

IMPERIAL ARMIES: SOURCE OF REGIONAL UNITY OR REGIONAL CHAOS

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I am aware of the fact that my paper, dealing pragmatically with imperial armies as specific institutions, differs greatly from the other papers on this panel which discuss more theoretical questions. My approach may allow us, at least, to compare theory with reality and to ask the question: did there ever exist a united and functioning Central Europe? It is my contention that there indeed was such a thing, roughly from the mid-eighteenth century to 1918, but only in the form of the Habsburg armed forces. No political leadership was as successful in this respect as the Habsburg army. As for the other imperial armies, they were either too peripheral to the region, or they were imperial armies only in name. For what else characterizes a true imperial armed force but that it stands above religious and ethnic considerations, and that it serves not a nation but a dynasty or a universalist ideology? As I'll try to show later, by this definition neither the Russian nor the German imperial armies were truly imperial; rather, they served national and nationalist goals. Only the army of the Habsburg dynasty was forced by circumstance to transcend provincial boundaries; it alone had no choice but to pledge loyalty not to a nation but to a family; it alone succeeded in creating a measure of unity among the many peoples of the region. What makes this unity so remarkable is that the Habsburg armed forces were not an independent force but were loyal servants of a political leadership which, on its side, was unable to establish lasting political unity

within its many territorial possessions. This is true even for such brief periods in Habsburg history as when the ruler and his advisers made extraordinary efforts to create a true, unitary Habsburg state. This happened under the rule of Joseph II between 1780 and 1790, and during the so-called absolutist period in the 1850s. Political unity during those years was more an illusion than a reality; this, mainly because of the fierce opposition of the Hungarians and of the northern Italian provinces and, in the 1780s, of the Belgian provinces. As a result, the Habsburg attempt to extend absolute political domination over Central Europe as a whole had to be again and again abandoned. The normal condition of the Habsburg monarchy was political disunity, diverse constitutional systems, and theoretically loyal but in reality often less than obedient local authorities. What prevented political disunity from turning into chaos was the unified Habsburg army, which made certain that domestic political differences would not lead to the dissolution of the monarchy. Thus, if ever there was a Central Europe, it was to be found in the armed forces of the Habsburg dynasty. Ironically, however, few institutions were less aware of such a territorial concept as Central Europe. The officers were not interested in creating a unified Central European state; their goal was to maintain the greatness of an ancient dynasty, which in turn guaranteed their own exalted social position and their jobs.

It seems certain that, without the Habsburg imperial army, the region would have fallen into pieces much earlier than it actually did, namely in 1867 as a first step, and in 1918 as a final step. The army alone guaranteed the stability of the system by ignoring ethnic and religious differences, and by at least trying to ignore internal political boundaries. To achieve unity, the army relied as much on the theatrical effect of dazzling uniforms, Sunday musical performances on public squares, and dashing cavalry squadrons as on the deterrent effect of guns and bayonets. This leaves open the question, however, whether such an undemocratic institution as the Habsburg army, while

it prolonged the life of the monarchy, did not also contribute to the mutual alienation of the peoples in the region. On the one hand, those who served in the forces, “Schulter am Schulter”, as the army liked to say, learned to live and to work together irrespective of race, religion, and regional differences. On the other hand, army practices being inevitably brutal, normal military chicanerie could and was often interpreted as a manifestation of ethnic prejudice and oppression. Moreover, by leading its peoples into a disastrous war in 1914, the army deprived itself of its *raison d’être*, which was to guarantee domestic peace and prosperity. But again, if we consider what happened after 1918, namely the rise of scores of pseudo-national states and of mutually hostile armies, then we must re-state our conviction that Central Europe as a useful concept ended in 1918 with the dissolution of the Habsburg armed forces. Regional unity has been but a dream since that time and, as recent experience shows, even when the states of the region are not openly hostile to each other, they have no intention to synthesize their actions. Rather, they seek admission into the Western world independently of, and sometimes directly against the interests of their neighbors. In brief, Central Europe today is no more than a geographic designation.

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But why do I say that the other imperial armies could not possibly have performed the same function as the Habsburg army, not even if we include in the concept of Central Europe all the countries from Poland in the north to the Balkan countries in the south and from the Tyrol in the west all the way to Romania in the east? Let us now consider the place and role of the Russian, German, and Ottoman armies in Central Europe.

Despite its claims to be the Third Rome, the tsarist empire and its armed forces were transformed, during the nineteenth century, into an instrument of Russian national interests. The empire included a huge number of ethnic groups but there never was any doubt regarding its domination by Russian administrators and military commanders. The armed forces of Russia helped to keep the state together both before and after the revolutions of 1917, only that the Slavophile and Russophile ideologies of tsarist Russia were replaced by the internationalist claims of a Communist leadership.

The German Empire and its armies were made up almost entirely of German-speakers. Even though the fiction of the independent armed forces of a number of German states was maintained to the end of World War I, the Kaiser's armies that fought in World War I were those of the entire German nation and of the unitary all-German state. After Germany lost the war and a few feeble political movements arose to reassert regional autonomies and even regional independence, the armed forces were able to reimpose national unity, if at the cost of considerable bloodshed.

Unlike the German and the Russian, the Ottoman armed forces could be said to be a true imperial army in the ancient Roman sense of the word in that the Ottoman military served no national cause but that of the sultan and of Islam. In that system, as in that of the Roman empire or of the Habsburg monarchy, young men of non-Turkish and non-Muslim background were able to rise to the highest level of command. The price to pay was an often nominal submission to the official state religion. For various reasons, however, the Ottoman empire gradually imploded in the course of the century, to be replaced by an increasingly Turkish state. During World War I, the Turkish army was still multiethnic, yet it no longer served the sultan but a coterie of nationalist officers. After 1918, this army upheld a militant nation-state.

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Let us now examine what methods the Habsburg army used to preserve unity in Central Europe.

Standing armies in Europe originated from such motley forces as feudal levies, mercenary companies, town and peasant militias, and princely body guards, none of which was permanent in character. The Habsburg possessions were no exception to this rule; they even provided a perfect example of reckless princely ambition, estate hostility, and desperate shortage of funds. Strangely, the first permanent military institution in the Habsburg realm was not a standing army but a craggy line of frontier defenses, begun in 1522 to ward off the Ottomans; it was manned by armed peasants organized into military colonies. This Military Border, controlled directly from Vienna, was essential for the monarchy's survival, but it was also a source of recurring conflict with the Hungarian, Transylvanian, and Croatian estates who claimed the Military Border for themselves.

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The Court War Council, or Hofkriegsrat, was the second lasting military institution to emerge in the monarchy. (2) Created in 1556, this mixed military-civilian body survived until 1848, when its place was taken by the ministry of war. At all times, the Court War Council (as well as its successor, the ministry of war) struggled with provincial opposition to the concept of a centralized military bureaucracy. The Hungarians in particular regarded the association of their kingdom with the rest of the monarchy as one between sovereign states, and they insisted on voting their own military budget and raising their own recruits.

It was Maria Theresa (reigning in 1740-1780 as "king" of Hungary and Bohemia) who, assisted by talented advisors, created a genuine standing army. It was divided into permanently established regiments, each with its own number as well as name; German was made the universal language of command and service; the troops were provided with uniforms and interchangeable weapons; a military academy and technical schools were established; and drill and discipline were standardized. Maria Theresa also took the first steps towards making her forces "Austrian" as opposed to German. When her husband was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1745, she ordered that her army be called "imperial-royal", and that the black and yellow Habsburg colors be displayed in her forces to signify the political unity of her family possessions. (3)

All this did not mean the end of domestic difficulties. Recruitment remained uneven and military appropriations remained grossly inadequate. Joseph II's attempts to modernize and centralize everything in his realm led to provincial resistance and a virtual state of war in Hungary and Belgium. He died in 1790, a self-confessed failure, but left behind a tradition of bureaucratic centralism forever associated with his name. The French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars proved to be a supreme test for the monarchy. Throughout, the Austrian troops suffered from an excess of drill and a lack of purpose; still, towards the end of the Napoleonic wars, Austria contributed the largest force to the campaign against France. Dissension in the armed forces had been minimal, and the handful of Hungarian officers who had plotted for national independence and perhaps even a republic were executed or imprisoned in 1795.

Because of the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and the creation of a so-called Austrian Empire two years earlier, most of Central Europe was now within a single state. The Habsburg monarchy emerged from the Napoleonic wars with its prestige greatly enhanced. Under Metternich, it endeavored to act as the conservative policeman of Europe but for that there was not

enough money. Thus, the army was never up to its theoretical strength. In most provinces, recruitment was now based on selective conscription; the term of service varied depending on the province, but in 1845 it was reduced to a uniform eight years throughout the empire. The regiments were on the move almost incessantly, partly in answer to political and military needs, but increasingly also so as to prevent fraternization with the civilians.

The ethnic and social composition of the officer corps, as we shall see later, had not changed drastically from the 18th century: part noble, part non-noble; part German and part Hungarian, Slavic, Italian, and Romanian, with a heavy admixture of foreigners. In this period, as in all others, the army was quite indifferent to the ethnic background of the officers and surprisingly, too, to their social origin, except for ruling princes and the high aristocracy. And even though Roman Catholicism was the religion of the army's supreme commander, an officer's confessional allegiance and religious devotion were considered quite immaterial for promotion. The officers were unpolitical, and when the revolution came, in 1848, it definitely did not originate from army ranks. There had been a few small conspiracies among Italian and Polish officers, but these had been suppressed without difficulty. Even so, beginning in March 1848, the army faced the greatest or, better to say, the only internal crisis in its history.

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The several Austrian revolutions, in Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and elsewhere caught the army by surprise. Soldiers lacked police training and their commanders lost their heads under the impact of mass demonstrations and often contradictory imperial-royal edicts. Officers

stationed in Hungary, for instance, were placed alternately under the new Austrian and the new Hungarian war ministry. Central authority had collapsed and even though most revolutionaries claimed to be mere reformers as well as unshakably loyal to the ruling house, the concessions they had wrested from poor retarded Emperor Ferdinand were very extensive. Had all of these been put into effect, the monarchy would have fallen apart almost immediately. To make matters worse, on March 23, the king of Piedmont-Sardinia declared war on Austria, and his army, together with local Italian revolutionaries, pushed the Austrian army out of Lombardy. In Venice, a republic was declared, and the local Austrian governor surrendered power to the revolutionary leadership.

The best part of the army was in northern Italy, yet even there the local commander, Field Marshal Radetzky, had only 73,000 men at his disposal, of whom about 20,000 were Italians. Most of the Italians were soon lost because of desertions or because they had been stationed in Venice.

(4) But Radetzky did not give up easily. His greatest asset was his popularity among his non-Italian soldiers and among the Italian peasants. The latter tended to see him as their protector against the aristocratic Italian revolutionaries, who were very often their landlords. Within a few months, Radetzky's army, made up of German Austrians, Hungarians, Croats, Czechs, Poles, and others defeated both Piedmont and the Italian revolutionaries. As it is well known, it was Radetzky and the Habsburg army of northern Italy which in that year saved the dynasty.

The March 1848 events allowed the seasoned Hungarian politicians to wrest crucial concessions from the ruling house in the name of ancient Hungarian liberties. In a series of new laws, signed by Ferdinand, Hungary became a partner state with Austria. It now boasted its own legislative and executive branch as well as its own ministries of finance, foreign affairs, and war. Yet the constitution left unclear how the two foreign services and the two military establishments, in Vienna and in Budapest, were to coordinate their actions. As a further major concession, the

Hungarians gained the right to make all Habsburg troops stationed in the Hungarian lands swear an oath of allegiance to the Hungarian constitution. This placed these soldiers under the authority of the Hungarian minister of war. But it was not made clear whether there should now be an exchange of regiments, with those originating from Hungary and Transylvania being returned there, and the non-Hungarian units being sent away. (5)

Command authority over the diverse army units and their loyalty became burning issues, for the initially almost bloodless revolutions soon deteriorated into a series of civil wars and, by the fall of 1848, into a full-scale war between Austria and Hungary. In the wars, battalions of the same regiment often found themselves in opposite camps, sometimes even fighting one another.

The crisis became particularly bloody and yet at the same time somewhat comical in southern Hungary where Serbian Border Guard units revolted in the summer of 1848 against the Royal Hungarian government. The Budapest government ordered imperial-royal regulars and Hungarian National Guards, a newly constituted militia, against the Serbs. At first, the regulars were willing to fight a rebellion which appeared to be fomented from abroad, but matters became more complicated when it turned out that the Border Guards were led by Habsburg officers, and that they carried the imperial-royal flag. (6)

In the spreading conflict Habsburg regulars either tried to stay neutral, or they joined, alternately, the Hungarian and the Serbian side, depending on what they thought would best serve the interests of the far-away emperor. In these choices the nationality of the officers seldom played a role; far more important was the tradition and location of the regiment. Needless to say, the officers in the so-called Hungarian, Czech, or German regiments were not necessarily Hungarians, respectively Czechs, and Germans. Quite a few officers in the Hungarian Hussars, for example, were

Englishmen. The rest originated from all parts of Europe and of the monarchy. Nor was the rank-and-file of a Hungarian regiment necessarily Hungarian; after all, Hungarian-speakers formed a minority in their own kingdom. In any case, those battling each other all swore to Ferdinand, their supreme commander. For quite a while in 1848, this hapless ruler handed out promotions and decorations generously to his loyal officers in opposite camps.

The Serbian revolt was powerfully assisted by a simultaneous Croatian political movement and rebellion against Hungary. (7) The Croatian situation was different from that of the Serbs, because the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia had been a recognized legal entity under the Hungarian Crown before 1848, and because the leader of the Croats, Josip Jelacic, was an imperial-royal general as well as a high Hungarian official. He proved to be a bitter enemy of the Hungarians, a loyal Habsburg subject, and a Croatian patriot -- in that order. Under him, the progressive Croatian national revolution turned into a powerful movement for the preservation of the monarchy and the destruction of Hungarian sovereignty. Secretly encouraged by some members of the court, Jelacic mobilized the Croatian Border Guards and, in September 1848, marched into Hungary.

The Hungarians, who were now effectively if not yet officially led by Louis Kossuth, the minister of finance in the constitutional government, ordered a Habsburg general to march against the rebel Jelacic. The split within the army appeared final. But the generals on the Hungarian side preferred to stay neutral, and thus Jelacic could be stopped only near the Hungarian capital with the usual motley force made up, in this case, of Czech gunners, Hungarian regulars, and National Guards, all under the command of a somewhat more forceful imperial-royal general.

At first the Hungarians cautiously invaded Austrian territory, then a powerful Austrian force invaded Hungary. In October, the emperor-king outlawed the Hungarian constitutional government but, for a long time thereafter, the now theoretically jobless Hungarian minister of war continued to

issue his orders to the troops in the name of the king. The Hungarians defied the manifesto and organized for war in which they became astonishingly successful. By the Spring of 1849, they had almost cleaned the country of Austrian troops.

Fearing ultimate defeat, the new emperor Francis Joseph (Ferdinand had graciously resigned in December) sought and received Russian military assistance in May 1849. (20) This was a great error on the part of the Austrians because it undermined forever the reputation of the Habsburg army and because, in all likelihood, the Austrians alone could have prevailed over the Hungarians. In Italy, Radetzky had easily smashed a second Piedmontese attack in March; Venice was being besieged and would surrender in August and elements of nearly all the Habsburg regiments were now marching on Hungary. Nor was there any shortage of recruits and even of volunteers on the Austrian side. It turned out that the majority of the monarchy's inhabitants -- Germans, Czechs, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, and even Poles, as well as the peasants in general -- preferred Austrian absolutism to ethnic war. War weariness had set in among the Hungarian population even before the arrival of the tsarist armies. The foremost Hungarian commander surrendered in August, and the last Hungarian fortress pulled down the national flag early in October.

After the war the Austrians court-martialled hundreds of former Habsburg officers, among them 24 imperial-royal generals. About 40 officers (but none of the old army generals) were executed; most of the others were given harsh prison sentences. (8)

How to explain the military crisis of 1848-1849? The constitutional arrangement between Hungary and the emperor-king had placed about one-third of the Habsburg forces under Hungarian authority. By the time a Habsburg officer in Hungary discovered that he had been obeying the wrong authority, it was too late. He had taken an oath to the Hungarian constitution, he was

receiving his pay from Budapest, he had been promoted by the Hungarians -- in the name of the king, of course -- and he was being watched by Hungarian political commissioners. Besides, even after the promulgation of the October imperial-royal manifesto, it was not quite clear whether staying in the Hungarian army was truly illegal. The Budapest government assured the officers that the manifesto was a forgery perpetrated by the king's evil advisers, or that it had been coaxed out of the king. Many career officers in the Hungarian national army persisted in never reporting to the "illegal" National Defense Committee, but only to the Royal Hungarian Minister of War.

After all this has been said, it still remains true that for an officer to stay on the Hungarian side was a matter of individual decision. At least 1000, or about 10 percent of the Habsburg officer corps, elected to do so, even after the Hungarian parliament had officially "dethroned the House of Habsburg-Lorraine" on April 14, 1849, and had acclaimed Kossuth governor-president of the country. Far from all the rebel officers were ethnic Hungarians. The Hungarian military historian Gabor Bona has calculated that of the 830 field-grade and general officers of the honved army (the vast majority of them Habsburg regulars), 68.8 percent were Magyar, 15.5 percent German, 4.2 percent Polish, and 3.6 percent Serbian or Croatian. (9)

The thirteen Hungarian rebel commanders executed at Arad on October 6, 1849, were of mixed nationality: a German from outside Austria, a German-Austrian, two Germans from Hungary, a Croat, and a Serb. Of the six Magyars, two were of Armenian descent; one or two others spoke no or very poor Hungarian. The pre-revolutionary army ranks of the thirteen ranged from lieutenant to colonel. Most had been in active service before the war; a few had resigned earlier. Some were promoted rapidly in the old army; most had moved up slowly. None had had any trouble with the Habsburg military authorities. Before the military court, they argued that they

had only been doing their duty in the posts in which the king had placed them. Even on the point of death and in private correspondence, several claimed to have been loyal Habsburg subjects. (10)

What motivated these officers? One of them was a republican; another, a German liberal who felt that the fight for a united Germany would be best advanced by serving in Kossuth's army. Most others enjoyed the opportunity to exchange the command of platoons and companies for the command of brigades, divisions, and army corps. The fundamental reason for the presence of 1000 Habsburg officers in the Hungarian national army was most likely neither Hungarian patriotism nor even career-seeking, but loyalty to one's regiment, the officer's true fatherland, or, if not that, then devotion to a charismatic commander.

Obviously, ordinary soldiers, who were mostly conscripts in both camps, had much less say in the matter than the officers. Many must have had only the vaguest notion of which side they were on. It was indeed difficult to understand a situation such as that of the summer of 1848, when, in the words of Count Majláth, a Hungarian aristocrat: "The King of Hungary declared war on the King of Croatia, and the Emperor of Austria remained neutral, and all three monarchs were one and the same person." (11) And yet, many ordinary soldiers did make individual political decisions during the war.

Ultimately, the monarchy and thus Central European unity was saved by determined generals such as Radetzky, Windisch-Graetz, Jelacic, and Haynau, and by the 9000-odd career officers (perhaps 2000 of whom hailed from Hungary) who had remained in the emperor's service throughout the war. For these officers, there was the comforting feeling that by fighting the revolutionaries and the Hungarians they were fighting for domestic peace, an end to ethnic conflict and class war.

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It was a proud army indeed that emerged from the revolutionary wars but the triumphant mood did not last long. Because of the horrifying expenses of the revolutionary wars and of other reasons, there was again no money for weapons and training. The absolutistic regime was unable to put an end to domestic ethnic disagreements and a bungling foreign policy drove Austria into two major military conflicts both of which it lost. The 1859 war against France and Piedmont-Sardinia as well as the 1866 war against Prussia and Italy showed the weaknesses of the Austrian military command and the relative backwardness of the country's economy. Still, these wars did not in any way demonstrate the disloyalty of the monarchy's multinational army. The forces maintained their unity and although some soldiers deserted, there were no mutinies, not even among the Italian and German-Austrian soldiers who may have disliked firing at their ethnic brothers from across the frontier.

By 1866 Austria had a liberal government which distrusted the military and hoped to transform the army into a willing instrument of the liberal elite and not of the emperor. These strivings were complicated by the re-assertion of Hungarian rights, which culminated in the Compromise of 1867. Again, as in March 1848, Hungary became a sovereign state, an equal partner with Austria in the Habsburg realm. The difference between 1848 and 1867 was that the bulk of the army, the foreign service, and a few other less important institutions remained joint or common enterprises.

The effect of the Compromise Agreement on the future of Central Europe cannot be exaggerated. There was now a major state in the area, Hungary, which was publicly dedicated to the idea of the nation and not only to the service of the dynasty. The Hungarian "nation-state"

guaranteed extensive civil rights to its citizens but it also tried to assimilate the ethnic minorities who constituted about one half of the total population. One of the instruments of assimilation was the *honvéd*, or Hungarian National Guards, who were to supplement the much larger Common or Joint Army. The Hungarian National Guards (and their Austrian equivalent) were at first much less well equipped than the Common Army but, gradually, that changed also so that, by 1912, the National Guards had nearly as many branches of service as the Common Army. This meant that, at least in theory, the *honvéd* forces were capable of waging their own war.

The Hungarian government foresaw a progressive and liberal nation-state that embraced all its inhabitants, provided that they in turn embraced the Hungarian national idea. In the *honvéd* army, the languages of command, instruction, and service were Hungarian. Moreover, between 1867 and World War I, the Hungarian government made incessant efforts to "nationalize" Hungarian units within the Common Army. Concessions wrought from Francis Joseph and the military high command consisted of such things as a virtually separate general staff for the *honvéd* army, even though theoretically there was only a single, all-monarchial general staff; the compulsory teaching of Hungarian to all Common Army officer candidates, and a decree in 1881 that henceforth Common Army units should be stationed near their home base as much as possible. This was exactly the opposite of the earlier practice of sending army units far away from home base.

Clearly, what the Hungarians were after in the long run was to divide the Common Army into an Austrian and a Hungarian part. Never mind that one half of those who served in so-called Hungarian regiments were not ethnic Hungarians but Serbs, Romanians, Slovaks, Ruthenes, and Germans. We can say without exaggeration that Central Europe as a fairly cohesive political and administrative system ceased to exist in 1867. In its stead there was now Hungary which aimed at

becoming a modern centralized nation-state, and "Austria" which wallowed in ethnic conflict and confusion and whose more modest aim was to survive. The survival of either state in the Dual Monarchy would have been inconceivable without the industrial and agricultural revolution which swept Central Europe in the second half of nineteenth century and without growing prosperity. But no less important a role was played by the Common Army which, despite all concessions to nationalist sentiments was still very much of a supranational force. This army included eighty percent, or if we add to this the similarly supranational Austrian National Guards, ninety percent of the manpower in the Habsburg armed forces.

The Habsburg army's ethnic policy did not change at all between the eighteenth century to 1918. Under the universal military service introduced in 1868, recruits were drafted into local units, whenever possible, but this did not make these units much less cosmopolitan. In 1914, for instance, only 142 major military formations (regiments and independent battalions) were considered monolingual; in 162 units two languages were spoken; in 24 units, three languages; and there were even a few units where four languages were in use. (12) Army regulations prescribed that if at least twenty percent of the men spoke a language, it automatically became one of the regimental, or "national" languages." In the Common Army and the Austrian National Guards, the language of command and service was uniformly German, but command language consisted of less than a hundred brief expressions, for the rest, one had to address the men in their own tongues. Officers who were not linguistic virtuosos or could not even learn a smattering of "Army-Slavic", for instance, risked being dismissed from service. (13)

Only in the 1870s did military statistics begin to reflect nationality, but in a very general sense. The criterion was the language preference of the soldiers. According to these statistics nearly

eighty percent of the career officers were Germans. Yet the data are misleading because the majority of officers, being the sons of soldiers, all lived a nomadic life; quite naturally, they used German most frequently in everyday affairs. The fact that East Indians often use English among themselves, does not turn them into Englishmen. My attempt at more reasonable statistics seems to show that a little over fifty percent of the career officers came of German ethnic stock. (14) Note that on November 1, 1918, out of the monarchy's 387 actively serving generals only 166 could be considered Germans, and that of the monarchy's nine field marshals only three were of completely German descent. (15) In any case, race and religion were of no significance, except maybe in the case of unbaptized Jews.

While the ethnic and religious composition of the career officer corps changed little over the years, its social composition did evolve significantly with the decline of the old nobility and the rise in the officer corps of middle-class, lower-middle class, and peasant elements. There were still a large number of nobles but these were mostly officers who had been ennobled because of their own, or their fathers' longevity in the armed forces.

Then there was the reserve officer corps: with time, it assumed ever greater importance until, during World War I, it was really the reserve officers, mere civilians in uniform, who commanded all the smaller combat units.

The army law of 1868 prescribed that those with a high school diploma or its equivalent would serve for only one-year, instead of the customary three or four years. Moreover, these privileged youngsters alone qualified for officer's school and thus for a reserve officer's commission. The government's goal was to win willing recruits from the supposedly liberal middle classes for a career in the professional officer corps. Not much came of that plan but with time, it became a mark of social distinction for a young man of the middle classes to be a lieutenant

or sub-lieutenant in the reserves. By 1914, there were in the Common Army 14,000 reserve and 18,000 career officers. (16) As a result, middle class nationalists -- most nationalists belonged to the middle classes -- were often obliged to moderate their political zeal. After all, at manoeuvres or in case of mobilization they had to serve with career officers who despised nationalist agitators and were even capable of provoking an anti-Habsburg or anti-Semitic loudmouth to a duel. Such a challenge, the reservist could not decline without losing his commission. Thus the army won thousands of educated men over to dynastic loyalty, if only for the period of their active service. When general mobilization came, in 1914, there were very few desertions among the reserve officers.

This is not to say that there was no ethnic discontent in the military. The 1908 and 1912/13 partial mobilizations led to minor mutinies in some Czech units, and it became increasingly clear that, in the long run, it would be more and more difficult to maintain army unity and thus also the already shaky political unity of the Dual Monarchy. Yet at least the first few years of the war demonstrated an astonishing degree of Habsburg loyalty among the officers and men. Certainly, there were desertions at the front but far fewer than what the High Command suspected and what Czech, South Slav, and Romanian politicians and historians boasted of after the war. The over two million Austro-Hungarian POWs were matched by the same number of Russian POWs; this virtual population exchange between the two countries during the war demonstrated not much more than that the frontlines in the East were fluid. Most soldiers were not captured individually but only when their regimental, divisional, or even army commanders, such as at Przemyśl, ordered a general surrender. All Czechoslovak and other propaganda to the contrary, Central European solidarity did not end in the POW camps. The number of those who volunteered for the Czech and

South Slav legions was but a fraction of all the Habsburg army Czechs and South Slavs in the Russian and Italian POW camps. (17)

It was such things as the suspiciousness of the Army High Command toward Slavic, Italian and Romanian soldiers; the horrifying bloodshed; the privations, and finally the military defeat of the Central Powers that caused the peoples to dismantle the Dual Monarchy in the Fall of 1918. On their way home from the Italian front, Austro-Hungarian soldiers were stopped by Austro-Hungarian officers now wearing the armband of the brand new South Slav state. Only with the visa of the new state were the soldiers allowed to proceed. This symbolic gesture marked the end not only of the Habsburg state and of the Habsburg army but also of Central European unity, or whatever had been left of it following the Compromise of 1867. Central European unity has never again been resurrected; nor is there much chance that it will arise again in the foreseeable future. Ever since 1918, Central Europe has been a nearly meaningless term.

NOTES

1. On the Military Border, see Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522-1747* (Urbana, Ill., 1960), and *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740-1881: A Study of an Imperial Institution* (Chicago, 1966).

2. On the Court War Council, see Oskar Regele, *Der österreichische Hofkriegsrat 1556-1848* (Vienna, 1949).

3. Gustav Adolph-Auffenberg Komarow, "Das Zeitalter Maria-Theresias," in Herbert S. Füllinger and Ludwig Jedlicka, eds., *Unser Heer. 300 Jahre österreichisches Soldatentum in Krieg und Frieden* (Vienna-Munich-Zurich, 1963), pp. 131-132. See also, Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Maria Theresa* (New York, 1977).

4. Oskar Regele, *Feldmarschall Radetzky* (Vienna-Munich, 1957), p. 262. See also, Alan Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire: Radetzky, The Imperial Army and the Class War, 1848* (London, 1979)

5. István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians,*

1848-1849 (New York, 1979), pp. 99-106 et passim.

6. István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York, 1990), pp. 34-35. Also, Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 140-141.

7. The best source on Croatian activity before 1848 is Gyula Miskolczy, *A horvát kérdés és irományai a rendi állam korában* [The history and documents of the Croatian question at the time of the feudal state], 2 vols. (Budapest, 1927-1928), which consists mostly of documents. See also, Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740-1881*, chapters 7-8. On the history of the Croatian campaign in Hungary in September 1848, see Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 161-170, and Ferdinand Hauptmann, ed., *Jelacics Kriegszug nach Ungarn 1848*, 2 vols. (Graz, 1975). Text and documents.

8. On the postwar trial of the Hungarian officers and politicians, see, among others, Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 329-337; Rudolf Kiszling, *Die Revolution im Kaisertum Österreich*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1948), vol. II, pp. 291-294, and the following documentary collections: Gyula Toth, ed., *Küzdelem, bukás, megtorlás. Emlékiratok, naplók az 1848-1849-es forradalom és szabadságharc végnapjairól* [Struggle, defeat, and retribution. Memoirs and diaries from the last days of the 1848-49 revolution and war of independence], 2 vols. (Budapest, 1978), and Tamás Katona, ed., *Az aradi vértanúk* [The Arad martyrs], 2 vols. (Budapest, 1979).

9. Gábor Bóna, *Tábornokok és törzstisztek a szabadságharcban 1848-49* [Generals and field-grade officers in the war of independence, 1848-1849] (Budapest, 1983), pp. 67-68, et passim.

10. The letters are in Katona, *Az aradi vértanúk*, vol. I, pp. 209-210,

11. Quoted by Johann Heinrich Blumenthal, "Vom Wiener Kongress zum Ersten Weltkrieg," in Herbert St. Furlinger and Ludwig Jedlicka, eds., *Unser Heer. 300 Jahre österreichisches Soldatentum in Krieg und Frieden* (Vienna, 1963), p. 234.

12. Maximilian Ehnle, "Die Öst-ung. Landmacht nach Aufbau, Gliederung, Friedensgarnison, Einteilung, und nationaler Zusammensetzung im Sommer 1914," *Ergänzungsheft 9* (1934) of Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau and Rudolf Kiszling, eds., *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg, 1914-1918*, 7 vols. and 10 supplements (Vienna, 1930-1938).

13. Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, pp. 99-102 et passim.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185

15. Wilhelm Winkler, *Der Anteil der nichtdeutschen Volksstämme an der öst.-ung. Wehrmacht* (Vienna, 1919), p. 3., and Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, pp. 188-189.

16. Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, p. 194.

17. The best recent work on Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia is by Alon Rachamimov, "Marginalized Subjects: Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia,

1914-1918." Unpubl. PhD Dissertation (Columbia University, 2000)

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