

# Quaderni

di Scienze Politiche

ISSN: 2532-5302  
ISSN edizione online: 2532-5310



ORBEM PRUDENTER INVESTIGARE ET VERACITER AGNOSCERE



23  
2023

# Quaderni

di Scienze Politiche

23

---

2023

Anno XIII - 23/2023

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Milano n. 355 del 27.6.2011

DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE

Massimo de Leonardis (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)

COMITATO EDITORIALE

Mireno Berrettini (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Francesco Bonini ( Rettore Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta, Roma), Barbara Lilla Boschetti (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Giuliano Caroli (Università Cusano, Roma), Rosa Caroli (Università Cà Foscari, Venezia), AntonGiulio de' Robertis (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro), Alessandro Duce (Università di Parma), Massimiliano Guderzo (Università di Siena), Umberto Morelli (Università di Torino) †, Giuseppe Parlato (Università Studi Internazionali di Roma), Luca Ratti (Università Roma Tre), Carola Ricci (Università di Pavia), Gianluigi Rossi (Sapienza Università di Roma), Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte (Università di Trieste), Andrea Santini (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Andrea Ungari (Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi, Roma)

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Alessandro Campi (Università degli Studi, Perugia), Paolo Colombo (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Jason Davidson (Università Mary Washington), Alan P. Dobson (Swansea University) †, Oreste Foppiani (Webster University, Ginevra), Michael Germann (Martin Luther Universität, Halle-Wittenberg), David G. Haglund (Queen's University, Kingston), Hubert Heyriès (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier 3) †, Bahgat Korany (American University of Cairo), Antonio Marquina Barrio (Universidad Complutense, Madrid), Richard Overy (Università di Exeter), Damiano Palano (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Vittorio Emanuele Parsi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Riccardo Redaelli (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Luca Riccardi (Università degli Studi di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale), Guido Samarani (Università Cà Foscari, Venezia), Maurizio E. Serra (Ambasciatore d'Italia e Accademico di Francia, Parigi-Roma), Georges-Henri Soutou (Président de l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, Parigi), Krzysztof Strzałka (Ambasciatore e Docente Università Jagellonica di Cracovia), Stanislav L. Tkachenko (Università di San Pietroburgo), Mark Webber (Università di Birmingham)

SEGRETARIO DI REDAZIONE

Davide Borsani (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)

La pubblicazione degli articoli è soggetta a *Peer Review* anonima.

I *Quaderni* sono liberamente scaricabili all'indirizzo Internet <http://www.quaderniscienzepolitiche.it>

È possibile ordinare la versione cartacea:

on line all'indirizzo [www.educatt.it/libri](http://www.educatt.it/libri); tramite fax allo 02.80.53.215 o via e-mail all'indirizzo [librario.dsu@educatt.it](mailto:librario.dsu@educatt.it) (una copia € 15; abbonamento a quattro numeri € 40).

Modalità di pagamento:

- bonifico bancario intestato a EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio dell'Università Cattolica presso Banca Infrastrutture Innovazione e Sviluppo - IBAN: IT 08 R 03069 03390 211609500166;
- bonifico bancario intestato a EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio dell'Università Cattolica presso Monte dei Paschi di Siena - IBAN: IT 08 D 01030 01637 0000001901668;
- bollettino postale intestato a EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio dell'Università Cattolica su cc. 17710203

© 2023 EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario dell'Università Cattolica

Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano - tel. 02.7234.22.35 - fax 02.80.53.215

e-mail: [editoriale.dsu@educatt.it](mailto:editoriale.dsu@educatt.it) (*produzione*); [librario.dsu@educatt.it](mailto:librario.dsu@educatt.it) (*distribuzione*)

web: [www.educatt.it/libri](http://www.educatt.it/libri)

ISBN edizione cartacea: 979-12-5535-133-7

ISBN edizione digitale: 979-12-5535-134-4

ISSN: 2532-5302

ISSN edizione online: 2532-5310

# Indice

Introduzione.....	5
di MASSIMO DE LEONARDIS	
La Santa Sede e gli “imperi” .....	11
di MASSIMO DE LEONARDIS	
La Santa Sede e le relazioni internazionali. La sfida della imparzialità .....	27
di BERNARD ARDURA	
Diplomazia, religione, storia: esperienze a confronto .....	49
di JAN TOMBIŃSKI	
Postilla .....	75
di LUCA IORI, MARIO TESINI	
Joint Panel Rearmaments and Disarmaments after the two World Wars in the XX Century .....	77
di MASSIMO DE LEONARDIS	
The rising challenge in the Asia-Pacific, Britain and Imperial defence in the age of the Ten-Year Rule (1919-1932) .....	81
di DAVIDE BORSANI	
Between disarmament and rearmament. Austria’s Armed Forces and Security Policy 1918-1938 .....	99
di MARIO CHRISTIAN ORTNER	
Gli Autori .....	129



# Between disarmament and rearmament. Austria's Armed Forces and Security Policy 1918-1938

di MARIO CHRISTIAN ORTNER

**Abstract** – *Quando il 3 novembre 1918 fu firmato l'armistizio di Villa Giusti, la Monarchia asburgica era già in fase di dissoluzione. L'Austria tedesca, uno degli Stati successori dell'ex Impero, aveva la necessità di creare al più presto un proprio strumento di difesa nazionale. Una Volkswehr provvisoria – ma non in continuità con il vecchio Esercito imperiale – avrebbe dovuto fare da ponte fino alla creazione di un nuovo Esercito regolare, ma il Trattato di Saint-Germain pose fine a qualsiasi idea di Esercito austriaco basato sul servizio nazionale e anche alla Volkswehr. Le restrizioni relative alla qualità e alla quantità di armi e armamenti erano considerevoli. La Conferenza sul Disarmo di Ginevra (1932-1934), concepita in realtà come un'iniziativa per la limitazione degli armamenti, rifletté i diversi approcci alla politica di sicurezza degli Stati europei sulla scena diplomatica e cambiò così il futuro ruolo delle Forze Armate austriache. Con l'introduzione del servizio militare obbligatorio il 1° aprile 1936, fu assicurato il rimpiazzo del personale nella struttura ampliata dell'Esercito e vennero fatti sforzi, seppur limitati, per il miglioramento materiale delle Forze Armate. L'invasione delle Forze Armate tedesche, il mancato dispiegamento delle Forze Armate austriache e l'Anschluss dell'Austria manifestarono in ultima analisi il fallimento di queste iniziative politiche per preservare la sua sovranità. Le dichiarazioni di garanzia all'estero si rivelarono inefficaci in considerazione della presunta debolezza militare dell'Austria e anche della riluttanza della politica austriaca a dare allo strumento militare un ruolo attivo nei propri concetti di politica di sicurezza e comunicare lo stesso in modo efficace all'esterno.*

## **From the Imperial and Royal Army to the provisional *Volkswehr* (1918-1919)**

November 1918 certainly is one of the decisive turning points not only in the political history of Austria but also regarding the development of Austrian Armed Forces. The “old” army, with some of its oldest regiments looking back on an almost 300-year-old tradition, had ceased to exist alongside the Imperial and Royal

Habsburg Monarchy. After a struggle of almost four-and-a-half years and more than one million dead soldiers, 550,000-600,000 of whom were killed in action, for Austria-Hungary the Great War ended with the armistice of 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1918, signed at the Italian Supreme Command in the Villa Giusti outside of Padua. At this point in time, the end of hostilities having been stipulated for 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918, the Habsburg Monarchy already was in a state of political dissolution and the Imperial and Royal Army spent the last days of its existence without belonging to any State. The crown lands or rather the nationalities one after the other had declared their independence, even though the actual border demarcations remained vague because of various argumentations - with national or historical undertones. At first, because questions of territorial expansion of the successor states and the bordering victorious countries had to be given priority in the political discourse, this had effects on the respective approaches of security policies and subsequently led to an elaboration of first concepts for Armed Forces of one's own and military matters. For "German-Austria", newly constituted on 30<sup>th</sup> October as the independent - at least for the time being - successor state of the Habsburg Monarchy and then on 12<sup>th</sup> November being proclaimed a republic as well as a part of Germany, a preoccupation with the problem of national defence would not only have been a principal but also a vital matter, since the borders of the young republic could definitely not be considered secure.

The first considerations<sup>1</sup> regarding the creation of Armed Forces for (the Republic of) German-Austria can be dated to the final phase of the First World War. When the German-speaking representatives of the Imperial Council met in the Herrengasse in Vienna on 21 October 1918, they already defined the first broad lines for the future administration of a state that was yet to be founded. A few days later, the first corresponding - provisional but still binding - guidelines for the constitution and the administration were defined as well. So-called State Offices were to replace the old ministries, led by secretaries and undersecretaries of state. The State Military Office, newly created for all matters military,

---

<sup>1</sup> K. Glaubauf, *Die Volkswehr 1918-1920 und die Gründung der Republik*, Vienna, 1993, pp. 22-ff.

was led by Josef Mayer of the German-National Party and two adjunctive undersecretaries of state: Dr. Julius Deutsch (Social Democratic Workers' Party) and Dr. Erwin Waihs (Christian Social Party). Although the matter of an independent army, especially its creation, organization and alignment, had to be of a high priority immediately after the foundation of the State Office, one must not forget that at the same time the Austro-Hungarian Army was still afield and at war. The Allied great offensive on the Italian front, launched on 24<sup>th</sup> October with enormous quantities of troops and materiel, met an already weakened and completely undersupplied Imperial and Royal Army which to everyone's surprise – including its own Army High Command – repulsed the first assault wave of Allied troops<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, separatist aspirations and several already published declarations of independence of single nationalities and crown lands, respectively, had an effect on the frontline troops. Under enemy pressure and because of the internal political situation, the old army began to dissolve<sup>3</sup>. The final point of this development was marked by the armistice of 3 November 1918, as mentioned above.

More concrete deliberations regarding the alignment of the new army were almost exclusive to the Social Democrats of German-Austria, and definitely aligned towards ideological socio-political guidelines. First Lieutenant of the reserve Dr. Julius Deutsch – the already mentioned Undersecretary of State, later Secretary of State for Military Matters – had even presented his defence concept in a secret meeting with trusted Social Democrats in the night from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1918, before the signing of the Armistice of Villa Giusti<sup>4</sup>. According to Deutsch, the Armed Forces should be formed as a type of militia based on compulsory military service, not least to emphasize the breakaway from the organization and structure of the old Imperial and Royal military traditions. With regard to the scope of duties of the new Armed Forces, internal

---

<sup>2</sup> *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg*, Hrsg. Österreichisches Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung und Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv, 7 Bde, Vienna, 1930-1937, Band VII, p. 598-ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibi*, p. 651-ff.

<sup>4</sup> E. Steinböck, *Entstehung und Verwendung der Volkswehr*, in *Saint-Germain 1919. Protokoll des Symposiums vom 29. Und 30. Mai 1979 in Wien*, Vienna, 1989, p. 180.



political duties were paramount for Deutsch, especially after the proclamation of a republic on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1918, «The military policy of the Austrian revolution can only be understood if one recognizes the key objective of our actions, that we are considering the reactionaries a bigger threat than the Bolsheviks. Since we did not allow ourselves to be dissuaded from this key objective, neither by the angry fight of the reactionaries, nor by the ridiculous chest-beating of the super-radicals, we managed to keep both in check»<sup>5</sup>.

While Deutsch judged policing the interior to be the primary function of the Armed Forces yet to be created, «...so that the revolution won't be suffocated by the prevalent general anarchy...»<sup>6</sup> military experts on the other hand recognized the urgent need of securing those territories claimed by German-Austria by force of arms, should the necessity arise. It was decided to take the temporary measure of creating a *Volkswehr* (Peoples' Defence) made up of short-term enlisted professional soldiers, until the actual implementation of a militia army based on compulsory military service was feasible. Recruiting for this new army began immediately after signing the armistice on 4<sup>th</sup> November and a high army pay (6 *Kronen* per day) was granted in order to reach relevant troop strengths as fast as possible. The demobilization order for the old imperial army from 6<sup>th</sup> November was still signed by Emperor Karl I and – this is an interesting detail – was only decreed by the Austrian State Council on 7<sup>th</sup> November<sup>7</sup>.

After a fundamental commitment to the guidelines for its formation on 8<sup>th</sup> November, the actual order to form the *Volkswehr* followed on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1918. At this point, Lieutenant Field Marshal Adolf von Boog had already been sworn-in as commander-in-chief. During his speech at the swearing-in ceremony, President of the State Council Karl Seitz not only mentioned the future spectrum of duties for the *Volkswehr* but also made clear that there was to be no continuity from the old army of the Danube Monarchy, although it had to be conceded that one would not be able to do without the trained soldiers from the Great War.

---

<sup>5</sup> J. Deutsch, *Aus Österreichs Revolution*, Vienna, 1923, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibi*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> W. Etschmann, *Theorie, Praxis und Probleme der Demobilisierung 1915-1921*, Vienna, 1979, p. 75.

However, this made it clear from the very beginning that there was to be no direct transfer of units from the former imperial army into the new *Volkswehr*.

By nominating Adolf von Boog, a highly educated and experienced Imperial and Royal general staff officer who had achieved outstanding accomplishments as division commander, the ambivalent situation – war experience and military training with an Imperial and Royal background on one side, lack of military skills with a republican ethos on the other – became more than obvious<sup>8</sup>.

Troop strengths for the *Volkswehr* were to be one infantry battalion of three companies each per political district. A senior level of leadership based on the federal principle, with provincial commanders (incl. Southern Bohemia, Southern Moravia, German-Bohemia and Sudetenland) located in official residences in Vienna, Graz, Innsbruck, Leitmeritz (modern-day Litoměřice) and Troppau (modern-day Opava) would lead the battalions and independent companies directly. No brigades or divisions were formed, particularly with regard to the envisaged unification with Germany and intended integration of the Armed Forces, which seemed easier to carry out without higher operational commands.

A maximum strength for *Volkswehr* formations was pinpointed for the individual territorial areas, with an overall strength of approximately 50.000 soldiers, however, this was already exceeded by December 1918. The already mentioned State Military Office operated as the “temporary” supreme political authority, charged with controlling the formation and expansion of *Volkswehr* units as well as planning ahead for the eventual transformation of *Volkswehr* cadres into a militia army. A “civilian commissariat” was also attached to the State Office and tasked with complying with the formalities of recruitment, day-to-day management, fees and taxes, rations, billeting as well as educating *Volkswehr* soldiers about their civic rights and duties and promoting democratic principles within the *Volkswehr* – another conscious breakaway from the old Imperial and Royal military tradition. The headquarters and especially the soldiers’ councils (men of confidence) of the battalions served as points of contact with the civilian commissariat. Each company sent two soldiers and each battalion

---

<sup>8</sup> Glaubauf, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-ff.

two officers to the committees established at the individual headquarters. Additionally, deserving rank-and-file soldiers were given the opportunity to become officers as so-called “*Volkswehr* lieutenants” even without *Matura* (high school diploma). This institution, however, was often abused, as suitable candidates had to be elected by the respective soldiers’ council, which in most cases prioritised party politics over quality<sup>9</sup>. The *Volkswehr* was also intended to look significantly different from the Imperial and Royal Army. However, because of the general lack of fabrics the old uniforms stayed in use after removing all imperial rank insignia and emblems. Demeaned as “reactionary” at first, it was understood that there would be no smooth functioning within the formations without rank insignia. The corresponding regulation was only issued relatively late, in April 1919<sup>10</sup>, and principally consisted of an adoption of the contemporary German system, which had abolished or rather transformed the old imperial rank insignia in January 1919: azure collar and coat cuffs in addition to rank insignia in the form of chevrons on the upper arm (for junior NCOs and NCOs) or lower arm (officers), quite unusual for Austrian military tradition. To these were added breast badges labelled “*Volkswehr*” and red-white-red cockades for caps<sup>11</sup>. All of this met the political intention of German-Austria becoming a part of the Republic of Germany, which had been proclaimed on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

There were strong fluctuations in the troop strengths of individual *Volkswehr* formations. These fluctuations not only were influenced by geographical differences in the willingness of former soldiers to join the new army but also how much support recruiting efforts received from local Social Democratic party structures. In industrial cities some battalions had already reached regimental strength (e.g. Vienna, where scores of workers left the factories to join the *Vokswehr*) whereas in certain rural areas there were not enough soldiers to fill even a single company (e.g. the district of

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibi*, pp. 29-ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des deutsch-österreichischen Staatsamtes für Heerwesen*, nr. 14 vom 2 April 1919.

<sup>11</sup> E. Steinböck, *Die Uniformen des Bundesheeres*, in *Das Bundesheer der Ersten Republik 1918-1938. Materialien zum Vortragszyklus 1990 HGM/Gesellschaft für österreichische Heereskunde*, Vienna, 1990, p. 147.

Zwettl in Lower Austria) or nobody signed up at all (Enns valley in Upper Austria). This naturally had to do with the fact that in some replacement districts there were almost no men left fit for military service due to exceptionally high losses of their respective regiments, or that the men had not yet returned from captivity<sup>12</sup>. The difficulties were not limited to reaching the necessary troop strengths. *Volkswehr* leadership, already quite cumbersome by the strong federal structure in the form of provincial commanders, was also in no way uniform. This was especially perceivable in the strong divergence of political ideas from military necessities, a common theme throughout the entire history of the *Volkswehr*. On one hand, Lieutenant Field Marshal Adolf von Boog had been tasked with taking military measures to secure the borders, such as in the case of Southern Bohemia and Southern Moravia<sup>13</sup>, these measures having even been approved by the State Council; on the other hand, Undersecretary of State/Secretary of State Deutsch revoked the measures by ordering to offer no military resistance to the Czech forces occupying the territories mentioned above. This led to tensions between the two most important political and military leaders, eventually leading to continuous resignation on the part of Boog, who said in regard to a similar order concerned with securing the southern border against the Yugoslav state, «Since no use of arms will take place in any case, there is no need to position any artillery»<sup>14</sup>. The planned occupation of the German-speaking territories of “German Western Hungary” (Burgenland) can be viewed as the apex of the contrast between politics and the military. It was intended to be carried out immediately after the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, to prevent its troops from entering German-Austrian territory. On 14<sup>th</sup> May 1919 the State Military Office received the corresponding order from State Chancellor Dr. Karl Renner and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dr. Otto Bauer. However, deployment of the *Volkswehr* as the “official” army of Austria would have represented a formal interference in the internal affairs of Hungary and was indeed deemed counterproductive to the negotiations in Paris

---

<sup>12</sup> H. Kristan, *Geschichte des Generalstabes des österreichischen Bundesheeres von 1918 bis 1938*, Vienna, 1993, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> ÖSTA/AdR Staatsamt für Heerwesen, Präs. Zl. 1423/18.

<sup>14</sup> Kristan, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

which had just begun. Boog's proposal therefore manifested itself in the creation of seven "*Freikorps*" (free regiments) for this task. Boog insisted that recruiting should exclude Jews, monarchists, Communists and members of soldiers' councils in the *Volkswehr*, «because we are not supposed to be a political army but an army of the government»<sup>15</sup>. Besides the particularly strong anti-Semitic tendencies, the exclusion of *Volkswehr* soldiers' councils was completely unacceptable to Deutsch, since these bodies secured his unlimited influence on and control of the *Volkswehr*. Deutsch rejected the recruitment of *Freikorps*, not least because of the activities of such formations in Germany. On 27<sup>th</sup> May, a frustrated Boog resigned from his office of commander-in-chief and the position was not filled with a replacement<sup>16</sup>. The primacy defined by Deutsch, Armed Forces with an internal political function, had triumphed over military necessities and foreign policy goals. Deutsch's classification of Boog as "reactionary" certainly is not correct, quite on the contrary. Boog had – whether due to career reasons or pragmatism – already in early 1919 critically mentioned the "old" army and its "injustices," while at the same time rejecting the Social Democratic national defence system with an arming of the people and soldiers' councils. All of this would point to a political alignment with the Christian Social Party, however, that party did not really participate in the discussion of military matters through "its" Undersecretary of State Dr. Waihs in a decisive way and left the field to Deutsch. Without any doubt the interventions by Deutsch, motivated by internal political agendas, were not beneficial to the *Volkswehr* for increasing trust in itself – especially among the border population – as the young republic's instrument of national defence.

In the meantime, "Provisional Regulations for the Armed Forces"<sup>17</sup> as a legal foundation for the future national defence system of the young republic had been created on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1919 in the form of the first national defence act of the republic. The Armed Forces were to be raised within the framework of

---

<sup>15</sup> ÖSTA/KA/Manuskripte/AEI 2/5 Orientierung über Maßnahmen zur Besetzung Deutschen Gebietes in Westungarn, Anlage II.

<sup>16</sup> Glaubauf, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Verordnungsblatt des Staatsamtes für Heerwesen Nr. 8 vom 22 Februar 1919.

compulsory military service according to the initial aims, including all male citizens aged 18 to 41. However, the *Volkswehr* was to remain in force until the creation of a regular militia system and its members should then be merged into the militia army as cadres. During the transition period on the road to regular conscription planned for a later date, the government was also granted the right to draft 24.000 men born between 1896 and 1900 for four months if needed and the right to additionally recruit volunteers. This right was only applied once, in Carinthia in April 1919. However, the results were thin and only 6.500 men reported for duty; 2.200 of them were instantly given leave, 1.900 deserted and 1.100 were classified unfit for service, which left fewer than 1.500 men for deployment<sup>18</sup>.

Besides the already mentioned ambivalence of political prerogatives and military necessities within leadership structures as well as fundamental legal issues regarding the new national defence act, there arose further, very concrete problem areas: by early 1919, military expenditure began to significantly exceed the projected framework, since army pay for the *Volkswehr* – as was already mentioned – had been fixed at a disproportionately high rate and because the old institutions of the Imperial and Royal Army, now termed “liquidating,” were still processing (until 1931) all the administrative cases which had not been settled during the war and needed to be financed as well. In the following months the financial requirements rose to such heights that a reduction of personnel became unavoidable. Since the State Military Office had pushed for larger recruitment numbers as late as November 1918, this new development signified a complete change of course for its strategic guidelines within only a couple of weeks and finally recruitment was stopped in December 1918. New maximum personnel strengths were issued, units were ordered to change their locations and resignation bounties were supposed to speed up voluntary resignations of *Volkswehr* soldiers. However, all these measures were slow to have any effect so that by 31<sup>st</sup> March 1919 the headcount still totalled more than 49.000 men. By May 1919 there finally was a higher number of discharges and it is interesting

---

<sup>18</sup> E. Steinböck, *Die Organisation der österreichischen Streitkräfte von 1918-938, in 1918-968, Die Streitkräfte der Republik Österreich*, Vienna, 1968, p. 35.

to note that instead of reducing the number of battalions only their total strengths were lowered<sup>19</sup>. For the sake of completeness, it has to be mentioned that despite a prioritisation of infantry other service branches were represented in the *Volkswehr* as well. Often, they owed their existence not to military necessities but to the single factor of appropriate specialist soldiers being locally available for collective recruitment. For lack of riding horses there were only two battalions of cavalry in Graz and Klagenfurt, there were three battalions of artillery and several independent batteries of field guns, howitzers and mountain guns, with a total of 156 artillery pieces but almost no draft horses. Furthermore, four technical battalions and several independent telephone platoons were in existence. Strangely enough, there was a *Volkswehr* naval battalion as well as four naval companies in Upper Austria, Styria and Carinthia, all of them serving in the infantry role except for one *Volkswehr* motor boat detachment in Vienna. Initially the air force component of the *Volkswehr* had been quite strong in numbers, as the six available airfields provided several squadrons of airplanes, one airship battalion as well as five air observer companies and one barrage balloon company<sup>20</sup>.

Due to the difficult financial situation and the ongoing negotiations in Paris since May, it became apparent in May/June that it was materially and politically impossible to implement the *Volkswehr* or a compulsory military service with militia system. Reduction of personnel produced a total strength of 41.300 men by early May 1919 and 27.600 men (still in 101 battalions) by October, when the clauses of the Treaty of Saint Germain were already known. The final dissolution of the *Volkswehr* took place by way of the National Defence Act of 18 March 1920.

During the short time of its existence, the *Volkswehr* had managed to get through the difficult political conditions at the beginning of the First Republic – the young republic was more or less spared from coups and insurgencies of the extreme right and left which might have threatened its existence. As an outward state instrument of power, the *Volkswehr* was more than unsuited, due to lack of material as well as the political interventions of Deutsch.

---

<sup>19</sup> Glaubauf, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>20</sup> Steinböck, *Entstehung und Verwendung*, cit., pp. 182-184.

Even the future President Colonel Theodor Körner found words of criticism, «Militarily the Volkswehr is equal to zero, immobile and only suited for military police service, insofar as it complies with political and class interest. It already is taking over the most unpleasant character of armed class struggle»<sup>21</sup>.

While the occupation of parts of German Western Hungary by *Freikorps* failed because of Deutsch's refusal and was reserved for the *Bundesheer* in 1921, the *Volkswehr* units in Southern Austria managed to scotch the territorial aspirations of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), although the bulk of the fighting formations had been raised locally and the combat operations had been directly led by the provincial commanders without a possibility of intervention from Vienna. Securing the German-speaking territories of Bohemia, Moravia and the Sudetenland, however, had been initially planned but – due to the foreign policy decisions taken – was illusive and therefore unrealistic.

### **From the *Volkswehr* to the National Defence Act of 1920**

While the *Volkswehr* had been intended as a temporary solution on the road towards “Armed Forces” structured like a militia for the Republic of German-Austria, by the spring of 1919 it became necessary to develop a meaningful negotiation strategy towards the victorious and successor states regarding the problem of national defence. German-Austria was officially invited to join the Paris Peace Conference on 2 May 1919. As the Social Democratic perspective – arming of the people and militia system by way of a preceding temporary solution in the form of the *Volkswehr* – had not changed, the idea of the Christian Social (CS) Party seems interesting, as it was in a coalition government with the Social Democrats (SDAP). In respect thereof the Christian Social representative Theodor Kirchlehner formulated the party's line as follows, «We are content with a gendarmerie designed according to the times, in which we want to see our deserving professional NCOs and officers well sheltered [...] our nation shall be spared from military service for several years and free to work productively

---

<sup>21</sup> ÖSTA/AdR NPA Karton Nr. 263 (Volkswehr) Letter from Colonel Körner to Colonel Schneller on 23 May 1919.



so that we can recover [...] later, after we have regained some of our strength, we shall continue talking about new Armed Forces»<sup>22</sup>. Of course Deutsch promptly accused these ideas of being “reactionary” behaviour, since obviously the “cadres” of the old army were to be largely preserved, to create a continuity of personnel and presumably also ideology with the Imperial and Royal Armed Forces. In 1925, a conservative officer, Major General August Pitreich, retroactively postulated about his party’s stance in 1919 regarding the problem of national defence, «By its lack of interest this pacifistically inclined party was quick to trade the Armed Forces away to the Left and thereby has become guilty beyond redemption...»<sup>23</sup>. For the German-Nationalist Party, on the other hand, the main emphasis was on the factors of a rapid availability of troops to defend areas of German settlement and of aligning the defence system with the other federal states of the German Empire, a country they considered themselves to be a part of.

Besides the already mentioned purely political and fundamental assessments, understandably enough there also were very concrete military considerations, compiled by the military personnel of the State Military Office. In this respect several individuals need to be mentioned: the former head of *Fachgruppe* (specialist group) IV “Liaison” and future presidential director of the State office, Colonel Theodor Körner, as well as three former members of the department of organization of the Imperial and Royal War Ministry, Lieutenant Colonel Josef Rettl, Major Robert R. von Srbik and Captain Karl Bornemann, and in addition Major Johann Friedländer of the “*Volkswehr* group”<sup>24</sup>. Körner’s approach was that of a former member of the Imperial and Royal general staff. Besides inviting consultation by military experts about forms of organization such as militia army, enlisted cadre army or cadre army, there also were queries about the political ideas mentioned above. Afterwards, based on the assessments, such documents were to be compiled which after Deutsch’s approval were supposed to be handed over to Colonel Karl Schneller<sup>25</sup> (head of the “state trea-

---

<sup>22</sup> Deutsch, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> P. Broucek, *Militärische Vorbereitungen für die Friedenskonferenz, in 1918-968, Die Streitkräfte der Republik Österreich*, Vienna, 1968, p. 213.

<sup>24</sup> Broucek, *Militärische Vorbereitungen für...*, cit., p. 206.

<sup>25</sup> ÖSTA/KA/B/509 Estate Schneller Nr. 2/1295.

ty group” in Department 1/N (Intelligence) of the State Military Office), assigned to the German-Austrian delegation as expert for military matters, as guidelines for the peace talks in Paris.

In the spring of 1919, it was the “intelligence department” which also served as an informal point of contact for the foreign-political goal of an approximation or integration of the German-Austrian military with a German army. Major General August von Cramon, the former German authorized representative in the Imperial and Royal Army High Command, and his assistant at the time, Major Paul Fleck, played an important role in this matter. Especially the latter, member of the department “Foreign Armies” in the German General Staff, was concerned with the “*Anschluss* problem” as well as the possibilities of a military convention. Cramon and Fleck were staying in Vienna in late February 1919 and were already negotiating about an intensive cooperation in the field of intelligence<sup>26</sup>. It is interesting to note that the German military’s strong interest in the problem of German-Austrian national defence was a continuation of First World War politics, especially since the German General Staff had already become proactive in late 1914 and then again in spring of 1915 about taking control of Imperial and Royal troops, particularly in the East. This went as far as using the Bavarian alliance treaty with the German Empire from 1870 as a model case for an eventual Habsburg contingent within a pan-German army. This was clearly rejected at the time but subsequently developed into a joint “supreme war command” by way of a joint “high command east.” It was the German wish to follow up by signing a military convention, however, this was prevented by the end of the war but meant a continuous loss of Austro-Hungarian autonomy<sup>27</sup>. The idea of an Austrian contingent within the army of the German Empire now seemed realistic to both sides and was politically confirmed in a written agreement, the so-called Berlin Protocol, between the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Otto Bauer and German Foreign Minister Ulrich Count Brockdorff-Rantzau in early March 1919<sup>28</sup>. This political willingness relatively soon turned into military (as opposed to political)

---

<sup>26</sup> T. Schäfer, *Die Genesis der Anschlussbewegung und die Anschlussdiplomatie 1918-1919*, Vienna, 1970, p. 208.

<sup>27</sup> Broucek, *Militärische Vorbereitungen für...*, cit., pp. 217-220.

<sup>28</sup> Schäfer, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

activities, such as sending German-Austrian officers and soldiers to Germany to be taught German service regulations and combat tactics or the participation of several members of the State Office in consultations about the organisation of future Armed Forces in Weimar in June 1919. However, the latter had to return home after the first conditions for peace handed over in Paris on 16 June had become known to the public<sup>29</sup>.

The already mentioned Colonel Schneller was supposed to consult the German-Austrian delegation in military matters during the peace negotiations and had been given instructions and directives by the State Office. These guidelines, decisively written by Körner, contained relatively complex issues, especially since the future national territory of German-Austria had not yet been specified. It was not intended to already prejudice if one was allowed to join the German Empire or if this was to include German-Bohemia, to leave some room for negotiations. Körner nevertheless demanded a fundamental equality of treatment with the other successor States, a possible entry to the League of Nations including participation in its executive powers as well as a collective demilitarization together with the neighbouring nations. Regarding the form of national defence an enlisted cadre army with 14 months of service was proposed, which then could be transformed into a militia army (of the Swiss model) after a transition period of five to ten years. The parallel maintaining of a small enlisted cadre contingent on permanent standby for urgent needs was conceivable as an additional option. A professional army was categorically rejected for ideological and financial reasons.

A rude awakening came on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1919 when the military clauses of the peace treaty were handed over to the German-Austrian delegation. Its content already was more or less identical with the specifications in the actual Treaty of Saint-Germain and included the definitive creation of a professional army with a maximum strength of 30.000 volunteers as a “force to keep the order” as well as considerable restrictions regarding quality and quantity of weapons and armaments. Schneller reacted by compiling a presentation for the delegation in which he rejected the posited restrictions and the explicit specification of a professional army. In

---

<sup>29</sup> Broucek, *Militärische Vorbereitungen für...*, cit., p. 222.

case of the latter he was striving for a combination solution instead, wherein the proportion of professionals and militia would be decided autonomously within the limits of the conceded maximum numbers. In Vienna, Körner held parallel talks “on site” with the representatives of Italy, France and Great Britain to influence the negotiations in Paris. His main line of argumentation was the potential threat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, a convenient and clever choice. However, the “Federal Hungarian Socialist Soviet Republic” collapsed on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1919 after Budapest had been captured by Romanian troops – «two weeks too early for us. Now the enemies (sic!) will all the more so insist on the full extent of the treaty», as Schneller wrote in his diary<sup>30</sup>.

The Treaty of Saint-Germain was finally signed on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1919 and the military clauses it contained – a total of 42 articles of the treaty addressed military matters – were later reflected in the National Defence Act of 18<sup>th</sup> March 1920, taking effect on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1920.<sup>31</sup>

The new army at first was called “Austrian *Wehrmacht*” and then “*Bundesheer*” (federal army) after 1<sup>st</sup> January 1922. The purpose of this “*Wehrmacht*” was specified in Paragraph 2 of the National Defence Act: «a) To protect the constitutional institutions of the republic, as well as upkeeping order and safety in the interior, b) to render assistance services during natural disasters and accidents of exceptional magnitude and c) to protect the borders of the republic»<sup>32</sup>. The core of this professional army with a maximum strength of 30.000 soldiers had been defined to consist of 1.500 officers and 2.000 NCOs with a maximum service length of 35 years – it was forbidden to train a general staff. The service length for short-term enlisted soldiers was six years of active service and six years in the reserves. Any measures which could have corresponded to a reinforcement of active forces by mobilisation were banned without exceptions. Thereby any reserve cadre was effectively excluded right from the outset.<sup>33</sup> However, this led to a contradiction, as the

<sup>30</sup> ÖSTA/KA/B/509 Estate Schneller Nr. 1/1320.

<sup>31</sup> L. Jedlicka, *Ein Heer im Schatten der Parteien. Die militärpolitische Lage Österreichs 1918 – 1938*, Graz, 1955, pp. 24-ff.

<sup>32</sup> *Staatsgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 43. Stück, Nr. 122, p. 232.

<sup>33</sup> Kristan, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

soldiers “of the reserve” explicitly mentioned in the treaty naturally were the equivalent of a mobilisation contingent.

There were two organisational options for this small army, either three infantry divisions and one cavalry division or six combined-arms brigades; the second option was chosen. Each brigade had to consist of two infantry regiments of three battalions each, one bicycle battalion, one dragoon squadron, one artillery battalion of four batteries and one battalion of engineers. Brigade strength fluctuated between 4.250 and 5.350 men, depending on the filling level<sup>34</sup>. There were six infantry and six alpine infantry regiments, some of the latter consisting of only two battalions. Several independent alpine infantry, infantry and light infantry battalions were raised as well. This framework remained more or less unchanged until 1935, with only the inner structures being changed time and again. The strong fluctuation of personnel between the brigades also were the result of the March 1920 law stipulating different quotas for each of the federal states. Vienna was earmarked for 9.000, Lower Austria for 6.500, Upper Austria and Styria for 4.000 each, Tyrol and Carinthia for 1.700 each, Burgenland for 1.500, Salzburg for 1.000 and Vorarlberg for 600 men<sup>35</sup>. Equipment and weapons of the units also were rigorously restricted, and not just in terms of quantities. 34.500 rifles, 216 light and 254 heavy machine guns, 60 mortars (up to a calibre of 14 cm) as well as 90 artillery pieces up to a calibre of 10,5 cm were admitted. Aircraft, anti-aircraft artillery, chemical warfare material and armoured vehicles were banned<sup>36</sup>. The maximum stock of ammunition was fixed at two million live military rounds. However, the Austrian Army Administration calculated an estimated annual need of six to eight million rounds for training purposes. The ammunition shortage was met with so-called “target practice rounds” (with soft-point bullet), a hunting variation of the 8 mm round in use, to which the fixed quota of the Entente did not apply. Artillery ammunition was limited to 1.000 rounds

---

<sup>34</sup> Steinböck, *Die Organisation der...*, cit., pp. 36-ff.

<sup>35</sup> Verordnungsblatt des Staatsamtes für Heerwesen Nr. 8 vom 22 Februar 1919.

<sup>36</sup> E. Steinböck, *Zur Organisation des Ersten Bundesheeres*, in *Das Bundesheer der Ersten Republik 1918-1938. Teil 1: Organisation und Bewaffnung*, Vienna, 1991, p. 8.

per gun<sup>37</sup>. An Allied military commission was watching over the disarmament measures until 1928, however, especially in its last years of existence it rarely ever put its foot down anymore and quietly tolerated the creation of “black stockpiles” as a consequence of arms seizures, mostly from the Social Democratic *Schutzbund* (1927). Thereby the number of small arms and machine guns of the *Bundesheer* almost doubled.

Transfer of personnel from the *Volkswehr* to the new army according to the clauses of the Treaty of Saint Germain within the framework of the National Defence Act of 1920 was more difficult than expected. Naturally, the establishment of a professional army with a minimum service length of six years led to an explosion of expenditure for active service troops, which was another reason why a total strength of 30.000 men could not be reached before 1935 and that it even dropped to 22.000 men in 1932<sup>38</sup>. This was to have significant consequences for the great mass of professional officers left over from the Imperial and Royal Army, as there only were 1.500 posts authorized by the table of organisation. Commissions established in the federal states were to classify the applicants – approximately 8.000 officers – according to qualification, whereby their function during the war was to receive particular appreciation but social aspects were more important. It was assumed that young officers would have an easier transition to civilian life including employment opportunities and that the older age groups would soon be retired and taken care of that way in any case. Therefore, an extraordinarily large number of middle-aged staff officers (approx. 900) were hired, but only 271 captains, 123 first lieutenants and only a single (!) second lieutenant. The idea was that future junior officers would subsequently rise up from the NCO corps (with and without high school diploma). This however led to a substantial age gap which in turn led to a quick ageing population of staff officers in the following years. Officers were mainly posted to the units to save authorized officer positions in the table of organization, all other duties such as army administration, medical and supply services etc. were to be filled with civilian employees, thereby reducing the number of officers necessary.

---

<sup>37</sup> Kristan, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> Jedlicka, *Ein Heer im Schatten...*, cit., p. 73.

This temporarily led to a strong increase of personnel at the newly founded or rather re-named Ministry of Defence. These circumventions of the clauses of Saint-Germain were eventually ruined by measures taken to reduce the number of civil servants within the framework of restructuring the national budget, whereby the military department had to make extraordinarily large sacrifices<sup>39</sup>.

The outer appearance of *Volkswehr* and *Bundesheer* soldiers, clearly expressed by their respective uniforms, reflected the self-image of the “Armed Forces.” After the already mentioned dress regulations of the *Volkswehr*, manifested in a total breakaway from Austrian traditions, the National Defence Act of 1920 brought a new system. This consisted of the retention or rather new introduction of German pieces of uniform in the form of a peaked cap with cockade and national coat of arms. Silver collar badges were introduced after the Prussian and *Reichswehr* model. Rank insignia were styled with similarities to those of the *Volkswehr* and consisted of braids from different materials (depending on rank groups) attached to the sleeves. There were some small changes to the peaked caps in 1923 and the tunics were tailored after a new cut the same year. The rank system was changed as well. Officers and NCOs received German rank insignia in the form of braids and rosettes on the shoulder straps; junior NCOs wore upper arm chevrons as rank insignia. In doing so, the uniform was more or less modelled after the *Reichswehr*. To keep some form of Austrian distinctiveness, the tunic was tailored not after the German but after the Austrian cut, with dark green collars and cuffs<sup>40</sup>.

### **The Austrian Armed Forces between 1920-1938**

As already shown in the previous section, the Austrian military potential was significantly restricted immediately after the conclusion of the Defense Act of 1920 due to the restricted financial conditions on the one hand and the restrictive monitoring activities of the allied monitoring commission(s) on the other. In addition, the existing domestic-political differences between the parties, none of which was in fact ready to impose restrictions on other areas of

---

<sup>39</sup> Kristan, *op. cit.*, p. 68-ff.

<sup>40</sup> Steinböck, *Die Uniformen des Bundesheeres...*, cit., pp. 149-ff.

state administration for ideological or material reasons in favor of strengthening the military potential, did not have a conducive effect. Foreign policy events also had an impact on the development of the Armed Forces. On the one hand, there were the restoration attempts of Emperor and King Charles in Hungary (1921), on the other hand, the upcoming “land grab” of Burgenland and the activities of the supervisory bodies of the “Geneva rehabilitation program”. Due to the impending national bankruptcy of Austria in 1922, three “Geneva Protocols” were signed on the initiative of the League of Nations, which brought about a loan of around 650 million gold crowns and thus a reduction of the Austrian national debt by around 60%, but were connected with considerable concessions as to the Austrian budgetary policy. While the conservatives saw no alternative to this loan – “loan or failure”<sup>41</sup> –, the social democrats and communists opposed it, as they feared a loss of the state’s political sovereignty. Nevertheless, the government loan was approved by a majority in parliament<sup>42</sup>. What was clear was that the strict League of Nations requirements for budget consolidation, especially the required reductions in government spending, also affected the Armed Forces. In addition to considerable staff reductions, especially with respect to the number of civil servants, even the dissolution of the Army Ministry was considered temporarily<sup>43</sup>.

Accordingly, the development of the army organization within the next few years was not only difficult, but experienced stagnation or decline until 1932. As is generally known, the existing six brigades consisted of six infantry regiments and six Alpine regiments, and additionally four independent battalions. There were also six bicycle battalions, six brigade artillery battalions (and an independent artillery regiment), six cavalry squadrons and six engineer battalions as well as liaison troops, supply and repair facilities as well as training facilities. This structure is quite impressive on paper, but suffered from the problem of how to staff the brigades. Army Inspector Major General Theodor Körner, already of decisive importance in the period of the People’s Army, was among

---

<sup>41</sup> “Neue Freie Presse”, 6 October 1922, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Arbeiter-Zeitung”, 6 October 1922, pp. 1-2; “Die Rote Fahne”, 6 October 1922, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Jedlicka, *Ein Heer im Schatten...*, cit., p. 66.



those who now “fell victim” to the reduction of staff. It is obvious that his dismissal was related to his strong social-democratic political attitude, as a christian-social politician – Carl Vaugoin (1873-1949) – headed the army department was from 1921 to 1933. Vaugoin tried to initiate a process of depoliticization the Armed Forces under the impression of the recently disbanded social-democratic People’s Army. The fact that a reorientation of the Federal Army in the christian-social sense would develop from this in the future had to result in conflicts with the army inspector. Körner, disappointed about his dismissal, but also frustrated by the future lack of military expertise on the part of politicians – his position was not filled –, used his “departure” to draw a public balance of the military policy of the last few months. In a farewell order, dated January 8, 1924, which was circulated (and discussed) in the media, Körner formulated both, political and military, thoughts on the current importance and capabilities of the Armed Forces. His conclusions turned out to be particularly critical due to the low staff numbers. According to him, the army was a «pure administrative body with the purpose of conserving and monitoring military goods». Furthermore, «what remains then and is called federal army, is only an association preparing for parades and deployments, which maintains the traditions of the past, surrenders to castles in the air and hides the public from sad reality»<sup>44</sup>. According to Körner’s assessment, this put the main task of the “Army of St. Germain”, namely to maintain the constitutional institutions of the republic as well as law and order, in question. In any case, the Armed Forces did not assume that Austria would be capable of defending its own territory.

Ultimately, however, it was precisely the (politically supported) financial bottlenecks on the one hand and the political discord of the parties on the other that ultimately led to a climate that directly and indirectly promoted the formation of political defense associations. Not only was the State’s monopoly on the use of force not recognized, what was more, it was undermined by the creation of private party militias. The governments calculated the financial expenditures for the Armed Forces from 1920 to 1931 so

---

<sup>44</sup>T. Körner, *Denkschrift über das Heerwesen der Republik*, Vienna, 1924, pp. 19-21.

tightly that they were hardly sufficed for the already reduced staff costs with respect to the maximum permitted by the Treaty of St. Germain. The military tried to avoid considerations of reducing the size of the existing army structure by reducing the large units, but increasing the staff levels and saving costs this way, probably in the euphemistic expectation that the situation would improve in the future and the existing structure would therefore be needed then<sup>45</sup>.

With regard to the material used for weapons and equipment, there were even advantages at first, as the bulk of the still existing stocks of the former k.u.k. Army was still available and new investments seemed necessary only to a small extent. However, understandably, the material gradually began to be “used up”, which from the late 1920s made new purchases necessary. This was difficult to implement for large equipment due to the expected costs; in the case of handguns, various disarmament campaigns and confiscations within the civilian population and military associations led to an increase in stocks.

The year 1931 led to a further deterioration of the already precarious situation – both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. The global economic crisis finally found its way to Austria with the collapse of Austria’s largest bank, the “Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe”. The impending national bankruptcy triggered a domestic political crisis, which subsequently led to the so-called “Pfrimer Putsch” by the Styrian Home Guard in September 1931. Although it failed after just one day and was largely downplayed by the Federal Government, the action underlined the domestic political instability of Austria. Because of the financial crisis, a new loan had to be applied for on the initiative of the League of Nations, which was then granted in 1932 (Lausanne Protocols of July 15, 1932). Again, concessions had to be made, which also extended to the monitoring of the financial household. A customs union with Germany planned in 1930 to improve the economic situation, as well as the “Anschlußfrage”, were also subject and were prohibited<sup>46</sup>. The mere announcement of a closer economic

---

<sup>45</sup> H. Lerider, *Die operativen Maßnahmen gegen die Nachfolgestaaten der Monarchie von 1918 bis 1838 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ära Jansa*, Vienna, 1975, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Jedlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

cooperation with Germany had triggered protests from France, Czechoslovakia and Italy and did not only draw Austria into the maelstrom of European interest politics, but also had immediate effects on its security policy. In its annual military meetings, the Little Entente did not only hold possible a major European military conflict in the near future, but also considered it as likely that it would involve Austria<sup>47</sup>. The Geneva Disarmament Conference (1932 - 1934), actually conceived as an arms-limitation initiative, reflected the different security policy approaches of the European states on the diplomatic stage and thus affected the future role of Austria. The German demand for equal rights vis-à-vis the former victorious states of the First World War was also sought by the Austrian representation, with the military conditions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain to be adapted to the current political situation in Central Europe.

The Austrian side argued against the possible integration of existing paramilitary units into the Austrian defense potential. This particularly affected the numerically significant conservative "Heimwehren". The demand was made primarily by the French, but ultimately rejected in May 1933, on the basis of the fact that the police and gendarmerie had not been integrated either, probably because Hitler had come to power in Germany in the meantime<sup>48</sup>.

Not least because of this, further opportunities arose for Austria with regard to the further development of the federal army from 1933 onwards. Also in terms of domestic politics, the formal prerequisites had changed considerably in the meantime. With the transition to an authoritarian regime from 5<sup>th</sup> March 1933, onwards the Austrian government had more far-reaching "design options". Governing by means of direct ordinances and without having to fear opposition in parliament or of the Constitutional Court, it brought the defense issue from the daily political agenda. The establishment of the "Vaterländische Front" (Fatherland

---

<sup>47</sup> R. Kiszling (Hg.), *Die militärischen Vereinbarungen der Kleinen Entente 1929-1937 nach in Jugoslawien erfaßten Originalprotokollen*, Vienna, 1945, pp. 46-ff.

<sup>48</sup> W. Krones, *Die Entwicklung der österreichischen Wehrverfassung von 1920 bis 1936*, in *Handbuch der Bewaffneten Macht für Heer und Volk*, Vienna, 1937, pp. 34-ff.

Front) as a unity party or «... the summary of all citizens who stand on the soil of an independent, Christian, German, professionally organized federal state of Austria...»<sup>49</sup> should encompass all conservative parties and their defense associations. This step was taken not least because of Italy's particular interest in declaring its readiness to guarantee Austrian independence in return – especially with regard to National Socialist Germany<sup>50</sup>. The “de-politicization” of the army which was closely linked to the enforced conformity due to the creation of the Fatherland Front did not seem possible with the aging Army Minister Vaugoin. Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss opted for the retired k.u.k. Colonel General Alois Prince of Schönburg-Hartenstein to become the new army Minister. He held the post of State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of the Army from September 1933 to March 1934 and that of the Federal Minister of the Army from March 12 to July 10, 1934. In keeping up the traditions of the former k.u.k. Army, he considered it to be decisive, «...to keep any kind of politics away from the present, active power...»<sup>51</sup>. Schönburg-Hartenstein also succeeded in increasing the army budget for 1934 by approximately 20% immediately after having taken office, and in receiving a special loan for investments.

It seemed that not least because of the changed foreign-policy situation – above all Hitler's aggressive attitude towards Austria – a reassessment with respect to the value of an independent Austrian national defense began within the government. Already under Vaugoin, the creation of a “military assistant corps” had begun, which, however, only provided 6 (5) months of military service for basic military training and then transfer the staff into a “leave of absence” status (mobilizable reserve). These so-called “A men” initially comprised 8.000 men<sup>52</sup>, complemented by 1.700 men in March 1934 under the impact of the civil war that had taken place in February. The expected expansion of the Armed Forces at that

---

<sup>49</sup> Bundesgesetz vom 1. Mai 1934, betreffend die „Vaterländische Front“. In: Bundesgesetzblatt II Nr. 4/1934 vom 3 Mai 1934.

<sup>50</sup> Kiszling, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-ff.

<sup>51</sup> *Tagesbefehl anlässlich seiner Amtsübernahme*, in “Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen”, 64, Vienna, 1933, p. 736.

<sup>52</sup> *Chronik des Bundesheeres*, in “Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen”, 64, Vienna, 1933, p. 816.

moment was to bring about the change from brigade to division structure within the Armed Forces, making the creation of six active and six reserve divisions possible by using the continuously growing mobilization potential within the military assistance corps.

In general, the years from 1932 to 1934 seemed to be a kind of transitional phase in the increasing defense potential, which from 1935/1936 onwards made actual and visible phases of expansion possible<sup>53</sup>. In terms of domestic policy, the successful use of the Federal Army in assistance missions during the civil wars in February and July 1934 proved conducive, as officers and soldiers were loyal to the instructions of the Federal Government and were able to cope with the crises in the interests of the Federal Government. In terms of foreign policy, the signing of the Roman Protocols in May 1934 was also decisive for this new approach to Austrian security policy, which now brought about a clearer and more energetic appearance in the context of national defense. They brought Italy, Hungary and Austria closer together and were to be viewed primarily in terms of Italian interests in the Danube region (compared to France and the Little Entente). At the same time, Germany's armaments efforts, which had started after Hitler's takeover, acted as a catalyst for Austrian armaments efforts.

With effect from June 1, 1935, the existing brigades were converted into 7 divisions, an independent brigade and a "Schnelle Division" (Mobile Division), and the Air Force Command (previously Air Protection Command) was established. The still existing conservative political militias were transferred to the "Voluntary Militia - Austrian Homeland Security" command in December 1935, and were directly subordinated to national defense as "Austrian Front Militia" in 1937. With the introduction of "compulsory military service" (conscription) for all 18- to 42-year-old males with an initial 12-month service period on April 1, 1936, the replenishment of staff in the expanded army structure was ensured. Investments were made in the motorization of the infantry, the procurement of light armored fighting vehicles in Italy as well as all-terrain vehicles and modern anti-tank systems in Austria.

---

<sup>53</sup> Steinböck, *Die Organisation der...*, cit., pp. 48-52.

Aircraft and anti-aircraft systems were procured exclusively from abroad, particularly in Italy and partly in Germany<sup>54</sup>. The artillery received significant reinforcement through the handing over of 150 examples of former Austro-Hungarian captured guns (including ammunition stocks) from Italy<sup>55</sup>. In addition to these continuous material and staff improvements, which in comparison to the armaments efforts of Germany or Czechoslovakia could still be described as limited and sluggish, the creation of the position of chief of staff had a particularly conducive effect. In May 1935, he was still “camouflaged” as head of Section III in the Federal Ministry for National Defense and published as an “official” function from April 1936 for foreign policy reasons; thus, the military planning now achieved a new quality. The fact that the major general (later Lieutenant General) Alfred Jansa, who was accredited in Germany and who had excellent knowledge of the Third Reich and the military rearmament efforts there made it clear where the federal government saw the greatest potential risk for the next few years.

### **Operational military planning from 1918 to 1938**

The operational plans of the Austrian Armed Forces based on the Defense Act of 1920 with regard to the protection of Austria’s territorial sovereignty were first worked out in 1923, with the concept of “border observation” (not to be confused with border protection) in the foreground. The border observation should precede any border protection<sup>56</sup>. Four possible threat scenarios were identified: Czechoslovakia (operation “T”), Hungary (operation “U”), SHS state / Yugoslavia (operation “S”) and Italy (operation “I”). Interestingly, the neighboring country in the north, Germany, did not play any role in these considerations. On the contrary, any

---

<sup>54</sup> F.H. Baer, *Fahrzeuge zu Lande, in der Luft und auf dem Wasser im Österreichischen Bundesheer bis 1938*, in *Das Bundesheer der Ersten Republik 1918 – 1938. Materialien zum Vortragszyklus 1990 Heeresgeschichtliches Museum/ Gesellschaft für Österreichische Heereskunde*, ungedr., Vienna, 1990, pp. 97-132.

<sup>55</sup> ÖSTA/KA Alfred Jansa: *Erinnerungen*. Ungedr. Manuskript, o.O., o.J., p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> ÖSTA/AdR/BMfHW Erlaß Zl. 230-2 von 1923.

such measures were completely avoided due to the particularly friendly relations<sup>57</sup>.

Nevertheless, it was more than clear to the military and political leaderships that in the event of an escalation, the transition from mere border observation to actual border protection would not be possible due to the low staff levels of the associations. Considerations of including the already existing political militia forces in the military planning were rejected in view of the problems resulting thereof with respect to the provisions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Ultimately, the sole purpose of border monitoring was to document possible violations of Austrian sovereignty and to pass it on to the League of Nations<sup>58</sup>. Even if border protection came to the fore in later years, actual operational plans for a sustainable use to protect the state border remained basic until 1934, when the foreign policy environment had already changed and there were many “endangered” borders or borders to be assessed as such. At first, only Switzerland and Germany (until 1933) were considered to be secure borders<sup>59</sup>. In the south, Carinthia might become a war zone, either directly because there was the threat of annexation or conflict by the SHS state (from 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia) or of a conflict with Italy, or indirectly as there was also the possibility of creating a “Slavic Corridor” to connect Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which threatened both border sections<sup>60</sup>. This corridor should run across Burgenland and parts of western Hungary and, in addition to the above-mentioned land connection, would separate German (-Austrians) and Hungarians. This idea, ventured by the Czechoslovakian side, was discussed intensely during the negotiations in St. Germain<sup>61</sup>. The border with Hungary seemed to be endangered not least because of the “Landnahme” (occupation) of Burgenland (German West Hungary) in 1921. An ambivalent situation arose for Italy, because

<sup>57</sup> ÖSTA/AdR/BMfHW Erlaß Zl. 1662-2 von 1923.

<sup>58</sup> Lerider, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>59</sup> L. Jedlicka, *Aufteilungs- und Einmarschpläne um Österreich 1918-1934*, in *Festschrift für Franz Loidl zum 65. Vienna, 1970*, pp. 96-112, p. 97.

<sup>60</sup> M. Rauchensteiner, *Zum „operativen Denken“ in Österreich 1918-1938*, in *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift Heft 2/ Jahrgang 1978*, pp. 107-116, p. 109.

<sup>61</sup> K.C. von Lösck, *Die Abgrenzung der Tschechoslowakei*, in *Friedrich Heiß: Die Wunde Europas. Das Schicksal der Tschechoslowakei*, Berlin, 1938, pp. 92-ff.

on the one hand there was an interest in Austria's existence, which Italy sought to support in terms of foreign policy, on the other hand, because of the cession of South Tyrol (1926/1927), there were constant tensions with the Austrian government. With the establishment of a General Staff in June 1935, previously "camouflaged" as a section within the Federal Ministry for National Defense, and the promotion of the former military attaché in Berlin, Major General Alfred Jansa, to Chief of Staff (from 1936), the organizational basis was created for the development of operational concepts.

In the meantime, between 1933 and 1935, both the domestic and foreign political conditions had changed significantly. On the one hand, the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß had, as already mentioned, embarked on the path of dictatorship from the spring of 1933, on the other hand, two civil wars had to be handled in February and July 1934, which in turn led to security-political assistance missions of the federal army<sup>62</sup>. This also had an external impact. The uncertainty as to the extent to which the security forces and the Armed Forces could cope with the respective situations made the neighboring states nervous, which induced them to work out military plans. Both Italy and Czechoslovakia were ready for a possible intervention, and Yugoslavia made it clear, too, that in the event of an Italian invasion it also intended to advance into Austria. Military forces were also concentrated on the German and Hungarian borders<sup>63</sup>. Interestingly, the quick end of the civil wars due to the security-political assistance missions of the Armed Forces, which were little esteemed by the army itself, also had an appropriate external effect – there were no foreign interventions.

---

<sup>62</sup> During the so-called "February-Uprising" (12-16 February 1934) parts of the at that time already forbidden social-democratic party-army "Schutzbund" rebelled against searched warrants and initiated skirmishes all over Austria. The civil war ended more or less on 16<sup>th</sup> February by the surrender of most of the fighting groups. Only a few months later on 25<sup>th</sup> July members of the illegal Austrian National-Socialists tried to take over power in Austria. The coup failed due to the lack of support by the population until 30<sup>th</sup> July, but chancellor Dollfuß was killed. In both civil wars the army stayed loyal to the government and was the essential key figure to preserve the government in power.

<sup>63</sup> Rauchensteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 111.



From 1935 onwards, military planning began to take into account the changed foreign-political conditions, Hitler's seizure of power in Germany, and the conclusion of the Roman Protocols. Instead of the previous "border observations", more concrete defense plans were made, which referred to the war case "DR" (German Reich) or "I" and the combined operation case "T" (Czechoslovakia) and "Ju" [Yugoslavia] – "II". The measures subsequently implemented for the two contemplated cases of war were balanced<sup>64</sup>.

Of particular interest are the effects of the pan-European political changes and their impact on the military planning of the Austrian General Staff. In 1935/36, a theoretical and superficial sketch of a possible war against Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia waged jointly with Italy and Hungary, the so-called Operation Case II, was drafted, which would have probably also taken Romania as member of the Little Entente into account. A detailed planning was not carried out, however, because the axis Rome–Berlin that was created in 1936 and the rapprochement between Belgrade and Berlin had completely changed the situation. After 1936, military considerations began to focus on thinking about possible military intentions of the Axis Powers against the Soviet Union. The fact that in this theoretical scenario Czechoslovakia had to be eliminated in advance made the Austrian territory a deployment area. Since the passage of German or Italian troops could not be prevented in any case, the only options left for the political reaction were to allow passage in combination with simultaneous neutrality or to join the Axis powers. In both cases, however, Austria's independence should be guaranteed by Rome and Berlin. In order to achieve this, the axis had to make clear the existing defense and delay options of the Austrian Armed Forces; and Austria demanded an economic calculation with regard to possible losses and time delays<sup>65</sup>. This makes clear that Austria did not totally refuse the option of rapprochement with the German Reich in order to improve the possibility of securing its own sovereignty, even at the price of possible aggressive behavior towards Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, there were also efforts to move in the "other"

---

<sup>64</sup> Lerider, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-ff.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibi*, p. 82.

direction in terms of foreign policy, that is, to seek a connection with the Little Entente. This variant was by no means unrealistic, especially since in the spring of 1936 the French army command tried to sound out possible approaches towards Czechoslovakia via the French military attaché in Vienna<sup>66</sup>. However, this effort faced significant difficulties. On the one hand, Czechoslovakia had massive concerns about possible restoration efforts by the House of Habsburg-Lothringen in Austria<sup>67</sup>, on the other hand, the influence of the Austrian social-democratic emigration in Czechoslovakia and the personal dislike of the Foreign Minister (later President) Edvard Beneš towards Austria should not be underestimated<sup>68</sup>. It is certainly one of the great historical tragedies that precisely those two States that were in the focus of German enlargement and expansion policy after 1936 were unable to agree on a common military and political approach and that both States were ultimately not supported by their respective security and defensive alliances with France and the Little Entente on the one hand, Italy and Hungary on the other.

With the conclusion of the (1st) Berchtesgaden Agreement ("July Agreement") of July 11, 1936, between the German Reich and Austria, the hoped-for guarantee of Austrian sovereignty seemed to have been achieved, but ultimately it also implied a significant reduction of Italy's protective power function, which deteriorated even further in the course of 1937 as a result of Mussolini's visit to Berlin at the end of September<sup>69</sup>. Germany's growing pressure to resume negotiations on an economic, customs and currency union and to strive for closer cooperation on military issues were also countered by personal resistance from Austria's highest military leaders Secretary Wilhelm Zehner and Chief of Staff Alfred Jansa. The latter in particular tried to increase the defensive capacity of the Armed Forces by increasing the budget (specially to stock up on ammunition), while Zehner wanted the question of sovereignty to be resolved primarily politically because

---

<sup>66</sup> A. Jansa, *Erinnerungen. Maschinengeschriebenes Manuskript*, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv (ÖSTA/KA), p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> Jedlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>68</sup> W. Hummelberger, *Österreich und die kleine Entente vor und nach dem Februar 1934, ungedrucktes Manuskript*, pp. 249-ff.

<sup>69</sup> Jedlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 143, pp. 161-ff.

of the perceived weakness of the Armed Forces. The government then also rejected the extraordinary armaments loan of 125 million schillings for 1938. Obviously, Hitler should not be provoked by any further rearmament measures<sup>70</sup>. This ambivalence probably also applies to Chief of Staff Jansa, who on the one hand constantly pushed for more armaments measures against the German Reich, and on the other, as already mentioned, had possible attacks against Czechoslovakia in conjunction with German troops to be dealt with in theoretical scenarios<sup>71</sup>.

With the conclusion of the (2nd) “Berchtesgaden Agreement” of February 12, 1938, between Austria and the German Reich, the further planning of the war case “DR” was then judged to be no longer urgent and ended (the plans for the war case “DR”, which became known under the name “Jansa Plan”, were no longer up to date in 1938). Instead, plans for a more intensive cooperation of the two general staffs and personal meetings of the military leaders with respect to topics of possible joint operations were drafted. Ultimately, these collaborations planned for 1938 became obsolete due to the events of March 1938. The invasion of the German Armed Forces, the non-deployment of the Austrian Armed Forces and the “Anschluss” of Austria ultimately manifested the failure of the political initiatives preferred by the Austrian government to preserve its sovereignty. The guarantee declarations made by the German Reich in the “July Agreement” and the “Berchtesgaden Agreement”, proved ineffective in view of Austria’s assumed military weakness and also the unwillingness of Austrian politics to give military means an active role in its own security-political concepts and communicate them to the outside world.

---

<sup>70</sup> Jedlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>71</sup> Lerider, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-ff.

finito di stampare  
nel mese di luglio 2023  
presso la LITOGRAFIA SOLARI  
Peschiera Borromeo (MI)  
su materiali e tecnologia ecocompatibili

EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario dell'Università Cattolica  
Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano - tel. 02.7234.22.35 - fax 02.80.53.215  
e-mail: editoriale.dsu@educatt.it (produzione); librario.dsu@educatt.it (distribuzione)  
web: www.educatt.it/libri  
ISBN: 979-12-5535-133-7 / ISBN edizione digitale: 979-12-5535-134-4  
ISSN: 2532-5302 / ISSN edizione digitale: 2532-5310

I *Quaderni di Scienze Politiche*, la cui pubblicazione è iniziata nel 2011 sotto la denominazione di *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche*, si ispirano ad una tradizione scientifica interdisciplinare orientata allo studio dei fenomeni politici nelle loro espressioni istituzionali e organizzative a livello internazionale e, in un'ottica comparatistica, anche all'interno agli Stati. Essi sono promossi dal Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, costituito nel 1983 e interprete fedele della tradizione dell'Ateneo.

Il fondatore dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Padre Agostino Gemelli, affermava nel 1942 che diritto, storia e politica costituiscono «un tripode» sul quale si fondano le Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, delle quali difendeva l'identità e la funzione. Circa vent'anni dopo, Francesco Vito, successore del fondatore nel Rettorato e già Preside della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, scriveva: «Noi rimaniamo fedeli alla tradizione scientifica secondo la quale l'indagine del fenomeno politico non può essere esaurita senza residui da una sola disciplina scientifica. Concorrono alla comprensione della politica gli studi storici, quelli filosofici, quelli giuridici, quelli socio-economici». Per Gianfranco Miglio, Preside per trent'anni della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dell'Università Cattolica e per otto anche Docente di Storia dei Trattati e Politica Internazionale, la storia è il laboratorio privilegiato della ricerca politologica.

Pubblicati sia a stampa sia *online* sul sito internet [www.quaderniscienzepolitiche.it](http://www.quaderniscienzepolitiche.it), i *Quaderni* ospitano articoli soggetti a *Peer Review*.

## ORBEM PRUDENTER INVESTIGARE ET VERACITER AGNOSCERE

In copertina: Martin Waldseemüller (1470 ca.-post 1522), *Mappa della terra*, 1507. Edito a Saint-Die, Lorena, attualmente alla Staatsbibliothek di Berlino - Foto: Ruth Schacht. Map Division. © 2019. Foto Scala, Firenze.

La mappa disegnata nel 1507 dal cartografo tedesco Martin Waldseemüller, la prima nella quale il Nuovo Continente scoperto da Cristoforo Colombo è denominato "America" e dichiarata nel 2005 dall'UNESCO "Memoria del mondo", è stata scelta come immagine caratterizzante dell'identità del Dipartimento, le cui aree scientifiche hanno tutte una forte dimensione internazionalistica.



euro 15,00