

1914 WORLD WAR I
CENTENARY

**SUMMARY REPORT PREPARED BY
AUSTRIAN RESEARCHERS**

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**SUMMARY REPORT PREPARED BY AUSTRIAN
RESEARCHERS ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENNIAL
COMMEMORATION OF THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I**

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Motivation and Introduction

In 2014 the centennial of the outbreak of World War I will be commemorated. The aim of this Summary Report initiated by the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and commissioned by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, the aforementioned Ministry, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research is to provide Austria's diplomatic representatives as well as the staff of the individual ministries with concise information on key issues explored in recent research on World War I. The paper has been authored by renowned Austrian historians from an Austrian point of view and a European perspective, incorporating the general historical background.

The Federal Chancellery and the ministries mentioned above express their thanks to the researchers who embarked on this task, especially to the members of the Drafting Committee, Manfred Rauchensteiner, Helmut Konrad and Verena Moritz.

Austria-Hungary and World War I.

An overview

- Manfred Rauchensteiner -

The outbreak of the war was a process that had been expected to some extent. In view of its ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July 1914 and the declaration of war on 28 July 1914, Austria-Hungary was later rightly singled out as the Empire that had contributed significantly to unleashing the dogs of war. However, this does not explain the reactions of the Entente (Great Britain and France) as well as of Russia, nor those of Germany, which had been an ally of Austria-Hungary since 1879. When it comes to the war-guilt question and to an analysis of the causes of the war, there is always a risk of engaging in counterfactual history. And the same is true when we search for the reasons why there was no negotiated peace and why military action was not terminated at a given point in time.

Each of the states joining World War I pursued very specific interests. By defeating Serbia, Austria-Hungary tried to prevent Serbia from continuing its efforts to realise its goals in Yugoslavia and to destabilise the Habsburg monarchy. When declaring war on Serbia, Austria-Hungary was well aware of the fact that Russia would intervene, which had mobilised its troops for war in the eastern military districts even before the summer of 1914. The dissolution of entire states came into play already during this very early stage of the war. Austria-Hungary considered to divide Serbia between other Balkan States (Romania, Bulgaria, Greece), while Russia's professed goal of joining the war was to dissolve the Habsburg monarchy. All belligerents relied on existing alliances. The Entente succeeded in rallying full support from its alliance system, while the Central Powers (Germany und Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire as from November 1914 and Bulgaria as from September 1915) could not motivate their allies Italy and Romania to enter the war.

The outbreak of the war was a process in which Emperor Francis Joseph played a decisive role, taking advantage of his extra-constitutional power. The Emperor wanted the war and avoided any discussions on an armistice or a separate peace until his death. The crushing military defeats suffered by the Habsburg monarchy against Serbia and Russia as well as the occupation of a major part of Galicia in 1914 did not shake his resolve to continue the war. By the winter of 1914/15, support from the Germans was, however, indispensable. The Austro-German relations became a factor determining the course of the war. Thanks to Germany's massive military assistance, the re-conquest of Galicia was started and Russia was deprived of its offensive capability for one year. In 1915 the Serbs were also defeated with German support. Finally, Germany's military presence in Poland allowed the Imperial and Royal Army to wage the war in the southwest, which had been declared by Italy on 23 May 1915 and to postpone the decision in this theatre of war until 1917/18.

The distribution of strength within the alliance of the Central Powers shifted definitely in September 1916 – a fact which has not yet been given adequate consideration. After a – surprisingly successful – offensive of the Russians, Austria-Hungary had once again lost its military power, but thanks to Germany's solid support the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian front

in the east could be prevented. Germany requested, however, a far-reaching surrender of sovereignty from the Habsburg monarchy. According to the rules subsequently laid down by the “Common Supreme Army Command”, the German Emperor alone had the overriding command, and his influence was to extend to all fronts where imperial and royal troops were deployed. Ultimately, it was the German Emperor who had the sole power of deciding on the continuation or termination of the war. Emperor Francis Joseph agreed to this arrangement.

After the death of Francis Joseph, Emperor Charles made an unsuccessful attempt to end Germany’s dominance. But as Austria-Hungary repeatedly required Germany’s assistance (in military as well as in political and economic terms and above all in the food sector), it could have ended German supremacy only by running the risk of violating alliance commitments. This seemed, however, unacceptable to Emperor Charles. Due to great military success and Russia’s withdrawal from the war, peace through a German – and consequently Austrian-Hungarian – victory appeared possible and imminent in 1917.

The nations of the Habsburg monarchy reacted very differently to the war. Despite their varying degree of enthusiasm for the war (being highest in the German territories of the Habsburg monarchy as well as in Hungary), remarkable unity could be observed in 1914. But it started to dwindle already in the autumn of the same year, above all in the Czech and Ruthenian territories of the monarchy. This trend was to be countered through repressive measures, the revocation of civil rights, evacuations and internment. Thousands of people were executed in the regions near the front. Martial law was, however, not declared in Bohemia, as originally requested by the Supreme Command of the Imperial and Royal Army. Nevertheless, the partial rejection of the war was reflected in an increasing loss of identity and a growing trend towards desertion, especially during the winter and spring months of the year 1915. The mass desertions, which had to be regarded primarily as an Austro-Hungarian phenomenon, occurred almost exclusively in the Russian – and temporarily also the Serbian – theatre of war. The number of Austrian-Hungarian war prisoners (predominantly in Russia) climbed to about two million by the end of 1917. No differences in the attitudes of soldiers from the various parts the Empire towards Italy could be observed. This was to change only in 1918. At that point in time, more than eight million men had been conscripted to join the Imperial and Royal Army. But also more than 30,000 women had become part of the armed forces of Austria-Hungary.

After the Imperial Council (Reichsrat) had been re-convened on the request of Emperor Charles in Austria in late May 1917, opposition to the war and resistance against the close alliance with Germany shifted to the House of Representatives. Tendencies of disintegration appeared as early as in 1917, which were supported and fuelled by groups of emigrants. It would, however, be wrong to invent a kind of “stab-in-the-back legend” for Austria-Hungary. The front and the hinterland did not only have their own developments as well as perceptions but also experienced synchronous disintegration processes. Despite the victory of the Austrian-Hungarian troops (in the 12th Battle of Isonzo) in Italy in late 1917, no progress was made towards “peace through victory”. About half of the Imperial and Royal Army – which consisted still of more than four million soldiers in 1918 – were needed in the central areas of the Empire to provide labour, to track down deserters and above all to suppress riots. Despite additional food supplies from Ukraine and Romania, it was not possible to contain the famine which had broken out in the autumn of 1916. After having been joined by the USA in the wake of the American war declaration against Austria-Hungary on 7 December 1917, the Allies declared repeatedly that the dissolution of Austria-Hungary was a key goal of the war. A military response to this position by Austria-Hungary had

become impossible. The last Austrian-Hungarian offensive on the south western front in Italy in June 1918 failed after only two days. This event marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Empire. Austria-Hungary had lost its military capability, and a common vision of the future seemed no longer possible. The identity of the Empire as a whole had become fragmented. In response to this situation, Emperor Charles issued his "Manifesto of the Nations" of 16 October 1918, paving the way for the independence of the nations of his Empire. The offensive launched by the Allies in Italy on 24 October 1918 was not challenged by an intact military force, and this was clearly reflected in the armistice agreed on at Villa Giusti near Padua on 3 November 1918. The Imperial and Royal Army ended warfare even before the armistice took effect. In the meantime, the successor states of the Habsburg monarchy, both victors and vanquished, had declared independence.

Reflections on the question of war guilt

- Helmut Konrad -

The question of war guilt has at least two dimensions. First of all, it addresses the issue of the outbreak of the war and the distribution of responsibility for these events between the parties to the conflict and the policy-makers. In the wake of the Fritz Fischer Controversy generated half a century ago, this subject-area has been treated in a differentiated manner, at least in Germany. In Austria the focus of research in this area is and has been on Conrad von Hötzendorf's position. The Habsburgs' share in the responsibility for triggering the war is evident. However, it is just one element in a wider scenario of different interests, alliances, expectations and fears that were shaping politics at that time.

Secondly, "war guilt" is a term which acquired its historically crucial meaning only retrospectively. It was used for the first time in official language in Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany and its allies, including in particular Austria-Hungary, was "guilty of a crime because of its aggression in 1914" (Gerd Krumeich) and therefore had to assume sole responsibility for the massive death toll and the destruction of cities, landscapes and infrastructure.

More than a century earlier, the Napoleonic Wars had also led to a forced reorganisation of Europe, but the Vienna Congress pursued a completely different approach. Victors and vanquished sat next to one another at the negotiating table, enjoying equal status. They achieved an elite consensus which – as a top-down decision – shaped the European continent. Neither political parties nor parliaments (and much less "the people") were players in the arena. Nationalism was only emerging, and social issues did not yet have any policy-making capacity. Information did not travel freely and beyond borders, geographical and social mobility was still low.

The "long" 19th century, which actually should be deemed to end in 1914, changed the underlying fundamentals drastically. The notions "modernity" (i.e. modern age) and "modernisation" (as a process) covered comprehensive literacy programmes, the emergence of megacities, industrialisation, and efforts of "measuring the world". People, goods, capital, services and, in particular, information were circulating practically without obstacles during the first wave of real globalisation in the late 19th century. Not only the world itself – but also the perception of the world – had changed radically.

Furthermore, World War I was the first modern war to involve the entire population of the belligerent countries in the warfare. After all, the outcome of the war was to be decided particularly on the home front. To motivate the population as a whole to participate in the warfare, new concepts of the "enemy" were necessary, which were, in fact, quite easy to disseminate in the emerging media society. The war was not only about territorial claims or dynastic power issues but revolved around good and evil, black and white. It was a sine qua non that a war ideologised in this way had to end with a defeat of all evil. After all, the war had been triggered by the evil challenging the good as well as the unjustified claims to power emanating from it. And the evil –when it was finally overcome – had to bear the guilt for the war and assume responsibility for it.

This is the underlying cause for the “war guilt” of the German Empire and its allies, which was formulated and laid down for the first time in history in Paris. This wording provided an emotional “justification” of the war, but blaming and condemning the guilty party proved to be counterproductive. This interpretation of the war did not only encourage the emergence of revanchist and revisionist political tendencies in the defeated states but also made it possible to establish an interconnection between WWI and WWII. In the aftermath of WWII., the spotlight was turned on the guilty behaviour of individuals – in the “Nuremberg Trials”, the other war crime trials as well as all issues affecting denazification. “War guilt” was interpreted as individual guilt and no longer attributed collectively to entire states based on the decision of the war winners.

If today the “war-guilt question” is to be examined seriously and on a sound academic basis, a clear line has to be drawn between the two aforementioned issues. On the one hand, we must concentrate on an analysis of the events leading to WWI. The scenario of events taking place between Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s assassination in Sarajevo and the first declaration of war by the Habsburg monarchy to Serbia is undisputed. It was the trigger for World War I, which was preceded by lengthy and complex developments and took place under concrete conditions of different alliance systems. Individual calls for a pre-emptive strike, more long-term visions of a re-distribution of “global power”, geopolitical objectives, the arms build-up policy of the ground forces and navies – all these factors were interacting in the summer of 1914. Hence, there are direct and structural responsibilities for the outbreak of the war, which developed into a European war and a world war. It is an unchallenged fact that this responsibility has to be assumed particularly by the Central Powers.

A clear line has to be drawn between examining the war-guilt question from the perspective of the history of reception, considering it a main reason for the emergence of anti-democratic and revisionist tendencies as well as the transformation of some young European states into dictatorships on the one hand and the academic analysis of the outbreak of the war on the other hand. This history of reception has, in any case, had a decisive impact on the political developments of the 20th century. But this issue is part of the history of the peace treaties signed in the suburbs of Paris and of the attempt to create a stable new order in a modern world – an attempt which has, undoubtedly, failed. Russia’s dropping out of the liberal-capitalist economic and political system and the (quite conflicting) claims to power of the victors were obstacles to a lasting stabilisation.

Democracy, war and peace.

Comments on the general framework of WWI

- Anton Pelinka -

The “Great War”, which had started with Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia, was a war with democratic features. The main players were either parliamentary democracies (such as France, the United Kingdom and Italy), democratic presidential republics (such as the USA) or constitutional monarchies with underdeveloped but existing parliamentarianism (such as the four empires whose destruction marked the end of the war – Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire). In all these states participation in the war was constitutional and, at least indirectly, democratically legitimised. World War I began and ended as a democratic war.

This observation poses a challenge to one of the fundamental but obviously also hotly discussed hypotheses of political science, particularly of International Relations as well as peace and conflict research: democracies based on a liberal approach, i.e. western, pluralistic democracies, do wage wars against non-democracies. But wars are not fought between democracies or, if so, only in exceptional cases. (See for example J. Ann Tickner: International Relations: Post-Positivist and Feminist Perspectives, in: A New Handbook of Political Science, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Oxford 2000, p. 449)

This “theory of democratic peace” is explained by the fact that it would be infinitely more difficult to legitimise war in democracies than in non-democracies and that democracies may wage wars only on the basis of the broadest possible social consensus. When it comes to justifying a war against another democracy, it is, however, very difficult to achieve such a consensus.

The democratic element of the war, which had started in 1914, was reflected in the increasing ideologisation of the war in the course of the years. This became evident when the USA entered the war. The USA had an understandable conflict of interests with the German Empire – free navigation in the Atlantic Ocean had been severely affected by the German submarine warfare. However, the USA had no manifest conflict of interests with Austria-Hungary and therefore declared war on the dual monarchy only some months after the declaration of war against Germany. In justifying his war policy, US President Wilson focused on a highly ideological formula: the right to self-determination of the nations. This inevitably vague, nebulous slogan very open to interpretation did not go against the existence of the German Empire. And in fact, the German Empire continued to exist in 1919 after giving up territories to France, Poland, Belgium and Denmark. Wilson’s formula – as it had been and was supposed to be perceived – had challenged the existence of Austria-Hungary.

As a result of this ideologisation process, Wilson gained widespread approval of a “war for a good cause”. Who could or wanted to be against the right to self-determination of the nations in the 20th century? Ideologisation promoted a Manichaen approach: branding and classifying things as “good” and as “evil”. The ideologisation of the war was an aspect of a democratic war. It was a crucial fact that it became exponentially more difficult to end the war due to its democratic character. With the exception of the social situation in Russia before the October Revolution, the support for continuing the war was basically unwavering – both from the governments and the “peoples” – until the autumn of 1918.

Thus it had become difficult to end the war based on elitist compromises – as it had been possible in pre-democratic wars. Before 1914 the traditional elites could end wars in a rational way that was practically no more available to democratic elites. The peace initiative of the Austrian Emperor and Hungarian King in 1917 was an attempt to return to a pre-democratic pattern. It was doomed to fail due to the furious outrage not only from the German allies but also from the democratic parties of the Entente, e.g. France.

The ideologisation of the democratic war between 1914 and 1918 had long-term effects on the general framework of WWII. The exaggeration of the demonic character of “the Germans” resulted in a boomerang effect, i.e. the true character of National Socialism was not recognised in the 1930s. Two decades after the end of WWI, public opinion in the Western democracies had become overly immune to reports about the evil deeds of the opponent. As the public was under the impression that the propaganda had been hugely overblown by their own governments, it could not perceive the de facto unprecedented evil of the new Germany. The ideologisation of the first, the democratic war led to a policy of appeasement which considerably facilitated the second – non-democratic war, the war between democracies and non-democracies.

Nationalism was the cause that WWI had become possible as a democratic war – beyond the mere perception of rationally justifiable conflicts of interest. Due to nationalist concepts of the enemy that were not reduced but strengthened through democratic mechanisms, the governments pushing for war and sliding into war received widespread social support for their policies.

WWI started as the third Balkan War. The Balkan War raging in former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1999 had one thing in common with the war breaking out in 1914: it was a democratic war. The democratically legitimised governments of the republics, now free from the authoritarian shackles of the Titoist unity party, started to wage war against one another – based on broad social support. Hence, the end of the 20th century was also marked by a democratically legitimised Balkan War. But the difference was that the non-Balkan powers, of which almost all were democratically legitimised, did not allow themselves to be dragged into this (last?) Balkan War.

It was nationalism that gave rise to the democratic legitimisation of war in 1914 and the following four years. The lack of effective transnational or international corrective responses proved to be a breeding ground for the disaster. And it was nationalism that destroyed the pluralism of democracy and prevented an effective opposition against war politics – which can be summed up very aptly in a quotation of the German Emperor: “I know no parties, I know only Germans!” The potential of democracy, i.e. to prevent war, was suffocated by nationalism – both in 1914 and in 1991.

“The liberating element of the courageous deed”: The “Dark” Side of modernity in Vienna Around 1914

- Oliver Rathkolb -

Under the impact of Carl Schorske’s work “Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture” (1981), exhibitions and historical studies on “the causes and effects” of the representatives of early modernity in Vienna, but also other urban centres of the Habsburg monarchy such as Prague and Budapest, were booming in the past few decades. However, a paradox has practically remained unanswered: Why did this intellectual and cultural elite not raise its – then already quite perceptible – voice and warn against war euphoria? Quite the contrary was true. Many of them, such as the composer Arnold Schönberg, supported the nationalist-chauvinist war enthusiasm – not only through their creativeness but sometimes even by risking their lives; Schönberg for example composed the march “Die Eiserne Brigade“ (“The Iron Brigade”) for a social gathering during his military service (“Kameradschaftsabend”). Star violinist Fritz Kreisler hurried from a health resort in Switzerland to his regiment in Leoben, where he gave a concert wearing the officer’s uniform; he was almost killed on the Russian front some weeks later. The revolutionary painter Oskar Kokoschka volunteered for voluntary military service and was trained as a reserve officer in the noble Imperial and Royal Dragoon Regiment No. 15.

Even the writer Stefan Zweig, who was internationally well connected (especially with France), succumbed to the enthusiasm of the masses in the early phase of the war after his return from Belgium: “All differences of ranks, languages, classes, religions were flooded over at that moment by the rushing feeling of fraternity ... each individual experienced an exaltation of his ego, he was no longer the isolated person of former times, he had been incorporated into the mass, he was part of the people, and his person, his hitherto unnoticed person, had been given a meaning.“ This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Zweig himself had witnessed the invasion of Belgium by Germany violating international law.

The list of examples could be continued infinitely. Only very few critical personalities such as the editor of the magazine “Fakel” (“The Torch”), Karl Kraus, tried – after some hesitation and despite censorship – to condemn this unbridled enthusiasm for the war of the art and culture scene openly. In his lecture on 19 November 1914 (published uncensored on 5 December 1914) he addressed the political absorption of poets by their own war poetry and war reporting – but the war itself was not yet called into question radically. These activities were in the meantime organised centrally in the Imperial and Royal Press Bureau (k. u. k. Kriegspressequartier) and covered literature, visual arts, photography, film as well as music.

Three hypotheses may be formulated to explain this initially conformist behaviour of the elites of early modernity. While challenging the conventions of society, many of them had been shaped strongly by German culture – with an Austrian flair – and did not yet form part of any international networks. In the course of the war many of them returned to their cultural backgrounds, believing that they had to defend their cultural roots.

A second reason was the reaction to the incredibly fast development of a “first wave” of globalisation as from 1850/1870. In Austria-Hungary it did not entail any far-reaching socio-cultural

changes due to the authoritarian basic structure of the political system and of society but reinforced existing conflicts and obstacles within society. Many innovative artists and intellectuals regarded the war as a liberation strike which would not only create a new world and a new humankind but also surmount the very tangible obstacles of “peacetime”. War was supposed to have a “cleansing or even liberating effect”, to encourage the breakthrough of modernity and to overcome and destroy old and outmoded social conventions.

It is a remarkable fact that the apocalypse interpreted in a positive way could be sensed in literature and the visual arts even before 1914. In the Cisleithanian (Austrian) part of the monarchy a third specificity had to be added, namely that the war was to solve the complex issue of identity and ethnic conflicts of the Habsburg Empire. Early signs of this phenomenon were observed before 1914. Arnold Schönberg, for example, wrote that he had discovered his love for the fatherland already during the Russian-Japanese War in 1904. The reason behind it was a kind of primordial fear that the German(-Austrian) “civilisation” would be lost, and the war almost had the quality of a “religious experience of enlightenment” (Peter Gay). The return to threat scenarios has been a reaction to international exchanges and mobility as a result of the first wave of globalisation. The contextualisation based on an approach of depth-psychology was described very graphically by Sigmund Freud in 1914: “But this may be the first time in thirty years that I feel Austrian”. Due to the increasingly radical anti-Semitism, especially the Jewish protagonists of Vienna’s modernity regarded the war as their last hope of achieving assimilation by defending national culture. However, all of them harboured the illusion that it would be a short war. Freud interpreted the “unscrupulous attitude” of foreign minister Berchtold as “the liberating element of the courageous deed” and admitted: “All my libido is given to Austria-Hungary.”

Social Militarisation

- Christa Hämmerle -

Recent research defines social militarisation as a complex and manifold process that has the aim or the result that military values and positions gain increased influence and social importance. This is mainly achieved through expanding the military sphere (whose dominance is then willingly accepted also by the civilian population) as well as applying military approaches to civilian life. If the later Habsburg monarchy is examined from this perspective, it becomes evident that – contrary to the persistent view of older research – complex militarisation processes were promoted, particularly in the decades preceding the outbreak of World War I. This phase extends far beyond the period as from 1906/07 when the new Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf – together with the military and political elites – started to make more concrete preparations for the war, advocating a pre-emptive strike against Italy and Serbia; as Günther Kronenbitter so succinctly put it, Hötzendorf had conducted “war in peacetimes” by pursuing a policy based on a bellicist approach and expanding defensive structures, etc. The first Balkan War strengthened this tendency culminating in the so-called War Requirements Act (*Kriegsleistungsgesetz*) in December of the same year, after the new Defence Act (*Wehrgesetz*) had been adopted in 1912. This law was a highlight in the process of militarising society, which had been planned on a top-down basis. It provided for the far-reaching involvement of the civilian population in the event of war – from very young to older men no longer fit for military service and including numerous possibilities for the military to requisition civilian facilities and take over all enterprises vital to the war. During World War I all of these measures were implemented on a large scale.

Various developments of social militarisation could be observed in Austria-Hungary, as in other European states, even before that, i.e. in the late 19th century. The spectrum covers measures to expand the supply of young men with (direct or indirect) ties to the military (within the framework of compulsory military service introduced at the end of 1868) as well as substantial efforts to build up and expand several parts of the Army and its equipment (e.g. artillery or two ground forces of the “*Landwehr*”), which were carried on despite many obstacles. Moreover, the military cult was intensifying considerably during these decades. This was not only reflected in numerous public military parades and new monuments (e.g. of Radetzky) but also by representing Emperor Francis Joseph, who often used to wear uniform, as a bellicose soldier. As research has also shown, the decades preceding the year 1914 were characterised by a strong expansion of organisations of traditional riflemen (“*Schützenwesen*”) and the foundation of numerous veteran associations, which were also joined by former soldiers of non-German ethnicity. And after the war against Prussia, women started to organise themselves for the first time in a period of peace, founding “Patriotic Women’s Benevolent Societies of the Red Cross” to be able to support their fatherland in the event of war.

In the early 1890s some newspapers and magazines of the Austrian women’s movement(s) published articles presenting the concept of a “women’s compulsory service”, which had been discussed more widely in the German Empire and was to be adjusted to the requirements of Austria-Hungary; it was supposed to be equivalent to compulsory military service for men. Even if this idea seemed to have been forgotten until the outbreak of World War I, it showed the militarising effect of conscription. It was hardly surprising that in former Austria, just like in other

parts of Europe, this modern recruiting system was equated with “militarism” by its critics as early as in 1867, i.e. before the introduction of parliamentary procedures to deliberate on and develop laws; but this means that some contemporaries had raised a voice of warning, recognising the militarising effect of this system. However, numerous new laws were adopted in Austria-Hungary to further develop compulsory military service. Hence, the regulatory framework and its implementation became increasingly comprehensive, e.g. 1875 Military Supplies Act (*Militärversorgungsgesetz*), 1880 Military Taxes Act (*Militärtaxgesetz*), 1886 Militia Act (*Landsturmgesetz*) or the new Defence Act of 1889 (*Wehrgesetz*), etc. Despite the great number of obstacles faced by this genuinely republican recruitment system guided by the concept of the nation in the poly-ethnic Habsburg monarchy, compulsory military service was expanding significantly. Thus the social acceptance of the military as a “school of manhood” and “school of the people” was also growing. Before 1914 the Imperial and Royal Army had, in fact, become a “people’s army”, which integrated all social groups and idolised the “citizen soldier” as well as soldierly moulded manhood. At the beginning of World War I this idol had already become hegemonic in society.

The war and the media

- Wolfgang Maderthaner -

As the confrontation of the great European powers was developing into a large global war – in accordance with the logic and mechanism of a complex system of alliances – the midsummer of 1914 was marked by a tremendous amount of emotional energy, euphoria and the pathos of imminent change. The *Great War* was overburdened with the metaphysically charged expectations, projections and desires of the intellectual elites of all political groups. With its elementary power, this great event was to have a purifying, cathartic effect, to return everything to a “simply meaningful” state, accomplish a painful but indispensable cleansing of everything that was obsolete, old and brittle.

The Habsburg authorities took advantage of this boundless war enthusiasm of the elites. In an unprecedented intellectual *parallel campaign*, they used writers, visual artists, filmmakers or photographers for concerted mass propaganda for the war by making them work for the War Press Bureau (*Kriegspressequartier*), which was run by the War Archives. The primary goal was to control war reporting and to organise it in a manner that inevitably triggers associations with the phenomenon of *embedded journalism* of the late 20th century. As the fierce opponent of war and prophet of doom Karl Kraus had commented already in December 1914, the war service of the poets marked the beginning of their careers as journalists; and there was a reason to suspect that the “members of the journalistic profession who were voluntarily unfit for military service” acted based on the heroic consideration of “escaping to where it is now safest, namely into commonplace phrases“. Outstanding personalities of Vienna’s literary modernity acted as collaborators of the war efforts of the Central Powers, supporting and inspiring the patriotic frenzy which had started with an unparalleled chauvinist wave of propaganda, a campaign of words and writings. Great authors enjoying a well-deserved reputation such as Hofmannsthal, Bahr, Schaukal, Roda Roda, Salten et al. were to become *word makers* (Franz Werfel) of the war machinery.

Stefan Zweig was undoubtedly a key figure of the *Literary Group* of the War Archives. In October 1914 he authored an open letter to the Friends in the Foreign Land (*An die Freunde im Fremdland*), in which he distanced himself from previously fiercely propagated cosmopolitan ideas and ideals for the duration of the war. Working almost four years for the Habsburg propaganda machinery, Zweig gradually turned into a critic of the war in his literary work. In 1915 he started working on his pacifist drama *Jeremias*, which was premiered in Zurich in February 1918 and caused a great stir. At that time the seasoned front officer Robert Musil joined the War Press Bureau. As the editor responsible for soldiers’ newspapers, he did not only give these publications an extensive makeover, supplementing them with elaborately designed art prints and reproductions, but also allowed them to become a platform for previously unthinkable political controversies over issues such as war profiteering and black-marketeering. At the War Press Bureau Musil, who previously had been assigned to the headquarters of the Isonzo army as an “art history expert”, came into contact with Franz Blei and his subtle defeatism as well as Egon Erwin Kisch and Franz Werfel, who had already joined the social-revolutionary movement.

Oskar Kokoschka also served on the Isonzo front after having suffered a severe head injury in Wolyn. Due to a shell shock, he was, however, dismissed from his position as a press liaison officer. In general the War Press Bureau made efforts to instrumentalise outstanding

representatives of Vienna's modern visual arts for its own purposes – with varying intensity and in different positions. It regularly organised exhibitions in Austria and neutral foreign countries. The most famous of these shows was undoubtedly *Österrikisk Konstutställning* staged at Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm in September 1917 and curated by Josef Hofmann. It presented works by Egger-Lienz, Faistauer, Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and the sculptor Anton Hanak and showcased exquisite objects manufactured by Wiener Werkstätten. The opening of this show formed part of an “Austrian Week”, which also included philharmonic concerts and fashion shows.

Great emphasis was placed on the state-of-the-art media that were probably best suited for the objectives of mass propaganda, i.e. film and photography. The war genre photos commissioned by picture agencies or professional war reporters often were of an absolutely amazing formal and technical quality. They were published (after censorship) for mass dissemination in glossy weekly magazines and propaganda papers created for this specific purpose. The aim was to aestheticise the horrors and atrocities of the modern machine war through visual representations of combat and the everyday lives of soldiers; in this way, a vivid, easily comprehensible narrative of the hero – guided by a cult of virility and contempt for death – was to be conveyed to the public. In the context of “raising the war enthusiasm” (Lieutenant-General Maximilian Ritter von Hoen, head of the War Press Bureau until 1917), *motion pictures* also had to fulfil an important function. The War Press Bureau sent cinema outposts to the front; the film teams had to supply the “home front” as well as neutral foreign countries with *newsreels* (“*Aktualitäten*”) (and later feature films specifically produced for this purpose). The most outstanding projects were devoted to the ambitious production of *genuine war films*, which was technically feasible only with great difficulty. They were realised in a temporary and quite conflict-ridden cooperation with two American *cinema operators*: Captain F. E. Kleinschmidt (a film about the German-Austrian offensive in Galicia in 1915) and Albert K. Dawson (on the Siege of Przemyśl).

The War Press Bureau was responsible for the coordination and supervision of all artistic, written and visual representations of the war. It was a specific characteristic of *Kakania* (a term coined by Robert Musil for the dual monarchy) that this institution was continued to be strengthened and further developed against the background of growing signs of economic depletion, military disintegration and revolutionary tensions. In the end it had a significantly larger number of personnel and a four-times higher budget than its German equivalent. While Habsburg strove to use its intellectuals and artists for the purpose of modern war propaganda, they themselves increasingly thwarted this intention. The fact that Alfred Polgar – Master Sergeant in the War Archives and one of the figureheads of the War Press Bureau since July 1914 – was dismissed in August 1917 and started to work for a pacifist journal seemed to be more than symbolic. It is symptomatic that the “total war”, in which the War Press Bureau was definitely playing an essential role, was doomed to end in a “total disaster”.

Front experience

- Helmut Konrad -

People who were not older than 50 years at the outbreak of World War I did not have any personal memories of previous wars in the Habsburg monarchy. Even their grandfathers could not tell them any battlefield stories, as 48 years had passed since the Battle of Sadová (*Königgrätz*). And in communicative memory wars were exclusively “battles” – where a few hours made the difference between victory and defeat.

The expectations that war would be an “adventure” were therefore often similar to those of manhood initiation rites, a short and exciting operation that was to be over by harvest season.

Reality was completely different. After the initial offensives came to a standstill, there was a military stalemate on the fronts towards the end of 1914. It was no longer possible to rush forward, retreat, evade the enemy – i.e. to move in the landscape of the battlefield – the front had now become an adjusted landscape, a “*gerichtete Landschaft*” (Kurt Lewin). “The area seems to have an end somewhere ahead after which follows a ‘nothing’.” In front there was death. It was no longer possible to gaze over the landscape as there was only a “front” and a “back”. The landscape had become an integral part of the combat and survival strategy. The trench warfare and need to survive in the trenches changed the lives of the soldiers. “The ability to hold out in a very confined space makes mental resistance a key qualification” (Hans-Georg Hofer).

The experiences of Oskar Kokoschka on the front may be used as an illustrative example. After volunteering for military service, he received the training he had longed for and which was to shape his personality. When he was called to duty on the front as an officer cadet of the cavalry, he was said farewell with flowers and cheers. Subsequently, he suffered, however, a profound shock when he fought with his people on horses against the cannons of the Russians. Due to a severe injury, he had to experience hospital and consequently a medical system geared to the needs of the war. Its main purpose was to make a maximum number of men fit for returning to the front within the shortest possible time – and this task was fulfilled with ruthless efficiency, especially by psychiatry in view of the large number of traumatised soldiers. And finally Kokoschka had to endure the Battle of Isonzo in the trench – an experience inevitably transforming original expectation of the war as an initiation rite into its dramatic opposite.

The machine war which had turned men into an “extension” or even “appendage” of the new technology (particularly through the machine gun and its standard ammunition), the tremendous bang when large artillery pieces went off or the threats of noiseless gas – all of this was part of the scenario of the “Great War”.

The battles on the Isonzo front had a lasting impact on many soldiers of the Habsburg monarchy. The karst landscape was completely different from the battle zones in the high mountains on the Tyrolean front but also from the battlefields in the east or on the German western front whose images (“All Quiet on the Western Front”) are still dominating the perception of military operations in World War I. The trenches in the shell limestone of the karst landscape on the Istrian front were lower, and their upper parts were reinforced by debris and sandbags. The soldiers were therefore forced to adopt a stooping position, which also shaped their mentality. It is hardly surprising that

Italian “*Squadristi*” and Austrian “*Heimatwehren*” emerged from the trenches at the end of the war as Benito Mussolini and Emil Fey had also been fighting there. Thus this specific space of violence had far-reaching political consequences.

The loud buzzing and whistling of the ricochets in the splintering rocks, the numerous injuries caused by these ricochets, the blistering heat in summer and the cold of the winter winds, the dead, who had to be abandoned in no man’s land after failed assaults, the virtual lack of territorial gains or losses, and consequently also of victories or defeats – all of that made the landscape north of Duino seem “adjusted” in a very specific way.

However, it was not only the landscape on the front that was “adjusted”. The needs beyond the front were subordinated to the needs of the front. After the “nothing” there were, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, casualty clearing stations and supply facilities, hospitals and eventually the hinterland, whose productivity was mostly geared to the needs of the front. Communication services were also tailored to these requirements as they had to cope with about 22 billion military letters and postcards from and to the war fronts. And all other types of communication were guided by these needs as well: the entire transport sector (from modern railways to horses, many of which went blind in the gas warfare) and finally the artists’ community in the War Press Bureau.

The prisoners of war were the first to move from the front to the hinterland, and the large prisoner-of-war camps changed the social structure of municipalities (Knittelfeld for example had about 10,000 inhabitants, but 30,000 war prisoners in a camp). They were followed by the Army’s own injured or traumatised, whom shell shocks had deprived of their speech or sense of orientation, and finally the corpses of those killed in action, or rather the death notifications as most of them were buried in mass graves.

The hinterland, which ultimately also determined the outcome of the war due to the excessive structural strains imposed on it, the so-called “home front” with its specific experiences of deficiencies, had also become part of a landscape of experience oriented towards the front lines.

Warfare and humanitarian consequences

- Verena Moritz -

World War I set new standards in many respects. Automatic weapons, which were used for the first time in such large numbers, had a destructive capacity that was many times greater. Heavy artillery and machine guns were used at varying levels of intensity but on all fronts, dramatically increasing the number of victims. About nine million soldiers died, approximately 1.5 million on the side of Austria-Hungary. Hundreds of thousands suffered partly severe injuries in combat. In the small post-war Austria alone there were more than 100,000 war invalids who had to be supported by the state. About 350,000 war widows and orphans had to be added to this number. The consequences of the war for all those who had survived it but had lost their relatives and/or were deprived of their livelihoods are, of course, not quantifiable.

Nevertheless, it seems to be worthwhile to consider the far-reaching implications of the manifold humanitarian consequences of the war, which can at least be vaguely sensed based on figures. The number of prisoners of war was, for example, running into millions. In no other military conflict had so many soldiers been captured by the enemy. An estimated total of 2.77 million soldiers from the Danube monarchy alone had been taken prisoner. Hundreds of thousands did not return home but died in the country where they were held captive. Moreover, numerous soldiers detained in Russia were able to return to their home country only many years after the end of the war due to the conflicts between the adherents and opponents of the Bolshevik regime established in 1917. As the Republic was experiencing a severe economic and financial crisis, the reintegration of former soldiers into the post-war society was very often difficult. Not all of them managed to return to their previous occupations. The mental side-effects of captivity, which often lasted several years, were palpable and frequently imposed a burden on the lives of the families affected which should not be underestimated.

The consequences of the war, which proved to be beyond expectation, also posed new challenges to the Red Cross and numerous other emergency and relief organisations at public and private level. The amount of time required to remedy organisational and logistical shortcomings (which had been evident especially at the beginning of the war) varied, depending on the assistance provided. The masses of refugees consisting mainly of women, children as well as old and frail persons were a group in dire need of support. About 600,000 people had to be displaced from regions becoming part of the war zone already in the spring months of 1915. At the turn of the year 1914/15 there were about 150,000 refugees in Vienna who had to flee above all from the regions of Galicia conquered by the army of the Tsar. The maintenance and accommodation of these refugees presented almost unsolvable problems to the authorities. As a result, the public sector was not always willing to take care of these displaced persons. Moreover, the presence of foreign refugees did not only trigger helpfulness and solidarity in the population. The attitude of rejection of the citizens vis-à-vis the refugees increased with their length of stay and intensified in view of the food crisis, which had become more severe in 1916. Jewish war refugees also had to face anti-Semitic resentment. And what's more, the misery of the refugees was usually treated as a taboo. Censorship ensured that the public had only random pieces of information about the fate of these people. In many cases repatriation took place prematurely, and the refugees had to be evacuated a second time due to continued warfare. Repatriation

usually meant that the refugees had to return to a destroyed country, where it was impossible to survive without support. Data on the civilian casualties of the war on the Austrian-Hungarian side are imprecise – the estimated number of 400,000 seems to be excessively low.

In the past few years research started to focus on the fact that the civilian population did not only have to fear the enemy but also its own soldiers. Soldiers committed acts of aggression against the population of Galicia under a blanket suspicion that the people living there were à priori “disloyal elements” and “traitors”. Quite a remarkable number of these “spies” supposedly working for Russia were executed, thousands of them were deported.

And it was only in the recent past that historical research explored issues related to the fact that warfare influenced by concepts of national enemies and consequential feelings of cultural superiority (which could be observed in Serbia at the outbreak of the war and other war theatres at a later stage) led to “transgressions of norms” and gave rise to “war atrocities”. From this perspective, the “de-mythification” of World War I, which had been ignored by historical research for a long time, as well as the critical assessment of the Imperial and Royal Army, which had quite frequently been subject to heroic idealisation or was quasi belittled in popular and academic retrospection for many decades, are therefore ongoing processes.

Women's and Gender History of World War I

- Christa Hämmerle, Gabriella Hauch -

The disaster of World War I cannot be understood unless we examine the gender relations of that period: from the question of the impact of the war on men *and* women as well as the civilian population as a whole to the gender order then propagated, with all its ambivalences and contradictions. More recent research has not only revealed this fact but also highlighted that numerous interconnections between the “front” and “home front” are a prerequisite for modern warfare. The blurring of boundaries between the battle fronts and the hinterland or home country posed a direct threat to many women and children, turned them into refugees and victims of war violence – the memory of which has often been repressed later in history. Also from this perspective, World War I was – to a very large extent – a “total” warfare, which did not only affect and involve soldiers but, in fact, society in general. It was therefore a “people’s war”.

This has manifested itself in the broad-based (self) mobilisation of women and women’s associations, starting immediately after the outbreak of the war with the establishment of the “Women’s Aid Campaign in the War” (*Frauenhilfsaktion im Kriege*). Putting aside their internationalism and committed to serving their “fatherland” going to war, most of the associations or representatives of the then women’s movement(s) joined – just like in other European countries – under this name. Social democratic women also participated in this campaign even though many of them were war opponents. There was only a small group of female pacifists from Austria and Hungary who did not support it and travelled to the international women’s peace conference in The Hague in May 1915. Together with more than 1,100 female delegates from twelve nations, they called for an immediate ceasefire. Many other women volunteered in activities which were considered to be ideally suited to the “female nature”. Women served meals to passing troops at railway stations (*Labedienst*), produced millions of “gifts of love” for the soldiers, wrapped and sent them to the front, created work opportunities for countless women who had lost their jobs due to the war, collected materials and money, etc. Together with the official “War Welfare System”, various welfare schemes for the poor, for women who had recently given birth, mothers, children or babies, public free meals services (that were of increasing importance) and warm rooms for the homeless in winter fell within women’s sphere of responsibility. Moreover, women were very attracted by work as a war nurse – not only in the so-called hinterland, but also in the mobile field hospitals, which were usually set up close to the front and where they had a chance to meet the first female doctors. It was precisely the role of the war nurse that was considered to be equivalent in status to the male soldier, who was glorified as a hero and regarded as the absolute, supreme ideal image of manhood. The respective gender discourses used gender, or rather the massively propagated contemporary ideals of virility and femininity, as a weapon to promote military mobilisation and rally support for the war. This strategy proved to be increasingly unsuccessful, the longer the war lasted. Gender conflicts became evident, and extramarital affairs and – just like in any war – prostitution and sexual violence were growing.

During World War I more and more women started to work in occupations which had been male-dominated in the past. They held various types of employments, worked as conductresses or women farmers who were now ploughing themselves. There was also a rapidly growing number of female workers in the war industry, whose living conditions were getting more and more precarious

during the war. In the wake of the tightening of the War Requirements Act (*Kriegsleistungsgesetz*) of 18 March 1917, they were to a very large extent deprived of their “freedom”, i.e. the possibility, of changing job; they had become indispensable for the continuation of the war. And no later than in the spring of 1917, this also applied to the “female auxiliary personnel of the army in the field” (30,000 to 50,000 women in total), who had to replace soldiers working in the administration so as to make them available for service on the front – this is another fact illustrating to what extent women had been involved in warfare during World War I. The example of Austria-Hungary is in line with similar developments in other countries going to war. However, in this case women’s additional role as “administrators of deficiency and of dramatic supply shortages” has been particularly complex, widening the gap between the worlds of experience “front” and “fatherland”. Queuing up for food and other essential goods for hours and the experience of hunger, cold, disease and exhaustion as well as grief, disillusionment or traumatisation – all of these were gender-specific war experiences having a long-term impact beyond the year 1918.

But all these experiences also led to resistance. Women became initiators and actors of protest campaigns, the so-called “food riots” and large strikes in the second half of the war. Research has shown that women’s scope of action had in fact widened and that many of them were also politicised but that this should not be regarded as war-induced “emancipation” as women’s concrete experiences and patterns to endow life with a meaning were too contradictory and characterised by hardship. The introduction of women’s suffrage at the beginning of the First Republic of Austria was not a direct consequence of the war, the “deserved reward” for women’s civic engagement in the war but the result of their long-term combat and the specific political constellation in November 1918; World War I therefore acted as a “catalyst” but was not the cause of this development.

As women had achieved new positions in society as citizens, as elected members of parliament or students of all academic disciplines (exception: theology), their sphere of action was widening in the First Republic but there was no structural collapse or fundamental realignment of the relationship between the sexes – even though the officers (whose descriptions determined the culture of war remembrance after 1918) were of the opinion that the loss of old-established values was reflected most drastically in the long-term “crisis of manhood”. The beginning of a new era resulted in a re-militarisation of society and a gender order which continued to be oriented towards the gender-specific hierarchies of the bourgeois gender roles enshrined in the Austrian Civil Code of 1811. Working in semi-skilled jobs and receiving less pay than men, the vast majority of working women “dreamt” – in vain – of better lives as housewives. The much-publicised image of the “new woman” wearing her hair in a bob was limited to urban centres. The party of modernity, the Social Democratic Workers’ Party (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*), garnered an increasing number of female votes in the First Republic. But, as the global economic crisis was progressing, the “passage of time” was reversed in respect of gender relations: re-masculinisation and discrimination against women were to become the political principles of the authoritarian Christian corporate state (*Ständestaat*) / “Austro-Fascism”.

Consequences of World War I

- Stefan Karner -

The world changed fundamentally at the end of World War I in 1918. The great monarchies, the Tsar's Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the German Empire and Austria-Hungary belonged to the past. Europe's reorganisation was enshrined in a framework of international law, namely in the so-called "treaties of the Paris suburbs" (1919/20) by Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey. Particularly the Treaty of Versailles was the result of the peace settlement crafted by the new "great powers". However, it carried the seeds of a new war in Europe within it. Europe's medium-sized and small countries were incorporated into very fragile European systems. A belt of countries was now extending from the Baltic region to the Balkans. The states located within it had to reorient themselves: with regard to their domestic and foreign policies as well as economically and socially. The rise of the USA was imminent, Europe's position as a global power had been weakened. Based on propaganda strategies (proclamation of the "Jihād" by the Ottoman Empire, ardent support of independence movements, etc.) and due to personal experiences, the anti-colonial movements had become more powerful, in particular in the British, French and Belgian possessions.

The collapse of the large European empires also changed the maps of Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the new Turkey. In some extreme cases, the strengthening of monochrome nation concepts (state = nation with a uniform language and religion) even led to forced exchanges of population (Greece-Turkey) or to genocide (Armenians). As a result of the foundation of the League of Nations, the brittle peace was stabilised by strengthening the idea of cooperation. New initiatives were launched under international law to at least reduce the horrors which had manifested themselves in World War I in future conflicts. However, as the Russian-Communist regime was consolidating, it became clear that the emerging conflict between the "democratic West" and the "Communist East" would play a decisive role in shaping future developments.

In World War I ten million people lost their lives, 20 million were wounded, several million became prisoners of war, were displaced or had to leave their native regions and resettle permanently. Austria-Hungary mobilised 7.8 million soldiers, of whom almost 20 percent were killed in action. A dramatic side effect of the war was a worldwide influenza pandemic ("Spanish Flu"), which spread rapidly due to the specific conditions of the war (high migration by mass armies and refugees; close contact and inadequate hygiene in mass accommodation; disastrous food supply of large population groups, etc.). The influenza killed between 25 and 40 million people around the globe – more than the war itself!

The consequences for the newly established Republic of (German-)Austria were dramatic. Its citizens were still spread over half of Europe as soldiers or war prisoners. They found themselves to be on "foreign" state territory overnight. Hundreds of thousands had been physically or mentally crippled.

The new state was perceived by many as a "remainder" which still had to discover its identity. Half of the Austrian state border had to be re-drawn. Many – partly German-speaking – regions that had been claimed were lost ("Sudetenland", South Tyrol, parts of Styria and Carinthia). Due to this disillusionment, the idea of "annexation" to Germany was of growing importance as a cross-party consensus but prohibited under international law.

In economic terms the collapse of Austria-Hungary meant that a homogenous economic, transport, industrial and working area was split up through new borders. A policy of high customs and trade barriers aggravated the situation. The new state had to take over an overblown banking, financial and administrative sector, which was forcefully downsized in the wake of the Loan of the League of Nations and the global economic crisis. The loss of traditional procurement and sales markets for industrial products as well as problems related to the changeover from war to peace production caused massive unemployment. One of the effects of inflation as well as of the supply and production difficulties before and after the war was the impoverishment of the bourgeois middle class. Finally, this also reinforced the economic element of Anti-Semitism, especially in Vienna.

Nevertheless, “Central Europe” continued to be the region with the globally third highest level of trade integration for another decade, which was split up into different parts only in the wake of the developments starting in the 1930s. The legacy left to “German-Austria” was, at first sight, not so negative. 13.5 percent of the population accumulated 18.4 percent of the net production value and 19.7 percent of the GDP of the monarchy. The public utilities in the federal provinces pressed ahead with the development of an Austrian electricity industry based on water and coal, which had been initiated during the war. In parallel, industrialisation was intensified by taking advantage of the existing war infrastructure (in particular prisoner-of-war camps and armament capacities).

In the aftermath of the war and the reorganisation of the community of states, hundreds of thousands of people had to emigrate overseas or to the successor states. The loss of population was compensated for only partially by the inflow of mainly German-speaking persons (*Altösterreicher*) from the former Crown Lands (*Kronländer*). Efforts were made to cushion the impact of the severest economic problems by pursuing a modern social policy (Hanusch) and building social housing estates in the “Red Vienna” (the Socialist Party was in power in Vienna from 1918 to 1934). But the social divide was inevitably widening due to the radicalisation of the discourses on identity in the wake of the upheaval of 1918 and the territorial conflicts with the successor states. A “moderator”, as the monarch previously used to be, was missing.

The four-year mass mobilisation, the duration of the war and the specific type of war (trench warfare, mountain warfare) resulted in an extraordinarily high number of war invalids also in Austria: amputations and war-related blindness (not through poison gas but splinter effects!) had forcefully ended the working lives of a substantial percentage of the population. Generational and gender conflicts became acute: women/children refused to accept being pushed to the fringes of society by those returning from the front and the prisoner-of-war camps. Traumatization and brutalization in the war nurtured readiness to use violence. Combined with the ideologisation of large sectors of the population through the after-effects of war propaganda, this resulted in an explosive mix, which was reflected in the militarisation of society through paramilitary forces (*Wehrverbände*). The phase of shock and silence (1918/19) was followed by a period in which political discourse was dominated by veterans and combatants.

Impact of the “front experience” of World War I on the development of Austria in the interwar period

- Verena Moritz -

After the collapse of the Danube monarchy, Austria became a small state which did not consider itself viable due to dropping out of the large economic framework of the former Habsburg monarchy. The Republic of German-Austria, which made its future dependent on its annexation to Germany, regarded itself predominantly as a victim in view of the peace conditions dictated by the victorious powers, which inter alia prohibited it to join with former partners of the alliance. Historians refer in this context to the so-called “first victim thesis” (by analogy with the developments after World War II), according to which the Republic of German-Austria recognised only to some degree that it had played an active role in the events of the past. The loss of a state being a “great power”, which was experienced as traumatic by large sectors of the population, was by no means a negligible reason why it seemed necessary to search for those culpable of reducing it to an unimportant “mini state”. This reflex did not only poison the internal climate but also had a decisive influence on the perception of foreign countries. The new nation states having emerged from the former Habsburg Empire were quite often regarded as “traitors”, and the victorious powers were blamed particularly for the precarious economic situation. Moreover, Austria was practically transformed into the “laboratory” of a struggle between ideologies. The “Cold War” now waged concentrated on “internal enemies”, those who were culpable of the “defeat” – depending on the respective point of view. But not only the Austrian version of the “stab-in-the-back legend” was the subject of heated debates. Existing political-ideological antagonisms – to which the Russian October Revolution had added a new dimension in 1917 – were deepening permanently after 1918 and also resorted to “war fatigue” (which had been politically motivated before the collapse of the Habsburg Empire) – combined with other phenomena such as the peace slogans of the Bolsheviks.

The Austrian history of the inter-war period is characterised by the irreconcilability of the political camps which were increasingly inclined to use violence. The paramilitary forces (“*Wehrverbände*”) which had emerged in the early 1920 and basically acted as an “extension” of the different political forces were symptomatic of this development. But was the manifest “militarisation” a direct consequence of World War I? And what about the much-cited “brutalisation” of society in general and of specific groups in particular? Can this type of radicalisation also be understood as a linear development since World War I? In the light of new research, answers to these questions are much more differentiated than before. They stress for example the need of taking into account the different social backgrounds of former combatants. Analyses have inter alia shown that the long-term effects of front-line service are not so dramatic on soldiers with a rural background. From this perspective, the experience of war is not considered a disruption of the lives of the front generation. It is, however, questionable whether this assumption may be verified by examining the extent to which soldiers participated in organised groups devoted to “upholding traditions”. However, the “refusal to remember” of many soldiers, which can be observed under this frame of reference, seems to be a striking fact. In this connection, cultures of remembrance and their cyclical trends are also of great importance. The war fatigue coming close to pacifism and the condemnation of war, which was typical of the first post-war years, was succeeded by a “conservative turnaround” in Austria starting at the beginning of the 1920s, in which former officers of the Imperial and Royal

Army were allowed to play a disproportionately important role in interpreting the war events. They remained fixated on conveying a meaning to the war lost which could also be used to construct politically- and ideologically-charged messages. The gap between officers and soldiers, which became blatant immediately after the end of the war, was gradually narrowing. Average soldiers accepted the idealisation of the war, the “praise” of the “patriotic attitude” and the overemphasising of “camaraderie” as it had been propagated by former officers of the Imperial and Royal Army. According to historians, this fact should, however, not be interpreted as an expression of approval but rather of the desire for recognition of the “services” rendered and “sacrifices” made during the war.

As pointed out in current research, no one-sided lines of continuity should be drawn from the effects and consequences of the acts of violence committed and suffered by the soldiers. Despite the differentiated approach which is considered necessary and must also take into account the instrumentalisation of “front experiences” by political forces, experiences of violence must in general be understood as a disruption in the life histories of the individuals affected even outside the military sphere. The increased incidence of experiences of this kind may in fact be seen as a factor that influences and shapes societies – including radicalising trends. A considerably more extensive conflict was superimposed on “traditional” war due to the sharp division between conservative and revolutionary forces, which had been observed already during World War I and in the aftermath of the upheavals in Russia. Consequently, a new kind of legitimisation of violence was generated. Similar conclusions may be drawn regarding national needs which were not satisfied after 1919 due to the establishment of new problematic borders: they threatened to rekindle military conflicts. In the light of these considerations, World War I – and its implications for future conflicts – must be recognised as an element having a profound impact on the history of Austria after 1918. Very often it has posed an obstacle to overcoming antagonisms peacefully.

World War I in the memory of Austria and (central) Europe – Traditions of remembrance from a (trans) national perspective

- Heidemarie Uhl -

World War I is still present in Europe's memory – as the “seminal catastrophe” and the origin of the dramatic transformations of the 20th century. There are, however, differences regarding the importance attached to the period from 1914 to 1918 in the individual national cultures of memory. While the “Great War” is firmly implanted in the collective consciousness of France and Great Britain, it plays a minor role in Germany and Austria. The question regarding the function fulfilled by World War I in the historical narrative of the countries of (South) Eastern Europe appears to be less important in current World War I remembrance projects.

From an Austrian point of view, it seems appropriate to go beyond the national perspective of the period 1914 to 1918 and launch pioneering initiatives which will strengthen European integration. Emphasis should, therefore, be placed on a transnational-reflexive examination of World War I as a site of memory in the Central European region.

I. National perspectives

World War I is not one of Austria's key sites of memory. As the time horizon is moving forward, the narratives of the “war experience generation” have disappeared from communicative everyday memory. The foundational narrative commences in 1945/1955, 1918 serves only as a backdrop to it. The period “1914–1918” does not provide a sound basis for controversies – at least from today's perspective. World War I is a negotiated historical event, regardless of the fact that conflicts in interpretation concerning the assessment of the years 1914–1918 repeatedly sparked fundamental debates about Austria's historical identity in the First Republic and even in the first decades after 1945. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the discussion around the war-guilt question, which played a key role in the Federal Republic of Germany (Fritz Fischer Controversy), practically had no repercussions in Austria.

The war memorials are present in the public space, but interest focuses more on World War II as well as on the controversial question which position should be adopted with regard to Wehrmacht soldiers killed in action. Contrary to World War II, remembrance of 1914–1918 seems to meet with universal acceptance. It should, however, be borne in mind that the interpretation of World War I – and consequently the Habsburg monarchy and the year 1918 – as the much-mourned collapse of the Empire or the hailed new beginning of a democratic republic has repeatedly proved to be a conflict trigger between the political camps of the First Republic. Material and semantic remnants of these conflicts in interpretation are still extending into the present memorial landscape, e.g. the Austrian heroes' monument for WWI and the Habsburg Army at Heldenplatz, one of the central historico-political initiatives of the dictatorship of the corporate state (*Ständestaat*).

Memory means that an event may be given a meaning and significance from the present perspective. Which subject areas of World War I seem to be accessible to a “lively” interest in history? First of all, new approaches in research should be mentioned as they represent the epistemological interests of the present – history of violence, every-day experiences, gender.

Today the site of memory “World War I” is still of importance in respect of two aspects:

1. As a result of remembrance of those killed in action of the First Republic and the consequential “invention” of a new image of the soldier, the “average soldier” becomes a “hero”. The semantics of the heroic death of the soldier, which practically remained unchanged even after World War II, still extends into the present-day semantics of remembrance of soldiers killed in action and often provokes criticism, above all with regard to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht.

2. But “1918” might have the greatest importance for the present – this date marks the beginning of the republic-democratic status of present-day Austria, and for many neighbouring countries it is associated with their formal foundation. “1918” has been an issue of conflict between the political camps, that has reached far into the Second Republic. 100 years later, we may take advantage of the opportunity to explore new perspectives that go beyond politically charged patterns of interpretation. The prerequisite is the reconstruction of debates and controversies on the period 1914–1918, particularly in historical science.

II. Transnational perspectives

100 years after the beginning of World War I, this historic event will for the first time be commemorated in a united Europe. It has already become apparent that the commemorations will be shaped by national historical traditions; however, an increasing number of transnational remembrance initiatives are being developed in parallel. In Western Europe these initiatives have already become a tradition: the joint memorial ceremony of Verdun is regarded as a symbol of the German-French reconciliation process.

From the Austrian perspective, the centennial of the year 1914 may initiate a process of reflection on the different national perceptions of history in the (Central) European region. World War I is interpreted in completely different ways, especially in Central Europe, in the successor states of the Habsburg monarchy – as a defeat and a history of loss, on the one hand; and as the historical background of state foundations and processes of democratisation, on the other hand. However, these approaches to interpreting history are limited to the respective national communities of communication – there is practically no knowledge about “World War I” as a site of memory in other Central European countries.

This conclusion serves as a starting point for a conference organised for multipliers in the field of teaching methodology (universities, pedagogical universities, authors of history books, etc.) by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. The aim of examining different perceptions of the period 1914 to 1918 is not to develop a “common” narration of history as the smallest common denominator but to establish links between the individual narratives as well as to develop a reflective perception of national memory cultures. In this way, the different, partially opposing, national perceptions of World War I may become a fruitful source of a “European experience”, i.e. of developing a reflective approach to a country’s own memory culture and to the memory cultures of other states.

Moreover, this issue could give rise to further transnational cooperation, i.e. by conducting projects examining different interpretations of World War I in order to develop a transnational, reflective perspective taking into account the pan-European context. The findings could be incorporated into history education at school (e.g. through a common history text book).

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Annex

Timeline of World War I, with particular emphasis on Austria-Hungary

1914

June 28:	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo.
July 23:	Austria-Hungary issues démarche (ultimatum) to Serbia.
July 25:	Austria-Hungary breaks off diplomatic relations with Serbia. Beginning of the general mobilisation in Serbia.
July 28:	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
July 29:	Partial mobilisation in Russia.
July 30:	Beginning of the general mobilisation in Russia.
July 31:	German ultimatum to Russia.
August 1:	Beginning of mobilisation in France and in the German Empire. Germany declares war on Russia.
August 3:	Germany declares war on France. Italy and Romania declare themselves neutral.
August 4:	Germany invades neutral Belgium. The United Kingdom declares war on the German Empire.
August 5:	Montenegro declares war on Austria-Hungary.
August 6:	Serbia declares war on the German Empire. Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia.
August 11:	France declares war on Austria-Hungary.
August 12:	The United Kingdom declares war on Austria-Hungary.
August 23:	The Battle of Krašnik begins (ends on August 25). First success of the troops of the Imperial and Royal Army.
	Japan declares war on the German Empire and beginning of the Siege of Tsingtao (seizure on 7 November 1914).
August 26:	The Battle of Komarów begins (ends on September 1). Victory of the troops of the Imperial and Royal Army.
August 27:	Japan declares war on Austria-Hungary.
September 2:	Conquest of Lviv (Lemberg) by Russian troops.
September 8:	Second offensive of Austrian-Hungarian formations against northwestern and western Serbia.
October 22:	The Ottoman Empire enters the war, joining the Central Powers.
November 16:	Beginning of the third Austrian-Hungarian offensive against Serbia.
December 1:	Battle of Limanowa-Lapanów leads to the withdrawal of two Russian armies (ends on December 15).
December 2:	Capture of Belgrade by troops of the Imperial and Royal Army.
December 3:	Beginning of the Serbian counter-offensive.
December 15:	Withdrawal of the last Austrian-Hungarian troops from Serbian territory.

1915

January 13:	Count Leopold Berchtold was replaced by Count Stephan Burián von Rajecz as Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister.
January 23:	The Carpathian Winter War (until the end of March); severe losses suffered by the Austrian-Hungarian army.
February 6:	Romanian-Italian defensive alliance.
March 22:	Surrender of the Austrian-Hungarian Fortress of Przemyśl.
April 22:	First use of chlorine gas by German troops in the region of Ypres (Ypern).
April 25:	Beginning of the landings of the Allies in the Dardanelles (peninsula of Gallipoli).
April 26:	Treaty of London between Italy and the Entente.
May 2:	Beginning of the Breakthrough Battle of Tarnów-Gorlice.
May 4:	Termination of Triple Alliance agreement by Italy.
May 7:	The British passenger steamer "Lusitania" is sunk by a German submarine.
May 23:	Italy declares war on Austria-Hungary.
June 3:	Przemyśl re-conquered by German and Austrian-Hungarian troops.
June 22:	Lviv (Lemberg) was again liberated by German and Austrian-Hungarian troops.
June 23:	Beginning of the first Battle of Isonzo (ends on July 7).
July 17:	Beginning of the second Battle of Isonzo (ends on August 10).
August 26:	Beginning of the "Black and Yellow" offensive against Russia.
September 6:	A military treaty was signed between the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria.
October 6:	Offensive of German and Austrian-Hungarian formations against Serbia. The common Ministerial Council in Vienna declared that a territorial expansion would not be commensurate with the national structure and constitutional system of Austria-Hungary.
October 8:	Conquest of Belgrade.
October 14:	Bulgaria declares war on Serbia.
October 18:	Beginning of the third Battle of Isonzo (ends on November 5).
November 10:	Beginning of the fourth Battle of Isonzo (ends on 11 December).
November 25:	Defeat of the Serbian army in the Battle of Kosovo polje ("Field of Blackbirds"). Withdrawal of the Serbs via Montenegro to Albania (until 26 February).
December:	Peace initiatives of the so-called "Meinl Group".

1916

January 4:	Austrian-Hungarian offensive against Montenegro.
January 8:	Evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula by the Allies.
January 11:	Occupation of Mount Lovćen (Montenegro) by Austrian-Hungarian troops.
January 23:	Unconditional surrender of Montenegro. Troops of the Imperial and Royal Army start to invade Albania.
February 21:	Beginning of the battle of the fortress city Verdun in the north of France.
February 29:	Formations of the Imperial and Royal Army completed the occupation of northern Albania.
March 11:	Beginning of the fifth Battle of Isonzo (ends on March 16).
March 16:	Fierce fighting in the Adamello region, blowing up of Col di Lana.
May 15:	Beginning of the Austrian-Hungarian South Tyrol offensive ("punishment expedition").
May 31:	The Sea Battle of Jutland (Skagerrak).
June 4:	Beginning of the Russian summer offensive (Brusilov offensive). Severe losses of the Imperial and Royal Army until August 31.
June 6 to 22:	Blockade of Greece by the Entente; on June 21 demobilisation of the Greek Army.
June 16:	End of the battle in South Tyrol.
June 29:	First use of poison gas by the Austrian-Hungarian troops in the region of Gorizia (Görz).
August 4:	Beginning of the sixth Battle of Isonzo (ends on August 17). Gorizia conquered by Italian troops.
August 23:	Italy declares war on the German Empire.
August 27:	Romania declares war on Austria-Hungary. Beginning of a Romanian offensive against Transylvania (Siebenbürgen).
August 28:	The German Empire declares war on Romania.
September:	Severe supply problems of the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary.
September 1:	Bulgaria declares war on Romania.
September 14:	Beginning of the seventh Battle of Isonzo (until September 17).
September 22:	Beginning of the counter-offensive of German and Austrian-Hungarian troops in Transylvania.
October 9:	Beginning of the eighth Battle of Isonzo (ends on October 12).
October 21:	Count Karl Stürgkh, Imperial and Royal Prime Minister, is assassinated by Friedrich Adler. Ernest von Koerber becomes Stürgkh's successor.
October 31:	Beginning of the ninth Battle of Isonzo (ends on November 4).
November 5:	Proclamation of an independent Kingdom of Poland by the German Empire and Austria-Hungary.
November 21:	Death of Emperor Francis Josephs I. Emperor Charles I becomes his successor.
December 6:	Conquest of Bucharest by troops of the Central Powers.
December 12:	Peace proposal by the Central Powers to the Allies (rejected on December 30).
December 18:	Unsuccessful peace appeal by US President Woodrow Wilson.
December 20:	Appointment of Count Ottokar Czernin as new Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister.

1917

January to May:	Confidential peace proposal by Emperor Charles to the Allies through Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma (compare 12 April 1918). Italy rejects negotiations on separate peace.
January 12:	Privy Council chaired by Emperor Charles: integrity of the monarchy, far-reaching rights of existence for Serbia, approximation to Russia; status quo in the Polish issue.
February 1:	Beginning of the unrestricted submarine warfare.
February 27:	General of the Infantry Arz von Straußenburg succeeds to Colonel-General Conrad von Hötzendorf as Chief of the General Staff. Establishment of a common Committee on Nutrition for both parts of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, which reported directly to the Emperor.
March 12:	Beginning of the (bourgeois) revolution in Russia.
March 15:	Tsar Nicholas II. of Russia abdicates.
April 6:	The USA declare war on the German Empire.
April 19 to 21:	English-French-Italian conference in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. A separate peace with Austria-Hungary is rejected.
April 23:	Conference on war objectives in Bad Kreuznach between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary
May 12:	Tenth Battle of Isonzo (ends on June 5).
May 15:	Sea Battle of Otranto Straits.
May 30:	The Austrian Imperial Councils is reconvened.
June 10:	Italian offensive in the region of the Seven Communities (Battle of Ortigara; ends on June 29).
June 15:	Count Moritz Esterházy succeeds to Count Tizsas as Hungarian Prime Minister.
June 27:	Offensive of the Russian army in Belarus (Kerenskij offensive).
July 2:	Greece declares war on the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Emperor Charles grants amnesty for political offences. Deployment of a Czech brigade near Zborów within the framework of the Kerenskij offensive.
July 16 to 18:	Bolshevik uprising in St. Petersburg fails.
July 20:	Corfu Declaration between Serbs and Croats to create a Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.
August 18:	Beginning of the eleventh Battle of Isonzo (ends on 13 September).
October 24:	Beginning of the twelfth Battle of Isonzo. German and Austrian-Hungarian troops achieve a breakthrough near Bovec (Flitsch) and Tolmen (Tolmein) and then march to the Piave River.
November 7:	Beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.
November 20 to 29:	Major attack of the Allies at Cambrai, using tanks for the first time.
December 3:	Beginning of the armistice negotiations between the Central Powers and Russia (armistice on December 15. Beginning of peace negotiations on December 22).
December 7:	The USA declare war on Austria-Hungary. Armistice between the Central Powers and Romania in Focșani.

1918

January 3 to 25:	Strike movement in Austria-Hungary. The number of workers on strike gradually rose to more than 700,000.
January 6:	“Twelfth Night Declaration” of the Czech deputies in the Austrian Imperial Council.
January 8:	Peace statement by US President Wilson (“Fourteen Points”).
February 1:	Mutiny of sailors in the Imperial and Royal Naval Base of Cattaro. After its suppression, four sailors were executed.
February 9:	Peace treaty of the Central Powers with the Ukrainian People’s Republic.
February 28:	Imperial and Royal Army troops participate in the invasion of Ukraine.
End of February:	Emperor Charles plans to recognise the Fourteen Points of Present Wilson (with modifications).
March 3:	Peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk between the Central Powers and Russia.
March 14:	Occupation of Odessa by formations of Central Powers.
March 21:	German Spring Offensive in Belgium and France (until July 17).
April 1:	The first air mail service of the world is launched on the route Vienna – Olomouc (Olmütz)–Cracow (Krakau) –Lviv (Lemberg) –Kiev.
April 8:	Conference of Oppressed Nationalities (of Austria-Hungary) in Rome (ends on April 11).
April 12:	French Prime Minister Clemenceau publishes the (first of two) “Letter(s) to Sixtus”. Emperor Charles denies allegations. Foreign Minister Czernin resigns.
April 25:	Homecomers’ riots in Bohemia, Moravia and Galicia (until July 5).
May 7:	Conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Bucharest between the Central Powers and Romania.
May 12:	Emperor Charles at Spa: agreement on a close political, military and economic alliance with the German Empire. Riots in Judenburg, Murau, Pécs (Fünfkirchen), Rumburk (Rumburg) and Radkersburg (until May 24).
May 30:	Agreement of Pittsburgh (USA) between the Czech leader of emigrants T. G. Masaryk and American leaders of the Slovaks.
June 10:	Sinking of the Imperial and Royal Battleship “Szent István” near the island Premuda.
June 15:	Beginning of the Piave offensive. The last offensive of the Imperial and Royal Army fails within some days.
July 6:	Beginning of the offensive of the Allies in Albania.
July 17:	Tsar Nicholas II. and his family are shot by Bolsheviks.
August 8:	Battle of Amiens (ends on August 11). Beginning of the collapse of the German front in France.
August 9:	Recognition of Czechoslovakia as a participant in the war by the United Kingdom.
September 14:	Peace note of Emperor Charles “To All”.
September 15:	Offensive of the Allies on the front of Macedonia (until October 29).
18. September:	Beginning of the offensive of the Allies in Palestine.
September 26:	Masaryk proclaims an independent Czechoslovak state in Paris.
September 29:	Armistice between Bulgaria and the Allies. Chief of the General Staff Hindenburg requests the German government of the Reich to take steps to agree on an armistice.

October 1:	Beginning of the withdrawal of Austrian-Hungarian troops from Albania.
October 3:	Beginning of the withdrawal of German and Austrian-Hungarian troops from Serbia. Peace note of Austria-Hungary to US President Wilson.
October 6:	Establishment of a National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in Zagreb.
October 14:	Formation of a Czech government in Paris.
October 16:	Imperial Manifesto on Nationalities of Emperor Charles.
October 18:	Wilson rejected the Austrian-Hungarian peace note.
October 21:	Establishment of a provisional National Assembly of German-Austria.
October 23 to 26:	Visit of Emperor Charles and Empress Zita in Debrecen. Resolution by the Hungarian Reichstag to establish a National Council.
October 24:	Beginning of the offensive of the Allies on the Piave River. Resignation of Burián. Count Gyulá Andrássy the Younger becomes the last Imperial and Royal Foreign Minister.
October 27:	Formation of the last Imperial Austrian government led by Heinrich Lammasch.
October 28:	Proclamation of an independent Czechoslovak state in Prague. Incorporation of the Polish territories of Austria-Hungary into the Polish state.
October 30:	Setting up of a provisional State Council and a German-Austrian government.
October 31:	Handing over of a major part of the Imperial and Royal War Navy to the South Slavic State. Former Hungarian Prime Minister Count István Tisza is assassinated.
November 1:	Sinking of the (former) Imperial and Royal flagship "Viribus Unitis" by Italy using limpet mines. Formation of an independent Hungarian government led by Count Mihály Károlyi. Serbs occupy Belgrade.
November 2:	Resignation of the last Austrian-Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Andrássy.
November 3:	Agreement on an armistice between Austria-Hungary and the Allies at Villa Giusti (coming into force on November 4).

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