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**Incompetence and Obfuscation: Austria-Hungary's Defeat in the Galician Campaign of
1914**

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Hist 708 Thesis Research**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: THE GENERAL STAFF.....	23
CHAPTER 2: THE SOLDIERS.....	49
CHAPTER 3: THE PRESS.....	72
CONCLUSION.....	100
IMAGES.....	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	115

INTRODUCTION

The 1931 Austrian film, *Berge in Flammen*, opens with the ringing of a church bell, signaling the beginning of the Great War. Upon hearing the bell's toll, men immediately abandon their work and rush to the village center. Two men so enraptured by the bell suddenly leap up and abandon their horse mid shoeing. Men, still clad in their work aprons - one having dragged a calf along with him- begin to read the Kaiser's "appeal to his people" posted upon the church wall. The enrapturing nature of the bell's call even reached the film's protagonist, Florian Dimai, high in the surrounding mountains where he works as a guide. He is accompanied by an Italian, who in a few short months would become his enemy. Upon descending from the mountains and reaching the town, Florian collected a rucksack packed by his wife. After delivering a heartfelt farewell to his wife and young child, he departed alongside the rest of the village's men, hats laden with flowers, for the war. The tranquility of the Tyrolean village was irrevocably shattered by the spreading war.

While the film is a dramatic creation of the post-war era, scenes similar to the film's depiction of the mobilizations of 1914 could have been witnessed throughout the Danube Monarchy. Men toiling in their fields, making ready for the harvest, were called from home and hearth and prepared for war. It is hard to imagine that many were surprised by the announcement. Since the archduke's assassination weeks earlier, many had begun to brace for the possibility of war. Men likely listened to fathers and grandfathers speak of the heroics of

1866, or even 1848. Husbands and sons embraced crying wives and mothers, many for the last time, as they boarded railcars decorated with jingoist slogans. A Transylvanian reserve officer having witnessed such an emotional scene at the station in his home town of Sibiiu, remarked that “the parting of a peasant from his wife brought the tears to my own eyes. On all God's earth, is there anything harder than the separation, perhaps for ever, of two beings who love each other?”¹

As the men began the process of mustering in their regimental garrisons, shifting from civilians to soldiers, the empire's leadership in Vienna hastened to enact elements of their prewar strategies while surveying the shifting political landscape of Europe. The empire's foreign minister, Leopold Berchtold² and his aides proved to be the driving force behind the approaching conflict. Franz Joseph appeared to be more hesitant than many of his officials, in the many decades of his reign; the emperor had learned the harsh reality that war could result in disaster for the empire.

Having ascended to the throne in 1848, Franz Joseph witnessed the loss of territory and influence as a result of failed wars against the fledgling states of Italy and Germany. Austria-Hungary's Chief of the General Staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, likewise offered an unexpected hesitancy to the possibility of war. In the years preceding the war, Conrad was undeniably the greatest war hawk within the empire, repeatedly calling for preemptive wars against Serbia and Italy, yet when war eventually came it took the form of a conflict he had not desired. Where Conrad had desired fast decisive wars against the empire's neighbors in an effort to strengthen its footing, he was instead faced with a world war against Europe's great powers.

¹ Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia*. (London : Skeffington, 1923), 9.

² As was the case with many within the Habsburg circles of nobility, Berchtold possessed a rather lengthy name, Leopold Anton Johann Sigismund Josef Korsinus Ferdinand Graf Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz, Frättling und Püllütz

Despite the trepidations of the empire's emperor and top military commander, the combination of Germany's pledge of total support and Serbia's unwillingness to fully comply with Austria's ultimatum, the First World War had come to fruition.

Facing a two front war against Serbia and Russia, Conrad sought to enact a strategy which called for dividing the Austro-Hungarian armed forces into three distinct bodies. *A-Staffel*, the largest of the three, comprised of nine army corps with 27 infantry divisions, 9 cavalry divisions, and 21 second line reserve brigades, were destined to advance into Galicia and engage with Russian forces ideally in Russian controlled Congress Poland. The second group, *minimalgruppe Balkan*, consisted of three army corps of 9 infantry divisions, and seven reserve brigades and were deployed against Serbia with the goal of capturing Belgrade. The third and unquestionably most important group was *B-Staffel*. *B-Staffel* was comprised of four army corps of 11 infantry divisions, one cavalry division, and 6 reserve brigades.³ What made *B-Staffel* the linchpin in Conrad's plans was that it was intended to serve as a swing force, being initially deployed to the Balkan front and after Belgrade was swiftly captured, it would then rapidly travel by rail to the Russian front and bolster *A-Staffel*. Ultimately this plan proved to be a disaster as it hinged entirely upon two elements, that Serbia would be defeated in a matter of days, and that the Austro-Hungarian rail system was able to accomplish such a task, unfortunately for Conrad, neither of these assumptions proved true.

The invasion of Serbia quickly proved to be disastrous, to the surprise of the Austrians, the Serbian forces proved to be not only determined, but well equipped and trained. The years of conflict within the Balkans had resulted in a veteran fighting force, lead by skilled officers and strengthened with Russian material aid. Instead of conquering Belgrade after only a few days of

³ Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*, Second Edition (Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 54.

fighting, the Austrian forces found themselves ousted from Serbian territory after a chaotic retreat. Before Austria could achieve any modicum of success in Serbia, *B-Staffel* had departed and began the process of boarding railcars for Galicia. The expectations placed upon the Austrian rail system were not only vastly unrealistic, but Conrad was warned by Colonel Johan Straub, the head of the War Ministry's Railroad Bureau, that such a plan would bring chaos to the mobilization schedule and the available resources and man power simply could not handle such a drastic rerouting of *B-Staffel*. Rather than heeding Straub's warning, Conrad instead chose to listen to Major Emil Ratzenhofer, his own railway expert in the General Staff, who assured Conrad that the plan would happen without issue. As one might expect, Ratzenhofer proved to be wildly off base and unable to deliver on his promises.

Where Ratzenhofer promised 11,000 trains could be made ready for the troop movement, in reality the Austrians were only able to muster just fewer than 2,000. The German historian, Holger Herwig explained that the reason the General Staff's predictions were so far off, stemmed from their continued use of timetables dating from the Franco-Prussian war, and had failed to account for more advanced railway technology. The often cash strapped Habsburg state likely lacked the funds to fully modernize their railways. The congestion of the aging railways were further burdened as the General Staff ordered that all trains travel at the same speed, a glacial 10 miles per hour, half the speed of German trains. The rationale behind such a decision to have trains travel at the same speed as bicycles, stemmed from Austrian commanders' desire to easily extrapolate where each train was at any given time. As a result Austrian forces were forced to mobilize upon sluggish trains, and others were simply forced to march upwards of twenty miles a day. *B-Staffel* which required speed to fulfill its goals instead spent much of the opening days of the war aboard trains, and not as a decisive force in either Serbia or Galicia. In regard to the

debacle of *B-Staffel*, Winston Churchill wrote that “before it could win him a victory it returned to Conrad in time to participate in his defeat.”⁴ Tragically for Conrad and the empire, *B-Staffel* departed Serbia too early, and arrived in Galicia too late.

In late August Conrad’s forces in Galicia mounted their offensive against the vastly numerically superior Russian forces. While the concept of the Russian “steamroller” was common knowledge, Conrad hinged his plans on assumed sluggish nature of the Russian forces, and the value of a single decisive victory. Unfortunately for Conrad, the Russians had mobilized far faster than the Austrians had predicted, and the Imperial Russian army proved not to be as unwieldy as expected. In the opening days of the war the Austrians and Russians probed into Galicia each seeking the other’s forces. The first significant battle in Galicia began on the 23rd of August. At Kraśnik, an Austrian force encountered a smaller Russian force. As the Russians had expected the main thrust of the Austrian forces to come via Lemberg, they were caught by surprise by the more northerly thrust. After two days of fighting, the Austrians, under the command of General Victor Dankl, emerged victorious and drove the defeated Russian forces into Congress Poland.

Austria enjoyed another early victory at the Battle of Komarów when Austrian forces under the command of Moritz von Auffenberg clashed with Russian forces on the 26th of August. Yet again the Russians were caught unprepared for such a stiff Austrian offensive in that region. After several days of combat the Austrians emerged, once again victorious having captured several thousands of Russian prisoners. As a result of these two early victories both Auffenberg and Dankl were hailed back on the home front as heroes. Observing just these two battles one might arrive at the conclusion that Conrad’s war plans were sound, yet only a matter of days

⁴ Herwig, 57.

after the victories at Kraśnik and Komarów, the tide of war shifted drastically against the Austro-Hungarian forces.

In the subsequent battles of Gnila Lipa and Rawa, the Austro-Hungarians experienced horrific losses. The result of encountering larger Russian forces and the drastic toll of superior Russian artillery and tactics quickly shifted the momentum of the war away from Austria-Hungary. After only seventeen days of fighting until the general retreat ordered on September 11th, the empire was faced with over 400,000 casualties. The empire suffered not only incredible losses, but was forced to abandon the city of Lemberg⁵ to the Russians, as well as the entirety of her Galician province.

In a few short months after the beginning of the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire found its Galician province occupied by Imperial Russian forces, the fortress of Przemyśl encircled, and its army in tatters driven back to the Carpathian Mountains. Unfortunately for the Danube Monarchy these setbacks were only the beginning of the war's disasters. The damage caused to the Austrian military in the first few months of the war had drastic consequences for the monarchy and ultimately can be linked to its collapse in 1918. In the century following these events, the historiography of Austria-Hungary and for the First World War has shifted dramatically.

The empire's collapse has garnered the attention of historians for a number of reasons. In some ways the Danube Monarchy remained distinct from its European neighbors; if anything it shared many qualities with its former mortal foe, the Ottoman Empire. Both the Habsburgs and House of Osman ruled multi-ethnic empires in era of nation states, overseen by ancient dynasties, and both met their demise as a result of the First World War. While the effects of the

⁵ While the Ukrainian city is today named Lviv, I have chosen to make use of the Austro-Hungarian name of Lemberg as it appears as thus in primary source material

French Revolution and the spread of nationalism were felt throughout Europe, eventually culminating in the unifications of Germany and Italy and revolutions in formerly Ottoman held regions of the Balkans, the Habsburgs sought to withstand this new ethos. Long seen as a paragon of oppression, Prince Clemens von Metternich sought to orchestrate a conservative bulwark against liberalism and nationalism both at home and abroad. Much of the early historiography linked this domestic policy to the empires collapse stemming from an inability to mediate internal ethnic conflicts. As Austria-Hungary's identity as a polyglot empire made it an outlier among European states, the reason for its demise was often attributed to this difference.

In *the Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918*, A.J.P. Taylor charts the Habsburg's rule of the Austrian Empire after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the transition to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and its subsequent death in the First World War. While Taylor's grasp of diplomatic history is undisputable, his work unfortunately bears a number of flaws common among the work of historians of his era. *The Habsburg Empire* is riddled with examples of the fallacy of inevitability. For Taylor, the empire's death was a foretold event which the Great War simply hastened. Taylor notes that while the politicians in Vienna might have not realized it on the eve of the war, "*Rigor mortis* was setting in"⁶. Taylor argues that since the *Ausgleich* of 1867, the empire was in decline and that "the fate of the Habsburg Monarchy had been decided by the war of 1866."⁷

Taylor explained that the growth of nationalism within the empire and Vienna's inability to curtail its spread proved to be the Habsburg's undoing. Initially, the nationalist movement was

⁶ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Penguin, 1990), 240, https://nls.idls.org.uk/welcome.html?ark:/81055/vdc_100048489799.0x000001.

⁷Taylor, 225.

pioneered by intellectual elites which permeated into the burgeoning middle classes. Taylor noted that this movement truly became uncontrollable when it spread to the rural citizenry, resulting in a “peasant nationalism” which the urban intellectuals could no longer direct. This form of popular national sentiment among the numerous ethnic groups within the empire resulted in a state with severely weakened cohesion, which the war only further conflated. Despite the claims of some historians that the empire might have been saved by the planned federalist reforms of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Taylor hardly shared their optimism, stating that “to place hope in any Habsburg was to fail to understand the nature of the Habsburg Monarchy”⁸.

Taylor’s account of the war was rather brief and his explanation for the disastrous invasion of Serbia was limited to “the Serbs, unlike the Italians of 1859, were a real people with a real fighting force” and noted that the offensive against Russia in Galicia “also failed”⁹. Avoiding any examination of the military decisions of the war, Taylor attributed Austria’s failure to two primary factors, Germany’s support of Austria and the machinations of the empire’s Hungarian and Czech populations. Taylor wagered that after 1914 Austria-Hungary’s only chance of survival would have been to sue for peace, but Germany’s decision to aid the empire prolonged its role in the war and assured its death. Also the actions of Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza in preserving Hungary over the whole of the empire, and the efforts of Masaryk to establish an independent Czechoslovakia proved too great a blow for the struggling empire. Taylor was hardly alone in his era in blaming the Czechs for the empire’s dissolution; Czech nationalism remained a convenient answer for the instability. When Karl took the throne in 1916,

⁸ Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918*, 226.

⁹Taylor, 233.

Taylor noted that he could do little to hold Austria-Hungary together as he “was an *émigrés*’ king, not the ruler of a real empire”¹⁰.

Taylor’s work also contains a series of other weaknesses; he repeatedly referred to the empire’s Ukrainian citizens as “little Russians” as he described Ukrainian nationalism as an “invention”¹¹ and made the claim that Ukrainians are simply Russians taken with fantasy. The addition of opinions such as this and his unabashed support for British institutions contributed to Taylor’s controversial reputation.

A notable shift in the historiography of Austria-Hungary occurred through the work of Alan Sked, most notably his work *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918*, published in 1976. In this work Sked challenged many established views of the empire and even went as far as attempting to improve the reputation of Metternich. Sked made the revolutionary argument that Metternich lacked the sway he is typically assumed to have on an international level, but argued that his downfall was not because of his reactionary policies, but his failure to enforce them with enough force. *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire* described an empire whose ultimate goal was to preserve the ruling families’ estates and not an experiment in federalism. Sked also noted that many contemporary historians often fell into one of two biased categories, those who were descendents of citizens of the empire who viewed its demise as a great tragedy in comparison to the communist systems which ultimately replaced it, or those who relished its collapse out of anti-imperial ideologies.

¹⁰ Taylor, 240.

¹¹ Taylor, 149.

Sked challenged the earlier assumptions of the empire's inevitability of collapse; instead he stated that "destruction, even with the onset of war, however, was not inevitable"¹² and that instead had the Central Powers emerged victorious from the war, Austria-Hungary would have likely gained territory. In regards to nationalism within the empire, Sked argued that István Diószegi's view that the ethnic groups' inability to work together or look past their own interests ultimately weakened the state. Sked instead argued that the Hungarian prime ministers wielded the ability to shape the empire's foreign policy, and hardly remained solely interested in Hungarian issues. Sked also noted that while the empire was host to various nationalist movements, none of them truly challenged Habsburg authority as they failed to conceive of an existence without it. For the Czechs, the Habsburgs were seen as the best option for championing their rights, and the empire's Poles sought the unification of Poland under Habsburg authority, rather than German or Russian control. In Hungary many of the lords were newly ennobled, and derived their legitimacy from the Habsburgs. Instead of truly destabilizing the empire, nationalist movements served to only invoke psychological stress on the monarchy, rather than a real threat.

Sked countered the thesis of Paul W. Schroeder, which stated that the First World War was caused by the foreign policy of Great Britain which pursued a policy of encirclement of Austria-Hungary and sought to provoke Germany into starting a preemptive war. Sked instead places the blame for the war's outbreak solely upon the shoulders of the Habsburgs themselves. Sked argued that since the nineteenth century the Habsburgs repeatedly sought out war in the hopes of securing their holdings. Instead of opting for peace or other foreign policy options, the Habsburgs viewed war as the only method of maintaining the status quo. It is important to note that these orchestrated wars often resulted in self-imposed defeats. This aggressive policy

¹² Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, England ; Longman, 2001), 268.

ultimately led to Austria seeking war with Serbia to ensure stability in the Balkans, and its inability to make concessions ultimately weakened Germany's ability to secure the support of Italy or Romania in the war.

Within the past two decades numerous works have been written on Austria-Hungary, possibly inspired by the centennial of the Great War. Of these recent additions to the historiography of Austria-Hungary is Pieter M. Judson's book *The Habsburg Empire: a New History*. Judson disputed Sked's stance that the Habsburgs were entirely concerned with maintaining their hereditary possessions, and that the Austro-Hungarian state instead sought to create a unified imperial state for its citizens. Throughout the work, Judson detailed the manner in which the various peoples of the empire interacted with the state and how the Habsburgs undertook an "ongoing project that engaged the minds, hearts, and energies of many of its citizens at every level of society"¹³. Running counter to the old idea that the empire was archaic and rendered inefficient by its twisting bureaucracy, Judson instead portrays the empire as being dynamic and able to adapt to rising issues. Although an unabashed advocate for the Habsburg Empire, Judson does note that the government's attempts occasionally fell short, and while some groups, such as liberals, improved the wellbeing of some citizens it was often as the expense of others.

Judson's book and other works heavily feature the concept of "national indifference" which challenges earlier concepts that ethnic tensions were the primary cause of the empire's instability. Along with Judson, other historians such as Tara Zahra have contributed greatly to growing scholarship that reexamines the role of national associations and national indifference within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Their work stands in such stark contrast to previous works

¹³Pieter M. Judson and Belknap Press., *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, First printing. (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 5.

largely as a result of the nature of their sources. While Taylor and others of his generation primarily drew upon records in Vienna and other political centers across the empire, Judson instead made extensive use of local archives. This differing approach provides a more accurate picture of daily life and interaction with the state on a local level, rather than how elite of Vienna imagined they lived. These sources deliver important new revelations, yet requisite command of the empire's diverse languages has served as a barrier for many historians.

While it is rather common to associate nationalism with ethnicity, within the diverse Habsburg empire nationalists viewed their compatriots through a different lens. Often for German or Czech nationalists a member of their nation was defined by language, education, and cultural practices. It was only with the establishment of Taaffe's "Iron Ring" cabinet in 1879, that national identities included an ethnic tone. For nationalists, an ethnic Czech could become "Germanized" as easily as a German could become a Czech. Although it was believed by many German Liberals that education and acceptance into the middleclass would inevitably result in "Germanization". Within his scholarship, Judson makes extensive use of the concepts of *Sprachgrenze* and *Spracheinsel*. Within the *Sprachgrenze* there existed fierce competition between Czech and German nationalist associations to preserve their respective populations and if possible absorb others. Where *Sprachgrenze* represent the battlegrounds between nationalist associations, *Spracheinsel* were beleaguered bastions in need of protection from surrounding rival nationalities. German nationalists sought to protect these islands by creating bridges, such as the Südmark.

Zahra's book, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* as well as several articles, focus heavily upon child services within Bohemia and the role national associations. As one's nationality was perceived as being

malleable, both German and Czech nationalist groups sought to influence their population at a young age. Towns within the *Sprachegrenze* often had both German and Czech schools and orphanages, and their teachers were seen as the guardians of their respective nation. During the Great War, the Austrian state recognized the role of these nationalist institutions and opted to bestow upon them a degree of government authority.

Both Judson and Zahra note that despite the actions of national associations across the Danube Monarchy, a great deal of the empire's population possessed a degree of national indifference. To the chagrin of national associations, many working class and farmers displayed little interest in nationalism. For the average farmer, the struggle between German and Czech nationalists was far less important than local issues within their communities. Pamphlets promoting ideal values for Germans often fell upon deaf ears as parents continued to marry their daughters to Czechs. The welfare benefits offered by national associations resulted in peasants simply shifting their national identity based upon which group offered the best incentives. National associations did eventually gain something of a foothold within the rural landscape, but Judson argues that this was primarily a result of the influx of white collar workers from the center to the periphery. This argument is in clear contrast to Taylor's earlier view of "peasant nationalism". Judson and Zahra note that it was not until the empire's collapse that the peasantry found a sense of national character as they found themselves treated as second class citizens within fledgling nationally oriented states.

Written shortly after the war's conclusion, an extremely comprehensive account of the war was written by Austrian Federal Minister of Military Affairs (*Bundesministerium für Heereswesen*) under the direction of Edmund Glaise-Horstenau. These Austrian officers were tasked with detailing the status of the Austrian armed forces in the pre-war era and its

performance in the First World War. Comprised of seven volumes and several thousand pages, *Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg, 1914-1918* provided an accounting of both the logistical status of the army, but also an exhaustive chronological description of troop movements and tactics throughout the war. While the work remains a valuable source for historians to draw upon it is not without fault.

Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg holds an incredibly important role in the historiography of Austria-Hungary in the First World War, as the official history it served as the groundwork for historical works published in the following decades. While the work avoids blatant scapegoating which can be found in some works, it is hardly without issue. In regards to the role national groups played in destabilizing the empire, it failed to take a definitive stance. While it does place blame upon politicians such as the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count István Tisza, its discussion of national loyalties is more complicated. On one hand when reviewing the failure of the Serbian campaign and the actions of Czech units, Glaise-Horstenau insisted that, “It is certainly incorrect to attribute the unit's misfortune - as still occasionally happens - to nationalistic dissatisfaction among the Czechs.”¹⁴ Yet the official history still left room for some to level criticism against the actions of national groups within the military.

The official history noted that “When the initial enthusiasm for the war had passed and signs of dissatisfaction appeared, they were most evident among the soldiers from the eastern territories, who were less sophisticated and more easily susceptible to depression.”¹⁵ These disgruntled soldiers were only kept in line through the instruction of their officers and the presence of military chaplains. The work continued to explain that for the bulk of the Austro-

¹⁴ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, *Austria-Hungary's Last War, 1914-1918* (Washington, D.C.: Army War College, 1932), 188.

¹⁵ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 37.

Hungarian period the army resisted persistent politicization and the “destructive influence of national conflicts”¹⁶, yet even this was only temporary, as “In the last two decades, however, there were small but unmistakable signs of the beginning of nationalistic tension in the ranks. This was mainly the work of the Czech "National Socialists".”¹⁷In the same breathe the official history contended that blame should not be leveled at Czech units in the war, but also that the Czechs represented the origins of nationalist tensions within the army. While the intent may have been in claiming that the Czechs introduced this weakening factor into the military, it was not great enough to impact the wider conflict; it resulted in a further fueling of a contentious issue. Where the Nazis sought to place blame for their defeat upon the backs of Germany’s Jews, many in Austria leveled similar blame upon the empire’s former nationalities, an opinion only further bolstered by works such as this. The lack of a definitive stance taken by the official history’s authors not only impacted popular discourse, but shaped the direction of the historiography for decades to follow.

In 1996 Graydon A. Tunstall, Jr.’s article *The Habsburg Command Conspiracy: The Austrian Falsification of Historiography on the Outbreak of World War I*, detailed the efforts of Austrian officers to distort the memory of the war’s origin. As a result of anti-Habsburg sentiments and direct opposition against the former officer corps of the empire resulted in these men joining together to defend their reputation and that of the monarchy. They were able to shape the popular understanding of the early events in two ways, by writing histories themselves, and controlling the archives. Without a doubt the man who helped shape this narrative to the largest extent within this “command conspiracy” was Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, the afore mentioned author of the Austria’s official history of the war. Another prominent figure was

¹⁶ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 38.

¹⁷ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 39.

Ratzenhofer, the Major who convinced Conrad that the Austrian railways could handle *B-Staffel*'s redeployment, rather than accept blame; the tardiness of *B-Staffel* was blamed on "railroad technical difficulties", a technical problem rather than one born of inept planning.

In the postwar period these former Habsburg officers controlled all access to the *Kriegarchives*, limiting who could read which documents and which documents might be distributed to a wider audience. Veterans of the war, include several members of the General Staff who wrote less than favorable accounts of the war found their works sealed within the archives, unable to be accessed. Rudolf Kiszling, the archive's director from 1936 to 1945 was another prolific member of the command conspiracy; Tunstall wrote that "Kiszling became the main spokesman and guardian of the official interpretation. To this end, he composed over one hundred articles, essays, and books."¹⁸ The men of the command conspiracy were incredibly successful in their control of information, presenting their doctored accounts and silencing those which offered other explanations. As these official histories were some of the only works available to historians, it is only natural that it resulted in the further transfusion of these ideas. It is only after these men had died and their progenitors relinquished total control of the archives that this view of history began to shift. In 1964, after publishing an article in the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, Kurt Peball became the first Austrian historian to challenge the traditional Austrian historiography.

English language works regarding the military history of Austria-Hungary in the First World War are scarce, and those with a focus on Galicia even more so. Despite an overwhelming focus upon the Western front, mirroring the increased attention the Monarchy has received in recent years, the eastern campaigns of 1914 have likewise seen a degree of new scholarship. Two

¹⁸ Graydon A. Tunstall, "The Habsburg Command Conspiracy. The Austrian Falsification of Historiography on the Outbreak of World War I," *Austrian History Yearbook*, no. 27 (1996): 188.

examples of such scholarship are Alexander Watson's *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I*, and John R. Schindler's *Fall of the Double Eagle: the Battle for Galicia and the Demise of Austria-Hungary*. While the scope of Watson's book covers the entire course of the war, where Schindler's work is far narrower, both provide detailed descriptions of the lead up to the First World War and the eventual opening of the conflict in the summer of 1914.

Watson and Schindler both argue that with the outbreak of war in 1914 the empire's demise was a foregone conclusion. Watson's thesis revolved around the concept that the incredible bloodshed of the war resulted in a radicalization of Germany and Austria-Hungary's governments which lead to destabilization and collapse. *Fall of the Double Eagle* instead claimed that the state's role in the empire's collapse was seemingly limited to its inability to adequately prepare for the war. In Schindler's eyes the Habsburg army was the glue which bound the empire together, and with its near total destruction in August of 1914, the empire lost its cohesion. While Franz Joseph famously remarked that the only groups he could trust were the military and the Jews, it seems Schindler might have bestowed more credit upon the army than is deserved. In this regard, Watson's explanation seems a more balanced approach, intertwining military and political aspects.

Their accounts of the war planning also differ in several important ways. Watson's Vienna is one of desperation and anxiety over the looming war, while Schindler paints the Habsburg politicians and generals as being consumed with bloodlust, and the Archduke's death simply provided Vienna with a justification for war. Watson detailed the planning undertaken by men such as Berchtold and noted that they were "ruthless because they felt they had nothing to

lose”¹⁹. These men feared their empire was ready to collapse at any time and it was worth gambling that war with Serbia would result in a localized conflict. In this section, Watson noted that many outside observers thought the Habsburgs were in decline and listed the various nationalist groups vying for control. Yet Watson made the argument that while fears existed within the empire, it contributed primarily to paranoia in Vienna, rather than a true threat to imperial stability.

Schindler described the catastrophic decisions made by Conrad von Hötzendorf as having been formulated in an environment where reason was scarce. Eager to avenge their murdered heir, and destroy Serbia, the empire’s generals blundered into a disastrous war. Even those generals aware of the military’s deficiencies overlooked them in favor of war. Schindler noted that “what transpired among Austria- Hungary’s military and political elite in July 1914 may be charitably termed groupthink. Not only did Conrad and his civilian counterparts fail to seriously debate the consequences of war against Serbia— any Viennese discussion of what strategic objectives and war termination might look like was cursory at best”²⁰. While Watson attributed this poor planning to fear of decline, Schindler instead explained it as a result of war fervor.

Regardless of what factors instigated Vienna’s poor planning, both historians agreed in that much of the blame should be attributed to Hötzendorf. In this they challenged the earlier opinion that Hötzendorf was a skilled general and simply failed as a result of bureaucracy and ethnic tensions. Schindler explained that his sentiment was the result of Cold War Austrians seeking military icons untainted by Nazism. This favorable view of Hötzendorf was propagated by Austrian military men such as General Alois Klepsch-Kloth von Roden, August von

¹⁹ Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel : Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I*, People’s War (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 28, <http://d-nb.info/1140255339/04>.

²⁰ John R. Schindler, *Fall of the Double Eagle*. (Potomac Books, 2015), 103, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4097309>.

Urbanski, and Edmund Glaise-Horstenau who all sought to establish Hötendorf as one of the war's premiere generals. For decades historians echoed these views, resulting in Cyril Falls' statement that Hötendorf was "the best strategist at the outset, probably of the war"²¹. Schindler instead included the powerful statement that "Conrad took his disadvantages and magnified them through seemingly willful blindness and an intractable escapism that was impressive even by Viennese standards. Conrad's disastrous choices on how to mobilize and deploy his armies that August sealed the fate of his army and with it the Dual Monarchy itself."²² It is hard to believe that in such a short period of time, the historical consensus of Conrad has shifted so dramatically.

Unsurprisingly Schindler provided a far more comprehensive narrative when detailing the military actions in the summer of 1914. *Fall of the Double Eagle* is military history of a singular theater, and as one would expect provided a detailed account of the failed invasion of Serbia and crushing defeats suffered in Galicia. Schindler made extensive use of accounts written both by the general staff and enlisted men providing personal connections within the detailed explanation of tactics and troop movements. In contrast Watson provided a serviceable overview of the campaign, but spent as much time discussing the combat as he did atrocities carried out against the civilian population. In Watson's defense this is likely the result of his social history bent, and the fact *Ring of Steel* covers the entirety of the war, unlike Schindler's magnified explanation of only a few months.

This paper will further build upon the conclusions of recent scholarship in regards to the cause of Austrian defeat in Galicia. The body of primary sources with little doubt shows that the military defeats of 1914 were the result of poor military tactics and strategy, rather than nationalist tensions. Furthermore, this paper will endeavor to explore how the control of

²¹ Cyril Bentham Falls, *The Great War [1914-1918]* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 36.

²² Schindler, *Fall of the Double Eagle.*, 106.

information, both at the hands of “gatekeepers” and as a result of the marginality of writers shaped both the Viennese populace’s understanding of the fighting in Galicia, as well as its perception within the historiography of the postwar era.

A commonly occurring element within each chapter is the concept of soldierly virtue within the Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia. This notion of virtue likely stems from the very nature of empire’s cohesion. Unlike modern nationalist states based upon ethnicity or a commonly shared creed, the Austro-Hungarian Empire relied upon dynastic loyalty. For those in Vienna and the Generals Staff the concept of military honor and tradition were the cornerstones of the state, and necessary for its continued survival. While Judson would most likely argue that the Austro-Hungarian state had remained viable as a result of its flexible local structures, the Habsburgs instead often turned towards more classical assumptions. The language and imagery espoused by the Austro-Hungarian state in regard to soldierly virtues seems more at home in preceding centuries, rather than that of the twentieth century. This language continued into the post-war period as a result of the works of the men who constituted the “command conspiracy”. The official history, did not hesitate to compare the fighting men of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to those of the Holy Roman Empire²³, noting, Separated almost entirely from family and nationality, the soldiers served their time under the Imperial standards just like the *Landesknechte* of the Renaissance, sometimes suffering privations, sometimes content, but always with a certain amount of romanticism.”²⁴ The comparison between medieval knights and the fighting men of Austria-Hungary was a common theme; it was felt that the empire’s fighting men were the direct descendants and upholders of great chivalric virtues.

²³ Holy Roman Imperial imagery was also an extremely common element in Austro-Hungarian propaganda posters, which depicted armored knights slaying their foes.

²⁴ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, *Austria-Hungary’s Last War, 1914-1918*, 36.

The first chapter examines accounts written by two officers of the General Staff who served in Galicia. The first being Conrad, and the second Max von Pitreich. While bearing several similarities, such as an adherence to social Darwinist beliefs, they recorded vastly different explanations for their empire's failure in Galicia. Where Conrad sought to deflect blame to preserve his reputation, Pitreich offered a far more balanced and critical depiction of events. This chapter then explores how those in "command conspiracy" following the war, controlled access to both accounts and how this shaped their respective roles in the historiography for decades after.

The second chapter seeks to examine the fighting in Galicia using a "ground up" approach, by way of focusing on memoirs written by soldiers. The accounts written by men who fought in the fields of Galicia vary greatly from the accounts of the previous chapter. Where Conrad and Pitreich focused upon grand strategy and the nature of Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany, the accounts' of soldiers bear a different social history bent. The men noted what tactics proved ineffective on the battlefield, as well as the impact of hunger and exhaustion on their performance. This chapter carefully explores not only commonalities between numerous accounts, but what potential factors are absent.

The third chapter details the coverage of the fighting in Galicia in Vienna's most popular newspaper, *die Neue Presse*. Through the course of the conflict the papers were filled with honorific depictions of Austria's actions, yet failed to inform the empire's citizenry of the reality of the war. This chapter highlights the manner in which the paper published misinformation as a result of heavy censorship and a reliance on scanty and often inaccurate reports given by the Austrian state. It becomes quickly apparent that those delivering the news were largely ignorant to the current events themselves, a system of the blind leading the blind. This chapter also shows

an alternate perspective in the form of the satirist Krauss, yet for several reasons he failed to truly shape the narrative about the nature of the war.

CHAPTER 1: THE GENERAL STAFF

Until the explosion of social history beginning in the 1960s, the vast majority of historiography focused primarily upon “great men history”. This school of thought held that it was of paramount importance to study those in positions of power, namely kings, politicians, and generals, as they were the men who shaped the course of history. Within some academic circles this differing approach remains a contentious issue, yet by in large the modern field of history enjoys a healthy mix of disciplines. Where the second chapter of this work is an effort to view the fighting in Galicia through a socio-historical lens, this chapter is definitely an exercise in more traditional great man history. This chapter seeks to juxtapose the accounts written by two high ranking Austro-Hungarian officers, and members of the Generals Staff, *Feldmarschall* Conrad von Hötzendorf and *Oberst* Max von Pitreich. While possessing some similarities in experience and world view, both men emphasized very different reasons for their campaign’s failure.

When studying Austria-Hungary’s role in the First World War, it is impossible to overlook Conrad’s impact. In the decades preceding the war, no man played a larger role in shaping Austria-Hungary’s military strategy than Conrad, as he represented the empire’s top planner and strategist. The only limiting factors Conrad encountered were those in the Kaiser’s circle who lacked the stomach for preemptive war Conrad so desired, and the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza, who generally opposed military spending for the common army. Throughout the

war, until his sacking in 1917 by the newly crowned Karl I, Conrad was responsible for Austria-Hungary's victories and failures in the field, including the outcome of the events which occurred in Galicia in 1914.

Conrad and Pitreich were chosen in this chapter as both explain their defeat in Galicia in vastly different ways. Conrad sought to preserve his legacy and that of his former empire, by deflecting blame away from himself and as a result presented a less than accurate depiction of the fighting in Galicia. Conrad wrote several volumes of memoirs detailing his military service, entitled *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit*. These accounts were published following the war and shortly before his death. In stark contrast, Pitreich instead offers a critical analysis of the conflict focusing upon the tactical and strategic missteps taken by the Austro-Hungarian military in the opening days of the war. This chapter makes use of Pitreich's books *Lemberg 1914*, published in 1929, and *1914: die militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes: Ideen, Gründe und Zusammenhänge*, published in 1934. Both of these works provide arguments that run directly counter to those made by Conrad in his memoirs. To properly understand the origins of Conrad's beliefs, which resulted in the loss of Galicia in the opening weeks of the war, it is necessary to examine his life, as the majority of his professional and educational experiences culminated in his disastrous performance in the Great War.

Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf (see image 1) was born on the outskirts of Vienna in the small village of Penzig in 1852. Conrad's family, despite possessing an imperial title, did not enjoy a position within the upper strata of Austrian society. Conrad's great-grandfather, Franz Anton was ennobled in 1815 as a result of his fifty years of service within the imperial bureaucracy, working as a financial official. The title "von Hötzendorf" stemmed from Franz Anton's wife's distant Bavarian ancestry. Because of his lack of lofty position within Viennese

society, Conrad was forced through hard work and ability to earn a place of prominence in Habsburg society. As a result of Conrad's preference for those around him to address him by Conrad, even his close friends, many assumed his familial name was actually Hötendorf.²⁵

Conrad's father, Franz Xaver entered imperial military service in 1813, and while serving as a cavalryman in the 4th Chevauxleger Regiment, saw action at the decisive battle of Leipzig. Franz Xaver was later transferred to 4th Hussar Regiment and spent several decades rotating throughout garrisons in Hungary and Galicia, eventually gaining the of lieutenant colonel. Franz Xaver was wounded during a brief skirmish during the liberal revolutions of 1848.²⁶ As a child, Conrad not only grew interest in seeking a military career mirroring his father's, a man who had triumphed over the forces of Napoleon, but was also dramatically shaped by his father's political outlook. As his father was wounded in the course of the revolutions of 1848, he harbored a deep distain for liberalism. Furthermore, Franz Xaver remained embittered as after his injury, his cavalry regiment later joined the Hungarian rebel forces. Along with his staunch conservatism, he warned his son of the dangers of the movement for Hungarian autonomy, a wariness Conrad would later share with Archduke Franz Ferdinand. His political and world outlook was shaped "in part directly by parents and teachers, in part through lectures on the history of the Fatherland."²⁷

Seeking to follow in his father's footsteps, Conrad entered the cadet institute in Hainburg in 1863. Here Conrad developed a friendship with Moritz von Auffenberg, who later served as Minister of War and a military commander in the First World War, as well as numerous other

²⁵ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 2.

²⁶ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 3.

²⁷ Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston; Leiden; Cologne: Humanities Press, 2000), 5.

future military leaders. In 1867, Conrad entered the Theresian Military Academy as Wiener Neustadt, the Austrian equivalent to WestPoint. While attending the military academy, Conrad excelled educationally. His performance was rewarded as upon graduating in 1871, Conrad received his first commission as a lieutenant in the prestigious 11th *Feldjäger* Battalion.²⁸

Through the course of Conrad's military education the empire underwent a series of drastic changes. The first monumental event which shook the empire was the dominant defeat in the Austro-Prussian war. The Habsburgs suffered not only an embarrassing defeat at the hands of their Northern German rivals, but subsequently lost its position of authority among the varied states. Following the Habsburg's loss, the empire underwent a colossal domestic shift, in the form of the *Ausgleich* of 1867, transforming the Austrian Empire into the dualistic Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this period the fledgling K.u.K.²⁹ shifted from a standing professional military, to that of conscription force based upon the Prussian model.

Another important event which served to define Conrad's understanding of military tactics was the Franco-Prussian War. For officers of Conrad's generation the Franco-Prussian War represented the last true European war, until the Great War. Conrad and his peers closely followed the events of the war, and while posted with the 11th *Feldjäger* Battalion he spent a considerable amount of time reading accounts of veterans of the war. One can glean how important the war was in Conrad's concept of warfare, as he later wrote a total of nine articles devoted to the topic, and the majority of his other works make note of the lessons of the conflict. In this fashion, Conrad considered himself a student of history, in his articles and manuals he often made reference to historical conflicts such as the Thirty Years War and Napoleonic wars.

²⁸ Sondhaus, 6–7.

²⁹ The “Imperial and Royal” army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the K.u.K. was the common army which represented the bulk of the empire’s fighting force

Building on this interest, he often spent his periods of leave touring battle fields. After being admitted to the *Kriegsschule* in 1874, Conrad took a trip to battlefields of the Austro-Prussian war, and later in his life toured the battle sites of both the Franco-Prussian war and Balkan Wars.³⁰

During his military education, Conrad's sociological views also began to mature. Like many of his peers he was introduced to the concept of Social Darwinism. The belief that struggles between nations and peoples were not only natural, but also necessary, became a fixture of his world view. Sondhaus noted that while the majority of imperial officers subscribed to the ideas of Darwin and Schopenhauer, they possessed only a superficial understanding of the concepts and instead used them as a justification for military force. Conrad instead showed a deep understanding of these philosophies. While serving in garrisons in remote regions of the empire, Conrad spent his time reading and writing, instead of drinking and smoking as the bulk of soldiers did. In his memoirs Conrad noted that "as a young officer in Kaschau, I read the works of Schopenhauer and Darwin, which conveyed the knowledge of the historical developments of mankind."³¹ In Conrad's view the writings of these men provided a framework for course of history, as well as the forces which would determine the future of his nation.

While in *Kriegsschule*, Conrad encountered several teachers whose lessons directly resulted in the tactics practiced by the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914. Here he met Karl von Gold, who preached what would later be known as the "cult of the offensive". This aggressive approach meshed well with the beliefs of Colonel Baron Johann Waldstätten, a veteran of the Austro-Prussian war, and advocate of the bayonet. By the time he graduated at the top of his class in 1876, and entered the General Staff Corps, he was well versed in the ideology that a war

³⁰ Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf*, 11.

³¹ Sondhaus, 15.

must be waged as aggressively as possible, with victory won at the end of a bayonet. Fortunately for Conrad, and his career, the opportunity soon came to implement his theoretical concepts, in a live war.³²

Following the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1877, the arriving Austrian forces encountered stiff resistance from segments of the population who remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire. Conrad seized upon this opportunity and requested transfer to a unit destined for the Balkans. Conrad was then transferred to the 4th Infantry Division where he was able to experience combat. While the combat during the occupation hardly compares to the brutality of the Franco-Prussian War, or the coming World War, it served to cement Conrad's tactical and social views. Upon seeing slain soldiers, he noted that it "left him fully cold" with "the conviction of the relentlessness of the struggle for existence."³³ Conrad also observed that the strict formality of marching in columns, and other old fashioned traditions practiced in the military resulted in more harm than good. Seeing columns of infantry suffer high casualties from walking along narrow roads convinced him of the necessity of infantry being capable of traversing rugged terrain and forgoing roads at times. Conrad served in combat until the cooling of hostilities, only to return once more in 1881 when rebels again rallied against Habsburg occupation.

In 1881 he took up a position as an instructor of infantry tactics at the *Kriegsschule*. While Conrad had not experienced a great deal of warfare during brief stints in the Balkans, no other officers from his generation possessed more combat experience. This lack of practical experience resulted in a great deal of misfortune experienced by all of the European powers in the early stages of the Great War. Decades of peacetime had left Europe's military planners

³² Sondhaus, 16.

³³ Sondhaus, 20.

reliant upon the theoretical, and they could only find solid examples by studying previous wars. In the opening days of the First World War, the majority of European armies clung to similar concepts of the necessity of the offensive, and the importance of morale above all, a disastrous formula which resulted in the killing fields of France and Galicia. Akin to Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, which stressed the importance of naval supremacy, in a period sparse of true protracted wars tacticians were forced to rely upon hypothetical situations when drawing up plans for future battles. The events of the Great War showed that the theories of men such as Mahan and Pitreich were both deeply flawed.

Just as his teachers had molded his understanding of warfare, he served a similar role to his students. Conrad quickly became a favorite among his students as he shied away from the authoritarian lecture styles common with *Kriegsschule* lecturers. Instead, just as in war, Conrad abhorred dogma in the classroom. During his lectures he encouraged debate and questions from his students. He presented war as a Darwinian process, which involved a struggle for existence, above all morale remained the most important element to victory. To drive his points home, he entwined lessons from history alongside his personal experiences from the Balkans. When war broke out in 1914, many of Austria-Hungary's high ranking officers had passed through Conrad's classroom, and carried with them a deep devotion their former teacher. This impact also had an important effect in that many of the men complicit in Tunstall's "command conspiracy" were former pupils of Conrad.

Conrad not only influenced the direction of Austrian military tactics as a teacher, but also from the many publications he produced throughout his career. His topics ranged wildly from improved latrine construction, to grocery logistics for garrisons, to the necessity for overarching tactical shifts. In a "Published Draft" (*Als Entwurf Gedruckt*) he laid out his general approach

towards warfare, these concepts were later refined somewhat in his later work *Zum Studium der Taktik*. In these works he noted that the "aim of war" is "the permanent defeat of the enemy will."³⁴ These works also stressed his belief in the infantry's ability to traverse adverse terrain, and the importance of the bayonet. In *Zum Studium der Taktik*'s section of the bayonet, he included the famous quote from the Russian military hero, Field Marshal Alexander Suvorov, "The bullet is a fool, the bayonet is a hero."³⁵ He argued that the offensive was better for the morale of the men as in combat the advancing soldier "leaves his dead and wounded behind"³⁶, while those in static defenses are surrounded by these gruesome realities. Conrad went on to note that throughout history the defensive approach almost always resulted in defeat. While praising the bayonet and the importance of aggression, he downplayed the role of cavalry, which he felt was relegated primarily to that of harassing the enemy and raiding supply lines. This view of cavalry was shaped by his understanding of Jeb Stuart in the American Civil War.³⁷ Conrad wrote little of technical innovation such as the machine gun, and his only concession to evolving military equipment was an increased need to numerical superiority. Earlier he believed that if the morale of the men remains high enough, then numbers mattered little to the outcome of the battle, yet with the increase in firepower, he compromised that one needed both morale and numbers.

Only a few years before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the eruption of war, Conrad received another opportunity to shape his military understanding, the Russo-Japanese War which began in 1904. The war garnered a great deal of attention across Europe, as all

³⁴ Sondhaus, 44.

³⁵ Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Zum Studium der Taktik* (Kreisel & Groger, 1898), 111.

³⁶ Hötzendorf, 313.

³⁷ Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf*, 44.

members of the great powers sent observers to watch the course of the war. One of Austria's officers who witnessed the conflict was Maximilian Csicseric von Bacsány, who in 1908 published his account of the war, titled, *Die Schlacht. Studie auf Grund des Krieges in Ostasien 1904/05*. While Csicseric's book imagined that future wars would be defined by their heavy use of machine guns and trenches, his work did not truly challenge Conrad's ideas. Csicseric above all noted that the war was dominated by the "offensive spirit" and the Japanese achieved victory through mass infantry assaults, this conflict only served to confirm Conrad's belief in the cult of the offensive. While Conrad agreed with many of Csicseric's conclusions, it is important to note that Csicseric was hardly a devotee of Conrad, and in the years following the war, like Pitreich, wrote a book highly critical of Conrad's leadership in the war.

As a result of his teaching experience and vast body of published work, Conrad quickly gained prominence within Austria-Hungary's military world. His adept performance in the year's *Kaisermanöver* also resulted in his increased attention of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In this period Ferdinand was seeking out modern thinking men to accompany him in his eventual assumption of the throne. As a result of Ferdinand's patronage, Conrad was promoted to the position of Chief of the General Staff in 1906, a position he held until 1917 in which he ran afoul of the newly crowned Emperor Karl. As Chief of the General Staff, Conrad stood as the empire's premiere military commander and planner, a position which allowed him to orchestrate the events which resulted in the devastation of Austria-Hungary's forces in Galicia and Serbia in the summer and autumn of 1914.

Once the dust cleared following the Central Power's defeat in the Great War, Conrad began to write his memoirs, *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit*, which charted his lengthy military career. Conrad's fourth volume was published in 1923, and his fifth volume was published

posthumously in 1925. Had Conrad lived longer he surely would have written several other volumes, as his final volume only covered though December of 1914. While the bulk of the fourth and fifth volumes are comprised of official communications between Conrad and other officers and politicians, as well as accounting of troop movements and battles, he did devote portions of his works to explaining the problems of the campaign.

Standing in stark contrast to Conrad's explanation for the failures of the early war, Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich's accounts of 1914 offer a wildly different reason for the Habsburg defeats. While Conrad sought to avoid blame, and instead placed it on Germany, Pitreich instead was extremely clear about the costly mistakes made by Austria-Hungary. Pitreich (see image 2) served on the General Staff during the First World War and in the postwar era wrote two accounts of the fighting of 1914, *Lemberg 1914*, published in 1929, and *1914: die militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes: Ideen, Gründe und Zusammenhänge*, published in 1934. Pitreich explored different aspects of the Galician campaign in each work, in *Lemberg* he focused primarily on tactical issues, while in *1914* he described the strategic missteps taken in the lead up to the war.

Despite providing vastly different explanations for Austria-Hungary's defeat in Galicia, both Conrad and Pitreich possessed a shared view of Social Darwinism, and wrote about the role it played in the conflict. Conrad argued that the responsibility of the state is to create "positive goals" for the nation, and then create the ability for the military to wage a war in order to achieve such goals. The lack of a suitable positive goal was in Conrad's eyes a reason for the empire's ultimate failure and collapse. While her enemies' goals included reclaiming territory or adding similar ethnic groups to their nation, Austria-Hungary sought only to survive. Such desperation failed to instill the needed spirit and morale into the nation.

In *Lemberg*, Pitreich wrote that war is an inevitable aspect of the human condition, and not purely the machinations of politics. He argued that “out of state institutions, organized war has gradually developed” but that “war is based on struggle whether via physical or spiritual means, derived from natural conditions and not military conditions”³⁸. In Pitreich’s opinion that while the state facilitated war on an organized level, violent conflict between people is intrinsic to human nature. Pitreich later implied that Austria-Hungary’s defeat in the war stemmed from the comfortable life of the empire’s citizens. He wrote that, “the nation and the people must be ready to fight, the state cannot will a people into victory. Comforts of civilization weaken the propensity towards violence, that “*primitive völker*” possess”³⁹. This sentiment was echoed by many Nazis, in that any advantages their Slavic opponents possessed were the result of their “primitive nature.”⁴⁰

It is important to note that while Conrad's Social Darwinist view of peoples seemingly did not apply to the citizens of the dual monarchy, he expressed a degree of prejudice against peoples of other nations. While fighting against rebels during the occupation of Bosnia, he referred to his Balkan foes as being "Primeval people of nature" who possessed a "*Mordlust*". After interacting with Turkish soldiers in garrisons, also while serving in the Balkans he noted that Turks possessed a "criminal physiognomies". He contrasted both groups with what he declared to be "*Kulturmenschen*"⁴¹. Sondhaus noted that Conrad often referred to these peoples

³⁸ Maximilian Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914* (Wien: Verl. von Adolf Holzhausens Nachf., 1929), 121.

³⁹ Pitreich, 174.

⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, like many of his contemporaries, Pitreich later served in the Wehrmacht in the Second World War.

⁴¹ Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötendorf*, 30.

in the same way other Europeans of the same period referred to the inhabitants of their colonial holdings.

Another similarity between both works is a failure to label nationalism for the empire's defeat. In both his books, Pitreich failed to mention the disloyalty of the army's nationalities as a reason for their defeat. Instead Pitreich's view seemed to be that because of dire strategic and tactical errors, the Galician campaign was almost guaranteed to fail, that the defeat was earned within the planning room rather than upon the battlefield. In his memoirs, Conrad took a firm stance on the question of nationalism as a cause of instability within the K.u.K.. Conrad felt that nationalism played little to no role in the defeat of Austro-Hungarian forces in 1914. He claimed that while both Russia and France made attempts to spread propaganda among the empire's Czech population with the goal to cause nationalist uprisings, it ultimately failed.⁴² He noted that this Czech nationalism did not drastically undermine the army, as some in Vienna believed. Instead Conrad offered that many in official positions held treason in their hearts. Nationalism stemmed from politicians, and not his soldiers. While some Czechs did desert to the enemy, so did small numbers of other Slavic people and Romanians. He wrote that the discussion of nationalism required a more detailed discussion and cannot be dealt with by generalizations. The actions of a few Czechs, in his opinion hardly represented the typical behavior of Czech troops. He then added that with the exception of the 21st L.D., Czech soldiers often fought with valor.⁴³ He argued:

I would like to emphasize that the Croatian, Bosnian, and Slovenian troops fought everywhere with outstanding bravery and that the majority of Italian South Tyroleans faithfully and loyally fulfilled their military duties. The fact that individuals, by betraying

⁴² Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 1906 - 1918. 5, Oktober - November - Dezember 1914 : die Kriegereignisse und die politischen Vorgänge in dieser Zeit*, vol. 5, Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, n.d., 43.

⁴³ Conrad von Hötzendorf, 5:475–76.

themselves to the enemy, violated their oath of obligation, thereby causing serious damage and desecrating the reputation of their troops, does not change this.⁴⁴

He further added that the majority of those who did commit treason hailed from

"intelligence circles"⁴⁵ This condemnation of "intelligence circles" and the idea that some in official positions had treason in their hearts, is likely an attempt to shift the blame from elements within the army, and redirect them towards the intelligentsia and politicians. Conrad made a final note that while Czechs often received the lion share of the blame, the Polish population of the empire also hosted a degree of national conflict between the Austro-Polish Party which desired to liberate Russian Poland, and unite it with Galicia under Habsburg administration, and those of the *allpolnische partei* who wanted to establish a fully independent Polish state.⁴⁶ While Conrad and Pitreich both shared similar viewpoints in regards to Social Darwinism and the nationality question, their interpretation of the defeat in Galicia is vastly different.

In the forward of the fifth volume, Conrad wrote that he intended for his account to be a starting place for future historians, and "hopefully" an objective work.⁴⁷ The vast majority of Conrad's arguments for the failure of Austro-Hungarian forces in 1914, stem from the actions taken by Austria's ally, Germany. Conrad attributed the victory of the Russian forces in Galicia as a direct result of Germany's refusal to undertake a joint invasion of Russian territory, in the goal of catching the Czarist forces in a pincer attack. Conrad repeatedly sent requests to the German command for confirmation of cooperation, and was met with continued silence. Conrad wrote that "my request was in the common interest" and that instead Germany decided to

⁴⁴ Conrad von Hötendorf, 5:477.

⁴⁵ Conrad von Hötendorf, 5:477.

⁴⁶ Conrad von Hötendorf, 5:513.

⁴⁷ Conrad von Hötendorf, 5:9.

"abandon their ally in the East to his fate."⁴⁸ Conrad later wrote that unlike in reality, that "should the cooperation between allies be fruitful, then she must be on full parity, full of trust, full of sincerity and be based on mutual respect."⁴⁹ In Conrad's eyes, Germany's failure to cooperate with Austria-Hungary stemmed for a lack of trust and respect, which in turn sealed Austria-Hungary's fate in Galicia.

Without German assistance, Austria-Hungary stood alone against Russia, which possessed superior numbers, and experienced predictable results. The reality is that Conrad's entire war plan in 1914 hinged on the presence of a coordinated strike by both Austrian and German forces; without Germany's aid, Conrad's plan had little to no chance for success. An additional source of anger for Conrad came as a result of the German defeat at the Battle of the Marne on the Western Front. Conrad referenced the Battle of the Marne many times throughout both fourth and fifth volume, and his displeasure is apparent. The siphoning of forces from the *Ostheer* to the West resulted in Conrad's inability to rely on strong German forces, and the Western offensive ultimately failed. Not only had Austria been forced to fight alone against the Russian tide, but their sacrifice so that Germany had a chance to win a decisive victory in the West was for naught. The K.u.K.'s martyred blood was squandered by her ally.

Following the defeat at the Marne, Conrad wrote that he felt Germany should have assumed a defensive position and quickly sent additional forces eastward. Ironically Conrad seemed to believe a defensive tactic was acceptable if it meant it could benefit his own offensive. Conrad claimed that his advice from the German Command was meaningless, "and now only the

⁴⁸ Conrad von Hötzendorf, 5:915.

⁴⁹Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 24. Juni 1914 bis 30. September 1914*, vol. 4, *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit*, 1923, 254.

advice, one should have "stopped" Russia! How did one imagine such a "Halting"?"⁵⁰ Instead Conrad described how he was unable to hold his forces against Russia as he was heavily outnumbered, and if he had opted to retreat he faced his forces being fully shattered as a result of repeated attacks.

Conrad also made a somewhat less credible claim that Germany was to blame for the conflict's escalation into a world war. He noted that ultimately Austria desired only a regional war conflict, yet Germany's slow mobilization resulted in the creation of a general war.⁵¹ This concept is somewhat questionable as Austria-Hungary's own mobilization proceeded far slower than planned, and by which measure did he conclude that a faster mobilization would have truly prevented Russia and France from declaring war?

While both Pitreich's books challenge Conrad's arguments, *1914* is the clearest rebuke of Conrad's work. He outlined not only the fallacy in blaming Germany for Austria's defeat, but also challenged Conrad's reliance upon the offensive. Pitreich wrote that there existed a conflict between the offensive nature of the planning, and the defensive realities of the available K.u.K. forces in Galicia. Pitreich stressed throughout his work that the army "did not have an offensive problem but a defensive problem."⁵² And that instead of Conrad's favored approach, it would have been wiser to adopt a more evasive, cautious position. Instead, an offensive was carried out which overestimated the capacity of the Austrian army and failed to properly communicate with

⁵⁰ Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 1906 - 1918. 5. Oktober - November - Dezember 1914 : die Kriegereignisse und die politischen Vorgänge in dieser Zeit*, 5:895.

⁵¹ Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 24. Juni 1914 bis 30. September 1914*, 4:713.

⁵² Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich, *1914 : die militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe und Zusammenhänge* (Wien : Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1934), 223, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/42754297>.

its German ally. While Conrad sought out a fast, decisive victory, Pitreich contested that protracted warfare would have better suited the Central Powers.⁵³

Similar to that of Conrad, Pitreich often framed his points through the use of historical comparisons. He noted that fears over Russian expansion dated well into the nineteenth century, and by 1914 the balance of power had only continued to worsen. He made use of the examples of Napoleon and Sweden's Charles XII, who both sought to humble Russia, only to meet defeat. Pitreich also remarked that Napoleon's *Grande Armee* which met its destruction in Russia, was comparable in size to the Austrian forces in Galicia, while Russia stood poised to divert far more men against them. Because of the numerical disadvantage, and sheer size of the landscape, Pitreich argued that war with Russia always should have been a defensive war, most likely along the Vistula River. Preventing Russia from crossing the Vistula and entering the empire's heartland should have been the primary goal of 1914.⁵⁴

Pitreich wrote that in the four decades leading up to the Great War, most plans included a defensive line at the Vistula, with the intention of attacking the *Weichselland*, Russia's western territory, when the opportunity presented itself. He claimed that shortly before the war, Conrad scraped the defensive element of the plan, and instead focused on an immediate invasion of the *Weichselland*, and after achieving a decisive victory, to then exploit Russia's loss. A plan which could only succeed with German support, which Pitreich explained never materialized, not because Germany was a poor ally, but because it was never part of Germany's war strategy.⁵⁵

⁵³ Pitreich, 42.

⁵⁴ Pitreich, 43.

⁵⁵ Pitreich, 44.

Like Austria, Germany originally shared the idea of a defensive position along the Vistula, yet while Austria abandoned this defensive idea, the Germans opted to place even more stock in a defensive eastward outlook. Pitreich explained that Germany feared a two front war with France and Russia, and believed France to be the more dangerous of the two. Because of this, Germany decreased its *Ostheer* forces to a minimum, and instead decided to focus the bulk of its forces on the west. Russia, taking note of this, against the wishes of France, labeled German East Prussia as a "secondary theater" and turned its forces towards Galicia. Pitreich noted that the two very different approaches of Austria and Germany, the offensive versus defensive, "embittered the mutual relations of the allies" and lead to "many misunderstandings about the meaning and purpose of the early campaigns."⁵⁶ A reality which resulted in the Central Powers' disunity in the east.

While in earlier planning both Austria and Germany supported the idea of a thrust into the *Weichselland*, Austria harbored fears of a Russian counterattack, and desired a joint attack for security. This joint attack was more popular in Vienna than in Berlin, as the Germans felt that the distance between the allied forces was so great, effective coordination was extremely difficult. Pitreich noted that Moltke had countered Archduke Albrecht's desire for establishing a common plan of operations by saying, "with the distance and separation of the two armies, they should operate according to their own interests."⁵⁷ The only exception to this idea came in the 1890s, when Schlieffen proposed leading German forces south of Warsaw, and over the Vistula to fight alongside Austro-Hungarian forces. While this plan was warmly welcomed in Vienna, in

⁵⁶ Pitreich, 44.

⁵⁷ Pitreich, 223.

the period following after, the defensive option once again prevailed, as Germany was unable to offer eastern support, a reality Conrad seemed unable to comprehend.⁵⁸

In the opening days of the war Conrad stuck to his plan to launch a decisive strike between the Vistula and Bug rivers against the enemy north of Galicia, "before the ring closes."⁵⁹ Pitreich noted that Conrad repeatedly contacted the German General Staff in August, seeking German assistance by way of Prittwitz's forces advancing across the Siedlec. Conrad had expected the *Ostheer* to bind Russian forces, while the K.u.K. pushed north. Pitreich explained that Conrad failed to take into account the low numbers of the *Ostheer*, and its inability to perform either a pincer attack, or merge forces with the Austrians. Conrad continued to contact the German General Staff seeking assistance, often making note of Siedlec in the hopes of conveying the necessity of his demands. Conrad's further requests for German forces to attack Russian railways, or send troops to help capture Lubin, received back only evasive answers.⁶⁰

While the Austrian offensive had brief initial success at Karsnik, the tide quickly turned against them. In contrast, the *Ostheer* achieved a decisive victory against Russian forces at the Battle of Tannenberg. As the Austrian 2nd army faced defeat, German commander Rennenkampf requested permission to pursue Russian forces, but was denied by the German General Staff. As a result the *Ostheer* became further bound to its defensive strategy and the separation between her ally grew larger. Yet despite furthering Conrad's woes, it did result in a second victory for the Germans at the Masurian lakes.⁶¹ Pitreich mused that despite trying to weaken the *Ostheer* to

⁵⁸ Pitreich, 224.

⁵⁹ Pitreich, 224.

⁶⁰ Pitreich, 225.

⁶¹ Pitreich, 226.

strengthen German's western forces; their performance at Tannenberg suggested they may have left the *Ostheer* stronger than necessary.

Facing its second defeat against the *Ostheer*, the Russians diverted more troops from the German front, to the Austrian front. Conrad became increasingly bitter towards the Germans, and felt they had won their victories at the expense of Austria-Hungary, and allowed Russia to array superior forces against the Austrians. While angry with his ally, Pitreich's argument is that Conrad acted with full certainty that Germany would assist in the offensive, when there was never truly a guarantee it would. Instead Conrad assumed there would be German support, and devoted all this energy towards that strategy. The lack of solid assurances resulted in Conrad's plan being foolhardy and impractical.

Once more Pitreich sought to explain the discrepancy in understanding, which lead to Conrad's fateful decision. Pitreich detailed that since Bismarck's offer for an alliance in 1879, the German General Staff had no desire to devote too many resources to aid Austria-Hungary in a time of war. In a conversation between Waldersee and Bismarck, it was agreed that they "must urge the Austrians to use all her strength"⁶² rather than devote German resources at the beginning of a conflict. Yet the Habsburgs adopted a very different vision of their alliance with Germany. At the time of the signing, the Austrians knew the Balkan question would eventually arise, and Russia would be a major competitor, in turn they welcomed the German alliance, and became dependent on Germany politically and for potential military assistance, which would never arrive in the degree Austria thought.

Conrad made a point of arguing that, in contrast to Pitreich's analysis, his pursuit of the offensive was not a misstep. He wrote "what should the K.u.K. armies have done? Passively wait

⁶² Pitreich, 227.

until the over powering enemy encircled them, and have them a Sedan⁶³...? Or idly watch as the Russian army first crushed the German *Ostheer*, and then Berlin and the heart of the German lands?"⁶⁴ He added that a defensive position would have convinced Italy and Romania to join with the Entente, an event which occurred in 1915 regardless of Conrad's offensive. His defense of the offensive is fascinating as it is not only presented as the only logical option for his forces, but in doing so he saved the Germans from destruction. Conrad carried the notion that not only did Germany behave as a poor ally to Austria-Hungary, the Austro-Hungarian forces gave Germany its chance to win in the West, and defended it from dangers from the East.

On the topic of material disadvantage in comparison to Austria-Hungary's foes, Conrad had very little to say. The battles in Galicia clearly showed that the Austrian forces lacked sufficient numbers of artillery guns, being vastly outnumbered by Russian guns and munitions. In the decades leading up to the war, Conrad subscribed to the notion that in battle artillery was not accurate enough to properly be deployed with advancing infantry. He believed that on the offensive, morale and bayonets were more important than artillery support. Instead of acknowledging in his memoirs the difficulties caused by Austria-Hungary's lack of artillery, he claimed that what Austro-Hungarian artillery was technically lacking it was able to make up for with "its traditionalist spirit, its excellent ability, and its heroic sacrifice."⁶⁵

In this way, Conrad felt that the notion of soldierly virtue was adequate to overcome the shortcomings of his army. This reliance upon honor and tradition appears quite often in Conrad's memoirs. Ironically, where Conrad had championed innovation and relished breaking with

⁶³ A reference to France's decisive defeat in the Franco-Prussian War

⁶⁴ Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 24. Juni 1914 bis 30. September 1914*, 4:712.

⁶⁵ Conrad von Hötzendorf, 4:229.

tradition through much of his career, he retained this old fashioned chivalric image of soldiers. Unfortunately for the men under his command, soldierly virtues and “traditionalist spirit” made for poor counters to Russian tactical and material advantages.

Conrad also devoted decent portions of his memoirs to challenging his critics. While he made note of his unfair treatment by critics throughout his memoirs, in the fourth volume he devotes a section to critics, entitled "War critics and Prophets". In this section he described these critics as thus:

One of the cheapest roles to advertise for and to find an audience, is by being a military critic. He always judges in hindsight, ... He always finds people in need of sensation or naive believers, ... but [he] completely overlooks in how easily he spreads accusations, which, standing on wavering, inaccurate or falsified basis, and describes men who are... under the conditions of which the petty-nagging critic has not the faintest idea, especially if he lacks any experience of warfare at a high level of command⁶⁶

Conrad continued and wrote that "I totally disregard those critics who follow the spirit of the times, favoring revolution, merely dragging the old army and its leaders into the dust for a Judas wage."⁶⁷ Conrad viewed the work of the journalists as often intentionally deceitful and lacked the needed reverence for late Austro-Hungarian military's heroism.

Much of his hostility towards critics comes from perceived slights against himself and Austria-Hungary, he lamented that the "negative German press is unjustified"⁶⁸ and that "hateful attacks against Austria-Hungary" had been written by German journalists, and had begun to make an appearance in serious works as a result. ⁶⁹ He claimed that such sources often down played German defeats early in the war, such as the Marne, while exaggerating Austrian defeats

⁶⁶ Conrad von Hötendorf, 4:221–22.

⁶⁷ Conrad von Hötendorf, 4:221.

⁶⁸ Conrad von Hötendorf, 4:713.

⁶⁹ Conrad von Hötendorf, 4:527.

in Galicia. Conrad sought to defend his own conduct by stating that "all day and night a supreme leader must be on duty, and ready to see his plans and orders thwarted."⁷⁰ In saying this, Conrad essentially wished for the reader, including his critics, to understand that he had a difficult job, and that not everything that occurred went how he planned. This sentiment fits Conrad's general explanation for the failures in Galicia; it was not his fault as fate did not follow along with his plans.

While *1914* is largely focused upon the strategic mistakes of the Galician campaign, it does touch upon tactical issues, which is the primary focus of *Lemberg*. Pitreich's assessment of the strategies adopted by the Austro-Hungarian army, notably Conrad's infatuation with the offensive came at incredible cost. Pitreich noted that in the period of peace before the war, weaponry developed rapidly, and without experience utilizing such equipment, the subsequent tactics could only be theoretical.⁷¹ Pitreich offered that upon entering the war, "our tactics were dominated by right and wrong ideas."⁷² One of the primary tactical mistakes Pitreich stressed was made in Galicia, was the focus on extreme infantry aggression and the desire to encircle the enemy. Pitreich wrote that Austrian tacticians realized that repeating rifles made frontal attacks more difficult, increased focus was placed in the goal of encircling the enemy. This was thought to be achieved through the adoption of smaller, more independent infantry units which could outmaneuver the enemy and threaten their flanks. While these independent units were more flexible, in practice they struggled to encircle an enemy unit with superior numbers. Pitreich noted that mobility was adopted at the expense of cohesion, the desire for the offensive was

⁷⁰ Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit : 1906 - 1918. 5, Oktober - November - Dezember 1914 : die Kriegsergebnisse und die politischen Vorgänge in dieser Zeit*, 5:10.

⁷¹ Pitreich, *1914*, 229.

⁷² Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914*, 130.

placed above that of building and wielding powerful force, in turn trading strength for aggression.⁷³

While Conrad might have sought a unified battle, Pitreich argued that these tactics resulted in a general disassembly of the Austrian forces during execution, and instead of achieving a single battle, three partial battles were fought at Karsnik, Komarow, and Lemberg. The army was unable to unify after these conflicts, and thus fell into the grip of the enemy. Pitreich offered that Austria-Hungary was not alone in making this mistake, and that the Russians acted similarly at the onset of the war. Yet their loss at Karsnik made them realize a single enemy attack could disrupt their offensive, and shifted from independent army operations and instead sought unified battles, where they could bring their whole strength to bear.⁷⁴

Pitreich described the experience of Austrian forces upon reaching combat:

Everywhere our troops hit the enemy for the first time, the same phenomena are shown: large frontal expansions and, consequently, a lack of unity in combat; a temporal acceptance of the battle formation; a sharp attack on the enemy without taking any notice of the cooperation of their own artillery; as well as the same considerations for the initial retention and later onset of reserves.⁷⁵

What Pitreich then explained was that, while these tactics had proven effective during maneuvers, they fared far worse when implemented in real combat. In battle, men lacked the same conviction as in training, and the simulations did not always take into account the sheer volume of fire the men encountered in reality. Also Conrad's assurance of the importance of morale, failed to take into account that local successes experienced by fragmented fighting forces did little to bolster the morale of their compatriots, who might be out of sight. Pitreich challenged Conrad's view of the importance of morale above all, instead asserting that:

⁷³ Pitreich, 127–28; Pitreich, *1914*, 229.

⁷⁴ Pitreich, *1914*, 230.

⁷⁵ Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914*, 130.

If the conditions for the victory are not the strongest, will is of no use. For a long time the war has no longer been a question of will and courage alone in the earlier sense, but victory always conditioned on the assumption that physical and morale forces are used a superior manner. Superiority can only be achieved through unification, and that is why this principle should have prevailed, but the pursuit of encirclement has gained the preponderance.⁷⁶

Pitreich noted that the continued reliance upon the bayonet was somewhat obsolete, and that the mass infantry assaults by the Japanese had further bolstered its reputation among officers like Conrad. Pitreich argued that while the Japanese utilized these tactics and achieved success, such tactics only worked in a short war, and not a war on the scale of the Great War. Pitreich added that "not the bayonet, but close range rifle fire, revolvers, and hand grenades and the advancement of reserves are needed for assaults to succeed."⁷⁷ It seems that Pitreich took from this conflict elements which bolstered his own beliefs, while ignoring those which ran counter to his method of war.

Another crucial tactical flaw Pitreich noted was Austria-Hungary's poor understanding of the proper utilization and importance of artillery. The focus of military strategy often revolved around infantry engaging and destroying other infantry, with artillery only playing a role early in the battle. Pitreich described the effect of Russian artillery upon Austrian troops:

Everywhere the enemy had advanced positions. These were taken throughout, then the next positions had to be attacked. Now the enemy artillery fire grew in violence and had a devastating effect. The attacks became more and more difficult and faltering until at last our troops remained at close range from the enemy without cover. In this situation even enemy infantry and machine-gun fire made itself extraordinarily sensitive. But if some protection could be obtained against it by laying down, the enemy artillery fire soon made the situation of our troops extremely difficult. No one among us had even guessed this artillery effect, this precision.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Pitreich, 155.

⁷⁷ Pitreich, 134.

⁷⁸ Pitreich, 132.

The surprise over the accuracy of artillery, Pitreich explained stemmed from economic constraints resulting in a shortage of ammunition, which prevented extensive artillery training in the prewar period. He further noted that Austrian artillery was less effective than Russian artillery, as the focus on small flexible units resulted in extreme fragmentation of fire, in which only a few guns were available for use by each corps.⁷⁹

While Conrad and Pitreich both left extensive accounts of the fighting in Galicia, only one of the men succeeded in shaping either popular or academic understanding of the Galician campaign. As a result of the efforts of the officers which comprised the “Habsburg command conspiracy” after the war, only Conrad’s work became available to a wider audience. These men, many of them friends and former students of Conrad, sought to protect his legacy and promote a more favorable analysis of the campaign. While men such as Pitreich and Csicseries provided far more accurate and leveled accounts of the conflict, their insight did not conform to the official history Edmund Glaise-Horstenau and Emil Ratzenhofer wished to present. As these men sought above all else to preserve their reputations, and that of the empire, works which detailed the failures and oversights of the empire’s commanders were not looked upon favorably. While these critical voices were not prevented from writing, their works were simply placed in the archives and unavailable to be accessed, while Conrad’s memoirs were available for popular and academic consumption.

The depiction of Conrad became more complicated in the years following his death, as he was elevated to a heroic figure within the Austrian military. As Conrad was the supreme military commander during the bulk of the war, the officers of the command conspiracy could not let his reputation become tarnished, as he represented “the best” of them. Following the Second World

⁷⁹ Pitreich, 137.

War, Conrad emerged in a prominent light as he represented an ideal figurehead for the Austrian military, who desperately needed military heroes untainted by Nazism. As a result of gatekeepers and a shifting political landscape in Austria, the reputation of Conrad was unduly elevated within academia which persisted in the historiography for decades following the war.

CHAPTER 2: THE SOLDIERS

In contrast to the previous chapter, which focused upon the memoirs of two members of the General Staff, this chapter examines accounts written by enlisted soldiers. In exploring these accounts it is possible to glean a very different picture of the war in Galicia. While the men fail to mention the strategic merit of invading the *Weichselland*, they instead offer the type of “on the ground” experiences that neither Conrad nor Pitreich shared. Where Pitreich criticized the offensively minded tactics of Conrad, the works written by soldiers provide an eyewitness account of these disastrous tactics. Conrad and Pitreich’s books offer explanations based upon the results, while the soldiers provide a human element lacking in the aforementioned works. The blending of the military and social spheres are even more extreme in periods of total war, when the two become deeply entwined, the military reflecting the nation's citizenry. Another important reason to study the accounts of soldiers is to see if nationalist differences were perceived to have contributed to their defeat. It is in the inclusion of both these approaches that provides the most comprehensive understanding of the events which unfolded on the Galician battlefields.

The Habsburg forces which marched to war in the summer of 1914 were as ethnically varied as the empire itself. The official history noted that, “Out of every 100 soldiers of the K.u.K. Army, there were 25 Germans, 23 Magyars, 13 Czechs, 14 Slovaks, 9 Serbo-Croats,

8 Poles, 8 Ruthenes, 7 Romanians, 2 Slovenes, and 1 Italian.”⁸⁰ While the K.u.K. was incredibly diverse, it is important to note that units were based out of regional garrisons, resulting in the bulk of the regiments’ men hailing from the same region. These men were then commanded by non-national officers who issued orders in “Army-German”⁸¹, a series of basic commands which all Austro-Hungarian soldiers were expected to know. Furthermore, officers attached to nationally different units were expected to learn the language of their men to aid in communication.

While the men initially struggled with the hardships of having left their homes and families behind, as a result of military units recruiting from specific geographic regions, the men quickly formed a sense of camaraderie as they served alongside their friends and neighbors. Since the 1880s the bulk of units were stationed in their recruiting areas, in an effort to increase the speed of mobilization. The shift from the earlier method in which conscripts served their military obligation either far from their homes or on a rotating basis, resulted in a degree of concern within Vienna. Franz Ferdinand felt this change threatened to undermine the formation of a “regimental spirit.”⁸² Others feared that having units’ garrisons in their recruitment zones guaranteed the influx of nationalist elements. Where some Viennese bureaucrats continued to see the specter of nationalism around every corner, the Prussian military establishment encouraged the service of soldiers based upon geographic region. In the eyes’ of Berlin’s military planners, shared regional traditions resulted in more cohesive and determined fighting force, essential for

⁸⁰ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, *Austria-Hungary’s Last War, 1914-1918*, 42.

⁸¹ Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 36.

⁸² Bundesministerium für Heereswesen, 36.

the formation of *Kameradschaft*.⁸³ Despite an increased sense of anxiety among some politicians, as the men departed for the front and marched along the sandy Galician roads, they were able to share in local folksongs and joke in a common tongue.

Vienna's fear of nationalism within the army truly was largely unrealistic, and the presence of nationally conscious soldiers within the army was not the powder keg as some would later claim. Schindler made the claim that in the pre-war period and in the first days of the war the army was a largely a non-national force, as a result of the non-national officer class. It was only the incredible losses among officers in the Galician and Serbian theaters, which ushered in nationalistic reserve officers. This issue grew as nationalities, such as the Czechs were made into scapegoats for military failures. While Schindler's depiction of the pre-war army is likely accurate, the concept that forces mustered in the summer of 1914 were without a nationalist element is untrue. As the work of Judson and Zahra has shown, the majority of the empire's citizens may have been nationally indifferent, but those championing nationalist causes, without doubt, existed. In times of total war, the ranks of the military become a reflection of the society which it draws from. The vast majority of peasants which flocked to the garrisons in August of 1914 likely lacked deep nationalist loyalties, yet those white collar bureaucrats who had moved to rural areas in the decades preceding the war also enlisted.

An ideal example of one such deeply nationalist soldier is Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, a Romanian from Transylvania who served in the 23rd Honved Infantry Regiment as a reserve officer during the Galician campaign. After the war Tăslăuanu published the diary he wrote while serving in the Austro-Hungarian military, under the title *With the Austrian Army in Galicia*. Tăslăuanu's account provides a detailed view of the early weeks of the war, and the

⁸³ Stephen G Fritz, *Frontsoldaten The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 164.

ensuing Habsburg defeats. The memoir is studded with examples of Tăslăuanu's heavy bias against Hungarians and his reverent views of the Romanian national state. Tăslăuanu often attributed the failings of those Hungarians serving alongside him as attributes of the Hungarian people. He described a fellow officer by saying that, "he was typical of those Hungarians, skilled in boasting and patriotic declamation, who yet vanished like a flock of birds at the first sign of danger."⁸⁴ At another point in the work he bemoaned the fact he might be killed wearing a Hungarian uniform and when a Hungarian woman presented him with a memento while boarding a train for the front, he threw it back at her. While he seems to be far more nationalistic than the men serving under him, it is not incredibly surprising he possessed a degree of nationalist sentiments.

The first reason for his national outlook likely stems from the fact he accurately fits the mold as established by Judson. Tăslăuanu possessed an extensive education and worked as a writer. Unlike the bulk of Sibiiu's inhabitants who were primarily concerned with their community and more physical affairs, Tăslăuanu's world was somewhat larger. He spent time both living in and working for the Romanian state, returning to Habsburg Transylvania out of a fondness for his homeland and the desire to promote Romanian nationalism among the Transylvanian people. Before the war Tăslăuanu worked as the secretary of the "Association for Roumanian Literature and National Culture," in Sibiiu. He also noted his contribution in establishing the "Association for Roumanian Literature and Culture in Ardéal". In this sense Tăslăuanu is rather similar to an ardent Czech nationalist moving from Prague to the Bohemian countryside to spread his cause among the rural people.

⁸⁴ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 19.

The second reason for Tăslăuanu's fervor for Romanian nationalism and his distaste towards Hungarians was the result of the practice of Magyarization. Unlike in the Austrian half of the Empire, in which nationalist squabbles were carried out between private organizations, Budapest sought to enforce a system of Hungarian acculturation among its non-Magyar citizens. While the Law of the Nationalities guaranteed linguistic rights to non-Hungarian speakers, it failed to prevent a persistent effort to force the Hungarian language on all of the kingdom's inhabitants. The point of contention arose from the fact that all official documents were to be written in Hungarian, forcing non-Hungarian majority localities to hire Hungarians to handle these documents.⁸⁵ Making the functionality of even small villages hinge on an understanding of Hungarian resulted in the rapid growth of Hungarian language school throughout the kingdom. Among nationalists throughout the empire, schools were seen as being an essential component in the battle for supremacy.⁸⁶ Unlike the regions which constituted the Austrian holdings of the empire, those living within Hungary were forced to fight for the preservation of their national identity. Upon reaching Galicia, Tăslăuanu commented with no small degree of jealousy "We, were, in fact, plainly immersed in the Slav ocean, and I was lost in admiration of the national liberties which the inhabitants enjoyed. If only it had been the same with us in Ardéal!"⁸⁷

Tăslăuanu wrote that initially following mobilization he and several other Romanian nationalists entertained the idea of revolution, yet quickly decided against such a drastic measure

⁸⁵ Judson and Belknap Press., *The Habsburg Empire*, 265–68.

⁸⁶ Tara Zahra, "'Each Nation Only Cares for Its Own': Empire, Nation, and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1918," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1379, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.5.1378>.

⁸⁷ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 36.

and claimed that “centuries of slavery had sapped the vitality of our race.”⁸⁸ He noted that some Romanians feared that an Austro-Hungarian victory might result in a worsening of life in Transylvania, saying that “No Romanian believed in our victory, or even wished it, and we all had the conviction that a Russian defeat would thrust us into bondage for ages on ages.”⁸⁹ He included a warning given to him by a peasant, that “if Russia lost, Tisza would throw away all restraint and strangle us.” This sentiment was further echoed by a father bidding farewell to his son, “come back safely, dear boy, but God grant you may be beaten.” Despite these Romanians in Tăslăuanu’s account seemingly fearing the Hungarians more than the Russians, it is important to note that Romanian majority units served with distinction for the entirety of the conflict, several units even serving on the Western Front in the waning days of the war.

Octavian C. Tăslăuanu’s account of the Galician campaign is a valuable tool as it shows that while some nationalist elements were present in the army, they did not view the empire’s military defeat as a result of nationalist tensions. Tăslăuanu rarely hesitated to heap blame and criticism upon the Hungarians around him, but interestingly enough he never claimed they were the cause of the campaign’s disastrous outcome. Instead, Tăslăuanu blamed many of the same factors which other soldiers’ accounts take note of. These other memoirs lack the nationalist overtones of Tăslăuanu. Tăslăuanu, who likely represented the most ardent form of nationalist within the Austro-Hungarian army, largely mirrored the opinions of the nationally indifferent soldiers he served alongside.

⁸⁸ Tăslăuanu, 17.

⁸⁹ Tăslăuanu, 28.

In accounts of the war, Tăslăuanu and many other men who served in the Austro-Hungarian military leveled a great deal of blame towards their senior officers⁹⁰. While Schindler argues that these men represented the glue which held the empire together, the insight gained by examining soldiers' accounts provides an alternative view that these officers might instead hold a good deal of blame for the empire's defeat. In many ways the Great War acted to bridge the gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yet in many ways the Habsburg officer corps was firmly seated in the nineteenth century.

In 1914, these officers marched to war wearing brightly colored silken sashes with swords at their sides. These men had been educated in the tactics promoted by men such as Hotzendorf, and were devotees of the "cult of the offensive". Courage and morale were what would carry the day, rather than accurate artillery fire. This mindset was hardly unique to the Austro-Hungarian officer class, generals serving all of the great powers carried similar concepts of war. The Czar famously resisted the issuing of steel helmets to his soldiers as he feared it would lower morale among the enlisted men. What separated the Habsburgs from their European allies and rivals was that they hinged so much of their strategy on these concepts. Ferdinand Huszti Horvath wrote bitterly that the Habsburg defeat in 1914, "was the natural result of the spirit that flamed in the pudgy hearts of senile, half witted generals, who now raced to security in their powerful cars, to have their pompous shakos exchanged for silk hats."⁹¹ Tăslăuanu wrote that, "our leaders were anything but Napoleons."⁹² After Tăslăuanu and his men were forced to

⁹⁰ It must be known that the discussion of poor officers is largely in regards to the high ranking and staff officers, rather than lower ranking officers. The majority of the memoirs drawn from in this chapter are from *Fähnrich* (the lowest rank of cadet-officer) and reserve officers, essentially nonprofessional soldiers.

⁹¹ Ferdinand Huszti Horvath, *Captured!* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1930), 20, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006534080>.

⁹² Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 218.

retreat he wrote that, "it was certainly not our fault that we failed to hold our positions. The true culprits were our staff and the reserves which had left us to our fate."⁹³ Tăslăuanu described the poor tactics the Habsburg army made use of:

The officers were angrily ashamed of our defeats and used no measured language. The great mistake we had made was in under-estimating our enemy and making our attacks according to books and theories. Each unit, as it arrived in Galicia, was hastily thrown into action and the men attacked as at maneuvers, advancing all together in open formation. The Russians, usually entrenched at the edge of a wood, let us approach within three or four hundred paces and, just as we yelled our " Hourra ! " for the " final assault " with the bayonet, opened rapid fire with rifles and machine-guns which decimated our ranks in a few seconds. The few who survived wandered panic-stricken all over Galicia and soon lost any military identity they ever had, while some are said to have fled without stopping to Fagaras ! At any rate this was the kind of fate that befel most of the Austro-Hungarian front-line units.⁹⁴

While none of the European nations were truly prepared for a war of this scale, Austria-Hungary entered it the least prepared.

After surviving several engagements with Russian forces, Tăslăuanu noted that, "you will have realized by now that the sword and revolver, the officers' weapons, are singularly useless in this war, especially the sword", and that many officers, "had long since taken to the rifle."⁹⁵ Béla Zombory-Moldován made similar comments at the obsolete nature of the sword. After failing to present his sword to a battalion commander, he was severely scolded by the officer. Zombory-Moldován sardonically wrote that in response, "I yank my sword out, and endeavor to comply sufficiently with regulations to stop us from losing the war."⁹⁶ He further echoed this sentiment

⁹³ Tăslăuanu, 167.

⁹⁴ Tăslăuanu, 58–59.

⁹⁵ Tăslăuanu, 79.

⁹⁶ Béla Zombory-Moldován and Peter Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World: A Memoir of 1914*, 2014, 40.

later in his memoir by writing that, "I strap the sword on: this should really scare the Russians."⁹⁷ Zombory-Moldován later noted that the sword not only served as a poor tool of war in the twentieth century, but often hindered his movement. While advancing through a wooded area he noted that, "My wretched sword keeps snagging in the undergrowth, and I trip over it. Damn this thing! I wrench it off and hang it around my neck."⁹⁸ The sword also became a liability as men circulated rumors that the Russians had received orders to specifically target officers, the sword and sash served as a ideal method of identifying an Austrian officer.

It is important to note that the Austrian officer of 1914 was hardly a monolith; the majority of officers fell into two camps, those professional military men well versed in outdated tactics, and reserve officers who lacked basic military education. The army which marched into Serbia and Galicia in the summer of 1914 was largely led by those with no training, or the wrong training. Tăslăuanu's account included numerous occasions of his unit being sent on pointless night marches as a result of planning oversights or wandering aimlessly in the dark because the officers were unable to properly read maps. Tăslăuanu claimed that, "more than one of the early Austrian defeats was due to this defect in the officers' military education."⁹⁹ He later joked that, "As long as our colonel isn't here, there is nothing to be afraid of."¹⁰⁰ Ironically those men the empire entrusted with upholding the soldierly virtues needed to win the war, often caused a great deal of problems themselves.

⁹⁷ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, 57.

⁹⁸ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, 45.

⁹⁹ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Tăslăuanu, 185.

When Zombory-Moldován arrived at his garrison in Veszprém in August, he realized his fellow junior officers shared his lack of military experience. In civilian life Zombory-Moldován worked as an illustrator, having only served his mandatory military service years earlier. Zombory-Moldován's captain confided in him that he was not really an infantryman, but a teacher of descriptive geometry and topography at a military academy. As Zombory-Moldován became more acquainted with his comrades he became aware of how many others similarly lacked sufficient training. The drill instructor was formerly a prison guard and treated the enlisted men harshly. The battalion's medical officer was a dentist in civilian life, and Zombory-Moldován noted that he rode his horse poorly and, "sat on it like a well-risen ball of dough."¹⁰¹ The most shocking element of Zombory-Moldován's account of this period of mobilization and preparation was the difficulty Zombory-Moldován and his fellow officers struggled with the language of military commands. Zombory-Moldován had been assigned to a Honved unit, but had done his previous service in the common army and knew only German commands. Despite living in Budapest and speaking Hungarian as his native language, he still faced a language barrier of sorts. Throughout his account, Zombory-Moldován repeatedly needed to seek out soldiers who could speak Slovak in an effort to issue commands to some of this men. These language problems were felt more strongly in units with a high degree of ethnic variation. Tăslăuanu was often forced to translate Hungarian officers' orders into Romanian as these officers failed to speak the same language as the majority of their men.

Other notable sources of failure mentioned in memoirs of Austro-Hungarian soldiers were the obsolete tactics espoused by their officers, primarily in regard to artillery and field fortifications. Artillery was a contentious issue as the soldiers often found themselves advancing

¹⁰¹ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 30.

into heavy Russian and Serbian artillery fire, yet saw little of their own. Zombory-Moldován described his unit:

The noise of gunfire is getting ever closer. Now there is no more forest to our left. The bare slope has a wavering line of figures across it. The line moves uphill, then breaks apart. Above them a few little puffs of cloud, like balls of cotton wool. Suddenly a fountain of earth erupts; amid the flying fragments, three figures, limbs flailing. Then, further along, another cone-shaped fountain, men tumbling from it. Shelling! Our troops are advancing against artillery!¹⁰²

Horvath wrote that while retreating through Galicia towards the Carpathians, "we haven't seen any of our artillery for two weeks."¹⁰³ Much of this lack of sufficient artillery stemmed from budgetary issues and conflict between Budapest and Vienna. Zombory-Moldován recorded a quote from a lieutenant regarding this, "Damn them! They blocked legislature for the sake of these stupid national-language commands, and held up modernization of the army. Now here we are, unprepared and outnumbered three to one. The whole brigade has a total of four 7.5-centimeter field guns. The Russians have twelve."¹⁰⁴ Horvath described a scene in which his unit was forced to advance on the enemy positions without the required artillery:

We waited for our artillery to open up and do its stuff. Regulations said that, before infantry went to storm, the artillery would annihilate the enemy positions, kill and demoralize the defenders... Our artillery was silent. There was no artillery behind us to give its support. We were just plain, unimportant reserve battalion that would have to get along somehow without artillery. And if the major said that we would storm at three in the morning, that did not mean three five or three fifteen, but three o'clock sharp - artillery or no artillery.¹⁰⁵

Not only did the Habsburg forces lack equivalent quantities of artillery as their enemies, some of the soldiers imply that the method in which they were used was also inferior. Austrian

¹⁰² Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, 44.

¹⁰³ Horvath, *Captured!*, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 47.

¹⁰⁵ Horvath, *Captured!*, 14.

artillery doctrine was overly rigid and unable to match the shifting tide of the war. Tăslăuanu wrote that, "at the hour indicated a storm of fire burst forth, for it is the Austrian fashion to carry out orders meticulously to the letter. It was an absurd waste of ammunition, without rhyme or reason."¹⁰⁶ In contrast the Russian fire remained accurate and, "seemed to have no lack of ammunition."¹⁰⁷ It must be said that despite the poor performance of Habsburg artillery in the campaigns of 1914, the artillerymen were open to adaptation and learning from their foes. Austrian artilleryman, "all praised Russian common sense. They had adopted from the Russians the idea of placing batteries in a triangle instead of in line, as it appeared that this arrangement facilitated quick changes of direction and flanking fire."¹⁰⁸ The Austro-Hungarians learned not only artillery tactics from the Russians, but also field fortifications.

In the decades leading up to the war, the Habsburg tacticians placed little value on field works, and the outcome of the earlier campaigns reflected this. Horvath described a scene in which the men advanced into heavy Russian machinegun and rifle fire with bugles sounding and officers waving their swords in the air.¹⁰⁹ Under this withering fire, Horvath broke with regulations and lied upon the ground to avoid enemy bullets, shortly after having done so a major began kicking his soles and ordered him to stand up. Later the same major brushed aside Horvath's words of caution and remarked, "I don't bother about a few lousy bullets."¹¹⁰ This

¹⁰⁶ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 153.

¹⁰⁷ Tăslăuanu, 141.

¹⁰⁸ Tăslăuanu, 184.

¹⁰⁹ Horvath, *Captured!*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Horvath, 14.

display of martial pride espoused by many officers ultimately resulted in their deaths, officers suffered extreme casualties in the first two years of the war.

Zombory-Moldován wrote about a colonel who he described as a "peacetime hero", intentionally avoiding cover, and noted that, "the news that's going around about the colonel, incidentally, is that he intends to forbid any digging of foxholes, and this 'leads to cowardice and undermines discipline.'"¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly, Zombory-Moldován followed this by saying that the colonel was slain the following day, having been hit with an artillery shell as he stood in the open. Despite the initial resistance to the digging of trenches or foxholes, just as with artillery tactics, the Austro-Hungarian army eventually began to adopt Russian techniques. Tăslăuanu described this shift as thus, "they had a first-rate knowledge of field fortification, and always held their lines with desperate tenacity. We exhorted to imitate their defensive system, and specifically recommended to note their tricks of digging sham trenches and putting caps on bushes and sticks in order to draw our fire."¹¹² Tăslăuanu further noted that many of the soldiers drew the ire of their officers as they had thrown away their entrenching tools earlier. At this stage in the war officers, rarely carried shovels, in one early engagement Zombory-Moldován was forced to dig a shelter with tin lid.

Horvath described this shift in that, "now, every man had a spade, and it was no longer considered a shame to dig in."¹¹³ Many officers also began to carry shovels and began to abandon their swords. Zombory-Moldován noted that he was relieved that he had left his sword with his

¹¹¹ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 48.

¹¹² Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 102–3.

¹¹³ Horvath, *Captured!*, 30.

adjunct; otherwise he would not have been able to fit in his foxhole.¹¹⁴ Horvath noted that among the men, captured Russian shovels became a valuable commodity as they were deemed to be sharper. By the time that the digging of field works had gained weight among the Austrian command, the Habsburg forces were in rapid retreat toward the Carpathians and often lacked the time to dig extensive trench works.

After being wounded and sent back to his garrison, Tăslăuanu noted a general shift in the training of newly enlisted men, who, "went through various fighting exercises, without arms, deploying in skirmishing lines, attacking in the Russian mode, digging trenches and shelters. I can assure you that the Austrian system had undergone substantial modification."¹¹⁵ It is undeniable that trenches served as an effective method of defense, and are likely the most iconic aspect of the Great War's largely fixed battle lines, they are also a trademark of the horror of this conflict. Tăslăuanu described the harsh conditions of trench life as thus:

Meanwhile the trenches were rapidly becoming indescribably filthy. Each time that the wind changed it carried to us whiffs of foetid air. The men were unable to leave them. One day a sniper had killed four of them who had managed to scramble over the parapet into a ditch near the trenches. Great numbers of the men were suffering from dysentery, and even cholera had begun to make its appearance. We had had several deaths from it... I proposed to the Commandant that we should send engineers to cover in the trenches. Up to the present the weather had been dry, but rain might come any day. Roofless and flooded trenches would just about finish the regiment. Without pausing to think, the Commandant informed me that if it rained the men could stay in the water until they drowned. I held my tongue!¹¹⁶

An element that remained a constant in accounts of the Galician and Serbian campaigns was the exhaustion of forced marches. The Austro-Hungarian rail system quickly proved itself to be inadequate to the task of transporting fighting men from across the empire to the fronts.

¹¹⁴Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 52.

¹¹⁵Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 247.

¹¹⁶Tăslăuanu, 181.

Zombory-Moldován described the arduous march his unit was forced to undertake from his garrison town to the railway to the Galician front. The men became exhausted carrying their equipment, Zombory-Moldován described the soldiers writing, "they were loaded down, all right: a rifle weighing six and a half kilos, a hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition, their bits and pieces in their knapsacks, bread bag, spade, hatchet, mess tin, rolled-up cape, and so on. Twenty to twenty-five kilos."¹¹⁷ While packing his personal effects before departing for the front, Egon Kisch tried to resist additional items his mother offered him, asking, "Do you think I'm going to the Thirty Years War?"¹¹⁸ The soldiers of the Great War were burdened with so much issued equipment that they likely desired any additional items to carry. After one particularly grueling day of marching Tăslăuanu whimsically noted that, "some cursed the cow that produced the calf that bore the hide that formed the leather of which their packs were made."¹¹⁹

During the short breaks from marching the men often removed and changed their socks or footcloths, some lathering their feet with grease to prevent chafing and blisters. Officers warned the soldiers that should their feet become damaged the men would be liable for punishment, a man unable to march was a man unable to fight. Zombory-Moldován wrote that after hours of marching his, "legs were like pieces of wood, no longer attached to my body. Maybe they would just go on marching by themselves, even when it was time to stop. They'd have to shoot them off me."¹²⁰ He was able to find some relief after dropping his equipment off on a baggage cart, a luxury the men around him could not share. Many of the men arrived at the

¹¹⁷ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 31.

¹¹⁸ Egon Erwin Kisch and Bodo Uhse, *Schreib das auf, Kisch!* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1962), 10.

¹¹⁹ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 61.

¹²⁰ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 31.

front and entered combat in such a state of exhaustion. Zombory-Moldován noted that, "the condition we're in now, a pair of Russkies armed with sling-shots would give us a thrashing."¹²¹

The dreadful conditions of the march worsened dramatically after the army's general route from the field in Serbia and the retreat toward the Carpathians in Galicia. The roads quickly became over crowded with supply wagons and carts carrying the wounded. Soldiers were forced to march alongside the roads, pausing to walk about the bodies of horses killed by fatigue. Horvath described the dreadful scene:

This was the largest, the most cruelly trying retreat ever staged in the history of a modern army. The once precisely functioning vast organization, the Imperial and Royal army, dragged its tired bones over the endless plains of Galicia. Its task was accomplished - with a fatal result.

For days we marched in dust, it was suffocating. Your lungs felt muddy, you could not recognize anybody. Lazy dust clouds puffed up behind those dragging feet; tired hoofs kicked up dust and rolling wheels whirled it up. Dust on the fields, dust on the miserable villages, the whole country boiled with dust - fine, gray, penetrating everywhere.¹²²

During this brutal retreat, Horvath recounted that a major reprimanded him because his field cap had lost its visor. The major ordered him to replace the visor by the next day, forcing Horvath to scavenge a visor from an abandoned cavalryman's hat. Even during a grueling retreat, some officers clung to seemingly pointless regulations. This notion of soldierly virtue once again surfaces, as the officer class of Austria-Hungary sought to impose traditional standards and obsolete relics like sabers, in the face of a new age of modern war. Where Conrad expressed the necessity of these perceived virtues and traditional methods, the accounts of soldiers instead highlight their absurdity, which tragically resulted in widespread loss of life. One wonders if this clinging to tradition served as something of a bulwark in the face of a rapidly changing world.

Tăslăuanu described a scene similar to that of Horvath's:

¹²¹ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, 33.

¹²² Horvath, *Captured!*, 20.

We passed through Tarnawa and marched to Sereďnie, which we reached at six in the morning. This was more than human endurance could stand. We went to pieces, with our Colonel Maetze at the head. The troops got mixed up, and we marched on like sleep-walkers. From 1 to 3 a.m. it was torture, and the men slept bolt upright. Some fell flat and slept where they fell. Dead horses and sleep-besotted men shared the ditches. In one wood we found men asleep, upright against the trees. No caricaturist's fantasy could have invented more grotesque poses. In addition to weariness, the men were a prey to hunger.¹²³

The field hospitals along the roads were equally as horrible, medics and surgeons worked quickly to bandage and treat the wounded. Those able to walk were sent forward to march along with the bulk of the retreating men. Those unable to walk were often left behind for the Russians to capture. Even with all available horses requisitioned to pull carts for the wounded, there were not enough to transport all of the severely wounded. Zombory-Moldovan noted that after suffering a head wound, he was forced to abandon the cart he was riding on and travel on foot to reach the railway.

In Serbia the defeated Austro-Hungarian soldiers experienced a similar occurrence to those serving in Galicia. Kisch described a similarly disastrous retreat from Serbia:

The escape had begun and tore us away. A failed army - no, a rampant horde ran to the border in meaningless fear. Coachmen lashed their horses. Passengers spurred and beat theirs, officers and soldiers crowding and weaving among the wagons or trudging through ditches¹²⁴

Along with the exhaustion of the retreat, to the men fighting in the Galician and Serbian campaigns, hunger was a constant companion. Schindler noted that this largely stemmed from the heavy focus on tactics rather than strategy and logistics. Field kitchens often lagged behind the advancing troops, leaving the men hungry and forced to scavenge for food. When available some officers would purchase food from the local populace to distribute among their men.

Taslauanu wrote that during the retreat, he was able to buy a few pigs and potatoes from a farmer

¹²³Taslauanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 210.

¹²⁴Kisch and Uhse, *Schreib das auf, Kisch!*, 60.

to feed his men. Yet more often than not, the soldiers were forced to scavenge for food in deserted fields. In Galicia foraged potatoes became a staple for the hungry men, Tăslăuanu wrote that, "in such circumstances, potatoes, boiled or fried, were food for kings."¹²⁵ He later voiced his praise for potatoes again, "for three days we had seen no bread and had had to subsist on potatoes. Oh, blessed plant! Blessed be he that brought you among us!"¹²⁶ While potatoes were the most commonly accessible food, the men occasionally ate ducks they could hunt or abandoned livestock. Tăslăuanu noted happily that he once found a cucumber to eat, and Zombory-Moldován was given a bowl of curds by peasant family with whom he was quartered.

Hunger made the men unpredictable and hard to control. Upon reaching a village Tăslăuanu recounted that, "hunger and an empty stomach prescribe a special code of morals. Inside of an hour, in spite of the intervention of the officers, the village was literally sacked."¹²⁷ He continued to write that, "hunger introduced a code of morals which has nothing to distinguish it from that of primitive man."¹²⁸ With a sense of resignation, Tăslăuanu described the manner in which his men abandoned their morality:

The men complained freely of wholesale theft. Hunger and misery take no count of rights of property, and for the first time I realized the naked truth of Proudhon's comment : " Property is theft." Food and tobacco are the soldier's greatest treasures, and the thieves made a dead set at these. Meat and bread vanished with extreme rapidity, and as for tobacco, a private told me that you couldn't guard it even with your rifle and bayonet. Nor was personal linen exempt from these unpleasant attentions. The long and short of it was that no man cared for anything but his own existence and his own comfort. The sentiment of altruism, social solidarity and mutual aid was completely obliterated.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 117.

¹²⁶ Tăslăuanu, 210.

¹²⁷ Tăslăuanu, 64.

¹²⁸ Tăslăuanu, 98.

¹²⁹ Tăslăuanu, 128.

The military command sought to stifle this behavior, by issuing a general order against looting and to maintain military conduct. Despite the best efforts of the officers, men living in such marginal conditions likely gave little regard for such orders. Horvath wrote that the shortages of rations ended once the soldiers reached the Carpathians, and settled into developed trench works with established logistical supply lines. Horvath noted that the officers were rationed three cigars a day, and there was plenty of rum and brandy to drink. He described it as "a real picnic to the front lines - sponsored and paid for by the government."¹³⁰ After experiencing the brutal conditions of the Galician front, the Carpathians represented a sharp improvement in both initial safety and quality of life.

Another unavoidable aspect of the war in Serbia and Galicia, was interaction with the local populace. As soldiers marched into Galicia they often passed refugees abandoning their homes, to avoid the approaching war. Horvath described his first encounter with refugees:

Long columns of fugitives clogged the roads. Their household goods and furniture were piled on wagons. The poor ones had to do with push-carts - even baby carriages. Little children trotted along weeping, holding on desperately to their mother's skirts. Women carried babes on their backs, suckling on their bosoms. They were unkempt and unwashed, muddy and dusty, with a wild look in their eyes. They begged us for bread and we gave it to them. We gave it to ladies, too; they were just as hungry but were ashamed to beg.

Sometimes, when a woman was close to a breakdown, my men would take the child from her arms and carry it themselves. One would give his rifle to his neighbor in the file and carry the child for a while... Then the man would smile and think of his own baby left at home.¹³¹

Not all of the accounts by soldiers spoke of the peasants in such kind terms. Tăslăuanu wrote, "the women looked for all the world like sorceresses, their hair unwashed and uncombed and

¹³⁰ Horvath, *Captured!*, 38.

¹³¹ Horvath, 8–9.

their clothes filthy and in rags."¹³² The stark poverty of the region made a definite impression on the soldiers.

In *Radetzky March*, Joseph Roth detailed the how marginal the lives of the Galician peasantry was, living in the buffer zone between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. Soldiers stationed in the region often fell deeply into alcoholism or racked up extensive gambling debts, the men found little other entertainment so far from "civilization". While Horvath and his men initially viewed the peasants with sympathy, after an arduous experience at the front their opinion of the locals began to shift. Many men opted to sleep in tents rather than the crowded and filthy peasant huts. Horvath wrote that his men, "were not interested in the possible outcome of the war. Galicia - though belonging to the Monarchy - was a strange country to all of us. What did we have in common with those long-coated Jews and filthy Ruthenians?"¹³³

Both Tăslăuanu and Zombory-Moldován made note of unfavorable interactions with the Jewish population in Galicia. After supposedly witnessing a group of Jews negotiating to purchase a young girl, he remarked, "I was horrified at their complete lack of scruples."¹³⁴ Later in the memoir he noted that he met a Jewish soldier who was exceptionally brave, and admitted that he felt Jews were often not brave enough for military service. After wounded, and while traveling onboard a medical cart, Zombory-Moldován encountered a Jewish man who offered him a glass of lemonade. After drinking the glass Zombory-Moldován realized the man was

¹³²Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 67.

¹³³Horvath, *Captured!*, 31.

¹³⁴Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 87.

waiting for compensation, feeling that the man had attempted to take advantage of a him, a wounded soldier, he drove him off.¹³⁵

Relations between the local civilian populace and the soldiers became strained, as suspicions of treason and espionage were rife. Soldiers heading to the front received warnings not to trust civilians, as they might be spies. In *Radetzky March* the protagonist, Carl Joseph cuts down a hanged Ruthenian while leading his men into Galicia. Many accounts include references to these fears, but Tăslăuanu remained heavily concerned about potential spies. This is somewhat ironic, as during mobilization he chaffed at the idea Hungarians might question the loyalties of the Romanians, and he felt he and his comrades were under scrutiny. Yet despite his own experience, as soon as he set foot in Galicia he began to see spies seemingly everywhere. He noted that, "all these wretches have sold themselves to the Russians" and that, "I put down everyone could not speak German as a spy."¹³⁶ His suspicions were only emboldened, when they passed through a village in which a priest was hanged as a spy. One man Tăslăuanu claimed, "was altogether too cunning and observant... he tried to look like a gaping country bumpkin... I was pretty certain he was counting us."¹³⁷ In Halicz, he observed a beggar who, "with his broad forehead and narrow, furtive eyes it was impossible to mistake him for anything but a spy."¹³⁸ Eventually Tăslăuanu's commanding officer told him that suspicion was not enough to arrest people, and that actual evidence of espionage was needed. Tăslăuanu did later have a woman arrested when she approached to close to the trenches. In Serbia soldiers had even more anxiety

¹³⁵ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 63–64.

¹³⁶ Tăslăuanu, *With the Austrian Army in Galicia.*, 37–38.

¹³⁷ Tăslăuanu, 43.

¹³⁸ Tăslăuanu, 57.

regarding civilians as they were on enemy territory, and it was almost impossible to determine if they were guerilla fighters, this tension resulted in the execution of suspected Serbian civilians.¹³⁹

By examining the accounts left by soldiers who served in the campaigns of 1914, it is possible to gather a far more nuanced understanding of the conflict, than if one reads only the accounts of generals or official history. In the words of the men who fought in Serbia and Galicia, nationalist tensions were not the cause of the disastrous outcome. Instead these men blamed the imperial officers for their obsolete tactics and the lack of modern artillery in sufficient numbers to contend with Russian guns. Because of poor infrastructure and logistics the men often arrived at the front exhausted and hungry, hardly in fighting condition. Distrust of the local populations also contributed to the soldiers' anxiety, and failed to instill them with a sense of duty to defend Galician land.

The spread of information from soldiers to their families were stifled through heavy censorship of letters and postcards. While his work focuses primarily upon the experiences of men serving in prisoner of war camps, Alon Rachamimov's book *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front*, discusses the military's efforts to censor the writings of their soldiers. A letter might be censored if it mentioned military information like locations, but also if they contained information of defeats, or even complaints over lack of food or supplies. Ultimately families only learned of the reality of the war when the soldiers returned home on leave or medical absence and could retell their accounts in person.

Sadly these accounts have failed to gain the same impact upon the field as accounts written by men such as Conrad for several reasons. While in the post-war period Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel*, and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* received popular

¹³⁹ Ben Shepard's *Terror in the Balkans* draws connections between the civilian atrocities in the Balkans during the Second World War, and Wehrmacht officers who had served in the Austro-Hungarian army in the Balkan theater.

interest in Germany, works of a different nature became popular in the former Habsburg realms. Where the afore mentioned German works center around the brutality of the war and Germany's military defeat, many Central European works revolved around the empire's collapse, and often its dysfunction. Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* painted a dismal image of the empire's waning days, and Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* portrays the empire as a decrepit bureaucracy overseen by ignorant and cruel Austrians. It seems many in the fledgling Central European states had little interest in reading works based around the experience of soldiers fighting under the Habsburg banner. Unlike Pitreich, these soldiers did not encounter resistance from "gatekeepers", but instead were victims of their own marginality within the turbulent realities of the post-war period.

CHAPTER 3: THE PRESS

Following the assassination of Arch duke Franz Ferdinand and the subsequent rising of international tensions, the Habsburg press served as the primary source of information the citizens of the empire could find. In Vienna, rumors began to swirl immediately, as shown in Jaroslav Hašek's 1921 novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk*. In the novel Švejk was initially unsure of which Ferdinand was slain. Upon hearing of the assassination, Švejk thought it was either the Ferdinand who worked for a chemist until he drank a bottle of hair oil, or the Ferdinand who collected manure who was killed, and not the empire's heir. While Hašek's example was without doubt exaggerated for comedic effect, it does show the level of confusion following the immediate assassination. Amidst the myriad of rumors and hearsay that flooded the streets and coffeehouses of Austria-Hungary, the citizenry turned to established press outlets to receive a more reliable account of events.

As the war eventually erupted in the summer of 1914, the empire's press, understandably, became heavily focused upon the conflict. Even specialist periodicals, such as the automobile enthusiast paper *Allgemeine Automobil-Zeitung* began to include articles about the use of military automobiles, reports on club members serving on the front, and efforts to raise funds for organizations such as the Red Cross. As the war impacted all facets of society, it is only natural that its presence was felt in a great variety of forms of press.

This chapter primarily makes use of the Viennese paper, *Neue Freie Presse* (NFP), as this popular daily paper serves as an example of one such source that the average citizen of Vienna relied upon to learn of the war's progression. The NFP was established in September of 1861, after its founders split with the paper *die Presse*. From its beginning the paper identified itself as being liberal, and sought to promote the importance of Austria within the German speaking world as a bastion of constitutional freedoms. Throughout publication, which ceased in 1939, the editors of the paper continued to espouse these views. While the paper's audience was comprised largely of members within the Austro-German bourgeoisie, rather than the working class, it had a large impact upon the public discourse in Vienna. Historian, Robin Okey noted that in the period leading to and during the First World War, the NFP "was the greatest single source of information helping to shape the thinking of Austria's politically aware German speakers."¹⁴⁰ Furthermore Kurt Paupier, a historian of Austrian journalism, argued that only the NFP and the *Presse* shared the same level of impact among Vienna's daily papers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Paupier reached this conclusion based upon the paper's universality of coverage and the impact it held on political matters. Under the editorship of the dynamic Moritz Benedikt, in 1914 the NFP's circulation reached an upwards of 114,000 papers sold daily.¹⁴¹

While the majority of journalistic documents utilized in this work hailed from the NFP, it also includes political cartoons and other visual stimuli, common in Vienna's humorist papers. While the previous chapters explored the explanations of the men who planned or fought in the war, this chapter, by way of popular media, seeks to understand the level of comprehension the

¹⁴⁰ Robin Okey, "The Neue Freie Presse and the South Slavs of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 1 (2007): 81.

¹⁴¹ Okey, 82.

average bystander, physically distanced from the front lines, had of the pivotal events of Galicia. Ultimately, the Austrian press failed to accurately report on the events of the Galician campaign and in turn left the empire's citizenry with an unrealistic view of the war's progress. When studying the message presented in Viennese daily periodicals it is quickly evident that those writing the news were almost as ignorant to the reality of war as their readers. The combination of stiff censorship and limited access to information quickly established a system of the blind leading the blind, the informers knowing little more than the informed.

Through the period of mobilization and the initial fighting in August, the papers heaped praise upon the Austro-Hungarian military forces and left little room for the possibility of failure. The Habsburg forces were described in glowing terms and lauded as mighty heroes, while their enemy was described as, "drunken barbarians and Asian hordes"¹⁴². This is unsurprising because of the general war euphoria of 1914, but also emerged in a similar fashion as the idealist and virtuous image of the Austro-Hungarian military. In the opening weeks of the war, the Austrian army achieved victory at the battles of Kraśnik and Komarów, yet these would mark the end of the empire's good luck and a chance for a decisive end to the war. In the closing days of August and the beginning of September the tide rapidly began to shift against the Austrians, blunders made in planning became evident, and the Russians proved more than apt to learn from their early losses.

After Austria's fortunes turned, by September 1914, the papers continued to present the events of the war in an increasingly positive fashion. On the 2nd of September a column noted the anniversary of the Battle of Sedan, and sought to draw connections between the Prussians'

¹⁴² "Ein Tag froher Nachrichten. Lüttich durch Sturm genommen und öster - reichischer Einmarsch in Rußland.," *Neue Freie Presse*, August 8, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

pivotal victory, and the Austrians success in Galicia, and claimed that, “it is clear that the monarchy will have its own *Sedantag*.”¹⁴³ This use of historical comparisons was commonplace in wartime articles, the same paper went on to compare German victories in the west to Hannibal’s victory over the Romans at the Battle of Cannae. History was used not only to lend gravitas to victories, but was utilized by the Habsburg press and state for the purpose of propaganda.

Propaganda posters and political cartoons often depicted the Habsburg state in its “golden days”, during its role as leader of the Holy Roman Empire. Unlike their German allies, who only could draw upon recent history, such as their victory of the French only a few decades earlier, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was forced to look further into the past. In the century preceding the Great War, the Habsburgs saw their empire slowly lose territory and international sway to the Germans, and domestic control to the Hungarians. Since the rise of Napoleon, and the Peace of Pressburg in 1806, the Habsburgs were forced to watch the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the establishment of the Austrian Empire, and finally the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As a result of this troubling century, the Austrians instead settled on a much earlier period to model. Medieval and early modern imagery was widely used, in which Austria was portrayed as a chivalric knight clad in the familiar black and yellow of the monarchy. The connection between chivalrous knights and the supposed virtue of the Austrian military and officer class is clear. Austria-Hungary sought not only to remind its citizens of a virtuous past, but to push the notion that this tradition had been carried into the First World War. This theme was further used in papers, which made claims that once Russia was defeated there, “will be a pleasure reign in this realm like hardly ever before and like after the liberation from

¹⁴³ “Ein bewegter Abend. Depesche unseres Kriegskorrespondenten: Stimmung sehr gut.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 2, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

the Turks.”¹⁴⁴ This inclusion sought to resurrect the concept of the Habsburgs as the defenders of Europe, only instead of serving as the bulwark against the Muslim Ottomans; they fought to protect Europe from Russian despotism.

As times of war require heroes for the sake of the populace, Austro-Hungarian commanders were singled out for praise. Two commanders who enjoyed a great deal of praise early in the Galician campaign were Viktor Dankl, because of his victory at Kraśnik, and Mortiz von Auffenberg as a result of Komarów, and early days of fighting during the Battle of Rawa. The papers detailed the “brilliant victory of Auffenberg” and described him as “a darling of Vienna”. On the 6th of September the paper noted that, “where the commanders go, victory is not far.”¹⁴⁵ Amidst this praising of Austria’s officers and troops, there is no mention of the fact the tide had already begun to turn, in the closing days of August, Austria had suffered its first setback at the Battle of Gnila Lipa, and the Battle of Rawa ended Dankl’s string of victories. Yet despite the beginning of Austria-Hungary’s series of defeats, they failed to appear in newspapers.

Instead, the papers continued to speak only of success against the Russian “colossus”¹⁴⁶. Updates continued to appear on the front page of the paper, noting various victories, yet often failed to make note of how large battles were, and what impact they held on the wider conflict. Also included were quotes from soldiers, describing the dire conditions of the Russian forces, one account claiming that, “these Russian soldiers had neither knapsack or coat... and only one

¹⁴⁴ “Ein bewegter Abend. Depesche unseres Kriegskorrespondenten: Stimmung sehr gut.”

¹⁴⁵ ““Der Kampf gegen vierzig russische Divisionen. Einige Gedanken eines militärischen Laien über den Krieg in Galizien.” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 6, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁴⁶ “Ein Tag der Hoffnungen. Zweihundert Geschütze von der Armee Auffenberg erbeutet und im Bereiche der Armeen Auffenberg und Dankl fast zwanzigtausend Gefangene gemacht.” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 4, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

piece of moldy bread”, and continued by noting during battles the “Russians fired badly.”¹⁴⁷ This rhetoric likely served as a counter balance against the undeniable truth that the Russians possessed a numerical advantage in Galicia. While the Austrian soldier might very well have been outnumbered, the papers wished to assure their readers that they were far better equipped and trained. It was also explained often that the Austrians possessed not only a material advantage over their foes, but carried a less tangible advantage because, “the army is so efficient, so devoted, and so richly equipped with soldierly virtues.”¹⁴⁸ It seems that the Austro-Hungarian leadership placed more importance in the virtues of its men, rather than their equipment or numbers.

While as the war dragged on, the Imperial Russian army did suffer from a shortage of supplies, it is important to note the Russians struggled with shortages only a few weeks into the war, the sheer size of the military proved to be a difficult organization to maintain. Yet the Russians were hardly unique in this matter, Austria found itself in a similar situation and became heavily reliant upon Germany for material goods. Yet this view of the inferior Russian army was popular in the prewar period, and was perpetuated long after the war, likely a result of defeats against German forces and its near collapse from political turmoil on the home front.

Interestingly enough on the front page of the *Neue Freie Presse* on September 6 an article explained that specifics of the war were ultimately unnecessary for the “military layman” to

¹⁴⁷ ““Kleine Episoden aus der großen Schlacht.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 4, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁴⁸ “Die Gefangennahme von Viertausend Serben bei Mitrovitzta und Erfolg des Feldmarschalleutnants Kestranek in den Kämpfen der Armee Dankl.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 8, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

know.¹⁴⁹ Not only was it unneeded, but such information could be harmful, as the layman would be unable to properly grasp the happenings and could easily become confused or misled. Instead the average citizen was better served simply placing their trust in the men serving in the field and the commanders making the decisions. The paper went on to note that thus far their faith in their commanders had been justified, and that, “in three battles are Russian armies not only beaten, but also in confusion.”¹⁵⁰ This admission that a lack of information was beneficial and intended served to lay the groundwork for the press’ policy which became evident within only a few days.

Starting in early September the condition of the city of Lemberg became a focal point within the Austrian press. The unreported defeat at Gnila Lipa had given the Russian forces an almost clear path towards the city. Fearing his beleaguered forces were too badly positioned after their defeat, Conrad had ordered his men to withdraw from Lemberg, which fell into Russian hands on the 3rd of September. On the 7th of September the paper noted that the city had been abandoned purposely, and that the reader could be confident that it would be restored to Habsburg control soon. The following day the paper went on to describe the long history and importance of the city, describing it as, “a jewel in the crown of Austria.”¹⁵¹ Lemberg must be restored as, “it belongs to us, every stone of its monuments, its churches, and its dwellings”. This notion of its place within the empire was stressed, and assured the reader that, “we will bring

¹⁴⁹ “Der Kampf gegen vierzig russische Divisionen. Einige Gedanken eines militärischen Laien über den Krieg in Galizien.”

¹⁵⁰ “Der Kampf gegen vierzig russische Divisionen. Einige Gedanken eines militärischen Laien über den Krieg in Galizien.”

¹⁵¹ “Die Gefangennahme von Viertausend Serben bei Mitrovitza und Erfolg des Feldmarschalleutants Kestranek in den Kämpfen der Armee Dankl.”

Lemberg back and each field of Galicia, everything since one and a half centuries has become Austrian and will stay Austrian for a long time.”¹⁵²

The situation regarding Lemberg loomed large in early September as it offered an opportunity for another great Habsburg victory, the once backwater region of the empire, quickly became the center of attention. The press announced the beginning of the fight for the city on the 10th, and offered that amidst the excitement of the looming battle, “who would not have the desire to fly there.”¹⁵³ For the sake of the layman, the paper then went on to describe the role of modern commanders, and how they had shifted over time. “A Julius Caesar of today keeps no address to the legions, and the art of military speech, in which Napoleon was one of the largest masters, is no longer used”¹⁵⁴. Once again the topic of Russian numerical superiority was raised, but writers assured that it was of no concern; the Austro-Hungarian forces were outnumbered at Zamsoc and Krasnik, yet emerged victorious. Instead of numbers, “only education, increased through traditions and through inherited virtues of the people” is truly important.¹⁵⁵ Yet again the press sought to impart on its readers that the knightly values of the earlier centuries had been carried to the present. Not only did the purported virtues of the Habsburg subjects outweigh that of the enemy, but it was enough to render other disadvantages meaningless. While they heaped praise upon the military’s commanders in their effort to push the enemy back to the “Tartar

¹⁵² “Die Gefangennahme von Viertausend Serben bei Mitrovitzta und Erfolg des Feldmarschalleutants Kestranek in den Kämpfen der Armee Dankl.”

¹⁵³ “Die neue Schlacht bei Lemberg. Beginn großer Schlachten im Räume von Lemberg und östlich von Paris.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 10, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁵⁴ “Am dritten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Der Chef des Generalstabes auf dem Schlachtfelde, der Friedensbünd der Kriegsanstifter und die deutsche Kriegsanleihe.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 12, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁵⁵ “Am dritten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Der Chef des Generalstabes auf dem Schlachtfelde, der Friedensbünd der Kriegsanstifter und die deutsche Kriegsanleihe.”

wastelands” the papers failed to note that on the 11th of September Conrad had ordered a general retreat throughout Galicia, ordering his force back to first the Dnieper, and then San rivers.¹⁵⁶ At this stage in the war, Austria’s “Julius Caesar of today” had virtually forfeited the whole of Galicia to the Russians.

In the face of the battle and the unavoidable casualties to follow, the great sacrifice of the men in the field was lauded. The writer noted that, “he fights for us and gives everything for his country”¹⁵⁷, and that, “the sighs of the wounded and pain, the price of glory and demands a love of home.”¹⁵⁸ Despite the understanding that Austrian soldiers were surely being killed and wounded in the field, few of Vienna’s civilians possessed a grasp of the sheer number of mounting casualties. In the seventeen days of fighting until the general retreat ordered on September 11th, the empire was faced with 100,000 men slain, 220,000 wounded and an additional 100,000 falling into enemy hands. In just over two weeks, Conrad had effectively lost a third of his fighting force in Galicia, yet the papers provided no insight into this reality.

This false reporting became immediately obvious to wounded soldiers returning from the front. Upon returning to his home in Budapest, Bela Zombory-Moldovan was shocked to hear his family and friends all thought the war was going well. While sitting in a Budapest coffeehouse Zombory-Moldovan was handed a newspaper, and was disgusted by its contents:

Report from the battlefield! Glorious weather! Battle-readiness of our troops unbreakable! They await the Russian attack from new positions, etcetera. It had evidently been composed by the armchair generals of the Pest coffeehouses... How alien it was...

¹⁵⁶ “Am vierten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Stimmungen Heim Gedanken an die schweren Kämpfe.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 13, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁵⁷ “Am vierten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Stimmungen Heim Gedanken an die schweren Kämpfe.”

¹⁵⁸ “Die neue Schlacht bei Lemberg. Beginn großer Schlachten im Räume von Lemberg und östlich von Paris.”

How far removed these people were from the agonies... with no conception of the reality of war.¹⁵⁹

Having fought in the desperate retreat towards the Carpathians, Zombory-Moldovan expressed a great deal of scorn at the “coffeehouse Conrads”¹⁶⁰ who spoke at length of Austria-Hungary’s victories.

On the 14th of September the last substantial coverage of Galicia appeared on the front page of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Galicia did not reemerge on the front page until the end of the month. Within this final coverage was a question and answer column addressing hypothetical queries the reader might have regarding the war’s progression. The question of why victory had not yet been achieved was explained away with notions that it was simply taking longer than expected to defeat all the Russians, but not to worry, the war would assuredly end soon. Further seeking to assure the reader all was well, the paper noted,

Russia has thrown herself on us with all her power, hoping to drive over us like a steam roller and squeeze us smoothly. That did not succeed and will not succeed. So far, we have not only stopped the Russian main power, but also caused it great damage.¹⁶¹

The paper added that Russia’s poor performance had undoubtedly, “disappointed the expectations of the French General Staff.” And that Austria’s ally, Germany, “certainly appreciates this immense value.”¹⁶² A recurring motif found in Austrian papers was the misfortune of those who allied themselves with Russia.

¹⁵⁹ Zombory-Moldován and Zombory-Moldovan, *The Burning of the World*, 72.

¹⁶⁰ The translator of this memoir used the term “armchair general” but in the notes added that the direct translation was “Coffeehouse Conrads”, a popular wartime phrase

¹⁶¹ “Die Ergebnisse der fünftägigen Schlacht bei Lemberg. Nach erfolgreicher Offensive und Gefangen-nahme von 10.000 Russen die Versammlung aller Teile der Armee in günstiger Lage mit Rücksicht auf die russische Uebermacht.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 14, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁶² “Die Ergebnisse der fünftägigen Schlacht bei Lemberg. Nach erfolgreicher Offensive und Gefangen-nahme von 10.000 Russen die Versammlung aller Teile der Armee in günstiger Lage mit Rücksicht auf die russische Uebermacht.”

One column from the 25th of September mentioned the tragedy of French soldiers lying mortally wounded in field, because of their alliance, noting that “the Russian friendship is a mortal danger.”¹⁶³ England, it was said, had brought such a disastrous fate upon itself, because of its desire for Russian gold. While the Russian forces had met stiff resistance from the Germans along the border of East Prussia, and suffered a defeat at Tannenberg, it is safe to say the French were hardly disappointed with Russia’s successes in Galicia, with the Austro-Hungarian army in tatters and limping towards the Carpathians.

The cause for this dearth of credible information in newspapers came as a result of heavy censorship which was imposed upon the Austrian half of the empire once martial law was established at the declaration of war, while Hungary also underwent censorship; it was overseen by a separate body. The duty of censorship was carried out by regional civil servants, who were tasked with reviewing each paper for at least three hours. These censor officers were overseen by the newly established War Surveillance Office (*Kriegsüberwachungsamt – KÜA*), and its Hungarian counterpart, the War Surveillance Commission (*Hadfelügyeleti Bizottság – HFB*). As one historian explained, The KÜA and HFB sought to prevent the publication of:

Anything which fell into the following loose categories: first, any disloyal or unpatriotic writing; second, any discussions which might give the impression to the enemy of Austro-Hungarian weakness (news of demonstrations or economic difficulties; third, any nationalist, socialist, or religious ideas which were judged provocative; fourth, items which criticized sensitive government measures; fifth, alarming rumors, and sixth, pacifist propaganda which gave the impression abroad that there was war-weariness.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ “Die russische Freundschaft eine Lebensgefahr. Das verlassene Serbien und das ohne Hilfe gebliebene Frankreich und das von bösen Ahnungen beunruhigte England.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 25, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁶⁴ Mark Cornwall, “News, Rumour and the Control of Information in Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918,” *History* 77, no. 249 (1992): 53–54.

Under these criteria, Austro-Hungarian papers were heavily controlled, and quickly became propaganda machines of the state. Despite this state control, some initially welcomed its presence. The Hungarian journalist, Marcell Benedek claimed that:

In those first weeks many of us believed everything we read in the newspapers... We welcomed wartime censorship in the belief that this would put an end to rumors and we would get the whole truth in the official reports.¹⁶⁵

Censorship was especially heavy in ethnic communities the state deemed suspect. Some papers seemingly refused to bend to these new regulations and the Bosnian paper, *Glas Slobode* suspended its publication. Other papers were instead forcibly ended, some thirty Serbian language papers were closed, and by the end of 1914, 36 newspapers in Bohemia and Moravia were shutdown.¹⁶⁶ The specter of national unrest resulted in Austria-Hungary's heavy handed policies, which likely only served to materialize these conflicts which eventually broke out towards the end of the war.

The paper included an official status update of the war, provided by a member of the general staff named Höfer. Fascinatingly enough and unbeknownst to the Austrian population, Höfer was not a real person, instead it was a pseudonym used by Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau serving at the army high command.¹⁶⁷ The man, who, in the period following the war wrote the official history of the conflict, was tasked with providing these minimal reports, often clinical in their contents, to assure the reader that the war was progressing according to plan. Even at the height of the Austrian's failure in Galicia, and forced to abandon great swaths of territory, on the second page the Höfer report noted that, "despite the constantly unfavorable weather, our troops

¹⁶⁵ Cornwall, 55.

¹⁶⁶ Schindler, *Fall of the Double Eagle.*, 271.

¹⁶⁷ Cornwall, "News, Rumour and the Control of Information in Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918," 53.

are in excellent condition.”¹⁶⁸ The memoirs left by soldiers serving in Galicia in this stage of the war wrote at length about lack of food, a near constant fear of Cossacks, and the misery of having to sleep in freezing muddy ditches along the side of the road, hardly the “excellent conditions” the official report implied.

One type of article which provided the greatest insight into the conditions of the front came from war correspondents, yet these still failed to provide a full picture of the failing Austrian forces in Galicia. The *Neue Freie Presse* contained columns written by the prolific correspondent and writer, Alexander Roda Roda. Roda Roda’s accounts provided an on the ground description of the front, focusing heavily upon the lodging of soldiers and field hospitals. In some instances quotes were included by soldiers, which made note of Russian trenches and spies, both common facets of soldier’s memoirs. His accounts occasionally depicted the less glorious side of the conflict, noting the spread of cholera, and deserted streets lined with closed shops, and the presence of older men in second line units serving on the front. Roda Roda described a group of older men smoking pipes and carrying long obsolete Werndl rifles, commenting that, “it is a peculiarity of this war that sets mature men in motion, and behold, they fight like the young” and added optimistically, ‘I do not know what their task is, but they will solve it.’¹⁶⁹ Yet despite his best efforts, Roda Roda often failed to see much in the way of combat for a number of reasons.

¹⁶⁸ “Vorzügliche Verfassung unserer Truppen im Norden. Fortschritte auf dem serbischen Kriegsschauplatz,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 24, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁶⁹ Roda Roda, “Die Fahrt des Kriegspressequartiers an die Front.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 5, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

In one instance he confessed despite his best effort, he “did not see a fight”¹⁷⁰ as a result of overcrowded roads. At another point he explained that his inability to get close to the action was the result of the military refusing to allow journalists to come close to the front, noting that, “we from the press district had not been allowed to close to war.”¹⁷¹ In some cases he succeeded in reaching the front, and was able to witness fighting or the immediate after effects of battle. After arriving at the front following the renewed offensive in December, he detailed the gruesome battlefield before him, “The scene of fierce fighting. Hundreds of unburied bodies are a frightening testimony to this.”¹⁷² Upon seeing the results of an Austrian victory, he bemoaned the “prohibition of photography” as he would have liked to share such a sight with the readers. While ever optimistic about Austrians success in the war, a requirement for war correspondents, he did occasionally question the impact the battles he witnessed had upon the wider conflict. On the 22nd of October after witnessing a series of new offensives, and some local victories, he added that, “I cannot give judgment about the whole situation, I have only seen a small section.”¹⁷³ While it might be instinctive to dismiss the reports of Roda Roda and other correspondents as being as biased and censored as the rest of the press, one must recognize that as small a contribution it might have been, it represented the most accurate ground level view of the war available to the empire’s citizens outside of speaking with soldiers returning from the front.

¹⁷⁰ Roda Roda.

¹⁷¹ Roda Roda, “Verwundete und Mitkämpfer.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 4, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁷² Roda Roda, “Das Nordringen unserer Truppen. Rückkehr der Bewohner von West- und Mittelgalizien.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 19, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁷³ “Feuer der Schlacht. Erlebnisse als Augenzeuge des Kampfes um die Höhen von Magiera.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 22, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

As the papers were devoid of information pertaining to the fighting in Galicia, it is important to study what occupied the daily paper instead. A common type of article sought to dehumanize the Russians and present Austria and Germany's aims in a glorious light. Readers were presented with an entirely unfavorable depiction of Czar Nicholas II. It was written that the czar had initiated the war without provocation, not to increase the size of his domain, but instead out of a desire to destroy Germany and Austria. On September 12th the paper explained that, "this war was not the free choice of the monarchy, but it was imposed on it by the czar, who wanted to derail the Europe and attack the existence of this empire."¹⁷⁴ The czar's hate for the Germans stemmed from his envy of Germany's prosperity and increasing global influence. Yet the papers sought to frame the Central Power's victory as not only a boon for them, but for all of Europe.

The Austrian press sought to depict the war as a struggle for civilization itself, and noted that, "a victory... would be a victory of good and every failure a victory of the bad on earth."¹⁷⁵ Making extensive use of historical and literary works, on September 10th included the quote from the Belgian writer, Maurice Maeterlinck, "this war is a civilization battling against the barbarian."¹⁷⁶ While the originator of the quote wrote many anti-war pieces, and the quote was likely not intended for such a use, the Austrian journalist felt little qualms in utilizing it. For the citizens of Vienna, the war was presented to them through the press as a necessary struggle against "a great snake"¹⁷⁷ which desired to devour which ever nations lay in its path, and those

¹⁷⁴ "Am dritten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Der Chef des Generalstabes auf dem Schlachtfelde, der Friedensbnd der Krieganstifter und die deutsche Krieganleihe."

¹⁷⁵ "Am vierten Tage der Schlacht bei Lemberg. Stimmungen Heim Gedanken an die schweren Kämpfe."

¹⁷⁶ "Die neue Schlacht bei Lemberg. Beginn großer Schlachten im Räume von Lemberg und östlich von Paris."

¹⁷⁷ "Auf den Kopf der Schlange. Die Kriegserklärung der Entteutemächte gegen die Türkei, Rußland als politischer Mittelpunkt des ganzen europäischen Krieges, die Entscheidung Nicht in Afrika und nicht in Asien, sondern in Europa, und nicht auf dem Wasser, sondern auf dem Lande, und die türkische Armee als Flügel der

who allied with Russia did so out of ignorance or greed. While the focus rested primarily upon the danger the czar posed to Europe, some attention was paid to the status of his subjects.

The *Neue Freie Presse* described the Russian Empire as, “limitless despotism having the characteristics of a crass police state, which is subject to the most indecent means.”¹⁷⁸ As a result of the “most terrible despotism of all time”¹⁷⁹, coupled with reported instances of riots and famine, the journalist questioned whether another revolution might soon occur within Russia. This somewhat sympathetic telling of the conditions of the Russian peasantry, served two primary purposes. First, it sought to present the superior quality of life the subjects of Franz Joseph enjoyed, and secondly, it further acted to drive home the necessity of defeating the czar. Victory against the czar meant not only safety for the west, but also for the Russians themselves.

In this crusade against the imperial forces of Russia, the Austrian press went to great lengths to impart upon their audience of the importance and strength of the Austro-German alliance and their fight to, “Protect the world from Muscovite rule.”¹⁸⁰ This alliance was, as one column described, based upon a “sense of knighthood, and to protect honesty even in the struggle against a thousand fold hate, to repel filth... and thus remain a sanctuary for humanity

Armeen der verbündeten Kaiserreichs.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 8, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁷⁸ “Die Niederlage der Russen in Galizien und Polen.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 19, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁷⁹ “Politische Gedanken über den Armeebefehl des Erzherzogs Friedrich. Günstige Lage der verbündeten Armeen, beginnender Zusammenbruch der russischen Offensive, Aufstände und Hungersnot im Rücken der Feinde und Einigkeit und Zuversicht in der Monarchie und in Deutschland.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 2, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁸⁰ “Ein Erfolg der verbündeten Armeen auf dem nördlichen Kriegsschauplatze. Zurückwerfen des Feindes von Opatow und Klimoutow gegen die Weichsel durch die Schutter an Schutter kämpfenden deutschen und österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen, günstiges Fort - schreiten der Operationen in Galizien und Russischpolen, vollständige Niederlage der Russen am Uzsoker Passe in den Karpathen.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 6, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

and dignity in Europe today.”¹⁸¹ On the 1st of the December, the front page began with a column which described Hungarian minister Tisza’s meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm II, in which he noted that, “our army also triggers the feeling of admiration and trust from our ally.”¹⁸² One must question with how much admiration the Germans truly had for their ally’s army. While Germany had emerged victorious over Russian forces and was locked in a stalemate with the western nations, Austria had embarrassingly botched their invasion of Serbia, and had lost miles of their territory to the Russians.

This *Waffenbrüderschaft* and *Blutsbrüderschaft*¹⁸³ were later expanded to include not only the Germanic elements of Central Powers, but also the Ottomans when they entered the war in late October. Political cartoons began to include images of muscular Turks in stereotypical red fezzes fighting the Russian bear along the Black Sea, or scrawny Englishmen in the Dardanelles. The shifting tides of wars had elevated the centuries old foe of the Habsburgs, who was mentioned only a month earlier in that the ensuing peace would mirror their defeat of the Turks, now emerged as a devoted ally to the empire. In the words of Shakespeare, war often makes “strange bedfellows”.

When the papers were not discussing the civilizing mission which lay before the empire, or the importance of the Central Power’s alliance, it often contained news regarding the efforts of the German Empire. Where the Austrians were unable to discuss their own troubling efforts in the war, they instead sought to promote the success of their ally. While the Austrians had

¹⁸¹ “Politische Eindrücke der günstigen Nachrichten vom Kriegsschauplatze. Operation der österreichisch-ungarischen und der deutschen Streitkräfte im Norden, rückgängige Bewegung des Feindes und weitere Erfolge der verbündeten Armeen.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 30, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁸² “Politische Gedanken über den Armeebefehl des Erzherzogs Friedrich. Günstige Lage der verbündeten Armeen, beginnender Zusammenbruch der russischen Offensive, Aufstände und Hungersnot im Rücken der Feinde und Einigkeit und Zuversicht in der Monarchie und in Deutschland.”

¹⁸³ Translated as “brothers in arms” and “blood brothers”

suffered incredible casualties in Galicia, the far smaller German *Ostheer* had achieved remarkable victories against the Russians. Germany's actions on the western front were also heavily popularized. Early victories against the Belgians and French fueled reporting that Paris would soon fall into German hands. Even after the German drive towards Paris was halted at the Battle of the Marne in September, and the war settled into a stalemate, the press continued to boast of German victories. While hardly the decisive victory envisioned, stalemates were much preferable to Austria's own steady retreats, and proved much easier to report on. In addition to German military accomplishments, the papers also ran columns discussing the strength of the German economy, and the status of British naval actions. It is fair to say in the autumn of 1914, the average citizen of Vienna had a far better grasp of Germany's status in the war, than realities of their own army fighting within their own territory. One element of the Galician campaign which permeated the front pages of the paper was the national loyalty of the empire's citizens.

The topic of nationalism also appeared occasionally on the pages of the paper. The overarching theme of these columns was the strength of unit among the varying peoples of the empire. Articles often lauded the bravery of non-German speaking soldiers, such as the Bosnian units. Others sought to express the extreme loyalty of the Ruthenian people living in Galicia, and their refusal to side with the Russians. While the paper presented a supreme confidence in the loyalty of the Ruthenians, the military command in Galicia carried a very different outlook. The military authorities looked upon the Ruthenians with extreme suspicion and ordered the hanging of many based on little to no evidence of treason. The papers also made the occasional reference to the discovery and execution of spies in Galicia. Despite this rather large departure from reality, the papers continued to present the Austro-Hungarian forces as an undividable monolith. On the 22nd of October the paper explained that both the Austrian and Hungarian peoples were

united in a struggle to preserve their nation, and fought alongside one another, not out of legal obligation, but to ensure victory over those who, “threaten and oppress their nationality.”¹⁸⁴ A few days later the paper ran a column noting that despite speaking differing languages, the empires’ nationalities fought and died for the monarchy.¹⁸⁵ The paper failed to blame national conflicts for the military’s defeat, largely in part because they failed to mention defeats. Although they did note that the Russians sought to stoke nationalist unrest in the empire, and that, “revenge and pan-Slavism are scourges of humanity.”¹⁸⁶

Just as in the previous two chapters, the NFP failed to label nationalism as weakness of the state or military, yet for one glaring difference. While Conrad and Pitreich and the common enlisted men failed to blame nationalism as a result of their firsthand experience, the press did so as a result of their lack of firsthand knowledge. As in this chapter, the journalists writing for the NFP were rarely allowed anywhere near the frontlines. Instead the Viennese journalists described the empire’s pluralist identity in the most idealized manner possible. Just as the empire’s soldiers were brave and honorable, the many nations of the empire were a source of strength and not division. The other reason stems simply from the fact the journalists themselves did not realize the war was going poorly in Galicia, and as such failed to devise a scapegoat for the crushing Austrian defeats.

News of Galicia once more returned to the pages of the *Neue Freie Presse* in the final days of September. On the 28th a column finally noted that the fighting had begun in the

¹⁸⁴ “Feuer der Schlacht. Erlebnisse als Augenzeuge des Kampfes um die Höhen von Magiera.”

¹⁸⁵ “Mit treuem Gedenken. Den für das Vaterland gefallenen Helden gewidmet.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 1, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁸⁶ “Die Vernichtung als Grundfaß. Einundvierzigtausend Russen und achttausend Serben als Gefangene in die Monarchie abgeschoben, dreihundert Kanonen erbeutet, die serbischen Kräfte über die Save zurückgeschlagen, Schlachten in Ostpreußen und Frankreich.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 16, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

Carpathians, and urged the readers to disregard any possible foreign propaganda regarding Russian successes. The paper described these as, “the fabric of lies that our opponents try to weave around the monarchy.”¹⁸⁷ The goal of these false Russian reports was to, “distract... and to worry the population” all in an effort to divert attention away from German victories in France. The paper explained that the fighting had shifted to the Carpathians, as Conrad had intentionally reorganized the army to such a position, and not the reality that after suffering incredible losses, the Austrians were forced to limp to the safety of the Carpathians with the Russians on their heels. The reporting regarding the conditions of the Carpathians remained rather consistent for the remainder of the war. As the fighting had slowed dramatically the reports often included brief descriptions such as “the situation has not changed”¹⁸⁸ or even that “nothing of importance”¹⁸⁹ occurred. Victories were mentioned, and often noted the number of Russian soldiers and machineguns captured, yet failed to note the larger significance of these battles. In reality these were often short skirmishes with little impact on the wider war. The matter of machine guns interestingly enough can be seen often, after such a battle on the 24th of December the paper boasted that, “not a machine gun fell in the hands of the enemy.”¹⁹⁰

For the press the most important aspect of covering the fighting in the Carpathians was impressing upon their readers the fact no ground was being lost. The explanation for the fighting

¹⁸⁷ “Abgewiesene russische Streisungen in den Karpathen. unbedeutende Plänkeleien und Zurückweisung der Russen.” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 28, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁸⁸ “Fortdauer der Kämpfe in Russisch-Polen und der Karpathen.” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 29, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁸⁹ “Fortdauer der Schlacht in Nordpolen. Erfolgreiche Kämpfe unserer Truppen bei Tymbark.” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 6, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁹⁰ “Die Kämpfe in Polen und Galizien.” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 24, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

even occurring in the mountains was that it was a calculated decision, and not the result of failure, and as such the fighting had to result in victories. Russian operations in the Carpathians were described as being, “effortlessly dismissed”¹⁹¹ and the reader assured that there was, “not a single Russian in Unger country.”¹⁹² On October 4th early in the fight for the Carpathians, the paper explained that a Russian victory would be impossible, and ultimately detrimental to the Russian war effort:

If this had happened, then the Russian army would have for the sake of their own insignificant expeditions, which are hardly successes, the chances of our allied armies are improved on the point where the decision will actually be made.¹⁹³
A Russian victory in the Carpathians would result in the over extension of their forces, leaving them valuable to a decisive counter attack.

The next form of excitement which seized the papers was the liberation of the fortress of Przemyśl. The fortress had served as Conrad’s base of operation in the opening days of the war, but as Austrians began to lose ground, Przemyśl was eventually left with a hundred thousand man garrison to defend itself from the Russians. As the Austro-Hungarian forces fled to the Carpathians, the fortress was quickly enveloped by the enemy. Despite numerous efforts in September, the Russians had proved unable to breach the venerable fortress’ defenses. The paper on the 9th of October noted that the czar was planning a trip to the front to see Przemyśl, as it has become a, “mass grave for his troops.”¹⁹⁴ The column continued with, “The glory of Przemyśl is

¹⁹¹ “Erfolgreiche Verteidigung Przemysls. Zurückdrängung russischer Truppen bei einem Ausfall nach Norden. Abweisung russischer Vor -stöße in den Karpathen.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 16, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁹² “Politische Gedanken über den Armeebefehl des Erzherzogs Friedrich. Günstige Lage der verbündeten Armeen, beginnender Zusammenbruch der russischen Offensive, Aufstände und Hungersnot im Rücken der Feinde und Einigkeit und Zuversicht in der Monarchie und in Deutschland.”

¹⁹³ Roda Roda, “Verwundete und Mitkämpfer.”

¹⁹⁴ “Befreiung des mittleren Galizien durch die Erfolge unserer Truppen. Anmarsch unserer Armee ans der Straße nach Przemysl, Zurückwerfen des Feindes westlich von Dyuow, Abweisung heftiger Angriffe auf Przemysl

already shining like a new hope.” The news regarding Przemyśl continued to improve, as only a few days later the paper detailed an Austrian offensive which succeeded in liberating the fortress. The paper exclaimed that, “The liberation of Przemyśl is one of the most important events of the war.”¹⁹⁵ Yet this excitement was short lived, as on the 12th of November it was admitted that, “Przemyśl is trapped again.”¹⁹⁶

The status of Przemyśl continued to appear occasionally in the paper, often on the second or third pages, with brief updates such as, “the defense of fortress Przemyśl becomes like the first one.”¹⁹⁷ On the 15th of December a column written by Major General Macalif, explained that the encirclement of Przemyśl, “certainly does not alarm us. On the contrary! The inclusion of the fortress has a not inconsiderable advantage for the allies.”¹⁹⁸ This optimism revolved around the concept that Przemyśl’s defenses proved too difficult for the Russians to overcome, and as a result were forced to devote troops to the siege, rather than at the front lines. The reality of the matter is that the Russians quickly abandoned their attempts to take the fortress by force, and instead left only a skeleton garrison in place to surround Przemyśl. Despite the constant reassurances that Przemyśl was fine, the fortress eventually capitulated of its own accord in

mit schweren Verlusten für die Russen, Flucht des Feindes aus dem Winkel zwischen Weichsel und San und vollständige Nieberlage der Serben in Bosnien.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 9, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁹⁵ “Die Befreiung von Przemysl. Ginzücken unserer Truppen in die Festung, Flucht der geschlagenen Russen über die Mußübergänge von Sieniawa und Lezajsk, Viele Gefangene in den Händen unserer Armees.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 12, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁹⁶ “Ungestörte Entwicklung unserer Operationen auf dem nordöstlichen Kriegsschauplatz. Flucht einer russischen Gruppe im Stryjtal.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 12, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

¹⁹⁷ “Erfolgreiche Verteidigung Przemysls. Zurückdrängung russischer Truppen bei einem Ausfall nach Norden. Abweisung russischer Vor -stöße in den Karpathen.”

¹⁹⁸ “Vorfeldstellungen im Festungskampfe.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 15, 1914, ANNO- Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

March of 1915. Dwindling supplies and mounting casualties eventually reached an untenable level. The loss of Przemyśl represented one of Austria's greatest singular defeats of the war. When the garrison surrendered on the 23rd of March, the men marching into Russian captivity included 9 generals, 93 senior staff officers, 2500 officers, and 117,000 enlisted men. The Russians also captured almost a thousand guns. This defeat reportedly drove Kaiser Franz Joseph to tears, and made Conrad contemplate self imposed exile to Switzerland.¹⁹⁹

Following the brief liberation of Przemyśl, the final pivotal event which commanded the attention of the Austrian press was the renewed offensives in Galicia in December. The most important result from these military operations was an Austrian victory at the Battle of Limanowa. This, "decisive victory over the Russian army"²⁰⁰ was described as heralding the "liberation of Western Galicia"²⁰¹ and a total collapse of Russian forces. In the wake of their victory, the Austrian press surprisingly revealed that earlier in the campaign, some missteps had been taken. On the 18th of December, an Austrian officer noted that, "shining, great victories were won in Poland and Galicia" and "what was not said publically in November! Thoughts about the conditions on the eastern front, as they were, can be expressed today without shyness."²⁰² It seems it was only possible to admit to earlier hardships if they were followed by victories, the minor victories of December in a sense gave this officer permission to mention what had previously been censored.

¹⁹⁹ Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*, 139.

²⁰⁰ "Entscheidender Sieg über die russische Armee.," *Neue Freie Presse*, December 18, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

²⁰¹ "Der Sieg Unserer Armee bei Limanowa.," *Neue Freie Presse*, December 14, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

²⁰² "Entscheidender Sieg über die russische Armee."

While Limanowa was celebrated as a great accomplishment for the victory starved Austrians, it must be noted that it was achieved with German support and ultimately failed to alter the trajectory of the war. The bulk of Galicia, including Lemberg, remained in Russian hands, and the Austrians found the majority of their forces confined to the mountain passes of the Carpathians. It was not until the joint Gorlice–Tarnów offensive in the following year, that under German command Galicia was reclaimed from the Russians. The papers continued to laud the importance of Limanowa, and other local victories, boasting that the Austro-Hungarian forces were, “an unbreakable dam against the armies of Russian despotism.”²⁰³ The increased frequency in which Austrian successes were noted was likely to mirror similar German victories in northern Poland. The importance of the fight in Galicia, and its role within the wider war was stressed on the 16th of December, “victory or defeat in the World War cannot be in Serbia and certainly not to be determined in Belgrade. The anvil, on which destiny is hammering his works, is in Flanders, Poland, and Galicia.”²⁰⁴

The most vocal critic of the NFP was the writer and satirist Karl Kraus. Kraus served as the sole writer of a privately published paper titled *Die Fackel*, which ran from 1899 to 1936. In this paper Kraus lambasted various elements of Viennese political and cultural spheres; a common target of his ire was the NFP. Kraus’ distaste for the NFP stemmed from what he saw as having clear biases for liberal politics, and a desire to influence national policy. The later manifesting in what he saw as a concerted effort on behalf of the NFP to push the empire into action in the Balkan wars. Robin Okey’s article, *The Neue Freie Presse and the South Slavs of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914*, supports Kraus’ claims and provided a clear argument as to

²⁰³ “Die Kriegsergebnisse im Norden und im Süden.,” *Neue Freie Presse*, December 16, 1914, ANNO-Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online.

²⁰⁴ “Die Kriegsergebnisse im Norden und im Süden.”

how the NFP sought to shape the popular understanding of the South Slavic people and the Balkans to promote Austrian interests.

Despite representing the loudest critic of the NFP, after an obituary of Franz Ferdinand, *Die Fackel* fell silent for several months, only releasing a new edition in December of 1914. His writing then sought to juxtapose the harsh conditions at the front with the relative comforts of the Viennese home front. Through the remainder of the war Kraus remained a critic of the war and was forced to dodge the work of censors. In the immediate period following the war, Kraus published his best known work, the satirical play *The Last Days of Mankind*. The play detailed the demise of the empire, and like many other postwar pieces, sought to highlight the absurdity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's final years. Kraus' view of the NFP is evident throughout the work, where in the opening scene; a pair of Viennese civilians were depicted as being totally reliant upon the NFP for information. After hearing of the assassination two subscribers of the NFP gather to wait for the daily paper, while waiting the "Oldest Subscriber" exclaimed:

I can't wait for tomorrow's editorial. Benedikt will find words he's never found before, even his editorial when Mayor Lueger died will pale in comparison. At long last he'll be able to say what he really thinks—with caution, of course. But he'll speak from the heart, to everyone, even the goys—you'll see—, even the higher goys, even the highest goys—especially the highest! He knows what's at stake, always did.²⁰⁵

His companion, the "Regular Subscriber" in turn warns not to tempt fate as war might not be inevitable, only for the first man to respond, "you pessimist". The repeated use of the term "goy" likely is in reference to the NFP's perceived Jewish character, several of the papers prominent correspondents were espousers of Zionism. Most famously both Simon Max Nordau and Theodor Herzl wrote for the paper, potentially placing the NFP within the perceived sphere of Vienna's Jewish intelligentsia. Later in the play, Kraus also referred to Benedikt as "the Lord

²⁰⁵ Karl Kraus and Frederick Ungar, *The Last Days of Mankind: A Tragedy in Five Acts* (New York: F. Ungar, 1987), 31.

of the Hyenas.”²⁰⁶ Despite this, Kraus failed to appear as a reliable counterpoint to the NFP during the course of the Galician campaign of 1914.

Within the Viennese press, official censors and journalists acted as gatekeepers of knowledge who prevented the citizenry from learning about the war’s reality. As discussed the writers of the NFP faced barriers established by state apparatuses which limited their ability to accurately present the war. Instead the papers were forced to publish the scanty information presented by the military, and war correspondents like Roda Roda, were often kept far from the front. As a result of heavy censorship, critical voices like Karl Kraus were suppressed and only seemed to have regained traction following the events of Galicia. The news available to the average Austrian was presented by journalists who themselves were unaware of the news, and critics were marginalized and pushed out of the mainstream. Just as in the previous two chapters, the reality of the events of Galicia were hindered from being spread by a variety of forces, dramatically impacting popular perception of the Galician campaign, both during the war and in the decades following. This distortion resulted in the citizens of the empire failing to understand that their nation was failing militarily in a conflict which eventually marked its demise. The censorship of 1914 also resulted in a reliance upon biased sources such as Conrad’s account and those presented by the General Staff, simply because it was the only available information on this period for decades.

Throughout 1914 the depiction of the campaigns of Galicia in Austrian newspapers underwent a series of definite phases. In times of success, the brilliance of the Austrian commanders and stalwart nature of their men were lauded, and comparisons were drawn to historical victories or heroes of antiquity, in a similar vein as the accounts examined in the first

²⁰⁶ Kraus and Ungar, 570.

two chapters. Yet as the tide quickly shifted against Austria, the press simply avoided any mention of these defeats. After the failure at the Battle of Lemberg, reports on Galicia vanished from the front pages, and if included at all were relegated to the second and third pages, and were often brief comments or reports from weeks earlier. After brief instances of success, such as the liberation of Przemyśl and Battle of Limanowa, the press once more began hailing the strength of the monarchy, and reported frequent accounts of local successes provided by official reports, often devoid of useful information. Where the soldiers sought to explain the hardships they suffered from, and members of the General staff sought to defend their reputations, the press simply avoided any responsibility in explaining Austria's defeats, whether intentionally or as a result of extreme state censorship. A shift can finally be seen in political cartoons at the beginning of 1915, likely as the incredible casualties suffered in the previous year and as a result of the extremely costly offensives Conrad launched out of the Carpathians, grew so large they could not be ignored. Cartoons depicted slain soldiers, and men returning from the front missing limbs, while the rich continued their lavish lives. The mood shifted from heroics to sacrifice. One particularly damning cartoon (see image 9) appeared on January 14th of 1915 in the paper, *Die Glühlichte*, in which an old man lifts a baby from its crib, and tells the child, that soon they too will be forced to muster and join the army.

CONCLUSION

The overconfidence of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff was only matched by their resultant defeat on the fields of Galicia. The work of Conrad and his colleagues proved to be irrevocably flawed and resulted in not only an incredible loss of life, but an overall weakening of their empire. The military defeats of Galicia resulted in the loss of an entire territory as well as roughly a third of Austria-Hungary's fighting force. The survivors of the opening days of war found themselves limping toward the Carpathians in a constant state of retreat. Conrad's Winter Offensive of 1915 resulted in a brutal war of attrition, only worsened by the harsh winter. The casualties in this period were astronomical, on the 27th of February, 1915 some 40,000 men were reported missing, "either captured by the enemy or lost in the snow"²⁰⁷.

The fighting in Galicia in 1914 and the early months of 1915 represented the highest rate of casualties suffered by Austria-Hungary in the war. According to the work of the Austrian statistician Gaston Bodart, following 1915 the rate of fatalities in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces decreased dramatically, and continued to decline each subsequent year. Bodart wrote that the total military deaths the empire sustained in 1918 were less than a third that of 1915.²⁰⁸ Fortunately for the empire, starting in the spring of 1915 the tide began to shift

²⁰⁷ Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2002), 38, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/providence/detail.action?docID=243458>.

²⁰⁸ Bodart, Gaston: *Erforschung der Menschenverluste Österreich-Ungarns im Weltkriege 1914–1918*, Austrian State Archive, War Archive Vienna, Manuscripts, History of the First World War, in general, A 91.

somewhat in the east. The joint Austro-German Gorlice–Tarnów offensive which began in May resulted in the reclamation of Galicia, as well as the entirety of Poland falling under the control of the Central Powers. Despite the casualties of the first two years establishing something of a high water mark, the remaining years of war were hardly easy for the empire.

In 1915 the Kingdom of Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary and thus began a long and costly conflict along the Isonzo River. While the Austrians did not suffer comparable losses in casualties or territory on the Southern front to that of Galicia, the stalemate did sap strength from the overtaxed empire. On the Russian front the Austro-Hungarian forces suffered a further blow in the summer of 1916 as a result of the Brusilov offensive. The combination of the grievous losses of the Galician campaign and the impact of the Brusilov offensive, which Austria-Hungary bore the brunt of, deprived the Austro-Hungarian army of its autonomy. For the remainder of the conflict Austria was only able to mount substantial offensives with German aid, and ultimately the fate of Austria-Hungary became tied to that of Germany. The transformation into a German satellite stripped Austria of any leverage on the world stage, as was apparent in Karl I's failed attempts to secure a separate treaty in 1917. Austria's only chance of emerging victorious in the First World War rode entirely upon whether Germany was able to secure victory, which it proved unable to do. The subsequent defeat resulted in the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the ousting of the long reigning Habsburg family. For many soldiers returning from the front they found a far different world waiting for them, and sadly often ones filled with a great deal of conflict.

When reviewing the primary source material coupled with newly published works, there is little doubt that the military defeats of 1914 were the result of poor military tactics and strategy, rather than nationalist tensions as claimed in earlier works. The efforts of career

military officers and nationalist scapegoating distorted the reality of the campaign. The control of information, both at the hands of “gatekeepers” and as a result of the marginality of writers shaped both the Viennese populace’s understanding of the fighting in Galicia, as well as its perception within the historiography of the postwar era. Fortunately the work of modern historians has been able to challenge many of their earlier beliefs, culminating in a more rounded and fair understanding of the conflict.

The concept of soldierly virtue in regards to the Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia looms large in many of the primary sources of the period. This notion of virtue likely stems from the very nature of empire’s cohesion. Unlike modern nation states based upon ethnicity or a commonly shared creed, the Austro-Hungarian Empire relied upon dynastic loyalty. Because of this the Habsburgs made extensive use of medieval imagery to both add legitimacy to the regimes place within Europe, but also as a potent vessel to present a set of chivalric virtues. For those in Vienna and the General Staff the concept of military honor and tradition were the cornerstones of the state, and the responsibility had fallen on their shoulders to maintain this virtuous air, having continued from the medieval era. These men saw themselves as modern day of medieval knights with swords at their sides, and the continued survival of their empire hinged on their continuance of these traditions. While Judson would most likely argue that the Austro-Hungarian state had remained viable as a result of its flexible local structures, the Habsburgs instead often turned towards more classical assumptions. The language and imagery espoused by the Austro-Hungarian state in regard to soldierly virtues seems more at home in the nineteenth century, rather than that of the twentieth century. This language continued into the post-war period as a result of the works of the men constituting the “command conspiracy”.

The first chapter examines accounts written by two officers of the General Staff who served in Galicia. The first being Conrad, and the second Max von Pitreich. While bearing several similarities, such as an adherence to social Darwinist beliefs, they recorded vastly different explanations for their empire's failure in Galicia. Where Conrad sought to deflect blame to preserve his reputation, Pitreich offered a far more balanced and critical depiction of events. Where Conrad blamed the loss of Galicia as a result of Germany's lack of support, Pitreich claimed that the strategy chosen for Galicia was destined to fail from the start. Pitreich argued that the expectation that Germany would cooperate in a combined offensive had no basis in reality. Despite Pitreich's account being comparatively more realistic, as it did not fit the message those engaged in the "command conspiracy" wished to present, it was suppressed. Following the war these men controlled access to state military archives and were able to shape the historiography for decades after, impacting both popular and academic audiences.

The accounts written by men who fought in the fields of Galicia vary greatly from the accounts of the men serving in the Generals Staff. Where Conrad and Pitreich focused upon grand strategy and the nature of Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany, the accounts' of soldiers bear a definite social history bent. The men noted what tactics proved ineffective on the battlefield, as well as the impact of hunger and exhaustion on their performance. The soldiers' accounts also serve to reveal the absurdity of the empire's obsession with virtue and other elements of "pomp and circumstance" which were expected to be adhered to even after horrific defeats and during grueling retreats. Even incredibly nationalistic men such as Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, who possessed not a kind word for Hungarians, failed to blame nationalist differences for their military defeats. These accounts present a very clear image of men facing technologically superior enemies, while being lead by an officer class firmly planted in the

previous century. Tragically many thousands lost their lives on the fields of Galicia as a direct result of their officers holding more stock in bravery and virtue than artillery guns.

On the home front the citizenry of Vienna, just as historians in the postwar period, found themselves ignorant to the reality of the Galician campaign. Vienna's most popular newspaper, *die Neue Freie Presse* failed to present an accurate accounting of the war. Through the course of the conflict the papers were filled with honorific depictions of Austria's actions, yet failed to make note of the crushing defeats the empire suffered. When it became impossible to ignore some elements of the war, the press sought to spin the facts. The retreat to the Carpathians was not the result of defeat, but instead a genius tactical plan on behalf of Conrad. The paper published misinformation as a result of heavy censorship and a reliance of scanty and often inaccurate reports given by the Austrian state. It becomes quickly apparent that those delivering the news were largely ignorant to the current events themselves, a system of the blind leading the blind. While there existed the opportunity for alternate voices in the period, namely from the satirist Karl Kraus, he remained oddly silent, only reemerging in December of 1914. For the citizenry of Vienna the reality of the Galician campaign only became known when soldiers began returning from the front, or in the case of many, did not.

Within the American academic community the 1914 Galician campaign has largely been overlooked. Attention has instead largely been devoted to the events of the Western front, and the eventual arrival of American troops in 1917. The understanding of the campaign was further hindered by the efforts of the men comprising the "command conspiracy", whose impact was felt for decades following the war. Fortunately modern scholarship has begun to shift the general understanding of not only Galicia and the war in the east, but also of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's closing years. Notions regarding the damaging impact of nationalism are being

exchanged for those of stability and compromise, and what was once seen as an inevitable collapse it now seen as a direct result of a war which could have ended considerably differently had men such as Conrad been more apt to lead.

IMAGES



Image 1

K.u.k. Feldmarschall Franz Xaver Josef Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf (1852-1925), taken in 1917. Conrad was Austria-Hungary's premier military strategist and tactician, and is ultimately responsible of the outcome of the Galician Campaign on 1914. Credit: *K.u.k.*

Kriegspressequartier / Bildarchiv Austria.



Image 2

Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich (1877-1945), taken in 1915 while in north-west Czernowitz.

Pitreich was representative of a former Habsburg officer who chose not to uphold the party line in the post-war era. His written works criticized the decision making of Conrad and others, and admitted that Austria's defeat in Galicia in 1914 are the direct result of the empire's failings.

As a result of his stances his works never received wide distribution. Credit: *K.u.k.*

Kriegspressequartier / Bildarchiv Austria.

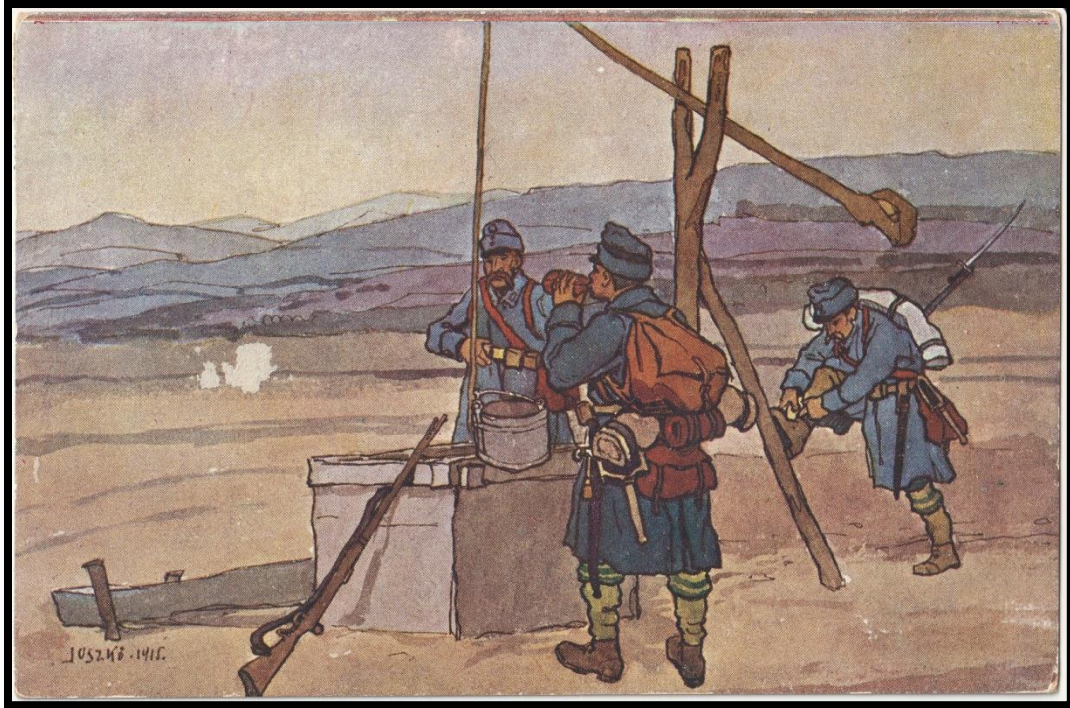


Image 3

An artistic depiction of early war Austro-Hungarian soldiers on the march. Note the equipment and supplies each soldier is burdened with, a frequent complaint amongst Austro-Hungarian soldiers. In 1914 soldiers suffered from extreme fatigue as they were forced to march miles to the front carrying their heavy equipment. Credit: Personal collection.



Image 4

A picture taken of the crude makeshift earthen works Austro-Hungarian soldiers were forced to take shelter in while encountering superior Russian artillery. Austro-Hungarian forces devoted little time in training to trenches or fieldworks as the hyper aggressive military ethos of the period shunned such tactics. Credit: Imperial War Museum.

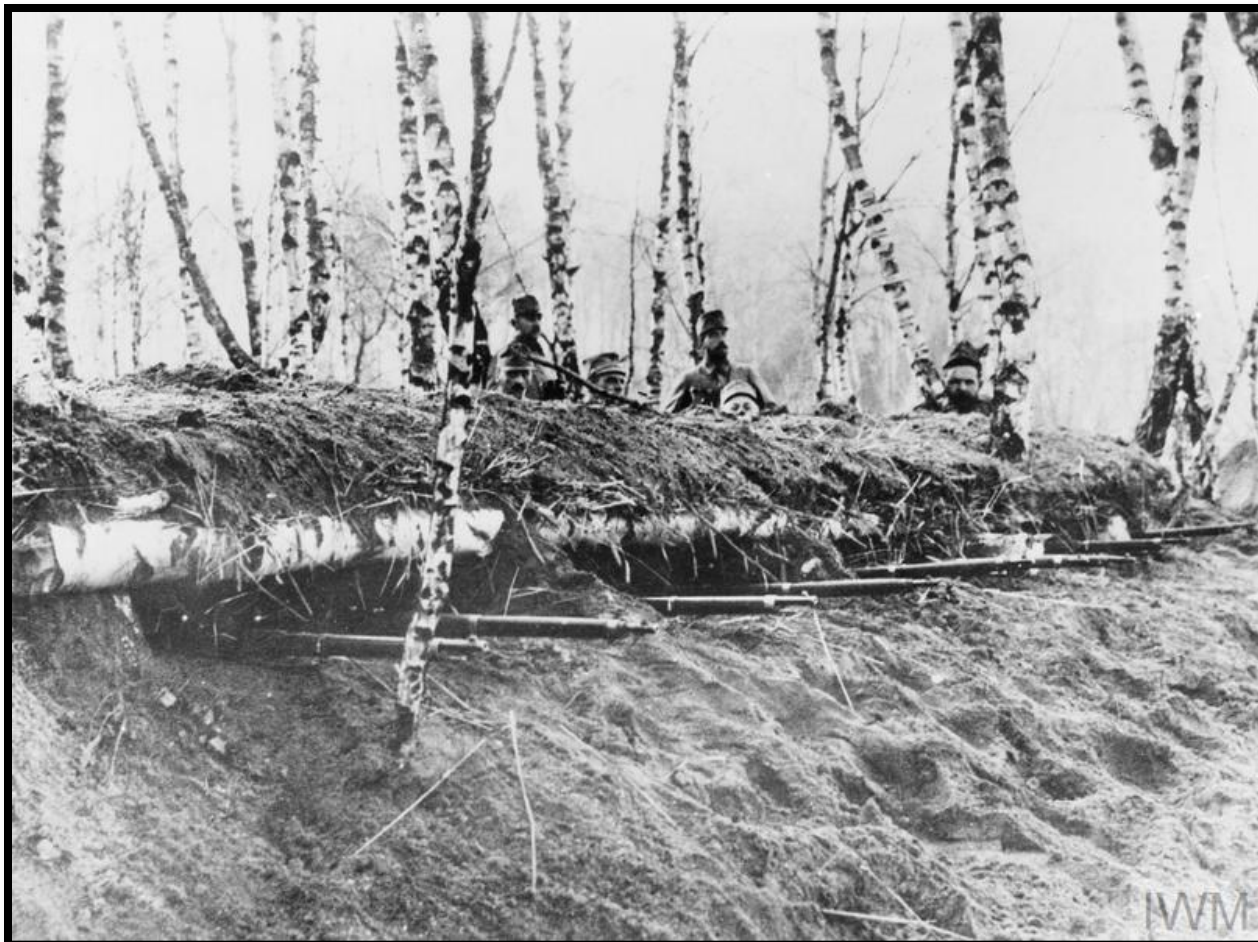


Image 5

An example of the more sophisticated trenches and earthen works constructed in the Carpathians mountains. After learning a harsh lesson in the opening weeks of the war, defenses such as these were a welcome reprieve for the battered soldiers retreating from the Galician plains. Credit: Imperial War Museum.



Image 6

Captured Austro-Hungarian soldiers march into Russian captivity. Many of these men remained in Russian hands until the breakdown of the Russian Empire, and were quickly returned to the front to resume fighting. Unfortunately for the Central Powers, the influx of returning prisoners did little to shift the tide of the war. Credit: Mary Evans Picture Library.



Image 7

An example of medieval imagery used extensively by Austria-Hungary as a form of propaganda. This postcard advertising war loans depicts an armored knight astride his steed with imagery of the Holy Roman Empire in the background. Scenes such as this not only sought to cement the Habsburgs long history, but also the chivalric connection between the medieval knight and the Austro-Hungarian officer corps of the Great War. Credit: Personal collection.

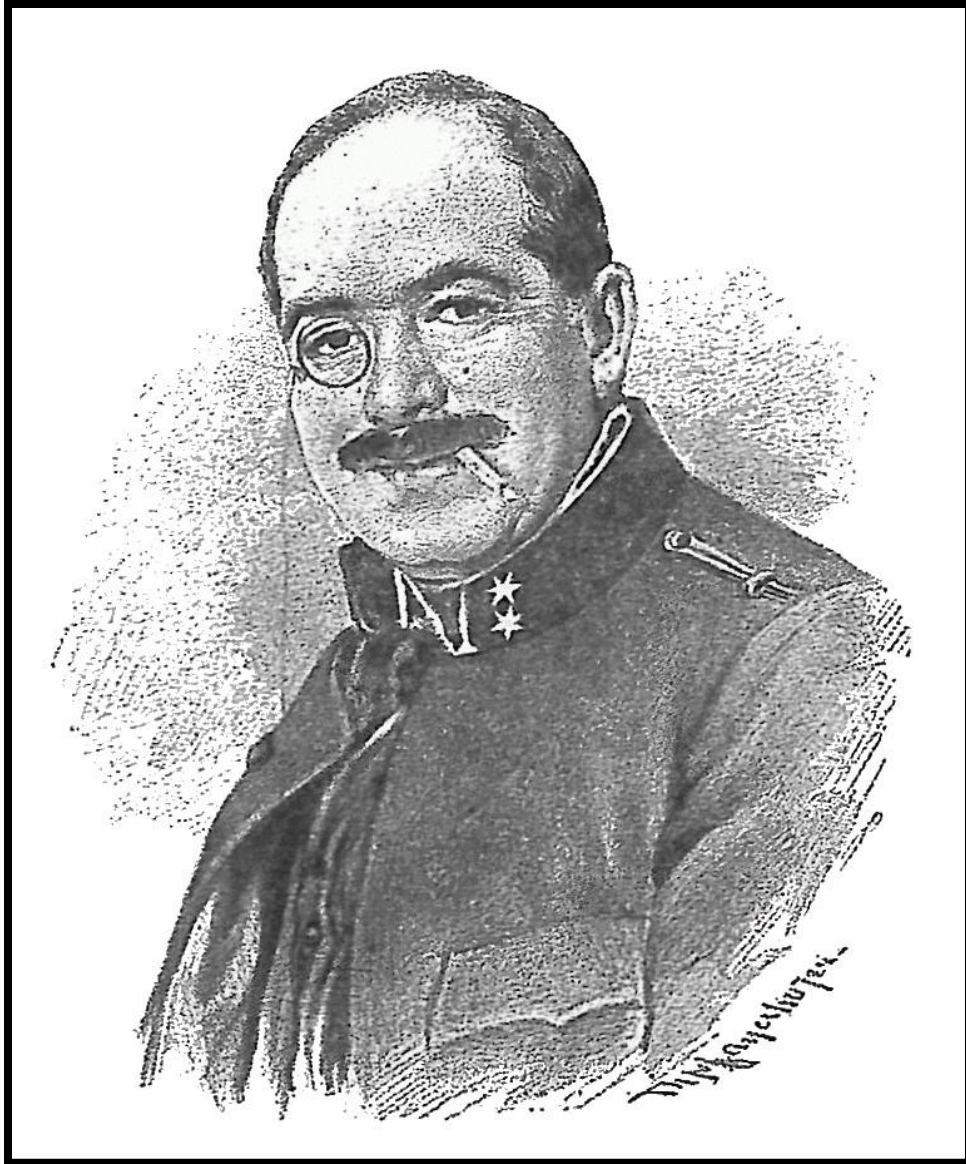


Image 8

Alexander Roda Roda (1872-1945), an Austrian writer and journalist. Roda Roda worked as a war correspondent through the Galician Campaign of 1914 and after. His accounts often highlighted the difficulty journalists faced when trying to reach the front to relay accurate accounts of the war. As a result of this limited access the press was forced to rely almost entirely on information presented by the military. Credit: *Österreichisches Kabarettarchiv*.

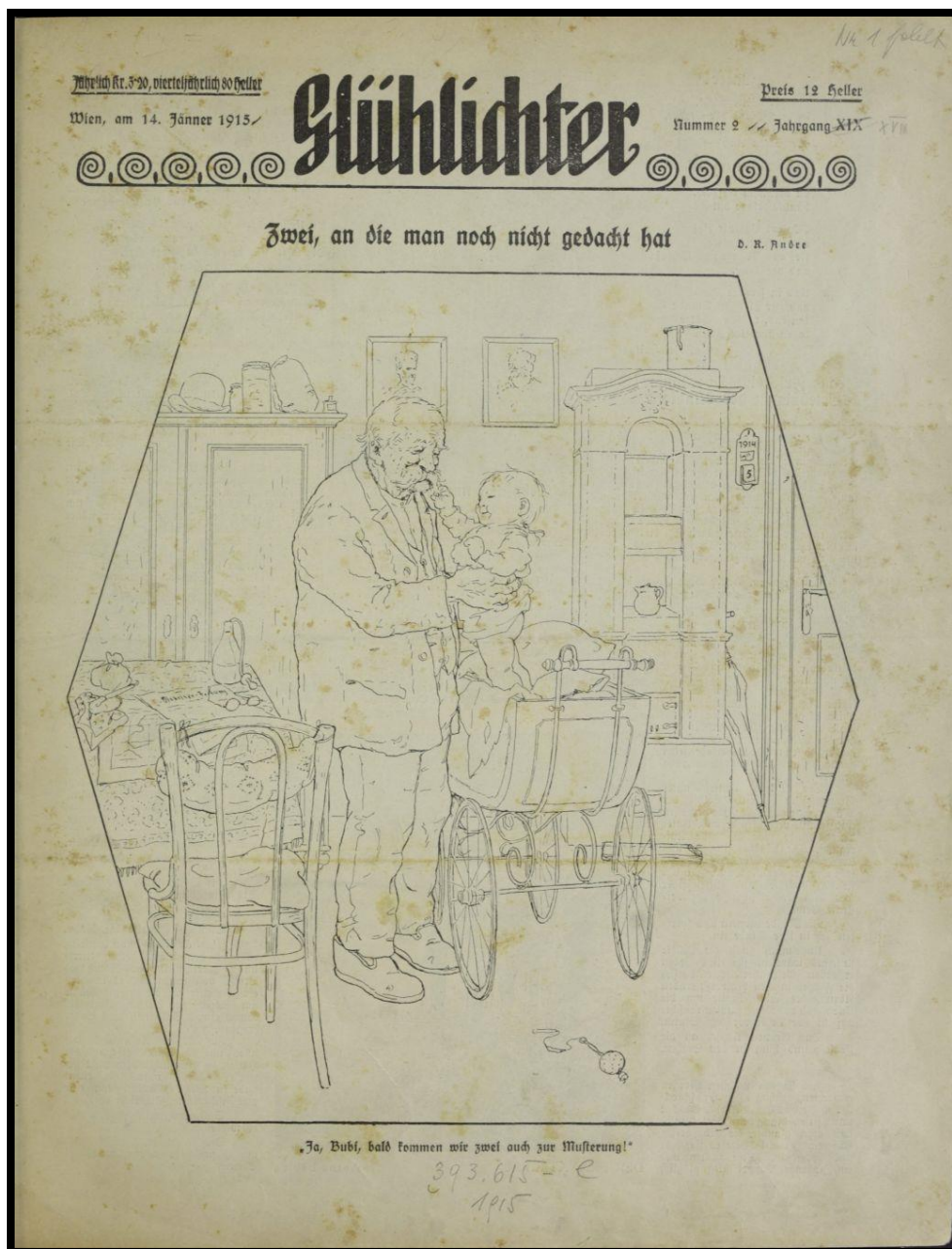


Image 9

A political cartoon which appeared in the January 14th of 1915 edition in the paper, *Die Glühlichte*. In the image an old man lifts a baby from its crib, and tells the child, that soon they too will be mustering to join the army. Credit: *Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek / ANNO Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften*.

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