders are powerless. The troops in their positions fight admirably because, as a result of the hostilities, they are not yet politically contaminated. Their fighting strength is slackening. The provision of reinforcements or disbandment are [both] out of the question, since troops cannot be brought to the front. Naval crews declare that they will leave their ships on 1 November, will share everything and have established soldiers' councils. Senior leaders unanimously demand an immediate armistice, because otherwise anarchy is unavoidable and Bolshevism unstoppable. The supply of foodstuffs is failing, the operation of railways can barely be maintained in some regions [and] the situation in the hinterland is confused and bleak. Under these circumstances, we must save whatever possible. Since it is a matter of hours, we must act quickly. Wilson's route is too long. [The] commission is attempting to contact the Italian Army Command in order to negotiate an armistice. With a heavy heart, I report this to Your Excellency. Most obediently, von Arz, General.'<sup>2490</sup>

Collapse was in sight and the end was nigh. The Swiss envoy in Vienna, C. D. Bourcart, briefly formulated it in his final report from the Habsburg Monarchy on 31 October as follows: 'Chaos reigns in the former Dual Monarchy.'<sup>2491</sup> Austria-Hungary had withdrawn from the alliance.<sup>2492</sup> However, the Emperor did not want to carry the responsibility for concluding the armistice alone, and perhaps not at all. He initially sought to tread the path of allowing the step towards peace to be supported

by a popular movement. Karl summoned the Mayor of Vienna, Weiskirchner, and suggested that he organise 'spontaneous' demonstrations in Vienna on the evening of 28 October, in order to demonstrate approval of the imperial move. Weiskirchner refused.<sup>2493</sup> The matter was not ended, however. It took on peculiar, almost embarrassing features.

### The Armistice of Villa Giusti

The commission of General von Weber, which had been at the ready in Trento since the beginning of the month, then briefly dismissed and again convened, was instructed to establish contact with the Italians. Now, at the latest, it must have become clear that the commission contained exclusively officers. Where, however, were the diplomats? For years, representatives of the Foreign Ministry had been attached to the Army High Command. The relocation to Baden had made this unnecessary. But if it was believed that an armistice was solely the concern of the military, then it would have been obvious to assign someone to the commission who was not only a politician but also a diplomat and perhaps additionally a reserve officer. There were enough such people. But none of them was nominated for the armistice commission, which allows the conclusion that the Foreign Ministry, which had vigorously helped to unleash the war, imposed considerable reserve on itself when it came to ending the conflict. General von Weber was only instructed that he was permitted to accept all conditions apart from those that the honour of the army did not allow or those that boiled down to a complete disenfranchisement.

Whilst the armistice commission set off, the Army High Command instructed Army Group

Boroević to hold out. The front had to be held until the armistice was concluded. Boroević responded laconically that, given the prevailing situation, he could not make any promises.<sup>2494</sup> On 29 October, a member of the armistice commission, Captain Camillo Ruggera, approached the Italian lines. Although the group carried a flag for all to see and announced its approach with a trumpet signal, it was shelled.<sup>2495</sup> It took hours until the letter could be handed over in which the desire for the conclusion of an armistice was expressed. Ruggera returned to Rovereto. The whole day passed without an answer. The Army High Command eventually sent an open radio signal and also made it known to the Italians that in the event of a withdrawal of the Imperial and Royal troops from Veneto, far-reaching demolitions would have to be carried out. The Italians indicated that they had received the radio transmission, but at the same time called into question the validity of the authority of the Austro-Hungarian armistice commission. Eventually, however, they accepted General von Weber.<sup>2496</sup> Italy only wanted to open

negotiations, though, when Austria-Hungary had acknowledged that the initiation of talks did not mean that the Allies would suspend their operations. The Army High Command agreed. It did not have any choice. A week earlier, Austria-Hungary would have been better able to act – but it was now 30 October 1918. And the Italians now very consciously took their time.

On the same day, the Italians reached Vittorio Veneto. Whilst negotiations were taking place, they were able to pursue the retreating and disbanding troops, accelerate their withdrawal here and there, overtake them, take prisoners and reach the aimed-for borders. On 31 October, Weber was permitted to cross the Italian lines with members of the Austro-Hungarian commission. Two German officers, Colonel Schäffer von Bernstein and Captain Heinz Guderian, went sent back by the Italians, however, although they had presented their credentials in the Lagarina Valley, in which they were empowered by Field Marshal Hindenburg to participate in the armistice negotiations.<sup>2497</sup> This evidently did not interest the Italians. Weber and his entourage were brought to the villa of Senator Giusti del Giardino in the vicinity of Padua. This was the guest house of the Italian High Command, which was accommodated in Abano Terme.<sup>2498</sup> The Allied delegation was not due to arrive, however, until 1 November. It was led by the Deputy Chief of the Italian General Staff, Major General Pietro Badoglio. Badoglio, however, did not yet have any conditions. They first had to be drafted by the Allied Supreme War Council in Versailles and would arrive in Padua, according to Badoglio, on 2 November. It happened a little quicker, after all. In fact, the Allied demands then arrived in the night of 1st/2nd. In summarised form, the ‘most sacred conditions’ were as follows: 1. Immediate cessation of hostilities. 2. Complete demobilisation, withdrawal of all troops from the front and downgrading of the Austro-Hungarian Army after the war to 20 divisions. Withdrawal of all Austro-Hungarian troops from the territories occupied since 1914 and withdrawal from the territory south of the Brenner within a period of time to be fixed at a later date. Furthermore, occupation rights for the Allies and freedom of movement within Austria-Hungary. The Allies also made it clear that the treaty to be concluded was to extend to all Imperial and Royal fronts. Separate negotiations with General Laxa on a ceasefire in the Balkans would, therefore, not be necessary. Captain Ruggera brought the conditions back across the Austrian lines. They were transmitted to Baden.

The Army High Command was appalled. Only an armistice was supposed to be concluded, and now a more or less unconditional surrender was being demanded. Particularly critical was the point demanding that the Allies receive complete freedom of movement within Austro-Hungarian territory. This meant that from Austrian territory they could also attack the German Empire, which had not opened armistice negotiations. Karl assured Kaiser Wilhelm in a telegram that he would place himself at the head of the remaining loyal Austro-Hungarian troops and, if necessary, personally deny

the Allies passage. Wilhelm telegraphed back that he was convinced that the German Austrian soldiers with the Emperor at their head would rise up 'as one man'.<sup>2499</sup> The double meaning of the formulation had evidently just slipped in.

There was fighting in the streets of Budapest. As early as 25 October, 300 to 400 officers marched to the Bug River at the forefront of a student demonstration. Brandishing their sabres and calling 'vivat', they had broken through the police blockades and hoisted the national flag. The agitation increased from one day to the next. Unlike Major General Zanantoni in Prague, the Budapest city commander General Lukachich ordered for the crowd to be shot at.<sup>2500</sup> Companies of storm troopers were to capture the headquarters of the revolutionary council, but they did nothing of the sort. On 31 October, the 'bourgeois' revolution appeared to have triumphed: Archduke Joseph, who functioned as 'homo regius', appointed Mihály Károlyi as Prime Minister. On the same day, soldiers shot and killed Count Tisza in his house in Pest.<sup>2501</sup> There was a parallel here to the murder of Count Stürgkh: the soldiers held the Hungarian Prime Minister personally accountable for the war and took their revenge. They no longer, however, had to galvanise or fear anyone.

The republic had been proclaimed in Prague on 28 October, and with that, speculation naming Duke Max von Hohenberg, the older son of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, as the possible king of Bohemia had become obsolete. In German-Austria, however, demonstrations in favour of annexation by the German Empire took place, although the German ambassador, Count von Wedel, urgently advised against such rallies. They would only complicate matters further, he argued. It would be better if German-Austria were to begin its existence as an independent state and only become a German federal state after several years of peace.<sup>2502</sup> In Vienna's Mariahilferstraße and in the inner-city, the 'Watch on the Rhine' was sung time and again. The Marseillaise was sung in order to allow a bit of revolutionary mood to arise.<sup>2503</sup> The Council of Ministers was due to convene on 30 October. The Hungarians stayed away; the body did not have a quorum. In the parliament of Lower Austria in Vienna, the Reichstag deputies of the German parts of the Habsburg Monarchy came to the understanding that they also wanted to create a new state in the worst-case scenario. This was then understood as the proclamation of the republic – but it was not (yet). Everyone now seemed to be in a hurry to found new states and only a few still worried about imperial affairs. The conclusion of the armistice appeared to be a troublesome formality, where responsibility was pushed back and forth and everyone could then resort to excuses. The last Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister, Count Andrassy, went one step further to end the commonalities and resigned on 2 November. This was not because he thought that the ministry was no longer important in these circumstances or because he did not regard himself as capable of enforcing the breach with the German Empire. Count Andrassy did not believe he could remain in office because his son-in-law, Count

Károlyi, was made jointly responsible for the murder of Tisza. It was for this reason that Andrásy resigned.

General Weber had remained in the Villa Giusti and awaited the return of his courier and the response from Baden. The Allies expected an answer by midday on 2 November. The deadline elapsed. The Emperor summoned the party leaders of the German Austrian council of state. Parliament was to decide on the acceptance of the conditions. The attempt to shift responsibility, however, miscarried. Viktor Adler commented bluntly: the war had been started by the Emperor, and now it was also to be ended by 'those parties' who were responsible for unleashing it. In response, Emperor Karl could very easily say that he had not been among those 'parties' that had begun the war, either.

Hungary no longer participated in negotiations. The radicals and the pacifists were in power there. A whiff of the 1848 revolution was in the air. Hundreds of thousands, who took to the streets, adorned themselves with white asters as a sign of non-violence. Hence the name 'revolution of the hollyhock' (*Az őszirózsás forradalom*). The Royal Hungarian War Minister of the Károlyi government, Béla Linder, had demanded on 1 November that all Hungarians on the front lay down their arms, and was repeatedly quoted as saying: 'I do not want to see any more soldiers.'<sup>2504</sup> It had to be asked whether the capitulation was even his responsibility. Military affairs were a joint imperial concern. If the Empire as a whole were to conclude an armistice and everyone made the excuse that this was no concern of the successors of the Empire, then the Imperial and Royal War Minister and the Army High Command could not simply be brushed aside for the time being. General Arz withheld Linder's order until 2 November; then he passed it on to the army group commanders and added for the commanders that the Hungarian government and the Hungarians assumed full responsibility for this measure. Borojević was of a completely different opinion and immediately telegraphed Waldstätten that, in his view, complete responsibility continued to rest on the shoulders of the army leaders.<sup>2505</sup> At this point, Arz qualified his earlier dispatch: with his reference to the order of Béla Linder, he had only wanted to illustrate what was happening.

Whilst Vienna and Baden dodged a decision, sought to delegate responsibility and no-one could be found who was prepared to assume responsibility, and whilst Andrásy also resigned, a telegram arrived from the Chief of the Italian General Staff, according to which the Allies demanded the acceptance of the conditions by midnight on 3 November. If this acceptance was not given, the offer would become obsolete and the offensive would be continued with full force.<sup>2506</sup> Half an hour before midnight, the Emperor empowered the Chief of the Operations Division, Waldstätten, to telegraph General von Weber that the conditions were to be accepted, though point four on the free access to march through was accepted under protest.

## The Last Army Supreme Commander

Now, however, not everything took its predetermined route, but became instead grotesque. Under point 1 of the armistice treaty, the Italians had demanded the immediate suspension of hostilities. This could, of course, only apply from the moment the treaty came into force. As yet, however, the negotiators were en route and the treaty had not yet been signed. On 3 November 1918 at 1:20 a.m., however, Arz telegraphed all army commanders: 'The armistice conditions of the Entente have been accepted. All hostilities on land and in the air are to be immediately discontinued. The details of the ceasefire conditions will be announced.'<sup>2507</sup>

The Emperor undertook a final attempt to share responsibility for the armistice with someone else and turn this into something other than just an action of the Crown. Negotiations were conducted once more with the German Austrian council of state, but it refused again. At this point, the Emperor ordered the Chief of the General Staff to rescind the ceasefire order. However, the order had already been passed on. Hours later, the soldiers in the foremost lines had already been informed of it. Nonetheless, Arz did what the Emperor asked of him.

Army Group Tyrol promptly protested: the telegram on the immediate armistice had already been forwarded to the subordinate commands. The order could not simply be annulled. The result was chaos.<sup>2508</sup> Thereafter, the decree on the armistice was to be no longer distributed. This had anyway not yet been the case with Army Group Boroević.

The Emperor believed, however, that he had found a way of escaping responsibility for the conclusion of the armistice himself. He wanted to lay down the supreme command. He confirmed by oath that the Chief of the General Staff was to assume the supreme command and on 3 November at 3 a.m. handed him a lined sheet with the handwritten words: 'Dear General Baron Arz. I appoint you My Army Supreme Commander. Karl'<sup>2509</sup> Arz refused to accept. He justified this by saying that he, as 'chief of a Prussian regiment and loyal to his hitherto manifested disposition', could not assume responsibility for an armistice that so eminently threatened the alliance partner. At this point, the scene became completely embarrassing: the Emperor designated a general as Commander-in-Chief who knew nothing about it, namely Field Marshal Baron Kövess, who had only just been appointed the commander of the army group in Tyrol. He was not yet in Tyrol but instead in the Balkans, where he was to hand over the command of his army group to Archduke Joseph and had been in the meantime disconnected from the telephone link to Baden.<sup>2510</sup> Arz was required to communicate: 'Yesterday, 2 November, His Majesty appointed Field Marshal Baron Kövess as Army Supreme Commander. Until the latter's arrival, General Arz is to deputise for him.'<sup>2511</sup> In fact, the appointment of Kövess had not been possible until 3 November, and indeed



at 3 o'clock in the morning. The correction of the date took place retroactively; it was just one of many corrected dates during these days. By naming 2 November, the fiction was to be created that it was not the Emperor but the new Army Supreme Commander, Field Marshal Kövess von Kövessháza, who had concluded the armistice. In this way, a peculiar arc was closed: at the beginning of the war, there had been the 'engagement' at Temes-Kubin, which had in fact never taken place. At the end of the conflict, there was an armistice, for which someone was supposedly responsible who did not even know that he was the Austro-Hungarian Army Supreme Commander.

In the meantime, General von Weber had been able to act again. The Allies had handed him the official armistice document. He had been informed of the approval of its acceptance and reported as the official time of the signing 3 November 1918, at 3 p.m. Weber held his prepared, formal address: 'The Imperial and Royal Army High Command empowered me in the early hours of the morning [...]. At the same time, the Imperial and Royal Army High Command instructed the Austro-Hungarian Army to cease hostilities.'<sup>2512</sup> Badoglio responded laconically that it had not been possible for the Italian High Command to inform the Italian troops immediately about the armistice. It required 24 hours; a corresponding clause had been attached to the treaty. The armistice did not, therefore, come into force until 4 November at 3 p.m. Weber had known about this clause since 2 November and also reported the condition to Baden, though he had not yet received a response. The General could no longer reach the Army High Command. Badoglio, however, stated that the Austro-Hungarian delegation should immediately accept the conditions, otherwise the negotiations would be regarded as aborted. General von Weber signed the document.<sup>2513</sup>

The Italians had demanded 24 hours in order to notify all the troops about the armistice. This was certainly generous. In the Balkans, for example, to which the armistice also applied, only six hours were required in order to inform the troops of the ceasefire, although the conditions were at least as adverse as in Italy. The argumentation for the necessary grace period was thus on shaky ground. The condition had been known, however, and in consideration of this the troops would certainly not have been ordered to cease hostilities before the deadlines had been negotiated and the procedure fixed. Ultimately, therefore, it is not very useful to criticise and deride the Italian approach and the emphasised victory of Vittorio Veneto. Italy had merely caught sight of and improved its chances in a completely cold-blooded way – and the Imperial and Royal Army High Command had provided it with a lever to do so. The capture of the 400,000 soldiers reported by the Italians (it was actually 360,000)<sup>2514</sup> and who laid down their weapons, was not due to Italy violating the treaty or – to use a word from 1915 – being 'perfidious'. An Imperial and Royal Army High Command that was incapable of utilising a one-month preparation period or of considering in detail the preconditions and terms of an armistice, that was not in a position to fulfil the necessary technical

facilities in order to maintain contact with the delegation, and that finally issued its directives prematurely and imprudently – this Army High Command must ultimately be described as the main culprit of the disaster at Vittorio Veneto.

It is without doubt inaccurate to claim that this had been intentional and done in order to saddle the Italians with the problem of a few hundred thousand people, and above all the trouble of feeding these people.<sup>2515</sup> This might have been a side-effect, but it was really not deliberate. However, the immediate consequences of the armistice were in any case remarkable: since the armistice treaty stated that the frontline resulted from the connecting line between the most advanced British and Italian troops, the Allies allowed armed patrols to push forward as far as possible. The Imperial and Royal Army High Command had attempted to inform the troops that the armistice would only come into force on 4 November at 3 p.m., but the soldiers generally allowed the Allies to pass unhindered. They did attempt, however, to make it clear to them that the armistice was already in place. Italians and British did not appear to be very quick on the uptake and pushed on.<sup>2516</sup> They travelled to Trieste, to the Val Canale and in the direction of the Brenner. Perhaps they also saw how, on the highest mountain of the decomposed Habsburg Monarchy, the Ortler, a black and yellow flag was flying at half mast, before the garrison of Carinthians and Styrians evacuated their positions on the peak.<sup>2517</sup> Protests against the capture of all the Imperial and Royal troops outstripped by the Italians were simply answered by pointing to the fact that the treaty had been signed by plenipotentiaries of the Army High Command. This was difficult to dispute.

During the course of the Allied advance, 108,000 soldiers were captured from the German lands of the Dual Monarchy, including around 30,000 from the territory that was to become German-Austria. In addition, 83,000 Czechs and Slovaks, 61,000 southern Slavs, 40,000 Poles, 32,000 Ruthenians, 25,000 Romanians and 7,000 Italians were captured. The Hungarians had, for the most part, already withdrawn. Thus, the Italians, British and French had captured masses of soldiers from their new allies as well as a few new compatriots; this fact was not without piquancy.

On 4 November, Colonel Karl Schneller left Padua in order to bring the signed copy of the armistice treaty to Vienna. He believed that he could accomplish the journey quickest via Vorarlberg, but he did not arrive in Vienna until 8 November.<sup>2518</sup>

### **Te Deum Laudamus**

The armistice also extended, as mentioned above, to all the other fronts on which Austro-Hungarian troops stood, namely the Balkans and the German western front. Understandably, there was confusion in those places. The German Empire had not

concluded an armistice; indeed, it had not even opened negotiations to that effect. The troops of the former ally Austria-Hungary were sent to the rear.

In the Balkans, where practically nothing had been heard about the results of negotiations in the Villa Giusti, the withdrawal had continued. On 1 November, Imperial and Royal troops detonated the railway bridge near Belgrade, which was thus destroyed for the third time in this war. The next day, no soldier of Army Group 'Feldmarshall Kövess', which should have long since been Army Group 'Erzherzog Joseph', stood any longer on Serbian soil.<sup>2519</sup> Kövess heard on 4 November, or even on the 5th, that he had been appointed Army Supreme Commander. He travelled on the Danube to Vienna. In the meantime, Hungary demanded and received new, separate armistice negotiations because it did not feel affected by the treaty signed in the Villa Giusti. In Belgrade, more far-reaching and worse conditions were then dictated to the Magyars.<sup>2520</sup>

The armistice naturally also extended to the navy. The Emperor had already transferred the High Seas Fleet to the new southern Slav state on 31 October, i.e. before the conclusion of the armistice, and did not intend to deliver the Fleet to Italy. The last Commander of the Imperial and Royal Fleet, Rear Admiral Miklos von Horthy, departed with an order to the fleet in which he expressed the hope that the southern Slavs who remained on the ships would exercise a 'firm protection of the common coast'. Evidently, Horthy did not want to accept that Hungary and Croatia would no longer share a common coast. The southern Slav fleet command had other worries, however, than commenting on this problem.

Italy felt duped by the transfer of the Imperial and Royal Fleet.<sup>2521</sup> It could not do much about it, but at least the joy of the new state of the Slovenes, Serbs and Croats was to be dulled and the danger of a powerful Yugoslav fleet averted. An Italian command that had already been sent against the Imperial and Royal naval base was dropped off in the harbour of Pula (Pola) took advantage of the dwindling vigilance and on 1 November attached two mines to the fleet's flagship *Viribus Unitis*, with which the dreadnought was sunk. Although the crew had been warned, the majority of the men, as well as the first Yugoslav Commander of the Fleet, Janko Vuković von Podkapelski, went down with the battleship.<sup>2522</sup> As a result of this, it had become clearly visible that a conflict had broken out between Italy and Yugoslavia for hegemony in the Adriatic and for the possession of the Adriatic coastal region, which appeared to confirm all pessimistic prognoses on the future of the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy.

A member of the task force of the British War Cabinet, Leopold Stennett Amery, who had gathered abundant experiences in Balkan matters since 1915,<sup>2523</sup> described the scenario in a powerful memorandum for Foreign Secretary Balfour: if sovereign nation states were to be established in Central Europe, then 'we transform Central Europe in the blink of an eye into a new Balkans'. His proposal for a solution aimed at a Danube confederation that would also by all means be in a position to resist German

ambitions of domination. Amery was vehemently contradicted,<sup>2524</sup> but suddenly Italy was also anxious to retain an Austrian rump monarchy. There was not to be an independent German-Austria but instead a state that also included Croats, Slovenes and Dalmatians. The Slavs would have to be in the majority, in order to prevent a union of German-Austria with the German Empire.<sup>2525</sup> And whilst the shooting continued and the war passed into the post-war period, those armistice conditions were still circulating that Czecho-Slovakian and Yugoslav representatives had worked out in Bern at the end of October. These stated that it could not only be a question of agreeing on military provisions for an armistice. The Austro-Hungarian armistice commission would have to recognise the independence of 'Czecho-Slovakia' and Yugoslavia. Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and the 'Czecho-Slovakian lands' of Hungary were to fall to the northern Slav state. The following would be ceded to the Yugoslav state: Carinthia with the districts Hermagor, Villach, Klagenfurt (except the Feldkirchen region), Völkermarkt and Wolfsberg, the south of Styria from the Koralpe to the northern border of Radkersburg, then the territory from Zala and Vas to Szent Gotthárd, the Serbo-Croat territory north of the Drau, the Batschka, the Banat, provided it belonged to the Serbian Vojvodina, Croatia, Slavonia with Rijeka as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia. The territory between the Leitha and the Danube as well as the course of the Raab River were to be occupied by international troop contingents in order to establish the link between 'Czecho-Slovakia' and Yugoslavia and give the former access to the sea.<sup>2526</sup> The paper had not been used in the Villa Giusti, but it very clearly announced the desires for the time after the war.

The lands that had belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy now ultimately had only one thing in common: they had to clarify their relationship to one another. However, in the hour of the dissolution of the Empire, they already split into victors and vanquished. Northern and southern Slavs were victors, although they had fought, suffered through and experienced the war as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Austria and Hungary were the vanquished.

The Monarch, the Imperial and Royal household, the last Imperial-Royal government, the Imperial and Royal Army High Command and liquidated imperial authorities remained in a recess of history. Many of them gathered together on 4 November in Vienna's St. Stephan's Cathedral. It was the name day of the Emperor, which was to be commemorated. Cardinal Piffl celebrated mass. The members of the Imperial-Austrian government had almost completely assembled. It was not a requiem for the Empire but instead a 'Te Deum'. At the end, the Emperor's Hymn, *Gott erhalte* (God Preserve) was sung. For Josef Redlich, there was a glaring contrast between the words 'lead us with a prudent hand' and the revolution taking place outside.<sup>2527</sup> 'Blood and treasure for our Emperor, Blood and treasure for the Fatherland' – this might have been acceptable as a type of 'balance sheet of the World War'. But the entire scene was unreal.

## Epilogue

Once the revolution had gradually spread to all the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, many did not want to accept it, but one glance at the surging masses said everything. Vast crowds moved through the streets of Vienna, Prague, Budapest and other capital cities. They did not want to 'watch the revolution' but actually to be a part of it when in the centre of Europe nation states were founded and an affirmation of one of the new states was demanded of every single person. Whoever attempted to make it clear that they still felt obligated to the Imperial and Royal government ran the risk of being physically reminded of the new realities. The scenes differed only marginally from one another: in one city, it was the nationalist radicals and in another the political and ideological fanatics who set the tone. A not to be underestimated group was formed by all of those who had not been radicalised by ideologues and ideas of the nation state but simply no longer wanted the war. Into the midst of these came the soldiers returning from the fronts who multiplied the revolutionary potential. Let us once more single out the scene in Prague in the last days of October and the first days of November 1918, about which the now former station commander wrote: 'There could be no talk any more of correction and discipline. [...] No-one any longer gave the military salute; jostling of all officers, whether white-red or black-yellow, was the order of the day. A wild band of soldiers emerged overnight. All factories were inactive. Everything was decked with flags; in pan-Slav and red flags. Workers and soldiers carried little red flags. Young and old, men and women, rejoiced over the day of the long-awaited freedom, the day on which the hated yoke of the Habsburgs was cast off. If one had asked any of the red flag-carriers what this yoke had actually been, I am convinced that none of them would have been able to provide an accurate answer.'<sup>2528</sup>

It was not possible for everyone – in fact not for the majority – to be involved in the proclamations of new statehood. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers were still marching back from the fronts and sought to somehow find their way to their respective homelands. Non-compliance and veritable battles among the former comrades were such a daily occurrence that they actually hardly any longer aroused any attention. One group declared that they did not want anything to do with another group, and then it was the turn of the second group to do the same. Those who were on the return

march from Ukraine, Romania and Serbia only learned several days late that the war was already over. Excesses occurred here and there. A few troop bodies returned home 'en bloc', as it was called, in spite of the capture of prisoners on a mass scale after the conclusion of the armistice in the Villa Giusti. At the railway stations the police attempted to maintain order. Protection forces, which had been formed ad hoc and were generally from the new states, supported the police. The situation in the large traffic centres was particularly dramatic. At Vienna's Nordbahnhof, released Russian prisoners of war plundered, and shots were fired. At Ostbahnhof, in Klein Schwechat and in Stadlau there were gunfights between units of the people's militia on the one hand and Czecho-Slovakian or Hungarian repatriates on the other. There were dead and wounded on both sides.<sup>2529</sup> The guarding of depots was generally in vain: People plundered, ate and drank like there was no tomorrow. Anything available was stuffed into kit bags, rucksacks and pouches. There were also smaller engagements with the Allies, who were pressing forward, or some other troops for whom the advance was too slow. Occasionally, demands were made for weapons to be surrendered. Most refused to do so. Somewhere, the soldiers were then loaded into carriages. Trains were shelled. Officers, who were suddenly without a home and without prospects, committed suicide. The circle from Christalnigg via Paukert and Bolzano to Eduard von Böltz thus closed.<sup>2530</sup> The dead lay at the railway stations. Then the military formations divided themselves up into larger and smaller groups. Some wanted to go one way, others in another direction. 'A shake of hands and friendship, which had often lasted for years, was brought to an abrupt end.'<sup>2531</sup> Generally, they did not even say 'good bye'.

## Afterword

The moment came in Paris on 18 January 1919. It was no coincidence that this was the same date on which in 1871, in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, the proclamation of the German Empire had been made. The President of the United States and the prime ministers and foreign ministers of the Allied and associated powers met on the Quai d'Orsay for the first session of a conference that was described as a 'peace conference', but whose scale and duration were not foreseeable. Its aim was to end the war that had first been temporarily halted through a series of armistice treaties. Representatives of those states that were regarded as defeated had not been invited to take part in the sessions. This was perhaps the first major difference between this and the peace conference that had taken place over a hundred years previously, and which ended the Napoleonic Wars as the 'Congress of Vienna'. As was usual on such occasions, ceremony was at the forefront and, not least, veiled language was used. The site of the conference itself meant that France played the role of host. When the French President, Raymond Poincaré, entered the hall, the 72 politicians who had been invited rose and in some cases remained standing to listen to what he had to say. Poincaré presented the overall picture: 'The most deceitful goal of the enemy has today been clearly proven. In the hope of seizing hegemony in Europe and, soon afterwards, dominance of the world, the Central Powers, which are bound together by culpable secret agreements, devised a hateful pretence in order to move beyond Serbia and to open a path to the Orient. At the same time, they renounced solemnly given obligations in order to prepare a road into the heart of France through Belgium [...]. If now, after many vicissitudes, those who wished to rule by the sword have now died by the sword, they bear the blame for doing so themselves [...].' Poincaré then left the hall, the chair was given to the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, and then all those who numbered among the Allied and associated states were invited to bring to paper their ideas for the clauses to be contained in the agreements that were to be concluded with the defeated states. Then, the delegates separated and in political circles and groups of experts began to discuss the peace treaties for Germany, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Over time, twelve treaties and conventions were formulated. One treaty was still missing: the peace treaty with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It could not be drawn up, since

the Habsburg Monarchy no longer existed; now, it was no more than a memory. It had been replaced by the 'successor states', of which (German-)Austria and Hungary would have to answer for what the Habsburg Monarchy had set in motion. They were taken into imperial custody and had no choice but to render an account to themselves and to others as to how the war had come about, and why its end brought the demise of a major European empire. Much time has passed since then. The accounts have continued to be given. Many issues have been possible to clarify and explain. However, questions still remain open, and the purpose of this book is to answer some of them.

By now, a great deal has been written about the First World War and the final years of Austria-Hungary. However, it is far exceeded by the material concerning events in Germany, Belgium and France. Even so, it is possibly a banal observation that we should be mindful of the fact that without Austria-Hungary, the First World War is neither conceivable, nor can it be explained satisfactorily. Certainly, however, the way in which events unfolded respectively in turn deserves an equally separate description, since otherwise, both the intensity and the conclusions remain incomplete and the approach taken towards a historic epoch is questionable at best. Ultimately, states, too, are individuals, and deserve to be described in terms of their very specific manifestations and mentalities. In the case of Austria-Hungary, it is by no means only the military events that should be taken into account, but also the overall political framework and the many-sidedness that caused this instable, fragile structure that the Habsburg Monarchy had already been before the war to crumble. It was not a sudden end, but a process of dissolution, which was merely accelerated by the war, and which probably led to the most far-reaching changes in Europe in the modern age.

It was already my wish twenty years ago to emphasise these aspects when I published a book about Austria-Hungary's final war for the first time. At that time, I began the book with a quote from the great Swiss historian Werner Näf, who in 1930 began a lecture about the war with the words that already aimed to create a historic distance:

'However far in the past and however frequently there had been talk of the "coming war", when it did arrive in the form of a World War, public opinion in the world was overcome with the awareness of a monstrous, all-convulsing event, and every individual was forced to deal with it. Despite all the war psychosis of the months and years that followed, there was no thinking person who did not undergo an inner crisis. The conflict and the hardships of the times were obstacles to striving for an objective insight into what happened; one struggled to explain the experience of the war towards oneself, or at least to make it bearable.'

Initially, in naming those who were now 'to blame' for the World War, it had appeared to be insignificant how varied the causes of this war had been. The victors and the vanquished had a very different view of what had happened. And each side availed itself of the 'terrible simplificateurs' (J. Burckhardt). The longer-term causes, the role of



the victorious powers in the events leading up to the war, as well as the differing levels of responsibility among the states of the Central Powers within their alliance remained largely discounted. The respective clauses in the peace treaties were oriented solely towards the assessment of the commission employed by the peace conference and chaired by the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing, in which it was concluded at the end that: 'The war was deliberately precipitated by the Central Powers together with their allies, Turkey and Bulgaria, and was the result of actions that were deliberately taken so as to render it impossible to prevent the war'.

It is clear that a war that lasted for around four-and-a-half years, that cost around nine million soldiers their lives worldwide, and that wounded a further 20 million more, of whom some retained severe injuries, triggered a shock reaction. It is also clear that a war that had led to millions of civilian deaths and caused three million people to die of illness and disease, that had ravaged vast swathes of European territory in particular – that such a cataclysmic event would lead to the question: who was to blame? And as is so often the case, attempts were made to assign the blame only to the former enemy. Victors, even more so when they are able to dictate the terms of peace, tend to continue the view propounded by the war propaganda, which makes little room for differentiation. And it nearly always takes time until years, decades or centuries later – and frequently not only with a more complete knowledge of the sources, but also arising out of a certain, perhaps political need – the issue of guilt or innocence, of more or less responsibility or, to use a philosophical term, pure 'throwness' leads to answers that are different to those that would be given immediately after the war. Above all, however, the issue of who was responsible for taking a step that led to war is only one of many. First, steps were taken to adopt a broader view when researching the causes of the war. Further issues emerged from the course of events during the war and in connection with the fact that the question must be asked why it was not possible to end the war earlier, or at least to agree an armistice, on the basis of which a peace could then have been brought about. In this connection, too, the issue of blame, or at least of responsibility, also applied. 21 years after the First World War ended, the next great European war began, whose roots certainly also – although not exclusively – lay in the results of the First World War. Here, it is usually only Germany under National Socialism that is taken into account, but not the consequences of the collapse of Austria-Hungary, nor the particular role played by Russia and one into which it was forced. It is now possible to agree with the hypothesis that it was only during the course of the Second World War that the previous war was fought to the end. Equally, it can be argued that this was a new war and, ultimately, every conflict, every war, has its roots in the past. The solutions found for Europe in 1945 and afterwards lasted for longer. However, ultimately, they too were not permanent enough. Older historical identities forcefully emerged and created new identities. And it was surely no coincidence that in

the years following 1989, when the Soviet Union began to dissolve, the states that were created on the soil of the Danube Monarchy after the First World War sought to find a connection to their past. Most certainly, the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s created new, but ultimately also old, individual political entities. The fact that during the Europeanisation of Europe, the question arose as to whether the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a prefiguration of European unification, could not be avoided. Idealistic trimming aside, one can only hope that Europe does not follow the path of the Habsburg Monarchy!

There is much that clings to the final years of the Danube Monarchy: the fragility of a major power than has become almost ungovernable, the attempt to find a compromise between eleven nationalities, and the laboratory for apocalypses and the enormous creativity that was released in the years before and during the First World War. If we also wish to apply the term 'historicisation' – which is usually used in relation to the National Socialist period – to the First World War, then this is appropriate to the extent that we can determine that the historicisation of the first great war of the 20th century has reached a decisive point. The focus here is not on problems of repeatability or some kind of direct reference. It is something else that marks this break: the last people who not only experienced the First World War in a state of unawareness, but who also took influential action or at least were aware of what was happening, are dead. They are no longer available to us as personal sources of information. There is also no-one left whom we could ask, and who could then give answers as to how things once were according to the popular oral history method. There is no-one left who can describe the emotions and the atmosphere that dominated when the war broke out, or at any other point during the war. Hunger, concerns, suffering and sorrow can also no longer be authentically attested to; instead, attempts can only be made at best to put ourselves in their shoes. For later generations, the First World War is therefore slipping back into the shadows of the distant past, which now has almost no further connection to the present. A hundred years 'afterwards' are a long time, after all!

The theatres of the heavy fighting have become open-air museums. Some have been given additional places of remembrance in the form of public exhibitions, which extend from Verdun, Peronne and Ypres through to Gorlice, Gorizia (Görz), Bovec (Flitsch) and Kötschach-Mauthen. Wherever a country did not see such fighting directly, as was the case for Austria with the exception of the area around the Plöcken Pass, the First World War and the end of the Habsburg Monarchy can only be displayed in exhibitions. The Museum of Military History in Vienna is an outstanding example of this, and is without doubt the central place of remembrance for all the countries that formerly belonged to the Habsburg Empire. However, there are very few memorials to the individuals who were influential at the time. Emperor Franz Joseph has his monuments. They were not explicitly erected for the 'war emperor', but for the monarch who had steered

the fortunes of his empire through 68 years. For Emperor Karl I, a few busts have to suffice, and he only attracted greater attention again in connection with his beatification in 2004. The prime ministers of the war era are buried in various local cemeteries and family vaults. Archduke Friedrich, Army Supreme Commander from 1914 until the end of 1916, is buried in Mosonmagyaróvár. Several military commanders, particularly Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, were given honorary graves. Roads and squares were also named after individuals such as Conrad, Archduke Eugen or Count Viktor Dankl. This continues to be, or is once again, a thorn in the side to some people.

The treatment of the war memorials of the First World War, which are in fact the most important and most widely distributed group of remembrance sites, has in the interim long become entirely separated from the aspect that was the determining factor in their being erected as substitute graves. They are part of the political veneration of the dead, and are accordingly subject to shifting trends. What began to be constructed already during the war as a symbol of mourning was conceivably treated differently after 1918. And if an attempt is made today to bring to mind the memorial culture, then elements emerge that may in some cases perfectly reflect the political changes, but which no longer have anything in common with the original intention behind the memorials, namely as places of mourning.

In Italy, the fortresses commemorating the dead in Friuli and the Julian March, the majority of which were erected during the Fascist era, continue to be symbols of national remembrance. The slogan 'Trento è Trieste' has in this way retained its validity. The areas around the memorials, most of which cover the ground on which the battles raged, are a sacred zone. In the memorials erected later, those who fell in the Imperial and Royal Army are also remembered, and are thus symbols of death as a levelling force as well as of the final victory. Those who fell in Italy were not described as heroes, however, but simply as 'caduti' ('the fallen').

In Slovenia, Fascist memorials mingle with those with a Slovenian nationalist tendency, which are in fact Yugoslav memorials. However, in the interim, they now provide an expression of a history linked to the Habsburg Empire and its final war while being a symbol of national identity in equal measure.

In Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, and to an equal extent in Transylvania in Romania, however, the memorials that commemorate the fallen Austro-Hungarian troops are rare. If they were not already erected during the war, there was subsequently no need to find an expression for what had happened before and for the soldiers who had fought for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the form of an honorific commemoration. For this reason, memorials such as the one in Kotor, which is dedicated to the men who were executed for their part in the sailors' uprising of 1918, are far more prominent. However, they too are no longer a matter for national sentiment, in extremely clear contrast to Hungary, where remembrance of the war through memorials is far more preva-

lent as a symbol of national identity than in other countries that formerly belonged to the Habsburg Empire, and certainly also as a symbol of mourning for the loss of territory.

Poland has nurtured the memory of the war, which has not least been preserved in hundreds of memorials and cemeteries, throughout all the years and all political upheavals. The right to eternal rest that was very consciously granted to soldiers after the First World War in order to act as a warning and as a deterrent in equal measure, was then also decreed in Poland for the Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian soldiers who fell. And cemeteries and memorials were meticulously cared for in Galicia in particular.

In Ukraine, there are hardly any more military cemeteries and, in particular, memorials to the war dead, unless they have been re-erected in very recent times. Usually, this was not done as a result of Ukraine's own initiative, but at the instigation of other former crown lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. Among Ukrainians, the historic rejection is too great for them to have any potential as a matter of national interest.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are markedly different when it comes to the veneration of the military dead. While in the Czech Republic, many hundreds of war memorials commemorate a time that is characterised by a type of competition, since the Imperial and Royal Army and the Czech Legion appear to continue to face each other as opponents, in Slovakia, aside from a few sites in the west of the country, there are hardly any memorials to be found, and not even soldiers' cemeteries from the 'Great War'.

The situation in Austria is also ambiguous. Whereas in Germany, where soon after 1918 a revanchist tendency already crept into the architecture of the memorials and the texts used, this is not the case in Austria. However, the memorials express not only mourning, but also heroisation. Most of the 5,000 or so public war memorials, which with just a few exceptions were erected in the period following 1918, are still standing on their original sites today. Some were relocated to cemeteries or re-erected. In many cases, inscriptions were added commemorating the troops who fell in the Second World War. However, three generations after the First and two generations after the Second World War, after a period of almost 100 years, this almost self-evident, if not unproblematic, equation of the two wars, which is commonplace on war memorials, has been the subject of increasing criticism. This has been triggered at least at the central site of remembrance, the 'heroes' memorial in the Outer Castle Gate (Äußeres Burgtor) in Vienna, where the merging of the First and Second World Wars has led to a radical reduction of this remembrance site. It may be that this is also an expression of a lack of a sense of history that is repeatedly the subject of discussion. This is something that is not easy to prevent. Memorials, museums, archives and libraries, which are also referred to by Pierre Nora, the 'progenitor' of modern scientific study of the storage of memory, as the classic 'places of memory', are however certainly necessary in order to give a voice to the immeasurable majority who are no longer alive, and have now been silenced.

## Acknowledgements and Dedication

This book is the result of decades of work. While completely revising my first major work on Austria-Hungary and the First World War, which appeared under the title: *Der Tod des Doppeladlers* ('The Death of the Double-Headed Eagle'), it was first necessary to take into account the fact that a work that had initially been written over twenty years previously needed to be re-examined. Questions have changed, and readers of any kind of work have changed. Errors needed to be rectified. Some elements needed to be formulated more precisely, more sharply. New information was added. And, naturally, such a comprehensive work is also to some degree a response to others and other works, to criticism as well as to praise and concurrence. In the interim, much good work and some less good work has been written on the subject. Sometimes, the certain level of humility is lacking that is also needed when approaching a period of time that one did not experience oneself. Above all, what was of importance, and continues to be so, was to comb through the archives and to search for answers to questions that are now pressing. Many works and many people have helped me to alter my own view of the subject and to enrich the way in which it is portrayed. To them, I express my thanks.

I would like to turn first to the person of Emperor Franz Joseph, whose role in unleashing the war is far greater than had been assumed until now. Franz Joseph tenaciously and obstinately insisted that he alone was to make the decisions. However, he caused an enormous vacuum to be created at the summit of his empire. Since he spent hours every day concerning himself with the military events, while accordingly paying little attention to political developments, he was no longer able or willing to make major changes, the power was initially conferred to the Austro-Hungarian Army High Command and, finally, to the German Empire. With the creation of the Joint Supreme War Command in September 1916, the Austrian Emperor forfeited important elements of his sovereignty and, ultimately, was no longer even in a position to decide whether to wage war or pursue peace. Peace was anyway very far from the dying Emperor's thoughts.

I also wished to provide a further and comprehensive description of the peoples of the Empire, whose behaviour during the war ultimately decided whether the Empire would continue to exist or whether it would disintegrate. Here, it was not so much the

Monarch in person who was the decisive factor, since the rejection of the war that some nationalities already clearly expressed in 1914 was related to the fact that they were no longer offered any prospect for the future. Austria-Hungary perished as a result of dualism, and not due to the war. The war ultimately only accelerated the process of dissolution.

I also wanted to discuss the issue of how this war was financed, and how the financial burdens were distributed, how refusals were given to the Empire that had already become clear in 1914, and how some members of the Austro-Hungarian elite in particular, not least the aristocracy, also no longer felt bound either to the Monarchy or to the war.

Particular attention also needed to be paid to those who had been the source of a particular kind of fluctuation, namely the two-and-a-half million or so war refugees, deportees and, above all, prisoners of war who had at times been accommodated within the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as the approximately two million Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who ended up in Russian, Serbian or Italian captivity.

In connection with the military events, I wished to take a detailed look at the mentality of the soldiers, which in a particular way provide information as to how the emphases shifted and the rejection of the Empire became widespread.

The thanks for the assistance given to me in making the preliminary studies for this book can probably not be great enough. They go to the staff at the Austrian archives, particularly the Austrian State Archives, whose director, Professor Dr Lorenz Mikolitzky, granted me very generous access to the archival files and libraries. My thanks go to the staff at the Haus- und Hofarchiv (Austrian State Archives), the Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives) and the Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (General Administration Archives). I was also able to find new sources in the Kärntner Landesarchiv (Carinthian Regional Archives) in Klagenfurt, for which I wish to thank the director, Dr Wilhelm Wadl, MAS, as well as in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (Viennese Municipal and Regional Archives), where Dr Klaralinda Ma-Kircher was particularly forthcoming in giving me support. Files in the Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives), above all the extremely important family and estate papers of Count Herbert Herberstein, were already previously made available for me to use. They have been supplemented by a small number of documents. For four years running, I had the opportunity to work at the British National Archives in Kew, and to continue research that I had already begun a quarter of a century earlier. I was also able to return repeatedly to archival research that I had already conducted previously, and that provided access to the documents of the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (German Federal Military Archives) in Freiburg im Breisgau, the Political Archives of the German Foreign Office in Bonn (now in Berlin) and most recently also the Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Saxon Central State Archives) in Dresden. Older research results

were added to by means of further research in the Vojenský historický archiv (Military History Archives) of the Czech Republic in Prague. I am also grateful for the research conducted in the most important documents at the Orszàgos Levéltár (National Archives) and Synodal Archives of the Reformed Church in Budapest. The primary sources of these archives were supplemented by files from the Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives) in Bern and smaller archives, of which the Albanian National Archives in Tirana should be given particular mention, the use of which was made possible as part of a visit to the archives by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Recently, I was also given the opportunity to examine the Academy's volume of statistics on the First World War, which is currently in press, and to compare data. For this, I am very indebted to Dr Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife Marianne, as so often in the past, for her quite extraordinary help in procuring the necessary literature, and in particular in reading and re-reading the manuscript. The fact that over many, many years, she accepted and helped realise the perhaps rather eccentric idea of visiting most of the theatres of Austria-Hungary's final war also deserves a particular mention. After all, who else has put up for the night on the Kolubara and in Andrijevica, in Rzeszów or Berati? Who else has been attacked at the Čakor Pass, or has examined not only the lodgings but also the theatres of war in – to name but a few – Prezmysl, Medzilaborce or, far less problematically, in Kotor, Folgaria, Duino, as well as in many, many other places?

Finally, my publisher, the Böhlau Verlag, informed me from the very beginning that this book about the First World War is of particular importance to them, and Dr Peter Rauch and in particular also Dr Eva Reinhold-Weisz, have consistently given me a feeling of being a favourite author. For this I express my heartfelt thanks to both, as well as to all the staff at the publisher who have given me advice and who have been a great support.

At the end of a work, the issue always arises of a personal dedication, and I would also like to make one here. Many years ago, my wife and I came to the realisation that our fathers, who had probably never known each other, but who were both born in 1898, served in the same regiment, namely the Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment No. 7 'Graf von Khevenhüller', and fought on the Italian front during the last two years of the World War. They came from Vienna and Carinthia. They never spoke of their war experiences. These could only be imagined on the basis of a few photographs and a verbal account given by other people. Nonetheless, I wish to dedicate this book to the two regimental comrades who have long since died, Hermann Rauchensteiner and Otto Strakosch. Perhaps they would have enjoyed reading it.

Vienna, spring 2013





## Notes

### 1. On the Eve

- 1 An excellent overview of the current status of international research and the results of country-specific research is given by Gerd Krumeich and Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Die Geschichtsschreibung zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, edited by Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zürich, 2009), 304–315 and in other chapters of the exposition and in the lexicon section of the encyclopaedia. Detailed information on current research and literature references of particular importance are included in the volume by Wolfdieter Bihl (ed.), *Deutsche Quellen zur Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges (= Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte der Neuzeit – Freiherr-vom-Stein Gedächtnisausgabe XXIX, Darmstadt, 1991)*. By the same author: *Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918. Chronik, Daten, Fakten* (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 2010); bibliography 314–321. Also: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands. Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918 (= Bruno Gebhardt, Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte, Vol. 17, Stuttgart, 2002)*. An exposé of the aspect according to which Russia bore a highly substantial share of the guilt for the unleashing of the war, aside from the German publications during the inter-war years focussing on who was to blame for the war, is given in the recently published volume by British historian Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (London, 2011). A summary of the most important opinions following the controversy surrounding the causes of the outbreak of war in 1914 that was triggered by Fritz Fischer is given in the anthology: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen, Entstehung und Kriegsziele*, edited by Wolfgang Schieder (= *Neue Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Vol. 32, Cologne/Berlin, 1969*). The Austro-Hungarian aspect, which is hardly considered at all in most British, French and also German publications, dominates in older works by Austrian authors, in particular: Mathilde Uhlirz, *Handbuch der Geschichte Österreichs und seiner Nachbarländer Böhmen und Ungarn, Vol. 3 (Weltkrieg 1914–1918, Graz/Leipzig/Vienna, 1940)*. Also: Hans Uebersberger, *Österreich zwischen Russland und Serbien. Zur südslawischen Frage und der Entstehung des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Cologne/Graz, 1958); Roderich Gooß, *Das Wiener Kabinett und die Entstehung des Weltkrieges. Mit Ermächtigung des Leiters des Deutschösterreichischen Staatsamtes für Äußeres auf Grund aktenmäßiger Forschung dargestellt* (Vienna, 1919). Comprehensive bibliographic references from the more recent and very recent past on the history of Austria-Hungary in the decades before the war, as well as the First World War itself, are provided in the volumes, to be acknowledged in detail later, published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918*, also in Ernst Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1994) and of course in most of the works listed below.
- 2 ‘The grand seminal catastrophe of this century’.
- 3 Also: Hew Strachan, *Towards a comparative history of World War I*, in: *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift Vol. 67, No. 2* (2008), 339–344.

- 4 Gregor Schöllgen, *Flucht in den Krieg? Die Außenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland* (Darmstadt, 1991).
- 5 McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, loc. cit.
- 6 The term used above all by Kurt Riezler, confidante of the German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg; the term used is included, for example, in the essay by Gerhard Ritter, *Riezlers Theorie des kalkulierten Risikos und Bethmann Hollwegs politische Konzeption in der Julikrise 1914*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, here 244.
- 7 The bonmot ascribed to Kaiser Franz Joseph's Adjutant General, Count Paar, in Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, *Marksteine der Moderne. Österreichs Beitrag zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna/Munich/Zürich/New York, 1980), 23.
- 8 Elisabeth Grossegger, *Der Kaiser-Huldigungs-Festzug Wien 1908* (Vienna, 1992), 7.
- 9 Hans Wilczek erzählt seinen Enkeln. *Erinnerungen aus seinem Leben*, edited by Elisabeth Kinsky-Wilczek (Graz, 1933), 445 and Grossegger, *Kaiser-Huldigungs-Festzug*, 201.
- 10 The source basis for studies on the foreign policy of the Monarchy before the war are the nine volumes of the series edited by Ludwig Bittner: *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914* (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs, Vienna/Leipzig, 1930).
- 11 See also: *Das Ende von Großreichen*, edited by Helmut Altrichter, Helmut Neuhaus (= Erlanger Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit 1, Erlangen/Jena 1996).
- 12 An extensive study of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy before the war, which is a work based on excellent source knowledge, is: Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1991). Here also esp. the secondary English language literature.
- 13 Aside from the not yet completed biography by Solomon Wank, esp. Francis Roy Bridge, Aehrenthal, Izvolsky, Grey and the Annexation of Bosnia, in: *Brennpunkt Mitteleuropa. Festschrift für Helmut Rumpler*, edited by Ulfried Burz (Klagenfurt, 2000), 413–430, and Solomon Wank, *The Archduke and Aehrenthal: The Origins of a Hatred*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook 33* (Minneapolis, 2002), 77–104.
- 14 Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy 1914–1918*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1966), 52. Also quoted in Daniela Schanes, *Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg. Feind- und Kriegsdarstellungen in österreichisch-ungarischen, deutschen und serbischen Selbstzeugnissen* (= Neue Forschungen zur Ostmittel- und osteuropäischen Geschichte, edited by Harald Heppner and Ulrike Tischler-Hofer, Vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern et al. 2011), 72.
- 15 See Heinrich Friedjung, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus 1884–1914*, Vol. 2 (Berlin, 1922), 215–236.
- 16 Hans Uebersberger, *Österreich zwischen Russland und Serbien. Zur südslawischen Frage und der Entstehung des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Cologne/Graz, 1958), 20 et seq. The corresponding documents in: *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik Vol. I*, esp. nos. 40–79.
- 17 Graydon A. Tunstall, *Planning for War against Russia and Serbia. Austro-Hungarian and German Military Strategies, 1871–1914* (= *War and Society in East Central Europe*, vol. XXXI, Boulder/New York, 1993), 63.
- 18 Re. Bertha von Suttner, the biographies by Beatrix Kempf, *Bertha von Suttner* (Wien 1964) and Brigitte Hamann, *Bertha von Suttner* (Munich, 1986). A comprehensive study of the Austrian peace movement before the First World War: *Überlegungen zum Frieden*, edited by Manfred Rauchensteiner (Vienna, 1987).
- 19 *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik Vol. III*, No. 2567. See also Uebersberger, *Österreich*, 65.
- 20 John Leslie, *Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch. Der Ballhausplatz in Wien im Juli 1914 aus der Sicht eines österreichisch-ungarischen Diplomaten*, in: *Deutschland und Europa in der Neuzeit* (= commemorative publication for Karl-Otmar Frh. v. Aretin, Stuttgart, 1988), 663. Here also the most important secondary literature.

- 21 On the personality of Franz Ferdinand, particularly his influence on policy: Georg Franz, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und die Pläne zur Reform der Habsburger Monarchie* (= Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 35, Brno/Munich/Vienna, 1943). Very thorough and analytical: Robert A. Kann, *Franz Ferdinand Studien* (Vienna, 1976). Also on his personality, Friedrich Weissensteiner, *Franz Ferdinand. Der verhinderte Herrscher* (Vienna, 1983).
- 22 On Berchtold the two-volume biography by Hugo Hantsch, Leopold Graf Berchtold, *Grandseigneur und Staatsmann*, 2 vols. (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1963). Berchtold's diaries, which were used by Hantsch, are now in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives).
- 23 Uebersberger, Österreich, 76. Also Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld? Wilhelm II. und die preußisch-deutschen Machteliten* (Munich, 2002), 194; John C.G. Röhl, *Die Generalprobe. Zur Geschichte und Bedeutung des "Kriegsrates" vom 8. Dezember 1912*, in: *Industrielle Gesellschaft und politisches System*, edited by Dirk Stegmann, Bernd-Jürgen Wendt, Peter Christian Witt (= Schriftenreihe der Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn, 1978), 357–373.
- 24 Uebersberger, Österreich, 79. Here also specific references to the British position in a Franco-German war.
- 25 Regarding the role of the Balkan states, and that of the 'Concert of Europe', see the volume: *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, ed. Béla K. Király, Dmitrije Djordjevic (= *War and Society in East Central Europe*, Vol. 18, Boulder/New York, 1987).
- 26 Uebersberger, Österreich, 88 et seq. Also the barely considered attitude of Russia towards Austria during the Balkan Wars in: Samuel R. Williamson, *Military Dimensions of Habsburg-Romanov Relations during the Era of the Balkan Wars*, in: *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, 317–337. Here also extensive references.
- 27 Alma Hannig, *Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns vor 1914*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Perspektiven der Forschung*, edited by Jürgen Angelow (Berlin, 2011), 40.
- 28 Leslie, *Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch*, 664 et seq. *Der Berliner Kriegsrat* in: Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*. Special edition (Düsseldorf, 1967), 45. A critical study on this subject: Egmont Zechlin, *Probleme des Kriegskalküls und der Kriegsbeendigung im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg*, 150 et seq. Also a very thorough study in: John C. G. Röhl, *An der Schwelle zum Krieg: Eine Dokumentation über den "Kriegsrat" vom 8. Dezember 1912*, in: *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, No. 1(1977), 77–134.
- 29 Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 10.
- 30 Röhl, *An der Schwelle zum Krieg*, loc. cit.
- 31 Hew Strachan, *The Outbreak of the First World War* (Oxford, 2004), 65–68.
- 32 Uebersberger, Österreich, 109.
- 33 *Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1908–1919. Die Erinnerungen und Tagebücher Josef Redlichs 1869–1936*, edited by Fritz Fellner and Doris A. Corradini, 2 vols. and index volume (= *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs 105/1–3*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2011; cited in Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*), Vol. 1, 528, 11.2.1913.
- 34 Hannig, *Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns*, 45.
- 35 Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 116 et seq.
- 36 Here the detailed section in the particularly thorough book by Günther Kronenbitter, "Krieg im Frieden". *Die Führung der k. u. k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914* (= *Studien zur Internationalen Geschichte* Vol. 13, Munich, 2003), here from 414.
- 37 Synodal Archives Budapest, Tisza bequest, box 6/20. On the issue of Transylvania see also – albeit with a unilateral focus on the Romanian perspective – the book by Milton G. Lehrer, *Transylvania. History and Reality* (Silverspring, 1986).

- 38 Uebersberger, Österreich, 158.
- 39 The record of a memory given in: Feldmarschall [Franz] Conrad [von Hötzendorf], *Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906–1918*, 4 vols., here Vol. 3 (Vienna/Leipzig/Munich, 1922), 456–460, the following until 467.
- 40 Uebersberger, Österreich, 185.
- 41 József Galántai, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie und der Weltkrieg* (Budapest, 1979), 169 et seq.
- 42 Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, Vol. 3, 456 et seq.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 420 und 463.
- 44 Quoted from Schanes, *Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 78.
- 45 Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 12.
- 46 Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, 16–23. By the same author, *Weltpolitik, Weltmachtstreben und deutsche Kriegsziele*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, 71–87.
- 47 Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 164 et seq.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 171. Also Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 137. As a comparison, the related sections in Hantsch, Berchtold. The assessment of the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian relationship fluctuates between ineptitude on the part of the Danube Monarchy and flagrant opportunism by Romania.
- 49 The quote by Josef von Baechlé from 1908 in Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Volksstämme als Verfassungsprinzip 1848–1918*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. III: *Die Völker des Reichs*, sub-band 2 (Vienna, 1980), 1199, note 146.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 1202. On the position held by Great Britain: Francis Roy Bridge, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914. A diplomatic history* (London 1972). On the position held by France: Jean Béranger, *Die Österreichpolitik Frankreichs von 1848 bis 1918*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. VI: *Die Habsburgermonarchie im System der internationalen Beziehungen*, sub-band 2 (Vienna, 1993), 491–538.
- 51 Zbynek A. Zeman, *Der Zusammenbruch des Habsburgerreiches 1914–1918* (Vienna, 1963), 18.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 55 In summary and with references e.g. to Czech and English-language literature: Victor S. Mamatey, *The Union of Czech Political Parties in the Reichsrat, 1916–1918*, in: *The Habsburg Empire in World War I. Essays on the intellectual, military, political and economic aspects of the Habsburg war effort*, edited by Robert A. Kann, Béla K. Király, Paula S. Fichtner (= *East European Monographs* 23, Boulder/New York, 1977), 3–28.
- 56 Zeman, *Zusammenbruch*, 35. A network of agents of this type also existed, although more prevalent was the concern regarding its possible existence. This was also one of the reasons for the radical and sometimes purely misguided and brutal measures by the Austro-Hungarian military authorities from August to December 1914.
- 57 On his role in the war, see in particular: Karel Pichlík, *Bez Legend* (Prague, 1991).
- 58 Zeman, *Zusammenbruch*, 38.
- 59 Gábor Vermes, István Tisza, *The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist* (= *East European Monographs* 184, New York, 1985), 186 et seq.
- 60 See the comprehensive study: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Helmut Rumpler, Vol. VIII, *Politische Öffentlichkeit und Zivilgesellschaft*, sub-band 1: *Vereine, Parteien und Interessenverbände als Träger der politischen Partizipation* (Vienna, 2006).

- 61 Robert A. Kann, *Geschichte des Habsburgerreiches 1526–1918*(= Forschungen zur Geschichte des Donauraumes, Vol. 4, Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1974).390. Comprehensive study: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, Vol. VIII, sub-band 1.
- 62 Rudolf Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte einer Großmacht* (Berlin, 1932), 128.
- 63 On the next war, in: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* Vol. LVII (1927), 56 et seq.
- 64 Dieter Senghaas, *Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Militarismus-Problematik*, in: *Militarismus*, edited by Volker Berghahn (Neue Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Vol. 83, Cologne, 1975), 125.
- 65 Rudolf Kiszling, *Das Nationalitätenproblem in der Habsburgermonarchie*, in: *Der Donauraum*, No. 2 (1959), 26.
- 66 Joh. Christoph Allmayer-Beck, *Die bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. V, *Die bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna, 1987), 116.
- 67 Kiszling, *Nationalitätenproblem*, 87 et seq.
- 68 Peter Broucek, *Zu den militärischen Beziehungen im Zweibund. Ein Bericht über den Stand der Forschung*, in: 15. Österreichischer Historikertag, Salzburg, 1981. Tagungsbericht (Salzburg, 1983), 84 et seq.
- 69 Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte*, 128–148.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 148–153.
- 71 Gernot D. Hasiba, *Inter arma silent leges? Ein Beitrag über die rechtlichen Grundlagen der österreichischen Verwaltung im 1. Weltkrieg*, in: *Modell einer neuen Wirtschaftsordnung. Wirtschaftsverwaltung in Österreich 1914–1918*, edited by Wilhelm Brauneder, Franz Baltzarek (= Rechtshistorische Reihe 74, Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York/ Paris 1991), 11–32.
- 72 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 1, 222 et seq., 25.3.1914.
- 73 Kann, *Habsburgermonarchie*, 390.
- 74 Margarete Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik in der Kriegswirtschaft. Die freien Gewerkschaften Österreichs im Ersten Weltkrieg* (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs 82, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1992), 57.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 50 et seq.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 46 et seq.
- 77 Gernot D. Hasiba, *Das Notverordnungsrecht in Österreich (1848–1917). Notwendigkeit und Missbrauch eines “Staatserschaltenden Instruments”* (Vienna, 1985), 150 et seq.
- 78 Roman Sandgruber, *Ökonomie und Politik. Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Österreichische Geschichte 1890–1990*, edited by Herwig Wolfram (Vienna, 1995), 310.
- 79 Felix Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2011), 170 et seq.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 307–313.
- 81 Herbert Matis und Karl Bachinger, *Österreichs industrielle Entwicklung*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. I: *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung* (Vienna, 1973), 59.
- 82 K. B. Winogradow, J. A. Pissarew, *Die internationale Lage Österreich-Ungarns 1900 bis 1918*, in: Fritz Klein (ed.), *Österreich-Ungarn in der Weltpolitik 1900 bis 1918* (Berlin, 1965), 31.
- 83 Heinrich Benedikt, *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung der Franz-Joseph-Zeit* (Vienna/Munich, 1958), 176.
- 84 Winogradow – Pissarew, *Die internationale Lage*, 32.
- 85 See Hannes Tauber, *Die Teuerungsrevolte vom 17. September 1911*, in: *Wiener Geschichtsblätter*, Vol. 66 (2011), No. 3, 265–268.
- 86 Francis R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo* (Boston, 1972), 372.

- 87 Gerhard Stadler, *Die Rüstungsindustrien der Donaumonarchie und ihre Exporte nach Lateinamerika*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1985, 3–43 et seq.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 A very extensive study: František Janáček, *Největší zbrojovka monarchie. Škodovka v dějinách ve Škodovce 1859–1918* (Prague, 1990).
- 90 James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (London/New York, 1984), 15.
- 91 Ivan Stanislavovič Bloch, *Der Krieg*, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1899–1906); several translations and editions.
- 92 Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion. A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (London, 1909); several translations and editions, as well as conclusions written after the war.

## 2. Two Million Men for the War

- 93 Supplementary issue 4 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg' (Vienna, 1932), 1–58.
- 94 Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914–1917* (London/Sidney/Toronto, 1975), 71.
- 95 Fritz Franek, *Probleme der Organisation im ersten Kriegsjahre*, in: Supplementary issue 1 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg' (Vienna, 1930), 18, note 1.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Franz Schubert, *Haben Rüstungen den Weltkrieg verursacht?*, in: Supplementary issue 4 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg' (Vienna, 1932), 59.
- 98 A complete overview with the cut-off date of 28.6.1914 can be found in Maximilian Ehnle, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Landmacht nach Aufbau, Gliederung, Friedensorganisation, Einteilung und nationaler Zusammensetzung im Sommer 1914*, in: Supplementary issue 9 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg' (Vienna, 1934), here 5.
- 99 Detailed and adapted to circumstances prior to 1912: Karl Glückmann, *Das Heerwesen der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Vienna, 1911), here esp. 20–27.
- 100 Anton Wagner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* (= *Truppendienst-Taschenbuch* 7, Vienna, 1981), 16 et seq. and 23. See also Ehnle, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Landmacht*, as well as the encyclopaedia entry by the author: *Streitkräfte (Österreich-Ungarn)* in: *Enzyklopädie des Ersten Weltkriegs*, 896–900.
- 101 On the structure and distribution of units as well as the technical data of the aeroplanes see above all the catalogue to the special exhibition in the Military History Museum 'Fliegen 90/71', Part 1, compiled by Erich Gabriel (Vienna, 1971), here esp. 152.
- 102 On the development of the Imperial and Royal Navy, above all on the naval shipbuilding programme, budget allocations, recruitment and relative strengths see Hans Hugo Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914–1918* (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1933), here esp. 19–40. On the political history see Lothar Höbelt, *Die Marine*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. V: *Die bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna, 1987), here esp. 720–724.
- 103 On this see Olaf Richard Wulff, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Donauflottille im Weltkriege 1914–1918* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1934), 11–13.
- 104 It revolved around the introduction of the piece of artillery ultimately referred to as the 7.5 cm mountain cannon type 1915, which was rejected by Potiorek because in a dismantled state it required seven instead of five pack animals to be transported.
- 105 This was the accurate assessment of the later Hungarian Foreign Minister Emerich Csáky. On this see *Vom Geachteten zum Geächteten. Erinnerungen des k. und k. Diplomaten und k. Ungarischen Außenministers Emerich Csáky (1882–1961)*, edited by Eva-Marie Csáky (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1994), 94.

- 106 Josef Wysocki, *Die österreichische Finanzpolitik*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, Vol. I: *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung*, 92.
- 107 On this see also Günther Kronenbitter, *Austria-Hungary*, in the collection of essays edited by Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig entitled *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge, 2010), 24–47, here 41. See also Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 173. The figures on the budget allocations to the Austro-Hungarian military as a proportion of the entire state budget could not be more different. Butschek relies on the statistical data in Max-Stephan Schulze, *Austria-Hungary's Economy in World War I*, in: *The Economics of World War I*, edited by Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (Cambridge, 2005), 77–111. Butschek and Schulze take the gross domestic product as their starting point. All others take the annual budgets or the annual financial statements based on the Austria of today; Schulze takes the Austrian and the Hungarian parts of the empire separately. Walter Wagner, *Die K.(u.) K. Armee – Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. V: *Die bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna, 1987), 590 et seq., who refers to a manuscript from Rainer von Kesslitz, *Die Lasten der militärischen Rüstungen Österreich-Ungarns in neuester Zeit (1868–1912)* (Kriegsarchiv, Allgemeine Reihe, No. 54), and thus cites very different figures. Wagner and Kesslitz cite for 1912 the military expenditure as a proportion of the total budget at 27.561 per cent. Revenues are not calculated. Wysocki, *Die österreichische Finanzpolitik*, 92, on the other hand, calculates the military expenditure for 1912 at 15.7 per cent and observes a gradual sinking of this figure, as the military expenditure from 1870 to 1914 had sunk continually from 24.1 per cent. Finally, Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik, *Protokolle des gemeinsamen Ministerrats*, Vol. VI (1908–1914), 59, determined the military proportion of the state budget in 1912 to be 14.9 per cent. The differences result, among other things, from the inclusion on some occasions of the navy and its exclusion on others, the failure to factor in the figures for Bosnia-Herzegovina, or the non-inclusion of the costs for the rampart buildings in the extraordinary states budget. Agreement has only been reached in one point, namely that the military expenditure of Austria-Hungary was low – too low – in comparison with the other states discussed here.
- 108 Norman Stone, *Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900–1914*, in: *Past and Present* 33 (1966), 95.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 *Ibid.*, 99. More comprehensive: István Deák, *Der k. (u.) k. Offizier 1848–1918* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1991), esp. 215–224. The printed statistical material can be found in the *Militär-Statistisches Jahrbuch* for the year 1911 (Vienna, 1912), esp. 143–152. The figures provided by Deák diverge consciously from those of the *Militär-Statistisches Jahrbuch* and cite for career officers only 55 per cent Germans, yet 16.2 per cent of mixed nationality. As right as it probably is to correct the statistical figures, it is also exceedingly difficult with the help of only one single year for lieutenants. The high percentage given in the *Militär-Statistisches Jahrbuch* is derived from the avowal of nationality and should thus be used in this case.
- 111 Galántai, *Österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie*, 149.
- 112 Deák, *Der k.(u.)k. Offizier*, 108–112.
- 113 *Ibid.*, 123.
- 114 Comprehensive on this: Rudolf Neck, *Arbeiterschaft und Staat im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1964).
- 115 The call for proposals was issued on 2.1.1913. Contributions on the subject of ‘The Delusion and the Harmfulness of Social Democratic Teaching’ should be submitted. The first prize was 1,000 kronen. The closure of the competition was no longer reported on. The call for proposals was presumably a failure.
- 116 The authorship of many contributions can no longer be determined, though it can be assumed that a large number of officers and general staff officers wrote for the army newspaper.

- 117 In an interesting article for the volume 'Militarismus' edited by Volker Berghahn, Alf Lüdtke has pointed out the weaknesses of the term and held it up as a 'typical example of the dilemma of historical concept formation'.
- 118 Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871 bis 1914. Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akademie des Auswärtigen Amtes, edited by Johann Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimmel, Vol. 39 (Berlin, 1927), no. 15734.
- 119 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 1, 509, 11.11.1912.
- 120 This is also emphasised by Helmut Rumpler: Rechtlich-organisatorische und soziale Rahmenbedingungen, in: Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918, edited by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. VI/1 (Vienna, 1989): Im System der internationalen Beziehungen, 120.
- 121 Bernhard Berger, Gespielte Vorbereitung auf den Ersten Weltkrieg. Die operativen Kriegsspiele in Österreich-Ungarn, in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift 5/2000, 596–602. See also Richard Germann, Österreichisch-ungarische Kriegsführung und Kriegsbilder an der Front zu Russland 1914/15, diploma thesis at the University of Vienna (2001), 19.
- 122 Leithner died unexpectedly on 1.7.1914.
- 123 On this see Fritz Fellner, Der Dreibund. Europäische Diplomatie vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg (= Österreich-Archiv, Vienna, 1960).
- 124 On the genesis of the Triple Alliance and its development see in addition to Fellner, Der Dreibund, Holger Afflerbach, Der Dreibund. Europäische Großmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs 92, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2002), here 39–40.
- 125 Stephan Verosta, Theorie und Realität von Bündnissen. Heinrich Lammasch, Karl Renner und der Zweibund (1897–1914) (Vienna, 1971).
- 126 Fritz Fellner, Der Dreibund, in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, special issue (1964), 5.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 Afflerbach, Dreibund, 628–632.
- 129 Williamson, Austria-Hungary, 82–99. By the same author: Vienna and July 1914: The Origins of the Great War Once More, in: Essays of World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War, edited by S. R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (= East European Monographs 126, New York, 1983).
- 130 Hans Jürgen Pantenius, Der Angriffsgedanke gegen Italien bei Conrad von Hötzendorf. Ein Beitrag zur Koalitionskriegsführung im Ersten Weltkrieg (= Dissertationen zur neueren Geschichte 15, 2 vols., Cologne/Vienna, 1984), 66.
- 131 On this thematic complex see also Lothar Höbelt, Der Zweibund. Bündnis mit paradoxen Folgen, in: Ungleiche Partner? Österreich und Deutschland in ihrer gegenseitigen Wahrnehmung. Historische Analysen und Vergleiche aus dem 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, edited by Michael Gehler, Rainer F. Schmidt et al. (= Historische Mitteilungen Beiheft 15, Stuttgart, 1996), 295–313.
- 132 Afflerbach, Dreibund, 660.
- 133 Ibid., 680.
- 134 Winogradow, Pissarew, Die internationale Lage, 17.
- 135 Gian Enrico Rusconi, Das Hasardspiel des Jahres 1915. Warum sich Italien für den Eintritt in den Ersten Weltkrieg entschied, in: Der Kriegseintritt Italiens im Mai 1915, edited by Johannes Hürter and Gian Enrico Rusconi (= Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, special issue, Munich, 2007), 19. Detailed on this: Afflerbach, Dreibund, 769–785.
- 136 Rusconi, Das Hasardspiel, 25 et seq.
- 137 Conrad, Dienstzeit, Vol. 1, 43.



- 138 Manfred Rauchensteiner, Die Entwicklung der Kriegstheorie von 1814 bis 1914, in: International Commission of Military History, XVII Congreso internacional de ciencias historicas, Madrid 1990, Actas I (Madrid, 1992), 83.
- 139 Ibid.
- 140 This charge is also made by Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke*, Vol. I, 465 et seq.
- 141 Lothar Höbelt, Schlieffen, Beck, Potiorek und das Ende der gemeinsamen deutsch-österreichisch-ungarischen Aufmarschpläne im Osten, in: *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 2 (1984), 21 et seqq.
- 142 Ibid., 3–30. The work by Oskar Wolf Schneider von Arno, *Geschichte des österreichisch-ungarischen Generalstabes* (Kriegsarchiv, Vienna, Nachlass B/1976), which was repeatedly intended for publication but remained unpublished, is worth citing here, esp. no. 9.
- 143 Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, esp. Vol. 4, also Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke*. The larger operational view in Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Zum operativen Denken in Österreich 1814–1914*, Part 6: *Der Vor-Weltkriegszyklus*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, no. 1 (1975), 46–53.
- 144 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke*, Vol. I, 470.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 August von Cramon, *Unser österreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1920), 43.
- 147 Michael Salewski, Moltke, Schlieffen und die Eisenbahn, in: XVII Congreso internacional, loc. cit., I, 33–48.
- 148 See esp. Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk. Das Problem des 'Militarismus' in Deutschland*, Vol. 2 (Munich, 1960), esp. 245–266.
- 149 Rauchensteiner, *Zum operativen Denken*, loc. cit., 46–59.
- 150 Conrad's self-assessment can best be traced in his (uncompleted) autobiographical work 'Aus meiner Dienstzeit', and particularly in his private notations, edited by Kurt Peball (Vienna/Munich, 1977). For a portrayal of Conrad, see, among others, Oskar Regele, *Feldmarschall Conrad*, though this work is much too defined by its aim of maintaining Conrad's prestige. See also the most recent and most critical biography: Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Leiden, 2000).
- 151 Hans Meier-Welcker, *Strategische Planungen und Vereinbarungen der Mittelmächte für den Mehrfrontenkrieg*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, special issue 11 (1964), 15–22.
- 152 On the ambivalence of the comments: Meier-Welcker, *Strategische Planungen*, 19.
- 153 Gerhard Ritter, *Die Generalstäbe und der Kriegsausbruch. Präventivkriegsideen im Österreichischen Generalstab*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, 283–308.
- 154 On the three first-named states: Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca/London, 1984). On the Conrad School see Rauchensteiner, *Entwicklung der Kriegstheorie*, 82–85.
- 155 One of the main theses of Fischer's 'Griff nach der Weltmacht' and his 'Krieg der Illusionen'.
- 156 Williamson, *Vienna and July 1914*, 19.
- 157 Fellner, *Dreibund*, 63–73.
- 158 This argument, which was first presented by Fritz Fischer and developed by him and by Imanuel Geiss, was subsequently contradicted above all by Egmont Zechlin, Karl Dietrich Erdmann and Gerhard Ritter. The arguments are summarised in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, esp. 29–104 and 149–164.
- 159 The collection of arguments and their comparison can be best followed using the anthology *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, 29–198.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Fischer, *Krieg der Illusionen*, 46 et seq.
- 162 Egmont Zechlin, *Probleme des Kriegskalküls und der Kriegsbeendigung im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg*, here 168.

- 163 Williamson, Vienna and July 1914, 22.  
 164 Ibid.  
 165 Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 8th volume, 5th chapter, here citing the 18th reprint (Bonn, 1973), 984.  
 166 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Absoluter" und "totaler Krieg". Von Clausewitz bis Ludendorff, in: *Geschichte und Militärgeschichte. Wege der Forschung*, edited by Ursula von Gersdorff (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), here 288.

### 3. Bloody Sundays

- 167 Walter Göhring, *Verdrängt und vergessen. Friedensnobelpreisträger Alfred Hermann Fried* (Vienna, 2006), 168.  
 168 A detailed description of the preparation and implementation of the manoeuvres is given in the memoirs of Major General Alfred Jansa: *Ein österreichischer General gegen Hitler*, edited by Peter Broucek (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2011), 213–220.  
 169 The most detailed study of the assassination, and one that is well supported by sources, is: Friedrich Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad. Die Hintergründe des Dramas von Sarajewo 1914* (Vienna/Munich/Zürich, 1975). As a supplement to this by the same author: *Dokumente zum Sarajewoprozess. Ein Quellenbericht* (= *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, supplementary volume 9, Vienna, 1978).  
 170 Summarised in *Kronenbitter, Krieg im Frieden*, 455–460.  
 171 Galántai, *Monarchie und Weltkrieg*, 207.  
 172 Carl von Bardolf, *Soldat im alten Österreich. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Jena, 1938), 132.  
 173 Vladimir Dedijer, *Die Zeitbombe. Sarajewo 1914* (Vienna/Frankfurt am Main/Zürich, 1967), 532–535. Dedijer describes the murder of Sultan Murad on the day before the battle. However, in the Serbian record, the event occurs following the battle. In reality, the record is probably so inaccurate that its depiction of events is questionable. 28 June is now no longer a public holiday in Serbia.  
 174 See the comprehensive study: Rudolf Jerábek, *Potiorek. Ein General im Schatten von Sarajewo* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1991).  
 175 The Duchess of Hohenberg died immediately following the attack. The Archduke was brought dying to the Konak, the residence of the regional commander, and laid down on a couch. Several doctors attempted to keep him alive, though in vain. Franz Ferdinand died within several minutes. The couch and the bed on which the body of Sophie von Hohenberg was laid, as well as the car in which the couple were being driven, are on display in the Military History Museum in Vienna. Claims occasionally made that the Graef & Stift car that had belonged to Count Franz Harrach had already been involved in accidents before the incident, and that afterwards it was also used, for example in an automobile race, in which another fatal accident occurred, before the bewitched car was destroyed by American bombs at the Vienna Arsenal in 1944, are pure nonsense. The uniform worn by Franz Ferdinand was saved for the couple's children, brought to Artstetten and transferred to the Military Museum on loan. Other items of clothing and personal belongings, together with the weapons carried by the assassins seized by the police were taken to the president of the Marianist congregation and head of the orphanage in Sarajewo opened by the Duchess of Hohenberg at the end of June 1914, Anton Puntigam. In 1918, he brought these items to his convent in Vienna. In 2004, they were also transferred to the Military History Museum from the convent.  
 176 Wayne S. Vucinich, *Mlada Bosna and the First World War*, in: *The Habsburg Empire in World War I* (East European Monographs, No. XXIII, Brooklyn College [New York, 1977]), 51.  
 177 Vucinich, *Mlada Bosna*, 55. For a very detailed study, see also Dedijer, *Die Zeitbombe*, here esp. 491–528.

- 178 Ottokar Graf Czernin, *Im Weltkrieg* (Berlin/Vienna, 1919), 63.
- 179 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 1, 610, 29.6.1914.
- 180 Tanja Kraler, "Gott schütze Österreich vor seinen 'Staatsmännern', aber auch vor seinen 'Freunden'!" *Das Tagebuch von Hans Schlitter*, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 2009, 239.
- 181 Csáky, *Vom Geachteten zum Geächteten*, 207.
- 182 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), F[oreign]O[ffice] 371, Box 1899, Report by the British Consul General William von Max-Müller to Sir Edward Grey, Budapest 14.7.1914.
- 183 *Ibid.*
- 184 Würthle, *Die Spur, 192–195*, and François Fejtö, *Requiem für eine Monarchie. Die Zerschlagung Österreich-Ungarns* (Vienna, 1991), 344 et seq.
- 185 Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, Vol. 4, 17 et seq.
- 186 Leslie, *Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch*, 666.
- 187 TNA, Kew, FO 371, Box 1899, Dispatch from Sir Horace Rumbold to Sir Edward Grey, Berlin 3.7.1914.
- 188 The fact that the regional commander of Bosnia, Potiorek, sent a telegram warning that Serbian assassins could attempt an attack on Kaiser Wilhelm II during a large funeral ceremony probably had no influence on the cancellation of the state ceremony. A reference to the telegram is made in *Kronenbitter, Krieg im Frieden*, 467.
- 189 Leslie, *Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch*, 668.
- 190 Galántai, *Monarchie und Weltkrieg*, 232 et seq. Hantsch, *Berchtold*, Vol. 2, 559.
- 191 Tisza's attitude was influenced not least by the fact that the Hungarian Prime Minister was rankled by the failure of Romania and Bulgaria to declare their position.
- 192 Robert A. Kann, *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Ausbruch des Weltkrieges. Eine Betrachtung über den Quellenwert der Aufzeichnungen von Dr. Heinrich Kanner*, in: *Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-histor. Klasse*, Vol. 274, 3rd Treatise (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1971).
- 193 Kann, *Kaiser Franz Joseph*, 16. Biliński named the day before the recent departure by the Emperor to Ischl. This would therefore have been 6 July.
- 194 Here, the relevant sections in Degreif, *Operative Planungen*; Rauchensteiner, *Entwicklung der Kriegstheorie*, und Meier-Welcker, *Strategische Planungen*, should be consulted. Also large sections from Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, Vol. 3.
- 195 William Jannen, *The Austro-Hungarian Decision For War in July 1914*, in: *Essays on World War: Origins and Prisoners of War*, edited by Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (= *East European Monographs* 126, New York, 1986), 55–81.
- 196 Hantsch, *Berchtold*, Vol. 2, 561.
- 197 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 398.
- 198 *Ibid.*
- 199 Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 194 et seq.
- 200 Galántai, *Monarchie und Weltkrieg*, 235.
- 201 *Ibid.*, 239.
- 202 *Ibid.*, 244.
- 203 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 413, appendix. Also, *Kronenbitter, Krieg im Frieden*, 467 et seq.
- 204 Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 139.
- 205 *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik*, Vol. VIII, No. 10,058.
- 206 The Italian ambassador in St. Petersburg, Marchese Carlotti, for example, informed the Russian Foreign Minister on a continuous basis during the July Crisis. See also McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 51.
- 207 The edition of the Riezler diaries was procured by K. D. Erdmann in 1972 (= *Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* 48). On the controversy and current research status: Winfried Baumgart,

- Die Julikrise und der Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges 1914 (= Texte zur Forschung 44, Darmstadt, 1983), Introduction.
- 208 Hillgruber, *Um Bethmann Hollweg*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, 243.
- 209 *Ibid.*, 245.
- 210 Galántai, *Monarchie und Weltkrieg*, 249.
- 211 Francis Roy Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo*, 375, and Norman Stone, *Hungary and the Crisis of July 1914*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1 (1966), 153–170.
- 212 *Protokoll des gemeinsamen Ministerrates der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, edited by Miklos Komjáthy (cited in Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, Budapest, 1966), Council of Ministers of 7.7.1914, 141–150.
- 213 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives, hereafter KA), Nachlass B/16 Ferdinand von Marterer, Tagebuch No. 2, entry for 12.9.1914.
- 214 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 403, and Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle* 7.7.1914.
- 215 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 6, dated Budapest 8.7.1914.
- 216 KA, Nachlass B/61 Gustav Hubka, No. 25: *Wenn Kriegsgefahr droht*, 76 et seq.
- 217 *Ibid.*, 66, note 3.
- 218 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 404.
- 219 Brigitte Schagerl, *Im Dienst eines Staates, den es nicht mehr geben sollte, nicht mehr gab, nicht mehr geben durfte*. Friedrich Ritter von Wiesner, Diplomat, Legitimist und NS-Verfolgter, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2012, 54–57.
- 220 Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914–1918* (London, 2007), 8.
- 221 McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 48.
- 222 Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, 9.
- 223 *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik*, Vol. VIII, No. 10,252, and esp. No. 10,253. Also Würthle, *Die Spur*, 138 et seq.
- 224 Here in particular the aforementioned document publication by Würthle, *Sarajewoprozess*.
- 225 Joll, *The Origins*, 12.
- 226 *Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (Archive of the Federal Foreign Office), Bonn, R 8672: *Geheimakten betreffend Militär- und Marineangelegenheiten Österreichs*, Vol. 1, No. 73, Letter to Waldersee, 15.7.1914.
- 227 Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, 47.
- 228 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 395, and: *November 1918 auf dem Ballhausplatz. Erinnerungen Ludwigs Freiherrn von Flotow*, compiled by Erwin Matsch (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1982), 320.
- 229 Cormons, *Schicksale*, 165.
- 230 Heinrich Drimmel, *Die Antipoden. Die neue Welt in den USA und das Österreich vor 1918* (Vienna/Munich, 1984), 197.
- 231 Cormons, *Schicksale*, 166.
- 232 Hantsch, *Berchtold*, Vol. 2, 589.
- 233 The record of the Joint Council of Ministers meeting in the Komjáthy edition, 150–154. Also: Walter Goldinger, *Österreich-Ungarn in der Julikrise 1914*, in: *Österreich am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1964). A summary of the current research status also in Bihl, *Deutsche Quellen*, esp. introduction, 1–10.
- 234 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives), Cabinetts Archiv, *Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle*, Box 33, record dated 20.7.1914. Just hours before the *démarche* was delivered to Serbia, the Hungarian Council of Ministers approved the 'Instructions on Emergency Decrees in the Case of War' on 23.7. In Hungary, therefore, the war was precipitated at least as systematically as in Austria.

- 235 Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 209.
- 236 Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *Rumänien und der Dreibund 1878–1914* (= *Bibliotheca Historica Romaniae, Studies* 65, București, 1983), 291.
- 237 Szápáry to Berchtold, 27.7.1914, quoted from: Baumgart, *Julikrise*, 160.
- 238 The reference to this telegram is given in a report written in September by Maurice de Bunsen during his last weeks in Vienna (TNA, Kew, FO 371, Box 1900, dated with receipt stamp 12.9.1914, although only completed by Bunsen after 22.9. The telegram number was later added at the Foreign Office. The telegram itself is not included in the bundle of dispatches and reports on the outbreak of the war, although telegram no. 85 to Foreign Secretary Grey is included in the official British document publication: *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914*, edited by G.P. Gooch, Harold Temperley, Vol. XI (London, 1926), 39 et seq.
- 239 In St. Petersburg, the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, reported on 18.7. what he had learned on his detour via London from his colleague Bunsen in Vienna.
- 240 Andrej Mitrović (*Serbia's Great War*, 47) supports the view that the idea originated in Paris.
- 241 Fischer, *Deutschland und der Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*, in: *Erster Weltkrieg. Ursachen*, 46. The notions held by Kaiser Wilhelm regarding Belgrade as a 'pledge', in: Baumgart, *Julikrise*, 163 et seq. and 168 et seq.
- 242 Fellner, *Mission Hoyos*, 406 et seq.
- 243 Hantsch, *Berchtold*, Vol. 2, 558.
- 244 McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 63.
- 245 Alexander Popovics, *Das Geldwesen im Krieg* (= *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie*, edited by Carnegie Stiftung für Internationalen Frieden, Abt. für Volkswirtschaft und Geschichte, Vienna/New Haven, 1925), 41.
- 246 Fischer, *Deutschland und der Ausbruch*, 35.
- 247 Transcript of a record of a conversation by Moriz Benedikt on the interview with Count Forgách on 16 July 1914. (My heartfelt thanks for permission to use this document go to the granddaughter of Moriz Benedikt, Frau Susanne Ovadia).
- 248 *Ibid.*
- 249 John F. V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1983), 145 et seqq.
- 250 Zara S. Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1977), 215 et seqq.
- 251 Baumgart, *Julikrise*, 118 et seq. and 122.
- 252 See Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *România în fata crizei internationale din Iulie 1914*, in: *Revista de istorie* 1/1973 (Bucharest), 81–99. I am very grateful to Professor Dr Dumitru Preda, Bucharest, for the reference to the Romanian publications on the July Crisis, and for the allocation and translation of Romanian documents.
- 253 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2158/33674, Sir Horace Rumbold to the Foreign Office, 24.7.1914.
- 254 Leslie, *Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegausbruch*, 679.
- 255 Fischer, *Deutschland und der Ausbruch*, 39.
- 256 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 257 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2159/33474. Dispatch by the British ambassador in Rome regarding information given by the Serbian chargé d'affaires to the Italian Foreign Minister San Giuliano on 28 July.

#### 4. Unleashing the War

- 258 Wladimir Baron Giesl, *Zwei Jahrzehnte im Nahen Orient. Aufzeichnungen*, edited by Generalmajor Ritter von Steinitz (Berlin, 1927), 271.

- 259 Leslie, Österreich-Ungarn, 675.
- 260 Goldinger, Österreich am Vorabend, 62.
- 261 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 9.1.1915.
- 262 Fellner, Mission Hoyos, 406 et seq.
- 263 Leslie, Österreich-Ungarn, 683.
- 264 KA, Nachlass B/6, Copy of the war memoirs of Major General Eduard Zanantoni (hereafter: KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni), 233.
- 265 In this context, I would like to sincerely thank Dr Leopold Auer, the former director of the Austrian State Archives (*Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*), as well as Dr Peter Broucek, the tireless collector of family and estate papers for the War Archives in Vienna and one of the leading authorities on 'hidden treasures', who have endeavoured to supply documents that were not always easily locatable.
- 266 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), PA I, Box 496, Liasse XLVII, Krieg 1914–1918, 1a.
- 267 Albert Freiherr von Margutti, Kaiser Franz Joseph. Persönliche Erinnerungen (Vienna/Leipzig, 1924), 414.
- 268 On Archduke Friedrich see: Manfred Rauchensteiner, Erzherzog Fritzl, der stille Habsburger, in: Die Presse, Spectrum, 20.12.1986, 1 et seq.
- 269 Baumgart, Julikrise, 152 et seq. (= Doc. 89).
- 270 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), FO 371/1900/48877, Bunsen's report to the Foreign Office from 1.9.1914.
- 271 Baumgart, Julikrise, 157 (= Doc. 95).
- 272 Fischer, Griff nach der Weltmacht, 66.
- 273 Kreiger, France and the Origins, 157 et seq.
- 274 McMeekin, The Russian Origins, 57.
- 275 Cover letter to declaration of war, in: Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik, Vol. VIII, No. 10,855.
- 276 Emil Ratzenhofer, Die Festsetzung des 1. Mobilisierungstages in Österreich-Ungarn im Sommer 1914, in: Berliner Monatshefte, October (1936), 801–805, esp. 804.
- 277 Ibid.
- 278 KA, Neue Feldakten (= NFA), carton 757.
- 279 Rudolf Kizling, Die Kriegserklärung Österreich-Ungarns an Serbien, in: Berliner Monatshefte, December (1930), 82.
- 280 KA, Nachlass Hubka, No. 32, Enclosure to the letter from 30.6.1957.
- 281 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2158/34312, Telegram from Bunsen to Grey, 27.7.1914.
- 282 Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik, Vol. VIII, No. 10,873.
- 283 Ibid., No. 10,892.
- 284 Kizling, Kriegserklärung, 82.
- 285 KA, Nachlass Hubka, No. 25, Manuscript: Wenn Kriegsgefahr droht.
- 286 Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik, Vol. VIII, No. 11,015.
- 287 KA, Nachlass Hubka, No. 32, Letter from 30.6.1957.
- 288 The same contents in the letter from Kaiser Wilhelm to Permanent Secretary von Jagow from 28.7.1914, in: Baumgart, Julikrise, 163 et seq., No. 101.
- 289 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2159/34474, Rodd to Grey, 28.7.1914.
- 290 Fischer, Griff nach der Weltmacht, 76. The contents of the 'global conflagration telegram' are also in: Baumgart, Julikrise, 172 et seq., Doc. 109.
- 291 TNA, Kew, Cab 45/101, Excerpt from the diary of the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, Maurice Paleologue, 29.7.1914. See also Revue des Deux Mondes, 15.1.1921, 257.

- 292 Baumgart, Julikrise, 196 et seq., No. 133.
- 293 Ibid., 192 et seq., No. 128. The treatment of the German démarche in the Joint Council of Ministers on 31.7 in: Komjáthy, Ministerratsprotokolle, 154–158.
- 294 Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch 1914, Vol. III (Berlin, 1927), 143.
- 295 After Italy had made it known that it was not impressed by Austria-Hungary's declaration that it would not make any territorial claims against Serbia and also wanted to spare Montenegro, the Foreign Ministry went a step further and assured Italy that in the event of war with Montenegro it would not attack Mount Lovćen south of Kotor. In this way, the renunciation of a strategic position was expressed. On this see HHStA, PA I, Liasse Krieg, geh. XLVII/1a,c 'Italien' (November 1914). See: Bruno Vigezzi, *L'opinione pubblica Italiana e la Francia nell'estate 1914*, in: *La France et l'Italie pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale. Actes du Colloque* (Grenoble, 1976), 33.
- 296 HHStA, PA I, Krieg 1914–1918, Liasse XLVII 1a, Copy of a letter from Berchtold to Tisza, 24.8.1914.
- 297 Popovics, *Geldwesen im Kriege*, 48–50.
- 298 Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, 77 et seq.; Baumgart, *Julikrise*, 196, No. 132; Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, Vol. IV, 151 et seq.
- 299 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 154–158, 31.7.1914.
- 300 HHStA, *Cabinetts Archiv, Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten*, Vol. 60, entries for 30.7 to 1.8.1914, and KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 9.1.1915.
- 301 KA, *Nachlass B/509, Kriegstagebücher des Obersten Karl Schneller 1914–1918* (cited as *Schneller Tagebuch*) No. 2/1, 7. Several of the diaries transcribed from Gabelsberger shorthand cannot at present be located.
- 302 HHStA, PA I, Liasse Krieg, geh. XLVII, 1a,c 'Frankreich' (October 1914).
- 303 Maximilian Polatschek, *Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen an der Westfront 1914/1918*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1974, 7–11.
- 304 TNA, Kew, FO 371/1900/48877, Bunsen's Report to the Foreign Office, 1.9.1914.
- 305 HHStA, PA I, Box 497, Liasse Krieg, geh. XLVII, 1a,c 'England' (November 1914).
- 306 Polatschek, *Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen*, 12 et seqq. A tank cupola from the Antwerp fort 'Kessel', which was hit by an Austrian mortar shot, can be seen in the Military History Museum in Vienna.
- 307 HHStA, PA I, Box 497, Liasse Krieg, geh. XLVII, 1a,c 'Japan' (November 1914).
- 308 Ibid. The Japanese, however, as it later transpired, had attempted during the capture of the Austro-Hungarian ships and in the treatment of the crew to be considerate. On the prisoner of war captivity in Japan see the accompanying booklet to the 2008 exhibition in the Austrian State Archives (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv) 'Nach der Heimat möchte ich wieder. Die österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsgefangenen in Japan'.
- 309 See Michael Howard, *Europe on the Eve of the First World War*, in: *The Coming of the First World War*, edited by J. R. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (= Oxford, 1988), 5.
- 310 Ibid.
- 311 Ibid.
- 312 *Neue Freie Presse*, morning edition, 25 and 29.7.1914.
- 313 L. L. Farrar, Jr., *Reluctant Warriors: Public Opinion on War during the July Crisis 1914*, in: *East European Quarterly* 4 (1982), 421.
- 314 Ibid., 438.
- 315 Rudolf G. Ardelt, *Die österreichische Sozialdemokratie und der Kriegsausbruch 1914. Die Krise einer politischen Elite*, in: *Jahrbuch für Zeitgeschichte* 1979, edited by the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte (Vienna, 1981).
- 316 Quoted from Hans-Georg Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg. Modernitätskritik und Krisenbewältigung in der österreichischen Psychiatrie (1880–1920)* (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 2004), 198.

- 317 Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War. The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence, KS, 1982), 56 et seq., also: *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung. Interdisziplinäre Studien*, edited by Marcel von der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (= *Beiträge zur politischen Wissenschaft* 61, Berlin, 1991), here esp. the one-sided contribution by Wolfgang Kruse, *Die Kriegsbegeisterung im Deutschen Reich zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges*. To trace the emotional movement at the end of July and the beginning of August 1914 back to a few 'frustrated intellectuals' falls way too short. Far more balanced is the volume *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen (= *Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien* 34, Munich, 1996). The authors of the contributions gathered in this volume admittedly deal primarily with conditions in Germany; analogies to Austria, however, are easy to establish. Occasionally the common 'silent' appropriations occur, for instance in the case of Robert Musil, Hermann Bahr, Martin Buber or Elias Canetti, who are counted among the *German* intellectuals and artists. Also by Wolfgang Kruse, *Zur Erfahrungs- und Kulturgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, in: *Kriegsbegeisterung? Zur Massenstimmung bei Kriegsbeginn*, in: *Eine Welt von Feinden. Der Große Krieg 1914–1918*, edited by Wolfgang Kruse (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).
- 318 Otto Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft 1848–1918, Vol.1* (= Anton Gindely Reihe zur Geschichte der Donaumonarchie und Mitteleuropas, edited by Gerald Stourzh (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1994), 837. Urban's findings for the lands of the Bohemian crown can easily be applied to the entire Habsburg Monarchy.
- 319 Stromberg, *Redemption*, 57.
- 320 KA, Kriegsüberwachungsamt (= KÜA), August 1914.
- 321 Stefan Zweig, *Die ersten Stunden des Krieges von 1914*, in: *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), 258.
- 322 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Ottonie Gräfin Degenfeld, Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 304. See also Evans, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 50.
- 323 Quoted from Franz Herre, *Kaiser Franz Joseph von Österreich. Sein Leben – seine Zeit* (Cologne, 1978), 452.
- 324 Ardelt, *Die österreichische Sozialdemokratie*, 96. See also: Alfred Pfabigan, *Austromarxismus und Kriegsgesinnung*, in: *Österreich und der Große Krieg 1914–1918. Die andere Seite der Geschichte*, edited by Klaus Amann and Hubert Lengauer (Vienna, 1989), 90–95.
- 325 Stromberg, *Redemption*, 127.
- 326 Quoted from Heinz Meier, *Die österreichischen Christlichsozialen während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1966, 4.
- 327 Günther Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Patriotismus. Österreichische Historiker im Weltkrieg 1914–1918* (= *Österreich-Archiv*, Vienna, 1973), 13.
- 328 May, *Passing I*, 87.
- 329 See the contribution by Jeffrey Verhey in: *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, 357–360. By the same author: *Der 'Geist von 1914' und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft* (Hamburg, 2000).
- 330 HHStA, PA I, Box 952, Liasse Krieg 25c, Letter from the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Switzerland, Baron Gagern, to Count Alexander Hoyos, Bern, 23.11.1914.
- 331 Schanes, *Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 139.
- 332 Hans Weigel, Walter Lukan and Max D. Peyfuss, *Jeder Schuss ein Ruß. Jeder Stoß ein Franzos. Literarische und grafische Propaganda in Deutschland und Österreich 1914–1918* (Vienna, 1983), 29. Weigel's selection, though made with forethought, is nevertheless a good example for the patriotic propaganda and the emotional experience of poets and writers.
- 333 Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Deutsche kulturelle Eliten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in *Kultur und Krieg*, loc. cit., 7.



- 334 KA, Donauflottillenkommando Res. 82/14, 9.7.1914.
- 335 Ibid., Res. 104/14, 21.7.1914.
- 336 Ibid., Res. 129/14, 25.7.1914.
- 337 Wulff, Die österreichisch-ungarische Donauflottille, 13. The author and one-time flotilla commander neglects 29.7.1914 in his story and only begins with the 30th. A chronicle with a lot of technical data and, above all, photographs: Georg Pawlik, Heinz Christ and Herbert Winkler, Die K. u. K. Donauflottille 1870–1918 (Graz, 1989).
- 338 KA, Donauflottillenkommando Res. 146/14, 30.7.1914.
- 339 The command of the 2nd Army was instructed on 31 July to cease with the bombardment of Belgrade, as this was impermissible in accordance with international law valid at the time. See Kronenbitter, Krieg im Frieden, 484, note 263.
- 340 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 1, 611, 2.7.1914.
- 341 Ibid., 616, 26.7.1914.
- 342 Ibid., 617.
- 343 Ibid..
- 344 József Litkei, Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges in Ungarn und Mobilmachung und Aufmarsch der Armee der Monarchie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle der ungarischen Einheiten, project paper written under the supervision of the author, University of Vienna, winter semester 1991/92, 26.
- 345 KA, Nachlass B/428 Hans Hartinger, NCO in Landsturm Regiment No. 3, then warrant officer in Landsturm Regiment No. 27, notebooks for the period 1914 to 1918, 4.
- 346 Robert Mateja, Oberösterreich im I. Weltkrieg 1914–1918, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1948, 22.
- 347 Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. I, 80.
- 348 Ludwig Hesshaimer, Miniaturen aus der Monarchie. Ein k. u. k. Offizier erzählt mit dem Zeichenstift, edited by Okky Offerhaus (Vienna, 1992), 79.
- 349 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 1, 619 et seq., 3.8.1914.
- 350 Leo Valiani, The End of Austria-Hungary (London, 1973), 74.
- 351 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (Vienna Municipal and Regional Archives, WStLA) 3.5.20.A1 – Biographische Unterlagen, Tagebuch Oberleutnant Franz Geyer, 30,5 cm Mörser Division 2, entry for 13.8.1914.
- 352 Described in Vermes, Tisza, 234.
- 353 Valiani, The End, 75. The reference to Count Clam-Martinic is incorrect.
- 354 Details in the doctoral theses by Mateja, Oberösterreich, and Ernst Eigentler, Tirol im Inneren während des ersten Weltkrieges von 1914–1918, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1954. Some of the details also in Ingo Binder, Vorarlberg im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1918, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1959, and Hans Doliner, Das Land Kärnten im Weltkrieg 1914–1918, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1951.
- 355 Josef Redlich, Österreichische Regierung und Verwaltung im Weltkriege (= Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie, edited by the Carnegie Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1925), 91.
- 356 This conclusion, which can be found running through the Austrian historical literature, is contradicted by Robert A. Kann, Geschichte des Habsburgerreiches 1526–1918 (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1977), esp. 437, who rightly states that Stürgkh 'had good reasons for his decision from his pragmatic point of view'.
- 357 Redlich, Österreichische Regierung, 113.
- 358 Christoph Führ, Das k. u. k. Armeeoberkommando und die Innenpolitik in Österreich 1914–1917 (= Studien zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie 7, Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1968),

- 17 et seqq. The ordinance for Dalmatia can be found in RGBl. No. 153. Additional information in: Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 117 et seq.
- 359 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 118 et seqq.
- 360 Ibid., 123.
- 361 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 27.
- 362 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 129 et seq.
- 363 Herbert Graf Herberstein, *Kriegserinnerungen*. Deposited in the Styrian Regional Archives (StLA), here page 2. For access to the family and estate papers, which was conditional on permission from the Herberstein family, I would like to thank the family itself and my deceased friend Dr Heinrich Purkarthofer. The typewritten manuscript contains several deletions and alterations, which temper the original statements and were evidently designed to enable a publication. This never came to pass.
- 364 Rauchensteiner, *Erzherzog Fritzl*, loc. cit.
- 365 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, *Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten*, Vol. 60, entry for 1.8.1914, 7:50 a.m.
- 366 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 25.
- 367 Giesl, *Zwei Jahrzehnte*, 277.

##### 5. 'Thank God, this is the Great War!'

- 368 Imperial War Museum, London, Manuscript Collection 87/13/1, report by Eugene Wason (Jr.).
- 369 A collection of the last messages before the outbreak of the war is in the *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), AOK 1914, Evidenzbüro 3506.
- 370 Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 104.
- 371 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. 1, Enclosure 3.
- 372 Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 106.
- 373 Bruno Enderes, *Die österreichischen Eisenbahnen*, in: *Verkehrswesen im Krieg* (= *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges*, Abt. für Volkswirtschaft und Geschichte, österreichische und ungarische Serie, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/ New Haven, 1931), 7 et seq.
- 374 Specifically on the conditions in Vienna: Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Räder müssen rollen für den Krieg. Die Wiener Bahnhöfe im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Wiener Geschichtsblätter*, Vol. 61 (2006), No. 4, 1–14.
- 375 Emil Ratzenhofer, *Eisenbahn- und Schifffahrtswesen*, in: *Verkehrswesen im Krieg*, op. cit., 153.
- 376 See Degreif, *Operative Planungen*, 113–223, here esp. 214. The issue of the effects and extent of the spying activities by Colonel Redl has certainly not yet been fully clarified. See, for example, Albert Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler. Österreich-Ungarns geheimer Dienst im Weltkrieg* (Graz, 1998); Verena Moritz, Hannes Leidinger, Gerhard Jagschitz, *Im Zentrum der Macht. Die vielen Gesichter des Geheimdienstchefs Maximilian Ronge* (Salzburg, 2007); Georg Markus, *Der Fall Redl* (Vienna, 1984). An examination of the files at the Russian State Military History Archives in Moscow leads one to conclude that the information provided by Redl is likely to have been particularly important, although in terms of quantity, it only amounted to a fraction of the information available to the Russians. Furthermore, it is highly likely that there was at least one further high-ranking informant within the Imperial and Royal General Staff who was working for the Russians, since an original copy (!) of the 'M' (Montenegro) war scenario is on file that was not prepared until the end of 1912, and to which Redl no longer had access. To ascribe the progression of the war to Redl does not make sense.
- 377 Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler*, 33.
- 378 See the excellent essay by John R. Schindler, *Redl – Spy of the Century*, in: *International Journal of*

- Intelligence and Counterintelligence, Vol. 18 (2005), No. 3, 483–507. Schindler also does away with other rumours that have almost become standard phrases. Thus, for example, the description by Egon Erwin Kiss of how he received information about the opening of Redl's apartment in Prague and therefore about the treason story, was consigned to the realm of fantasy. I am most grateful to Professor Dr Siegfried Beer, Graz, for the reference to this work and for making it available to me.
- 379 The manuscript of this discussion held on 26.5.1913 is the property of the author.
- 380 Degreif, *Operative Planungen*, 283.
- 381 *Ibid.*, 292.
- 382 On the national composition, see also Ehnle, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Landmacht*, loc. cit.
- 383 Marian Zgórnjak, Galizien in den Kriegsplänen Österreichs und Österreich-Ungarns, in: *Österreich Polen. 1000 Jahre Beziehungen* (= *Studia Austro-Polonica*, Vol. 5, edited by the Jagellonische Universität, Historische Reihe Vol. 121, Kraków, 1996), 303.
- 384 Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War. Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–1918* (London/New York/Sydney/Auckland, 1997) 79. The author of this very lively book is however frequently very liberal in his interpretation of the information.
- 385 Degreif, *Operative Planungen*, 222.
- 386 On the following: Norman Stone, *Die Mobilmachung der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee 1914*, in: *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, No. 2 (1974), here 78.
- 387 KA, Nachlass B/1466 Böhm-Ermolli, *Tagebuchmanuskript*, 1. The retroactively edited diary of Böhm-Ermolli is stored on microfilm in the Austrian War Archives in Vienna. The original is in the Slezské zemské muzeum, Opava.
- 388 Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 174.
- 389 *Ibid.*, 179–181.
- 390 Graydon A. Tunstall, *The Habsburg Command Conspiracy: The Austrian Falsification on the Outbreak of World War I*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. XXVII (1996), 181–198.
- The highly problematic railway deployment of the Imperial and Royal Army became a popular subject for American historians in particular, most recently Holger H. Herwig. Essentially G. Tunstall, *Planning for War*, 189–209. The fact is that those responsible for the deployment, above all Gustav Ratzenhofer, presented their views regarding this issue in detail several times and in high-profile places, and justified their decisions. For example, Ratzenhofer did this as the person responsible for the important volume published by the Carnegie Endowment on Austro-Hungarian transportation during the war. At first, critics were far less frequently heard, and when they were, it was in a lower profile manner, e.g. Rudolf Pfeffer, *Zum 10. Jahrestag der Schlachten bei Zloczów und Przemyślany 6.–30. August 1914. Eine Entgegnung...* (Vienna, 1924). Also Max Freiherr von Pitreich, *Die militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginn* (Vienna, 1934); by the same author: *Lemberg 1914* (Vienna, 1929). However, it was precisely Pitreich who failed to attract attention in comparison with the descriptions given by Ratzenhofer. Most remained as a manuscript and can be found in the family and estate papers of Pitreich in the Austrian War Archives in Vienna: *Manuskripte zum Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, Nos. A-65 and A-99. The Officer of the Hungarian General Staff Kalman Kéri jumped on to the critics' bandwagon during the 1960s: KA, *Manuskripte* No. A-103.
- 391 KA, Böhm-Ermolli *Tagebuchmanuskript*, 2.
- 392 Enderes, *Die österreichischen Eisenbahnen*, 75.
- 393 *Ein General im Zwielicht. Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horsteneau*, edited by Peter Broucek, Vol. 1 (= *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs*, Vol. 67, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1980; cited in Glaise-Horsteneau), 285 et seq.
- 394 Glaise-Horsteneau, *General im Zwielicht I*, 285.

- 395 Demophil Frank, *Wien. Taumel – Qual – Erlösung 1914–1918* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1928), 14.
- 396 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 1, 619 et seq., 3.8.1914.
- 397 KA, Nachlass B/3 (Dankl) 5/1, Tagebuch 1914, 16.
- 398 Constantin Schneider, *Die Kriegserinnerungen 1914–1919*, introduced, annotated and edited by Oskar Dohle (= *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs*, Vol. 95, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2003), 29 et seq.
- 399 Wenzel Ruzicka, *Soldat im Vielvölkerheer*, edited by Edith Thöres (Freilassing, 1987), 65.
- 400 See Horst Haselsteiner, *Die Affäre Putnik*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, No. 3 (1974), 238–244. The Styrian side of the episode is treated by Martin Moll, *Auf dem Weg in den Weltkrieg. Die Affäre um den Steiermark-Aufenthalt des serbischen Generalstabschefs im Juli 1914. Ein später Nachtrag aus steirischer Sicht*, in: *Blätter für Heimatkunde*, edited by the Historischer Verein für Steiermark, Vol. 78, No. 2/3 (Graz, 2004), 75–84.
- 401 Dimitrije Djordjević, Radomir Putnik, cited in Moll, *Auf dem Weg in den Weltkrieg*, 77.
- 402 KA, KM Präs. 1914, 40-11/5-2, Written order of the Emperor from 28.7.1914
- 403 Ratzenhofer, *Eisenbahn- und Schiffahrtswesen*, 173.
- 404 With regard to this problem, the studies (manuscripts) by Kalman Kéri, *Kritische Betrachtungen zum Eisenbahnaufmarsch*, are of particular interest (*Austrian War Archives in Vienna*).
- 405 On the following, see again Stone, *Mobilmachung*, 83.
- 406 Ratzenhofer, *Eisenbahn- und Schiffahrtswesen*, 156.
- 407 Egon Erwin Kisch, *Schreib das auf*, Kisch (Berlin, 1930), 15.
- 408 Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 78.
- 409 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 250 et seq.
- 410 KA, Nachlass Hartinger, 15 and 17.
- 411 Kurt Peball, *Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, Sonderheft I* (Vienna, 1965), 22.
- 412 KA, Nachlass Dankl, No. 5/1, 1.
- 413 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 4.
- 414 KA, Bestand der Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM) Sep. Fasz. 91, Tagebuch Marterer 23.7.1914–28.8.1916 (referred to below as KA, Marterer Tagebuch), here 1.8.1914.
- 415 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 9.1.1915. Here, Marterer made a reference to 1.8.1914 in the first volume of his war diary. However, this volume must be assumed to have disappeared. It is possible that this volume was and is consciously kept hidden in the same way as Volume 5, in which Marterer recorded his impressions of the last months of Franz Joseph's life.
- 416 On the overall complex see Kéri, *Kritische Betrachtungen*, loc. cit.
- 417 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 10, 22.1.1915.
- 418 Stone, *Eastern Front*, 76.
- 419 See: Peball, *Der Feldzug*, but in particular Jeřábek, Potiorek, 107–117. Here also in great detail the secondary literature.
- 420 KA, Tagebuch Dankl (1914), 2.
- 421 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 422 Franz Forstner, *Przemysl. Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung* (= *Militärgeschichtliche Dissertationen Österreichischer Universitäten* 7, Vienna, 1987), 141.
- 423 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 424 Herbert Steiner, *Lenin in Österreich*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, No. 3 (1970), 145–153.
- 425 *Ibid.*
- 426 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives), *Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen*, 10.

- 427 Ibid., 15.
- 428 Ibid., 18.
- 429 On the issue of whether Conrad had in actual fact received agreement from von Moltke regarding an offensive beyond the Narew and to Kielce – as he repeatedly included in his verbal and written descriptions after the war – became the subject of a long and vehement controversy, which was predominantly debated by the German Imperial Archives and the Austrian War Archives. See Martin Schmitz, *Verrat am Waffenbruder? Die Siedlice-Kontroverse im Spannungsfeld von Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik*, in: *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift*, Vol. 67 (2008), No. 2, 385–407.
- 430 Moltke to Conrad 5.8.1914, cited in Schmitz, *Verrat am Waffenbruder*, 398.
- 431 Heinrich Mast, *Die Aufklärungstätigkeit der österreichisch-ungarischen Kavallerie bei Kriegsbeginn 1914*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, special issue I (1965), 12.
- 432 Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, Vol. IV, 877.
- 433 Jeřábek, Potiorek, 109.
- 434 The information regarding the effective strength of the Balkan forces varies significantly. Overall, the numbers given in the Austrian literature were, however, adjusted downwards very severely. The numbers given for the 5th Army are 80,000 men, and for the 6th Army 60,000 men (Peball). If one takes the war structure and figures given in *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. I, 62–80, as a basis, a different picture emerges. When only the 5th and 6th Armies are counted, around 250,000 men were apparently available. When the entire 2nd Army is added, the figure totals 340,000 men. This is supplemented by the territorial forces, which remained the same. In actual fact, 275 battalions etc. remained in this theatre of war. In any case, with the 1,000 men per battalion given in the General Staff records, significantly higher totals result. The lower number levels given can as a result refer only to the pure battle numbers. On the figures (which are different again), see also Jeřábek, Potiorek, 108.
- 435 Peball, *Der Feldzug gegen Serbien*, 22. On the campaign in detail: *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914–1918*, Vol. I (Vienna, 1930) and volume of maps.
- 436 Jeřábek, Potiorek, 111.
- 437 Ibid., 114.
- 438 KA, *Tagebuchmanuskript Böhm-Ermolli*, 2.
- 439 Ibid., 7.
- 440 Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, 67.
- 441 Ibid., 69.
- 442 On this commission: Wolfgang Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend noch die Schande. Das altösterreichische Offizierskorps am Beginn der Republik (= Militär-geschichtliche Dissertationen Österreichischer Universitäten 9, Vienna, 1988)*. Giesl's report in KA, *Kommissionsakten B72/19*.
- 443 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 256.
- 444 KA, *Böhm-Ermolli Tagebuchmanuskript*, 16.
- 445 KA, *Kriegspressequartier*, 169. On reporting restrictions and the effectiveness of the War Press Bureau, see also in detail: Petronilla Ehrenpreis, *Kriegs- und Friedensziele im Diskurs. Regierung und deutschsprachige Öffentlichkeit Österreich-Ungarns während des Ersten Weltkriegs (= Wiener Schriften zur Geschichte der Neuzeit, Vol. 3, Innsbruck, 2005)*, here esp. 68–106.
- 446 KA, AOK, Op. Fasz. 679, *Tagebuch AOK*, 23.7.–27.8.1914.
- 447 HHStA, PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII, 2b, *Telegr. Berchtold to Giesl No. 9*, 20.8.1914.
- 448 Ibid., geh. XLVII, 2, *Telegram from Giesl to Berchtold*, 21.8.1914.
- 449 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No.2, 6.8.1914.
- 450 KA, *Manuskripte zur Geschichte des Weltkriegs, Manuskripte Regenauer: Balkan 23 und 36*.
- 451 Ibid., 37.

- 452 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives), PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII, Telegram from Conrad to Berchtold, 25. 8. 1914.
- 453 Jeřábek, Potiorek, 139–142.
- 454 Family and estate papers of Dr Eduard Draxlmayr, Vienna. (Copy of the letter owned by the author).
- 455 Konrad Leppa, General von Conrads Kampf um die Balkanstreitkräfte 1914, in: *Wissen und Wehr*, Berlin, 1930, No. 8, 483–503, here esp. 500.
- 456 *Ibid.*, 501.
- 457 Gerhard Oberkofler and Eduard Rabofsky, Tiroler Kaiserjäger in Galizien, in: *Historische Blickpunkte. Festschrift für Johann Rainer* (Innsbruck, 1988), 505–527.
- 458 Kärntner Landesarchiv (Carinthian Regional Archives), Klagenfurt, Infanterieregiment Nr. 7, Sch. 2 (Nachlass Barger), extract from the field correspondence, 2.
- 459 On this phase of the initial battles, see *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. I, 155–338, also Konrad Leppa, *Die galizische Schlacht*, in: supplement volume 2 to the work “*Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*” (Vienna, 1931), 9–28. Succinctly summarised in Wagner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, here 47–53.
- 460 McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 81.
- 461 KA, *Tagebuch Dankl*, 43.
- 462 Klaus-Jürgen Bremm, *Militärstrategie und Eisenbahntransportplanung in Österreich-Ungarn 1870–1914*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 3 (2011), 326–333, here 332.
- 463 Conrad, *Dienstzeit*, Vol. 4, 563 et seq.
- 464 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 7.9.1914.
- 465 Herwig, *The First World War*, 91.
- 466 *Ibid.*, 647.
- 467 John Frederick Charles Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961* (London, 1962), 154.

## 6. Adjusting to a Longer War

- 468 Raimondo Luraghi, *The Coming of the Industrial Warfare and its Misunderstanding by the European Staffs in World War I*, in: *Stuttgart 19–24 August 1985, Acta No. 10 Internationale Kommission für Militärgeschichte*, edited by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Freiburg, 1986), 216.
- 469 Horst Gundelach, *Faktor Mensch im Kampf*, quoted in Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*, 197.
- 470 André Beaufre, *Die Revolutionierung des Kriegsbildes. Neue Formen der Gewaltanwendung* (Stuttgart, 1973), here esp. 34.
- 471 Quoted from: Raimondo Luraghi, *The Coming*, 217 et seq.
- 472 Robert Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft 1914–1918* (Vienna, 1979), 93.
- 473 Friedrich Adler, *Vor dem Ausnahmegericht*, edited by J. W. Brügel (Vienna, 1967), 14.
- 474 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 475 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 74–79. There were also parallels to this. A comparative study would doubtlessly be worthwhile. The examples cited in the volume ‘*Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung*’ are too arbitrary.
- 476 Werner Dietschy, *Wiener Neustadt, ein Zentrum der Rüstungsindustrie während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, diploma thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1976, 15.
- 477 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 112.
- 478 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 479 *Ibid.*
- 480 Richard Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs während des Krieges* (= *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des*

- Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1932). The comprehensive portrayal in this volume is still unsurpassed.
- 481 See the catalogue of the Military History Museum on the special exhibition: *Die Frau im Krieg* (Vienna, 1986).
- 482 Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 16–23.
- 483 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 484 Rainer Egger, *Heeresverwaltung und Rüstungsindustrie in Niederösterreich während des 1. Weltkrieges*, in: *Modell einer neuen Wirtschaftsordnung . Wirtschaftsverwaltung in Österreich 1914–1918*, edited by Wilhelm Brauneder and Franz Baltzarek (= *Rechtshistorische Reihe* 74, Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York/Paris, 1991), 87.
- 485 Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 43.
- 486 Österreichisches Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHSStA), PA I, Box 815, *Liasse Krieg*, Berchtold to Conrad, 25.8.1914.
- 487 *Ibid.*, Stürgkh to Conrad, 25.3.1915.
- 488 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 59–66.
- 489 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 490 *Ibid.*, 82. On occurrences in the states see esp. the doctoral theses by Doliner and Eigentler as well as esp. Mateja, *Oberösterreich im I. Weltkrieg*.
- 491 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 84 et seq.
- 492 Helmut Meelich, *Die Kriegswirtschaft Österreich-Ungarns 1914–1918. Wirtschaftsorganisation und Versorgungspolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*, doctoral thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1976, 119.
- 493 Mateja, *Oberösterreich im I. Weltkrieg*, 45–86 and 160 et seqq.
- 494 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 85 et seqq.
- 495 Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 116.
- 496 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 24.
- 497 *Ibid.*, 33 et seq.
- 498 Dietschy, *Wiener Neustadt*, 13.
- 499 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 117.
- 500 *Ibid.*, 120.
- 501 The following in accordance with *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), MKSM 1914, No. 2862, from 25.9.1914. The model built until the end of the war was the MG System Schwarzlose 1907/12.
- 502 Christian M. Ortner, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Artillerie von 1867 bis 1918. Technik, Organisation und Kampfverfahren* (Vienna, 2007), 307–364.
- 503 Oswald Kostrba-Skalicky, *Die Luftstreitkräfte Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Weltkrieg 1914–1918. Heereskundlich-kriegsgeschichtliche Betrachtung siebenzig Jahre danach. Materialien zu einem Vortragszyklus der Gesellschaft für österreichische Heereskunde*, printed in manuscript form (Vienna, 1988/89), 135.
- 504 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 107.
- 505 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 152.
- 506 *Ibid.*, 140.
- 507 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 508 Quoted from: Meier, *Die österreichischen Christlichsozialen während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 4.
- 509 Mateja, *Oberösterreich*, 62.
- 510 See Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, esp. Chapters 4 and 5. The origins of such important terms as

- 'war economy' (*Kriegswirtschaft*) or 'inner front' (*innere Front*) can be found here.
- 511 Steiner, *Militärischer Dienst*, 82.
- 512 Georg Hofer, "Nervöse Zitterer". *Psychiatrie und Krieg*, in: *Krieg, Medizin und Politik. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die österreichische Moderne*, edited by Helmut Konrad (= *Studien zur Moderne* 10, Vienna, 2000), 15–134, here 27.
- 513 Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*, 199 et seq.
- 514 Clemens Pirquet (ed.), *Volksgesundheit im Krieg*, 2 vols. (= *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie*, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1926), here Vol. 1, 138. Newer and with different foci: Brigitte Biwald, *Von Helden und Krüppeln. Das österreichisch-ungarische Militärsanitätswesen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (= *Militärhistorische Dissertationen österreichischer Universitäten*, Vols. 14/1 and 14/2, Vienna, 2002).
- 515 Steiner, *Militärischer Dienst*, 82, and Wilhelm Raschofsky, *Militärärztliche Organisation und Leistungen der Feldspitäler der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee im Kriege 1914–1918*, in: *Volksgesundheit im Krieg*, op. cit., 114.
- 516 Herbert Hirt, *Die historische Entwicklung der Sanitätsschulen Österreichs I: Von den Anfängen bis 1938* (Vienna, 1985), 52.
- 517 F. Herrmann, *Organisatorische Aspekte des Sanitätsdienstes im deutschen und österreichisch-ungarischen Heer 1914–1918*, in: *Wehrmedizinische Monatsschrift* 9 (1983), 383.
- 518 *On Austro-Hungarian military pharmaceuticals in wartime* see the comprehensive Thomas Rehor, *Mörser und Pastillen. Die k. u. k. Militärpharmazie im Ersten Weltkrieg*, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2011, here 61.
- 519 Raschofsky, *Feldspitäler*, 117.
- 520 Biwald, *Von Helden und Krüppeln*, 91 et seq.
- 521 *Ibid.*, 237–255.
- 522 Hofer, "Nervöse Zitterer", 18.
- 523 Steiner, *Militärischer Dienst*, 81.
- 524 *Ibid.*
- 525 StLA, *Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen*, 349.
- 526 *Ibid.*, 158.
- 527 See: Joachim Giller, Hubert Mader, Christine Seidl, *Wo sind sie geblieben ...? Kriegerdenkmäler in Österreich* (= *Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums* 12, Vienna, 1992).
- 528 See: Eduard R. v. Steinitz und Theodor Brosch von Aarenau, *Die Reichsbefestigung Österreich-Ungarns zur Zeit Conrads von Hötzendorf* (= supplementary issue 10 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg', Vienna, 1937).
- 529 Precise details in: Forstner, Przemysł, esp. 146–161.
- 530 Steinitz und Brosch-Aarenau, *Reichsbefestigung*, 64.
- 531 Erich Hillbrand, *Der Brückenkopf Wien im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, Vol. 14 (Vienna, 1961), 139.
- 532 Hillbrand, *Brückenkopf Wien*, 142.
- 533 Steinitz und Brosch-Aarenau, *Reichsbefestigung*. New and comprehensive: Willibald Richard Rosner, *Fortifikation und Operation. Die Sperre Lavarone – Folgaria*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2 vols., 2007.
- 534 Quoted from the work that should be used in general for the organisation and function of the War Press Bureau, Klaus Mayer, *Die Organisation des KPQ beim k. u. k. AOK im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1963, 18. See also Hildegund Schmörlzer, *Die Propaganda des*



- Kriegspressequartiers im Ersten Weltkrieg, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1965.
- 535 See also Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Zeitungskrieg und Kriegszeitung*, in: *Ein Stück Österreich. 150 Jahre "Die Presse"*, edited by Julius Kainz and Andreas Unterberger (Vienna, 1998), 92–107.
- 536 *Neue Freie Presse, Morgenblatt*, 28.8.1914.
- 537 *Ibid.*, *Morgenblatt*, 3.9.1914.
- 538 Hesshaimer, *Miniaturen aus der Monarchie*, 83.
- 539 Eva Maria Hois, "Ein Kultur- und Zeitdokument ersten Ranges": Die Soldatenliedersammlung der Musikhistorischen Zentrale beim k. u. k. Kriegsministerium im Ersten Weltkrieg. *Geschichte, Dokumente, Lieder*, doctoral thesis at the University for Music and Performing Arts Vienna, 2007. The systematic collection began in 1916 in a sub-group of Department 10/War Economy of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry. For the purposes of continuing the work, the department of the War Press Bureau also designated the 'Soldiers' Song Headquarters' was attached. Its staff extended their work to the prisoner of war camps, where, for example, songs of Russian prisoners (Mingrelian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Mordvinic and other songs) were recorded using phonographs. After the war, a substantial part of the collections was lost.
- 540 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives; hereafter StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 31.
- 541 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 542 KA, Neue Feld Akten (NFA) 1914, Box 909, 15. I.D., Op.Akten 1.8– 30.9.1914. Eine zusammenhängende Darstellung der Kämpfe in Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. 1, 197–204. On the death of General Wodniansky, it states (p. 200): 'Out of desperation, the divisional commander, MG Baron v[on] Wodniansky, gave himself to death.'
- 543 Declared as permanently unfit for duty.
- 544 Consequently, the General should have appeared on one of the plaques that were mounted in the pantheon in the Military History Museum in Vienna and should recall the colonels and generals who fell in battle or succumbed to their wounds between 1618 and 1918. Wodniansky is missing.
- 545 Carl Bardolff, *Soldat im alten Österreich. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Jena, 1938), 198 et seq.
- 546 *Kaiser Karl, Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, Zeugnisse und Dokumente*, edited by Erich Feigl (Vienna/Munich, 1984), 106 et seq.
- 547 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 26. The entry of the headquarters of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, however, states: 'MG Ernst von Fforeich-Szabo, fallen in battle 18.8.[1914] near Satańów on the Zbrucz'.
- 548 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-4/24.
- 549 Reinhard Nachtigal, *Die kriegsgefangene k. u. k. Generalität in Russland während des Ersten Weltkriegs*, in: *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur (mit Geographie)*, Vol. 47 (2003), No. 5, 258–274.
- 550 KA, Nachlass Hartinger, 22.
- 551 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-151/2, Enclosure.
- 552 *Ibid.*, Bruderermann to the War Ministry, 10.11.1914.
- 553 KA, MKSM Sonderreihe (SR), Briefe an den Vorstand, Box 58, Bruderermann to Bolfras, 8.9.1914.
- 554 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-111/2, 28.9.1914.
- 555 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-133/ 4, 5.
- 556 KA, KM Präs 19141-116/1-4. Schemua was not retired, however, but instead received the command of the Danube frontier Krems–Bratislava/Pozsony. For good measure, Brigadier Maximilian Csicseric, a particularly good chief of staff, was appointed alongside him. On Csicseric see the (uncritical) work by Hans Eder, *Der General der k. u. k. Armee und geheime Rat Maximilian Csicseric von Barcsány*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2010.
- 557 KA, MKSM SR Briefe an den Vorstand, Box 58, Count Karl Huyn to Bolfras, 9.9.1914.

- 558 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 2, 15.9.1914.
- 559 Doppelbauer, Zum Elend noch die Schande, esp. 15–177.
- 560 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-132/3.
- 561 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-128/3.
- 562 KM Präs 1914 1-131/1.
- 563 The correspondence in relation to Auffenberg's dismissal can also be found in his memoirs: *Aus Österreichs Höhen und Niedergang. Eine Lebensschilderung* (Munich, 1921), 397–402.
- 564 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 109.
- 565 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-107/5.
- 566 KA, KM Präs 1914 1-115/2-6.
- 567 FMLt Othmar Panesch von Hohenstegen, *Das Kriegstagebuch*, edited by Karl J. Trauner. Mimeo-graphed as a manuscript (Vienna, 1993), 80.
- 568 Baronet Siegmund von Micewski.
- 569 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 82. See also Konrad Leppa, *Die Schlacht bei Komarów* (Carlsbad/Drahovice, 1932), 510.

## 7. The End of the Euphoria

- 570 Theodor Ritter von Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps erinnert sich, with an introduction and edited by Peter Broucek (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs, Vol. 101, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2009), 195.
- 571 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 86 et seq.
- 572 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 2, 15.9.1914.
- 573 Kaiser Karl, *Persönliche Aufzeichnungen*, 106.
- 574 Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*, 225.
- 575 A(lois) Alzheimer, *Der Krieg und die Nerven* (Wrocław, 1915), 15 et seq.
- 576 Julius Wagner von Jauregg, *Erfahrungen über Kriegsneurosen* (separate copy from the *Wiener medizinische Wochenschrift*, 1916–1917, Vienna, 1917), 14.
- 577 See Ernst Hanisch, *Männlichkeiten. Eine andere Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2005).
- 578 Kurt R. Eissler, *Freud und Wagner-Jauregg vor der Kommission zur Erhebung militärischer Pflichtverletzungen* (= Veröffentlichung des Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institutes für Geschichte der Gesellschaftswissenschaften, Vienna, 1979), 32.
- 579 Wagner-Jauregg, *Erfahrungen über Kriegsneurosen*, 16.
- 580 August von Cramon, Paul Fleck, *Deutschlands Schicksalsbund mit Österreich-Ungarn. Von Conrad von Hötzendorf zu Kaiser Karl* (Berlin, 1932), 40.
- 581 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 171, 19.8.1914.
- 582 Ibid.
- 583 (Austrian State Archives, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv; hereafter HHStA), PA I, *Liasse Krieg 1914–1918*, geh. XLVII, 2b, *Unsere Beschwerde beim A. O. K. wegen einiger hieramtlichen Anfragen*, Dezember 1914.
- 584 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 183, 20.9.1914.
- 585 I. I. Rostunow, *Die Mobilmachung der russischen Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg und ihr Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft*, in: Stuttgart 19.–24. August 1985. *Internationale Kommission für Militärgeschichte*, Acta 10, edited by Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Freiburg, 1986), 131–136. See also the further

reading.

- 586 Kriegesarchiv (Austrian War Archives, hereafter KA), Nachlass B/1000 Kövess, No. 28, Letter from Conrad to Kövess, 7.9.1914.
- 587 Ibid., No. 48, Letter from Kövess to his wife, 4.9.1914.
- 588 Stone, Eastern Front, 90.
- 589 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 49.
- 590 KA, Bestand der Militärkanzlei seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM) 1914, 69-6/8-30, Allerhöchstes Befehlsschreiben, 1.10.1914.
- 591 Komjáthy, Ministerratsprotokolle, 176, 7.9.1914.
- 592 Karl-Heinz Janßen, *Der Kanzler und der General. Die Führungskrise um Bethmann Hollweg und Falkenhayn 1914–1916* (Göttingen, 1967), 23. See also Holger Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn. Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (= Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte, Vol. 42, Munich, 1994), 249–254.
- 593 Gerhard Ritter, *Die Zusammenarbeit der Generalstäbe Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Zur Geschichte und Problematik der Demokratie. Festgabe für Hans Herzfeld* (Berlin, 1958), 547 et seq.
- 594 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 61. Schneller referred to a message from Captain Moritz von Fleischmann, the Imperial and Royal representative assigned to the German 9th Army.
- 595 Benedikt, *Damals im alten Österreich*, 287.
- 596 KA, MKSM, sep. Box 58, Conrad to Bolfras, 17.10.1914.
- 597 Ibid., 27.10.1914.
- 598 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 199.
- 599 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 71.
- 600 Jerzy Gaul, *Der k. u. k. Kundschafts- und Nachrichtendienst und die polnische Frage 1914–1918, in: Polnisch-österreichische Kontakte sowie Militärbündnisse 1618–1918*, edited by Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (Vienna, 2009), 197–231.
- 601 Marian Zgórnjak, *Polen Die Polen im österreichisch-ungarischen Heer während des Ersten Weltkriegs*, in: *Zeszyt Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, Vol. 90 (Kraków, 1989), 261–282, and Richard Georg Plaschka, *Polnisches "Piemont" im Norden der Donaumonarchie*, in: *Galizien um die Jahrhundertwende. Politische, soziale und kulturelle Verbindungen mit Österreich*, edited by Karlheinz Mack (Vienna/Munich, 1990), 17.
- 602 Rudolf Hecht, *Fragen zur Heeresergänzung der gesamten bewaffneten Macht Österreich-Ungarns während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1969, 8 et seqq.
- 603 Adolf Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des preußischen Generals als Kriegsmminister und Truppenführer im Ersten Weltkrieg*, edited by Helmut Reichold and Gerhard Granier (= Schriften des Bundesarchivs Vol. 34, Boppard am Rhein, 1986), 32.
- 604 Ibid., 39.
- 605 Ibid., note 3.
- 606 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 2, 18.10.1914.
- 607 KA, MKSM, Nos. 96 and 97 ex 1914.
- 608 Janßen, *Der Kanzler*, 34.
- 609 Ibid., 42. The Zimmermann concept became fully clear at the end of November.
- 610 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives, hereafter StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 102.
- 611 Craig, *Krieg, Politik, Diplomatie*, 76.
- 612 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 2, 14.11.1914.
- 613 HHStA, PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII, 2b, Summary of a conversation with the Chief of the General Staff,

- 2.11.1914.
- 614 An example are the records by Robert Trimmel, here quoted from: Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (= *War and Society in East Central Europe* 28, Lanham/New York/London, 1988), 203 et seq.
- 615 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 101.
- 616 Benedikt, *Damals im alten Österreich*, 282.
- 617 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 108.
- 618 HHStA, PA I, Box 498, geh. XLVII, Berchtold to Giesl, 16.10.1914.
- 619 See Fritz Fellner, *Der Plan einer 'Vortragsmission Redlich-Apponyi' in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika*, in: *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte* (= *Festschrift für Adam Wandruszka*, Vienna, 1974). The files on the subject are in the HHStA, PA I, Box 940.
- 620 HHStA, PA I, Box 940, Letter from Redlich to Baron Musulin, 16.9.1914.
- 621 The most comprehensive description of the maritime war of the Imperial and Royal Navy remains the extensive volume by Hans Hugo Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914–1918* (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1933), here 75–85.
- 622 Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867–1918. Navalism, industrial development, and the politics of dualism* (West Lafayette, Indiana), 218.
- 623 *Ibid.*, 218–220.
- 624 Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg*, 22.
- 625 Sondhaus, *Naval Policy*, 250 et seq.
- 626 Sokol, *Seekrieg*, 67–74.
- 627 On the order of battle of the operative fleet, see also: Enclosure V of Sokol, *Seekrieg*.
- 628 Paul G. Halpern, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean 1914–1918* (Annapolis, 1987), 37–39.
- 629 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 630 See also the highly sensitive and source-based biography by Paul G. Halpern, Anton Haus. *Österreich-Ungarns Großadmiral (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1998)*. Since the 'Goeben' and 'Breslau' affair, Freyberg nurtured a deep resentment. The attitude displayed not least by him was described by his counterpart in Berlin, Colloredo-Mannsfeld, as 'unscrupulous through and through' (Halpern, Haus, 211).
- 631 See also the contribution by Daniel Marc Segesser, which attempts to make a differentiation, *Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan und in Anatolien*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan*, op. cit., 193–209.
- 632 Ronge, *Kriegs- und Industriespionage*, 128 and 130.
- 633 Valiani, *The End*, 76.
- 634 *Ibid.*.
- 635 Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend noch die Schande*, 155–170. The investigation against Major General Alois Pokorny in particular provides a corresponding insight.
- 636 Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 164.
- 637 Valiani, *The End*, 75.
- 638 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No.2, 16.8.1914.
- 639 Alois Schupp, *Rechtslehre*, bearbeitet im Auftrag des k. u. k. Reichskriegsministeriums für die k. u. k. Kadettenschulen (Vienna/Leipzig, 1906), 67.
- 640 The measures taken in Serbia and Montenegro are described in Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 162–165. The taking of hostages and the reprisals by the Russians during the occupation of Galicia were described by Baron Leopold Andrian in a comprehensive report dated 26.7.1915, HHStA, PA I, *Liasse Krieg*, Box 1064.
- 641 See Segesser, *Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan*, 202–207.
- 642 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 56, and KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 49.
- 643 Quoted from: Gerhard Oberkofler and Eduard Rabofsky, Hans Kelsen im Kriegseinsatz der k. u. k.

- Wehrmacht (= Rechtshistorische Reihe, Vol. 58, Frankfurt am Main, n.d.), 32.
- 644 Benedikt, *Damals im alten Österreich*, 277 and 303.
- 645 Führ, *Das k. u. k. Armeeeberkommando*, 27.
- 646 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 647 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 648 Valiani, *The End*, 80.
- 649 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 10, presentation to the Army High Command op. 2078, 26.11.1914.
- 650 However, figures are at best approximate values. On the military judiciary, see also the corresponding sections in Chapter 30. On this subject, see also Hans Hautmann, *Todesurteile in der Endphase der Habsburgermonarchie und im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Mit dem Tode bestraft. Historische und rechtspolitische Aspekte zur Todesstrafe in Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert und der Kampf um die weltweite Abschaffung*, edited by Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider, Heimo Halbrainer, Elisabeth Ebner (= *Veröffentlichungen der Forschungsstelle Nachkriegsjustiz*, Vol. 2, Graz, 2008), 15–38. In 1918, figures were already circulating of 11,400 gallows, then 30,000 hanged and executed. In 1916, while he was in exile, Thomáš Masaryk named a figure of 80,000 executed. At this moment, when the dead were being used for propaganda purposes, the numbers rocketed. It is unlikely that precise figures will ever be determined, although assumptions, or even the use of picture material in which the same group of hanged bodies has been photographed from different perspectives, also contribute nothing towards clarifying the matter and remain classified as a mixture of shock, sensationalism and agitation. However, the fact that many – far too many – people were executed without reason is beyond doubt.
- 651 Quotes in Rudolf Jeřábek, *Die Brussilowoffensive 1916. Ein Wendepunkt der Koalitionskriegführung der Mittelmächte*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2 vols., 1982, 26 et seq.
- 652 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, Nos. 2, 8 and 12.12.1914.
- 653 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 202.
- 654 On the plans for division see also Chapter 8: *The First Winter of the War*.
- 655 See also Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich-Ungarn und dem Osmanischen Reich im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte 1* (Vienna, 1982), 33–52, here 35.
- 656 Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary. The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (New York/London, 2000), 41.
- 657 See also Jürgen Angelow, *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Neue Fragestellungen und Erklärungen*, in: *Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich 1914–1918*, edited by Arnd Bauerkämper and Elise Julien (Göttingen, 2010), 178–194, here 179.
- 658 KA, MKSM Sonderreihe, Box 91, 26 Res., 2.9.1914.
- 659 KA, MKSM Sonderreihe, Box 91, 43 Res., 17.9.1914.
- 660 Panesch, *Das Kriegstagebuch*, 66.
- 661 Charles E. J. Fryer, *The Royal Navy on the Danube* (= *East European Monographs*, Vol. 232, Boulder/New York, 1988), 20 et seq.
- 662 Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 170.
- 663 Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, 70.
- 664 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 300.
- 665 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 39. Letter dated 25.11.1914.
- 666 Schanes, *Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 162.
- 667 The verbatim quotes in Peball, *Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro*, 28; others in Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, esp. 173–181.
- 668 Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 170.

- 669 The records and correspondence of Potiorek, which have been drawn from different sources, have been stored in the Austrian War Archives (Kriegsarchiv) in Vienna since the 1990s, Nachlass B/ 657.
- 670 The following in Kisch, *Schreib das auf*, 211–214.
- 671 Kaiser Franz Joseph never forgot the fact that the Bulgarian Tsar had wooed Katharina Schrott. From that time on, he displayed an undisguised aversion to the Coburger.
- 672 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 22.11.1914.
- 673 Kisch, *Schreib das auf*, 214 et seq.
- 674 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 1.12 and 2.12.1914.
- 675 Schanes, *Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 166–187. The examples given here can be multiplied almost indefinitely, as can the explanatory models. Wolfgang Höpken, *Das Dickicht der Kriege*, in: *Wie Kriege entstehen*, edited by Bernd Wegner (Paderborn, 2000, 319–367) explains the excessive use of violence in the theatres of war in the Balkan region as a ‘privatisation of violence’. This too fails to sufficiently explain the phenomenon of violence in this region during the course of the 20th century. Daniela Schanes follows a sensible principle to the extent that she investigates individual examples, rather than simply citing ‘manic calculated destruction’ and an ‘excessive desire to kill’.
- 676 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 10.12.1914.
- 677 *Ibid.*
- 678 KA, *KM Präs.* 1914, 83-18/13.
- 679 Michael Salewski has attempted to put the noise of war into words: *Lärm, Monotonie und Dynamik in den Weltkriegen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Historische Mitteilungen*, edited by Ranke-Gesellschaft, Vol. 22 (Stuttgart, 2009), 188–204.
- 680 The Austro-Hungarian figures should naturally also be set in relation to those for other participants in the war, particularly those for the Russians. There, also, it became evident that the old cadre of active troop officers no longer existed at the end of 1914, and that they were replaced by briefly and poorly trained officers. Incompetence and a lack of authority increasingly became a problem. On this subject, see Dietrich Beyrau and Pavel P. Shcherbinin, *Alles für die Front: Russland im Krieg 1914– 1922*, in: *Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich*, op. cit., 157.
- 681 Decree of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry dated 28.10.1914, quoted in Germann, *Österreichisch-ungarische Kriegsführung*, 99.
- 682 Deák, *Der k. (u.) k. Offizier*, 233.

## 8. The First Winter of the War

- 683 Ludwig Thálloczy, *Tagebücher*, 23.VI.1914–31.XII.1914, edited by Ferdinand Hauptmann and Anton Prasch (Graz, 1981), 284.
- 684 Mateja, *Oberösterreich*, 82.
- 685 Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1966), here Vol. 1, 102.
- 686 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement 1915: The World War* (Washington, D.C., 1928), 10, Report by Penfield, 29.1.1915. On Penfield see the very critical view of Heinrich Drimmel in the corresponding sections of: *Die Antipoden*.
- 687 A comprehensive summary of the Austro-Hungarian, German and other war aims, though not one based on primary sources, is provided by Martin Hekele, *Die Kriegszielpolitik der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie im Ersten Weltkrieg*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1996.
- 688 Valiani, *The End*, 81.
- 689 Horst Günther Linke, *Das zarische Russland und der Erste Weltkrieg. Diplomatie und Kriegsziele*

- 1914–1917 (Munich, 1982), 39–42.
- 690 Valiani, *The End*, 89 et seq.
- 691 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/1900/67456, Minutes from 5.11.1914.
- 692 Arthur J. May, *Woodrow Wilson and Austria-Hungary to the End of 1917*, in: *Festschrift für Heinrich Benedikt zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Hugo Hantsch and Alexander Novotny (Vienna, 1967), 216.
- 693 May, *Woodrow Wilson*, 218.
- 694 See the detailed Achim Müller, *Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung. Österreich-Ungarn und die Diskussion um Mitteleuropa im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Marburg, 2001), here 28 et seq.
- 695 Reiner Pommerin, "Polen gegen uns eingenommen und stark jüdisch durchsetzt". König Friedrich August III. und die Kriegsziele Sachsens im Ersten Weltkrieg (Potsdam, 2009), 15. These reflections continued in 1916 and 1917.
- 696 Müller, *Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung*, 51.
- 697 Gustav Gratz and Richard Schüller, *Die äußere Wirtschaftspolitik Österreich-Ungarns, Mitteleuropäische Pläne (= Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie*, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden) (Vienna/New Haven, 1925), 261et seqq.
- 698 Stanislaw Stomma, *Die Hoffnungen und Misserfolge der "österreichischen" Orientierung der Polen im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Nationale Vielfalt und gemeinsames Erbe in Mitteleuropa*, edited by Erhard Busek and Gerald Stourzh (Vienna/Munich, 1990), 118 et seq.
- 699 Joachim Lilla, *Innen- und außenpolitische Aspekte der austro-polnischen Lösung 1914–1916*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, Vol. 30 (Vienna, 1977), 228.
- 700 Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, 2.10.1915.
- 701 Wolfdieter Bihl, *Zu den österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegszielen 1914*, in: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Osteuropas*, New Series 16 (Wiesbaden, 1968), 506.
- 702 HHStA, PA I, *Liasse Krieg 1914–1918*, geh. XLVII/1c, *Exposés*, the main copy of the position paper.
- 703 *Ibid.*, *Exposé of head of department Count Forgách from 10.1.1915*, 1–40. See Fritz Fellner, *Zwischen Kriegsbegeisterung und Resignation – ein Memorandum des Sektionschefs Graf Forgách vom Januar 1915*, in: *Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte. Alexander Novotny zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres gewidmet* (Graz, 1975), 153–162.
- 704 Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, Vol. V, 811.
- 705 *Ibid.*, *Position paper from Andrian and statements from Mérey, Szápáry*, etc.
- 706 Comprehensive and carved out with strongly alternating preferences and standpoints: Heinz Lemke, *Allianz und Rivalität. Die Mittelmächte und Polen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 1977).
- 707 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Schneller Tagebuch*.
- 708 May, *Passing I*, 145.
- 709 Quoted from Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive*, I, 40. Examples of this attitude are also recorded for Wild von Hohenborn and others.
- 710 Janßen, *Kanzler*, 63.
- 711 *Ibid.*
- 712 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 713 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 6 and 16.1.1915.
- 714 *Ibid.*, 1.2.1915.
- 715 Janßen, *Kanzler*, 71–79.
- 716 KA, *MKSM*, sep. Box 58, Conrad to Bolfras, 1.2.1915.
- 717 A facsimile of the telegram in *Germann, Österreichisch-ungarische Kriegführung*, 169.
- 718 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 327.

- 719 Until the completion of a more major study by Graydon A. Tunstall see his: *Die Karpatenschlachten 1915 (I and II)*, in: *Truppendienst*, Nos. 2 and 3 (Vienna, 1990).
- 720 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 329–333.
- 721 Emil Ratzehofer, *Verlustkalkül für den Karpatenwinter 1915* (= supplementary issue to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg', Vienna, 1930), 31–41.
- 722 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 30.12.1914.
- 723 Tunstall, *Karpatenschlachten II*, 226 et seq.
- 724 Siegmund Knaus, unpublished manuscript: 'Die Winterschlacht in den Karpathen 1915' (in the possession of the author).
- 725 KA, *Tagebuchmanuskript Böhm-Ermolli*, 268.
- 726 KA, *Nachlass Kundmann No. 2*, diary entries for 14, 17 and 26.3.1915.
- 727 Valiani, *The End*, 94.
- 728 KA, *MKSM 1915*, 52–4/16.
- 729 On the cases of desertion in regiments containing a high proportion of Czechs see: Richard Lein, *Das militärische Verhalten der Tschechen im Ersten Weltkrieg*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2009 (published version Vienna, 2011). Older and with similar findings: Richard G. Plaschka, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Überganges von Einheiten des Infanterieregiments Nr. 28 an der russischen Front 1915*, in: *Österreich und Europa (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1965)*, 455–464. Also Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft*, 850 et seq. An additional documentary source, which contains a clear case for the soldiers of the Infantry Regiment No. 28, is the manuscript in the Family and Estate Papers Dankl (KA, *Nachlass B/3*, No. 11): 'Mehr Klarheit und Wahrheit' from 1937. For a problematisation of the subject and especially the work of Lein, see the review by Michael Olsansky in the *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, Vol. 70 (2011), No. 2, 475–478.
- 730 HHStA, PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII, 2, Conrad to Burián, 29.3.1915.
- 731 KA, *Tagebuch Kundmann*, n to q, esp. Letter from Conrad to Bolfras, 5.3.1915.
- 732 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive I*, 45.
- 733 Holger W. Herwig, *Disjoined Allies: Coalition Warfare in Berlin and Vienna, 1914*, in: *Journal of Military History* 54 (1990), 265–280.
- 734 KA, *MKSM*, No. 1,392, from 15.4.1915.
- 735 *Ibid.*
- 736 Janßen, *Kanzler*, 87.
- 737 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 738 *Ibid.*, 104.
- 739 Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 286–293, here esp. 288.
- 740 Stone, *Eastern Front*, 128.
- 741 On Falkenhayn's decision-making and the reasons for shifting the forces of the Army Reserve to the east see Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 231 et seq.
- 742 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, E 27, No. 12,659, Report by Bridler, 38–41.
- 743 Stone, *Eastern Front*, 136. For details on all phases of the breakthrough battle: *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. II, 315–504 and the maps.
- 744 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 65.
- 745 *Ibid.*, Letter from 7.6.1915.
- 746 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive I*, 60.
- 747 Structure and strength of the German 11th Army with the inclusion of the X Army Corps can be found in Enclosure 14 of *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*.
- 748 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 389.



## 9. Under Surveillance

- 749 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/2602 Interrogation of a deserted Hungarian officer, 8.6.1916.
- 750 Kriegsarchiv, Vienna (War Archives, hereafter KA), Bestand der Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM) 1915 69-8/5.19 'Unsere Verluste bis anfangs Juni 1915', 22.7.1915.
- 751 KA, MKSM 1915 69-8/5.
- 752 KA, MKSM 1915 69-8/5.20 'Über Vermisste. Versuch einer Berichtigung der Verlustzahlen. Anzahl der Kriegsgefangenen'.
- 753 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 194.
- 754 Schneider, Kriegserinnerungen, 118. Helmut Kusmics and Sabine A. Haring however, concluded from the analysis made by Constantin Schneider, albeit after the war, which is supplemented by his war accounts, that precisely during the first months of the war, significant differences emerged between the Austro-Hungarian officers on the one hand and the German officers on the other, and that, in particular, the terms 'bravery' and 'leadership' were understood and treated very differently. See also the contribution made by the same authors: *Habitus und Reform in der Habsburger Armee zwischen 1800 und 1918*, in: *Reform, Reorganisation, Transformation. Zum Wandel in deutschen Streitkräften von den preußischen Heeresreformern bis zur Transformation der Bundeswehr*, edited by Karl-Heinz Lutz, Martin Rink and Marcus von Salisch. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Munich, 2010), 107–128.
- 755 Schneider, Kriegserinnerungen, 119.
- 756 *Ibid.*, 240 et seq.
- 757 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 194.
- 758 Schneider, Kriegserinnerungen, 83.
- 759 Kerchnawe, Die unzureichende Kriegsrüstung der Mittelmächte, loc. cit. However, the contribution is primarily a justification. See also the explanations given by Peter Broucek in Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 194 et seq., note 251. Also Rudolf Jeřábek, Die Ostfront, in: Mark Cornwall (ed.), *Die letzten Jahre der Donaumonarchie. Der erste Vielvölkerstaat im Europa des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts* (Essen, 2004), 155–173.
- 760 KA, NL B/726/ Robert Nowak No. 1/I, Die Klammer des Reiches. Das Verhalten der elf Nationalitäten Österreich-Ungarns in der k. u. k. Wehrmacht 1914–1918, manuscript (1964), 2 vols., 253. The reference to the project funded by Ludwig Jedlicka, as a result of which the manuscript by R. Nowak was produced, was kindly provided by my Hungarian colleague and former student Dr András Kocsis.
- 761 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 293.
- 762 The information on national composition on the basis of the language of communication again in Maximilian Ehnle, Die österreichisch-ungarische Landmacht, loc. cit.
- 763 Hildegard Mandl, Galizische Flüchtlinge in der Steiermark zu Beginn des ersten Weltkrieges, in: *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereines für Steiermark*, Vol. 77 (Graz, 1986), 280.
- 764 Bardolff, Soldat im alten Österreich, 190.
- 765 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 531.
- 766 *Ibid.*, 327.
- 767 *Ibid.*, 330 et seq.
- 768 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, hereafter HHStA), Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, 20.2.1915.
- 769 The reference to the Russophile attitude among the Ruthenians in particular was widespread. It can be found in a wide range of different war memoirs, but also circulated far away from the front. Thus, Redlich noted repeatedly from the end of August 1914 that the defeats were explained by the disloyalty of the population in East Galicia and the countless spies.

- 770 Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. II, 134 et seq.
- 771 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 331–334.
- 772 Ibid., 356.
- 773 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 211.
- 774 KA, KÜA (Kriegsüberwachungsamt) 1914/5829, Telegram from Ambassador Czernin to Foreign Minister Berchtold, Sinaia 29.9.1914
- 775 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 344.
- 776 Ibid., 345–347.
- 777 Ibid., 367.
- 778 KA, MKSM, Sonderreihe, Box 289.
- 779 Sondhaus, In the Service of the Emperor, 106 et seq.
- 780 Malcolm Noel, Geschichte Bosniens (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 185, also cited in Inanç Atilgan, Das Kriegsjahr 1915. Reaktionen Österreich-Ungarns auf die Umsiedlung der Armenier innerhalb des Osmanischen Reiches anhand von Primärquellen, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2003, 46.
- 781 Manuscript by General Otto Wiesinger 'Die Kroaten und Serben', 44, quoted from Schanes, Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg, 147.
- 782 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 332.
- 783 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 259.
- 784 The order cited in Schanes, Serbien im Ersten Weltkrieg, 149.
- 785 Déak, Der k. (u.) k. Offizier, 221 and 223. The contradiction in the data could not be explained, although the information on the higher share is based solely on 10 per cent of the service accounts of active lieutenants. It is doubtful that this is sufficient to refute the data from the military statistical annual for 1910.
- 786 Gerburg Thunig-Nittner, Die tschechoslowakische Legion in Russland. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bedeutung als politischgeistiger Faktor bei der Entstehung der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, printed in Wiesbaden, 1969, 5.
- 787 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 299.
- 788 Victor S. Mamatey, The Czech Wartime Dilemma: The Habsburgs or the Entente, in: East Central European Society in World War I, op. cit., 104.
- 789 See also Gertrude Rothkappl, Der tschechische Nationalismus in den Kriegsjahren 1914 und 1915 aus der Sicht österreichischer Zentralbehörden, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1991, here p. 8.
- 790 KA, KÜA 1914/5903, MG Schleyer to the Governor of Prague, 3.10.1914.
- 791 HHStA, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA) Ministerium des Innern (MdI), Protokolle, Weltkrieg 1914–18, line 18,423/14.
- 792 Ibid., line 20,618/17.
- 793 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 187. This was the 10th Infantry Division (Josefstadt) of the IX Corps ('Leitmeritz'). Peter Broucek provides a correction to the extent that Václav Klofač sat in the Reichsrat for a Prague constituency. The fact that the division was composed of between 68 and 95 per cent of Czechs, depending on the regiment, is undisputed. For a positive account of the Czechs, Otakar Frankenberger, Českí vojáci ve světové válce, in: Od Sarajeva k Velké Válce (Prague, 1995), 3–8.
- 794 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 300.
- 795 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 303.
- 796 KA, Nowak, Die Klammer des Reiches I, 305.
- 797 Ibid., 307.
- 798 KA, MKSM 1915 28-3/4.2.
- 799 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 211.
- 800 Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. I, 66, note 4 .

- 801 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches I*, 359.
- 802 *Ibid.*, 359.
- 803 KA, MKSM 1914, 10-1/35. Bericht über militärische Übergriffe, 2.12.1914, cited in Germann, *Österreichisch-ungarische Kriegführung*, 122.
- 804 Erwin Schmidl, *Juden in der k. (u.) k. Armee 1788–1918. Jews in the Habsburg Armed Forces (= Studia Judaica Austriaca XI, Eisenstadt n.d.)*, 82.
- 805 The diary records of Hans Hartinger serve simply as an example (KA NL B/428), which describe in clear terms the normal everyday life of a German-Austrian NCO in a Slovenian-German Landsturm and later Landwehr regiment in Serbia, Bosnia and Italy from 1914 to 1918.
- 806 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches I*, 319.
- 807 *Ibid.*, 524 et seq.
- 808 KA, MKSM 1915 28-3/4.3. Stimmungsbericht 20.6.1915.
- 809 KA, MKSM 1915 28-3/5.2. It is likely that the Army High Command communicated the composition to the Military Chancellery of the Emperor with the aim of informing the monarch and gaining a lever for the repeatedly demanded radical disciplinary measures.
- 810 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 366 et seq.
- 811 Edith Marjanovic, *Die Habsburger Monarchie in Politik und öffentlicher Meinung Frankreichs 1914–1918 (= Veröffentlichungen zur Zeitgeschichte Vol. 3, Vienna/Salzburg, 1984)*, 36.
- 812 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches I*, 422.
- 813 *Ibid.*, 374.
- 814 Lein, *Das militärische Verhalten der Tschechen*, loc. cit.
- 815 KA, MKSM 1915 28-3/14.2. Evidenzbüro. Skizze der gegenwärtigen innerpolitischen Lage, Dezember 1915, 2. Bericht.
- 816 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches I*, 428.
- 817 See also Immanuel Geiss, *World War I and East-Central Europe: A Historical Assessment*, in: *East Central European Society in World War I*, op.cit., 33.
- 818 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches I*, 446.
- 819 The colours of Infantry Regiment 36 were scarlet red with yellow buttons. Those of Infantry Regiment 21 were sea green with yellow buttons.
- 820 See also the war outline for the first half-year of 1916. Enclosure 2 to *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. IV.
- 821 Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Der zweite Teil des deutsch-französischen Krieges 1870/1871: Der Krieg gegen die Republik*, in: *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine No. 69 (Vienna, 1904)*, 58, cited in Sondhaus, *Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse (Leiden, 2000)*
- 822 Oswald Überegger, *Politik, Nation und Desertion. Zur Relevanz politisch-nationaler und ideologischer Verweigerungsmotive für die Desertion österreichisch-ungarischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 8 (2008), No. 2, 109–119, here 110.
- 823 Hanisch, *Männlichkeiten*, 23.
- 824 *Ibid.*, 34–40.
- 825 Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage. Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg (Munich, 1920)*, 73.

## 10. 'The King of Italy has declared war on Me'

- 826 Walter Lukan, *Die Kriegspostkarte 1914–1918. Eine erfolgreiche Tochter der "Illustrierten Korrespondenzkarte"*, in: "... und Friede den Menschen..." *Weihnachten und Jahreswechsel im 1. Weltkrieg. Kat-*

- alog zur Sonderausstellung im Heeresgeschichtlichen Museum, 10.12.1992 bis 2.2.1993 (Vienna, 1992), 18; Weigel, Lukan, Peyfuss, Jeder Schuss ein Russ, loc. cit.
- 827 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 51, 25.5.1915. Redlich describes the manifesto as 'excellent and worthy'.
- 828 Reference to the definition of 'Croat' as a swearword is made in Afflerbach, Dreibund, 790, in respect of the memoirs of Prime Minister Antonio Salandra.
- 829 Afflerbach, Dreibund, 793 et seq.
- 830 Quoted in Rusconi, Das Hasardspiel, 13.
- 831 A comprehensive account of Italian politics is provided in: Brunello Vigezzi, *L'Italia di fronte alla prima guerra mondiale* (Milan/Naples, 1966). On the prehistory see the comprehensive Afflerbach, *Der Dreibund*. Furthermore Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, 3 vols. (London/New York/Toronto, 1952, 1953 and 1957).
- 832 Comprehensive: Luigi Aldrovandi Marescotti, *Der Krieg der Diplomaten* (Munich, 1940).
- 833 See above all: *I Documenti Italiani, Seria V, 1914–1918, Vol. 1* (Rome, 1954), as well as the corresponding documents in *Außenpolitik, Vol. VIII*; see also Peter Hanák, *Die ungarischen Staatsmänner und der Kriegseintritt Italiens*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, No. 4 (1969), 197–215.
- 834 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 154–158, 31.7.1914.
- 835 *Ibid.*
- 836 Rusconi, *Italiens Kriegseintritt*, 27.
- 837 According to the information provided by Departmental Councillor Sarntheim of the Imperial and Royal Ministry of Railways to the Director of the Austrian State Archives (*Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv*), Hans Schlitter. On this see his diary entry for 17.8.1914, in Kraler, "Gott schütze Österreich", Vol. 1, 265.
- 838 Hanák, *Die ungarischen Staatsmänner*, 202.
- 839 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 8.9.1914.
- 840 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 159–166, 8.8.1914, here 161.
- 841 Dr. Ludwig Thaloczky – *Tagebücher 23.6.1914–31.12.1914*, edited by Ferdinand Hauptmann and Anton Prasz (Graz, 1981), 89.
- 842 See the teacher training seminar paper by Hermann Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens von der Neutralitätserklärung bis zur Intervention*, University of Vienna, 1962.
- 843 May, *Passing I*, 178.
- 844 *Ibid.*, 183.
- 845 *Ibid.*, 199.
- 846 Quoted from Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens*, 22.
- 847 *Ibid.*, 23. The 'tiring and indecent' negotiations in accordance with this premise are also to be found in the account by Silvio Furlani 'Das Risorgimento', in: Adam Wandruszka and Silvio Furlani, *Österreich und Italien. Ein bilaterales Geschichtsbuch* (Vienna/Munich, 1973), here 232.
- 848 Aldrovandi Marescotti, *Der Krieg der Diplomaten*, 61.
- 849 On the less noted stance of Romania: Rădulescu-Zoner, *Rumänien und der Dreibund 1878–1914*, loc. cit.
- 850 Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens*, 57 and note 205.
- 851 See the doctoral thesis by Peter Schuster, *Henry Wickham-Steed und die Habsburgermonarchie* (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs 53, Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1970). Additional aspects in: Thomas Angerer, Henry Wickham-Steed, Robert William Seton-Watson und die Habsburgermonarchie, in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, Vol. 99 (Vienna, 1991), 435–473.
- 852 Rusconi, *Der Kriegseintritt Italiens*, 34.

- 853 Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens*, 75.
- 854 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 855 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 856 Valiani, *The End*, 124 et seqq.
- 857 Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens*, 81.
- 858 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 11.12.1914. It was evidently regarded as particularly promising that the First Adjutant General of the Emperor, Artur Bolfras, might be able to persuade the Emperor during his hours-long audiences to cede South Tyrol. But Bolfras was issued with a strict 'no'.
- 859 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 28.12.1914.
- 860 Hantsch, Berchtold, Vol. 2, 723, Diary entry from Berchtold for 11.1.1915.
- 861 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 2 and 27.2.1915.
- 862 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 13.1.1915.
- 863 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 9, 21.1.1915.
- 864 *Ibid.*, 21, 27.2.1915.
- 865 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Burián, Letter from Conrad to Burián, 12.2.1915.
- 866 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 12.1.1915.
- 867 Egmont Zechlin, *Das "schlesische" Angebot und die italienische Kriegsgefahr 1915*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 9 (1963), 533–556. See also Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 269–273.
- 868 Stephan Graf Burián [Count Stephan Burián], *Drei Jahre aus der Zeit meiner Amtsführung im Kriege* (Berlin, 1923), 38 et seq.
- 869 Möcker, *Die Haltung Italiens*, 90.
- 870 *Ibid.*, 92 et seq.
- 871 Lyncker to his wife, 6.3.1915, quoted in Holger Afflerbach, *Vom Bündnispartner zum Kriegsgegner. Ursachen und Folgen des italienischen Kriegseintritts im Mai 1915*, in: *Der Kriegseintritt Italiens im Mai 1915*, edited by Johannes Hürter and Gian Enrico Rusconi (= *Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, special issue, Munich, 2007), 53.
- 872 Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 267.
- 873 Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 39.
- 874 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 25, 4.3.1915.
- 875 *Ibid.*
- 876 *Ibid.*
- 877 *Ibid.*, 35, 10.4.1915.
- 878 Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 34, reports that the Duke of Avarna told him this already during their first meeting following the appointment of Burián.
- 879 Valiani, *The End*, 110.
- 880 Quoted in: Zechlin, *Angebot*, 555.
- 881 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 233–266, 18.6.1915, here 243.
- 882 Zechlin, *Angebot*, 551.
- 883 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 315.
- 884 *Ibid.*, 316.
- 885 HHStA, PA I, Box 499, *Liasse Krieg*, geh. XLVII, 2, Conrad to Burián, 2.4.1915; and KA, *AOK Op.* 8657. See also: Ritter, *Staatskunst*, Vol. III, 81.
- 886 KA, *MKSM*, sep. Box 58, Conrad to Bolfras, 31.5.1915.
- 887 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 57.
- 888 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, 27.3.1915.
- 889 *Ibid.*, entries for 4 and 19.4.1915.

- 890 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 320.  
 891 Ibid., 324.  
 892 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 21.4.1915.  
 893 Wild von Hohenborn, Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 60.  
 894 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 24.4.1915.  
 895 HHStA, PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII, 2, Telegram from Conrad to Burián, 30.4.1915.  
 896 May, Passing I, 197.  
 897 Möcker, Haltung Italiens, 105.  
 898 Friedrich Engel-Janosi, Österreich und der Vatikan, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1960), 234 et seq.  
 899 Ibid., 235. This is evidently a case of selective perception. However, a different reaction in the Foreign Ministry was almost impossible, given the daily half-truths of the diplomatic representations.  
 900 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 324.  
 901 Ibid., 351.  
 902 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 4.5.1915.  
 903 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Burián, Letter from Max Wladimir Baron Beck to Burián, 9.5.1915.  
 904 Möcker, Die Haltung Italiens, 134.  
 905 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 16.5.1915.  
 906 Ibid., 25.5.1915.  
 907 Möcker, Die Haltung Italiens, 141. It was also intended that this invitation to come to the German headquarters should underline the resentment over the – in the opinion of the Germans – far too inflexible attitude of Austria-Hungary.  
 908 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 355.  
 909 See the very informative work, which goes well beyond the scope suggested by the title, by Marianne Cairn-Thalmann, *Der Meinungsumschwung in Italien zur Neutralität von August 1914 bis zum 23. Mai 1915*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1992, 160.  
 910 Quoted from Rusconi, *Der Kriegseintritt Italiens*, 43.  
 911 Rusconi, *Das Hasardspiel*, 15.  
 912 Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Die Villa des Senators Giusti*, in: *Die Presse. Spectrum*, 31.10.2008, II.

## 11. The Third Front

- 913 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 1.6.1915.  
 914 Rolf Steininger, ‘Gott gebe, dass diese schwere Zeit bald ein Ende nimmt.’ Introduction to: *Tirol und der Erste Weltkrieg* (= Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 12, Innsbruck, 1995), 12.  
 915 Friederike Maria Brunner, *Die deutschsprachige Flugblatt- und Plakatpropaganda der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie im Ersten Weltkrieg*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1971.  
 916 The National Archives, Kew FO 371, Box 2241, report by William Max-Müller dated 7.6.1915: *Die wirtschaftliche Situation in Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn*.  
 917 All quotes are from the letters from Conrad to Bolfras in: KA, MKSM, sep. Fasz. 58.  
 918 Eigentler, *Tirol im Inneren*, 25.  
 919 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 27.4.1915.  
 920 Eigentler, *Tirol im Inneren*, 195 et seqq.  
 921 Ibid., 105.  
 922 Ibid., 111. The dissertation by Eigentler, which was still written without reading the files, is like the works by Binder, Mateja and Doliner, *Kärnten im Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, in many parts still authorita-

- tive. Countless new aspects can be found, for example, in the volume *Klischees im Tiroler Geschichtsbewusstsein*, edited by the Tiroler Geschichtsverein (Innsbruck, 1996).
- 923 Eigentler, *Tirol im Inneren*, 26.
- 924 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 925 See the work by Rosner, *Fortifikation und Operation*, which is based on a very wide range of sources. Older but still of relevance: Binder, *Vorarlberg im Ersten Weltkrieg*, here 33. On the Vorarlberg Standschützen see also the contribution by Erwin Fitz, *Frontgeschehen gegen Italien in Südtirol, in: 1914–1918. Vorarlberg und der Erste Weltkrieg. Quellen und Darstellung*, edited by Gerhard Wanner (Schloß Hofen, n.d.), 39–49.
- 926 Eigentler, *Tirol im Inneren*, 199 et seq.
- 927 *Ibid.*, 201.
- 928 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 929 KA, Bestand der Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM), 1915, 26.5.1915.
- 930 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke* 1, 613.
- 931 Mario Isnenghi, *Italien*, in: *Zyklusopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, 98.
- 932 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke* I, 615.
- 933 Reflections on this issue are presented by Lothar Höbelt as part of the 19th Österreichischer Historikertag (Graz, 1992).
- 934 Fryer, *Royal Navy*, 111–118, who in this context describes above all the role of the British naval mission in Serbia.
- 935 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke* I, 555.
- 936 Maximilian Ronge, *Zwölf Jahre Kundschaftsdienst. Kriegs- und Industriespionage (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1930)*, 164.
- 937 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 28.5.1915.
- 938 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, Conrad to Bolfras, 7.6.1915.
- 939 Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage* (Munich, 1923), 208.
- 940 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, Falkenhayn to Conrad, 11.6.1915.
- 941 *Ibid.*, 12.6.1915.
- 942 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 385.
- 943 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 11.6.1915.
- 944 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 385.
- 945 The precise structure and distribution of forces in: *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. II, Enclosure XIV.
- 946 Comprehensive information on this issue in the Italian General Staff records, *Esercito Italiano* I, 205, also: John Whittam, *The Politics of the Italian Army 1861–1918* (London, 1977), esp. 191–209.
- 947 Fliegen 90/71, 128. Also: Georg Gassner, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Fliegertruppe im Einsatz an der Südwestfront 1915–1918*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1980, here esp. 88 et seq.
- 948 Georg Veith, *Die Isonzoverteidigung*, in: Supplement 3 to “*Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*” (Vienna, 1932), 19.
- 949 Fliegen 90/71, 135. Comprehensive work by Peter Schupita, *Die k. u. k. Seeflieger. Chronik und Dokumentation der österreichisch-ungarischen Marineluftwaffe 1911–1918* (Koblenz, 1983), here esp. from 166.
- 950 Sondhaus, *Naval Policy* 272 et seq.
- 951 *Ibid.*, 279.
- 952 *Ibid.*, 281.
- 953 Cramon, *Schicksalsbund*, 105.

- 954 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 356.
- 955 Krauß, Ursachen, describes this episode and at the same time severely criticises the command of the 5th Army.
- 956 John Keegan, *The First World War* (London, 1998).
- 957 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke II*, 653.
- 958 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 401.
- 959 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke II*, 661.
- 960 Oswald Gschließer, Aus dem Tagebuch eines Unbekannten. Kriegserlebnisse eines vor 50 Jahren an der Isonzofront Gefallenen, in: *Wiener Monatshefte*, Vol. 39 (1965), 6.
- 961 See also: Veith, *Isonzoverteidigung*, loc.cit.
- 962 A more recent work on this controversy: Günther Reinhart, *Die erste und zweite Isonzoschlacht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der vorangegangenen politischen Ereignisse*, diploma thesis (University of Vienna, 1990), 111 et seqq.
- 963 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 17.8.1915.
- 964 Ibid.
- 965 On the personality of Borojević, see the work by Eduard F. Hoffmann, *Feldmarschall Svetozar Borojević von Bojna. Österreich-Ungarns Kriegserlebnisse an den Flüssen Isonzo und Piave*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1985.
- 966 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 493.
- 967 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 356.
- 968 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 438.
- 969 KA, NFA Box 1471, OpAbteilung 5. Armee, Ansuchen des GdI v. Borojević um Versetzung in den Ruhestand, letter by Archduke Eugen dated 22.8.1915.
- 970 *History of the Great War. Military Operations: Italy 1915–1919*, comp. J. E. Edmonds et al (London/Nashville, 1991), 13 et seq.
- 971 On the conditions during and after the second Battle of the Isonzo, see the works by Reinhart and Veith.
- 972 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 423.
- 973 Ibid., 480.
- 974 On Conrad's audience with the Emperor on 26.7.1915 see the entries in the Kundmann diary for this date (KA), 173.
- 975 A comprehensive work on these contacts: Peter Schubert, *Die Tätigkeit des k. u. k. Militärattachés in Bern während des Ersten Weltkrieges (= Studien zur Militärgeschichte, Militärwissenschaft und Konfliktforschung 26*, Osnabrück, 1980).
- 976 A series of legends surrounds the clearance and possible surrender of the barrier fort, which not least proliferated as a result of the literature (apparently) written by Luis Trenker. The author also burrowed deeply into nationalist prejudices. Willibald Rosner, *Fortifikation und Operation*, 636–656, attempted to straighten out the various clichéd representations and legends, but it is still to be feared that they have still not been stamped out as a result.
- 977 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke II*, 691.
- 978 Ibid., 695.
- 979 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 14/15, 216 et seq.
- 980 Pantenius, *Der Angriffsgedanke II*, 705.

## 12. Factory War and Domestic Front, 1915

- 981 Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Private Aufzeichnungen*, 94 and 115.



- 982 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 53. The figures are also given in: Gustav Stolper, *Das mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsproblem* (Vienna, 1918), 34.
- 983 See Sigrid Augeneder, *Arbeiterinnen im Ersten Weltkrieg. Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen proletarischer Frauen in Österreich* (Vienna, 1987), 26 et seq.
- 984 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 54 et seq.
- 985 *Ibid.*, 55.
- 986 The campaign 'I gave gold for iron' was certainly one of the most effective and also constituted a striking success in terms of wartime propaganda.
- 987 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 57 et seq.
- 988 *Ibid.*, 86 et seq.
- 989 *Ibid.*, 110.
- 990 Peter Schubert, *Die Tätigkeit*, 459 et seqq., as well as idem, *Der österreichisch-italienische Gegensatz im Spiegel der Militärattachéberichte aus Bern (1908–1915)*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 33 (1977), 247–262, here 256.
- 991 *Fliegen* 90/71, 128 and Appendix I, 305–308.
- 992 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 121.
- 993 Nik Cornish, *The Russian Army and the First World War* (Stroud, 2006), 36.
- 994 *Military Operations Italy*, 16.
- 995 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 180 et seq.
- 996 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 142, and Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 98.
- 997 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 43 et seq.
- 998 *Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv* (Styrian Regional Archives, StLA), *Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen*, 108.
- 999 Bernhard Denscher, *Gold gab ich für Eisen. Kriegsplakate 1914–1918* (Vienna/Munich, 1987).
- 1000 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 42.
- 1001 *Ibid.*
- 1002 See Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich-Ungarn und dem Osmanischen Reich im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1982), 41.
- 1003 Peter Jung, *Der k. u. k. Wüstenkrieg. Österreich-Ungarn im Vorderen Orient 1915–1918* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1992).
- 1004 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 145.
- 1005 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 1006 On the prisoners of war see Chapter 26 in this book: *Camps*.
- 1007 Augeneder, *Arbeiterinnen*, 19.
- 1008 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 150.
- 1009 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 97.
- 1010 Augeneder, *Arbeiterinnen*, 10–14.
- 1011 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 96. The relevant statements made by the director of the Witkowitz Mining and Iron and Steel Trade Union, Sonnenschein, become obsolete when compared with the use of women in the production of ammunition.
- 1012 Wegs, *Kriegswirtschaft*, 96.
- 1013 Augeneder, *Arbeiterinnen*, 53 et seqq.
- 1014 See also the introduction by Brigitte Holl in the exhibition catalogue of the Military History Museum's 'Die Frau im Krieg' (Vienna, 1986).
- 1015 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 177 et seq.
- 1016 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), MKSM 69-24/1.2 ex 1915 and 69-22/1 ex 1916, 17.9.1916 and others, with reference to events since December 1915.

- 1017 KA, MKSM 69-22/1 ex 1916, Extraktbogen, Remark made by the Military Chancellery.
- 1018 Augeneder, Arbeiterinnen, 17.
- 1019 Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 311.
- 1020 Ibid., 312.
- 1021 Herwig, *The First World War*, 129.
- 1022 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 35 et seqq.
- 1023 Ibid. On the contents, treatment and impact of this memorandum see 35–43.
- 1024 Ibid., 48.
- 1025 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 21.5.1915.
- 1026 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 55.
- 1027 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, Conrad to Bolfras, 7.6.1915.
- 1028 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 63 et seqq.
- 1029 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, Conrad to Bolfras, 7.6.1915.
- 1030 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 74.
- 1031 On the complex of issues regarding the withdrawal of assets and the legal problems of sanctions in the case of high treason see: Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 99–109.
- 1032 Meier, *Christlichsoziale*, 7.
- 1033 Quoted from Theodor Freiherr von Kathrein (1842–1916), *Landeshauptmann von Tirol. Briefe und Dokumente zur katholisch-konservativen Politik um die Jahrhundertwende*. Edited from the family and estate papers and annotated by Richard Schober (Innsbruck, 1992), 63.
- 1034 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 81–90.
- 1035 KA, Nachlass B/1000 (Kövess), No. 222, *Biography of Géza von Kövess*, 59.
- 1036 See the Hamburg Master thesis by H. Jürgen Ostler, published as a manuscript: *Soldatenspieler? Vormilitärische Ausbildung bei Jugendlichen in der österreichischen Reichshälfte der Donaumonarchie 1914–1918*, edited by the *Militärhistorischer Dienst*, special series, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1991). In addition to this: Barbara Holzer, *Die politische Erziehung und der vaterländische Unterricht in Österreich zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs*, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1987.
- 1037 Ostler, *Soldatenspieler*, 47.
- 1038 Holzer, *Die politische Erziehung*, 73.
- 1039 Otto Glöckel, *Die Wehrhaftmachung der Jugend* (Vienna, 1916), 4. See Ostler, *Soldatenspieler*, 53.
- 1040 Ostler, *Soldatenspieler*, 55.
- 1041 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 133, with reference to a letter from the Army High Command from 19.8.1915.
- 1042 Ostler, *Soldatenspieler*, 58 et seqq.
- 1043 Ibid., 109.
- 1044 Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 140.
- 1045 Ibid.
- 1046 Informative regarding the reaction in the lands of the Bohemian crown is Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft*, 852.
- 1047 KA, *Faszikel Statistik 1914–1918*, esp. *Kriminal-Statistik des k. u. k. Heeres und der k. u. k. Kriegsmarine. Das Strafverfahren 1914–1916*.
- 1048 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 20.9.1915.
- 1049 Ibid., 165 et seqq.
- 1050 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, HHSStA), PA I, Box 497, *Liasse Krieg*, geh. XLVII/1a, c, 116.
- 1051 Meier, *Christlichsoziale*, 10.

## 13. Summer Battle and 'Autumn Swine'

- 1052 Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 313
- 1053 Kaiser Karl. Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, 102.
- 1054 See also: Fischer, Griff nach der Weltmacht, 158–169, and esp.: Kraft, Staatsraison und Kriegführung im kaiserlichen Deutschland (Göttingen, 1980), 93 et seq.
- 1055 Kraft, Staatsraison und Kriegführung, 95.
- 1056 Ibid.
- 1057 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Schneller Tagebuch, 395.
- 1058 Very detailed descriptions also in: Hesshaimer, Miniaturen aus der Monarchie, 91–94.
- 1059 Ibid., 110.
- 1060 The use of chlorine gas as Ypres is regarded as the first large-scale use of chemical agents during the First World War. During the course of 1914, the French had already fired bromoacetic ester grenades, but while these released a suffocating agent, it was not poisonous. Even before the end of 1915, phosgene began to be used, which was then mixed with diphenylchlorarsin in order to “break through” the Allied gas masks. On warfare using poison gas, see Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (London, 1982), here esp. 13–33. Also Achim Theodor Schäfer, *Lexikon biologischer und chemischer Kampfstoffe und der Erreger von Tier- und Pflanzenkrankheiten, die als Kampfstoffe nutzbar sind* (Berlin, 2003).
- 1061 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 26.7.1915.
- 1062 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 23.6.1915.
- 1063 See also: Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. II, 588–609.
- 1064 Wild von Hohenborn, Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 78.
- 1065 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 73.
- 1066 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 26.7.1915.
- 1067 Burián in conversation with Conrad on 26.7.1915, quoted from: KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, entry for this date.
- 1068 Stone, Eastern Front, 187 et seq.
- 1069 Janßen, Kanzler, 150.
- 1070 Ibid., 136.
- 1071 KA, Bestand der Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM), Conrad to Bolfras, 11.8.1915.
- 1072 Kraft, Staatsraison, 107.
- 1073 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 80.
- 1074 Stone, Eastern Front, 190.
- 1075 Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 250 et seq.
- 1076 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 21 7.1915.
- 1077 A detailed account of the offensive in: Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. III, 51–184.
- 1078 Hesshaimer, Miniaturen aus der Monarchie, 124.
- 1079 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 28.8.1915.
- 1080 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 3.9.1915.
- 1081 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 87.
- 1082 Ibid., 93.
- 1083 The diaries mentioned, and also: Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 94.
- 1084 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 13.9.1915.
- 1085 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 13.9.1915.
- 1086 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, HHSStA), PA I, Box 499, geh. XLVII/2b–13.

- 1087 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 17.9.1915, and Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 358.
- 1088 Kraft, Staatsraison, 112 et seq.
- 1089 Stone, Eastern Front, 190.
- 1090 Ibid.
- 1091 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 23.9.1915, also Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 99.
- 1092 Stone, Eastern Front, 149.
- 1093 Ibid., 191.
- 1094 Ibid.
- 1095 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 105.
- 1096 KA, Nachlass B/1014 (Martiny), Kriegstagebuch, 24.9.1915.
- 1097 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 23.9.1915.
- 1098 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 108.
- 1099 Ibid. See also: Fritz Franek, Die Entwicklung der österreichisch-ungarischen Wehrmacht in den ersten zwei Kriegsjahren. (= supplementary issue 5 to the work "Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg", Vienna, 1933).
- 1100 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 3, 26.9.1915.
- 1101 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 4.10.1915.
- 1102 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 5.8.1915.
- 1103 Ibid., 4.9.1915.
- 1104 TNA, Kew, WO 107/55, Private Letters from Military Attaché Serbia (Phillips), Skutari 7.12.1915.
- 1105 Fryer, Serbia 1915, 32.
- 1106 Georgi Markov, Waffenbrüderschaft zwischen Bulgarien und Österreich-Ungarn während des Ersten Weltkriegs, in: Der unbekanntete Verbündete. Bulgarien im Ersten Weltkrieg. Begleitband zur Sonderausstellung im Heeresgeschichtlichen Museum (Vienna, 2010), 20.
- 1107 Peter Enne, Bulgarien als Verbündeter der Mittelmächte im Ersten Weltkrieg, in: Der unbekanntete Verbündete, 65.
- 1108 On this set of issues: Richard Cooper Hall, Bulgaria's Road to the First World War (Boulder, 1996). A similar work: Anne Christine Holden, Bulgaria's Entry in the First World War. A Diplomatic Study, 1913–1915, doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 1976 (published by: University Microfilm Internationals, Ann Arbor, 1992).
- 1109 Holden, Bulgaria's Entry, 154–183.
- 1110 Janßen, Kanzler, 152 et seq.
- 1111 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 17.9.1915.
- 1112 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 4.10.1915.
- 1113 Fryer, Serbia 1915, 70.
- 1114 TNA, Kew, WO 107/55, Private Letters from Military Attaché Serbia (Phillips), Skutari 7.12.1915.
- 1115 Heshshaimer, Miniaturen aus der Monarchie, 136.

#### 14. War Aims and Central Europe

- 1116 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Kundmann Tagebuch, 20.11.1915.
- 1117 Ibid., 15–17.11.1915.
- 1118 KA, MKSM 25-1/5, 1915, No. 4,252.
- 1119 The reasons for this and for Conrad's interpretation are presented at length in: Conrad, Aus meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. 5. See also: Conrad, Private Aufzeichnungen, incl. 77, 155 and 267 et seq.

- 1120 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives, BArch-MA), Nachlass N266, August von Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 43a.
- 1121 Österreichisches Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), PA I, Box 497, Liasse XLVII, geh., 1a–c, 264–270.
- 1122 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 22.11.1915.
- 1123 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives, StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 114.
- 1124 Ibid., 328.
- 1125 Ibid., 345.
- 1126 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 29.12.1915.
- 1127 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive I, 126.
- 1128 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 28.12.1915.
- 1129 Schneller had already noted this in his diary entry for 3.12.1915.
- 1130 Wild von Hohenborn, Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 93, Letter from 1.11.1915.
- 1131 Ibid., 97, Letter from 2.11.1915.
- 1132 Friedrich Naumann, *Mitteleuropa* (Berlin, 1915). On the discussion in the German Empire: Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, 208–239.
- 1133 Gratz-Schüller, *Die äußere Wirtschaftspolitik Österreich-Ungarns*.
- 1134 Essential for this: Fritz Fellner, *Denkschriften aus Österreich. Die österreichische Mitteleuropa-Diskussion in Wissenschaft und Politik 1915/16*, in: *Geschichte zwischen Freiheit und Ordnung. Gerald Stourzh zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by Emil Brix, Theodor Fröschl and Josef Leidenfrost (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1991), 145–162.
- 1135 Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 33.
- 1136 Ibid., 32.
- 1137 Ibid., 37.
- 1138 Achim Müller, *Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung*, 152.
- 1139 This passage in the letter is quoted in Achim Müller, *Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung*, 153.
- 1140 Ehrenpreis, *Kriegs- und Friedensziele*, 115.
- 1141 Achim Müller, *Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung*, 155.
- 1142 Ibid., 39.
- 1143 Ehrenpreis, *Kriegs- und Friedensziele*, 130–179.
- 1144 Fellner, *Denkschriften aus Österreich*, 149.
- 1145 *Denkschrift aus Deutsch-Österreich*. Printed as a manuscript (confidential; Leipzig, 1915), 5 et seq.
- 1146 See Andrej Mitrović, *Die Balkanpolitik der Ballhausbürokratie im Ersten Weltkrieg (1914–1916)*, in: *Gesellschaft, Politik und Verwaltung in der Habsburgermonarchie*, edited by F. Glatz and R. Melville (= Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Abteilung Universalgeschichte, Supplement 15, Stuttgart, 1987), 343–373.
- 1147 Fellner, *Denkschriften aus Österreich*, 156.
- 1148 Bihl, *Die Beziehungen*, 40.
- 1149 Atilgan, *Das Kriegsjahr 1915*, esp. 101–199. It is striking that this work provides practically no concrete details on the Armenian victims.
- 1150 See: Karl Johannes Bauer, Alois Musil. *Wahrheitssucher in der Wüste* (Vienna/Cologne, 1989), 204–275.
- 1151 Bihl, *Die Beziehungen*, 41.
- 1152 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 96–99.
- 1153 Ibid., 102.
- 1154 Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 41.

- 1155 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 31, Report from the envoy Bourcart to the Political Department, 15.1.1916.
- 1156 Gratz-Schüller, *Die äußere Wirtschaftspolitik*, 9 et seqq.
- 1157 Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 39 et seq.
- 1158 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 34, Council of Ministers from 2.10.1915.
- 1159 Gratz-Schüller, *Die äußere Wirtschaftspolitik*, 18 et seq.
- 1160 The bundle of papers in: KA, MKSM 25-1/5, ex 1916. The 'New Year's Eve position paper' can also be found in the Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 14/15, 226, 1–9. See also KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 31.12.1915.
- 1161 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 31.12.1915.
- 1162 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 352–391, 7.1.1916. Enclosure.
- 1163 KA, MKSM 25-1/5 ex 1915, Presentation by Conrad, Op. No. 16,560, from 10.10.1915 and supplementary items as far as Op. No. 18,400, 26.11.1915.
- 1164 KA, MKSM 25-1/5 ex 1915, Letter from Conrad to the Emperor, 22.11.1915, Op. No. 18,260.
- 1165 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 352–391, 7.1.1916.
- 1166 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 11.1.1916.
- 1167 On the problem of the culmination point see John Tashjean, *Zum Kulminationsbgriff bei und nach Clausewitz*, in: Clausewitz, Jomini, Erzherzog Carl. *Eine geistige Trilogie des 19. Jahrhunderts und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1988), 50–73.
- 1168 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 24 and 28.12.1915.
- 1169 The account of one Austrian prisoner of war, who took part in this migration, can be found in: Wenzel Ruzicka, *Soldat im Vielvölkerheer* (Freilassing, 1987). The memory of this migration is kept alive visually above all in the Montenegrin town of Andrijevica. The impressions of the chief of the British military mission in Serbia, Lieutenant Colonel Troubridge, can be found in Fryer, *Serbia 1915*, 92.
- 1170 Ruzicka, *Soldat im Vielvölkerheer*, 107.
- 1171 Fryer, *Serbia 1915*, 99–104.
- 1172 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371, 2606, 235–239.
- 1173 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 9.1.1916.
- 1174 *Ibid.*, 15.1.1916.
- 1175 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 11.1.1916. The formulation of 'unconditional surrender' does not, therefore, correspond exclusively to the American tradition, but can also be found in Austrian terminology. The consequences of this already corresponded to those that would then become the norms of total war, above all from 1943 onwards.
- 1176 Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg*, 272, notes 173 and 174.
- 1177 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 29.1.1916.
- 1178 *Ibid.*, 26.1.1916. The Archduke also continued to take this view towards the German Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg.
- 1179 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 14.2.1916.
- 1180 *Ibid.*, 25.3.1916.
- 1181 Detailed contents of the discussions in KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 26.1.1916.

#### 15. South Tyrol: The End of an Illusion (I)

- 1182 See also: Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 249–256.
- 1183 *Ibid.*, 254.

- 1184 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 166, 15.5.1916.
- 1185 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 97.
- 1186 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/2602: The War 1916.
- 1187 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 86.
- 1188 Peter Schuster, Wickham-Steed, 172. This line of argument was ultimately adopted by the British and by the policy of the Allies overall. However, it was at the end of the day merely intended to cover over something that had very different roots.
- 1189 Ibid. The same statements also in: Valiani, The End of Austria-Hungary, and Fejtő, Requiem.
- 1190 Schuster, Wickham-Steed, 175.
- 1191 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 99, and Peter Hank, The British Press and Austria-Hungary 1914–1918 (London, 1962).
- 1192 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 367.
- 1193 Pantenius, Der Angriffsgedanke II, 717.
- 1194 Ibid., 718.
- 1195 Ibid., 736.
- 1196 Ibid., 738. The text of Conrad's memorandum in: Hermann Wendt, Der italienische Kriegsschauplatz in europäischen Konflikten. Seine Bedeutung für die Kriegführung an Frankreichs Nordostgrenze (= Schriften der Kriegsgeschichtlichen Abteilung im Historischen Seminar der Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität Berlin, No. 11, Berlin, 1936).
- 1197 Kriegsarchiv (War Archives; hereafter KA), Kundmann Tagebuch, 3.12.1915.
- 1198 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives, BArch-MA), Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 51a.
- 1199 Walther Schaumann, Die Bahnen zwischen Ortler und Isonzo 1914–1918 (Vienna, 1991).
- 1200 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 373.
- 1201 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 14.2.1916.
- 1202 Ibid., 16.2.1916.
- 1203 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 25.2.1916.
- 1204 Gerhard Artl, Die österreichische Südtiroloffensive 1916 (= Militärgeschichtliche Dissertationen österreichischer Universitäten, Vol. 2, Vienna, 1983), 70.
- 1205 The controversy in detail in: Halpem, Naval War, 286 et seq. Conrad's conclusion in: KA, AOK Op. 22.332, 17.3.1916.
- 1206 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 20.4.1916.
- 1207 Ibid., 24.4.1916.
- 1208 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 23.4.1916.
- 1209 Artl, Südtiroloffensive, 94, and friendly notification by the author. On the controversy and the start of the offensive, see also: Pantenius, Angriffsgedanke II, 884–911. Here also copies of meteorological reports.
- 1210 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielficht I, 363.
- 1211 KA, Bestand der Militärkanzlei seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM), Conrad to Bolfras, 2.5.1916.
- 1212 Artl, Südtiroloffensive, 102.
- 1213 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives, StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 361.
- 1214 Ibid., 102 et seq. On the concealment towards the German Empire: Pantenius, Angriffsgedanke II, 861–866.
- 1215 KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 13.5.1916.
- 1216 Artl, Südtiroloffensive, 113.

- 1217 Ibid., 123.  
 1218 Ibid., 122.  
 1219 Piero Pieri, *La Prima Guerra Mondiale 1914–1918* (Turin, 1947), 198 et seq.  
 1220 Artl, *Südtiroloffensive*, 133.  
 1221 Ibid., 139.  
 1222 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 21.5.1916.  
 1223 Ibid., 23.5.1916.  
 1224 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 168 et seq., 4.5.1916.  
 1225 Artl, *Südtiroloffensive*, 151.  
 1226 Enrico Acerbi, *L'offensiva austriaca di maggio 1916. Aspetti storico-militari*, in: *1916 – La Strafexpedition. Gli Altipiani Vicentini nella tragedia della Grande Guerra*, edited by Vittorio Corà and Paolo Pozzato (Udine, 2003), 56.

#### 16. Lutsk: The End of an Illusion (II)

- 1227 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive I*, 204.  
 1228 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives; hereafter StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 347, who reports this of the 10th Cavalry Troop Division (entry for 19.2.1916).  
 1229 Timothy C. Dowling, *The Brusilov Offensive* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2008), 55 et seq.  
 1230 Dowling, *Brusilov Offensive*, 57 and Stone, *Eastern Front*, 242.  
 1231 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive I*, 220.  
 1232 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Op. geh. No. 3, 19.6.1916 and Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), Cabinetts Archiv, *Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten*, Vol. 61, 20.6.1916. Herberstein was granted an audience of 75 minutes.  
 1233 KA, Op. geh. No. 3, 19.6.1916.  
 1234 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive I*, 262.  
 1235 Falkenhayn to Cramon, 5.6.1916, quoted from Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive II*, 312.  
 1236 On the structure of the army see *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. IV, Enclosure 2.  
 1237 Gonda, *Verfall*, 293. In 1914, the regiment comprised 67 per cent Czech speakers and 31 per cent German speakers.  
 1238 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 160 et seq., Letter from 9.6.1916.  
 1239 Ibid., 162.  
 1240 Dowling, *The Brusilov Offensive*, 70.  
 1241 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 246.  
 1242 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive II*, 310.  
 1243 StLA, *Kriegserinnerungen Herberstein*, 375.  
 1244 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, several entries, above all for 16.3.1916. The criticism of the presence of women in Cieszyn related first and foremost to the wife of the Chief of the General Staff, Gina Conrad von Hötendorf.  
 1245 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, entry for 4.7.1916.  
 1246 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, *Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten*, Vol. 61, entries for 14.6.1916.  
 1247 Jeřábek, *Brussilowoffensive II*, 317.  
 1248 KA, *Tagebuch Kundmann*, 8.6.1916.  
 1249 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives, hereafter BArch-MA), Cramon, *Aufzeichnungen*, 2r.



- 1250 Zeynek, Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps, 250.
- 1251 KA, AOK, Op. 26,200, Telegram from 17.6.1916.
- 1252 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 382 et seq. and HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten, Vol. 61, 20.6.1916.
- 1253 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 352.
- 1254 Ibid., 361.
- 1255 Wild von Hohenborn, Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 180, Letter from 24.7.1916.
- 1256 See Janßen, Kanzler, 210–214.
- 1257 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 3a.
- 1258 Quoted from: Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 276. Letter from Tisza to Stürgkh from 28.1.1916.
- 1259 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 34, Council of Ministers from 3.9.1915.
- 1260 Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 281 et seq.
- 1261 Doppelbauer, Zum Elend noch die Schande, 181.
- 1262 Ibid., 182.
- 1263 Ibid., 183.
- 1264 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 400.
- 1265 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 183 et seq., 9.7.1916. With this observation, Redlich referred among others to the journalist Paul Schulz.
- 1266 The report to the Military Chancellery (KA, MKSM 69–2/6, 1916) is printed in: Janßen, Kanzler, 299 et seqq.
- 1267 KA, MKSM, Conrad to Bolfras, 19.7.1916.
- 1268 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 406.
- 1269 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 4a, r.
- 1270 Ibid.
- 1271 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 407, and Janßen, Kanzler, 356 et seq.
- 1272 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 409.
- 1273 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 392.
- 1274 Ibid., 386 et seq.
- 1275 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 6r.
- 1276 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 18.7.1916.
- 1277 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 396.
- 1278 Acerbi, L'offensiva austriaca, 333, note 18.
- 1279 Comprehensive on the use of war gas by the Imperial and Royal Army: Wolfgang Zecha, "Unter die Masken". Giftgas auf den Kriegsschauplätzen Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg (= Militärgeschichtliche Dissertationen österreichischer Universitäten, Vol. 13, Vienna, 2005).
- 1280 Zecha, "Unter die Masken", 72.
- 1281 Ibid., 158.
- 1282 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 430.
- 1283 Reactions to the attacks by the Hungarian opposition can be found, among other places, in the Schneller Tagebuch (KA), 24.8.1916.
- 1284 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 11r.
- 1285 See the comments in: Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 440.
- 1286 KA, AOK, Op. geh. 10. See also KA, Kundmann Tagebuch, 25 and 26.6.1916.
- 1287 KA, MKSM 69-6/23-2, 1916.
- 1288 Gonda, Verfall, 295.

- 1289 See the letter from Wild, dated 4 August, in: Wild von Hohenborn, Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 186.
- 1290 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 19.8.1916.
- 1291 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 455, who references Cramon.
- 1292 Ibid., 457.
- 1293 KA, MKSM 69-2/10-4, 1916, Encrypted telegram, Cieszyn, 23.8.1916.
- 1294 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 12a.
- 1295 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 400, which contains the verbatim text of the memorandum.
- 1296 Ibid., 403.
- 1297 Ibid., 404.
- 1298 Ibid., 405.
- 1299 Ibid., 407.
- 1300 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 465.
- 1301 KA, Schneller Tagebuch, 4.9.1916.
- 1302 BArch-MA, Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 12a.
- 1303 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archives of the German Foreign Office, PAAA), Bonn (now Berlin), Botschaft Wien, secret, Vol. 811. L. 118743–118750.
- 1304 Gonda, Verfall, 296.
- 1305 Ibid., 298. 2.5 billion marks.

#### 17. How is a War Financed?

- 1306 Thomas Winkelbauer, Wer bezahlte den Untergang der Habsburgermonarchie? Zur nationalen Streuung der österreichischen Kriegsanleihen im ersten Weltkrieg, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Vol. 112 (2004), 368–398, here 371. Military expenses, which in 1910 constituted 15.7 per cent of Austrian state expenditure, rose to 22.7 per cent in 1913, but were proportionately still far below those of 1870. According to a calculation by Gerd Hardach, Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918 (= Geschichte der Weltwirtschaft im 20. Jahrhundert, Vol. 2, Munich, 1973), military expenditure totalled 4 per cent of national income, and around 3.3 US\$ per head of the population, compared to 8 US\$ in France and 7.4 US\$ in Germany.
- 1307 Herbert Matis, Grundriss der österreichischen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (Vienna, 1987), 28.
- 1308 Alexander Popovics, Das Geldwesen im Kriege (= Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges. Austrian and Hungarian series, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1925), 39 et seq.
- 1309 Stefan Zweig, Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 14.
- 1310 Popovics, Das Geldwesen im Kriege, 48.
- 1311 Franz Baltzarek, Die Geschichte der Wiener Börse. Öffentliche Finanzen und privates Kapital im Spiegel einer österreichischen Wirtschaftsinstitution (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Wirtschafts- Sozial- und Stadtgeschichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1, Vienna, 1973), 108.
- 1312 Baltzarek, Wiener Börse, 109.
- 1313 Roland Roth, Die Wiener Börse in den Inflationsjahren 1918–1922, diploma thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1984, 11.
- 1314 Doris Seefried, Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen der Inanspruchnahme der Nationalbank zur Finanzierung des 1. Weltkrieges, diploma thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1999.

- 1315 Popovics, *Das Geldwesen im Kriege*, 45.
- 1316 Gertraud Oberer, *Die Organisation der Kriegswirtschaft Österreich-Ungarns 1914–1918*, diploma thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1996, 70.
- 1317 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 34, 1915/16, protocol dated 5 6.1915.
- 1318 Popovics, *Geldwesen*, 74.
- 1319 HHStA Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 34, Council of Ministers from 13.8.1915.
- 1320 Seefried, *Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen*, 10.
- 1321 Diethard Wolfgang Hochhauser, *Die Finanzierung des Ersten Weltkriegs durch die Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie*, diploma thesis, Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1996, 51.
- 1322 Popovics, *Geldwesen im Kriege*, 94 et seq.
- 1323 Helmuth Perz, *Aspekte der Kriegsfinanzierung: Die österreichischen Kriegsanleihen 1914–1918*, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1989, 24–91. The merit of this thesis is that it takes as its basis not only works that have already been published, but also important new source materials.
- 1324 Bernhard Bier, *Die Stellung Ungarns in der Kriegswirtschaft der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, diploma thesis, Hochschule für Welthandel Vienna, 1973, 76. Also Popovics, *Geldwesen*, 165 and Gratz-Schüller, *Die äußere Wirtschaftspolitik*, 178.
- 1325 Popovics, *Geldwesen im Kriege*, 66.
- 1326 The work by Winkelbauer was contested particularly by Czech historians, which will be discussed below.
- 1327 Winkelbauer, *Wer bezahlte*, 381.
- 1328 *Ibid.*, 383. The information originates from the six German national members of the Reichsrat (Imperial Assembly) in the parliamentary request made during the 49th meeting of the House of Representatives on 5 December 1917, the records of which were printed by the Deutschnationale Geschäftsstelle 1918 in Vienna with the title: *Das Verhalten der Tschechen im Weltkrieg*. Here page 112 of the Enclosure.
- 1329 Winkelbauer, *Wer bezahlte*, 385–394. Also Bernard Michel, *Le sabotage des emprunts de guerre autrichiens par les banques tchèques (1914–1918)*, in; *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 15 (1968), 321–339.
- 1330 Rothkappl, *Der tschechische Nationalismus*, 33.
- 1331 Winkelbauer, *Wer bezahlte*, 587. In 1915, criminal proceedings were initiated against the Viennese director of the Živnostenská banka, Josef Špitálský, and several members of the board of directors.
- 1332 The interpretation in relation to this matter by Karel Pichlík in reaction to the studies conducted by Bernard Michel in Winkelbauer, *Wer bezahlte*, 388 et seq.
- 1333 Hochhauser, *Die Finanzierung*, p. 60–65.
- 1334 *Delivery amounts and war bond subscriptions by war suppliers from the beginning of the war until 31 December 1917*, 2 vols. (Vol. I: Austria; Vol. II: Hungary), Vienna, 1918.
- 1335 Martin Moll, 'Monumente des Patriotismus'. *Die österreichischen Kriegsanleihen 1914–1918 und die Steiermark*, in: *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereines für Steiermark*, Vol. 89/90. (1998/99), 26–289, here 266. The conclusions drawn for Styria can – with some degree of caution – be applied to the entire Monarchy, even if there were occasionally regional differences.
- 1336 Moll, *Monumente des Patriotismus*, 265.
- 1337 From the war diary of Josef Mörwald, 9th instalment, in: *Der Dolomitenfreund*, Series I/2010, 31.
- 1338 Perz, *Aspekte der Kriegsfinanzierung*, 66.

- 1339 Oskar Dohle, Geld für den Krieg. Die Krieganleihe-Zeichnungen der Städte Linz und Urfahr im Ersten Weltkrieg, in: Stadtarchiv und Stadtgeschichte. Forschungen und Innovationen. Festschrift für Fritz Mayrhofer (Linz, 2004), 464.
- 1340 Perz, Aspekte der Kriegsfinanzierung, 87.
- 1341 Hermann Heller, Unsere Krieganleihen 1914–18. Monumente des Patriotismus. Historisch-statistische Skizze, Part V (Vienna, 1918), 20.
- 1342 On the bond policy in the German Empire and particularly the bond propaganda of the German Reichsbank see Steffen Bruendel, Vor-Bilder des Durchhaltens. Die deutsche Krieganleihe-Werbung 1917/18, in: Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich, op. cit., 81–108.
- 1343 Heller, Unsere Krieganleihen 1914–15. Monumente des Patriotismus, Section II (Vienna, 1916), 72. On the third war bond, see also Neue Freie Presse, Morgenblatt, 9.5.1915, 22.
- 1344 Eduard März, Österreichische Bankpolitik in der Zeit der großen Wende am Beispiel der Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe (Munich, 1981), 198.
- 1345 Hochhauser, Die Finanzierung, 59.
- 1346 Heller, Unsere Krieganleihen V, 6.
- 1347 Perz, Aspekte der Kriegsfinanzierung, 39.
- 1348 Dohle, Geld für den Krieg, 471.
- 1349 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 37, Council of Ministers on 5.11.1917.
- 1350 Oberer, Die Organisation der Kriegswirtschaft, 86.
- 1351 Seefried, Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen, 16. Statistics taken from: Eduard März, Österreichische Bankpolitik in der Zeit der großen Wende 1913–1923, am Beispiel der Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe (Vienna, 1981), 213.
- 1352 Hochhauser, Die Finanzierung, 67.
- 1353 In Bulgaria, for example, the loans were to be used to mine coal deposits and build railways.
- 1354 Perz, Aspekte der Kriegsfinanzierung, 9 et seqq. Other figures in Bier, Die Stellung Ungarns in der Kriegswirtschaft, 68 et seq.
- 1355 Hochhauser, Die Finanzierung, 73 et seq.
- 1356 Fünfunddreißigster Rechenschafts-Bericht des Postsparkassen-Amtes für das Jahr 1918 (Vienna, 1919), 5.
- 1357 Roth, Die Wiener Börse, 50.

#### 18. The Nameless

- 1358 Andreas Hillgruber, Der historische Ort des Ersten Weltkriegs, in: Stuttgart, 19.–24. August 1985 (Freiburg, 1986), 425. Also in Gregor Schöllgen (ed.), Flucht in den Krieg. Die Außenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland (Darmstadt, 1991), 230–249.
- 1359 Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. VI, 46 et seq. See also: Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 287–306.
- 1360 The conveyance of replacements by means of march formations established on a monthly basis was also one of the points of criticism that Prince Ludwig Windisch-Graetz made in a secret session of the Hungarian House of Representatives on 16.9.1916.
- 1361 The following is based primarily on Erwin Steinböck, Ausrüstung des österreichischen Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg, in: Weltkrieg 1914–1918. Heereskundlich-kriegsgeschichtliche Betrachtungen siebenzig Jahre danach, Materialien (duplicated as a manuscript, Vienna, 1988), 81–102.
- 1362 Deák, Der K. (u.) K. Offizier, 234 et seq.

- 1363 Fliegen 90/71, 188 et seq.
- 1364 Csáky, Vom Geachteten zum Geächteten, 225 et seq.
- 1365 See above all: Wolfgang Steglich, Bündnissicherung oder Verständigungsfrieden. Untersuchungen zum Friedensangebot der Mittelmächte vom 12. Dezember 1916 (= Göttinger Bausteine zur Geschichtswissenschaft 28, Göttingen, 1958).
- 1366 Ibid., 22 et seq.
- 1367 Ibid., 23.
- 1368 Ibid., 31.
- 1369 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza 14/15, 222 et seqq.
- 1370 The text is printed as a manuscript (Leipzig, 1915), here 71. See also: Paul R. Sweet, Germany, Austro-Hungary and Mitteleuropa: August 1915–April 1916, in: Festschrift für Heinrich Benedikt (Vienna, 1957), 186.
- 1371 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 106.
- 1372 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, 14/15, 222 et seqq., Letter from 29.12.1915.
- 1373 See: Vermes, Tisza, 340 et seq.
- 1374 Jeřábek, Brussilowoffensive II, 509.
- 1375 Ibid., 510.
- 1376 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM) 1-3/200. The Emperor took a look at this letter. On his orders, a copy of the letter was then placed at the disposal of Foreign Minister Burián. The letter thus completely lost its character as private correspondence.
- 1377 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives, BArch-MA), Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 3a.
- 1378 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives; hereafter StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 416.
- 1379 Vermes, Tisza, 343 et seq.
- 1380 A copy of this speech marked 'strictly confidential' can be found in the family and estate papers Herberstein, StLA, Graz.
- 1381 Ibid., 345.
- 1382 Ibid., 355.
- 1383 Gonda, Verfall, 197.
- 1384 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 117.
- 1385 Ibid., 118.
- 1386 Portrayed in detail in Gonda, Verfall, 296, where, among other things, Baron Stoltzenberg's proposals to Ludendorff from September 1916 are discussed.
- 1387 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 419.
- 1388 Peter Broucek, Die deutschen Bemühungen um eine Militärkonvention mit Österreich-Ungarn (1915 bis 1918), in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Vol. 87 (1979), 451.
- 1389 Gonda, Verfall, 301.
- 1390 Ibid., 300 et seq.
- 1391 Ibid., 301.
- 1392 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archives of the German Foreign Office, PAAA), Bonn (now Berlin), R 22230, Österreich, geh. 70, 231–234.
- 1393 May, Passing I, 291.
- 1394 Ibid., 342.
- 1395 On the following: Alexander Fussek, Ministerpräsident Karl Graf Stürgkh, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1959, 166 et seqq.

- 1396 Rudolf G. Ardelt, *Der Prozess gegen Friedrich Adler*, in: *Sozialistenprozesse*, edited by Karl Stadler (Vienna/Munich/Zürich 1986), 182–229, esp. the reprinted medical opinion, in which the preparation and the deliberations are described.
- 1397 KA, MKSM 28-2/24, No. 1. 299/T. Z. K., Communication from Brigadier von Vivenot to the Military Chancellery from 21.10.1916.
- 1398 See: Adler, *Vor dem Ausnahmegericht*, and Ardelt, *Der Prozess gegen Friedrich Adler*, 181–232.
- 1399 Staatsarchiv Dresden (State Archives Dresden), Außenministerium Fasz. 1801–180, XXI, 1/207, Report by Count Rex to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Count Vitzthum von Eckstädt, 26.10.1915.
- 1400 *Ibid.*, Vitzthum to the new Saxon envoy in Vienna, Count Nostitz, 23.11.1916.

### 19. The Death of the Old Emperor

- 1401 May, *Passing I*, 343.
- 1402 Both excerpts in the personal records made by Tisza and Burián in the Synodal Archives Budapest.
- 1403 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 218, 21.10.1916.
- 1404 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archives of the German Foreign Office, AA), Bonn (now Berlin), R 8552, Österreich 70 geh., 172 et seq., Tschirschky to Foreign Office, Telegr. No. 370 dated 21.10.1916.
- 1405 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (hereafter MKSM), Conrad to Bolfras, 22.10.1916.
- 1406 Jerábek, *Brussilowoffensive II*, 609.
- 1407 KA, MKSM 9-2/3, Chiffre-Telegr., Bozen, 22.10.1916.
- 1408 *Ibid.*, Chiffre-Telegr., 23.10.1916.
- 1409 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 221, 28.10.1916.
- 1410 *Ibid.*, 239, 8.12.1916.
- 1411 This was even still expressed in 1917, when Emperor Karl considered forming a Peace Cabinet with Lammasch, Redlich and Foerster, who adopted a position in the Austrian political society against Central Europe and in favour of peace, and triggered the most severe rejection and raging protests among the German groups. See also: Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 68.
- 1412 Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 156 et seq.
- 1413 See: Richard Charmatz, Dr. Ernest von Koerber, in: *Österreichische Rundschau*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Nov. 1916), 145 et seq.
- 1414 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 257.
- 1415 May, *Passing I*, 345.
- 1416 Gonda, *Verfall*, 136.
- 1417 *Ibid.*, 196.
- 1418 *Ibid.*, 303.
- 1419 *Ibid.* In this way, the same circles that had worked to overthrow Stürgkh now called for the militarisation of the administration.
- 1420 Redlich, *Österreichische Regierung*, 242.
- 1421 Zeman, *Zusammenbruch*, 118.
- 1422 Kann, *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Ausbruch des Weltkriegs*, 12.
- 1423 Peter Broucek, Chef des Generalstabes und Oberster Kriegsherr. Aus den Erinnerungen des Feldmarschallleutnants Alois Klepsch-Kloth von Roden, k. u. .k. Delegierten im Deutschen Großen

- Hauptquartier 1915/18, in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 27 (1974), 392.
- 1424 Burián, *Drei Jahre aus meiner Amtszeit*, 187.
- 1425 See Wilhelm Deist, *Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr*, in: *Wilhelm Deist, Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft. Studien zur preußisch-deutschen Militärgeschichte* (= *Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte*, Vol. 34, Munich, 1991), 1–8, here p. 8.
- 1426 This information from Baron Stefan Kray, *Im Dienste der Kabinettskanzlei während des Weltkriegs* (Budapest 1937), is incorrect. The diaries of the aide-de-camp say otherwise.
- 1427 Diary entry for 5.8.1915, quoted in Ernst Trost, *Franz Joseph I.* (Vienna/Munich/Zürich/New York, 1980), 75.
- 1428 Quoted in Eduard Heller, *Kaiser Franz Joseph I.* (Vienna, 1934), 126.
- 1429 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 187, letter dated 4.8.1916.
- 1430 Egon Cäsar Conte Corti, *Der alte Kaiser* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1955), 415–443.
- 1431 Quoted from Irmgard Schiel, *Stephanie* (Stuttgart, 1978), 336.
- 1432 Sondhaus, *Conrad*, 208.
- 1433 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 29.10.1914.
- 1434 Ingrid Zeller, *Die Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten Kaiser Franz Josephs I.*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1969. As a supplement to this Kray, *Im Dienste der Kabinettskanzlei*; also Ernest U. Cormons (= Emanuel Urbas), *Schicksale und Schatten. Eine österreichische Autobiographie* (Salzburg, 1951), esp. 198 et seq.
- 1435 Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 181.
- 1436 Urbas, *Schicksale und Schatten*, 199.
- 1437 *Ibid.*
- 1438 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 58, no date.
- 1439 Marterer's diary, of which Nos. 1 and 4 are unfortunately missing, is certainly one of the most important sources on the history of Austria-Hungary during the First World War. Not least, Marterer's records provide important insights into the procedures in the circle closest to Franz Joseph.
- 1440 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 22.12.1914.
- 1441 *Ibid.*, 27.8.1914.
- 1442 *Ibid.*, 7.9.1914.
- 1443 *Ibid.*, 15.9.1914.
- 1444 *Ibid.*, *Tagebuch* No. 3, 30.11.1914.
- 1445 *Ibid.*, 30.12.1914.
- 1446 *Ibid.*, 9.1.1915.
- 1447 *Ibid.*, 18.1.1915.
- 1448 *Ibid.*, 4.4.1915.
- 1449 *Ibid.*, 4.5.1915.
- 1450 *Ibid.*, 12.7.1915.
- 1451 Joseph Maria Baernreither, *Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches und die Deutschen. Fragmente eines politischen Tagebuches 1897–1917*, edited by Oskar Mitis (Vienna, 1938), 210.
- 1452 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HStA), *Cabinetts Archiv, Tagebücher der Flügeladjutanten*, Vol. 61, 10.5.1916.
- 1453 *Neue Freie Presse, Abendblatt*, 29.7.1914.
- 1454 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 3, entries from 8.12.1914 to 4.5.1915.
- 1455 Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 184.
- 1456 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 2, 9.9.1914.

- 1457 HHStA, Familienurkunden 2838 (microfilm).  
1458 HHStA, Obersthofmarschallamt III B, No. 225 (1916–1919).

## 20. Emperor Karl

- 1459 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 232, 26.11.1916.  
1460 Ibid., 235, 28.11.1916.  
1461 May, Passing I, 435.  
1462 Schneider, Kriegserinnerungen, 440.  
1463 Cramon-Fleck, Deutschlands Schicksalsbund, 159 et seq.  
1464 Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Regional Archives; hereafter StLA), Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 120 et seq.  
1465 Cramon-Fleck, Deutschlands Schicksalsbund, 169 et seq., gives an example that constitutes an addendum to the well-known problems of the Sixtus Affair.  
1466 May, Passing I, 438.  
1467 Redlich, Österreichische Regierung, 244 et seq.  
1468 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), Tagebuch Zanantoni, 436.  
1469 On both the text of the army and fleet order as well as the drafting and proclamation process, see: Helmut Hoyer, Kaiser Karl und Feldmarschall Conrad von Hötzendorf. Ein Beitrag zur Militärpolitik Kaiser Karls (= Dissertationen der Universität Wien 70, Vienna, 1972), 72.  
1470 Ibid.  
1471 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 5, 11.1.1917.  
1472 Tagebuch Wille, 256. (The diary was graciously made available to the author by Dr Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck.)  
1473 StLA, Herberstein Kriegserinnerungen, 373.  
1474 Glaise-Horstenau, General im Zwielicht I, 385.  
1475 Hoyer, Kaiser Karl, 70.  
1476 On this complex see Broucek, Die deutschen Bemühungen um eine Militärkonvention, here 455 et seq.  
1477 Hoyer, Kaiser Karl, 131 et seq.  
1478 Detailed depictions in Herberstein's wartime memoirs (StLA), 428–431.  
1479 Wegs, Kriegswirtschaft, 123.  
1480 For the corresponding data see: Wegs, Kriegswirtschaft, 119–122.  
1481 Ibid., 78.  
1482 Ibid., 122 et seqq.  
1483 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 228–238, 23.11–7.12.1916. Redlich stated, however, that the problems in this respect had been caused by Koerber, since he had initiated the imperial handwritten letter.  
1484 Ibid., 240–242, 13 and 14.12.1916.  
1485 Kaiser Karl, Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, 205.  
1486 Ingeborg Meckling, Die Außenpolitik des Grafen Czernin (= Österreich-Archiv, Vienna, 1969), 218.  
1487 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/2862, Horace Rumbold (Bern) to Sir Edward Grey, 30.12.1916.  
1488 Kaiser Karl, Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, 203.  
1489 KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 5, 12.1.1917.  
1490 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives; hereafter BArch-MA), Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 53a, and KA, Marterer Tagebuch, No. 5, 11.1.1917.  
1491 The corresponding references can be found in Cramon's private notations (BArch-MA), here esp. 52r.



## 21. The Writing on the Wall

- 1492 The term is used in: Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (= Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie, edited by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1926), 55.
- 1493 Johann E. Pattera, *Der gemeinsame Ernährungsausschuss 1917–1918*, doctoral thesis, Vienna, 1971, 27.
- 1494 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), Cab 37/157, Report by William von Max-Müller dated 16.10.1916 on the economic situation of the Central Powers in September 1916, here esp. 21–39.
- 1495 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2602, Horace Rumbold (Bern) to Viscount Grey, 9.11.1916.
- 1496 Maureen Healy, *Exhibiting a War in Progress: Entertainment and Propaganda in Vienna, 1914–1918*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. XXXI (2000), 57–85. Posters for the exhibition e.g. in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek KS 16215882.
- 1497 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2602, Report 30.8.1916.
- 1498 Sandgruber, *Ökonomie und Politik*, 325.
- 1499 Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft*, 846.
- 1500 TNA, Kew FO 371/2602, Report by Horace Rumbold (Bern) on conditions in Vienna, 9.11.1916.
- 1501 For more precise data on requirements and the provision of food, see Horst Haselsteiner, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization of Food Supplies*, in: *East Central European Society in World War I*, edited by Béla K. Király and Nándor F. Dreisziger (= *War and Society in East Central Europe XIX*, Boulder, 1985), 87–102.
- 1502 Loewenfeld-Russ, *Volksernährung*, 61.
- 1503 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Schneller Tagebuch*, 26.1.1917.
- 1504 Országos Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary, Budapest), semi-official documents by the Hungarian Prime Minister, Box 467.
- 1505 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), *Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle*, Box 36, 2.4.1917.
- 1506 Pattera, *Ernährungsausschuss*, 31.
- 1507 Loewenfeld-Russ, *Volksernährung*, 106.
- 1508 *Ibid.*, 111.
- 1509 *Ibid.*
- 1510 Vermes, *Tisza*, 271.
- 1511 See Marion Breiter, *Hinter der Front. Zum Leben der Zivilbevölkerung im Wien des Ersten Weltkrieges*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1991, here esp. 64–67.
- 1512 Breiter, *Hinter der Front*, 67.
- 1513 KA, *Nachlass B/3, Bolfras, Mappe C*, f. 358 et seq.
- 1514 *Ibid.*, report by Höfer to Conrad, 12.11.1916.
- 1515 Jan Galandauer, *Der misslungene Kampf des letzten Königs von Böhmen um die Rettung seines Thrones*, in: *Karl I. (IV.). Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Donaumonarchie*, edited by Andreas Gottsmann (= *Publikationen des Historischen Instituts beim österreichischen Kulturforum in Rom, Abhandlungen*, Vol. 14, Vienna, 2007), 148 et seq.
- 1516 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 259 et seq., 14.1.1917 and 297, 13.5.1917.
- 1517 Pattera, *Ernährungsausschuss*, 36.
- 1518 Ottokar Landwehr von Pragenau, *Hunger. Die Erschöpfungsjahre der Mittelmächte 1917/18* (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1931), 11.
- 1519 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 3.12.1916, which also presents the reports and dispatches received via the Turkish headquarters.

- 1520 A detailed description of the following: Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, Vol. V, 223–358. An excellent overview: Gerhard P. Groß, Ein Nebenkriegsschauplatz. Die deutschen Operationen gegen Rumänien 1916, in: Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan, op. cit., 143–158. In summary: Anton Wagner, Erster Weltkrieg, 207–218, and Kiszling, Die hohe Führung, 125–144, also the memoirs of Arz, Falkenhayn and Mackensen.
- 1521 A very good synopsis of the campaign can also be found in the (unpublished) teaching aid by Mario Duić, Der Krieg gegen Rumänien 1916, edited by the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum/Militärwissenschaftliches Institut, Vienna, n.d..
- 1522 Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 237, 7.12.1916.
- 1523 Conrad von Hötzendorf, Private Aufzeichnungen, 236.
- 1524 Steglich, Bündnissicherung, 60.
- 1525 Meckling, Czernin, 27 et seq. Here, the assessment is quoted of the US envoy in Vienna, Penfield, addressed to Secretary of State Lansing, dated 3.6.1916. See also: Betty Miller-Unterberger, The United States, Revolutionary Russia and the Rise of Czechoslovakia (Chapel Hill/London, 1989).
- 1526 See Harley Notter, The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson (New York, 1965), 373.
- 1527 Meckling, Czernin, 42 et seq.
- 1528 Steglich, Bündnissicherung, 68.
- 1529 Ibid., 70.
- 1530 Further reading e.g. in the Neue Freie Presse, 12.12.1916, evening edition, 1.
- 1531 Kaiser Karl, Persönliche Aufzeichnungen, 203.
- 1532 Neue Freie Presse, morning edition, 7.1.1917.
- 1533 Galandauer, Der misslungene Kampf, 149.
- 1534 Ibid., 150 et seq. While the Emperor did apparently consider a coronation, Clam-Martinic was against the proposal.
- 1535 May, Passing I, 448.
- 1536 HHSStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 34, 5.5.1916.
- 1537 Hecht, Fragen zur Heeresergänzung, 418–428, here esp. 424.
- 1538 Steglich, Bündnissicherung, 175 et seq.
- 1539 Ibid., 178 et seq.
- 1540 Komjáthy, Ministerratsprotokolle, 440–458.
- 1541 Meckling, Czernin, 16.
- 1542 Ibid., 23.
- 1543 Halpern, Naval War, 309.
- 1544 Ibid. and notes.
- 1545 Foreign Relations 1915, Supplement, The War, 623 et seqq.
- 1546 Ibid., 655–658.
- 1547 Numerous examples of partial behaviour in the USA and, in particular, the role and style of writing of newspapers in the USA in: Drimmel, Antipoden, 401–425.
- 1548 Foreign Relations 1916, The War, 160–177, 277 et seq.
- 1549 Ibid., 143–149.
- 1550 Ibid., 273–276, report by Penfield, 20.5.1916.
- 1551 Halpern, Naval War, 252.
- 1552 Meckling, Czernin, 36 et seq.
- 1553 Ibid., 39.
- 1554 Foreign Relations 1917, Suppl. 1, 41 et seqq., Page to Lansing 11.2.1917.

- 1555 Arthur J. May, Woodrow Wilson and Austria-Hungary to the End of 1917, in: *Festschrift für Heinrich Benedikt*, op. cit., 228.
- 1556 Meckling, Czernin, 45.
- 1557 Ibid., 46.
- 1558 Wilhelm Deist, *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914–1917*, 785.
- 1559 Meckling, Czernin, 51.
- 1560 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 252 et seq., 29.12.1916. A statement on the subject was made by A. F. Příbram.
- 1561 Ibid., 254, 3.1.1917.
- 1562 Conrad to Gina von Reininghaus, 14.9.1913, quoted from Sondhaus, *Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Leiden, 2000).
- 1563 Hoyer, *Kaiser Karl*, 82.
- 1564 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 267.
- 1565 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 5, 9.2.1917.
- 1566 Reinhold Lorenz, *Aus dem Kriegstagebuch des Generaladjutanten Freiherrn von Marterer*, in: *Österreich und Europa. Festgabe für Hugo Hantsch* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1965), 491.
- 1567 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 277.
- 1568 Lorenz, *Kriegstagebuch Marterer*, 493.
- 1569 KA, *Marterer Tagebuch*, No. 5, 22.2.1917.
- 1570 See: KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, beginning of January to 25.2.1917 (= 1060 to 1112). From Scheller's elaborations and the amendments made by the Chief of the Operations Division, General Metzger, as well as Conrad's comments on the sketch for the operations, it is evident that an attack was planned in two directions, in which the focus was again to be on South Tyrol. If this study is transferred to the Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo in 1917 and the Piave Offensive in 1918, key elements were already anticipated for both operations.
- 1571 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 278 et seq.
- 1572 KA, op. geh. No. 234. Hindenburg justified his decision by referring to the lack of ammunition, and pointed out that the Central Powers would in general act defensively. The latter was still linked to the peace offer by the Central Powers, although opinions in the German Supreme Army Command were anyway divided with regard to an engagement in Italy. The former was a thinly disguised excuse, since at precisely that point in time, more ammunition was being produced in Germany than could be fired.

## 22. The Consequences of the Russian February Revolution

- 1573 André Beaufre, *Die Strategie des Jahres 1917*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, special issue on 1917 (1967), 68.
- 1574 Ibid., 70.
- 1575 Valiani, *The End*, 143.
- 1576 Ibid., 159.
- 1577 Ibid., 163.
- 1578 This clearly reflected the ever less restrictive stance of the War Surveillance Office.
- 1579 Valiani, *The End*, 174.
- 1580 Summary in: Hans Meier-Welcker, *Die militärischen Planungen und ihre Ergebnisse 1917/18*, in: *Weltwende 1917. Monarchie – Weltrevolution – Demokratie*, edited by Hellmuth Rößler (Göttingen, 1965).

- 1581 See: Gerhard Schulz, *Zum historischen Wandel von Revolutionsbegriff und Revolutionsverständnis*, in: *Revolution und Krieg. Zur Dynamik historischen Wandels seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 1989), 189–209. On the concept of an acceleration of history see: Reinhart Koselleck, *Gibt es eine Beschleunigung der Geschichte?* and: *Zeitverkürzung und Beschleunigung. Eine Studie zur Säkularisation*, both in: Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 150–221.
- 1582 Sergei Kudriashov, *The Russian Worker at War*, In: *Facing Armageddon*, 545–548.
- 1583 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VI, 88.
- 1584 Boris Meissner, *Die russische Revolution und ihre Folgen*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, special issue on 1917 (1967), 55–62, here 56.
- 1585 See the large-scale account by Richard G. Plaschka, *Matrosen, Offiziere, Rebellen. Krisenkonfrontationen zur See 1900–1918*, 2 vols. (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1984), esp. Vol. 2.
- 1586 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Kriegstagebuch der k. u. k. 1. Armee*, entry for 22.3.1917.
- 1587 *Ibid.*, entry for 29.3.1917.
- 1588 KA, *Kriegstagebuch der k. u. k. 5. und der 36. Infanteriedivision zum 6.4.1917*.
- 1589 KA, *Kriegstagebuch der k. u. k. 5. Infanteriedivision*, 13.4.1917.
- 1590 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VI, 95, and KA, *Kriegstagebuch des k. u. k. I. Korps*, *Tagebuch No. 13*, 7–30.5.1917.
- 1591 *Ibid.*
- 1592 Kudriashov, *The Russian Worker at War*, 542.
- 1593 Dietrich Beyrau and Pavel P. Shcherbinin, *Alles für die Front: Russland im Krieg 1914–1922*, in: *Durchhalten. Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich 1914–1918*, op. cit., 154.
- 1594 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VI, 95.
- 1595 Gottfried Schramm, *Die russische Armee als politischer Faktor vor der Februarrevolution (1914–1917)*, in: *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, No. 2/1975, 33.
- 1596 Viktor E. Frankl, *Die Sinnfrage in der Psychotherapie* (Munich, 1981), 45.
- 1597 Galántai, Hungary, 230.
- 1598 KA, AOK, Op. geh. 253 and 253/II, 30.4 and 1.5.1917.
- 1599 Anton Wagner, *Das russische Heer und die Revolution*, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, special issue on 1917, 62–67.
- 1600 Franz Tomsche, *Kriegstagebuch 1914–1920*, manuscript, transferred by Arnulf Weittenhiller (Klagenfurt 1984; one copy in the library of the Military History Museum). The camp in which this scene took place was in the vicinity of Irkutsk.
- 1601 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 288, 16.4.1917.
- 1602 *Ibid.*, 285, 25.3.1917.
- 1603 *Der Zerfall der europäischen Mitte. Staatenrevolution im Donauraum. Berichte der sächsischen Gesandtschaft in Wien, 1917–1919*, edited by Alfred Opitz und Franz Adlgasser (= *Quellen zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Fritz Fellner, Vol. 5, Graz, 1990), 16, Report 121, from 25.3.1917.
- 1604 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 24, Report 197, from 30.4.1917.
- 1605 Ottokar Czernin, *Im Weltkrieg* (Berlin/Vienna, 1919), 228 et seq.
- 1606 L. L. Farrar, Jr., *Separate Peace – General Peace – Total War: The Crisis in German Policy during the Spring of 1917*, in: *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* No. 2/1976, 56.
- 1607 Glaise-Horstenau, *Ein General im Zwielicht I*, 413.
- 1608 Richard G. Plaschka, *Zum Kriegsbild des Ersten Weltkriegs. Eröffnungsbild, Wandel und Wirkungsbild*, in: *Stuttgart*, 19.–24.8.1985, 62 et seq.

- 1609 Kazimierz Sobczak, Die Auswirkungen der Revolutionen in Russland 1917 und in Deutschland 1918 auf die Wiedergeburt des polnischen Staates im Jahre 1918, in: Stuttgart: 19.–24.8.1985, 365.
- 1610 See: Holger Fischer, Oszkár Jászi und Mihály Károlyi (= *Studia Hungarica* 17, Munich, 1978).
- 1611 Zeman, Zusammenbruch, 142. Both figures cited by Zeman are to be doubted, however. The number of Czechs in Russian prisoner of war captivity was probably considerably higher, and more were recruited as well. The percentage might be accurate.
- 1612 KA, Op. geh. 1917, No. 246.
- 1613 The tablet can be found in the permanent exhibition on the First World War in the Military History Museum in Vienna, reproduced in the catalogue *Das Heeresgeschichtliche Museum in Wien* (Vienna, 2000), 67.
- 1614 Garry William Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance*, doctoral thesis, University of California, 1974, 181.
- 1615 Ibid.
- 1616 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371, 2863, Dispatch from Sir Horace Rumbold (Bern) to Foreign Minister Balfour, 16.4.1917.
- 1617 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 32, Letter from the Swiss envoy in Vienna, C. D. Bourcart, to the Political Department, 7.5.1917.
- 1618 May, *Passing II*, 640.
- 1619 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 291 et seq., 24.4.1917.
- 1620 Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft*, 884.
- 1621 Joseph Maria Baernreither, *Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches und die Deutschen*. Fragmente eines politischen Tagebuches 1897–1917, edited by Oskar Mitis (Vienna, 1938), 223.
- 1622 Zeman, *Zusammenbruch*, 135 et seq.
- 1623 Ibid., 138.
- 1624 Baernreither, *Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches*, 224.
- 1625 Sondhaus, *In the Service*, 107. More comprehensive: Claus Gatterer, *Erbfeindschaft Italien-Österreich* (Vienna, 1972).
- 1626 Gonda, *Verfall*, 200.
- 1627 Ibid., 201.
- 1628 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 37, Report 214, 30.5.1917.

## 23. Summer 1917

- 1629 Stenographic records of the House of Representatives of the Reichsrat 1917, XXIIth session, 3–33.
- 1630 Felix Höglinger, *Ministerpräsident Heinrich Graf Clam-Martinic* (= *Studien zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* 2, Vienna, 1964), 185.
- 1631 On the entire complex of measures implemented with the aid of §14, see: Hasiba, *Notverordnungsrecht*, here esp. 153–164.
- 1632 On Spitzmüller, see the dissertation by Christine Baumgartner, *Dr. Alexander Spitzmüller von Harmersbach*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1967.
- 1633 Höglinger, *Clam-Martinic*, 128 et seqq.
- 1634 See again Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung*, esp. the chapter: *Gleichberechtigung und Sprachenrecht*, 1041–1147.
- 1635 Höglinger, *Clam-Martinic*, 147.
- 1636 Ibid., 148.

- 1637 On the session of the Council of Ministers: Spitzmüller, Und hat auch Ursach, 217 et seq., also: Redlich, Schicksalsjahre, Vol. 2, 292 et seq., 24.4.1917.
- 1638 Peter Štih, Vasko Simoniti and Peter Vodopivec, *Slowenische Geschichte. Gesellschaft – Politik – Kultur* (Graz, 2008), 308.
- 1639 Höglinger, Clam-Martinic, 191.
- 1640 Ibid. Here also the government declaration.
- 1641 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 257–264.
- 1642 Ibid., 226.
- 1643 Höglinger, Clam-Martinic, 195.
- 1644 Brügel, *Geschichte der Sozialdemokratie* Vol. 5, 285.
- 1645 Höglinger, Clam-Martinic, 199.
- 1646 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Kriegsüberwachungsamt 112.908: Stimmung und wirtschaftliche Lage der österreichischen Bevölkerung im Hinterland; Junibericht 1917*.
- 1647 On Seidler, see the dissertation by Brigitte Kosnetter, Ernst Ritter von Seidler, University of Vienna, 1963.
- 1648 Doliner, *Kärnten*, 212.
- 1649 Ibid..
- 1650 Quoted from Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 309 and notes.
- 1651 Eigentler, *Tirol*, 114.
- 1652 *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv* (Austrian State Archives), *Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv* (hereafter AVA), *Ministerium des Innern* (hereafter MdI), *Weltkrieg 1914–18, Protokolle, Box 33, Zl. 14,675/18*.
- 1653 Ibid., 114–117.
- 1654 Sandgruber, *Ökonomie und Politik*, 323.
- 1655 Quoted in: Eigentler, *Tirol*, 325.
- 1656 Ibid., 321.
- 1657 As well as the war metal collection campaigns, there were also ‘wool and rubber weeks’, all kinds of material donations for the Red Cross and dozens, if not hundreds, of other collection campaigns.
- 1658 Eigentler, *Tirol im Inneren*, 180.
- 1659 Ibid., 336.
- 1660 Mateja, *Oberösterreich*, 87.
- 1661 AVA MdI *Weltkrieg 1914–18, Protokolle, Box 31, Zl. 59,921/18*. On 1.9.1918, there were still 326,261 impoverished refugees in Vienna, including 110,000 Italians, 42,000 Ruthenians and 65,000 ‘Israelites’, of whom 17,000 were housed in Vienna. The statistics for September 1918 were the last record to be made in this respect.
- 1662 See Péter Hanák, *Die Volksmeinung während des letzten Kriegsjahres in Österreich-Ungarn*, in: *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches. Zusammenbruch und Neuorientierung im Donauraum*, edited by Richard G. Plaschka and Karlheinz Mack (= *Schriften des Österreichischen Ost- und Südosteuropainstituts* 3, Vienna, 1970), 62.
- 1663 Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik*, 221.
- 1664 Ibid., 267.
- 1665 The reports and dispatches referring to the subject from 22–25.5.1917 in: KA, MKSM 28-2/17. On the history of the development of the artillery arsenal in the First World War: Josef Gerdenitsch, *Das Wiener Arsenal. Wirtschaftliche und militärische Bedeutung 1918–1927*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1967, 5 et seqq.
- 1666 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 424.
- 1667 Ibid., 438 et seq. Zanantoni retired on 1.8.1917, but remained in his post as deputy city commander and station commander of Prague.

- 1668 Grandner, Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik, 267 et seqq.
- 1669 See the collected works that appear in the series by the Carnegie-Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Krieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie: Die Militärverwaltung in den von österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen besetzten Gebieten, edited by Hugo Kerchnawe et al. (Vienna/New Haven, 1928), here the introduction, 3. A comprehensive work and one founded on a solid source base: Tamara Scheer, Zwischen Front und Heimat. Österreich-Ungarns Militärverwaltung im Ersten Weltkrieg (= Neue Forschungen zur ostmittel- und südosteuropäischen Geschichte, Frankfurt am Main et al., 2009).
- 1670 Kerchnawe, Militärverwaltung, 6. See also Heiko Brandel, Die österreichisch-ungarische Besetzung Montenegros im Ersten Weltkrieg als habsburgischer Imperialkrieg, in: Imperialkriege von 1900 bis heute. Strukturen, Akteure, Lernprozesse, edited by Tanja Bühner, Christian Stachelbeck, Dierk Walter (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zürich, 2011), 129–147.
- 1671 See: Rudolf Mitzka, Die k. u. k. Militärverwaltung in Russisch-Polen, in: Die Militärverwaltung in den von österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen besetzten Gebieten, op. cit., 9.
- 1672 Tamara Scheer, Typisch Polen: Facetten österreichisch-ungarischer Besatzungspolitik in Polen (1915–1918), in: Polnisch-österreichische Kontakte sowie Militärbündnisse 1618–1918, edited by the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (Vienna, 2009), 240.
- 1673 Mitzka, Russisch-Polen, 19.
- 1674 Ibid., 23.
- 1675 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), PA I XLVII 2b,20, AOK/Q.100.071 geh., 18.7.1917.
- 1676 Mitzka, Russisch-Polen, 37.
- 1677 Gaul, Der k. u. k. Kundschafts- und Nachrichtendienst, 223.
- 1678 Hugo Kerchnawe, Die k. u. k. Militärverwaltung in Serbien, in: Die Militärverwaltung in den von österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen besetzten Gebieten, op. cit., 57.
- 1679 Ibid., 62.
- 1680 Ibid., 84.
- 1681 An indirect acknowledgement of this stance by the Muslims was made evident in May 1918, when, following an application by the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, Emperor Karl approved the establishment of an action committee for the construction of a mosque in Vienna. – KA, MKSM 48-4/2, Präs. No. 16,697, 30.5.1918.
- 1682 Kerchnawe, Militärverwaltung in Serbien, 99.
- 1683 Ibid., 112 et seqq.
- 1684 In other cities in Serbia, too, the power supply was re-established. However, by 1918, the electricity works had been militarised.
- 1685 Kerchnawe, Militärverwaltung in Serbien, 158 et seqq.
- 1686 HHStA, PA I XLVII 2b,20, AOK/Q.100.071 geh. 18.7.1917.
- 1687 Kerchnawe, Militärverwaltung in Serbien, 226 et seq.
- 1688 The uprising was not least a result of the ethnic ‘cleansing’ carried out by the Bulgarians.
- 1689 Kerchnawe, Die Militärverwaltung in Montenegro und Albanien, in: Die Militärverwaltung in den von den österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen besetzten Gebieten, op. cit., 272.
- 1690 Kerchnawe, Militärverwaltung in Montenegro, 274.
- 1691 Heiko Brendel, Der geostrategische Rahmen der österreichisch-ungarischen Besatzung Montenegros im Ersten Weltkrieg, in: Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Perspektiven der Forschung, edited by Jürgen Angelow (Berlin, 2011), 175.

- 1692 See the comprehensive dissertation by Helmut Schwanke, *Zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Militärverwaltung in Albanien* (Vienna, 1982).
- 1693 Gernot Sattler, *Oberst Georg Veith (1875–1925)*, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1991, 49.
- 1694 Scheer, *Zwischen Front und Heimat*, 126–129.
- 1695 Kerchnawe, *Militärverwaltung in Montenegro*, 297.
- 1696 Schwanke, *Zur Geschichte*, 146–364.
- 1697 Information on this subject in an otherwise very barren stock in the Albanian National Archives, Tirana, (unorganised microfilm stock). Used by the author in July 1990. See also Schwanke, *Zur Geschichte*, 224 et seq.
- 1698 Schwanke, *Zur Geschichte*, 443–462.
- 1699 Felix Sobotka, *Der Anteil Österreich-Ungarns an der Militärverwaltung in Rumänien 1917 bis 1918*, in: *Die Militärverwaltung in den von österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen besetzten Gebieten*, op. cit., 306.
- 1700 Sobotka, *Militärverwaltung in Rumänien*, 312.
- 1701 Quoted from: Thomas Stein, *Zur Frage der rumänischen Landwirtschaft im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, 21 (1979), No. 2, 120.
- 1702 Sobotka, *Militärverwaltung in Rumänien*, 314.
- 1703 Ibid.
- 1704 See Lisa Mayerhofer, *Making Friends and Foes: Occupiers and Occupied in First World War Romania, 1916–1918*, in: *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, edited by Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (= *History of Warfare*, Vol. 49, Leiden/Boston, 2008), 119–149.
- 1705 Quoted from: Gustav Spann, *Zensur in Österreich während des I. Weltkrieges 1914–1918*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1972, 334.
- 1706 Ibid., 339.
- 1707 Ibid., 340.
- 1708 Galántai, *Hungary*, 226 et seq.
- 1709 Ibid., 237.
- 1710 Ibid., 241.
- 1711 Vermes, *Tisza*, 397.
- 1712 Galántai, *Hungary*, 245.
- 1713 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 300, 16.4.1917. He correctly concluded that a series of complications would result from this.
- 1714 Galántai, *Hungary*, 241.
- 1715 Ibid., 245 et seq.
- 1716 HHStA, *Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle*, Box 36, protocols from 22.5 to 10.6.1917.
- 1717 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 37 et seq., Report 224, 30.5.1917.
- 1718 Vermes, *Tisza*, 402.
- 1719 Spitzmüller, *Und hat auch Ursach*, 227.
- 1720 The National Archives, Kew, FO 371 Box 2864, 139 et seq. and 171–174, Reports by Sir Horace Rumbold (Geneva).

#### 24. Kerensky Offensive and Peace Efforts

- 1721 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 329, 20.8.1917.
- 1722 Ibid.



- 1723 Halpern, *Naval War*, 286 et seq.
- 1724 Höbelt, *Kriegsmarine*, in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, edited by the Akademie der Wissenschaften, Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, Vol. V: *Die bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna, 1987).
- 1725 On the problem of fuel supplies for the Imperial and Royal Navy see the comprehensive Karl Fanta, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Kriegsmarine im Ersten Weltkrieg. Eine kritische Untersuchung der Logistik und ihres Zusammenhanges mit der k. u. k. Flottenstrategie*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1997.
- 1726 See Peter Schupita, *Die k. u. k. Seeflieger. Chronik und Dokumentation der österreichisch-ungarischen Marineluftwaffe 1911–1918* (Koblenz, 1983). The deployment, successes and losses in the war in the years 1914 to 1918 can be found on pages 161–246.
- 1727 Paul G. Halpern, Anton Haus. *Österreich-Ungarns Großadmiral* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne, 1998), 297–331.
- 1728 Halpern, *Naval War*, 310. In this way, above all Allied shipping on the route from Malta to Cythera was to be halted.
- 1729 Sondhaus, *Naval Policy*, 304 et seq.
- 1730 *Ibid.*, 312.
- 1731 Only the loss of one Imperial and Royal submarine could be verifiably attributed to the blockade. Other losses could not be proven with absolute certainty, but seem likely.
- 1732 Halpern, *Naval War*, 358–367, and comprehensively in: Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg*, 376–393.
- 1733 Halpern, *Naval War*, 364.
- 1734 Spann, *Zensur*, 361.
- 1735 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), MKSM 85-1/30, 2.3.1917.
- 1736 *Ibid.*, 85-1/30-3, 19.6.1917.
- 1737 Quoted from: Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe*, 109.
- 1738 Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend*, 190.
- 1739 Glaise-Horstenau, *General im Zwielicht I*, 398.
- 1740 See: Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, *Kaiser Karl. Aus der Geheimmappe seines Kabinettschefs* (Zürich/Leipzig/Vienna, 1929), 274 et seqq.
- 1741 Also in Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 216 et seq., 6.7.1917, described in the context of a long discussion in Laxenburg.
- 1742 Spann, *Zensur*, 363.
- 1743 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, Report 316, 55 et seq., from August/September 1917.
- 1744 Kosnetter, Seidler, 32–42.
- 1745 Engel-Janosi, *Österreich und der Vatikan*, 282. On Musil's role: Bauer, *Musil*, 284.
- 1746 Kosnetter, Seidler, 37 et seqq.
- 1747 Baernreither, *Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches*, 232 et seq.
- 1748 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 331, 20.8.1917. Redlich's claim that Seidler had also known nothing is incorrect. See: Kosnetter, Seidler, 35 et seq.
- 1749 Hoyer, *Kaiser Karl*, 152.
- 1750 Lammasch in the upper house of the Reichsrat on 28.2.1918, quoted in: Meckling, Czernin, 92.
- 1751 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, Report 316, 56, from August/September 1917.
- 1752 Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe*, 108.
- 1753 *Ibid.*, 108.
- 1754 KA, MKSM 85-1/150, 17.8.1917.
- 1755 Lammasch's speech in the upper house of the Reichsrat on 28. 6. 1917, quoted from: Meckling, Czernin, 83.

- 1756 Meckling, Czernin, 98 et seq.
- 1757 Ibid., 84. On Meinl's role see also the numerous entries in Redlich, Schicksalsjahre; index volume.
- 1758 Meckling, Czernin, 82.
- 1759 Baernreither, Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches, 235.
- 1760 KA, Nachlass B/726 Robert Nowak, No. 4, Letters to his mother from 16 and 25.6.1917.
- 1761 Hans Meier-Welcker, Die Beurteilung der politischen Lage in Österreich-Ungarn durch Generalmajor von Seeckt im Sommer 1917, in: Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen, No. 2/1968, 89 et seqq.
- 1762 Meckling, Czernin, 95.
- 1763 Cornwall, The Undermining of Austria-Hungary, 45. The Austro-Hungarian Army Command, for its part, focussed increasingly on propaganda and had some success with it, but the expected mass desertions did not come about.
- 1764 The figures can be found in a dossier on the Czech question that Edvard Beneš forwarded to the Foreign Office in London in October 1917 (The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA, Kew], WO 106/2864/207243). Even if the information contained therein was partially erroneous, the dossier provided an interesting overview.
- 1765 Beyrau, Scherbinin, Alles für die Front, 158–162.
- 1766 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, HHStA), PA I, Box 500, geh. XLVIII 2b, 20, Compilation by the Army High Command for the Foreign Minister: Über die Lage II, 6.7.1917.
- 1767 Das Verhalten der Tschechen im Weltkrieg, edited by the Deutschnationale Geschäftsstelle (Vienna, 1918), 348.
- 1768 Gerburg Thunig-Nittner, Die tschechoslowakische Legion in Russland. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bedeutung als politisch-geistiger Faktor bei der Entstehung der tschechoslowakischen Republik (= Marburger Ostforschungen 30, Wiesbaden, 1968), 10.
- 1769 Thunig-Nittner, Die tschechoslowakische Legion, 15.
- 1770 Lein, Das militärische Verhalten der Tschechen, 285.
- 1771 Ibid., 21.
- 1772 Gabriel Župčan, Der Tschechoslowakische Legionär in Russland 1914–1920, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2008. The study makes reference least of all to the events on the Austro-Hungarian side, but has the merit of using Czech and Russian literature.
- 1773 Župčan, Der Tschechoslowakische Legionär, 86
- 1774 Notification to the author by Professor Mirolav Mudra, Prague. It cannot be entirely ruled out, however, that this is a myth.
- 1775 Meier-Welcker, Die Beurteilung der politischen Lage, 95.
- 1776 KA, NL B/726 Robert Nowak, No. 4, Letters to his mother from 23.7.1917.
- 1777 Das Verhalten der Tschechen im Weltkrieg, 349. See also: Kurt Peball, Um das Erbe. Zur Nationalitätenpolitik des k. u. k. Armeoberkommandos während der Jahre 1914 bis 1917, in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, special issue on 1917 (1967), 28–39.
- 1778 Kiszling, Die hohe Führung, 181.
- 1779 KA, PA I, geh. LXVII 2b, 20, Report by the Army High Command on the economic situation in the field army, 18.8.1917.
- 1780 KA, AOK, Op. geh. 390, 19.8.1917.
- 1781 Cramon, Bundesgenosse im Weltkrieg, 120.
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#### 25. The Pyrrhic Victory: The Breakthrough Battle of Flitsch-Tolmein

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## 26. Camps

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- 1986 Ruzicka, *Soldat*, 140.
- 1987 Biwald, *Von Helden und Krüppeln*, Vol. 2, 435 et seq.
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- 1989 Ruzicka, *Soldat*, 159. See also the unavoidably cursory, but somewhat lower figures in Nachtigal, *Zur Anzahl der Kriegsgefangenen*, 375.
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- 2002 Ibid., 94.
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- 2007 Stenographische Protokolle des Abgeordnetenhauses des Reichsrates, XXIIth Session, 18th Sitting, 12.7.1917, Appendices, No. 1857.
- 2008 Tamara Scheer, Die Ringstraßenfront. Österreichs-Ungarn, das Kriegsüberwachungsamt und der Ausnahmezustand während des Ersten Weltkrieges (Vienna, 2011), 113.
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#### 27. Peace Feelers in the Shadow of Brest-Litovsk

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- 2017 Ibid., geh. 897, Über die Lage (IX), 29.1.1918.
- 2018 Ibid.
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- 2026 See also Emmerich Seiwald, Die österreichische Polenpolitik zwischen den beiden russischen Revolutionen im Kriegsjahr 1917, doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1977.
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- 2028 Achim Müller, Zwischen Annäherung und Abgrenzung, 276.
- 2029 Leidl, Die Verwaltung des besetzten Gebietes Italiens, 318 et seq.
- 2030 Ibid., 320. They were to coordinate their measures, but there were certainly regional differences.
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- 2044 Pattera, *Ernährungsausschuss*, 115.
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- 2050 Stenographic protocols of the House of Representatives, XXIIth session, 48th sitting, 4.12.1917, 2558–2565.
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- 2058 Miller-Unterberger, *The United States*, 54.
- 2059 Mamatey, *United States*, 175.
- 2060 On the establishment of Czech units in Italy, see Johann Rainer, *Die Anfänge des tschechoslowakischen Heeres in Italien 1917–1919*, in: *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte Österreichs*, edited by H. Fichtenau and E. Zöllner (Vienna, 1974), 493–502.
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- 2062 Miller-Unterberger, *United States*, 87–96, also Mamatey, *United States*, 171.
- 2063 Mamatey, *United States*, 174.
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- 2067 Heinrich Benedikt, *Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe 1917/18. Die Bemühungen um einen Verständigungsfrieden. Nach Dokumenten, Aktenstücken und Briefen (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs 48*, Graz/Cologne, 1962), 202 et seq.
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- 2069 Miller-Unterberger, United States, 96, who also discusses the reactions in Rome and among the Czecho-Slovak emigrants.  
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## 28. The Inner Front

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 2090 This observation was made by head of department Richard Schüller. See: Johann Rainer, *Die Friedensverhandlungen von Brest-Litovsk aus der Sicht von Richard Schüller*, in: *Innsbrucker Historische Studien* 10/11 (1988), 335.  
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- 2096 Verena Moritz, Österreich-Ungarn und die Ukraine unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Kriegsgefangenen- und Heimkehrerproblematik im Jahr 1918, in: Die Besetzung der Ukraine 1918, 95–108. The figures differ again greatly. The members of the Imperial and Royal Army repatriated by the summer are cited as between 200,000 and 500,000.
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- 2104 KA, Böhm-Ermolli Tagebuchmanuskript, 184.
- 2105 See the book by Timothy Snyder, *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke* (New York, 2009).
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- 2114 Quoted from: Meckling, Czernin, 289.
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- 2123 Marian Zgórnjak, Der Zusammenbruch der militärischen Organisation Österreich-Ungarns im Jahre 1918 in Polen, in: *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches*, 298.
- 2124 Halpern, Naval War, 411.
- 2125 Ibid., 447.
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- 2127 This was submitted by the defendants before the summary courts-martial following the suppression of the revolts. See Plaschka, Haselsteiner, Suppan, *Innere Front*, Vol. 1, 142.
- 2128 Plaschka, *Matrosen, Offiziere, Rebellen*, 276.
- 2129 Halpern, *Naval War*, 449.
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- 2131 *Ibid.*, 272.
- 2132 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives; hereafter HHStA), Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 36, 7.3.1918.
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- 2134 *Ibid.*, 273.
- 2135 Karel Pichlík, *Das Ende der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte* 5 (1963), 355.
- 2136 HHStA, Cabinetts Archiv, Ungarische Ministerratsprotokolle, Box 37, Session from 21.6.1918.
- 2137 On the repatriation of the Austrian prisoners of war: Inge Przybilovski, *Die Rückführung der österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsgefangenen aus dem Osten in den letzten Monaten der k. u. k. Monarchie*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1965.
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- 2139 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 268.
- 2140 Plaschka, Haselsteiner, Suppan, *Innere Front*, Vol. 1, 311.
- 2141 Pichlík, *Das Ende*, 358.
- 2142 Richard G. Plaschka, *Die revolutionäre Herausforderung im Endkampf der Donaumonarchie, in: Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches*, 21. In Rumburk, for example, where the revolt broke out on 21.5.1918, the Replacement Battalion of the Imperial and Royal Rifle Regiment No. 7 – the majority of whose members were Czech – mutinied. Three members of the battalion were sentenced to death and executed. 560 soldiers, i.e. practically the entire battalion, were brought to the Small Fortress in Terezín, where Gavrilo Princip, the murderer of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, had died four weeks earlier.
- 2143 Oswald Überegger, *Der andere Krieg. Die Tiroler Militärgerichtsbarkeit im Ersten Weltkrieg (= Tirol im Ersten Weltkrieg. Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, edited by Richard Schober, Innsbruck, 2002), 117.
- 2144 Plaschka, Haselsteiner, Suppan, *Innere Front*, Vol. 2, 137.
- 2145 Exemplary for this is the entry of Infantry Regiment 37 into Murau (Styria).

## 29. The June Battle in Veneto

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- 2147 Elisabeth Kovács, *Untergang oder Rettung der Habsburgermonarchie? 2 Vols, Vol. 2: Politische Do-*

- kumente aus internationalen Archiven (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs 100/2, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2004), 168. Also Tamara Griesser-Pečar, *Die Mission Sixtus. Österreichs Friedensversuche im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna/Munich 1988), 138–141.
- 2148 See also Fejtő, Requiem, 234.
- 2149 Polzer-Hoditz, Kaiser Karl, 351.
- 2150 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 278.
- 2151 *Ibid.*, 282.
- 2152 Miller-Unterberger, *United States*, 107.
- 2153 A detailed description in: Meckling, Czernin, 340–358.
- 2154 *Ibid.*, 350.
- 2155 *Ibid.*, 351.
- 2156 Gonda, *Verfall*, 385.
- 2157 This opinion is presented by Kann in particular in his work on the Sixtus Affair.
- 2158 Bauer, Musil, 288.
- 2159 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 286, and Friedrich Funder, *Vom Gestern ins Heute. Aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik* (Vienna, 1953), 563.
- 2160 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 290.
- 2161 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 147, Report 210 dated 8.5.1918.
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- 2166 Miller-Unterberger, *United States*, 104.
- 2167 TNA, Kew, 371/3134/312 Letter from House of Commons MP A. Hankey to Lord Balfour, 14.5.1918.
- 2168 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3134/83287, Telegram from the embassy in Paris to Lord Balfour, 9.5.1918.
- 2169 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3134/78708, British mission in Rome to Lord Balfour, 28.4.1918.
- 2170 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 33, Letter from Bourcart to the Political Department, 1.5.1918.
- 2171 Gonda, *Verfall*, 385.
- 2172 BArch-MA, Cramon, *Aufzeichnungen*, 64a.
- 2173 Meckling, Czernin, 290.
- 2174 BArch-MA, Cramon, *Aufzeichnungen*, 66r.
- 2175 Mamatey, *United States*, 257.
- 2176 Kann, *Sixtusaffäre*, 55.
- 2177 Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 233.
- 2178 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3133/104207, *Weekly Memorandum*, 12.6.1918.
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- 2183 See: Pichlík, *Das Ende der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee*, 351–369. The precise data on the ratio of forces in: *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VII, 41.
- 2184 Sondhaus, *In the Service*, 108 et seq.
- 2185 Hecht, *Fragen zur Heeresergänzung*, 497 et seq.



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- 2187 Wegs, Kriegswirtschaft, 73.
- 2188 Ibid., 101.
- 2189 Bardolff, Soldat, 313.
- 2190 Kriegsarchive (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), AOK, Op. geh. 897, Über die Lage IX, 29.1.1918.
- 2191 Detailed on this: Military Operations Italy, 88–145.
- 2192 Alexandra Ward, The Participation of British Troops in the War in Italy during 1918, in: *La Prima Guerra Mondiale e il Trentino*, edited by Sergio Benvenuti (Rovereto, 1980), 82 et seq. Supplementary to this and in particular also taking into account the logistical situation: *Military Operations Italy*, esp. 131–145.
- 2193 Hanks, *The End*, 94.
- 2194 On the operational ideas: Hanks, *The End*, 103 et seqq.
- 2195 Ibid., 113.
- 2196 Ibid., 122.
- 2197 Ibid., 123. See also esp. Fiala, *Die letzte Offensive Altösterreichs. Führungsprobleme und Führungsverantwortlichkeit bei der österreichisch-ungarischen Offensive in Venetien, Juni 1918* (= *Militärgeschichtliche Studien 3*, Boppard am Rhein, 1967), here 42 et seq.
- 2198 Hanks, *The End*, 122.
- 2199 The events within the Imperial and Royal Navy in detail in: Sokol, *Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg*, 489 et seq. As a supplement: Halpem, *Naval War*, 452 et seq.
- 2200 Hanks, *The End*, 129.
- 2201 Ibid., 131.
- 2202 Ibid., 132.
- 2203 Landwehr, *Hunger*, 192.
- 2204 BArch-MA, Cramon Nachlass, N266/50, Entwürfe für Bestimmungen über den deutsch-österreichischen Waffenbund.
- 2205 Broucek, *Die deutschen Bemühungen*, 466 et seq.
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- 2207 On the negotiations in Spa see also Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 242–245, and Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 250 et seqq.
- 2208 Broucek, *Die deutschen Bemühungen*, 465.
- 2209 Gonda, *Verfall*, 247.
- 2210 Zeman, *Zusammenbruch*, 222.
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- 2213 M. L. Sanders and M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–1918* (London, 1983), 185.
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- 2228 *Ibid.*, 215, and Anton Hainzl, *Das ehemalige Egerländer Feldjägerbataillon Nr. 22 im Weltkrieg 1914–1918* (Reichenberg, 1935), 227 et seqq.
- 2229 Hanks, *The End*, 247.
- 2230 Fiala, *Letzte Offensive*, 100.
- 2231 Letter from Archduke Joseph to General von Seeckt dated 4.8.1918, quoted in: Jedlicka, *Ende und Anfang. Österreich 1918/19. Wien und die Bundesländer (= Politik konkret, Salzburg, 1969)*, 18–23.
- 2232 Quoted from: Jedlicka, *Ende und Anfang*, 21.
- 2233 Peter Schiemer, *Die Albatros-(Oeffäg-)Jagdflugzeuge der k. u. k. Luftfahrtruppen* (Graz, 1984), 217.
- 2234 Jansa, *Ein österreichischer General*, 413.
- 2235 *Landwehr, Hunger*, 229.
- 2236 *Ibid.*, 233 et seq.
- 2237 Hanks, *The End* 91.
- 2238 *Ibid.*, 260, and United States Army in World War 1917–1919: *Military Operations of the American Expeditionary Forces, Vol. VI* (Washington, D.C., 1948), 529.

### 30. An Empire Resigns

- 2239 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), *Qualifikationslisten*, Box 238, Heinrich Bolzano Edler von Kronstätt.
- 2240 In 1950, the Military History Museum in Vienna requested the directorate of the Austrian War Archives to examine and amend the marble plaques on which in the pantheon in the Museum those colonels and generals who fell in battle in the wars of Austria from 1618 to 1918 are listed by name. On this occasion, the fate of Brigadier Bolzano was subjected to intensive research. Subsequent interventions are based on this, like for example the enquiry by Ian Stevenson of Charlottesville, Virginia, from 10.7.1967. See the document from the directorate of War Archives, Zl. 34877/67. Since the War Archives concluded that mental disorientation was no reason to describe someone as having ‘fallen in battle’, the amendment to the plaques in the pantheon of the Museum was omitted.
- 2241 The then lieutenant colonel in the General Staff Corps and later Director of the War Archives, Rudolf Kiszling, described the incident to the author and interpreted it to the effect that the sentry who shot Bolzano assumed that the General wanted to desert. Kiszling was convinced, however, that Brigadier Bolzano wanted to die. A complete clarification was not possible, even with the help of the Italian files.
- 2242 KA, KM Präs 1915 1–11/8 as well as index volume of ‘Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg’, 173.
- 2243 KA, KM Präs 1915 1 – 5/11: Retirement for age reasons.
- 2244 This is a reference to Major General Ludwig von Fabini, from the end of September 1914 to the beginning of August 1916 Commander of the 8th ‘Kaiserjäger’ Imperial Rifle Division. Proceedings before the Commission for the Investigation of Military Dereliction of Duty in War were instituted against General Fabini in 1919. See Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend noch die Schande*, 266 et seq. Neither disciplinary misconduct nor a case of criminal wrongdoing could be proven on the part of the General. He retained the unflattering name.

- 2245 KA, KM Präs 1915 1- 4/15-2.
- 2246 The text of the proposal is in Germann, *Österreichisch-ungarische Kriegsführung*, 143 et seq. The dismissal of General Meixner had been requested by Emperor Franz Joseph, who was responding to German criticism.
- 2247 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 413.
- 2248 Zeynek, *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps*, 241.
- 2249 *Ibid.*, 256.
- 2250 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), FO 371/2602, Horace Rumbold (Bern) to Foreign Secretary Grey, 7.11.1916.
- 2251 KA, KM Präs Sonderreihe, Box 2872. The full generals were Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, Baron Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin and Count Viktor Dankl.
- 2252 See Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, *Das Heeresgeschichtliche Museum – Wien. Das Museum. Die Repräsentationsräume* (Salzburg, 1981), 82–89. The names are listed in the pantheon of the Military History Museum on plaques XXXVII to XLIII. Missing are the names – as in the case of Brigadier Bolzano – of the generals and colonels who died under mysterious circumstances or later succumbed to their wounds.
- 2253 KA, KM Präs 1918 1-5/3
- 2254 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VII, 361.
- 2255 KA, KM Präs 1918/19, Box 2137.
- 2256 Forstner, *Premysl*, 234. The army order issued by Army Supreme Commander Archduke Friedrich at the request of the Emperor cited the ‘undefeated heroes of Przemysl’, who had been ‘vanquished not by the enemy but by forces of nature’.
- 2257 Bernd Ulrich, *Die Desillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914*, in: *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, edited by Wolfram Wette (Munich/Zürich, 1992), 121 et seq.
- 2258 Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*, 258.
- 2259 Ulrich, *Die Desillusionierung*, 122.
- 2260 Geoffrey Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army: The Evidence of Habsburg Army Campaign Reports and Allied Intelligence Officers*, in: Hugh Cecil, Peter Liddle, *Facing Armageddon. The First World War Experience* (Barnsley, 2003), 399–412, here 403 and note 14.
- 2261 Biwald, *Von Helden und Krüppeln* 2, 405.
- 2262 *Ibid.*, 490 et seq. and 512–522.
- 2263 Hanisch, *Männlichkeiten*, 330.
- 2264 *Ibid.*, 327 (quoting family and estate papers in KA, B/507).
- 2265 As in the case of the Military Order of Maria Theresa, the submissions for bestowal of Medals of Bravery continued to be processed after the war. Here the dual purpose also applied of honouring people and – which was soon at least as important – providing them access to the financial perks connected with the conferment of the Medals for Bravery. The commission did not have any influence on the payment outside of the Empire. Allowances were only paid in Austria and Hungary.
- 2266 The figures cited here were meticulously compiled, but minor inaccuracies cannot be ruled out. The entries in the register held in the War Archives in Vienna of the recipients of the Gold Medal for Bravery are, in some cases, barely legible anymore and an allocation to individual troop bodies is not always possible. The exact figures cannot be clarified for the number of Medals for Bravery awarded during the war and the number bestowed thereafter. Until March 1918 alone, 2,900 (genuine) Gold and around 800 gilded Medals for Bravery were conferred. The cheaply manufactured items were supposed to be exchanged after the war for genuine golden medals. This, of course, never happened.

- Regardless of the actual value of the medals, it can be established that as many as 3,700 of the around 4,600 Gold Medals for Bravery, i.e. 80 per cent, were awarded during the war. It cannot be ruled out that after the war members of German regiments were favoured somewhat. See *Der Held. Organ der Bundesvereinigung der Tapferkeitsmedaillenbesitzer*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 4 et seq. See also Hans Mühlfeith, *Das goldene Buch der Tapferkeit* (Vienna, 1960), as well as Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, Abt. Ausbildung 2, *Die Tapferkeitsmedaille in der Österreichischen Armee* (Vienna, 1979), 28 et seq. Unverifiable figures are also circulating, however, such as those in Werner Schachinger, *Die Bosniaken kommen! Elitetruppe in der k. u. k. Armee 1879–1918* (Graz, 1989), 355 et seq. The Bosnian–Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment 2 is ranked in first place with 42 conferrals. It is quite obvious, however, that the data is incomplete and incorrect. I am very grateful to Ms Andrea Hackel from the Austrian War Archives for her help with working through the registers.
- 2267 Wilhelm Winkler, *Die Totenverluste der öst.-ung. Monarchie nach Nationalitäten. Die Altersgliederung der Toten. Ausblicke in die Zukunft* (Vienna, 1919), esp. 6–17.
- 2268 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches*, 440.
- 2269 *Ibid.*, 369.
- 2270 Quoted from Rothkappl, *Der tschechische Nationalismus*, 59.
- 2271 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. IV, 139
- 2272 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches*, 464.
- 2273 *Ibid.*, 376.
- 2274 *Ibid.*, 376 et seq.
- 2275 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 363.
- 2276 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches*, 495–498.
- 2277 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. III, 537 et seq.
- 2278 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches*, 504.
- 2279 Wild von Hohenborn, *Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, No. 53, 102.
- 2280 TNA, Kew, Cab 37/157, Report by William von Max- Müller from 16.10.1916 on the economic situation of the Central Powers in September 1916, 21–39.
- 2281 TNA, Kew, FO 371/2602, Report by an agent to the Foreign Office on a trip through Bohemia and Moravia in June and July 1916, 30.8.1916.
- 2282 Sondhaus, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 109.
- 2283 Vladimir Buldakov, *The National Experience of War, 1914–17*, in: *Facing Armageddon*, 539–544.
- 2284 KA, Nowak, *Die Klammer des Reiches*, 481.
- 2285 Professor Hans Riedl, lieutenant of the reserve in Infantry Regiment No. 72, manuscript: *Meine Kriegserlebnisse 1914–1918* (Krems, 1937), 57, in the possession of the author, diary entry for 28.7.1915. I am very grateful to General of the Reserve Wilhelm Lachnit for making this manuscript available.
- 2286 Bernadette Schuh, *Geschichte der Desertion in Österreich*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2006, Enclosure 6, 361 et seq.
- 2287 KA, AOK Op 1916, No. 32, 183.
- 2288 Schuh, *Geschichte der Desertion*, 177.
- 2289 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 2290 *Ibid.*, 149. See also Franz Exner, *Krieg und Kriminalität in Österreich (= Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Weltkrieges, österreichische und ungarische Serie*, edited by the Carnegie Stiftung für internationalen Frieden, Vienna/New Haven, 1927), 1–110.
- 2291 Ernst Junk, *Das Verbrechen im Kriege. Kriminalpsychologische und kriminalistische Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Weltkriege* (Vienna/Leipzig, 1920), 47.
- 2292 Junk, *Das Verbrechen im Kriege*, 82 et seq.

- 2293 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 157: 'A dreadful tribunal was also set up against the self-mutilators, whose number took on eery proportions.'
- 2294 Christop Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918* (= *Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft* 123, Göttingen, 1998), 27. Comprehensive: Peter Riedesser, Andreas Verderber, "Maschinengewehre hinter der Front". *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Militärpsychiatrie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996).
- 2295 Georg Lelewer, *Die Militärpersonen*, in: Franz Exner, *Krieg und Kriminalität in Österreich*, op. cit., 111–146.
- 2296 *Ibid.* See also Schuh, *Geschichte der Desertion*, 184.
- 2297 Ted Peter Konakowitsch, *Im Namen seiner Majestät des Kaisers. Die Tätigkeit der Grazer Militärgerichte 1914 bis 1918*, doctoral thesis, University of Graz, 1999, 100.
- 2298 Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, 404.
- 2299 TNA, Kew, WO 106/593, *The State of the Austro-Hungarian Army in May 1918*; see also Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, 412.
- 2300 See Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary*, 74–256.
- 2301 Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, 407.
- 2302 Sonja Kofler, *Alltagsgeschichte an der Ortlerfront im 1. Weltkrieg*, diploma thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1999, 115.
- 2303 Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary*, 265.
- 2304 *Ibid.*, 295 and 301.
- 2305 Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, 408.
- 2306 *Ibid.*
- 2307 Plaschka, Haselsteiner, Suppan, *Inner Front*, Vol. 2, 66.
- 2308 Wawro, *Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, 408.
- 2309 *Ibid.*, 412, note 43
- 2310 *Ibid.*, 409 and note 40.
- 2311 Schneider, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 569.

### 31. The Twilight Empire

- 2312 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 176.
- 2313 Hanks, *The End*, 257.
- 2314 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 160, Report 329 dated 19.7.1918.
- 2315 The handwritten letter by the Emperor on this matter in: Hoyer, *Kaiser Karl*, 161. In this honorary function, Conrad thus followed in the footsteps of the long-serving Chief of the General Staff who had in the interim been retrospectively promoted to the rank of full general, Friedrich Beck-Rzikowsky.
- 2316 *Zerfall der europäischen Mitte*, 159, Report 329 dated 19.7.1918.
- 2317 *Arz, Zur Geschichte*, 277. In this regard, *Arz* mentions that Field Marshal Boroević should also have been dismissed; however, *Arz* had spoken out against any dismissal, including that of Conrad.
- 2318 *Kriegsarchiv* (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), MKSM 25-1/11 ex 1918, Memorandum für Ministerpräsident Wekerle, 18.7.1918.
- 2319 KA, MKSM 69-6/14-2, AOK, Op. No. 146.427, 22.7.1918.
- 2320 Glaise-Horstenau, *General im Zwielficht I*, 482.
- 2321 The list of descriptions in *Fiala, Letzte Offensive*, in the bibliography.
- 2322 KA, MKSM 69-6/14-3, 26.6.1918.

- 2323 Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau (German Federal Military Archives; hereafter BArch-MA), Cramon, Aufzeichnungen, 80a.
- 2324 The history of this memorandum (which has not been preserved) described in detail in: Glaise-Hors-tenau, General im Zwielficht I, 483.
- 2325 See Alexandra Hois, "Weibliche Hilfskräfte" in der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg. diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2012, here 12-107. The figure given by Hois of up to 55,000 auxiliary workers is only a pure estimate, even if a large degree of fluctuation has to be taken into account. See also the figures given by the Chief of Recruitment, General Hazai, in the following paragraph.
- 2326 KA, AOK Q.No. 119,083 from 1918.
- 2327 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 5, Fasz. 17.
- 2328 Helmut Rumpler, Max Hussarek, Nationalitäten und Nationalitätenpolitik in Österreich im Sommer des Jahres 1918 (= Studien zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie 4, Graz/Cologne, 1965), 23.
- 2329 Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, Slowenische Geschichte, 309.
- 2330 Rumpler, Hussarek, 25.
- 2331 Kosnetter, Seidler, 197-207.
- 2332 Rumpler, Hussarek, 27.
- 2333 Ibid., 30, with the conclusion: '[...] one cannot suppress the doubt as to whether the Emperor still has an overview of all the correlations.'
- 2334 Ibid.
- 2335 Ibid., 35.
- 2336 See the comprehensive account in Plaschka, Haselsteiner, Suppan, Innere Front, esp. Vol. 2.
- 2337 Rumpler, Hussarek, 44.
- 2338 Ibid.
- 2339 Ibid., 44 et seq.
- 2340 Kindler, Cholmer Frage, 337-348.
- 2341 The figures are also to be found on image placards that were published in France and Italy in 1918 and 1919. One of these is in the Italian War Museum in Rovereto.
- 2342 Rumpler, Hussarek, 70.
- 2343 Ibid., 71.
- 2344 Meier, Christlichsoziale, 118.
- 2345 Reichspost No. 273, 17.6.1918.
- 2346 Meier, Christlichsoziale, 122.
- 2347 Lukan, Die slowenische Politik, 176f et seq. and Rumpler, Hussarek, 79.
- 2348 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), FO 371/3135/107968, Information on the Yugoslav committee held by the British government regarding the strength of the 'Serbo-Croat Volunteer Corps' and the Yugoslav division.
- 2349 Quoted from: Rumpler, Hussarek, 96.
- 2350 KA, AOK, Op. geh. 2168, Résumé of the discussions and details.
- 2351 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, HHStA), PA I, Box 500, XLVII 2b, 20, AOK. Op. geh. 1689, 21.7.1918.
- 2352 Polatschek, Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen, 53-61.
- 2353 Ibid., 68.
- 2354 Ibid., 70.
- 2355 The Imperial and Royal 1st and 35th Infantry Divisions were relocated with the first transports. The

- second tranche comprised the Imperial and Royal 106th Infantry Division and the 37th Honvéd Infantry Division.
- 2356 Hanks, *The End*, 302, and Peter Feldl, *Das verspielte Reich. Die letzten Tage Österreich-Ungarns* (Vienna/Hamburg, 1968), 262.
- 2357 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 174.
- 2358 Paul von Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig, 1920), 383 et seq.
- 2359 Polatschek, *Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen*, 94 et seqq.
- 2360 A good overview of the changes in tactics and impact of weapons in Hans Linnenkohl, *Vom Einzelschuss zur Feuerwalze. Der Wettlauf zwischen Technik und Taktik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Koblenz, 1990), here esp. 209–280.
- 2361 Polatschek, *Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen*, 105–110.
- 2362 Hanks, *The End*, 303.
- 2363 *Ibid.*
- 2364 *Ibid.*, 306.
- 2365 KA, MKSM 10-2/1-1, KM Präs. No. 22,805, 3.7.1918.
- 2366 KA, MKSM 11-2/10, bundle of reports with enclosures.
- 2367 Sanders, Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918*, 182.
- 2368 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 598, 25.1.1916.
- 2369 Hanks, *The End*, 309.
- 2370 *Ibid.*, 311.
- 2371 Ward, *The Participation*, 87.
- 2372 Hoen, *Geschichte des Egerländer IR 73*, 663.
- 2373 Hanks, *The End*, 312.
- 2374 *Ibid.*, 310.
- 2375 *Ibid.*
- 2376 *Ibid.*, 313.
- 2377 BArch-MA, Cramon, *Aufzeichnungen*, 84a.
- 2378 *Ibid.*, 84r.
- 2379 *Ibid.*, 82a and r.
- 2380 Hanks, *The End*, 313.
- 2381 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 174 et seq.
- 2382 Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 328 et seq.
- 2383 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 176.
- 2384 Hanks, *The End*, 316.
- 2385 Here, at issue were not the relatively modern battleships, but the old battleships and cruisers that were still remaining.
- 2386 Halpern, *Naval War*, 402.
- 2387 *Ibid.*, 404.
- 2388 Sondhaus, *Naval Policy*, 310.
- 2389 *Ibid.*, 453.
- 2390 *Ibid.*, 503.
- 2391 *Ibid.*, 538.
- 2392 For this, Rigele received the Military Order of Maria Theresa. See: *Der Militär-Maria-Theresien-Orden. Die Auszeichnungen im Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, edited by Baron Carl von Bardolf, (Vienna, 1944), 265 et seq.
- 2393 KA, MKSM 78-1/1-3, August 1918.

- 2394 Hanks, *The End*, 318 et seq.  
 2395 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 1274, 3.10.1918.  
 2396 Quoted from: Hanks, *The End*, 321.  
 2397 Spann, *Zensur*, 372.  
 2398 *Ibid.*, 369.  
 2399 *Ibid.*, 370.  
 2400 *Ibid.*, 371.  
 2401 *Vojenský historický archiv, Praha* (Military History Archives, Prague), 4th section. 1918 56 1/4–99, Letter from War Minister Stöger-Steiner to the Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle, 4.9.1918.  
 2402 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 446.  
 2403 *Ibid.*, 447.  
 2404 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3136/195784, Notes on the Situation in Austria-Hungary, August 1918, 6.  
 2405 Hanks, *The End*, 317. The number of 100,000 soldiers given here is probably too low, and is likely to apply to Poland alone.  
 2406 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3136, Notes on the Situation in Austria-Hungary, August 1918, 9 et seq.  
 2407 Pichlík, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, 258.  
 2408 Hanks, *The End*, 317.  
 2409 *Ibid.*, 5.  
 2410 Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 177.  
 2411 The wording of the telegram from Spa is also given in: Cramon, *Bundesgenosse*, 178.

### 32. The War becomes History

- 2412 *Ibid.*, 180.  
 2413 Hanks, *The End*, 327.  
 2414 This was the title of his book, which appeared in 1929.  
 2415 András Siklós, *Revolution in Hungary and the Dissolution of the Multinational State 1918* (Budapest, 1988), 13.  
 2416 See Bogdan Krizman, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch auf dem Balkan im Herbst 1918*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte* 5 (1968), 268–293.  
 2417 Johannes Legier, *Die Endphase des Ersten Weltkrieges auf dem Balkan*, unpublished teaching training seminar paper, University of Vienna, 1977, 16.  
 2418 Krizman, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, 276.  
 2419 *Ibid.*, 278.  
 2420 *Ibid.*, 280.  
 2421 The text is in Krizman, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, 281 et seq.  
 2422 Komjáthy, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, 680–687, 27.9.1918.  
 2423 The events are also described by Jurj A. Pisarev: *Die Befreiungsbewegung der südslawischen Völker Österreich-Ungarns in den Jahren 1917 und 1918 und die Entwürfe einer Reform der Donaumonarchie*, in: *Die Auflösung*, 191.  
 2424 Synodal Archives Budapest, Nachlass Tisza, Box 20/21, 159, 1 et seqq.  
 2425 See: Helmut Rumpler, *Das Völkermanifest Kaiser Karls vom 16. Oktober 1918. Letzter Versuch zur Rettung des Habsburgerreiches* (= *Österreich-Archiv*, Vienna, 1966), 21.  
 2426 Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, 23.  
 2427 Lukan, *Die slowenische Politik*, 179 et seq.



- 2428 Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slowenische Geschichte*, 309 et seq.
- 2429 Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 321.
- 2430 Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, 25 and 74 et seqq.
- 2431 Quoted from: Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, 33.
- 2432 Vermes, Tisza, 442–452. The highpoint of its influence was on 31.10.1918 with the appointment of Károlyi as Prime Minister.
- 2433 Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, 37.
- 2434 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 2435 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 309.
- 2436 Kriegsarchiv (Austrian War Archives; hereafter KA), AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,032 from 21.10.1918 and Op. geh. No. 2,071 from 30.10.1918.
- 2437 Ludwig Jedlicka, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti in der österreichischen Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Innsbruck–Venedig. Österreichisch-italienisches Historikertreffen 1971 und 1972*, edited by Adam Wandruszka and Ludwig Jedlicka (Vienna, 1975), 87.
- 2438 Hanks, *The End*, 334.
- 2439 *Ibid.*, 335.
- 2440 The peace note is reproduced in Bihl, *Deutsche Quellen*, 475, No. 218. On the response see 477 et seq., No. 221. Oddly enough, the fact that the American government did not deign to give Austria-Hungary an answer was interpreted positively in Vienna. See: Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 310.
- 2441 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 309.
- 2442 *Ibid.*
- 2443 Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 308 et seq.
- 2444 Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, 42.
- 2445 *Ibid.*, 42 et seq.
- 2446 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 2447 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 2448 The text is in: Rumpler, *Völkermanifest*, im Anhang, 88–91.
- 2449 Hanks, *The End*, 337.
- 2450 *Ibid.*, 338.
- 2451 Vermes, Tisza, 444.
- 2452 Quoted from: Burián, *Drei Jahre*, 304.
- 2453 Siklós, *Revolution in Hungary*, 32 et seq.
- 2454 Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 326.
- 2455 The account of this journey with interesting details, though in a linguistically poorly balanced form, can be found in: Kaiser Karl, *Persönliche Aufzeichnungen*, 244 et seqq.
- 2456 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA, Kew), FO 371/3134/179471, Telegram from Lord Acton (Bern) to the Foreign Office, 22.10.1918.
- 2457 Arz, *Zur Geschichte*, 330.
- 2458 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 33, Letter from Bourcart to the Political Department, 14 (actually 18) 10.1918.
- 2459 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 311.
- 2460 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 455 et seq., 25.10.1918. Redlich became Finance Minister in the Cabinet of Lammasch.
- 2461 Walter Rauscher, *Karl Renner. Ein österreichischer Mythos* (Vienna, 1995), 106–108.
- 2462 See also: Fritz Fellner, *Der Zerfall der Donaumonarchie in weltgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, in: *Die Auflösung*, op. cit., 34.

- 2463 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 454 et seq. On the revolution in Prague see also Richard Lein, Paul Kes-  
tránek, der letzte Militärkommandant in Prag, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 2/2010,  
208–219.
- 2464 KA, Tagebuch Zanantoni, 464.
- 2465 Pichlík, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, here 260.
- 2466 Bruno Wagner, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti* 3. November 1918, doctoral thesis, University of  
Vienna, 1970, 214.
- 2467 KA, Nachlass Hartinger, 422.
- 2468 Otto Gallian, *Monte Asolone* (Graz, 1933), 138.
- 2469 *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Vol. VII, 592.
- 2470 Carla Cordin, Ettore Cordin. *Das Tagebuch eines k. u. k. Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Edition und  
Analyse (= *Menschen und Strukturen. Historisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Studien*, edited by Heiko  
Haumann, Vol. 20, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern/Brussels/New York/Oxford/Vienna, 2012), 105  
et seq.
- 2471 *Ibid.*, 591.
- 2472 KA, AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,036, 22.10.1918.
- 2473 *Arz*, *Zur Geschichte*, 333 et seq.
- 2474 Hanks, *The End*, 329.
- 2475 Pichlík, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, 258.
- 2476 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, 1280, 17.10.1918.
- 2477 Johann Rainer, *Der Luftkrieg an der österreichisch-italienischen Front 1915–1918*. In: *Festschrift des*  
*Pestalozzigmnasiums Graz* (1987), 138.
- 2478 Gallian, *Monte Asolone*, 151.
- 2479 Hanks, *The End*, 347.
- 2480 Gallian, *Monte Asolone*, 172 et seq.
- 2481 Pichlík, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch*, 362.
- 2482 Hanks, *The End*, 348.
- 2483 *Ibid.*, 349.
- 2484 *Ibid.*, 350.
- 2485 Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe*, 351.
- 2486 KA, AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,205, *Imperial and Royal Army Group Command in Tyrol* 55,000/200.
- 2487 Hanks, *The End*, 356.
- 2488 *Ibid.*, 359.
- 2489 Shanafelt, *Secret Enemy*, 313.
- 2490 KA, AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,058. The telegram is without doubt from 28 October, although it was dated  
to the 29. The confirmation of receipt was dated the 28, and Hindenburg's answer is also dated to the 28.
- 2491 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 33, Letter from  
Bourcart to the Political Department, 31.10.1918.
- 2492 Polatschek, *Österreichisch-ungarische Truppen*, 127.
- 2493 Wagner, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti*, 209.
- 2494 Hanks, *The End*, 362.
- 2495 *Flags and trumpets can be found today in the Italian War Museum in Rovereto.*
- 2496 A slightly divergent account in: Luigi Mondini, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti und seine Fol-*  
*gen*, in: *Innsbruck–Venedig*, op. cit., 65 et seq.
- 2497 Mondini, *Der Waffenstillstand*, 66, and KA, AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,071, 30.10.1918.
- 2498 Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe*, 412.

- 2499 Hanks, *The End*, 367, and KA, AOK, Op. geh. No. 2,091.
- 2500 Tibor Hetis, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch und Ungarn*, in: *Die Auflösung*, op. cit., 295.
- 2501 Vermes, *Tisza*, 453.
- 2502 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (Swiss Federal Archives), Bern, 2300 Wien, No. 33, Letter from Bourcart to the Political Department, 31.10/1.11.1918.
- 2503 Wilhelm Brauneder, *Deutsch-Österreich 1918. Die Republik entsteht* (Vienna/Munich, 2000), 16.
- 2504 Linder's letter in this matter and its forwarding by Arz in: Jedlicka, *Ende und Anfang*, 49 et seq.
- 2505 Hanks, *The End*, 369.
- 2506 *Ibid.*, 371.
- 2507 KA, AOK, Op. geh. 2,101, 3.11.1918.
- 2508 Hanks, *The End*, 372.
- 2509 The note in *Nachlass Arz*, KA, B/63.
- 2510 Jansa, *Ein österreichischer General*, 419.
- 2511 Wagner, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti*, 227. Wagner states that the dating to 2 November is an error and that it should be 3 November. However, the date was consciously cited incorrectly in order to create the impression that it was already the new Army Supreme Commander who had concluded the armistice.
- 2512 The exact wording is in: Wagner, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti*, 151 et seq. within six days eq.
- 2513 On the constitutional questions: Jedlicka, *Der Waffenstillstand*, 95.
- 2514 Before the surrender, the Italians had already been able to take 80,000 Austro-Hungarian soldiers captive. The figure of 436,675 prisoners of war that the Italians cited as the official number includes those prisoners who had been captured since 24 October. See also: Emil Ratzenhofer, *Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti und die Gefangennahme Hunderttausender*, in: supplementary booklet 2 to the work 'Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg' (Vienna, 1931), esp. 48 et seqq.
- 2515 Jedlicka, *Der Waffenstillstand*, 97.
- 2516 Ward, *The Participation*, 94.
- 2517 Kärntner Landesarchiv (Carinthian Regional Archives), Klagenfurt, *Nachlass Lukas*, *Kriegstagebuch* 2, 8.
- 2518 KA, *Schneller Tagebuch*, *Nachtrag für 1918*, 17 et seq.
- 2519 Legler, *Die Endphase*, 68.
- 2520 The so-called Belgrade Convention forced Hungary to fall back to Számos and Tisza, and also to leave Szabadka and Baja to the Entente troops. The Danube Fleet furthermore fell to the Allies.
- 2521 Very detailed on this: Johann Rainer, *Die Besetzung Polas durch Italien am Ende des 1. Weltkrieges*, in: *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte*, op. cit., 163–171.
- 2522 A commemorative plaque that recalls this event has been located for some time in the naval hall of the Military History Museum in Vienna.
- 2523 Fryer, *The Royal Navy*, 74 et seq.
- 2524 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3137, Letter from Amery to Balfour, 22.10.1918.
- 2525 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3136/152437, Report by Erskine to Balfour, Rome, 5.9.1918.
- 2526 TNA, Kew, FO 371/3137/195857, *The Conditions of the Armistice* (s. d.).
- 2527 Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre*, Vol. 2, 462, 5.11.1918.

## Epilogue

- 2528 KA, *Tagebuch Zanantoni*, 482.
- 2529 Biwald, *Von Helden und Krüppeln*, Vol. 2, 594 et seq.

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2530 Major General Eduard Edler von Böltz, the Commander of the 19th Infantry Division, committed suicide on 8 November 1918 in Odessa.

2531 KA, Nachlass Hartinger, 437.

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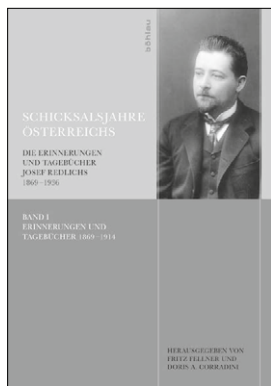


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 LITERATURGESCHICHTE IN STUDIEN UND  
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Das Buch ist eine Gesamtinterpretation von Musils Roman »Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften« mit dem Fokus auf dessen gesellschaftsanalytische Leistung. Es stützt sich auf Pierre Bourdieus Konzept einer Sozioanalyse literarischer Texte, das durch Anleihen aus der Diskurs-, Erzähl-, Gender- und Medientheorie ergänzt sowie durch Befunde der Sozial- und Kulturgeschichtsschreibung empirisch gesättigt wird.

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# The Italian Theatre of War



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	Borders of the Kingdom of Hungary
	Belonging to Austria-Hungary
	Belonging to Italy

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Manfried Rauchensteiner is Professor of Austrian History at the University of Vienna and, until 2005, was Director of the Museum of Military History.



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