

Exploiting Victory, Sinking into Defeat: Uniformed Violence in the Creation of the New Order in Czechoslovakia and Austria, 1918-1922

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On June 26, 1920, a regional meeting of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party in the Moravian city of Olomouc was taking place. About one thousand members of the local party organization gathered during the evening in one of the town's dance halls. The 6th infantry regiment of the Czechoslovak army, consisting solely of former Czechoslovak legionnaires coming back home from Russia, was housed nearby. Here, too, a lively chirp could be heard. Soldiers gathered inside the barracks and vigorously discussed the publicly announced program of the Social Democratic meeting, featuring speeches on the possibilities of socializing big enterprises.¹ After a short and heated discussion, the soldiers decided that the planned party gathering might pose a leftist danger to the new Czechoslovak republic, left the barracks (the guard at the gate did not try to stop them) and stormed the dance hall. Although the meeting was only open to members of the local Social-Democratic organization, roughly 150 legionnaires broke in violently, secured all exits and brutally attacked one of the speakers. According to eyewitnesses, "... he was hit on the head with a glass and stabbed in the back with a knife. Legionnaires were armed with guns and knives and threatened anyone who tried to defend him. Even women, who tried to protect him with their bodies, were beaten. When the legionnaires had satisfied their rage, they tortured him. He fell practically unconscious under the piano ... the legionnaires once again grabbed their victim and kicked him and beat him on the ground. Then they took the tortured man to the barracks where the 6th infantry regiment is housed."²

The political repercussions of this incident soon started to unfold. A group of leftist deputies publically questioned the Prime Minister about his stance towards the incident, the

role of the officers that were allegedly encouraging the soldiers to commit such violence and urged him to disclose those who are "...turning the Czechoslovak army into a tool of counter-revolution in the service of French capitalism."³ The leftist press published numerous articles complaining about the violation of basic republican liberties and warning of the "just anger" of the working class,⁴ bourgeois conspiracy⁵ and the approaching white terror.⁶ Announcements of protest strikes all over Bohemia were made and inner party disputes erupted within the Social Democratic Party about how to generally position itself towards a state whose army could not be trusted. In the overall atmosphere of a culminating social conflict between the radicalized workers and the state power, which started to endanger the basic stability of the new republic, President Tomáš G. Masaryk eventually had to personally intervene and exhorted the Czechoslovak Social Democrats to limit politics to the parliamentary domain and remain loyal to the young republic.⁷

Comparing Cultures of Victory and Cultures of Defeat

This study will focus on comparing the phenomenon of uniformed military or paramilitary violence as the defining element of the first post-war years in Czechoslovakia, a "culture of victory" and Austria, understood in present-day historiography as a "culture of defeat." Empirically, it will confront archival material as well as the periodical press and memoirs produced during the early years of Czechoslovakia and stored in today's Czech Republic and Slovakia with similar sources and literature from Austria in order to provide a comparative account of the position of uniformed violence within both national cultures.

The dramatic increase of violence as a common social practice during the First World War and especially afterward has not escaped the attention of historians. In the 1990s, George Mosse formulated his "brutalization thesis" as the starting point of the research on the position of violence in the new post-war European order. According to this thesis, the total character of the First World War engendered the brutalization not only of the war conduct, but

also of entire warring societies.⁸ The broad application of physical violence then basically became a constitutive phenomenon in the building of a new post-war order, in which physical assaults were seen as a legitimate tool of political struggle.⁹ Thus the official end of the war did not bring an end to the physical violence. In fact, the opposite took place. Between 1917-1923, violent revolutions, counter-revolutions, ethnic conflicts and civil wars erupted in many parts of Europe.¹⁰

The brutalization thesis, however, has been substantially criticized in recent years. Some states, such as France, did not experience any post-war brutalization and some, such as Great Britain, experienced only very little.¹¹ The increase in physical violence as a formative experience of the post-war order thus may not necessarily be related to the war, but to what immediately followed it. Recent studies emphasize the experience of defeat, which played a central role in the explosion of violence in Germany, Austria or Hungary. Almost immediately after the end of the First World War, the ever-present experience of humiliating defeat created a complex “culture of defeat,” which prevented many war returnees from coming to terms with the result of the war and demobilizing themselves internally.¹² Many German, Austrian and Hungarian officers never accepted the new European post-war order, refused to enter civilian life and became members of paramilitary organizations that tried to question the new borders of the Central European states and defend the society against the presumed or real danger of the Bolshevik Revolution. The particular practices they employed in their struggle then followed their socialization within the warring armies of the German or Austro-Hungarian empires. The extremely masculine military culture, in which the giving and carrying out of orders for more and more acts of violence took precedence before any civilian values, enabled terror in the name of reestablishing the pre-war conservative order on the one hand or in the name of a communist utopia on the other. Hungary, Bavaria and Austria thus experienced several alternating waves of white and red terror after 1918.¹³

Current research continues to advance the concept of Central European paramilitary violence, which it sees as a product of a complex culture of defeat.¹⁴ At the same time, the cultural and psychological determinants of physical violence have garnered some scholarly attention over the last couple of years. The ways in which the protagonists viewed and legitimized their own violent practices and the cultural framework that dynamized those practices in specific situations have become the focus of scholarly research.¹⁵ This research, however, is generally devoted to the Central European states that were on the losing side of the First World War. Thus, for example, when Robert Gerwarth reviews the situation in Central Europe shortly after 1918 he concludes that a right-wing wave of political violence swept through both Austria and Hungary – the biggest successor states of the Habsburg Empire.¹⁶ While Austria and Hungary were the successor states of the Habsburg Empire that were deemed to have lost the war, they were certainly far from being the biggest in terms of size or population. The Czechoslovak Republic as well as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (officially becoming Yugoslavia in 1929) stretched over a bigger territory and each had almost the same number of inhabitants as Austria and Hungary combined.¹⁷ The relevant scholarship has thus largely missed the other side of the fall and reconstruction of Central Europe at the turn of 1910s and 20s, originating not from a “culture of defeat,” but rather from an opposite “culture of victory.”¹⁸

The end of the First World War meant not only the emergence of states, which were identified and identified themselves as defeated, but also the creation of states whose public spaces were overcome by euphoria from victory and their newly-won state independence after 1918. In states such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes or Romania, symbolic dates in the fall of 1918 were celebrated as national holidays. Allied representatives were invited to official celebrations, the armies of these states cooperated with Italian or French general staffs and the war was seen as an event that accelerated the emergence of a new, or strengthened an already existing, independent nation state.¹⁹ If the war

cemented the nation as the main framework of thought for many men deployed at the front, its outcome and end were integrated even more into complex national narratives, coining the concept of “national revolution” as the main result of the destructive, but liberating, war.²⁰

But, as this study will show, even within cultures of victory uniformed physical violence was hardly absent as a constitutive dimension of the post-war order. Securing the new borders in the context of ethnically and religiously heterogeneous societies generated significant tensions and violent excesses even in places where nationalist movements were connected rather to non-violent traditions, such as Ireland, Poland and Czechoslovakia.²¹

Czechoslovakia and Austria are both very well suited for comparison. The Czech lands, as the core of the new Czechoslovak state, and Austria shared the very same state until 1918.²² They were both the most industrial parts of the Habsburg Monarchy and, as such, were marked by a similar social structure with a strong working class and a long pre-war tradition of institutionalized parliamentary politics and an organized political left and right.²³ Even though they parted ways after the war, they were still confronted with similar problems in the establishment of a new, post-war order.

While Czechoslovakia had become already during the interwar period a widely praised symbol of democratic stability with a functioning civil society and effective mediation of social or national conflicts for many, especially English-speaking external observers, we must not forget that these were rather the outcome of tumultuous post-war years than established right after the end of the war.²⁴ Although former parliamentary rule and government was reestablished in Czechoslovakia quite quickly, the young republic was, in the immediate years after the war, far from a stable parliamentary democracy. The securing of the borderlands in the West and completely new territories in the East in 1918-19 resulted in armed clashes with the German-speaking population and eventually into two wars with Poland and Hungary.²⁵ Right after the international securing of the new state during 1919, the conflict between the political left and right generated a political instability that brought the young republic to the

brink of civil war in 1920. Both of these tensions generated significant pressure on parliamentary politics throughout the early 1920s. As even some of the local authors that were traditionally positive towards interwar Czechoslovakia noted recently, at least until 1922 Czechoslovakia resembled more a “Czech national dictatorship” rather than a flourishing parliamentary, democratic state.²⁶

Austria faced a number of similar challenges right after the war. Keeping the food ration system until November 1922 (Czechoslovakia until July 1921), the young republic struggled with severe material supply problems that further dynamized the already burning social conflict.²⁷ Reestablishing the national parliament and a legitimate government as quickly as Czechoslovakia, Austria was nevertheless consumed by the clash between the radicalized left and right between 1918 and 1922, which also brought the young republic to the brink of collapse and internal armed conflict. Similarly to Czechoslovakia, the territorial losses that Austria suffered as a result of the Paris peace treaties sparked regional armed conflicts with some of its neighboring states, albeit much more localized and less intense than in the Czechoslovak case.²⁸

As a result of these external and internal pressures, both states were far from free from the physical violence that was used during the early post-war years as a means of achieving political goals. However, the different position of these two states within the emerging new European order framed these similar experiences and challenges differently.²⁹ While Czechoslovakia’s public space was shaped by an overwhelming “culture of victory” after the war, Austria was dominated by a contrastive “culture of defeat.” The main question at stake is thus if, and how, did these contrasting cultures affect the operation and perception of uniformed violence in both societies and how, in turn, did uniformed violence shape these cultures. The comparison is thus fruitful for both cases. It seeks to shed new light on the argument about the importance of the “culture of defeat” for explaining the occurrence of violence in some of the post-war societies. On the other hand, it also tries to show the

surprising potential that one of the most model “cultures of victory” had in appropriating physical violence to stabilize itself.

In order to ground the comparison empirically, the paper will first concentrate on the different levels of weapons proliferation as one of the most visible practical features distinguishing the culture of victory from that of defeat. It will argue that the ever-present feeling of victory among the Czech-speaking population of the newly created Czechoslovak state made it possible to limit the proliferation of various weapons and thereby quickly recapture the state’s monopoly on violence. In Austria, by contrast, the feeling of unjust defeat had weakened the state to such an extent that it effectively ceased to control the proliferation of weapons. This then enabled the emergence of a paramilitary culture, which shaped the public space of the new Austrian republic and deepened the feeling of collapse and defeat.

However, even though Czechoslovakia comparatively quickly reclaimed the monopoly on violence, it did not bring about the disappearance of uniformed violence as a part of everyday life. In the next part, the paper will therefore concentrate on the violence committed by the officers and soldiers of the newly created Czechoslovak army. Using the example of the reclaiming of the Czechoslovak borderlands in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus’ in particular, the paper will demonstrate that even the Czechoslovak culture of victory was able to incorporate uniformed physical violence into the set of practices that were used to shape the new order. I will then conclude with some comparative remarks on the role that uniformed violence played in shaping the post-war order in the different social, ethnic and discursive environments in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Guns in Public. Reclaiming the State’s Monopoly on Violence

As the above-mentioned incident in Olomouc illuminates, the immediate post-war years cannot be considered years of peaceful, non-violent reconstruction and state-building

even in those Central European states whose public spaces were formed by a culture of victory. Even a cursory look reveals that the Olomouc ambush was far from unique and that uniformed violence played an important role in shaping the new Czechoslovak state. In fact, in terms of uniformed violence, the inhabitants of Austria and Czechoslovakia were often in many respects confronted with very similar experiences. Gerhard Botz analyzed violent conflicts in Austria and came to the conclusion that about 200 people, predominantly from the leftist political camp, were killed by various paramilitary groups during the explosive political fight that followed the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy between the years 1918 to 1920.³⁰

The situation in Czechoslovakia was in many respects similar, although the victims of violence came from much more broader social segments. The newly created multiethnic republic had to come to terms not only with significant social and political polarization, but also with increasing ethnic tensions. The first casualties were caused by armed clashes already in the fall of 1918, when the rapidly emerging Czechoslovak army began to occupy the German-speaking border regions of the new state. The tense situation in the borderlands culminated in the town of Kadaň (Kaaden) on March 4, 1919 with the Czechoslovak army opening fire on the crowds that were protesting against the Czechoslovak authorities' ban on voting into the emerging National Assembly of the German-Austria in Vienna, killing 54 people and injuring over 1000, including several women and children.³¹ Social tensions led to the declaration of martial law in December 1920, escalating into local communist putsch attempts followed by swift and harsh military repercussions. Martial law was declared and martial courts sentenced radicalized communists to death. Their executions were carried out by the military very quickly.³² Altogether, in 1918-1920 around 150 people were killed during the ethnic and political turmoil in the Czech lands alone, while the Czechoslovak army's conventional war with the Hungarian Republic of Councils in the south and east of Slovakia during the spring and summer of 1919 cost more than one thousand lives.³³ A further unspecified number of civilian victims fell during military retributions carried out by the

Czechoslovak army in occupied Slovakia between 1918 and 1919 and in Subcarpathian Rus', where martial law lasted until 1922.³⁴ Uniformed violence was thus an indelible part of the public space of Czechoslovakia and Austria alike.

The existing scholarship has convincingly shown how some of the German or Hungarian-speaking officers of the Austro-Hungarian and German imperial army could not come to terms with the post-war status quo, culminating in their refusal to demobilize and the subsequent continuation of the struggle against the emerging new order through violent means.³⁵ One of the main motives of the escalating violence in Austria was the resistance against the "Slavic" and "Judeo-Bolshevik world," which, in the imagination of conservative paramilitaries, embodied the fall of civilization. After the war, Austrian towns became scenes of violent confrontations between returning soldiers, who could not come to terms with the newly emerging political order, and their adversaries, also often returning soldiers, who were trying to deepen the revolution. Physical assaults, the tearing off of military decorations or destruction of weapons were everyday experiences for the majority of the returning officers in Vienna as well as other major Austrian towns.³⁶

These attacks, along with the general indifference towards the war experience of the Austrian returnees, pushed many of them into an internal exile and reinforced their feeling of misrecognition. While Austrian officers had to hide themselves from the street violence, news of the cheering welcome of German officers and the epic reception of the Czechoslovak legionnaires spread around the country, leaving the Austrian returnees in a state of inner despair. As one of the Austrian journalists put it: "While in similarly suffering Germany there are flags and flowers, cheer and warm words for the returnees, while the Czechoslovak nation cheers its legionnaires into heaven, the Austrian soldier has to crawl silently in his home country."³⁷

A striking feature of early postwar Austria was the state's inability to reclaim the monopoly on violence and the wide proliferation of weapons among the common public. As a

result of the tense political situation between the years 1918 and 1922, many followers of Austria's main political camps heavily armed themselves and formed paramilitary units that were entrusted with the protection of the working class or the rural population against real or imagined class enemies. These were quickly divided into units that dominated the public space of numerous Austrian towns and villages, contributing heavily to a general feeling of foreboding of the approaching civil war that further dynamized the particular camps' need to arm themselves.³⁸ In November 1920, for example, Austrian police reported that more than one thousand workers armed with guns and machine guns and led by the former non-commissioned Austrian officer Richard Tässl were patrolling the region around Wiener Neustadt, on the lookout for alleged rural militias. According to the police, it was certain that "...every worker in this region has at least one gun at home."³⁹ Only two weeks later, a tense stand-off between workers' and peasants' militias was reported in the village of Gramatneusiedl, south-east of Vienna, where "...the Social Democratic as well as Christian-Social populations are heavily armed with weapons that come from the war returnees."⁴⁰ In Innsbruck on May 23, 1921 the provincial government had to deal with dozens of heavily armed former imperial officers, who appeared in their old military uniforms at the public festivities for Corpus Christi and tried to turn the religious gathering into a monarchic manifestation.⁴¹

As these examples show, a huge number of weapons that disappeared from military warehouses during the last months of the war suddenly appeared in the hands of armed civilians. In the village of Pottendorf near Vienna, the Social Democratic Volkswehr distributed dozens of guns to local workers every day during the winter of 1920.⁴² In the summer of 1921, Vienna police accidentally discovered five machine guns and 2500 pieces of ammunition at the apartment of university student Franz Nowotny and as late as March 1922 a police raid in one of the houses in Linz found several barrels filled with poisonous gas belonging to the local nationalist "Selbstschutzverbund," which was prepared to use it against

potential Social Democratic or Communist attackers.⁴³ In the small town of Wöllersdorf near Wiener Neustadt, hundreds of grenades that had disappeared at the end of the war on their way to Lemberg were found in the hands of the armed Social Democratic Volkswehr that was passing them on to friendly civilians.⁴⁴

The wide distribution not only of firearms, but also of military gases, grenades and other heavy weapons among the common population illustrates the level to which the state's monopoly on violence declined in the first post-war years in Austria. In the summer of 1921, Austrian police officially admitted that they had to cease upholding the respective law that officially forbade civilians from carrying firearms. It declared a wide reaching amnesty for all illegal gun holders, provided that they hand over their guns voluntarily. In only three months, between June and August 1921, in Vienna alone over 1500 guns and 70 000 pieces of ammunition were handed over to authorities. However, these numbers were perceived as a profound failure, given the tens of thousands of guns that the Austrian authorities still believed were illegally dispersed throughout the country.⁴⁵

The level of uncertainty about the future, the profound feeling of utter defeat and the broad proliferation of weapons among the general population prevented the Austrian state from monopolizing the violence and enabled armed paramilitary units to seize the public space. Austrian towns and villages became a showplace for demonstrations of organized paramilitary power. In September 1920, for example, more than 300 men were observed performing military exercises under the command of former imperial officers in the outer Vienna district of Simmering. According to the district governor, they were workers from the nearby factories, who had prepared themselves for clashes with the conservative Heimwehr.⁴⁶ Almost exactly one year later, the 15th Vienna district witnessed a joint exercise of over 600 hundred armed workers, who even performed an ostentatious march through the traditional working-class neighborhood of Ottakring.⁴⁷ In both cases, as well as in many others, the

official state police lacked the capacity to intervene and could merely passively witness the further disintegration of state authority.

With such a high level of militarization, gun violence became an almost everyday experience of public life. On May 8, 1921, for example, a Christian social meeting in the village of Sankt Lorenz near Salzburg was attacked by armed workers who focused primarily on the main organizers – the local landholder Peter Papst and the county representative Dr. Rintelen. As eyewitnesses testified: “One of the attackers grabbed a ladder bag from the table and hit the speaker on the head. Others were beating Papst so that he fell on the floor. Rintelen was thrown against the window and beaten with sticks and stones. When defending himself he had to pull out his gun.”⁴⁸ What is telling about this is not so much the attack on Dr. Rintelen itself, but rather the fact that in Austria in 1921 it was still quite normal even for a lower provincial official to carry and use a firearm.

While carrying and potentially using guns in the context of the collapsed state was a common experience if not a necessity for many ordinary Austrians, Czechoslovakia was in this respect a much safer place. The shared feeling of victory from the fall of 1918 made it possible for the newly emerging state authorities to capture the monopoly on violence quite quickly.⁴⁹ Already in October and November 1918 public manifestations were held where people were either ostensibly relinquishing the weapons they had at home in favor of the newly emerging republican army or even enlisted themselves in this army as volunteers.⁵⁰ While the German or Hungarian-speaking inhabitants of the new Czechoslovak state were prevented from joining the army until the fall of 1919,⁵¹ from the declaration of Czechoslovak independence on October 28 until the end of 1918 a total of 18 Czech-speaking volunteer battalions were formed all over the Czech lands with the estimated strength of more than 10 thousand soldiers.⁵² The feeling of victory gave rise to an enthusiasm that saw weapons as belonging to an army that was the best defender of the newly won national independence. Czechoslovak authorities thus did not have to fear the high level of weapons proliferation

among the general public and the resulting formation of paramilitary units connected with leading political groups as in Austria.

However, this does not mean that the streets of Czechoslovak towns and villages were free from uniformed violence. Even though Czechoslovakia welcomed some of its war returnees warmly and with much more confidence, their mental horizon in some respects did not differ from their Austrian counterparts. The new republican army was being built around the hard core of the returning Czechoslovak legions.⁵³ These originally paramilitary units, formed primarily from Czech-speaking POWs in France, Italy and Russia, were gradually recognized by the allied countries as the official Czechoslovak army that fought side by side with allied forces at the French, Italian and Russian front.⁵⁴ At the end of the war, they numbered roughly 90 thousand men returning to Czechoslovakia between the years 1918 and 1920.⁵⁵

Some former legionnaires saw Czechoslovakia between 1918-1922 as a state whose inner stability needed to be redeemed by violently suppressing Germans, Hungarians, communists, or Jews, and lines between these categories were very often blurred. For national conservative Czechoslovak soldiers, the imagined or real Bolshevik enemy played a similar role as in Austria, except that the hatred of the “panslavic mess” was substituted by the inverted fight against “pangermanism.”⁵⁶ As a result, violent clashes between former frontline soldiers were common in Czechoslovakia and Austria alike, as were clashes between uniformed soldiers or paramilitaries and the civilian population.

In the summer of 1920, for example, a quarrel between Czech-speaking legionnaires and former imperial soldiers in the mostly German-speaking town of Jihlava (Iglau)⁵⁷ turned into a skirmish, claiming the lives of two participating soldiers. Symptomatically, shortly after the incident the German population of the town was held responsible and dozens of legionnaires occupied the town against the will of the official bodies. In the following days, they fired workers from their jobs and conducted wild and violent house searches.⁵⁸

The political meetings of leftist or Slovak national parties were often attended by armed soldiers, who would try to break up the meetings by force. Only three months after the above-mentioned brutal assault on the Social Democratic meeting in Olomouc, in September 1920, a similar incident took place in the Slovak town of Námestov where the Slovak People's Party held a meeting of about two thousand of its sympathizers. Czechoslovak uniformed soldiers, mostly former legionnaires, interrupted the meeting and attacked some of the speakers. During the clash, soldiers drew weapons and opened fire on the unarmed gathering, claiming the lives of two Slovak peasants and causing several serious injuries.⁵⁹

While in Austria similar violent acts were typical of paramilitary units of conservative, often noble returnees or of Communist or Social Democratic workers' militias, in Czechoslovakia they belonged to the repertoire of the regular state army. Since almost two thirds of all legionnaire veterans returned from revolutionary Russia, where Czechoslovak legions actively engaged in the fight against the Bolshevik revolution, many Czechoslovak army units became the backbone of national conservatism.

Their subsequent adaptation to the conditions in the newly founded republic was in some respects similar to the unsuccessful demobilization that occurred in Austria, Germany and Hungary. Many of them considered the Czechoslovak state not as the humiliating result of the First World War, but as only half of the solution to the national and social revolution. Upon returning home, a large number of legionnaires understood their next engagement in the republican army as the continuation of the fight for the national revolution and as the final settling of accounts with the enemies of the nation. The mentality of many Czechoslovak officers was thus in several aspects not very different from their Austrian or German counterparts. On one side, it is certainly true that the experience many of them had with Russian captivity, republican agitation and their subsequent engagement in Czechoslovak legions alienated them from the Habsburg state and its military culture structured around absolutist and bureaucratic values.⁶⁰ But similarly to many German or Austrian officers, who

attributed the lost war to a Bolshevik betrayal in their own ranks, Czechoslovak officers saw the communist rabble and rule of the street as the greatest threat to their victory. But the context of the victorious state allowed them to fight against this threat within the framework of the state's monopoly on violence, most visibly embodied in the uniform of the regular Czechoslovak army.

There was, however, one major difference between the returning Czechoslovak legionnaires and the Austrian paramilitaries – the intensive engagement in the Russian Civil War. The Czechoslovak legions in Russia were marked by extraordinary brutality since their formation, both in terms of the legionnaires themselves as well as their enemies. As, for example, one of the leading officers and later the leader of the Czechoslovak fascists, general Radola Gajda, remembered in the 1920s, the deployment of Czechoslovak units at the battle near the Ukrainian town of Bachmač in March 1918 was accompanied by merciless violence on both sides: “Germans...on the second day they buried three hundred dead. But even our losses were great. Around one hundred killed, injured and missing.... The latter must be counted among the dead, for neither side spared the other. The gallows awaited imprisoned Czechoslovaks and Germans were afraid of the Czechoslovaks' cruelty.”⁶¹

Physical violence, which often far exceeded the level necessary at the front, became an everyday experience, shaping the horizon of the majority of Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia. This violence intensified during their involvement in revolutionary battles against Red Army units in the summer of 1918.⁶² Taking no prisoners became a basic imperative. Both sides committed mass executions of POWs, and occasionally ritually mutilated their bodies. Cases of corpses, whose face was disfigured to such an extent that the body was almost impossible to identify, were no exception.⁶³ Brutal cases of mass public executions, such as those committed by the Czechoslovak legionnaires after seizing the town of Samara in June 1918, or the public mass burning of captured Czech or German-speaking Red Army members, even attracted wide international attention.⁶⁴

Such grotesque forms of violence had a significant impact not only outside, but above all within the collective of perpetrators. By evidently and intentionally exceeding the norms of war, such violence established an entirely new collective identity. The frequent negligent or non-existent burial of bodies reflected the basic intentions of the perpetrators, who programmatically wanted the bodies to be discovered. These killings formed very deep bonds between soldiers because they automatically placed them at risk of brutal revenge. Extreme violence was thus a moment that created an internally coherent male community of perpetrators. Disfiguring a dead body, or massacring defenseless civilians, including women and juveniles, established an internally coherent collective of perpetrators, for the experience of such mutilated bodies and fear of enemy reprisals prevailed over any internal differences among them.⁶⁵

When the Czechoslovak legionnaires were transferred back into Central Europe during 1918-1920, the basic structure of the units was maintained and collectives forged during the campaigns abroad were not separated. The Czechoslovak government opted to keep the experienced military units intact, as these were practically the only armed forces it could rely on.⁶⁶ Thus the military power of the state was effectively boosted, but on the other hand the legionnaire communities represented a significant potential for unleashing unprecedented violence.

In the imagination of nationally conservative soldiers, the newly created Czechoslovak state was not only threatened by communism, but also by ever-present German or Hungarian counter-revolution. According to many, the national revolution had to be completed through the total sidelining of the non-Czech speaking population of the new state. Ethnic violence committed by uniformed legionnaires became an everyday occurrence all over Czechoslovakia and its targets were manifold. In May 1919, for example, legionnaires were overseeing public lootings of Jewish and German property in the streets of Prague and ensuring that every looter got his or her share, while at the same time preventing the shop

owners from doing anything about the ransacking crowd.⁶⁷ One of the Prague shoe shop owners bitterly complained to the local police that on May 23 1919, a crowd gathered in front of his shop and demanded that his shoes be sold at forced low prices. The present uniformed soldiers did not do anything to stop this, precisely the opposite. Threatening him with their guns, they even forced him to sell his goods for the enforced prices.⁶⁸ In January 1920, a crowd of uniformed legionnaires stormed the Prague apartment of a Galician Jewish family, and moved the furniture out to enable another legionnaire to move in. Their actions were approved by many people in line at a nearby supply office.⁶⁹ In October 1920, a legionnaire asked the janitor of a Prague apartment house to open an apartment for him, bolstering his authority with the reference to his uniform and thereby his military status. He then emptied two rooms in the apartment to free it for his friends.⁷⁰

These incidents point to a specific idea of justice or even moral economy that was cultivated both among the deprived public and among the uniformed legionnaires. In the context of the Czechoslovak culture of victory, this idea merged with the ethnic divisions within Czechoslovak society and enabled the soldiers to deploy physical violence as a means to deepen the perception of victory and the resulting revenge on alleged German or Jewish wartime profiteers and enemies of the national revolution.

However, such violence did not have to be connected with material interests at all. In November 1920, for example, the English-speaking pregnant wife of a British embassy employee was attacked on the streets of Prague by legionnaires because they simply thought she was speaking German in public.⁷¹ More or less serious attempts to undermine the emerging republican order were also gaining momentum. In July 1919, a battalion of legionnaires revolted in southern Bohemia, imprisoned its officers and marched on Plzeň (Pilsen) where they hoped to get reinforcements for a further march on Prague to storm government buildings.⁷² In November 1920, in reaction to the alleged destruction of a Czech school in the predominantly German town of Cheb (Eger), the former Russian legionnaire

Josef Zápotocký assembled a crowd in the center of Prague and planned to attack the Czechoslovak Parliament. According to him, Czechoslovak state power was not able to deal with the increasing provocations of the German population in the borderlands and therefore it was necessary to violently suspend the parliamentary form of government and to deal with the “pangermanic” counter-revolution with violent means.⁷³

The dynamics of the ethnic conflict unfolding in Czechoslovakia at the break of the 1910s and 1920s were deeply rooted in the culture of victory that swept through the majority of the Czech-speaking population. While violent incidents between Czech and German-speaking inhabitants of the Czech lands almost disappeared under the tight state dictatorship of the First World War, from 1918 until 1922 they became much more common than before 1914.⁷⁴ The feeling of a deserved victory and a national revolution propelled violent vengeful actions against many of those who did not fit into the dominant national republican narrative of Czech nationalism. Even though the Czechoslovak culture of victory made it at first possible for the state to reclaim the monopoly on violence much faster than its Austrian neighbor, this did not result in a decrease in the level or forms of uniformed violence. The official state army provided the Czech-speaking returnees who did not want to demobilize with enough opportunities to continue in the fight for the national revolution in a similar way as the Austrian, Hungarian or German paramilitary units did for the conservative officers of the former imperial armies. The dividing line of ethnicity and language that was much more present in Czechoslovakia than in Austria constituted, together with the political tensions between the left and the right, a mixture that enabled the further maintenance of uniformed violence as one of the main components in the shaping of the new, republican order.

However common the violence targeted toward real or imagined Germans or Jews on the streets of Czech towns could have been, it only very rarely went beyond low-level physical attacks. The well-known massacre of March 1919 was a unique exception in Czech-German relations immediately after the war. Skirmishes and violent clashes with only few

casualties were more common and in many ways resembled the Austrian struggle between distinct camps, where violence was used quite often, but the intention to kill was rather weak.

But in Czechoslovakia this was not the case everywhere. The violent potential of the legionnaire units was tamed in the west of the country, where Czech-German rivalries had a long tradition reaching back to the nineteenth century and were seen by Czech nationalists predominantly as a clash of two opposite, but more or less equal cultures. But Czechoslovakia's acquisition of the eastern part of the new state brought completely different challenges. The heterogeneous spaces of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus', marked out by an ungraspable multitude of ethnic, national and religious categories, constituted a completely different context for deploying violence as an inherent part of the still deepening culture of victory and offered a framework that enabled old patterns of behavior cultivated during the Russian campaigns to be activated.

Deepening the National Revolution

The two dangers that continued to keep many Czechoslovak war returnees in a state of inner mobilization – the struggle against Bolshevik revolution and against the German or Hungarian counter-revolution – merged in the already mentioned war that Czechoslovakia waged with the Hungarian Soviet Republic in the spring and summer of 1919. For many Czechoslovak soldiers, Hungary's invasion of southern Slovakia in March 1919 was a welcome occasion to deepen the national revolution through military means. The fact that the invasion was commenced by the undisputedly communist Hungarian regime made it very easy to connect the specter of bolshevism with that of the threatening Hungarian danger. As one of the officers wrote in the main Czech right-wing daily at the end of 1918: "It is not yet the end. Today the greedy Hungarian-German beast is rising against our freedom and our young state... Today Czech blood is still flowing in Slovakia. And there is our place. The Czechoslovak soldier does not return to his loved ones before securing his country's

freedom...The Czechoslovak volunteer knows that if he were to return home today, his mother, father, wife and children, all of them would welcome him with pain in their hearts.”⁷⁵

The actual military campaign was not a success for Czechoslovakia. A large portion of southern and eastern Slovakia quickly came under Hungarian control and in June 1919 Hungarian Communists declared a sister Slovak Soviet Republic. Czechoslovakia had to rely on an ultimatum by the allied powers that authoritatively ended all combat and forced the Hungarian army to retreat. The subsequent occupation of Slovak towns was accompanied by numerous violent anti-Semitic or anti-Catholic reprisals.⁷⁶ While occasional wild killings of alleged or real enemies of the state on the streets of Slovak towns by Czech soldiers were reported already before the war, the final seizure of the southern and eastern Slovak territory was accompanied by a much more widespread wave of uniformed violence.⁷⁷ Jewish properties were ransacked and Jews thrown out of their houses and humiliated.⁷⁸ Catholic priests were taken away in the middle of holding mass and publicly beaten. In a village near the Sucarpathian administrative center of Užhorod (Ungwar), for example, a Catholic priest was violently dragged out of his home, bound to a carriage, publicly beaten and showed off to the local inhabitants on the streets. After torturing him for several hours, Czechoslovak soldiers stabbed him to death with bayonets, letting the local crowd witness the brutal theater until the very end.⁷⁹

The retributions in Slovakia even claimed the lives of several women, girls and juvenile boys who were shot on the streets.⁸⁰ On June 3, 1919, 28-year-old Jozef Tepper and 14-year-old Vojtech Tirpak were, as alleged Hungarian spies, executed on the street of the eastern Slovak town of Košice (Kaschau). As one of the overseeing Czechoslovak officers reported: “Jozef Tepper was kneeling by the wall and kept shouting that he was innocent. Vojtěch Tirpák collapsed and was lying on the ground. His mother begged the officer on her knees for her boy’s life. He sent her to the command and said they would wait. The moment the mother left, shots rang out. Civilians present during the execution were dispersed.”⁸¹ The

number of such incidents is still unknown, but judging from the reactions to them they were hardly a negligible episode. In 1919, the scope of violent actions perpetrated by Czechoslovak soldiers deployed in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus' was so alarming that it eventually forced some of the higher ranked officers to forbid the soldiers from having any contact with the local population⁸² and even provoked British and French diplomatic interventions.⁸³

As these examples show, many executions were far from a strictly organized military practice. The main inspector of the Czechoslovak armed forces, Josef Svatopluk Machar, later recalled that officers on the spot were postponing the execution of Tepper and Tirpák, which should have been carried out during the night. The reason for this was a drinking party with local civil officials who, together with the military officers, wanted to make the execution a public event and at the same time were hesitant to stop drinking during the night.⁸⁴ As a result, the execution was staged in such a way as to attract not just the attention of the Czechoslovak officials and military officers, but also of the local crowd.⁸⁵ This kind of public display was a common denominator of the uniformed violence perpetrated in eastern Czechoslovakia. Many of the executions and killings in the contested regions of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus' were carried out by the military publicly and on the streets. In many cases, executed bodies were not buried, but left lying on the streets for the local community to take care of. Killings committed by knives, bayonets or rifle butts were as common as executions committed by guns.

It was precisely this form of violence that made the real difference. In Austria, the majority of victims were found in Vienna and other larger cities and the casualties were mainly the result of street clashes and skirmishes, similarly to the western part of the Czechoslovak republic, where the Czech-German clashes occurred. Although non-uniformed civilians were sometimes targets of paramilitary violence, publicly displayed executions were rather rare, just like killings in the immediate proximity of a knife or bayonet range.⁸⁶ These differences are not marginal, as different ways of perpetrating violence reveal much about the

collective mentality of the perpetrators and about the social dynamics behind specific violent practices. The much more common public display of uniformed violence, as well as the crude ways of perpetrating it, attest, in the case of Slovakia or Subcarpathian Rus', to the different position that physical violence had in soldiers' repertoire of communication as well as to the role of a different spatial framework, which made this kind of communication possible.

In order to decipher this position, we need to return to the main difference between Austrian paramilitaries and Czechoslovak soldiers, which was their different experience of the First World War as well as the different situation at home after their return. In the case of Czechoslovak soldiers, it was the eastern front and above all the Russian Civil War, which to a great extent created the framework of violence that they used to cement the newly formed republic. The mobile way of waging war on the eastern front and then later during the Russian Civil War as well as the frequent blurring of lines between combatants and non-combatants ensured that soldiers experienced more face to face clashes and killings at close range.⁸⁷

As one Czech war veteran remembered: "We chased the Russians from their posts. The order was: no pardons, no prisoners. I can't understand the Russians. Men tall as mountains; they could kill us with their bare hands. They stopped, raised their hands and looked at us like children, so kindheartedly, as if they were our people and were waiting for us. And we pounced on them like beasts. We used bayonets and knives. We sliced their necks as if they were goslings."⁸⁸ Similarly brutal killings of POWs and civilians belonged to the repertoire of many units on the Russian front, and later in the civil war, and it is therefore not surprising that they belonged to the basic repertoire of the Czechoslovak legions as well.

As current military research confirms, killings with a stabbing weapon at a distance of no more than an arm's length has the greatest potential to generate psychological trauma. The immediate experience of the enemy's death, "the intimate brutality" of the opportunity to experience his last breath, in many cases breaks down ethical boundaries and creates future soldiers, who in subsequent battles lack any sort of moral limits to killing.⁸⁹

Thus, when these male collectives returned home and were sent to the eastern periphery, they were reanimating the mode they were used to from the Russian Civil War. As a result, they did not comply with the official commands given from Prague, but applied their own vision of how the new order should be completed and sustained. Although the most brutal mutilations ceased, group killings at close range without using a firearm were still part of the violent repertoire of many in 1919-1920 Czechoslovakia, similarly to wild executions on the streets of conquered towns.

While such wild killings were practically unimaginable in the context of the Czech-German rivalry in the west of the country, the situation in eastern Czechoslovakia offered a framework that in many ways resembled what the soldiers already knew from Russia. Local Jews were easily imagined as primary allies of the invading Bolshevik Hungarian forces as well as representatives of the old Austro-Hungarian order. Merging these ascriptions with the experience of massive anti-Jewish violence during the Russian Civil War generated a dynamic of violence that connected the old violent patterns with the new spatial frame.⁹⁰ Violence against the Catholic clergy was dynamized by the official Czechoslovak agenda that incorporated anti-Catholicism as a part of the state's legitimization as well as by the socialization of the soldiers within the legionnaire units in Russia.⁹¹ Here, the anti-Catholic orientation played a strong part in defining the very identity of some of the legions. The regiments were frequently named after main personalities from the medieval Hussite rebellion and many officers did not allow any sorts of Catholic religious practices.⁹² Similarly to anti-Jewish attacks, it was the framework of the eastern periphery of Czechoslovakia that propelled the brutal and grotesque anti-Catholic violence. Symptomatically, it did not occur in the Western Czech lands where it would have quickly placed the soldiers at odds with many Czech Catholics and most probably sparked a wave of popular protests. The specific context of mastering the Eastern periphery, however, did not have such constraints in place and

unleashed anti-Catholic fantasies that were cultivated in many legionnaire units already during the Russian Civil War.

Vague national identities and the confusing composition of the local population, where it was in many cases even impossible to differentiate between Hungarians, Slovaks and Jews, made it also very hard to discern who was loyal or disloyal to the new republic. When, for example, the Czechoslovak army seized Košice (Kaschau) in March 1919, the marching soldiers were shelled by the locals from the windows of surrounding residential houses. The army responded by extensive house searches, but was unable to identify more than just a handful of shooters.⁹³ Such a general distance of a significant part of the local population from what the soldiers perceived as a civilizing, state-building mission generated a feeling of utter mistrust to the locals that led, in many cases, to a blurring of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.⁹⁴ Just like during their deployment in Russia, all of this merged and resulted in a much more frequent and brutal use of violence as a means to impose order on what was seen as a chaotic, uncivilized and dangerous realm as well as a means to convey a distinct message to the local population that any resistance, which was in fact feared the most, will be smashed without mercy.

Austria, in contrast, did not wage any war of a comparable scope as Czechoslovakia's with Hungary. The new Austrian republic, too, argued over the demarcation of its borders. As a defeated state with a completely decimated army, however, it could not support its territorial demands through an open military conflict.⁹⁵ The most painful issue – the loss of southern Tyrol to Italy – caused disillusionment among many demobilized Austrian soldiers as well as the wider public. Many political protests followed, which particularly in Vienna culminated in mass public demonstrations.⁹⁶ However, due to the disintegration of the Austrian state army, the public outcry did not develop into a wave of military or paramilitary violence comparable to the Czechoslovak deployment in southern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus'.⁹⁷

The only real armed conflict that the young Austrian republic waged with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes over Styria at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 never spilled over into a larger wave of uniformed violence. The ever-present feeling of defeat prevented the Austrian army from mobilizing more than a few hundred poorly armed soldiers in late 1918 when the conflict started to unfold. At the peak of the fighting, in April 1919, the estimated strength of the Austrian army did not exceed three thousand men.⁹⁸ In contrast to Czechoslovakia, where volunteer battalions were formed as early as in December 1918, Austrian authorities were faced with an unprecedented wave of refusals to fight for the borders of the new republic. In the south of Austria, where in May 1919 the government tried to mobilize approximately 24 thousand men, only about seven hundred, i.e. about three percent, showed up.⁹⁹

The whole conflict also never transgressed into larger excesses against the civilian population. The overall number of civilian casualties did not exceed a few dozens, and the majority died from accidental shootings.¹⁰⁰ The distinguishing line between combatants and non-combatants was never blurred to such an extent as in the case of the eastern Czechoslovak borderlands. Similarly to the Czech-German clash in the west of Czechoslovakia in late 1918 and early 1919, the conflict between Austrian-Germans and Slovenes in lower Styria was rooted in long-lasting pre-war rivalries.¹⁰¹ The immediate post-war years experienced an escalation of this conflict, throwing the region into a short-term war with several hundred casualties. However, this conflict was played out as a clash between two more or less distinct adversaries over clearly defined territorial claims. The soldiers also did not experience deployment in the Russian Civil War and a victorious feeling from the newly won state independence, which would encourage violent acts against mistrusted civilians. Thus, basic norms of war, such as those differentiating between soldiers and civilians, were not broken and brutal violence that went beyond the customs of a regular war was practically non-existent.

Conclusions

We can conclude that as far as uniformed violence in the immediate postwar years is concerned, Austria and Czechoslovakia share many similarities. Both the culture of defeat and the culture of victory generated and propelled various forms of uniformed violence, which became part of everyday politics. In Austria, conservative paramilitaries saw Jews and Bolsheviks as the main culprits of the post-war chaos. In Czechoslovak soldiers' fantasies, Jews and Bolsheviks represented one of the last obstacles in fulfilling the national republican dream. The mobilizing force of the fear of "panslavism" in Austria found its counterpart in the specter of "pangermanism" in Czechoslovakia. Physical attacks on imagined or real Communists were similarly fierce and ruthless in both countries. In Czechoslovakia, these were supplemented by similarly fierce attacks on real or imagined Germans or Hungarians.

However, uniformed violence in both countries also differed in many ways. The first obvious difference is the institutional framework. Victorious Czechoslovakia could accommodate many of the returning soldiers into its newly emerging army, thus giving them an institutionalized opportunity to refuse demobilization and to operate within the state monopoly on violence. In Austria, the majority of the violence was not perpetrated within the state monopoly, but was committed by paramilitary forces organized around political camps.

In fact, according to Robert Gerwarth and others, Austria in the immediate post-war years was one of the main exporters of violence. Many of the former conservative officers as well as young nationalist students left the country to fight for their cause in Germany or Upper Silesia.¹⁰² Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, imported violence predominantly from the eastern front and the Russian Civil War, bringing home almost 60 thousand Russian legionnaires and offering many of them the opportunity to join the regular army. This blending of the experience from the eastern front and the Russian Civil War with the official state monopoly on violence, mainly embodied by the army, and the context of securing the

eastern territories of the new state, generated the framework for the specific Czechoslovak deployment of uniformed violence.

This was to be found on the streets of Czechoslovak towns and villages, but above all in the border regions of what was perceived as the newly won territories, such as Slovakia or the Subcarpathian Rus', which Czech nationalists were striving to accommodate into the new state. In some aspects, the ways on which physical violence was used in Czechoslovakia were more brutal than in Austria, which operated within the framework of a much more helpless state power, a disintegrating army and the more or less even armed forces of the political left and right, all of which helped to keep the level of uniformed violent clashes relatively low. Exploiting victory in Central Europe after the First World War could have resulted in a more significant escalation of uniformed physical violence than sinking into defeat.

In both cases violence was eventually tamed around 1922 and Czechoslovakia as well as Austria stabilized themselves as more or less functioning parliamentary democracies. However, the potential to resort to violence as a means of solving political disputes remained much greater in the Austrian case. Political camps retained armed militias and the state was unable to fully recapture the monopoly on violence throughout the whole 1920s'. In 1927, the violent potential was reanimated during the massive wave of violence around the famous fire of the Vienna "Justizpalast" and culminated in the demise of the interwar Austrian parliamentary democracy into the civil war of 1934.

In Czechoslovakia, the culture of victory generated a more stable environment. During the uneasy "founding years," the Czechoslovak state power never collapsed to such an extent as in Austria and after securing the new state internally and externally a stable parliamentary democracy unfolded, where the potential to resort to violence for political means was comparably low. Even though Czechoslovakia had to face, above all, the ethnic challenge, its political system never imploded, as in the case of Austria, but eventually had to be destroyed from the outside.

¹ Právo lidu 28. 6. 1920, p. 2.

² Parliamentary interpellation of deputies Skalák, Geršl and Toužil on the Czechoslovak Prime Minister related to the groundless ambush and torture of Alois Muna as well as threats to his person by the legionnaires of the 6th regiment in Olomouc. Records of the Czechoslovak Chamber of Deputies (N. S. R. Č), 1920. Electoral period I, Material No. 361.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Pražské pondělí 28. 6. 1920, p. 1.

⁵ Právo lidu 29. 6. 1920, p. 1.

⁶ Právo lidu 28. 6. 1920, p. 2.

⁷ Ferdinand Peroutka, *Budování státu 3., 1920* (Prague, 1936), 1841-1844.

⁸ Georg L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990). On further discussion, see: Dietrich Beyrau, "Brutalization Revisited: The Case of Russia," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (2015): 15-37. Jennifer Keene, "A Brutalizing War? The USA after the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (2015): 78-99. Piotr Wrobel, "The Seeds of Violence. The Brutalization of an East European Region 1917-1921," *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003): 125-149. John Horne, ed., *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997). Stephen Audoin Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002).

⁹ Ian Kershaw, "War and Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe," *Contemporary European History* 14 (2005): 107-123, 108-115.

¹⁰ On the immediate post-war conflicts all over Europe, see: Peter Hart, *The IRA at War, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003). Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge, 2011). Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (London, 2003). T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence. Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford - New York, 2010). Béla Bodó, *Pál Prónay: Paramilitary Violence and Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1919-1921* (Pittsburg, 2011). Scott Stephenson, *The Final Battle: Soldiers of the Western Front and the German Revolution* (Cambridge, 2009). Aviel

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¹¹ John Laurence, “Forging a Peacable Kingdom: War, Violence and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain, “ *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 557-589. Dirk Schumann, “Europa, der erste Weltkrieg und die Nachkriegszeit. Eine Kontinuität der Gewalt?“, *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003): 23-43.

¹² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York, 2003).

¹³ Julia Eichenberg - John Paul Newman, “Aftershocks: Violence in Dissolving Empires after the First World War“, *Contemporary European History* 19 (2010): 183-194, 186. Bela Bodó, “The White Terror in Hungary, 1919-1921: The Social World of Paramilitary Groups, “ *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 133-163.

¹⁴ See most recently the collected essays in: Rober Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁵ On the „new violence studies,“ see most importantly: Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996). Trutz von Trotha, ed., *Soziologie der Gewalt* (Opladen, 1997). Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London, 1999). Michael Geyer, “Eine Kriegsgeschichte, die vom Tod spricht“, in *Physische Gewalt. Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, ed. Thomas Lindenberger and Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 136-162.

¹⁶ Robert Gerwarth, “Rechte Gewaltgemeinschaften und die Stadt nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Berlin, Wien und Budapest im Schatten von Kriegsniederlage und Revolution“, in: *Kollektive Gewalt in der Stadt. Europa 1890-1939*, ed. Friedrich Lenger (München, 2013), 103-122, 103.

¹⁷ The first post-war censuses were organized all over Central Europe in the early 1920s. However, the first reliable results are from those taking place around 1930. According to them, Czechoslovakia had over 14,7 million inhabitants and Yugoslavia almost 14 million. Austria registered about 6,7 million people, while Hungary around 8,6 million. On the demography of the region, see: Franz

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¹⁸ John Horne, "Beyond Cultures of Victory and Cultures of Defeat?," in *The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism*, ed. Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman (Basingstoke, 2013), 207-223.

¹⁹ On the festivities and construction of collective memory in interwar East-Central Europe, see: John Paul Newman, "Allied Yugoslavia: Serbian Great War Veterans and their Internationalist Allies," in *The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism*, ed. Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman (Basingstoke, 2013), 97-117. Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington, 2009), 98-143. Nancy M. Wingfield and Dagmar Hajkova, "Czech (-oslovak) Commemoration of the Great War: The Battle of the White Mountain Avenged, 1918-1938," *Acta Histriae* 18 (2010): 425-452.

²⁰ On the post-1989 historiographies of East-Central Europe and their master narratives, see the essays in: Sorin Antohi and Balazs Trencsenyi and Peter Apor, eds., *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest – New York, 2007). On the particular case of the First World War in the Czech historiography, see: Martin Zückert, "Der Erste Weltkrieg in der tschechischen Geschichtsschreibung 1918-1945," in *Geschichtsschreibung zu den böhmischen Ländern im 20. Jh. Wissenschaftstraditionen, Institutionen, Diskurse*, ed. Christianne Brenner and Erik K. Franzen and Peter Haslinger and Robert Luft (München, 2006), 61-75.

²¹ Julia Eichenberg, "The Dark Side of Independence: Paramilitary Violence in Ireland and Poland after the First World War," *Contemporary European History* 19 (2010): 231-248. On ethnic conflict in 20th century, see the substantial piece: Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge-New York, 2005).

²² The Ausgleich of 1867 divided the Habsburg Monarchy into two economically almost independent parts, so that the social and economic contacts of the „cisleithanian“ West with the „transleithanian „East“ were minor compared to the contacts maintained within each of the parts. For more details, see: Andrea Komlosy, *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung. Binnenmarkt und migration in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 2003), 115-273.

²³ On the emergence of modern parliamentary politics in the Austrian half of the monarchy, see: Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburger Monarchie 1848-1918. Band VIII/2, Politische Öffentlichkeit und Zivilgesellschaft* (Vienna, 2006).

²⁴ For a critical engagement with the “Czechoslovak exceptionalism“ as well as for further literature, see: Peter Bugge, “Czech Democracy, 1918-1938 – Paragon or Parody?,” *Bohemia* 47 (2006-2007): 3-28.

²⁵ On the international securing of interwar Czechoslovakia, see: Dagmar Perman, *The Shaping of the Czechoslovak State. Diplomatic History of the Boundaries of Czechoslovakia* (Leiden, 1962).

²⁶ Zdeněk Kárník, *České země v éře první republiky (1918-1938). Díl první. Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky, 1918-1929* (Prague, 2000), 63-76.

²⁷ On the social collapse in Austria during the First World War, see: Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2005), 31-76. For the post-war economic reconstruction, see: Felix Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna, 2012), 182-218. Roman Sandgruber, *Ökonomie und Politik. Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1995), 354-370.

²⁸ On the international context of the interwar Austrian republic, see the contributions of Christian Koller, Rolf Steininger, Ute Weinmann, Béla Rásky and Walter Reichel in: Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Maderthaler, eds., *Das werden der ersten Republik....der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Wien, 2008).

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³⁰ Gerhard Botz, “Gewaltkonjunkturen, Arbeitslosigkeit und gesellschaftliche Krisen. Formen politischer Gewalt und Gewaltstrategien in der ersten Republik,“ in *Das werden der ersten Republik....der Rest ist Österreich, Band I*, ed. Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Maderthaler (Wien 2008), 339-362, 341.

³¹ On the Czech-German clashes in the first interwar years, see: Karl Braun, “Der 4. März 1919. Zur Herausbildung Sudetendeutscher Identität,“ *Bohemia* 37 (1996): 353-380. Johann Wolfgang Brügel,

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³⁶ Wolfgang Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend noch die Schande. Das altösterreichische Offizierskorps am Beginn der Republik* (Wien, 1988), 17-19. Gerhard Botz, *Gewalt in der Politik. Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918-1934* (München, 1976), 28-30.

³⁷ *Neue Freie Presse* 14. 12. 1918, p. 3.

³⁸ Dirk Schumann has elaborated on the role that fear of approaching civil war played in the similar rise of Saxon paramilitarism: Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic. Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War*, (New York, 2009).

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⁴⁰ ALW, Nachlass Johannes Schober, Box 46/1, Police report from February 5, 1920.

⁴¹ ALW, Nachlass Johannes Schober, Box 57, Report of the Provincial Government in Innsbruck from May 23, 1921.

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⁴⁴ ALW, Jahreskartons, Sig. St 1918, Box 16, Report of the military headquarters in Lemberg to the Vienna police headquarters from July 17, 1918.

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⁴⁸ ALW, Nachlass Johannes Schober, Box 46/1. File „Berichte über Versammlungen politischer Vorgänge“, Police report from Graz, May 9, 1921.

⁴⁹ Martin Zückert, “National Concepts of Freedom and Government Pacification Policies: The Case of Czechoslovakia in the Transitional Period after 1918,” *Contemporary European History* 17 (2008): 325-344.

⁵⁰ Richard G. Plaschka, *Cattaro-Prag. Revolte und Revolution. Kriegsmarine und Herr Österreich-Ungarns im Feuer der Aufstandsbewegungen vom 1. Februar und 28. Oktober 1918* (Graz-Köln, 1963), 237-271.

⁵¹ Slovak Military Archives in Bratislava (Hereafter: SMA), Bratislava Military Headquarters, Box 2, Note of the Czechoslovak Ministry of National Defense from 3. 2. 1919.

⁵² Zdeněk Ježek, *Boj o Slovensko v letech 1918-1919* (Prague, 1928), 5-6. Martin Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität. Die tschechoslowakische Armee und ihre Nationalitätenproblematik 1918-1938* (München, 2006), 35-36.

⁵³ On the special position of the Czechoslovak legion members in the Czechoslovak republic, see: Natalie Stegmann, *Kriegsdeutungen - Staatsgründungen - Sozialpolitik: Der Helden- und Opferdiskurs in der Tschechoslowakei 1918-1948* (München, 2010), 63-116.

⁵⁴ On the Czechoslovak Legions, see: Gerburg Thunig-Nittner, *Die Tschechoslowakische Legion in Russland. Ihre Geschichtliche Bedeutung bei der Entstehung der 1. Tschechoslowakischen Republik* (Wiesbaden, 1970). John F. N. Bradley, *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, 1914-1920* (New York, 1991). Viktor M Fic, *Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak Legion: The Origin of their Armed Conflict, March-May 1918* (New Delhi, 1978). On the war returnees and their influence on the radicalization of the countries of Post-Habsburg Central Europe more broadly, see: Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz, *Gefangenschaft – Revolution – Heimkehr. Die Bedeutung der Kriegsgefangenenproblematik für die Geschichte des Kommunismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1917-1920* (Wien - Köln - Weimar, 2003). Reinhard Nachtigal, *Russland und seine österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsgefangenen 1914-1918* (Remshalden, 2003). Alan Rachmaninow, *POWs and the Great War. Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford - New York, 2002).

⁵⁵ Klimek, *Velké dějiny*, 68. Thunig-Nittner, *Die Tschechoslowakische Legion*, 112-123.

⁵⁶ Ivan Šedivý, “Zur Loyalität der Legionäre in der ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik“, in *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918-1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, ed. Martin Schulze Wessel (München, 2004), 141-152.

⁵⁷ Whenever a nationally contested place is mentioned in the paper I use the official Czechoslovak spelling first with the German version following in parentheses.

⁵⁸ Peroutka, *Budování státu 3*, 2017-2018.

⁵⁹ Karol Sidor, *Slovenská politika na podě pražského sněmu* (Bratislava, 1943), 164-166.

⁶⁰ On the military culture of the late Habsburg Empire, see: Wolfram Dornik, *Des Kaisers Falke. Wirken und Nachwirken von Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf* (Innsbruck – Wien, 2013). Christa Hämmerle, ed., *Des Kaisers Knechte: Erinnerungen an die Rekrutenzeit im k. (u) k. Heer 1868 bis*

1914 (Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2012). Laurence Cole and Christa Hämmerle and Martin Scheutz, eds., *Glanz – Gewalt – Gehorsam. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800 bis 1918)* (Essen, 2011). Jonathan E. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia 1914-1918* (Cambridge – New York, 2009). Günther Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden. Die Führung der k. u. k. Armee und die Grossmachtpolitik Österreichs-Ungarns 1906-1914* (München, 2003). On the concept of military culture, see: Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Wilhelmine Germany* (Ithaca, 2005).

⁶¹ Radola Gajda, *Moje paměti* (Brno, 2008), 24.

⁶² Thunig-Nittner, *Die Tschechoslowakische Legion*, 46-57.

⁶³ Jaroslav Kříž, *První světová válka a Československo: revoluci, 1914-1918* (Praha, 1967), 262-269. Gajda, *Moje paměti*, 242.

⁶⁴ The most detailed account of the violent seizure and Czechoslovak terror in Samara is in Russian: Ilja S. Ratkovskij, *Krasnyj terror i dejatel'nost' VCK v 1918 godu* (Sankt Petersburg, 2006), 100-104. Further, see for example: Heinrich August Winkler, *Geschichte des Westens. Die Zeit der Weltkriege 1914-1945* (München, 2011), 90-92. Manfred Hildermeier, *Geschichte der Sowjetunion 1917-1991. Entstehung und Niedergang des ersten sozialistischen Staates* (München, 1998), 137-139.

⁶⁵ For similar phenomena in the context of the Silesian ethnic conflict cf.: Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence*, 124-158.

⁶⁶ Ježek, *Boj o Slovensko*, 3-10.

⁶⁷ PPA, Prague Penal Court, Box 1428, sig. VR XXIV 5917/19. On the antisemitic violence in interwar Czechoslovakia, see most recently: Ines Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen. Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag 1918-1938* (München, 2012), 151-176.

⁶⁸ PPA, Prague Penal Court, Box 1428, sig. VR XXIV 6182/19.

⁶⁹ National Archives of the Czech Republic in Prague (hereafter: NACR), Interior Ministry Presidium, Box 179, sig. N, No. 9. Police report on the events of January 9, 1920.

⁷⁰ NACR, Interior Ministry Presidium, Box 179, sig. N, No. 297. Police report on the events of October 23, 1920.

⁷¹ Antonín Klimek, *Velké dějiny*, 216-217.

⁷² Ibid, 224.

⁷³ PPA, Prague Penal Court, Box 1434, Sign. Vr. IX/4736/20.

⁷⁴ Most important recent works on the national struggles in the Czech lands before and during the First World War include: Peter Haslinger, *Nation und Territorium im tschechischen politischen Diskurs 1880-1938* (München – Göttingen, 2010). Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands 1900-1948* (Ithaca, 2008). Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints. How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007). Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006). Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics 1848-1948* (Princeton, 2005). Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a Velká válka 1914–1918* (Prague, 2001).

⁷⁵ Národní Listy 7. 12. 1918, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Ladislav Lipscher, “Die Lage der Juden in der Tschechoslowakei nach deren Gründung 1918 bis zu den Parlamentswahlen 1920,” *East Central Europe* 1 (1989): 1–38. On the broader Central European context, see: Eliza Ablovatski, “The 1919 Central European Revolutions and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth,” *European Review of History* 17 (2010): 473-489. Paul Hanebrink, “Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary 1890-1920,” *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 55-80.

⁷⁷ See, for example, the report on the wild executions of civilians committed as a preventive measure against looting: Venkov, 17. 1. 1919, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Miloslav Szabó, “‘Židovská otázka’ na Slovensku v prvých rokoch Československej republiky,” *Stred/Centre. Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in 19th and 20th Centuries* 3 (2011): 59-81, 76.

⁷⁹ National Archives of Slovakia in Bratislava (hereafter: NAS), Ministry for the Administration of Slovakia, Box 270, Police report about the situation in Subcarpathian Rus’ from 16. 9. 1919.

⁸⁰ NAS, Ministry for the Administration of Slovakia, Box 271, Military report on the seizure of Kosice, undated.

⁸¹ Ivo Pejčoch and Jiří Plachý, *Masarykovy oprátky. Problematika trestu smrti v období první a druhé Československé republiky 1918-1939* (Prague 2012), 20.

⁸² SMA, Bratislava Military Headquarters, Box 3, Order of the 6. Czechoslovak Division Headquarters, undated.

⁸³ Ismo Nurmi, *Slovakia – a Playground for Nationalism and National Identity. Manifestations of the National Identity of the Slovaks 1918–1920* (Helsinki, 1999), 92-95.

⁸⁴ Josef Svatopluk Machar, *Pět roků v kasárnách: vzpomínky a dokumenty 1925-1926* (Praha, 1927), 198-199.

⁸⁵ NAS, Ministry for the Administration of Slovakia, Box 270, Military report on the situation in Kosice, undated

⁸⁶ On the street violence in Vienna, see: Gerwarth, *Rechte Gewaltgemeinschaften*.

⁸⁷ On the eastern front warfare and occupation, see most recently: Jochen Böehler and Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkammer, ed., *Legacies of Violence. Eastern Europe's First World War* (München, 2014). Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik, ed., *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten. Erfahrung - Wahrnehmung - Kontext* (Innsbruck - Wien – Bozen, 2013). Alfred Eisfeld and Dietmar Neutatz, ed., *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa* (Essen, 2013). Stephen Velychenko, *State Building in Revolutionary Ukraine. A Comparative Study of Governments and Bureaucrats, 1917-1922* (Toronto, 2011). Michael Neiberg - David Jordan, *The Eastern Front 1914-1920* (London, 2011). Alexander V. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland. War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914-1920* (Tuscaloosa, 2005). Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge – New York, 2000).

⁸⁸ Gustav Habrman, *Mé vzpomínky z války* (Praha, 1928), 46-47.

⁸⁹ Dave Grossman, *On Killing. The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston - New York, 1995), 120-133. Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face to Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (London, 1999).

⁹⁰ For more on anti-Jewish violence in the Russian Civil War, see: Oleg Budnitskii, *Russian Jews between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920* (Philadelphia, 2012). Felix Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens: Gewaltträume und Gruppenmilitanz in der Ukraine, 1905-1933* (Hamburg, 2012).

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⁹¹ On the conceptions of „Czechoslovakism,“ see recently: Stegmann, *Kriegsdeutungen - Staatsgründungen – Sozialpolitik*, 45-62.

⁹² On the inner organization of the legions, see: Thunig-Nittner, *Die Tschechoslowakische Legion*, 35-41

⁹³ Response of the Interior Minister Antonín Švehla to the parliamentary interpellation of deputies Kadlčík, Ševčík and Pospíšil related to the seizure of Košice. Records of the Czechoslovak Chamber of Deputies (N. S. R. Č), 1919. Electoral period I, Material No. 1666.

⁹⁴ Nurmi, *Slovakia*, 77-92.

⁹⁵ On the international dimension of the treaties at the end of the First World War, see: Erez Mandela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007).

⁹⁶ See the police reports on the wave of public manifestations, lamenting the loss of Tyrol that swept Vienna in the fall of 1920. ALW, Nachlass Johannes Schober, Box 3, File „Traufeier für das geraubte Südtirol“

⁹⁷ On the Italian annexion of Southern Tyrol, see: Rolf Steininger, "1918/1919: Die Teilung Tirols. Wie das Südtirolerproblem entstand," in *Das werden der ersten Republik....der Rest ist Österreich, Band I.*, ed. Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Maderthaner (Wien, 2008), 103-118. Stefan Lechner, *Die Eroberung der Fremdstämmigen. Provinzfashismus in Südtirol, 1921-1926* (Innsbruck, 2005), 19-33.

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⁹⁸ Arnold Suppan, *Jugoslawien und Österreich. Bilaterale Außenpolitik im europäischen Umfeld* (Wien-München, 1996), 571-577.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 568-571.

¹⁰⁰ Erwin Steinböck, *Die Volkswehr in Kärnten unter Berücksichtigung des Einsatzes der Freiwilligenverbände* (Graz, 1963), III-XXXI.

¹⁰¹ On the national conflict in Styria before and during the First World War, see for example: Martin Moll, *Die Steiermark im Ersten Weltkrieg. Der Kampf des Hinterlandes ums Überleben 1914-1918* (Wien-Graz-Klagenfurt, 2014). Stefan Karner, *Die Steiermark im 20. Jahrhundert* (Graz, 2005), 39-122.

¹⁰² Robert Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present* 200 (August 2008): 175-209. On the emigration of the former Austro-Hungarian officers, see also: Doppelbauer, *Zum Elend*, 79-101.