

OFFENSIVE SPENDING: TACTICS AND PROCUREMENT  
IN THE HABSBURG MILITARY, 1866-1918

by

JOHN ANTHONY DREDGER

B.A., St. Mary's College, 1993  
M.A., University of Kansas, 1996

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History  
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

## **Abstract**

This manuscript reveals the primary causes of Habsburg defeat both in 1866 and in 1914-1918. The choice of offensive strategy and tactics against an enemy possessing superior weaponry in the Austro-Prussian War and opponents with superior numbers and weapons in the First World War resulted in catastrophe. The inferiority of the Habsburg forces in both wars stemmed from imprudent spending decisions during peacetime rather than conservatism or parliamentary stinginess. The desire to restore the sunken prestige of Austria-Hungary and prove Habsburg great power status drove the military to waste money on an expensive fleet and choose offensive tactics to win great victories. This study shows the civil-military interaction in regard to funding and procurement decisions as well as the deep intellectual debates within the army, which refute the idea that the Habsburg military remained opposed to technology or progress.

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Approved by:  
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2013

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## Acknowledgements

Many individuals deserve my gratitude for the various ways in which they have made this manuscript possible. I must first thank Mr. Mark Chapman for funding not only the present work but also my four years as a full-time student at Kansas State University. Without his generosity through the Chapman Fellowship, the completion of my writing may never have taken place. I must also thank the Kansas State University History Department for awarding me the Colonel Peter Cullen Military History Fellowship, which supported my research trip to Vienna. I am grateful as well to my father, Oliver Dredger, who generously helped me financially with my Viennese sojourn.

The members of my committee have been of inestimable value during my writing. All have shown themselves always willing to provide answers covering the spectrum of academic queries. Professor Brent Maner has constantly offered helpful criticism while trying to keep me on track as I wandered off into the details. Similarly, Professor David Stone has repeatedly guided me to see the forest when I was lost in the trees. Professor Marsha Frey's continually positive and amazingly quick feedback encouraged me during the arduous writing and revising process. Professor Derek Hillard inspired me to improve my German skills, a most useful and necessary ability as I learned in Vienna while poring over the cryptic scribblings of Austro-Hungarian officers.

While in Vienna, the staff at the Kriegsarchiv performed the impossible by supplying me with inaccessible boxes during the remodeling of the archive holdings. I must especially thank Dr. Jerko who offered his help when I was lost and led me to sources which I had no idea existed. In addition, I wish to thank Miha Simac for befriending me and alleviating the tedium

of leafing through seemingly endless documents. My thanks must also go to my brother, William Dredger, and my friend Patrick Maguire as well as my niece, Pauline Dredger, for always expressing interest in my writing while reading, discussing, and commenting on my dissertation chapters.

My gratitude would not be complete without an immense thank-you to my wife Vanessa and our children Margaret, Kathleen, Patricia, Cecilia, Anthony, Elizabeth, and Raymond. Vanessa endured the long hours of loneliness and boredom that the writer's spouse must tolerate in addition to achieving the task of keeping the household in a state of relative quiet for me to work. Supporting me with words of encouragement while putting up with my fits of frustration, she continued to supply me with the consolation of not only her presence but also her mouth-watering brownies. Our children suffered through days, weeks, and months of Daddy being too busy to spend much time with them as they heard too often such words as, "Not right now," and, "Just wait until I'm done with this chapter."

Finally, I must thank those no longer here, especially Brother Sidonius Lepsi, OCSC, for the inspiration of his immense historical knowledge, Mr. Eugene Dinet, for his friendship and linguistic skills, and in particular my mother, Elizabeth Dredger, who helped me more than anyone could know.



# **Dedication**

To my wife Vanessa

## Introduction

In 1866 a Habsburg staff officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Eduard Bartels, in his book *Österreich und sein Heer*, commented on the dismal results suffered by the Austrian military whenever it confronted a major power: “The history of the Austrian army is a history of defeats. Every time it fights alone against another European great power, it loses. This permanent misfortune must have its reasons.”<sup>1</sup> This comment came in the wake of the disastrous defeat of the Habsburg army against the Prussians at Königgrätz in the Austro-Prussian War, also called the Seven Weeks’ War, denoting how quickly the Austrian army collapsed in the face of an aggressive enemy.

In 1914, the Austro-Hungarian army embarked on its final failure, World War I. Though this time the Habsburg forces held out for over four years, the result resembled previous losses except for the finality of 1918 for the monarchy and the dismemberment of the empire. As in 1866, poorly trained troops led by incompetent commanders, who refused to adapt to the effects of new technology on the battlefield, met disaster. Surely a state so large and populated as the Austro-Hungarian Empire should have better provided the means of military victory than history relates.

The causes for these failures stemmed primarily from flawed offensive strategy and tactics as well as imprudent spending decisions that resulted from the desire maintain great power status and restore the prestige of the Habsburg Empire. Both during the Austro-Prussian War and the First World War Habsburg troops charged headlong into enemies bearing superior

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<sup>1</sup> Eduard Bartels. *Österreich und sein Heer* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1866), 1, 28-29.

weaponry: the Dreyse breechloading needle gun in 1866 and the modern Russian and Serbian artillery in 1914. Though not suffering from numerical inferiority in the Bohemian campaign of 1866, Austro-Hungarian forces attacked the far larger Russian army in Galicia in 1914 while simultaneously assaulting equal numbers of Serbian troops in the Balkans. During the forty-eight years between the Austro-Prussian War and the Great War the Habsburg high command had seemingly learned nothing. Repeating the same mistakes, using the same offensive tactics, Austro-Hungarian armies garnered the same debilitating results.

Scholars have voiced various reasons for Habsburg defeat. American historian Gunther E. Rothenberg in *The Army of Francis Joseph* discusses backwardness and conservative rejection of technology as well as nationalistic problems within the empire that led to parliamentary delegates refusing to fund military budget requests adequately. Rothenberg also points to the linguistic difficulties of an army that recruited speakers of ten major languages into its ranks as an essential reason for poor performance on the battlefield.<sup>2</sup> British historian C.A. Macartney speaks of parliamentary stinginess as a primary cause of Austro-Hungarian defeats in *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918*.<sup>3</sup> The Austrian historians Walter Wagner and Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck in their contributions to *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* emphasize the paucity of funds available to the Habsburg military during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> Apologists for the Austro-Hungarian army, especially former Habsburg officers, such as Hugo Kerchnawe in *Die Vorgeschichte von 1866 und 19??* and Oskar Regele in *Feldzeugmeister Benedek und der Weg nach Königgrätz* and *Feldmarschall*

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<sup>2</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," and Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987).

*Conrad*, as well as the official history of 1866, *Österreichs Kämpfe im Jahre 1866*, and the official history of the Great War, *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914-1918 (ÖULK)*, also prefer to blame members of the *Reichsrat* for failing to provide sufficient money to enlarge the Dual Monarchy's military and procure modern weaponry.<sup>5</sup> Other historians focus more on the general backwardness of Austria-Hungary as the main cause for military failure. Jonathan E. Gumz sees the Habsburg army as a backward-looking preserver of the old order in *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia*.<sup>6</sup> A.J.P. Taylor in *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918* also portrays the Austro-Hungarian empire as politically, economically and socially anachronistic, falling behind the other powers in every way throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

These explanations fall short, though, of a full analysis for Habsburg defeat. Certainly, the presence of ten major languages and ethnicities created communication problems within the Austro-Hungary military as Rothenberg ably argues. Similarly, Macartney, Wagner, Allmayer-Beck, and the apologists for the army make the valid point that internal political and economic conditions, including a smaller industrial base, hampered the Habsburg army from receiving as much funding as the other European military powers, such as Germany, France, and Russia. In 1868, Russia spent 34% of its state income on the military, the North German Confederation spent 28%, and France 20.8% while Austria-Hungary expended only 18% on its army, less than

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<sup>5</sup> Hugo Kerchnawe, *Die Vorgeschichte von 1866 und 19??* (Vienna: C.W. Stern Verlag, 1909); Oskar Regele, *Feldzeugmeister Benedek und der Weg nach Königgrätz* (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1960), 10-11; Oskar Regele, *Feldmarschall Conrad* (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1955); K.k. Generalstabs-Bureau für Kriegsgeschichte, *Österreichs Kämpfe im Jahre 1866* (Vienna: R.v.Waldheim, 1867-1869), vol. 1-5; Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, Josef Brauner, Eduard Czegka, Jaromir Diakow, Friedrich Franek, Walther Heydendorff, Rudolf Kiszling, Franz Mühlhofer, Ernst Wisshaupt und Georg Zobi, *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914-1918 (ÖULK)* (Vienna: Verlag der Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen, 1930-1938).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan E. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914-1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948).

any other major power.<sup>8</sup> In 1911, the Dual Monarchy's military spending amounted to 420,000,000 Kronen compared to Germany's 1,786,000,000, Russia's 1,650,000,000, Great Britain's 1,514,000,000, France's 1,185,000,000, and Italy's 528,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

Even though the Austro-Hungarian military received less funding than the other major powers, more importantly the spending decisions of the Habsburg high command reflected poor judgment in recognizing how to use funding most effectively. Although artillery had proven the most effective part of the Austro-Hungarian army in 1866, Habsburg military leaders did not ensure that the artillery branch would continue to possess an adequate quantity of field pieces nor sufficient quality to match the major powers. Instead, the Dual Monarchy's high command decided to upgrade old fortresses and build new permanent fortifications costing millions of florins and Kronen. Officers argued that Austria-Hungary would most likely engage in a future war on multiple fronts while suffering from an inferiority in numbers. Therefore, to fend off one enemy from part of the empire while fighting another on a different front, permanent fortresses would supposedly provide advantages to offset the numerical deficiencies of the Habsburg army. Even worse, during the decade preceding the First World War, Austro-Hungarian military leaders embarked on a grand plan of naval construction including four Dreadnought battleships, which consumed hundreds of millions of Kronen. Rather than wasting hundreds of millions on fortresses and Dreadnoughts that had little impact on the war, the Habsburg high command could have procured modern artillery to replace the outdated steel-bronze cannon that weighed more and possessed a far shorter range than the field pieces of the enemy.

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<sup>8</sup> Hauptmann Ernst Schmedes, "Die Kriegsmacht der europäischen Staaten im Vergleiche mit deren Bevölkerungs- u. Budget-Verhältnisse im Jänner 1868," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 2 (1868), 54.

<sup>9</sup> Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918*, 791.

While permanent fortresses appealed to the desire to defend the borders of the empire against multiple enemies, a large fleet attracted the support of politicians and officers who wanted to restore the great power status of the Dual Monarchy by establishing an overseas empire and fostering commerce. Thus, prestige played a major role in determining both parliamentary funding and spending decisions for the Austro-Hungarian army, especially in naval matters. Historians such as A.J.P. Taylor in *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918*, Edward Crankshaw in *The Fall of the House of Habsburg*, Steven Beller in *Francis Joseph*, and Alan Sked in *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* have rightly argued that prestige played a large role in guiding the policy of the Dual Monarchy both during the last half of the nineteenth century and especially for entering war in 1914.<sup>10</sup> These discussions, however, have involved the politicians more than the army. Günther Kronenbitter in “*Krieg im Frieden.*” *Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmacht politik Österreich-Ungarns 1906-1914* asserted that both Dual Monarchy politicians and military men considered the restoration of Austro-Hungarian prestige as the main motive for entering World War I and crushing Serbia.<sup>11</sup> As the main support of the Habsburg dynasty in a multi-ethnic state, the army increasingly desired to restore the great power status of Austria-Hungary ever since the debacle of 1866. With little opportunity for this restoration before the First World War, the Habsburg high command welcomed the chance to prove the worth of Habsburg arms by invading Serbia in 1914. This desire to restore the fallen prestige of the Dual Monarchy, however, resulted in poor spending decisions that wasted hundreds of millions on useless battleships. Thus, the

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918*; Edward Crankshaw, *The Fall of the House of Habsburg* (New York: Viking Press, 1963); Steven Beller, *Francis Joseph* (New York: Longman, 1996); Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London: Longman, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Günther Kronenbitter, “*Krieg im Frieden.*” *Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmacht politik Österreich-Ungarns 1906-1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 9-10.

predilection for maintaining prestige prevailed against a more prudent approach to war and spending.

Like the discussions of ethnic and linguistic problems as well as parliamentary stinginess, arguments attempting to prove Austro-Hungarian military backwardness and conservatism fail to divulge the whole story of the history of the Habsburg army between 1866 and 1918. Some historians, such as Barbara Jelavich in *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs*, David Good in *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire 1750-1914*, and Sked, have pointed out the positive development of the Habsburg empire in political and economic affairs, although not much in the military. These historians make the important point, though, that Austria-Hungary did not decline precipitously throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century nor did the fall of the empire appear inevitable.<sup>12</sup> This view applies to the military as well. Though certain parts of the Dual Monarchy's officer corps, especially in the cavalry, tried to maintain older styles of warfare, such as mounted troops charging infantry, the majority of officers recognized the changing landscape of the modern battlefield. The fast-paced progress of technology greatly impacted weaponry. Habsburg military thinkers took great interest in technological innovations. Austro-Hungarian officers debated the merits of new inventions and materials for rifles, field guns, bicycles, handguns, ships, airplanes, and other technological advances. Even members of the imperial house called for technical improvements in the Dual Monarchy's equipment. War ministers and general staff chiefs continually strove to upgrade the weaponry of the Habsburg army. These men, however, while striving to improve the artillery and rifles of Austro-Hungarian troops, also poured money into field guns of inferior quality, unnecessary and

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<sup>12</sup> Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*; Barbara Jelavich, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs, 1814-1918* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1969); David Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

expensive permanent fortresses, and battleships. Poor choices about technology, not backwardness or conservative rejection of technology per se, held back the Austro-Hungarian military from keeping pace with the rest of the European powers, especially in artillery.

This more complex portrait of a military leadership that willingly engaged in intellectual debate and took great interest in new technology and its effects on the modern battlefield emerges from the heated debates about strategy and tactics primarily in the main Austro-Hungarian military journals, the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* and the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine*. These discussions favored more and more the abandonment of the offensive *à outrance* that had met disaster in the Austro-Prussian War while showing a readiness for employing the defensive and advantageous use of terrain. Archduke Albrecht, the victor of Custoza in 1866, provided the foremost impetus towards this logical method of warfare that required the combined efforts of all branches of the military. Thus, throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the Habsburg high command made progress not only in procuring new weaponry but also in putting these innovations to good use. The Austro-Hungarian army even went beyond the measures of most European militaries by dedicating cavalry to security and reconnaissance missions instead of shock in addition to eliminating the lance from the weaponry of mounted troops. This progress, however, failed to carry completely from theory into practice as certain parts of the officer corps still believed in the old offensive methods, especially as the attacker always appeared to win wars throughout history.

Articles from the Austro-Hungarian military journals reveal the active theoretical debates on technology, strategy, and tactics. Not only low-ranking officers but also colonels and generals, including members of the royal family, used these journals as mouthpieces for critiques and analyses of battles, weapons, and regulations. The war ministry also employed the



periodicals as a means for distributing official proclamations and introducing new measures. These journals, as the voice of the Austro-Hungarian army reaching a greater number of officers and indicative of the intellectual debates within the Dual Monarchy's military, comprise a little used, yet highly important source for historical research on the Habsburg army.

The archival resources in the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna, especially for the *Kriegsschule* and the general staff, provide documents for the offensive strategic and tactical theory that directed staff officers during maneuvers and combat. Regulations manuals, strategic and tactical handbooks, war college study guides, memoranda from war ministers and general staff chiefs, and military budget requests reveal how the Habsburg high command thought about the issues of rifles, artillery, fortresses, battleships, and their effect on strategy and tactics. These sources display the penchant for the attack, the importance of prestige in spending decisions, especially for the navy, and the proclivity for permanent fortresses that seemingly contradicted the offensive tactics of the Austro-Hungarian army. The minutes of the budget debates in the Delegations show the attitudes of parliamentary representatives towards army requests, particularly the more positive view of military expenditures on the part of many delegates after 1878 as well as the role of imperial prestige in parliamentary support of the Habsburg fleet. Memoirs of former officers offer vital insight into the events of 1866 and 1914-1918 as well as during the years between the Austro-Prussian War and the First World War. High-ranking officers, such as Anton von Mollinary and Daniel von Salis-Soglio, reveal the tactical thinking of *Feldzeugmeister* Ludwig von Benedek, commander of the Austrian army in Bohemia in 1866, and the causes of choosing inferior artillery during the 1870s. The writings of Arthur Arz von Straussenburg, Moritz Auffenberg von Komarów, Anton von Pitreich, and Maximilian von

Pitreich show the development of the offensive Austro-Hungarian tactics and training before the Great War as well as the results of the poor pre-war decisions on the battlefield.

The present study will show how the Habsburg high command reached conclusions about tactics and military spending. As Geoffrey Wawro said in *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866*, fault for choosing the wrong tactics and mismanaging funding, and thus for military defeat in 1866, lay within the Habsburg high command, not in outside sources, such as a stingy parliament or civilian government officials.<sup>13</sup> This assessment applies to World War I as well. Basing decisions on the desire to maintain great power status and prestige, Austro-Hungarian military leaders again chose offensive tactics while mismanaging funding before 1914.

Like Isabel Hull's *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* and Bruce Menning's *Bayonets Before Bullets: the Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, this work will look at a major European military power during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>14</sup> The following pages reveal how the Habsburg high command made the same critical mistakes in 1914-1918 as in 1866: offensive strategy and tactics against enemies possessing superior weaponry. These mistakes stemmed from the desire to raise the fallen prestige of the Dual Monarchy, which also caused poor spending decisions during the years between 1866 and 1914. The Austro-Hungarian army never took on the military culture of absolute destruction of the enemy that Hull describes in Germany. Some Habsburg military leaders, such as Conrad von Hötzendorf, would have liked to adopt

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<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2-5.

<sup>14</sup> Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

such an idea and approached the concept in speaking of annihilation of the opponent, emphasis on tactics rather than strategy, disregard of logistics, unrealistic views of war, focus on the offensive and *élan* as well as pursuit of initiative and action. Military views, however, did not penetrate Austro-Hungarian society in the same way as in Germany nor did the Habsburg army play a dominant political role. The Austro-Hungarian army resembled the Russian army as described by Menning far more than the German, especially in its struggle to adapt to modern war by building railroads and procuring new weaponry, the failure of the high command to learn from past conflicts, and the division between diplomats and soldiers.

In my work Chapter 1 points out the primary causes of the disaster against Prussia in 1866: the abysmal leadership of Benedek, the offensive tactics that failed to suit the Austrian rifle, and the fiscal corruption within the Habsburg army. Chapter 2 underscores the attempts of the new Austro-Hungarian high command to reform the military in response to the defeat of the Austro-Prussian War. During the late 1860s and 1870s Archduke Albrecht, the victor of the battle of Custoza against Italy in 1866, and other reformers strove to implement more reasonable regulations that combined the defensive with the offensive while simultaneously procuring breechloading rifles. Reforms also took place in officer training though the problem of transferring theory into practice still remained. Imprudent spending decisions continued to stunt military progress while internal rivalry delayed the reform process.

Chapter 3 investigates the performance of the Habsburg army during the invasion of Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1878. Fighting a weak opponent, the Dual Monarchy's military achieved victory. This success resulted in a renewal of popular acclaim for the Austro-Hungarian army within the empire as well as a more favorable attitude towards military funding by parliamentary representatives. Though problems still existed in spending decisions, tactics, and strategy, the

Habsburg army showed progress in adapting to the requirements of the modern battlefield. Chapter 4 explains the continued progress of the Habsburg army towards the creation of a modern fighting force until the pivotal years in which the return to offensive tactics took place. During the 1880s the high command continued attempts to improve weaponry with the purchase of repeating rifles and smokeless powder though the artillery suffered from the inferior Uchatius bronze-steel cannon. The war ministry retained the favor of parliamentary delegates towards the army by proving efficient and responsible, yet needlessly spent large sums on permanent fortresses because of the fear of fighting numerically superior opponents on multiple fronts. However, the early 1890s brought about a turning point in Austro-Hungarian military history with the appointment of Conrad, considered an innovative and progressive thinker, as tactical instructor at the war college in 1888 and the death of Albrecht in 1895. These changes resulted in a return to the errors of 1866.

Chapter 5 shows the reversion of the Dual Monarchy's army to the offensive *à outrance* despite the lessons of the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Balkan Wars that modern weaponry gave the advantage to the defensive. With the selection of Conrad as chief of the general staff, the most important position in the Habsburg military, the offensive took even greater prominence among the high-ranking officers of Austria-Hungary. At the same time, the Dual Monarchy's high command spent millions not only on permanent fortifications but also on the little-used navy to maintain prestige and great power status instead of using funding to upgrade the artillery sufficiently. Chapter 6 describes the main reason for Habsburg defeat in the First World War: the offensive strategy and tactics of Conrad against enemies superior in numbers and weapons, especially artillery, in an effort to restore prestige. Conrad's methods resulted in catastrophe for the Austro-Hungarian army, which lost the majority of its trained

officers and soldiers and had to rely on Germany for support. The Dual Monarchy's military, however, proved resilient as Habsburg industry began producing modern weaponry, in particular artillery, in greater quantities. After the accession of Charles to the throne in 1916 and the dismissal of Conrad the following year, the new Austro-Hungarian high command started enacting reforms to restore the Habsburg empire as a major power with sufficient weaponry and intelligent spending. Despite these belated efforts, the war ended in the collapse of the army and the Dual Monarchy.

In these chapters, I suggest that the Habsburg army would have had more success if military leaders had employed defensive strategy and tactics or chosen to spend more on modern artillery or even tanks rather than permanent fortresses and Dreadnoughts. These suggestions imply the use of counterfactuals, but in no way do I contend that if the Austro-Hungarian military had made better spending or tactical decisions, the Dual Monarchy would have won the First World War. While pointing out the mistakes of Habsburg military leaders, I felt obliged to offer alternatives to Austria-Hungary's military choices in the context of discussions within the army itself before World War I. As humans make choices that affect the outcomes of wars, decisions to use better strategy, tactics, and weaponry prior to 1914 could have brought more favorable results.

All the primary sources reveal that the choice of offensive tactics did not suit the numerical inferiority of the Dual Monarchy's forces. In addition, poor spending decisions because of a misguided desire to restore Habsburg prestige resulted in inadequate and insufficient material. The ensuing combination, more than general backwardness or conservatism, or even parliamentary stinginess, doomed Austro-Hungarian troops to suffer catastrophe in the Great War.

## Chapter 1 - The Problems of 1866: Tactics, Weapons, and Money

As visitors to the Military History Museum in Vienna enter Hall 4, they meet a sign with the title “Radetzkysaal: Field Marshal Radetzky and His Time (1848-1866).” To those unfamiliar with the life of the undefeated Habsburg commander Johann Josef Wenzel Graf Radetzky von Radetz, the placard for Hall 4 might not seem odd. For those, however, who know that the victor of Custoza and Novara died in 1858, the dates appear strange at the least. Upon further investigation of the room, the visitors see the emphasis on the feats of the Austrian military, especially Radetzky’s Italian campaigns of 1848, while the defeats of 1859 and 1866 remain muted. Almost one hundred fifty years after the disastrous campaign against the Prussians in Bohemia, Austria, even though no longer under Habsburg rule, still attempts to conceal the low points of its military history while featuring the highlights. According to the museum guidebook, “After a number of ill-fated skirmishes, the Austrian Army under *Feldzeugmeister* Ludwig von Benedek suffered a devastating defeat near Königgrätz (Hradec Králové, east of Prague; the battle is also called Battle of Sadová) on 3 July.”<sup>15</sup> The key word “ill-fated” shows the intention to lay fault elsewhere than on the Habsburg army.

Yet, despite the claims of contemporary army supporters and some later historians that parliamentary stinginess hindered the Austrian military from procuring the best weaponry, the Habsburg high command deserved the primary blame for the disaster of 1866. The choice of offensive tactics against an enemy possessing superior firepower condemned Austrian infantry and cavalry to horrendous losses while granting little hope for success. Poor pre-war spending choices and wasteful financial practices eliminated any chance the Habsburg troops had to face

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<sup>15</sup> Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Heeresgeschichtliches Museum Vienna* (Vienna: Styria Verlag, 2000), 49.

the Prussians with equal weaponry in Bohemia. These causes inherent within the Austrian military leadership, more than parliamentary representatives, brought about defeat in 1866.

### **Casting Aside the Blame**

The museum pieces concerning the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 consist mainly of rifles, official reports and proclamations after the climactic battle, and two paintings. The rifle displays reveal the desire to blame the defeat on inferior weaponry. As the museum guidebook states, “With the needle-gun the Prussian army already possessed an efficient breech-loader in the Battle of Königgrätz (Hradec Králové) on 3 July, 1866. This weapon was clearly superior in rate of fire (cadence) to the Austrian muzzle-loaders of the *Lorenz* system.”<sup>16</sup> While this analysis contains truth, the guidebook does not explain why the Habsburg army relied on an inferior weapon. The museum’s collection of official reports and proclamations in the aftermath of Königgrätz, though admitting the gravity of the loss, focuses more on the heroism of the Habsburg troops and call upon the people of the Austrian Empire to display their patriotism and courage in the face of disaster.

The two paintings reveal most strikingly the devastation of the Austrian catastrophe in Bohemia, far more than the other exhibits. The Czech artist Vaclav Sochor depicts the panic and confusion of the Habsburg army’s attempt to retreat from the battlefield in *The Battery of the Dead*. Amid the carnage of human and equine cadavers of the Austrian 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment dominating the center and foreground of the painting, a driverless team of horses leading a cannon and its caisson tries to plow through the bodies and becomes hopelessly entangled in the wreckage. On the left, another team with riders successfully avoids the central mass, while careening frantically down the rut-filled path. In the background, riderless horses

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<sup>16</sup> Rauchensteiner, *Heeresgeschichtliches Museum Vienna*, 54.

rear and run in panic, while the Prussian troops in the distance advance to overrun the abandoned Austrian guns. Sochor not only reveals the horrors of war but also and more pointedly the utter confusion of the Habsburg army as it tried to avoid capture and total collapse.<sup>17</sup>

Rudolf Baron Otto von Ottenfeld's oil canvas *A Glorious Chapter of the Austrian Artillery. The Artillery Reserve Unit after the Battle of Königgrätz on 3 July, 1866* sets a stark contrast to *The Battery of the Dead*. Yet Sochor's title could easily belong to von Ottenfeld's painting as it depicts an abandoned artillery reserve unit in a treeless landscape after the battle. A solitary horse stands as the only living creature in the midst of dead soldiers and animals lying near abandoned and broken artillery pieces. In the distance under a gray sky, smoke rises from a village, perhaps Chlum. The serenity of the scene creates a very different impression than the chaos and panic of Sochor's painting. However, the desolation of complete defeat hangs over the battlefield and portrays the hopelessness of the Austrian situation.<sup>18</sup> Yet the title of the painting conveys the artist's view of the glory of the Habsburg military, even in catastrophe, while the museum guidebook again attempts to elicit a positive message from the battle: "While suffering heavy losses, the artillery reserve covered the orderly retreat of the Austrian northern army across the river Elbe."<sup>19</sup>

This same attitude pervades the official Austrian General Staff history of the Austro-Prussian War published in 1869. Its main director and editor, General Friedrich Fischer, attempted to portray the outcome of the fighting as almost inevitable because of the difficulty of waging a two front war against enemies with a combined superiority in manpower, the technological advantages of Prussian weaponry, the weak support and campaign performance of

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<sup>17</sup> Vaclav Sochor, *The Battery of the Dead*, 1901/7.

<sup>18</sup> Rudolf Ritter Otto von Ottenfeld, *Ein Ruhmesblatt der österreichischen Artillerie. Die Armeegeschützreserve nach der Schlacht bei Königgrätz am 3. Juli 1866*, 1897.

<sup>19</sup> Rauchensteiner, *Heeresgeschichtliches Museum Vienna*, 54.



Austria's small German allies, and the deficient funding for the Habsburg military. According to the official history, these problems stemmed from diplomacy and funding issues outside the control of the army. Thus Fischer and his staff tried to shift blame away from the inner problems of the Habsburg military.<sup>20</sup> This view also exonerated Feldzeugmeister Ludwig von Benedek, the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Army, who after the war attributed his defeat to "bad luck."<sup>21</sup>

One military source, *Sechzig Jahre Wehrmacht 1848-1908*, the anonymous work of several Austrian officers, carries the same spirit in its description of the heroic deeds of the Habsburg military: "The war against Prussia was also unlucky, but the fault lay thus, as indicated, not in the army, not in the leadership alone, not in the deficiency in ability, training, and valor." The officers fault the stinginess of the Reichsrat as the primary cause of Austrian defeat in Bohemia in the following passage: "In Austria the means for the development of the army were denied by parliament because of financial considerations, unconcerned about training, unconcerned about consequences, while even the army's status was diminished... Therefore, even if we had been victorious at Königgrätz, (and) possessed an equivalent tactical training and an evenly matched rifle (to the Prussian weapon), Austria would still finally have been defeated, because it was not capable of fighting through the war without an equivalent number of replacement troops."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> K.k. Generalstabs-Bureau für Kriegsgeschichte, *Österreichs Kämpfe im Jahre 1866* (Vienna: R.v.Waldheim, 1867-1869), vol. 1-5); Geoffrey Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War: Politics, Strategy and War in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1859-1866" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1992), 12; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Ludwig August Ritter von Benedek and Heinrich Friedjung, *Benedeks nachgelassene Papiere* (Leipzig: Gröbel & Sommerlatte, 1901), 417.

<sup>22</sup> *Sechzig Jahre Wehrmacht 1848-1908* (Vienna: k.u.k. Kriegsarchiv, 1908), 132-135.

Other writers also assumed this attitude of blaming civilians for the disastrous outcome of 1866. In 1900, the Viennese Liberal Heinrich Friedjung accused reactionaries in the Habsburg government of forming an ultra-conservative policy, which opposed liberal attempts at reform and led the Austrian state shackled by Catholicism into an unwinnable war against the more liberal Prussia. Oskar Regele, an officer in the Austrian federal army, also tried to exonerate the military for the defeat of 1866 and blame the timidity and parsimony of Habsburg civil officials for the debacle. Similarly, the German historian Emil Franzel, the American historian Gordon Craig, and the Austrian historian Adam Wandruszka, among others, agree with the contention that parliamentary deputies and bureaucrats ruined the Austrian military's chances to gain victory against Prussia in 1866.<sup>23</sup> The inevitability of Habsburg defeat comes out strongly in all of these works as many later historians took up the contemporary military cry of blaming others for the disaster rather than analyzing causes within the Austrian army. These attempts to cover up the true reasons for failure present an erroneous picture of reality and thus deserve refutation.

### **Recognizing Reality**

The claim that parliamentary monetary restrictions and diplomatic bungling rendered final victory impossible merely tries to hide the grave shortcomings in the Austrian military. While some sources attempted to lay blame on civilian errors, important voices spoke about reality in the military. On 21 August 1866, Archduke Albrecht, the oldest son of the revered

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<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Friedjung, *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859 bis 1866*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1900), vol. 1, 32; Oskar Regele, *Feldzeugmeister Benedek und der Weg nach Königgrätz* (Vienna: Herold, 1960); Regele, "Staatspolitische Geschichtsschreibung: erläutert an Königgrätz 1866," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs (MÖSA)* 3 (1950), 305; Emil Franzel, *1866. Il Mondo Casca. Das Ende des alten Europa* (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1968); Gordon Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz* (Philadelphia : Lippincott Co., 1964); Adam Wandruszka, *Schicksalsjahr 1866* (Vienna: Styria Verlag, 1966). Wawro provides an in-depth account of the historiography of the Austro-Prussian War in both his book (p. 2-4) and his dissertation (p. 11-16). Johann C. Allmayer-Beck also provides an earlier overview of the historiography in "Der Feldzug der österreichischen Nordarmee nach Königgrätz," in Wolfgang v. Groote and Ursula v. Gersdorff eds., *Entscheidung 1866* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 106-110.

Habsburg commander Archduke Charles during the Napoleonic Wars and the cousin of Emperor Franz Joseph, submitted to the emperor a report containing his observations on the problems and causes of defeat in the northern campaign against Prussia. Juxtaposing the Austrian campaign in Bohemia with the one in Venetia, where Albrecht had achieved victory over the Italians, he found numerous reasons for the catastrophe of Königgrätz. Starting with the poor army organization and war preparation by Benedek, Albrecht noted the weakness of the Austrian army at the beginning of the war, a point which “had been repeated several times already by the Military Commission.” The Archduke accused the high command of exhibiting poor leadership in failing to enforce proper control and discipline over subordinates. Albrecht continued with a critique of the General Staff and its officers, who did not have adequate knowledge of the Bohemian terrain and the enemy to the north because of a deficiency in training. Despite the presence of the best General Staff officers in the Northern Army, the Austrian leadership did not know the theater of war, because they had trained in Italy and therefore had no familiarity with the northern areas. As for the troops, Albrecht praised their bravery and especially commended the Habsburg artillery for its superior performance in the field. The cavalry, however, he claimed did not fare well in combat on account of poor leadership that employed the horsemen in unfavorable situations. The infantry did not fight with enough of the discipline that comes from drill, while the insufficient number of officers, both commissioned and non-commissioned, enhanced the branch’s difficulties. Thus, the Austrian troops could not stand up against the superior Prussian rifle and discipline. Albrecht made no attempt to exonerate the leadership of the Northern Army. Without naming anyone directly, he accused Benedek and his staff of the mistaken belief that “bravery is everything, but skillfulness in maneuver and knowledge of terrain are not necessary.” Finally, the archduke called the field army’s administrative apparatus

too cumbersome and too removed from contact with the rest of the army, and concluded by blaming the leadership once again for the bleak results of the northern campaign.<sup>24</sup> Coming from the victor of Custoza in Venetia and new commander in chief of all Habsburg forces, this report and its criticisms carried great weight.

In 1867 Colonel Friedrich von Beck of the General Staff, the special envoy of Franz Joseph to Benedek's headquarters in the Northern Army, wrote several reports about the poor state of the army, especially its morale. Beck pointed out the deficiencies in military administration as the main cause for the poor campaign performance of the Habsburg forces. Explaining the disadvantage of joining several important positions in one person, as in the case of Benedek commanding the whole army as well as controlling the General Staff during the previous years, Beck called for the simplification of army administration, better preparation of the General Staff for war, and the procurement of breechloading rifles for the infantry.<sup>25</sup>

The General Staff colonel elaborated on these issues and others in another document concerning the issue of raising the deflated morale of the army. Instead of blaming outside sources for the disaster in 1866, Beck said "the fault for the failed campaign against the Prussians lay in the army and its institutions." Again he advocated the simplification of army administration in addition to unity throughout the military leadership. While indicating the loss of trust in the army's high command on all sides as well as the propensity of the higher military positions, such as the war ministry, field command and General Staff, "to lose sight of important tasks because of too great attention to details," Beck discussed other difficulties that appeared during the recent war. He claimed that the General Staff did not play a prominent enough role in

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<sup>24</sup> Feldmarschalleutnant (FML) Erzherzog Albrecht, No. 1017 "Allerunterthänigster Vortrag," 21 August 1866, Kriegsarchiv (KA) Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM) Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 22, 1866.

<sup>25</sup> Oberst Friedrich von Beck, "Promemoria über Armee-Verhältnisse," August 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

relation to the rest of the army, as the Prussian General Staff did. Troop training failed to correspond to the requirements of modern warfare. The education of the officers and strength of the troops needed improvement. In addition, he bemoaned the high costs accrued by generals who enjoyed too much high living, especially during campaigns. To stop unqualified officers or political appointees from rising to important positions of command, the General Staff colonel advised a promotion system that would base advancement on merit and competence rather than connections and influence.<sup>26</sup> Like Albrecht, Beck pointed out the high command as the primary reason for the catastrophe of Königgrätz. Neither the archduke nor the colonel tried to blame parsimonious parliamentary deputies or financial deficiencies for the defeat, but rather called for reforms within the military to revive the flagging martial spirit and deteriorating status of the Austrian forces.

Another military writer, most likely Major General Gideon Baron von Krismanić, the chief of the Operations Bureau for the Northern Army, found fault with the Habsburg army's leadership, in particular Benedek. Krismanić expressed his views shortly after the war in an anonymous article in the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* (*ÖMZ*), the mouthpiece for many officers who wished to publish their ideas without attaching their names to them.<sup>27</sup> The Operations Bureau chief accused the commander of the Northern Army of frittering away the

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<sup>26</sup> Beck, "Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armee-Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften," 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

<sup>27</sup> The *ÖMZ* appeared for the first time in 1808 as the official organ of the War Ministry because of Archduke Karl's desire to raise the intellectual level of the Austrian officer corps and bring about unity of thought throughout the army. The journal took this Tacitean saying as its motto: "Omnia quae vetustissima creduntur, nova fuere et quod hodie tuemur exemplis, inter exempla erit." (All things which are believed to be very old, were new at one time, and what today we preserve in examples, later will be among examples.) The *ÖMZ* lasted until 1849, at which time it ceased to publish its quarterly issues. After a hiatus until 1860, Karl's son Wilhelm, perceiving a declining intellectual level in the officer corps, revived the journal for the same reasons as his father. The journal, as an attempt to stimulate discussion and spread military knowledge from Habsburg as well as foreign sources among the officers, thus continued without interruption until the First World War. Oberleutnant Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908: Eine Geschichte dieser Zeitschrift anlässlich ihres 100jährigen Bestehens* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1908), 1-25.

opportunity to beat the dispersed Prussian army's individual units as they entered Bohemia instead of fighting a major pitched battle at Königgrätz against superior numbers. For Krismanić, numerical superiority held greater importance than the advantage of the Prussian breech-loader over the muzzleloading Austrian Lorenz. Like Albrecht and Beck, he did not blame politicians for hindering the Habsburgs from putting an adequate military force in the field. Instead, Krismanić censured Benedek for employing massed shock tactics against the superior firepower of the Prussian needle-gun and the ensuing loss of morale for the Austrian troops, who saw the heavy casualties resulting from their charges. However, Krismanić denied the invincibility of the Dreyse rifle, while claiming the Austrian army, especially the artillery, fought better than the Prussians and could have gained victory with a more intelligent field commander. The Habsburg forces possessed the means to succeed, but Benedek failed to properly prepare for war by practical training in maneuver and use of terrain.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, once again an Austrian military source identified the problems within the army, especially the high command, as the primary causes of failure in 1866. These internal negative assessments of the Habsburg military contrast sharply with the official history and other writings published by officers and supporters of the army, which diverted blame onto the civilian leaders and influenced some later authors. Clearly, Austrian military leaders realized that the problems stemmed from within the army while wishing to maintain a more positive public view for the military. Some later writers also saw the complaints against the politicians as a façade.

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<sup>28</sup> "Über die Ursache der Mißerfolge bei der österreichischen Nordarmee im Kriege Preußens gegen Deutschland im Jahre 1866," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 2 (1866): 341-361. The author of this article is most likely Generalmajor Gideon Ritter von Krismanić, the assistant chief of staff for the North Army, as it mirrors his report to the commission inquiring into the defeat in Bohemia. Krismanić to Untersuchungs-Commission, 24 August 1866, KA, Nachlässe, Nosinic. However, Zitterhoffer lists the article among the writings of Valentin Streffleur, the editor of the *ÖMZ*. Marginal notes by a reader of the *ÖMZ* express a difference of opinion about the needle-gun, while claiming that the Dreyse weapon alone rendered the Prussian army numerically superior to the Austrians.

The Austrian historian Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, writing in 1966, stated that the causes of the 1866 disaster in Bohemia came from within the Habsburg army itself. Refuting the claims that a series of unlucky accidents culminated in the fateful battle of Königgrätz, or that inferior numbers or weaponry predetermined the outcome, Allmayer-Beck blames the outdated Austrian theory of war as Archduke Charles had instilled his version of Napoleonic warfare into the Habsburg military: “But the spirit, which should give everything direction and effect - which the victor of Amberg, Würzburg, and Aspern made it his business to kindle and keep alive - this spirit now after half a century had become rigid and lacked elasticity, and one of the proudest armies that Austria had ever put in the field broke to pieces on it.”<sup>29</sup>

Twentieth century American historian, Gunther Rothenberg, also did not accept the easy explanation of a miserly parliament unwilling to give necessary monetary resources to the Austrian military establishment. Rothenberg did not, however, place the blame solely on Benedek either. The Northern Army field commander made serious mistakes during the campaign, but pre-war choices by the Austrian high command in weaponry and tactics rendered the Habsburg army at a great disadvantage.<sup>30</sup> The explanation for defeat lies in both the battlefield command and the army administration that decided weapons procurement, tactics, strategy, and training, as Albrecht and Beck maintained in their reports.

Another American historian Geoffrey Wawro asserted in 1992 that blame for the catastrophe lay primarily with Benedek because of the field commander’s strategy and tactics that did not suit the capabilities of the Austrian rifle. In addition, Wawro stated that the

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<sup>29</sup> Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, “Der Feldzug der österreichischen Nord-Armee nach Königgrätz,” in *Der Krieg zwischen Österreich und Preußen*, ed. Wolfgang v. Groote and Ursula v. Gersdorff (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 140-141.

<sup>30</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 72.

Habsburg war ministry had used funding carelessly by spending money on bureaucracy and high living rather than training and weaponry.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, certain historians have seen that even though the Austrian military preferred to blame outside sources for defeat publicly, the main causes came from within the army itself, as the postwar high command realized.

### **Breechloader versus Shock Tactics**

For those who wished to exonerate the military, such as Fischer, the director of the official Austrian General Staff history of the Austro-Prussian War, the authors of *Sechzig Jahre Wehrmacht 1848-1908*, and the rest, the claim of having to employ inferior weaponry and rely on poorly trained troops because of financial constraints imposed by a recalcitrant *Reichsrat* conveniently explained the defeat in Bohemia, while at the same time accounted for success against a similarly trained and equipped Italian army in Venetia.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, the Prussian breechloader, the Dreyse needle gun, surpassed the Austrian Lorenz rifle in rate of fire. Not only did the breechloading weapon shoot four to seven rounds per minute compared to the one to two rounds per minute of the Austrian muzzleloader and its Minié bullets, but the soldiers using the needle gun could fire it from any position: standing, kneeling, prone. Thus, the Dreyse afforded the Prussian troops more flexibility, greater possibility to find cover, and increased firepower over the muzzle-loading weapons of the Habsburg army.<sup>33</sup> An *ÖMZ* author estimated the superiority of the breech-loader over the Lorenz as 3 to 1, and claimed the needle gun overpowered the courage and perseverance of the enemy.<sup>34</sup> This advantage led to a great

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<sup>31</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 807-808, 811-812.

<sup>32</sup> *Sechzig Jahre Wehrmacht*, 134-135.

<sup>33</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, "An 'Army of Pigs': The Technical, Social, and Political Bases of Austrian Shock Tactics, 1859-1866," *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1995): 413; Dennis E. Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), 112-113.

<sup>34</sup> "Der Krieg im Jahre 1866. Im Auszuge nach einem Artikel von Xavier Raymond in der 'Revue des deux mondes'," *ÖMZ* 3 (1866): 101.



discrepancy in casualties between the Prussian and Austrian forces. Habsburg losses amounted to roughly 48,000 men at the battle of Königgrätz, while their adversary lost not even 9000.<sup>35</sup> Not all Austrian casualties resulted from the Prussian breechloader, but its superior firepower must account for a large proportion. The Dreyse rifle greatly impressed Albrecht. Even though he had not encountered it in Italy, the archduke commented after the war that the needle gun had proven in the Bohemian campaign the theoretically established advantage of an easily and quickly loaded weapon against troops equipped with slower firing rifles.<sup>36</sup>

The superior rate of fire of the Prussian breechloader over the Austrian muzzleloader, however, did not alone cause the enormous discrepancy in casualties. The reliance of the Habsburg forces on *Stoßtaktik* or shock tactics eliminated the advantages of the Lorenz rifle's greater range and muzzle velocity.<sup>37</sup> An *ÖMZ* review of an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* contended that the *Schnellfeuer* of the breechloader as well as the Prussians' greater capability for and use of maneuver explained the Austrian catastrophe in Bohemia.<sup>38</sup> Another *ÖMZ* writer asserted after the war: "The Prussians knew most how to draw profit from dominating positions, how to use terrain positions for cover, how to bring the enemy into crossfire, etc.; the Austrians on the other hand held themselves more to formal mass tactics and the direct attack with bayonets and sabers, which, hindered by superior enemy fire, could scarcely come to execution and yet brought heavier and heavier losses with it."<sup>39</sup> Clearly, Habsburg military leaders recognized the advantages of the breechloading rifle over the

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<sup>35</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 714.

<sup>36</sup> Albrecht, No. 1086 Allerunterthänigster Vortrag, 27 August 1866, Karton Nr. 22, 1866, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 349.

<sup>38</sup> "Der Krieg im Jahre 1866. Im Auszuge nach einem Artikel von Xavier Raymond in der 'Revue des deux mondes,'" *ÖMZ* 3 (1866), 101.

<sup>39</sup> "Über die Ursache der Mißerfolge bei der österreichischen Nordarmee im Kriege Preußens gegen Deutschland im Jahre 1866," *ÖMZ* 2 (1866), 353.

muzzleloader as well as the disconnect between the Austrian shock tactics and the Lorenz rifle that Habsburg troops fired.

The Habsburg army, though, had maintained an offensive spirit in its tactics for decades, like most other nineteenth-century powers. Ever since the great offensive victories of Napoleon I, the European armies had adapted to the French emperor's style of emphasizing mobility, rapidity, and the decisive battle with shock tactics and concentration of artillery.<sup>40</sup> In keeping with the ideas of the two great theorists from the Napoleonic Age, Antoine Henri Jomini, who stressed the importance of bringing the greatest mass of troops to bear upon the decisive point of the battlefield, and Carl von Clausewitz, who signified the aim of warfare as the disarming of the enemy and the destruction of his forces, the great victories leading up to 1866 had all contained offensive assaults.<sup>41</sup> Napoleon defeated the Austrians at Ulm and Austerlitz in 1805, the Prussians at Jena and Auerstädt in 1806, the Russians at Friedland in 1807, all with impressive assaults. Radetzky's famous victories over the Italians at Custoza and Novara as well as Habsburg gains in Hungary came from timely offensives. In the Crimean War, Sevastopol finally fell to a French attack after a long siege. In 1859, the Austrians succumbed to French storm columns at Magenta and Solferino. Even in the Danish War, the Prussian and Austrian frontal assaults appeared to bring decisive victory. All these achievements appeared as the results of employing the offensive tactics of Napoleon. However, military leaders who chose to emulate the Little Corporal's methods ignored the increasing number of casualties resulting from frontal assaults in addition to the battles in which the tactical offensive failed, such as Waterloo,

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<sup>40</sup> Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Robert Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1967); Gunther Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1980); Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1862).

Balaclava, and Inkerman, as well as many engagements in the American Civil War, including Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor.

Austrian officers, like the soldiers of most European armies, saw the successes of Napoleon and the other generals who won with the tactical offensive. Habsburg leaders especially looked to Archduke Charles' victory at Aspern and Radetzky's feats in 1848 as a tradition of offensive battle, and hoped to imitate them with similar effect. With this view, most of the Habsburg officer corps did not even consider the tactical defensive as an effective option. Wawro also posits that the Austrian high command could not pit its troops against the superior Prussian forces except in assault formations. "Basically, in 1866, Austria had no choice but to employ storm columns. The poorly educated, poorly trained, largely non-German-speaking Austrian army could not shoot accurately or maneuver in open order. Shock tactics thus met the organizational needs of the unruly Austrian regiments; they massed large numbers of men in formations which could be literally driven into action."<sup>42</sup> With the offensive as the only consideration for the Habsburg high command, shock tactics fit the inferior Austrian soldiers. The defensive, however, would have provided better employment of Austrian military resources, especially superior artillery and the Lorenz rifle, while still allowing officers to control their assortment of poorly trained troops. If the Habsburg leaders had understood Clausewitz properly and taken the time to train their units to shoot accurately, they would have realized the superiority of the defense. Instead, Benedek elected to do the opposite by sending his men directly into the *Schnellfeuer* of the Prussian needle gun.

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<sup>42</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 813-814.

Benedek had emphasized *Stoßtaktik* in his numerous instructions and orders both before and during the early stages of the 1866 campaign.<sup>43</sup> As the only Austrian general who emerged from the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 with a good reputation, Benedek had received the command not only of the Army of Italy but also the Austrian general staff. Thus, he became the most powerful soldier in the Habsburg Empire. Disdainful of military science and intellectual pursuits in general, Benedek, like his emperor and many other Austrian officers, had come to the conclusion that shock achieved the best results in battle based on his experiences in Italy in 1859. There the French had stormed the Habsburg positions, putting the Austrian troops to flight, despite the superior rifle and maneuver capabilities of the Habsburg units. Austrian commanders, however, learned the wrong lessons from the war. As Wawro wrote, “Although the secret of French arms was *flexibility*, Austrian critics ignored the fact and focused instead on the intangible quality of *élan* supposedly conferred by bayonet charges into the breach.”<sup>44</sup>

The commander of the North Army clung to these erroneous tactical ideas even after the experiences of Habsburg forces in the Danish War of 1864 and the publication of the writings of Helmuth von Moltke, the Chief of the Prussian General Staff. Prussian units had inflicted devastating losses with the rapid fire of the needle gun on the Danish troops, while Austrian massed frontal assaults on entrenched Danish positions had endured heavy casualties.<sup>45</sup> In articles published both in a Prussian army journal and in the *ÖMZ*, which promoted the dissemination of the views of foreign military thinkers, Moltke explained the advantages of the

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<sup>43</sup> *Sammlung der Armeebefehle und speziellen Anordnungen des k.k. Feldzeugmeisters Benedek, Kommandanten der k.k. Nordarmee vom Jahre 1866* (Vienna: k.k. Staatsdruckerei, 1866); “Taktische-und Dienst Instruction für die k.k. Nord Armee,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1866); Friedjung, *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859 bis 1866*, vol. 1, 424; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 69.

<sup>44</sup> Wawro, “An ‘Army of Pigs’,” 415; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 26-27.

<sup>45</sup> Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 55; Wawro, “An ‘Army of Pigs’,” 424-431.

Prussian breechloader and its superior employment in the Danish War.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Benedek, in his devotion to *élan* and the supposed merits of the offensive displayed by the French in 1859, insisted on closed formations and shock to achieve decisive results with rapid bayonet charges in closed formations.<sup>47</sup>

Benedek did not stand alone in his preference for *Stoßtaktik*. Other high-ranking officers in the Habsburg army agreed upon shock as the premier method of attack. Major General Anton von Mollinary praised the French offensive tactics during the 1859 campaign because of their emphasis on closed formations for the concentration of the greatest power on decisive points. Even in defensive positions, they tried to maintain their offensive spirit through frequent counter-attacks.<sup>48</sup> The 1865 Austrian tactical manual, written by Colonel Johann Waldstätten, stressed the bayonet as the most important weapon and the bayonet attack as the high point of battle.<sup>49</sup> Even Archduke Albrecht advocated bayonet attacks and a perpetual offensive before he realized the decimating effect of the Dreyse rifle.<sup>50</sup> Against the poorly trained Italian troops Austrian frontal assaults had found success.<sup>51</sup> In Bohemia, against a highly competent enemy, a far different outcome had resulted.

The combination of shock tactics and the Prussian needle gun contributed heavily to the Austrian defeat in 1866. A defensive form of tactics could have taken advantage of the superior range and muzzle velocity of the Lorenz rifle without exposing soldiers as much to the

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<sup>46</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, "De l'influence des armes perfectionnées sur le combat," *Militär Wochenblatt*, 8 July 1865 ; "Bemerkungen über den Einfluß der verbesserten Schußwaffen auf das Gefecht," *ÖMZ* 2 (1865).

<sup>47</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 69; Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 56.

<sup>48</sup> Anton von Mollinary, *Studien über die Operationen und Tactique der Franzosen im Feldzuge 1859 in Italien* (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1864), 128-129.

<sup>49</sup> Friedjung, *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859 bis 1866*, vol. 1, 342.

<sup>50</sup> Wawro, "An 'Army of Pigs'," 433.

<sup>51</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 69.

devastating effect of the Dreyse's *Schnellfeuer*. The Bavarians, allies of the Habsburgs during the Austro-Prussian War, demonstrated the ability to adapt tactics to the rapidly changing battlefield of the nineteenth century by avoiding massed frontal assaults and the offensive in general. Ludwig Tann, the Bavarian chief of staff, learned the devastating effect of the breechloader from observing the Danish War of 1864. During this conflict at the battle of Düppel, Prussian troops had inflicted five times the number of casualties they received from the Danes. Tann interpreted this large differential as the effect of the needle gun and thus implemented defensive tactics, including lying prone behind cover, in the new Bavarian tactical manual. The Bavarian commander proved the possibility of successfully adapting to technological change on the battlefield during his own encounters with the Prussians in 1866.<sup>52</sup>

Although the Bavarians showed how to limit the advantages of the Dreyse rifle and changed their tactics to accommodate Prussia's style of warfare, Benedek, the chief architect of Austrian tactics, did not see the need to do the same until too late. Under the influence of the successful French assaults in 1859 and the Austrian offensive victories against the Danes in 1864, Benedek saw no reason to change tactics. Some members of the Austrian army, however, realized the superior firepower of the Prussian weapon. Beck warned Benedek about the danger of frontal assaults across open spaces in the spring of 1866 before war broke out. The North Army commander, nevertheless, disregarded Beck's advice, claiming that the Austrian attackers would run under the arc of the Prussian bullets, much as the French had done in 1859.<sup>53</sup> Such a plan, however, required poor shooting from the enemy, an unfounded hope against the well-trained Prussians. Only after repeated defeats and heavy losses did Benedek consider changing

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<sup>52</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 812-813; Wawro, "An 'Army of Pigs'," 430; Rolf Förster, "Die Leistungsfähigkeit der bayrischen Armee im Feldzuge 1866: Dargestellt an der militärische Ausbildung vor dem Krieg" (Ph.D. dissertation, Munich, 1987), 155-156.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund von Glaise-Horstenaus, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte* (Wien: Amalthea Verlag, 1930), 96.

his tactics. In an order of 28 June, he tried to adjust the offensive methods he had constantly employed up to that time. However, Benedek refused to give up the attack, especially the bayonet charge, altogether, commanding his officers to soften up the enemy with artillery fire before any assaults, and not wishing to diminish the offensive spirit of his troops.<sup>54</sup>

The Austrian high command clung to the offensive during 1866 until the saner minds of Albrecht and his chief of staff, Generalmajor Franz Freiherr von John, ordered no more frontal assaults. In July, before the official end of the war, John began working on a new tactical manual, in which he mandated an emphasis on firepower, the defensive, the use of terrain and cover, coordination with artillery, and open order advances.<sup>55</sup> Although immediate implementation of such a different set of tactics would have proved difficult for the poorly trained Habsburg forces, at least the new Austrian leadership had started to address the problems.

### **Strategic Failure and Permanent Fortifications**

In the realm of strategy, the North Army high command had also erred. Wavering and tentative, Benedek originally wanted to await the Prussians in the fortified positions surrounding the fortress at Olmütz in Moravia. This plan, however, not only gave the initiative to the enemy during the opening stages of the war but also withdrew any hope of Austrian assistance for the Habsburg allies in the German Confederation, in particular Hanover, Hesse, and Saxony. Therefore, Franz Joseph sent Beck to prod Benedek into action, though the general complained that his army could not withstand the strain of an advance into Bohemia. Even under pressure from Vienna, Benedek still did not act with enterprise and alacrity. Failing to take advantage of his interior lines to attack the three separate Prussian armies invading Bohemia, he wasted his

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<sup>54</sup> Ludwig von Benedek, "Army Order No. 41," Josefstadt, 28 June 1866, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 26, Akten (1866); Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles*, 126-127.

<sup>55</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 770.

men in isolated assaults against the needle gun. After heavy losses, the Austrian army drew back to Königgrätz, another fortress, where Benedek pleadingly requested Franz Joseph to make peace. Receiving a negative response from the emperor, the leader of the North Army fought the Prussians and lost disastrously.<sup>56</sup>

Strategy certainly played an integral role in Austrian defeat. In an article translated and published in the *ÖMZ*, Jomini, the famous French military writer and strategist, expressed his view that weaponry did not influence the Prussian victory as much as strategy did. Although changes in armament affected tactics, they did not alter the immutable principles of war and the goal of great maneuvers. Weapons merely affected the execution of these principles: “As it always is with these secondary questions, one must search much higher for the causes of the extraordinary success of the Prussians in the war in Bohemia; the strategic calculations have certainly more share than the needle gun, if this even contributed to it.”<sup>57</sup> Though the octogenarian Jomini denigrated the impact of the Dreyse rifle, he pointed to the superior strategy of concentration on a decisive point and the maneuverability of the Prussian army.

The North Army command received much criticism after the war for its indecisiveness and mishandling of the strategic operations against Moltke’s forces. Feldzeugmeister Ladislaus Baron Nagy von Alsó-Szopor, *de facto* Chief of the Habsburg General Staff from 1862 to 1864, wrote a report in September 1866 about the Königgrätz campaign and published it anonymously in the *ÖMZ*. Nagy took the view that nations engaging in a two front war should fight defensively, especially when confronted by enemies who had a combined strength greater than the single nation. In the Austro-Prussian War, Italy and Prussia held an advantage of roughly

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<sup>56</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 68-71; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 124-273.

<sup>57</sup> H., “Jomini über den Feldzug 1866 in Böhmen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 154. The “H” most likely stands for Field Marshal (FML) Heinrich Hess, Chief of the General Staff from 1849 to 1860.



200,000 men in comparison with Austria and its allies. Lieutenant Colonel Eduard Bartels of the Austrian General Staff similarly claimed the two front war against Prussia and Italy as the primary cause of defeat, especially because of the inability of the Habsburg government and military to provide enough men for the army.<sup>58</sup> Likening the Habsburg Empire to a fencer facing two opponents, Nagy asserted that the strategic defense should have taken precedence rather than an offensive war against a military power like Prussia along with a simultaneous campaign against Italy. Instead of Benedek's idea of hiding behind the fortifications of Olmütz, Nagy favored the occupation of defensive positions in Bohemia not based on fortresses, claiming that the defense of the province closer to Berlin would have afforded protection for the rest of the empire as well as the opportunity to take the offensive towards the Prussian capital if the occasion arose.<sup>59</sup> Although not blaming Benedek as much as Nagy, Albrecht, and Beck did, Bartels also criticized the North Army commander for not taking control of Bohemia to ward off any Prussian invasion attempts and to offer the possibility of beating the enemy units individually as they crossed into Habsburg territory.<sup>60</sup>

Benedek's desire to stay in Moravia and defend against an enemy advance by holding a position based on permanent fortifications, though strangely abandoning most of Bohemia, coincided with the cordon defense strategy that Austrian generals had followed for years. Dating from the previous century, the Habsburg military had attempted to defend the imperial lands by establishing a series of fortified outposts throughout the border areas. This strategy had succeeded against Frederick the Great during the Seven Years' War and the War of the Bavarian

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<sup>58</sup> Eduard Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand: 1866), 15.

<sup>59</sup> FZM Ladislaus Freiherr Nagy von Alsó-Szopor, "Bemerkungen über den Krieg zwischen Österreich und Preussen 1866, " September 1866, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 22, 1866, 1; "Bemerkungen über den Feldzug der k.k. Nordarmee 1866, mit einem aphoristischen Anhang," *ÖMZ* 2 (1867), 158.

<sup>60</sup> Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer*, 16-17.

Succession when the fortresses at Olmütz and Königgrätz had blocked the Prussian king's routes towards Habsburg possessions. However, the advent of larger armies and more destructive weaponry, especially rifled cannon, rendered these fortresses obsolete. During the Bohemian campaign of 1866, despite the hopes of Austrian leaders who relied on the strategy of the previous century, Königgrätz offered no protection for Habsburg forces. Instead, the fortress, which could hold only one brigade, impeded an orderly retreat from the battlefield across the Elbe and Adler rivers and resulted in a bottleneck that caused even more casualties.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Habsburg high command should have realized the problems that nineteenth-century warfare posed for the cordon system, the disastrous Bohemian campaign at least caused military leaders to start questioning the efficacy of permanent fortifications. Field Marshal Heinrich Hess had advocated permanent fortresses before 1866.<sup>62</sup> After the war, however, Hess decidedly changed his views: "Already before the application of steam as mobile power, the offensive had a decisive preponderance over the defensive, and since the death of Vauban, when all states began to multiply their great road networks, the cordon fortifications in the borders have almost completely lost their purpose."<sup>63</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Bartels agreed with Hess that the fortresses in Bohemia no longer served any purpose for the army. Arguing more from a strategic rather than technical viewpoint, Bartels claimed that any Austrian wars in Germany must take an offensive stance to stop Prussia from swallowing up the smaller German states. Such a war would negate the advantages of permanent fortifications. Russia alone presented an opportunity for a defensive war which could

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<sup>61</sup> Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 264-265.

<sup>62</sup> FML Heinrich Freiherr von Hess, "Strategische Grundsätze über die Verteidigung der österreichischen Monarchie," in *Schriften aus dem militärwissenschaftlichen Nachlass*, ed. Manfred Rauchensteiner (Osnaburg: Biblio Verlag, 1975). Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707) was a French Marshal and the foremost military engineer of his time.

<sup>63</sup> H., "Jomini über den Feldzug 1866 in Böhmen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 150.

use fortresses protecting strategic railroad bridgeheads in Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains.<sup>64</sup>

Hess and other Habsburg leaders had ample precedents for underscoring the tactical obsolescence of relying on fortresses. The permanent fortifications of the Quadrilateral fortresses in Italy (Mantua, Peschiera, Verona, and Legnago) had provided little assistance to the Austrians against the French in 1859. During the Napoleonic wars, the French emperor had merely bypassed Habsburg strongholds, such as Ulm, on the way to finding and decisively defeating the main Austrian force. Archduke Karl, Napoleon's main adversary at the time, though, did not respond by adopting the new style of warfare. On the contrary, he advocated a return to the eighteenth-century method of fortifying strong positions to create a network of impregnable fortresses that would fend off any enemy who ventured to breach them. Despite losing to Napoleon and his greater strategic and tactical mobility, Karl failed to learn the right lessons. Instead, he adhered to the idea that whoever possesses certain decisive points will win.<sup>65</sup> This strategy resembled more the writings of Jomini and Bülow rather than Clausewitz.<sup>66</sup> According to Karl, "Strategy determines decisive points whose possession is necessary for one's planned purpose. It also marks the lines for their use. These points must be secured and claimed, and then mutually connected lines must be created. In a defensive war they are called defensive lines, and in an offensive war they are the base of operations."<sup>67</sup> Karl's status as victor

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<sup>64</sup> Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer*, 30-31.

<sup>65</sup> Archduke Karl, "Strategie und Taktik. (Geschrieben im Jahre 1845.) Aus dem hinterlassenen Papieren weiland Sr. kaiserlichen Hoheit des Erzherzogs Carl von Österreich," *ÖMZ* 1 (1866), 1.

<sup>66</sup> The Prussian officer Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, who published *Practical Rules of Strategy* in 1805, set the keys of strategy on geometrical formulae with converging lines coming from bases. Thus, possession of both bases and their corresponding lines would assure victory.

<sup>67</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2009), I-37.

at Aspern over Napoleon I and the recent publication of his military ideas greatly influenced Austrian officers to favor permanent fortresses.

However, this strategy did not garner positive results for the Austrian army as the permanent fortresses did not deter the Prussians from invading Habsburg territory. Captain Graf Geldern tried to defend their usefulness in the *ÖMZ*, but he had to admit they could not withstand modern technology: "...in general the worth and advantages of the fortified points of the northern theater of war were not appreciated as perfectly as they deserved in reality; because the individual fortresses belonged to various time periods, they could not be considered or used as members of a state fortification system corresponding to modern demands; in addition, Josephstadt, Königgrätz, Theresienstadt were built according to the old system to produce no stonework protection and comparatively few bombproof areas, therefore they no longer possessed the resistance that they once had."<sup>68</sup> Even a proponent of fortresses, who continued to attempt to defend their merits throughout the rest of his article, had to admit how little the old permanent fortifications helped the Austrians in 1866.

Although a defensive strategy based on the cordon system proved ineffective during the nineteenth century, the strategic defensive in Bohemia could have produced better results than the halting, indecisive offensive Benedek waged. An anonymous veteran of the Austrian army published an article in the *ÖMZ*, in which he maintained, like Nagy and Bartels, that the possession of Bohemia in a defensive posture with the goal of hindering the unification of the various Prussian armies would have benefitted the Habsburg forces far more than the North Army commander's plans. Though the author noted the impossibility of exactly knowing

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<sup>68</sup> Graf Geldern, "Befestigungs-Vorschläge, basirt auf die Vertheidigung von Manövriplätzen," *ÖMZ* 4 (1867), 299.

Benedek's thoughts, he censured the commander for his strategic indecision and for allowing the decisive battle to take place at the poor position near Königgrätz.<sup>69</sup>

### **Flawed Leadership and Unrealistic Training**

Obviously, Benedek made grave errors in both his strategic and tactical choices in 1866, and thus a large amount of the blame for the disaster fell upon him. His command structure resembled the overly bureaucratic Austrian government and army with four different levels: *Kommandantur* (Benedek), *Präsidium* (Henikstein), *Operationskanzlei* (Krismanić), and *Detailkanzlei* (Kriz). As Wawro said, "Benedek erected a four tier monstrosity of a headquarters that delayed the conception and transmission of orders for critical hours and even whole days."<sup>70</sup> As happens after many heavy defeats on the battlefield, the losing commander-in-chief must bear the brunt of the criticism. Certainly in the case of Benedek, he deserved the critical judgments that Albrecht, Beck, Nagy, and the rest gave him, even if they did not mention him by name in their reports and articles. Before the war, Benedek had earned a reputation as an opponent of intellectual views and anything resembling a scientific approach for the army. Boasting he had never read a book since his graduation from the Habsburg war college and denigrating those who did study, he claimed that merely a strong stomach and good digestion were the only talents necessary for a chief of staff.<sup>71</sup> Regardless of Benedek's bravado, his ideas showed in his propensity for adherence to regulations and "iron discipline." He sought to instill in his troops obedience and the observance of rules with the result that he produced within the army a

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<sup>69</sup> "Praxis und Routine. - Wissenschaft und Kunst. - Betrachtungen über den Kriegsschauplatz in Böhmen von 1866 und die auf demselben stattgehabten Kriegsereignisse dieses Jahres. (Aus den Schriften eines Veteranen des österreichischen Heeres)," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 199-207.

<sup>70</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 807.

<sup>71</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 60; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 25-27.

*Formalismus*, an excessive attention to the details of outward form.<sup>72</sup> According to FZM Anton Baron von Mollinary, one of Benedek's subordinates in 1866, "This dashing field soldier held very little to tactical exercises and appeared content if in a parade review the divisions marched by straight and in closed order."<sup>73</sup> As one *ÖMZ* author wrote sarcastically, perhaps the time will come when a wandering traveler will see a faded statue of the goddess "Parade."<sup>74</sup>

Yet, the Austrian army needed more than discipline and obedience to gain victory over the Prussians. Good leadership requires intelligence as well as the so-called military virtues. One Austrian officer recognized this necessity in an *ÖMZ* article: "The mere acquiring of the purely formal part of tactics is more a matter of drill than understanding; it is clearly and distinctly standardized, therefore made very easy, by the exercise regulations, which are the code of the soldier. In the employment of this form for actual war conditions, in which one sees everything from the terrain, mere praxis and routine is not sufficient; a free development of intelligence, bound by neither blind obedience nor regulatory norms, is indispensable, praxis and the gaining of suitable routine should be made possible by utility."<sup>75</sup> The author continued by stating that the higher the officer's rank, the more necessary theoretical training becomes for him and not formal handbooks and instruction manuals. He must know military geography and statistics, logistics and supply, political and foreign relations. The commander-in-chief must use all this knowledge to plan a strategy based on the situation in which he finds himself and his

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<sup>72</sup> Allmayer-Beck, "Die bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 34.

<sup>73</sup> FZM Anton Freiherr von Mollinary, *Sechsvierzig Jahre im österreich-ungarischen Heere, 1833-1879*, 2 vols. (Zurich: Art. Institut Orell Füssli, 1905), II 106.

<sup>74</sup> B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 42. Scrawled under the article title is "Prince v. Solms-Braunfels," most likely the author (B[romfels] P[rinz] S[olms]). Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Ludwig Georg Alfred Alexander Prinz zu Solms-Braunfels (1812-1875), a German prince, served in the Austrian army as a major general in charge of a brigade during the Austro-Prussian War and retired as a lieutenant field marshal in 1868.

<sup>75</sup> "Praxis und Routine. - Wissenschaft und Kunst. - Betrachtungen über den Kriegsschauplatz in Böhmen von 1866 und die auf demselben stattgehabten Kriegsereignisse dieses Jahres. (Aus den Schriften eines Veteranen des österreichischen Heeres)," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 192-193.

army rather than preset rules that may or may not apply. Unfortunately for the Austrian army, Benedek adhered to his *Formalismus* and did not study the terrain or base his decisions on the nature of the theater of war and the battlefield.<sup>76</sup>

The problems of Benedek's leadership indicated a deeper issue within the Habsburg military. Officers had received promotions because of family or political connections rather than worthiness and merit proven in battle. Although Benedek had exhibited quick and direct action in squelching a Galician uprising in 1846 and showed his courage on the battlefield at Curtatone in 1848 and Solferino in the Franco-Austrian War, he had never done anything to earn a reputation as a competent strategist or army commander. Popular as the "Lion of San Martino" in 1859 for his stalwart defense at Solferino, loved by his soldiers but suspect among his fellow officers, Benedek had attained the high positions of *Feldzeugmeister*, commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy in Verona, and Chief of the General Staff in Vienna.<sup>77</sup> In Wawro's words, "His promotion had been a political ploy by Emperor Franz Joseph to win popularity among Austria's newly enfranchised middle class, who revered Benedek for his colorful personality and common origins and tended to overlook the *Feldzeugmeister*'s obvious shortcomings as a staff officer."<sup>78</sup>

Benedek's successor as Chief of the General Staff in 1863, FML Alfred Baron Henikstein, provided another egregious example of the faulty promotion system in the Austrian army. Even though he had less experience and fewer qualifications than Benedek, Henikstein received the position despite admitting his own incompetence.<sup>79</sup> Bartels looked on Henikstein's appointment as a political move by Benedek to obtain a representative in Vienna to counter his

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<sup>76</sup> "Praxis und Routine," 194-195, 198-199.

<sup>77</sup> Allmayer-Beck, "Die bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 32-33; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 57-60.

<sup>78</sup> Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 25.

<sup>79</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 60; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 27.

rivals.<sup>80</sup> Beck as well as Generalmajor Gideon Ritter von Krismanić, the assistant chief of staff for the North Army, considered Henikstein's appointment as a concession to Benedek and not as a beneficial move because of Henikstein's outmoded ideas about war and his amicable relationship with Benedek.<sup>81</sup>

Not only Benedek and Henikstein but also other officers received positions for which they did not have proper experience. Solm-Braunfels stated the situation accurately: "Besides the customary bestowal of infantry brigades on old cavalry officers, the brigade commanders had been chosen for the most part in rather unusual ways for the use of the army."<sup>82</sup> Obviously, a serious problem existed in the promotion system of the Habsburg military, as Beck pointed out in his 1867 report on the poor morale of the army.<sup>83</sup> Bartels exaggerated in claiming that the troops had no confidence in any of the Habsburg corps commanders.<sup>84</sup> Austrian leaders, however, needed to find a solution so that competent and experienced generals, not political appointees, would make critical decisions in future campaigns.

The Austrian rank and file also did not perform well in battle, though this shortcoming stemmed more from poor training than innate inability to fight. While Albrecht noted the courage of the Habsburg forces, he lamented their insufficient discipline and cohesion.<sup>85</sup> Beck agreed that troop training required improvement so that it would prepare Austrian soldiers for the practical exigencies of the battlefield.<sup>86</sup> Neither of these leaders cast aspersions on the men

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<sup>80</sup> Eduard Bartels, *Kritische Beiträge zur Geschichte des Krieges im Jahre 1866* (Zurich: Cäsar Schmidt, 1901), 24.

<sup>81</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 96-97.

<sup>82</sup> B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866), 41.

<sup>83</sup> Beck, "Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armee-Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften," 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

<sup>84</sup> Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer*, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Feldmarschalleutnant (FML) Erzherzog Albrecht, No. 1017 "Allerunterthänigster Vortrag," 21 August 1866, Kriegsarchiv (KA) Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM) Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 22, 1866, 7-8.

<sup>86</sup> Beck, "Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armee-Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften," 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.



themselves or raised the issue of the willingness of the various peoples within the empire to fight for the Habsburg Empire.

Other officers also noted the deficiencies of the Austrian troops. Major General Zaitschek wrote to Albrecht that the army lost the campaign in Bohemia because of the individual and tactical shortcomings of the infantry who could not fight the Prussians on an equal level without better training.<sup>87</sup> Krismanić, while lauding the Austrian infantryman for his indisputable superiority in hand to hand combat because of his supposed contempt for firepower and his strong fists, castigated the officer corps for not leading the troops with enough intelligence.<sup>88</sup> Contempt for firepower, however, merely led to enormous casualties for both Habsburg officers and soldiers, whose strong fists did not even reach the enemy lines. Too many parades and not enough practical training with an emphasis on shooting had rendered Austrian soldiers inferior to the enemy.

Bartels attributed the poor battle performance and morale of Austrian troops to the failure of the Habsburg government and army to inspire them with love of the Austrian empire as their country. According to the lieutenant colonel, indiscipline that led to the dissolution of certain units during the retreat stemmed from the poor morale of the army. In addition, Bartels claimed that Habsburg forces disintegrated even though casualties remained insignificant.<sup>89</sup> Though the Austrian loss of 48,000 men at Königgrätz hardly comprised an insignificant number, Bartels made the valid point of the difficulty involved in unifying an army composed of soldiers from so many ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

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<sup>87</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 813.

<sup>88</sup> "Über die Ursache der Mißerfolge bei der österreichischen Nordarmee im Kriege Preußens gegen Deutschland im Jahre 1866," *ÖMZ* 2 (1866), 352-353.

<sup>89</sup> Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer*, 7-8, 10-11.

For the most part, the various peoples of the Austrian empire, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Poles, Croats, Rumanians, and Austrians remained loyal to the Habsburgs as long as their officers kept them in their units and they had sufficient supplies, although not surprisingly, certain Venetian units refused to fight against Prussia, Italy's ally.<sup>90</sup> In general, however, Austrian forces, whether German, Slavic, or any other ethnicity, tended to try to escape from danger in difficult situations, especially if no officers remained in the vicinity.<sup>91</sup> This behavior resulted from the Habsburg high command's failure to train the soldiers with too many parades and not enough realistic exercises in target practice and maneuvers rather than insufficient love of the Austrian empire. Confidence in commanders and familiarity with weaponry builds morale, no matter which ethnic background the soldiers represent.

### **Spending Unwisely**

In addition to the wrong choice of tactics for Austrian weapons as well as poor leadership and training, the internal finances of the army presented a major problem for Habsburg military leaders. Although the official campaign history *Österreichs Kämpfe im Jahre 1866* tried to exonerate the Habsburg high command by finding fault in other areas, especially the parliament and its stinginess, the Austrian high command did not critically examine their own handling of money. Instead, they continued to focus on civilian officials as the source of their financial problems, as *Sechzig Jahre Wehrmacht 1848-1908* asserted as well as later historians who favored the public military account of events.<sup>92</sup>

The army budget debates in the *Reichsrat*, however, reveal a different explanation. In an 1865 session of the *Abgeordnetenhaus*, Dr. Čupr, a Liberal delegate from Bohemia, accused the

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<sup>90</sup> Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 138.

<sup>91</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 815.

<sup>92</sup> See pages 3-4.

Austrian war ministry of spending seven million florins more than it should have. Taking examples from the army's supply system, he showed how the military "supports the monopoly of profit-seeking, usurious purveyors and speculators, because it pays too much regard to class and party interests at the cost of the common good, because thereby not only the producers in general, but also the soldiers and the taxpayers themselves suffer." Instead of purchasing necessities from industries within the Habsburg Empire, the army did business with suppliers who procured provisions from foreign sources at higher prices. This system thus wasted money and, much worse in the eyes of Dr. Čupr, ruined homeland industries. He even went so far as to blame the losses of 1859 at Magenta and Solferino on the system: "Our sons had to starve on the battlefield while unscrupulous speculators sought to enrich themselves by this imperial calamity."<sup>93</sup> Aside from Dr. Čupr's exaggerations concerning the causes of defeat in 1859, he made a valid point in maintaining that the Austrian military could not only save money but also support Habsburg industry by procuring supplies within the Austrian Empire.

The Liberal party led the parliamentary opposition to military overspending and corruption. Though not in the majority before the war, the Liberals became the strongest political group in the *Reichsrat* in 1867. This party, composed mainly of anti-clerical Germans, represented the industrial and commercial interests of the empire and advocated liberty of the press, religion, association, and equality before the law. As heirs of the Viennese bourgeois revolutionaries of 1848, the Liberals desired limitations on the Habsburg monarch's authority, particularly in finances. This combination of constitutionalism and emphasis on financial matters led Liberals to oppose the army as the primary support of imperial authority and thus

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<sup>93</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 55. Sitzung der 3. Session am 4. Mai 1865 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1865), 1499-1500.

military expenditures.<sup>94</sup> The Liberal party, however, did not reject all army expenditures, only those expenses Liberals considered unnecessary, including contracts from foreign producers, such as Čupr bemoaned. In many cases, such as pensions and permanent fortresses, these expenses constituted legitimate concerns.

The Liberal party leader, Dr. Karl Giskra, the mayor of Brno, Moravia, stated during the budget debate of 1863 that from 1850 to 1861 the military had cost over 2 billion florins, and that as a result the state debt had risen from 1.3 billion to 2.5 billion florins with a projected interest payment of 128 million florins, more than any other branch of the government.<sup>95</sup> This outlay for interest alone represented an enormous amount for a state with an overall budget of only 305 million florins in 1862, 138 of which the army already took, leaving a mere 52 million florins for the rest of the government after the 115 million interest payment servicing the national debt.<sup>96</sup>

Apologists for the army within the *Reichsrat* argued in favor of military expenditure by bringing out the importance of maintaining Austria's status as a first class power among European states by means of a large military presence. These men emphasized the need to look at the state budget as a whole rather than merely inspecting the army's share minutely. They also pointed out that parliament did not allow anyone representing the army to sit on its benches, thus disallowing true representation.<sup>97</sup> These arguments, however, did not take into account whether the army wasted its funding on useless expenses or not, as Deputy Dreher from Lower Austria declared while underscoring "the contrast of this military luxury with the public emergency, with

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<sup>94</sup> C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 519-520; 571.

<sup>95</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 61. Sitzung der 2. Session am 11. December 1863 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1864), 1396.

<sup>96</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 171.

<sup>97</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 61. Sitzung der 2. Session am 11. December 1863, 1405-1406.

financial ruin.”<sup>98</sup> In 1862, the Habsburg army received a budget of 138 million florins.

According to Wawro’s calculations, the high command spent only 76.7 million, or 55%, on the regimental troops while the rest went to areas such as pensions, construction costs, army offices, general expenses, and “other expenses.”<sup>99</sup>

Giskra continued the debate by accusing the military of shifting numbers within the amount requested for the army by the war ministry. The 4 million florins of savings the war minister claimed the army had achieved through natural price declines appeared in the 1863 *extraordinarium* request for funding rather than as a true subtraction from the budget segment designated as *ordinarium*. In addition the army moved 6 million other expenses from the *ordinarium* to the *extraordinarium* so that the 10 million it purported to save merely showed up in another part of the budget.<sup>100</sup> Aside from the war ministry’s number games, Giskra pointed out the army’s propensity for wasting money by employing higher ranking officers for positions that lesser officers could easily hold, for example, a colonel as head of a stud farm rather than a major, or a major as riding instructor at a military academy instead of a lieutenant, who sufficed at another educational institution. This practice resulted in an overabundance of officers and administrative officials who absorbed more funds because of the frequent promotions that the Habsburg high command felt necessary to raise the morale of the army. Thus, the Austrian military had 15,000 officers in 1863, more than the number that had existed for the larger pre-revolution army of 1848. Earlier, when the army had assigned an officer to an administrative position, no new officer replaced him. That policy no longer remained in effect, however, and

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<sup>98</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 61. Sitzung der 2. Session am 11. December 1863, 1414. By public emergency Dreher meant the financial ruin that military expenditures were bringing the rest of the government and in particular lower officials and teachers who did not receive enough pay.

<sup>99</sup> Wawro, “The Austro-Prussian War,” 178.

<sup>100</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 61. Sitzung der 2. Session am 11. December 1863, 1401-1402, 1416.

therefore supernumeraries abounded with a cost of over half a million florins. Compared with other branches of the Austrian state, such as the justice department, promotions took place far more often and thus raised the expenses of the military accordingly. Giskra said Parliament would consider the army's budget requests seriously "as soon as it has happened that in peacetime all superfluous positions are eliminated, superfluous positions removed, the administration expenses are compressed to a minimum, which is really necessary, all the luxury of the officer ranks and positions is withdrawn, and only what is necessary is introduced."<sup>101</sup>

The superabundant bureaucracy of the Austrian military continued unabated as parliamentary delegates continued to complain about these issues two years later when they debated the army budget again in 1865. Once again Giskra raised issues of monetary irresponsibility on the part of the military. Even though the number of soldiers and horses in the Austrian army had declined from the previous year, the costs for the military had increased because of the transfer of two lieutenant fieldmarshals from corps commands to administrative boards and the subsequent creation of two new positions to replace them. These positions constituted part of the six newly established troop commands within the past two years that had no tactical or administrative purpose, and which did not require men of such high rank to oversee them, as only major generals held two similar positions throughout the rest of the army.<sup>102</sup> Overspending on superfluous officers marked a major source of financial mismanagement for the military. The army spent 8,124,044 florins on 8256 pensioned officers, not counting pensions for invalids and widows, more than half of the 14,954,570 florins it spent on 15,099 active

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<sup>101</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 61. Sitzung der 2. Session am 11. December 1863, 1417-1419. The Austrian army had 10,000 officers for a peacetime footing of 327,000 soldiers in 1848. By 1865, the peacetime footing had risen to 374,000 men.

<sup>102</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 53. Sitzung der 3. Session am 2. Mai 1865, 1446-1447.

officers. The situation among the generals and staff officers revealed the problem more distinctly as the pensioned outnumbered the active generals and staff officers 2352 to 1252.<sup>103</sup> The cost of maintaining generals and pensioned officers at the imperial court, where they served as little more than advisors, alone amounted to 141,222 florins.<sup>104</sup> Compared to France and Prussia, Austria spent more on pensions and army administration and less on the rank and file while consuming more of the state budget than the other countries.<sup>105</sup>

Asking rhetorically what caused the great overload and ensuing monetary burden of the pensions, Giskra answered, “it is the existing promotion regulations and their management. It is this, and one can say against it what one wishes, because, as it is extremely well known, very frequent pensionings must occur because of the existing promotion regulations.”<sup>106</sup> After the Austro-Prussian War Archduke Albrecht and Generalmajor John concurred that the promotions resulting from the large number of supernumerary officers brought about the high rate of pensioning, which only appeared to indicate savings for the active army while in reality burdening the budget with excessive amounts of pension payments.<sup>107</sup> Even FML August Count Degenfeld-Schonburg, the war minister, admitted the necessity of issuing new rules for promotions.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the problem of promotions based on political connections and favoritism

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<sup>103</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 54. Sitzung der 3. Session am 3. Mai 1865, 1481.

<sup>104</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 54. Sitzung der 3. Session am 3. Mai 1865, 1469.

<sup>105</sup> Antonio Schmidt-Brentano, *Die Armee in Österreich: Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft 1848-1867* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1975), 146.

<sup>106</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 54. Sitzung der 3. Session am 3. Mai 1865, 1482.

<sup>107</sup> Albrecht and John, “Die Beförderungs-Vorschrift für die k.k. österreichische Landarmee vom 24. April 1867,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1867), 138.

<sup>108</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 54. Sitzung der 3. Session am 3. Mai 1865, 1482.

affected not only battlefield command performance but also the financial situation of the whole empire.

Giskra also attacked the exorbitant sums the Habsburg army wasted on permanent fortifications. Whereas the Prussians spent a mere 370,000 thaler on their more numerous fortresses in 1865, the Austrian expenses amounted to 1,244,000 florins.<sup>109</sup> The Liberal party leader questioned this enormous outlay for structures that would not even serve any purpose in modern warfare: “I certainly ought to permit myself the remark, that it has come into question whether in recent time, when the cannon system has changed, the construction of fortification works should not be carried out with greater foresight, as, for example, it is a notorious concern, that fortresses, which were considered impregnable because of their territorial sites according to the old system - impregnable is actually not the right term - but difficult to take, now lie in the range of the new cannon, so that all the works can be bombarded and razed in a very short time.”<sup>110</sup> Even though parliamentary delegates pointed out the uselessness of outdated permanent fortifications that held little strategic value, the Austrian high command insisted on spending large sums for upgrading old fortresses or building new ones.

Clearly, with such imprudent decisions the deficiency of funding for the procurement of breechloading rifles, better material for the artillery, or more training and target practice for the rank and file stemmed from the mishandling of funds by the Habsburg high command. In 1865, the Austrian military spent a mere 42,500 florins on rifles, 20,000 for artillery shells, 8500 on

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<sup>109</sup> According to the Vienna Coinage Treaty of 1857, 1 thaler equaled 1.5 Austrian florin, which would make the Prussian fortress expenditure 555,000 Austrian florins. Steven P. Reti, *Silver and Gold: The Political Economy of International Monetary Conferences, 1867-1892* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>110</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 54. Sitzung der 3. Session am 3. Mai 1865, 1461.



new fortress cannon, and 317,000 for troops exercises.<sup>111</sup> Parliamentary stinginess did not hinder the improvement of Austrian military might, as a comparison of the army budgets of the major European powers shows. According to Wawro, “Austrian expenditures on the land army in 1862 were double Prussian expenditures, more than Italy’s, nearly equal to France’s and only 25 percent less than Russian appropriations.... In fact, the 1860s did not see a ‘catastrophic decline’ in Austrian spending as apologists for the Austrian army have argued, but rather a return to barely sustainable, still quite high levels of spending.”<sup>112</sup> The financial problems for the Habsburg military stemmed not from insufficient funding from parliamentary representatives but from budgetary mishandling on the part of the high command.

## **Conclusion**

The catastrophic defeat in 1866 against the Prussians revealed many grave problems in the Habsburg army. Although the Austrian artillery surpassed their enemies’ cannon in range and precision, the infantry definitely proved inferior in training and rifle firepower. The Habsburg high command failed to implement tactics suitable for the Lorenz. Instead of employing defensive tactics that would have taken advantage of the Austrian weapon’s greater range and muzzle velocity, Benedek insisted on shock and reliance on the bayonet for decisive action. This decision played directly into the forte of the Prussians: the *Schnellfeuer* of the Dreyse needle gun, which could fire much faster than the Lorenz but without as much range and impetus.<sup>113</sup> Combined with the indecisive semi-offensive strategy of the North Army commander, the offensive shock tactics resulted in heavy casualties and disaster at Königgrätz. In addition, the expensive permanent fortresses of the defensive cordon system had not stymied

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<sup>111</sup> Wawro, “The Austro-Prussian War,” 182.

<sup>112</sup> Wawro, “The Austro-Prussian War,” 174.

<sup>113</sup> Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles*, 122. Showalter puts the Dreyse’s normal effective range around six hundred paces, whereas the Lorenz had a range of nine hundred paces.

the Prussian advance into Bohemia nor afforded the Austrians sufficient protection to take up a favorable position using fortifications.

The abysmal performance of the Austrian army in Bohemia, however, exposed deeper issues within the military than the battlefield actions of certain individuals. The high positions of Benedek and Henikstein revealed the corruption of relying on political and financial bases for promotion rather than a system valuing merit, experience, and ability. Training among the soldiers and officers, including general staff officers, proved deficient, especially in knowledge of the terrain of the northern theater. The troops, though displaying adequate courage for the most part, had communication issues with their officers because of language barriers and lost trust in the high command. Their training proved insufficient in shooting, maneuver, and discipline. All these inadequacies resulted in little cohesion and poor morale.

While many high ranking officers could see the purely military reasons for Austrian defeat in 1866, they failed to realize the true state of the army's financial situation. Too much bureaucracy in addition to the waste of resources and corruption within the military used up a large part of the military budget each year without providing for the procurement of enough new weaponry and the proper training of the troops for battle with realistic exercises. Despite the warnings and castigations of the Liberal party, Habsburg military officials continued merely to excuse their actions and blame the supposed stinginess of parliamentary delegates for the fiscal shortcomings.

The task of solving the problems that had become clear during the war with Prussia and Italy now confronted the Austrian high command. Despite the desire to conceal these issues from unfavorable public opinion and to blame parliament, the new leadership recognized that the problems stemmed from within the military. In order to maintain its status as a world power, the

Habsburg monarchy would have to procure the new weaponry that nineteenth-century technology had to offer as well as adapt its tactics and strategy to employ it to full advantage. This endeavor would require a new way of thinking, different from the traditional views of the Austrian military since the time of Archduke Charles. The army would also have to improve its command structure and make sure its officers and soldiers received better training in modern warfare. Finally, the Habsburg army would have to eliminate the financial mismanagement within its ranks to prove itself deserving of further appropriations from the *Reichsrat*. How Austrian leaders would respond to these challenges would shape the status and success or failure of the army in the coming decades.

## Chapter 2 - 1866-1876: First Steps Towards Progress

“We wish to utilize our experiences for the future!”<sup>114</sup> Thus Emperor Franz Joseph commanded his military leaders to investigate the causes of defeat and repair them to ensure that the catastrophic losses would not happen again. These causes permeated the whole Habsburg army and therefore made any superficial changes useless. As one officer later expressed the common opinion, “The cannon thunder of Königgrätz also became the funeral march of the old army, the army of Radetzky and Benedek. Vast upheavals awaited, which necessitated the introduction of an almost completely new foundation. The experiences in the last campaign compelled a deep running reform in head and members.”<sup>115</sup> Only a full scale remodeling would remedy the problems of outdated weaponry, tactics, and strategy, promotions based on political connections and money, inadequate training for officers and enlisted men, and inefficient organization, in addition to the financial waste and mismanagement. If the army could resolve these grave problems, the Austrian military could return to great power status and play a prominent role in Europe. The decade following the disaster of 1866 brought improvements in weaponry and tactics, though the Habsburg high command retained the same faulty strategic ideas and failed to remedy the fiscal problems completely. Internal rivalry also hindered effective reforms.

### Early Measures and Self-Awareness

With the removal of the North Army commander-in-chief Benedek on 10 July 1866, the new leaders, Archduke Albrecht and his chief of staff FML John, made rapid changes to stabilize

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<sup>114</sup> B.P.S., “Unsere Aufgabe,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 34.

<sup>115</sup> Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josefs Weggefährte* (Vienna: Amalthea Verlag, 1930), 135.

the army and enable it to continue the war. Almost immediately Albrecht ordered an end to frontal attacks, while John worked on a new tactical manual emphasizing firepower, the defensive, the use of terrain and cover, coordination with artillery, and open order advances.<sup>116</sup> Later, as chief of the general staff and minister of war, positions he held simultaneously, John renewed the proposal he had made in 1859 that the Habsburg army should do away with the customary white coats, which it had used for centuries, and equip its troops in a darker hue. Though no one attributed the catastrophe of Königgrätz to the color of Austrian uniforms, military leaders finally realized the disadvantage of using a uniform that the enemy could see from afar. Habsburg soldiers had worn their gray cloaks over their white uniforms to conceal themselves from the Prussians in Bohemia. After the war they adopted a blue darker than “Prussian blue.” As Austrian historian Allmayer-Beck noted, “Now finally the adaptation of the uniform for the requirements of battle appeared more important than for the needs of parade.”<sup>117</sup>

The structure of the Habsburg high command contained several different components. The minister of war, responsible directly to the emperor, who possessed supreme command, maintained the highest position within the army. Other men, however, also held powerful positions. The chief of the general staff, as the preparer of war plans and main advisor to field commanders, had a large role in army operations while responsible to the war minister. The president of Franz Joseph’s military chancellery, with direct access to the emperor, also held great influence over important military decisions, though without the rank or power to make final decisions. In addition, Archduke Albrecht, the victor of Custoza in 1866 and a member of the

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<sup>116</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, “The Austro-Prussian War: Politics, Strategy and War in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1859-1866,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1992), 770.

<sup>117</sup> Johann C. Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 60.

royal house with personal access to the emperor, possessed the highest position at the end of the Austro-Prussian War and desired to maintain his power in the future.<sup>118</sup>

This situation created a rather complex structure that gave ample opportunities for friction to develop within the high command. While Albrecht wished to hold power over reforming the army, John, who became minister of war and chief of the general staff, possessed the highest position and held responsibility for procuring funding from parliamentary representatives. The rivalry that ensued among the various members of the Habsburg military command stopped one man from gaining too much power, yet delayed the implementation of reforms. The command structure also remained somewhat fluid over the following decades with certain positions gaining more prominence than others. Under this indefinite arrangement, the Austrian army set out to remedy the problems of 1866.

Before anyone could institute major reforms, however, Franz Joseph considered his first priority that of finding out why Austria had lost the war in such a disastrous fashion. Therefore he convened a court of inquiry to investigate the conduct of Benedek, Henikstein, Krismanić, and other high ranking officers during the campaign. The court concluded that Benedek's incompetent leadership was the primary cause of defeat.<sup>119</sup> It did not, however, choose to inspect more than the time period of the war, and thus did not look at issues such as weapons procurement that could implicate the whole military hierarchy, including members of the royal family. Thus, Benedek, Henikstein, and Krismanić retired on 1 November, and the court dropped all charges of military irresponsibility and incompetence on 4 December.<sup>120</sup> The inquiry allowed Franz Joseph and his court to find someone to blame for the debacle as the accusations

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<sup>118</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 78-79.

<sup>119</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 804.

<sup>120</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 72.

against Benedek and his staff contained accurate assessments of the North Army command's actions.

Austrian officers nevertheless realized that Benedek alone did not lose the war. Problems existed within the military, problems which would continue to exist after Benedek had retired if army leaders did not institute necessary reforms. In the words of one veteran of 1866, "Self-knowledge is the first step towards improvement."<sup>121</sup> The theme of self-knowledge played an important part in the reform process, as Habsburg leaders could remedy only what they perceived as problematic. Opinions differed on the crucial issues, but they agreed that the dire situation required widespread changes. An *ÖMZ* writer quoted the new war minister John: "Frankly be assured before all that one has recognized the causes of the suffered misfortune not merely in superficial reasons and chance, but also in deep lying evils, and one is strongly determined to remove them thoroughly."<sup>122</sup> Beck advocated sweeping reform in army administration, officer and troop training with an emphasis on better intelligence, weapons procurement, and improvement of the general staff.<sup>123</sup> Albrecht, while stressing the importance of discipline above all, argued strongly for the adoption of a breechloading rifle as well as improvements in organization, preparation for war, training, and leadership.<sup>124</sup> Clearly, the Habsburg high command had determined to remedy the problems of 1866, especially in officer education, tactics, and weaponry.

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<sup>121</sup> B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," 34.

<sup>122</sup> "Zum Programm des Kriegsministers," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866), 283.

<sup>123</sup> Oberst Friedrich von Beck, "Promemoria über Armee-Verhältnisse," August 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien; Beck, "Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armee-Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften," 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

<sup>124</sup> FML Erzherzog Albrecht, 14-6/7 Nr. 74 Präsid., Wien am 10. Oktober 1866, KA KM Präsidium, Karton Nr. 243, 1866 CK 14/6 - 20; Albrecht, No. 1017 "Allerunterthänigster Vortrag," 21 August 1866, Kriegsarchiv (KA) Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM) Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 22, 1866; Albrecht, No. 1086 Allerunterthänigster Vortrag, 27 August 1866, Karton Nr. 22, 1866.

## Procuring a Breech-loader

The call for arming Habsburg troops with breech-loading rifles resounded throughout the whole army. Albrecht had appealed to Franz Joseph almost immediately after the conclusion of peace in 1866, stressing the necessity of obtaining breech-loaders so that Austria could defend against incursions from the other European powers, who had all started procuring weapons similar to the Prussian needle gun. The archduke emphasized the loss of trust in the Lorenz rifle and the ensuing fall in morale as a decisive reason for the emperor to order new breech-loaders for the infantry.<sup>125</sup> Beck concurred with Albrecht that raising the depressed morale in the Austrian army constituted a pressing argument for acquiring better weaponry.<sup>126</sup> Even officers, such as Krismanić and Solm-Braunfels, who did not attribute the disaster of Königgrätz solely to the Dreyse rifle, advocated the purchase of breech-loaders in order to improve the fighting ability of the Austro-Hungarian army.<sup>127</sup>

Therefore, the Austrian high command hastily assembled a commission for selecting the best breech-loader for the Habsburg army. Attempts to convert the Lorenz rifles into breech-loaders, the so-called Wänzl modification, fizzled because parts of the old Austrian weapons proved too worn. The commission finally decided on the weapon design of Josef Werndl, whose factory at Steyr in Upper Austria used American machine tools and industrial methods and thus could produce rifles faster than the Vienna arsenal.<sup>128</sup> John placed an order for 611,000 Werndl

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<sup>125</sup> Albrecht, No. 1086 Allerunterthänigster Vortrag, 27 August 1866, Karton Nr. 22, 1866.

<sup>126</sup> Beck, "Promemoria über Armee-Verhältnisse," August 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien; Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josefs Weggefährte*, 141.

<sup>127</sup> "Über die Ursache der Mißerfolge bei der österreichischen Nordarmee im Kriege Preußens gegen Deutschland im Jahre 1866," *ÖMZ* 2 (1866): 361; B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 142-143; "Der Krieg im Jahre 1866. Im Auszuge nach einem Artikel von Xavier Raymond in der 'Revue des deux mondes'," *ÖMZ* 3 (1866), 101.

<sup>128</sup> Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 57; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 83; Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 604.



pieces in 1867, not enough for the wartime army after the introduction of universal conscription by the 1868 military law. By November 1870 the Steyr factory had delivered only 316,650 rifles, partially because of delays in production and more importantly because of insufficient funding from the Austro-Hungarian army. At a cost of 50 florins per rifle, the total cost of the order came to 30,550,000 florins, or 37.6% of the 81,200,000 florin budget for 1867. Even the first installment of 100,000 pieces totalled 5,000,000 florins.<sup>129</sup> The parliamentary delegations from Austria and Hungary showed themselves unwilling to grant such large amounts of money to a branch of the government they felt spent far too much every year. Although the delegates approved more than 14,000,000 florins precisely for the new Werndl rifles and ammunition, the parliamentary representatives did not wish to continue granting the same amount each year until the army had procured enough weapons. Thus, the special weapons funding dropped to less than 1,000,000 florins in 1869.<sup>130</sup> Despite the Liberal party connections of FML Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld, minister of war from 1868 until 1874, the war minister reported the army still needed another 370,000 Werndl rifles in 1873. The Habsburg army did not finish equipping itself with breech-loaders until the mid-1870s.<sup>131</sup> Until Austrian military leaders proved capable of making trustworthy decisions and showed success on the battlefield, parliamentary representatives did not wish to risk pouring large funds into a mismanaged army. Unlike before the Austro-Prussian War, though, the Habsburg military leadership showed great interest in technology and willingness to test and procure new weaponry rather than conservatism or

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<sup>129</sup> Scott Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army: Friedrich Beck and the Rise of the General Staff* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 40.

<sup>130</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 17. Sitzung der 2. Session am 30. August 1869 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1869), 366-369.

<sup>131</sup> Scott Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army: Friedrich Beck and the Rise of the General Staff* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 40, 45.

aversion to progress. The inner workings of the Austrian government and its army delayed the achievement of military goals.

### **Tactical Debate: Infantry**

To incorporate the Werndl rifles fully into the army and to implement the lessons of 1866, the k.k. high command developed new tactics. The 1870-71 tactical manual of the *Kriegsschule* revealed the details of these tactics, though in many ways the new manual resembled old ideas. The author, Colonel Wilhelm Reinländer, took a Clausewitzian approach to war. Echoing the Prussian theorist's definition of war as a continuation of political policy by other means,<sup>132</sup> Reinländer divided war into the positive side of attack and the negative side of defense. Adding to this idea Moltke's goal of achieving a decisive defeat of the enemy by an enclosing movement, the colonel emphasized the importance of mobilization and concentration of units towards a fixed point as integral parts of warfare. While Reinländer acknowledged the rarity of achieving the destruction of all enemy forces in one battle, he still maintained the decisive battle as the ultimate goal of war. However, he believed that victory depended not on the old linear tactics but rather on fire and mobility. Yet, the general staff colonel also adhered to the view of Archduke Charles that the possession of vital points or places on the battlefield would bring success. Additionally, Reinländer stressed the importance of combined arms and morale for favorable results, especially emphasizing self-confidence and surprise as decisive means for achieving victory.<sup>133</sup>

In his discussion of attack and defense, the colonel asserted his preference for attack as positive and forward moving, thus raising the morale of the troops with feelings of superiority.

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<sup>132</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

<sup>133</sup> Oberst Wilhelm Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Son, 1870-71), KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 59, Studienbeihelfe: Strategie und Taktik, 1-9.

“The attack is the form of the strong.” Assault forces have the advantage of surprise over the defenders because the attackers can choose objective points, whereas the defense does not know where exactly the attack will come. In addition, the attacker can employ the demoralizing effects of “the roar of battle, the crackle of firing, the hurrah of the storming troops” against the defender so that the assault troops will find cover in the smoke of battle while the enemy sits unsure of where to fire. “Under these psychological influences favoring the attack it is certainly to be expected that despite the breechloader, the direct attack will succeed.” The attacker merely needs to use quick recognition of terrain and the weak points of the defender to overcome the advantages of the breech-loader’s rapid fire.<sup>134</sup>

Reinländer then continued by saying the effect of fire constitutes the greatest strength of the defense because the defender can employ terrain and fire from a steady and secure position to deter the attacker. The colonel nevertheless maintained the disadvantage of defense as a passive form of battle, which can only react to the aggressive moves of the enemy. The negative effect of this passivity weighs upon the morale of the defender and results in a feeling of weakness with a corresponding reduction in courage and energy. Reinländer summed up his analysis of attack and defense thus: “A powerfully undertaken, well led attack strengthened by the raised moral element of the troops will finally overcome all difficulties, and, despite the murderous fire of the breech-loader, will break through the line of the defender.”<sup>135</sup>

Reinländer also discussed the role of the bayonet attack. While admitting the superiority of firepower on the modern battlefield and the little hope of success for driving off with a bayonet an enemy armed with a breech-loader, he refused to admit the complete demise of shock with steel. After weakening the defender with artillery and infantry fire, the attacker will almost

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<sup>134</sup> Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik*, 29-32.

<sup>135</sup> Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik*, 33-34.

always achieve victory through an energetic bayonet assault, primarily because of the psychological advantage of attack. Reinländer also asserted that the bayonet can bring about a decisive outcome, which fire cannot accomplish.<sup>136</sup>

To avoid heavy losses in the attack, the general staff colonel recommended the employment of open order tactics or swarms as skirmishers instead of closed lines. While the developed line would give greater effect to the firepower of the defender, the company column would present the most effective main assault formation because of its flexibility, greater cohesion and morale as well as the ease for its commander to control his troops. Thus, even though Reinländer saw the need for open order tactics, he advocated the retention of the attack column for the culmination of the assault in a bayonet charge.<sup>137</sup>

Yet other members of the Austrian military had already voiced differing opinions. Albrecht and John immediately after taking charge in 1866 ordered no more frontal assaults and a greater emphasis on defense, firepower, and open order tactics.<sup>138</sup> Debate took place in the *ÖMZ* where Captain Wendelin Boeheim, using examples from the Austro-Prussian War, expressed his view that the defensive offered far better opportunities for success than the offensive, especially considering the effects of new technology in the form of the breech-loading rifle: “The so beloved aggressive elementary tactics of the Austrian army are no longer useful in any way for modern times and should have been changed long ago, as also for the reason that this (the examples from the Bohemian campaign) demonstrates precisely the present power of the elementary defensive.”<sup>139</sup> Assessing frontal attacks against the breechloader as ineffective

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<sup>136</sup> Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik*, 49-52.

<sup>137</sup> Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik*, 52-62.

<sup>138</sup> Wawro, “The Austro-Prussian War,” 770.

<sup>139</sup> Hauptmann Wendelin Boeheim, “Die Elementar-Taktik der Infanterie in Bezug auf die Grundsätze der Taktik und auf die Praxis,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1867): 238.

and dangerous, Boeheim advocated only two methods that have proved successful: first, the defensive in order to ruin the enemy's fighting power, to induce him to attack prematurely, or to seek a propitious moment for a counterattack after the weakening of the enemy physically and morally; second, aggressive moves against the enemy's flanks and rear but always with a defensive reserve ready. Proving the worthiness of imitating Prussian ideas, Boeheim stated the suitability of linear formations rather than columns for employing the benefits of increased firepower as well as the use of skirmishers in swarms if the offensive becomes necessary or advisable.<sup>140</sup> The Habsburg high command demonstrated its conviction about the importance of firepower by raising the numbers of bullets issued for training, completing shooting grounds, and releasing new instructions for shooting in 1869 and 1872.<sup>141</sup> Clearly, Austrian military leaders realized the importance of firepower on the battlefield and stressed the necessity of having trained soldiers firing breechloading rifles.

Nonetheless, some officers, claiming the breechloader offered equal advantages to both the attacker and the defender, continued to adhere to the offensive as the surest guarantee of martial success and thus the favored form of battle. Though these officers saw no need to change previous tactics, they at least admitted the defense as an option if the circumstances of battle did not allow an attack.<sup>142</sup> Friedrich von Fischer, a general staff colonel who presided over the writing of the official history of the Austro-Prussian War, took a more extreme view concerning the advantages of the attack over the defense, maintaining Clausewitz erred in his statement of

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<sup>140</sup> Boeheim, "Die Elementar-Taktik der Infanterie in Bezug auf die Grundsätze der Taktik und auf die Praxis," 238-241.

<sup>141</sup> Dr. Alfred Jurnitschek, *Die Wehr-Reform in Österreich-ungarn von 1866 bis 1873* (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn: 1873), XCIV.

<sup>142</sup> Oberlieutenant Leopold Auspitz, "Zur Taktik des Hinterladers," *ÖMZ* 4 (1867): 179-195; Oberlieutenant Rudolph Musil, "Die Elemente der Gefechtsführung, durch eine Reihe von Aufgaben erläutert," *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* 2 (1871): 3.

the superior strength of the defensive. Fischer claimed that despite the firepower of the breech-loader “positions can hardly be held at least against armies in which the spirit of the offensive enlivens the smallest divisions up to the individual common soldier.” The reasons for the superiority of the defense, “as plausible as they may be, are supported in reality only with illusions and deceptions.”<sup>143</sup> This analysis coincided with Fischer’s view in the official history that the army had not caused the defeat of 1866: Austrian offensive tactics still maintained superiority over the defensive, which would not have achieved better results.

As *Kommandant* of the general staff’s war college from 1873-1874, Fischer influenced the views of prominent military leaders during the First World War, including Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the chief of the general staff and *de facto* commander-in-chief of Austro-Hungarian forces for most of the Great War. As a student of the *Kriegsschule* from 1874-1876, Conrad studied under Fischer, and absorbed the tactical principles of Reinländer while learning from the instructor of tactics Colonel Johann Baron Waldstätten, the author of the pre-1866 tactical manual. With such men teaching at the war college, the curriculum failed to reflect the more reasonable tactics of Albrecht and John. Thus, even though reformers advocated a more reasonable approach using the defensive during debates in the military journals, the offensive still held sway in the *Kriegsschule*.

The war college had an immense influence over the Habsburg army. Founded in 1852, this institution educated general staff officers, who as chiefs of staff had responsibility for drawing up war plans and advising field generals. These officers learned both the technical as well as practical aspects of all branches of the military in order to become capable of joint planning for the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Only lieutenants who had served with the troops

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<sup>143</sup> Oberst Friedrich von Fischer, “Vorlesungen über Einfachheit u. Sicherheit in der Kriegführung, IV. Vorlesung über den Angriff u. über die Vertheidigung,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1870): 126-128.

for at least three years and passed competitive examinations gained entrance to the *Kriegsschule*. After graduation from the war college, general staff officers received rapid promotions with the result that by the early 1900s most Austro-Hungarian generals had graduated from the *Kriegsschule*.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the tactical ideas that general staff officers received at the war college dominated the higher ranks of the Habsburg officer corps.

During this crucial time of reform in the 1870s, the Franco-Prussian War afforded an opportunity for officers to debate tactics with recent examples. As the Prussians, using offensive tactics, defeated the French, who fought primarily defensive battles, one Habsburg general staff officer reached the simplistic conclusion that the offensive always brought victory. According to this officer, troops employing the defensive, especially in entrenched positions, ruined their offensive spirit, which must culminate in the bayonet charge.<sup>145</sup> However, First Lieutenant Gustav Ratzenhofer, who later became the leading tactical writer for the Austro-Hungarian army during the 1870s and 1880s, provided a different viewpoint. Ratzenhofer stated that the defense has certain advantages over the offense because of the advent of breechloading rifles. Thus, military leaders must choose the offensive or defensive depending on the battlefield situation.<sup>146</sup> Under the guidance of Ratzenhofer and Albrecht, the more reasonable view of tactics increased throughout the Habsburg army.

### **Tactical Debate: Cavalry**

The employment of cavalry marked another point for debate during the decade following the defeat at Königgratz. The ineffectiveness of cavalry charges near the end of the battle and the insignificant effect cavalry had on the outcome led Austrian officers to search for the best

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<sup>144</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 89-90.

<sup>145</sup> Hauptmann Ernst Schmedes, "Die Taktik der Preussen beim Ausbruche des Feldzuges 1870 und ihre Änderung im Laufe desselben," *ÖMZ* 4 (1871): 20-23.

<sup>146</sup> Oberlieutenant Gustav Ratzenhofer, "Die Taktische Lehren des Krieges 1870-7," *ÖMZ* 4 (1872): 107-108.

role for mounted troops in the future. Solm-Braunfels asserted that the effect of increased firepower and the use of broken terrain on battlefields rendered cavalry attacks pointless. Therefore, commanders should employ their mounted forces for reconnaissance, security patrols, and harassing the operations lines of the enemy.<sup>147</sup> Other Austro-Hungarian officers concurred about the lesser role of cavalry in what they termed “small war,” such as raids, patrols, and reconnoitering, while still maintaining the overall importance of the branch for campaigning, especially in attacks on the mounted troops of the enemy.<sup>148</sup>

Yet other officers insisted on the offensive quality of cavalry in massed formations.<sup>149</sup> Reinländer’s tactical manual for the war college expressed this idea. “Shock is the most decisive part of attack, the touchstone of battle, the most important task of cavalry.” Thus, commanders must inspire mounted troops with the spirit of the offensive and high morale in order to assault the enemy “with the sword in the fist.”<sup>150</sup> Another officer shared the conviction concerning the decisive quality of mounted troops, lamenting the reduction of mounted forces from 40,000 to 29,000 before the Austro-Prussian War as the cause of poor cavalry performance during the Bohemian campaign. The increase of mounted troops back to its pre-war number formed an imperative goal if the Habsburg army wished to compete with the other European powers who possessed at least 50,000, like the French, to 90,000 cavalry, like the Russians.<sup>151</sup> Archduke

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<sup>147</sup> B.P.S., “Unsere Aufgabe,” 146-148.

<sup>148</sup> Lieutenant Carl Landmann, “Die Reiterei im Amerikanische Bürgerkrieg 1861-1865,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1870): 60-71; F.B.P., “Taktische Studie über Formation und Führung grösserer Cavallerie-Körper und die Thätigkeit ihrer Artillerie,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1874): 153-161; Lieutenant Colonel Hotze, “Einige Schlagworte über das Verhalten eines im Vormarsche aufklärenden grösseren Cavallerie-Körpers,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1876): 61-70.

<sup>149</sup> (Ein alter Soldat), “Die Eintheilung der Cavallerie bei einer Feldarmee,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 386-388.

<sup>150</sup> Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik*, 62-64.

<sup>151</sup> “Die österreichische Armee der Zukunft,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1868): 125, 129.



Albrecht, citing the significant advantage in cavalry forces that the Prussians held over the French in 1870, also favored an increase in the number of Austro-Hungarian cavalry.<sup>152</sup>

Many officers, however, realized that cavalry would play a diminished role on future battlefields because of the devastating fire of defending infantry. One first lieutenant recommended a reduction in the number of mounted troops because of their excessive cost and their uselessness as a purely offensive weapon against infantry armed with breechloading rifles.<sup>153</sup> Other officers suggested the adoption of breechloaders for cavalry to enable the mounted branch to take advantage of the increase in firepower. Thus, cavalry could use its superior mobility to capture strategic positions and its new rifles to maintain possession. In this way mounted troops would still retain a significant part in warfare, even adopting the role of mounted infantry as the Russians had started to do.<sup>154</sup> Franz Joseph himself saw the necessity of changing the employment of cavalry and ordered the arming of his cuirassiers with carbines to fight like dragoons.<sup>155</sup>

Habsburg officers realized the necessity of adapting their tactics to modern war. Many, however, remained incapable of abandoning what they considered the traditional aggressive style of Austrian warfare. Combining their misinterpretation of Clausewitzian thought as favoring the offensive with the recent victories of Moltke and their own defeats while employing the defensive, these men continued to view the offensive as the stronger choice. Despite the obvious

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<sup>152</sup> Albrecht (anonymously), *Das Jahr 1870 und die Wehrkraft der Monarchie* (Vienna: Faesy & Frick, 1870), 21-24.

<sup>153</sup> Auspitz, "Zur Taktik des Hinterladers," 183-184.

<sup>154</sup> Oberlieutenant Micsin, "Gedanken über die Verwendung der Reiterei im Sinne der modernen Kriegführung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Materials, der Organisation u. Ausrüstung der Österreichischen Reiterei," *ÖMZ* 4 (1870): 121-122, 233; Rittmeister Felix Freiherr von Pach zu Berneck, "Über die Vortheile einer bestimmten Gefechts-form grösserer Cavalerie-Körper, sowie über das Feuergefecht und die Methodik der einschlägigen Übungen der Cavalerie," *O.* 10 (1875): 341, 355-357, 361; Major Friedrich Baron Mühlwerth-Gärtner, "Über das Feuergefecht der Cavalerie," *O.* 6 (1873): 386-412.

<sup>155</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 816.

effect of the breechloader, Austro-Hungarian officers attempted to find ways of assault that would allow them to bring the bayonet to bear. The emphasis on morale revealed how *élan* still held sway in the officer corps. The events of 1870 confirmed this view in the minds of Habsburg officers.<sup>156</sup> The wars of 1866 and 1870 remained a fixation for k.k. officers. This obsession would last for over four decades among certain officers who saw the offensive victories of the Prussians as proof of the success of Moltke's methods and tried to solve the problem of retaining offensive tactics in the era of technological innovation and ever increasing firepower. These attempts resulted in Reinländer's tactical manual that presaged the tactics of the First World War with emphasis on the offensive with frontal assaults in swarms culminating in a bayonet attack.

At the same time, however, with the influence of Albrecht and John, many officers understood that defense would have to take a greater part in future wars. The devastating firepower of the breech-loader necessitated a more prudent style of warfare. Thus, at least debate had opened within the Habsburg army concerning changes in tactics with voices of reason advocating less emphasis on the offensive. In the employment of cavalry especially, Austro-Hungarian leaders began to recognize the need for change. Nevertheless, reforms came slowly as gallant cavalry charges lasted in k.k. maneuvers until the First World War. The constant attempts to prove the worth of the mounted branch while simultaneously calling for limitations or alterations of its use revealed the attachment that some k.k. officers, especially from the cavalry, maintained for the battlefield importance of cavalry. This view came partially from Franz Joseph's desire to use the impressiveness of cavalry on parade to influence his subjects as well as the traditional Austrian supremacy in mounted forces and belief in the officer as a

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<sup>156</sup> Captain Michael Trapsia, "Einige Ursache der Erfolge im Jahre 1870/71," *O.* 10 (1875): 121.

modern knight.<sup>157</sup> The cavalry charge against emplaced cannon at the 1876 maneuvers impressed Franz Joseph greatly, though some officers silently objected.<sup>158</sup> In 1866 cavalry attacks, presenting large targets that the Prussian breechloaders could hardly miss, had never even reached the enemy. Ten years later, the results for mounted troops could not have improved. Yet for Franz Joseph and many of his cavalry officers, the prestige, not only of the Habsburg cavalry but also of the Habsburg Empire, would suffer without glorious charges into the fire of the enemy.

### **Cordon Strategy**

Strategically the Austro-Hungarian high command persisted in employing the cordon system of permanent fortifications to defend the empire despite the meager part that fortresses played in 1866. Several officers saw the drawbacks of depending on the cordon system for defending the Dual Monarchy. FML Hess admitted that the fortress strategy had almost completely lost its purpose.<sup>159</sup> Colonel Fischer, arguing against the merits of the defensive, stated the disadvantages of weakening a strong army by having to garrison many forts, especially considering that modern artillery had gained “a truly irresistible power, so infinitely superior that it must certainly break through resistance with means far more insignificant and relatively very inexpensive, and the fall of bulwarks according to their interior strength and the means that stand at the disposal of the attack, becomes only a question of time.”<sup>160</sup> Dr. Hermann Orges, a government councillor and captain in the k.k. *Landwehr*, concurred concerning the uselessness of permanent fortresses in resisting new technology in the form of rifled breechloading cannon.

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<sup>157</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7-8, 127-128.

<sup>158</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 84.

<sup>159</sup> H., “Jomini über den Feldzug 1866 in Böhmen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 150.

<sup>160</sup> Fischer, “Vorlesungen über Einfachheit u. Sicherheit in der Kriegführung, IV. Vorlesung über den Angriff u. über die Vertheidigung,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1870): 130-132.

Employing examples from the wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Orges showed how the cordon system represented an outmoded style of warfare that had receded before the age of steampower, railroads, and universal conscription.<sup>161</sup>

The majority of Habsburg officers, however, still believed in the efficacy of permanent fortifications as deterrents to enemy invasions, especially in the case of a multi-front war against enemies with superior numbers. Officers of the engineering staff especially proposed the extension of not only the cordon system around the empire but also a set of fortresses within the empire to provide fortified places for regrouping after retreat and to prepare for attacks from all sides. These men advocated the continued employment of the cordon system and permanent fortifications because of their strength that could presumably withstand mortar shot and the supposed possibility of building them inexpensively. Other officers recognized the expense of building or upgrading fortresses but trusted the Habsburg army to spread out the cost during times of peace. One contributor to the *ÖMZ* even recognized the tendency of nineteenth-century armies to grow in size and thus become less dependent on fortresses that weakened military strength by absorbing too many men for garrison duty. Nevertheless, the author still preferred permanent fortifications because of their positive effect on morale and suggested a smaller number of forts but an extension of fortresses as well to create groups of forts like the Quadrilateral in Lombardy that would have a greater impact on warfare.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Dr. Hermann Orges, "Die permanente Befestigung und die Kriegführung der Gegenwart," *O.* 5 (1872): 129-149.

<sup>162</sup> Major Bela von Ghyczy, "Über die Zukunft der Festungen," *ÖMZ* 4 (1867): 67-76; Oberlieutenant Moriz Brunner, "Reichsbefestigung und Eisenbahnen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1868), 133-148; "Permanente oder provisorische Festungen? Ein Beitrag zur Lösung dieser Streitfrage," *ÖMZ* 4 (1871): 86-87; "Der gezogene Hinterlade-Mörser und die Fortification," *ÖMZ* 4 (1875): 69-84; "Über Lagerforts u. Verschanzte Lager: Vorschläge zur Erbauung derselben; hiezu erforderliche Geldmittel. Über Reichs-Befestigung," *ÖMZ* 3 (1868): 357-384; "Fortificatorische Studien," *ÖMZ* 3 (1869): 209-230.

Archduke Albrecht also lent his voice in favor of the cordon system of defense: “It has been called wishing to wash Moors white, if one has tried to convince someone who despite all the lessons of history denies the necessity of a well-ordered system of permanent fortifications as one of the most important conditions of the defense of every state. And thus the most recent history has just delivered the clearest proof.”<sup>163</sup> The archduke listed permanent fortresses in the key points of a potential theater of war as the first step in preparing for future campaigns. While advising against the construction of many small fortified locations that would absorb garrisons and weaken the army, Albrecht advocated the building of only a few extensive fortresses in Carpathia, such as Krakau and Przemyśl, that would strategically control the whole area in case of war with Russia.<sup>164</sup> Numerous reports in the military chancellery and the general staff’s operations bureau during the late 1860s and 1870s also advocated building up permanent fortifications to meet the requirements of modern warfare.<sup>165</sup>

None of the members of the Austro-Hungarian high command considered permanent fortifications as a useless strategy, wasting millions of florins that could have benefitted the army in procuring better weaponry. At a commission meeting for solving the problem of defending the Galician border against a possible Russian invasion, four members including John voted for the fortification of Przemyśl, three including Kuhn voted for Jaroslau, and two for both.<sup>166</sup> In adhering to the cordon system, whether in the form of upgrading old fortresses or building new expansive fortifications, Habsburg officers failed to recognize the changes taking place in

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<sup>163</sup> Albrecht, *Das Jahr 1870 und die Wehrkraft der Monarchie*, 76.

<sup>164</sup> Albrecht, No. 25, “Uiber die Vorbereitung eines Kriegsschauplatzes mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Karpathenländer,” July 1871, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>165</sup> Major General Heinrich Freiherr von Scholl, “Denkschriften betr. Befestigungswesen,” 1869, 1870, 1871, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien; Fol: 1-95 Protokolle No. I bis V, 3-9 April 1868, Reichsbefestigung, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 790, Studien; No. 14, “Vertheidigungs-System der Monarchie 1873,” 23. II., Generalstab, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>166</sup> Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 402.

modern warfare, especially in the presence of increasingly larger armies and more destructive artillery.

The Franco-Prussian War did nothing to alter this viewpoint but rather confirmed k.k. convictions.<sup>167</sup> Even though some officers realized the reality of war in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and published articles in the *ÖMZ* against the employment of the cordon system, the belief that the isolated political situation of the Habsburg Empire required the in-depth fortification of every border to thwart invasion persisted among the majority of the military.<sup>168</sup> This attitude resulted in the building of the fortress at Przemyśl, where thousands of soldiers became surrounded and hundreds of thousands died during relief attempts in World War I. The only hindrance to erecting and remodeling the whole system of permanent fortresses throughout the Dual Monarchy arose from the deficiency of funding, a point on which almost all k.k. officers agreed.<sup>169</sup>

### **Budgetary Imprudence**

The Austro-Hungarian army budget depended of course on parliamentary approval. From 1868 to 1877, military expenses varied between a low of 173,760,000 florins in 1869 and a high of 253,360,000 florins in 1871 with an average outlay of 228,795,00 florins.<sup>170</sup> In 1868 the military asked for only 80,000,000 florins in its budget request because of the unpopularity of the army with parliamentary representatives. Even the Liberal party leader, Dr. Carl Giskra, minister of the interior for the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy from 1868 until 1870, who

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<sup>167</sup> Hauptmann Michael Trapsia, "Welche sind die wichtigsten Erfahrungen aus Dem Kriege des Jahres 1870 zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland?" *O.* 2 (1871): 43-45.

<sup>168</sup> Ghyczy, "Über die Zukunft der Festungen," 76.

<sup>169</sup> "Die österreichische Armee der Zukunft," *ÖMZ* 1 (1868): 131.

<sup>170</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 590.

had opposed excessive army spending before 1866, advised the representatives to approve this far lower request than the budgets of the 1860s.<sup>171</sup>

Yet Giskra, as a representative of Lower Austria in 1871, objected to war minister Kuhn's request for parliamentary approval and funding to raise the number of cavalry by 7000 men and horses to 37,000. Contrary to the war minister's assertion that the effectiveness of Austro-Hungarian mounted troops depended on this increase in comparison with the other European military powers, Giskra pointed out that France had only 34,500 and Russia 33,600 without counting "the 100,000 Cossacks on paper, whom no European eye, which has not been in Russia, has seen." The ineffectiveness of Habsburg cavalry did not lie in the small number of sabers but rather in its employment: "The Austrian cavalry could not prove its excellent reputation in war against Prussia, because it was used worthlessly; one led the cavalry against infantry, one charged a Prussian cavalry division, which opened, and behind it stood infantry and artillery. The Austrian cavalry was thrown back."<sup>172</sup> This accurate assessment proved the need to limit the role of mounted troops on the battlefield and thus also the need to limit spending on cavalry.

Giskra also mentioned the constant changes in how many cavalry the army leadership deemed necessary as an indication of the instability and untrustworthiness of the Habsburg military. Comparing Austrian defeats to the years and decades of success of other states in war, the parliamentary representative wondered how anyone could consider the war ministry as an

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<sup>171</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 145. Sitzung der 1. Session am 11. November 1868 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1868), 4477-4483.

<sup>172</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 58. Sitzung der 6. Session am 22. Juni 1871 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1871), 1228-1230.

authority, “where change and lack of stability is the rule.”<sup>173</sup> The k.k. army could have acquired a more favorable assessment from the Liberal dominated *Reichsrat* if its leaders had exhibited more constancy, less infighting, and greater responsibility with the funds parliament granted. The Liberal majority leader, Dr. Anton Banhans, showed how the army asked for and received a grant of 1,300,000 florins to maintain the battle readiness of the army for eight weeks until it could train new recruits. Several months later the high command said all the money went to the troops suppressing a revolt in Dalmatia, not for maintaining battle readiness. Thus, Banhans asserted, “after a few months what was so earnestly repeated in the committee and public sessions of the delegation as absolutely unavoidably necessary for the battle readiness of the army, has at the same time again disappeared and been presented as not necessary.”<sup>174</sup> Even Major General von Scholl, the minister for national defense, expressed his opinion that “so long as we labor with a deficit, I am not of the view that one spend more money on the cavalry.”<sup>175</sup> Because of the instability and dishonesty that the Liberal majority perceived in the war ministry, most of the parliamentary representatives did not see the wisdom of granting the army the millions of florins that Kuhn desired.

During the budget debate in the Delegations of both halves of the Dual Monarchy for 1869, Dr. Carl Rechbauer observed how the price of the Werndl rifle rose every time the war ministry asked for funding: “Therefore I cannot help expressing my surprise that for us, the longer the order lasts, the more expensive the rifles become. The first cost 27 florins, then 29, consequently with the inclusion of all the attachments first 33 florins and then 35, and today they

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<sup>173</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 58. Sitzung der 6. Session am 22. Juni 1871, 1227.

<sup>174</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 58. Sitzung der 6. Session am 22. Juni 1871, 1250-1251.

<sup>175</sup> *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrathes*, 58. Sitzung der 6. Session am 22. Juni 1871, 1241.



cost 40 florins. If we continue the order, rifles will soon come to cost us perhaps 100 florins per piece.”<sup>176</sup> The Delegations also objected to granting 1,800,000 florins for raising the pay of the 1982 supernumerary officers in the Habsburg army.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Dr. Johann Baron von Elswehr Demel believed that 400,000 florins for the building of two steamships in the *Monitor* style to patrol the Danube River for defense constituted a waste of resources. Not only did the *Monitor* style suit sea warfare rather than river patrolling but a mere two ships would not suffice for proper defense and merely signalled the prospect of far greater expenses in the future to build a larger fleet.<sup>178</sup>

Similarly, Friedrich Freiherr zu Weichs objected to granting 380,000 florins for the fortification of Komorn in Hungary. According to Colonel von Tunkler, who spoke for the war ministry, the completion of the permanent fortress would require 5 million florins. Thus the government made only a small request for funds that the Delegations should grant. Weichs, however, pointed out that at 380,000 florins per year, by the time the army finished building the fortress, artillery technology will have developed cannon powerful enough to destroy the new construction. Besides, the 5 million florins for Komorn represented a fraction of the total cost of upgrading the cordon system of the whole empire, which would require at least 50 million by one reckoning and 350 million by another. Both sums amounted to impossible numbers considering the financial situation of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 9. Sitzung der 2. Session am 17. August 1869 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1869), 226.

<sup>177</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 11. Sitzung der 2. Session am 20. August 1869, 283-288.

<sup>178</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 11. Sitzung der 2. Session am 20. August 1869, 264.

<sup>179</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 11. Sitzung der 2. Session am 20. August 1869, 268-269.

Furthermore, Dr. Rechbauer found the rising cost of supplying a smaller army inexplicable. Even though the number of men in the k.k. military had decreased by over 15,000 from 1868 to 1870, the war ministry asked for 3 million florins more in the latter year than previously. Rechbauer also noted the significant increase of 160 staff officers from 240 to 400, not including the burdensome number of pensionaries, and their corresponding pay from 1868 to 1870, even though there were fewer soldiers to command. The delegate singled out especially the surprising demands for more cavalry funding, despite the lesser role that cavalry played on the battlefield. The war ministry requested 12,352,041 florins in 1870, 123,041 florins more than in 1868, though 4000 fewer mounted troops served in the army. This expense stood out all the more in comparison to the 3,559,009 florins spent on a far larger number of infantry.<sup>180</sup> Clearly, the Habsburg high command had not yet rid the army of the financial imprudence and overspending that had existed before the Austro-Prussian War.

### **Restructuring and Rivalry**

On 9 September 1866, John sent a communication to Franz Joseph with his recommendations for restructuring the positions in the army leadership. While echoing Albrecht's ideas concerning the primacy of discipline, John did not want to see the archduke take complete control over the Habsburg army. He suggested the creation of an *Armee-Ober-Kommando* (AOK), which would have authority over individual troop commanders in order to raise the morale of the army and enhance its sense of duty. The AOK would also decide personnel issues, choosing capable leaders who would guarantee favorable results. John's own position, minister of war, "would find in an *Armee-Ober-Kommando* equipped with the indicated

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<sup>180</sup>, *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 7. Sitzung der 2. Session am 14. August 1869, 148-149.

authority an essential support in maintaining the complete battle capability of the army.”<sup>181</sup> Thus, John expressed his wish to possess overall control of the army himself through the war ministry with the help of a commander in the AOK who would take care of all concerns other than materiel. The holders of both positions had the responsibility to communicate with each other as well as the various army inspectors and the chief of the general staff concerning all important questions.<sup>182</sup> In this way, the high command would achieve the unity that Beck had desired while avoiding the disadvantages of one man having total power.<sup>183</sup> This system resembled the Prussian arrangement with the chief of the general staff controlling important decisions with the exception that John desired the final say for the war minister.

Franz Joseph put John’s proposal into action when he appointed Albrecht head of the AOK on 15 September.<sup>184</sup> This charge, however, led to friction between Albrecht and John, whose roles suddenly reversed since the war, with John, at least in his own mind, superior to the archduke. Albrecht opposed this power arrangement, as he believed the AOK should hold supreme command. He also clashed with John over who deserved credit for the victory of Custoza in 1866.<sup>185</sup> Civil-military officials, such as Foreign Minister FML Alexander Count Mensdorff-Pouilly, feared a revival of the neo-absolutist military control of the 1850s under the aegis of the AOK. Beck saw in the AOK, even nominally within the control of the war ministry, an unwieldy body with too much power and too large a staff even to go on campaigns. Thus, with a great part of its apparatus remaining in Vienna, army operations would come to a

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<sup>181</sup> FML Franz Xavier Freiherr von John, 16-22/1 C.K. No. 5729, Wien am 9. September 1866, KA KM Präsidium, Karton Nr. 243, 1866 CK 14/6 - 20.

<sup>182</sup> Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 351-352.

<sup>183</sup> Beck, “Promemoria über Armee-Verhältnisse,” August 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

<sup>184</sup> Emperor Franz Joseph, 16-22/1 C.K. No. 5729, Schönbrunn am 15. September 1866, KA KM Präsidium, Karton Nr. 243, 1866 CK 14/6/20.

<sup>185</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 32; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 79.

standstill. According to Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, an Austrian officer and Beck's earliest biographer, "Despite his personal good relations with Archduke Albrecht, he [Beck] resolutely set himself on the side of those who stood for the dissolution of an *Armeeoberkommando* growing to a gigantic position of command."<sup>186</sup> Although in theory the AOK and war ministry worked together with the minister of war in charge, Beck believed the new arrangement would not run smoothly according to his ideas of unity within the army together with dispersion of powers among several boards. Under the new arrangement Beck feared too much control might come into the hands of either Albrecht or John.

All of these differing opinions revealed the difficulties inherent in establishing a new command hierarchy for the Habsburg military as well as the rivalry endemic among its various members, who held very different opinions of how best to structure the possession of power within the high command. Beck's theories of unity within the army and dispersion of power made the most sense for smooth operations. However, in practice the ongoing rivalries limited their effectiveness on a greater or lesser level throughout the years leading up to the Great War, despite Beck's present status as head of the imperial military chancellery (*Militärkanzlei*) with direct access to Franz Joseph and later as chief of the general staff. The antipathy between Albrecht and John as well as Beck's opposition to John's elevation of the power of the war ministry and consequent decrease in the importance of the general staff and the *Militärkanzlei* rendered the war minister's position barely tenable. Additional antagonism stemming from civil officials, including the new foreign minister, the Hungarian Julius Count Andrassy von Csik-

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<sup>186</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 137.

Szent Király u. Kraszna-Horka, combined to force John to resign in January 1868 less than two years after his appointment.<sup>187</sup>

The removal of John from the war ministry, however, did not solve the problem of rivalries within the Habsburg military. On the contrary, the appointment of his successor, FML Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld, caused even more antagonism, especially with Albrecht. Kuhn followed the ideas of his predecessor in desiring to make the war ministry supreme in all decisions affecting the military. This view obviously clashed with Albrecht's position in the AOK. Further antagonism between Kuhn and Albrecht occurred on the political level. Kuhn represented a more progressive attitude towards the military, especially because of his connections to the Liberal party in the *Reichsrat*, as opposed to the dynastic perception of the army as the sole guardian of the empire that Albrecht and other officers maintained.<sup>188</sup>

According to Colonel Valentin Streffleur, the editor of the *ÖMZ*, Habsburg soldiers had to guard against nationalistic feelings and propaganda that threatened the empire. The paramount cultural-historical task of Austria and its army comprised the spread and inculcation of loyalty and devotion to the Habsburg monarch throughout the imperial lands, regardless of the ethnic background of the people.<sup>189</sup>

Both the conservative faction of Albrecht, Beck, and their supporters and the progressive party of Kuhn and the Liberals desired to improve the army's battlefield performance by raising the intellectual level of the officer corps and putting men who displayed the best abilities into leadership positions. Both sides saw education and promotion regulations as the means to

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<sup>187</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 137, 147; Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 32-33; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 79.

<sup>188</sup> Heinrich von Srbik, *Aus Österreichs Vergangenheit* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1949), 145; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 74; Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 66-67.

<sup>189</sup> Oberst Valentin Ritter von Streffleur, "Österreich am Schlusse des Jahres 1866," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 3.

achieve these goals. In theory the plans for attaining success appeared worthwhile. Albrecht's and John's prescriptions for basing promotions on battle records, academic examinations, physical fitness, and personal behavior, all measures of merit and ability, seemed the best solution without opening up the field to competitive examinations. While the archduke's plan may have worked well in an era with frequent wars, a time through which the k.k. army had recently passed, a protracted peace would have limited the significance of battle performance and raised the issue of what to do with reserve officers.

Kuhn believed the inferior status of the Austrian military stemmed from the incompetence and backwardness of those who held to the old dynastic principle and neo-absolutism of the 1850s. To make progress towards transforming the army into a modern fighting force with a constitutional war minister responsible to the people, the high command must eliminate the members holding on to what Kuhn called "feudal" values.<sup>190</sup> Instead of an absolute state ruled by an absolute monarch for his own good or for the benefit of certain vested interests, according to Kuhn's younger brother Colonel Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld, "the uppermost practical purpose of the state consists in the realization of a condition of human society corresponding to the principle of right, which the purpose of each individual - that is, the harmonic development of one's intellectual, moral, and material elements - promotes, the attainment of which is facilitated and thus the sum of the powers of all public society is led into an asymptote for ideal humanity."<sup>191</sup>

Kuhn therefore took aim at the general staff, making it a *Hilfsorgane*, or supporting organ, directly subordinate to the war minister in 1868, as part of his attempt to control every

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<sup>190</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 34; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 79.

<sup>191</sup> Oberst Freiherr von Kuhn, "Vorträge über Strategie," *ÖMZ* 2 (1870), 3. Colonel Franz Freiherr Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld gave this lecture to the students of the Habsburg war college for general staff officers.

aspect of the Habsburg army through the imperial war ministry.<sup>192</sup> Kuhn held a special dislike for the general staff, which he considered a “Jesuit caste” blocking liberal reforms. According to 20<sup>th</sup> century American historian Scott Lackey, “The war minister aimed at nothing less than the complete elimination of the general staff corps and a scattering of its functions across the entire officer corps. Kuhn felt that this would engender a ‘meritocracy’ within the Habsburg officer corps and end advancement on the basis of birth, family connections, and sycophancy.”<sup>193</sup>

Kuhn also convinced Franz Joseph to appoint Major General Josef Gallina as merely the director of the general staff rather than chief. In this way, Kuhn reserved for himself control over the general staff and mirrored the command arrangement of Benedek before the Austro-Prussian War. The war minister also opened the general staff to any Austro-Hungarian officer who proved his abilities by competitive examinations. Thus, Kuhn eliminated the independent status of the general staff completely as he tried to create an officer corps whose promotions relied on talent.<sup>194</sup>

Kuhn’s views, of course, led to friction with the archduke. The antipathy between the two men became bitterly hostile and personal, particularly on the part of Kuhn.<sup>195</sup> In his diary he called Albrecht the proponent of “Spanish absolutism, bigotry, ultramontanism, falseness and jesuitism.”<sup>196</sup> Certainly Kuhn exaggerated in his estimation of Albrecht and the archduke’s negative effect on the Austrian military. Nonetheless the war minister’s venom provides an excellent example of the crippling rivalry within the Habsburg army.

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<sup>192</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 237.

<sup>193</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 35.

<sup>194</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 36; Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 374-375; Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 72.

<sup>195</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 73.

<sup>196</sup> FML Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld, *Nachlässe Kuhn*, 2 September 1869, Karton Nr. 670, 7.

This rivalry led once again to an alteration of the command structure. A mere month after Kuhn's appointment, Franz Joseph dissolved the AOK and the following year appointed Albrecht inspector general of the armed forces. This position allowed the archduke less independence as he had to submit all his reports to the war ministry and enjoyed only limited access to the emperor.<sup>197</sup> Although Albrecht's influence on military decisions decreased, the antagonism between the archduke and the war minister did not abate in the least as their quarrels even spilled over into the press. As Rothenberg stated, "The rift split the army into opposing 'court' and 'ministerial' factions which lambasted each other in their respective journals, the semi-official *Österreichische Militär-Zeitung* and the liberal-leaning *Österreichisch-ungarische Wehrzeitung*."<sup>198</sup>

### ***Ausgleich and Wehrgesetz***

Another issue that augmented the difficulty of reforming the Austrian army's organization came from the *Ausgleich* or Compromise of 1867. This agreement between Franz Joseph and the Magyar leadership of Hungary led to the Dual Monarchy, in which German-speaking Austria and Hungary became the two main components of the Habsburg lands with their own governments under the Habsburg monarch. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of War remained common to both parts of the empire. The two halves of the monarchy, however, handled the other state functions separately. Though no one, especially the Slavic nationalities, who received no benefits from the *Ausgleich*, particularly liked this new constitutional arrangement, it lasted until the end of the empire in 1918.<sup>199</sup> Even the Hungarians, by far the greatest beneficiaries of the compromise, complained that they did not

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<sup>197</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 34.

<sup>198</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 80.

<sup>199</sup> For an excellent discussion of various views concerning the *Ausgleich*, see Alan Sked's *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London: Longman, 1989), 191-202.



receive enough autonomy and worked incessantly to gain more and more concessions in their favor.

The *Ausgleich* created an increasingly difficult situation for the Habsburg army. Although military leaders succeeded in retaining the unity of the army, they conceded a national guard for Austria, the *Landwehr*, and one for Hungary, the *Honvédség*. Many officers, such as Albrecht, remembering the 1848 revolution and fearing a Hungarian national guard would foster subversive ideas, wanted no privileges whatsoever for the Magyars.<sup>200</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Eduard Bartels, pondering solutions even before the *Ausgleich*, perceived the negative effect of Dualism on the other nationalities, mainly the Slavs, who would look for connections to the foreign Slavic powers, Russia, Serbia, Rumania, more than ever. He suggested a federation of six independent areas each with its own Habsburg archduke, government, and army, all under the rule and at the command of the emperor.<sup>201</sup> However, Franz Joseph, desiring a quick resolution to the constitutional as well as military situation, remained firm in his conviction to make dualism work. While the imperial war minister continued as responsible only to the emperor, gaining appropriations became harder than before because the military had to go before not one, but two parliamentary bodies, the Delegations, representing the legislatures of Austria and Hungary.<sup>202</sup>

The negotiations with Hungary comprised a step necessary for the passage of the military law of 1868. The work of over two years of discussions on the part of the Austro-Hungarian high command, the new *Wehrgesetz* allowed for a large expansion of the Habsburg

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<sup>200</sup> Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War," 800.

<sup>201</sup> Eduard Bartels, *Österreich und sein Heer* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand: 1866), 19-20.

<sup>202</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 75-78.

fighting force to render it comparable to other European powers.<sup>203</sup> According to statistics published in the *ÖMZ*, the Dual Monarchy's peacetime strength in January 1868 amounted to 350,000 men and 791,000 for war, fewer than only the North German Confederation's 928,500 wartime force and Russia's 1,238,000.<sup>204</sup> After the new military law of 1868, Franz Joseph could call from 800,000 to over 1,000,000 troops to arms during wartime with an active peacetime strength of 255,000.<sup>205</sup> Soldiers fulfilled an active service term of three years in the common army (k.k. - *kaiserlich königlich*), seven years in the reserve, and two years in the *Landwehr* or the *Honvéd*, for a total of twelve years.<sup>206</sup>

According to Rothenberg, even with this increase, however, the Habsburg military found itself falling slightly behind the other powers, who had also taken measures to strengthen their forces. The North German Confederation could field over 1,000,000 men, France 1,350,000, and Russia 1,476,000.<sup>207</sup> The numbers in the *ÖMZ*, though, present a different picture with the Austro-Hungarian army second only to Russia's 1,279,000 wartime strength for 1870. The Habsburg empire's 1,058,000 surpassed the North German Confederation's 957,000, France's 772,000, and almost doubled Italy's 573,000, even if the Austro-Hungarian peacetime force did not equal the German and French contingents. By 1874 the k.k. army could field 1,135,595 soldiers, compared to Russia's 1,429,700, Germany's 1,314,048, and France's 1,205,000. Thus,

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<sup>203</sup> "Ideen über die Mittel zur Heranbildung der für den Bedarf einer Armee in Österreich von der in Neuester Zeit postulirten Stärke - nahezu einer Million Soldaten - nöthigen Anzahl intelligenter Ober- und Unterofficiere," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 176. The author considered one million the magic number to ensure great power status both inside and outside the nation. A footnote in the *ÖMZ* says the author of this article also wrote "Praxis und Routine. - Wissenschaft und Kunst. - Betrachtungen über den Kriegsschauplatz in Böhmen von 1866 und die auf demselben stattgehabten Kriegsereignisse dieses Jahres. (Aus den Schriften eines Veteranen des österreichischen Heeres)," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866).

<sup>204</sup> Hauptmann Ernst Schmedes, "Die Kriegsmacht der europäischen Staaten im Vergleiche mit deren Bevölkerungs- u. Budget-Verhältnisse im Jänner 1868," *ÖMZ* 2 (1868), 54.

<sup>205</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 29; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 81.

<sup>206</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 29; Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 491.

<sup>207</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 81.

while the other military powers steadily grew in numbers, the Habsburg forces increased by a small percentage, and were superior only to Italy's 647,500. The peacetime statistics show more clearly the little growth in the Austro-Hungarian army. From 1870 to 1874, the standing k.k. army rose by a mere 1.2% or 3524 men from 298,000 to 301,524, whereas the armed forces of Russia expanded by 5.5% from 726,000 to 765,800, France grew 12.1% from 405,000 to 454,170, and Germany increased 33% from 318,000 to 422,342. Only Italy decreased from 183,410 to 159,800 among the major land powers of Europe.<sup>208</sup>

The passage of the military law of 1868 enabled the Habsburg army to compete with the armies of the rest of the European states, at least on paper. The *Wehrgesetz* ensured the establishment of a unitary army with a national guard for Austria and for Hungary. An imperial war minister responsible to Franz Joseph oversaw the military administration. A legal basis existed within which the k.k. army could expand greatly because of the introduction of universal conscription throughout the empire. Aside from the issues inherent in the dualistic structure's reliance upon the Magyars for budget approval and military support, the 1868 military law laid the foundation for maintaining the Habsburg Empire as a major power. This law met the approval of at least one veteran of 1866: "One had thus made a great achievement, that the highest military boards finally ceased to make almost only administrative adjustments, and recognized the necessity of joining in the progress of modern times in the military and its introduction into the Austrian army."<sup>209</sup> Yet only six years later, already the Austro-Hungarian

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<sup>208</sup> Major J. Nosinich, "Machtverhältnisse der Haupt-Staaten Europa's in der alten und neuen Zeit, nebst einem allgemeinen Blicke auf das europäische Gleichgewicht," *ÖMZ* 4 (1875), 24-25.

<sup>209</sup> "Ideen über die Mittel zur Heranbildung der für den Bedarf einer Armee in Österreich von der in Neuester Zeit postulirten Stärke - nahezu einer Million Soldaten - nöthigen Anzahl intelligenter Ober- und Unterofficiere," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 175.

army had failed to keep pace with its rivals. The implementation of the *Wehrgesetz* and subsequent adjustments provided the area for problems to arise.

The issue of universal conscription raised some debate among the high command. Kuhn opposed the idea as he preferred the old system of calling up a specified number for the yearly recruit contingent and allowing those who did not wish to serve to pay a redemption fee instead. The Liberal government of the Austrian half of the empire also maintained this preference because its members felt the more industrialized part of the realm could not endure a long war under universal conscription because of the number of workers called to serve in the army and the drain on financial resources.<sup>210</sup> John, Beck, and Albrecht all saw the necessity of introducing conscription throughout the empire in order to keep up with the other powers, such as Prussia, which had already instituted such a program earlier in the 1860s.<sup>211</sup> As one Austro-Hungarian officer wrote, “It is not to be doubted that by the introduction of universal conscription the stated strength proportions of nearly a million battle ready fighters will be achieved, if this principle of universal conscription gains actual currency in practical life.”<sup>212</sup>

Finally, the Austrian military leaders, including Kuhn, agreed on universal conscription with no more purchasing of exemptions as the best means for increasing the fighting force of the army. Nevertheless, the implementation of the new program revealed difficulties inherent within the system. The 1868 military law set the recruit contingent at 95,474, determined in subsequent years not by the army but by parliament. This arrangement signified parliamentary control over the number of men in the army and provoked an ongoing struggle between the members of the

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<sup>210</sup> Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 490.

<sup>211</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 25.

<sup>212</sup> “Ideen über die Mittel zur Heranbildung der für den Bedarf einer Armee in Österreich von der in Neuester Zeit postulirten Stärke - nahezu einer Million Soldaten - nöthigen Anzahl intelligenter Ober- und Unterofficiere,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 177.

*Reichsrat* and the Austro-Hungarian high command over whether to raise or lower the recruit contingent, just as in the case of the debates about the military budget. Thus, increasing the size of the k.k. army depended on the views of the Austrian and Hungarian parliamentary representatives rather than the growing population of the empire or the needs of the military. In addition, not all recruits entered the active army. The draftees drew lots to determine their assignment. Those who drew the lowest numbers joined the active army, while those drawing the middle lots served in the *Landwehr* or the *Honvéd*. The highest numbers gave the recruits basically an exemption, because they merely joined the *Ersatzreserve*, or, supplementary reserve, in which they received no training and entered into military service only during wartime.<sup>213</sup> The reserve received 9574, or 10%, of the recruits.<sup>214</sup> Thus, the full 95,474 man recruit contingent did not benefit the standing army in the many ensuing years of peace, and even if the reserves had joined the active forces, they would have hardly helped the true military strength of the Austro-Hungarian army because of the paucity of their training. Though parliamentary representatives could take the blame, at least in part, for the small recruit contingent, the army did not use the maximum number of new soldiers to full advantage.

Another problem affecting the recruit contingent arose in the replenishment districts throughout the empire. The commanders in charge of these areas rejected too many recruits as unfit based on the recruitment instructions that stated the military requirements for accepting new men into the army. The doctors who inspected and measured the recruits followed the prescriptions too stringently or allowed their patients to escape the draft by declaring them unfit for insufficient reasons. In an article published in the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen*

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<sup>213</sup> Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 56; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 81.

<sup>214</sup> Frederick Martin, Sir John Scott Keltie, Isaac Parker Anderson Renwick, Mortimer Epstein, Sigfrid Henry Steinberg, and John Paxton, *The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the Civilised World for the Year 1889* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), 19.

*Vereine* (Organ of the Military Science Society), a k.k. doctor stated that his purpose consisted in “exposing several deficiencies in the army replenishment directions for the examination of conscripts.”<sup>215</sup> The doctor revealed striking statistics showing the serious decline in the number of fit soldiers entering the army despite the yearly increasing recruit contingent. From 1870 to 1882, the annual number of men eligible for conscription had almost doubled from 496,274 to 830,903. The tally of men declared fit for active service, however, totaled 149,875 or 29.3% in 1870 and a mere 107,728 or 12.9% in 1882, a drop of nearly a third.<sup>216</sup>

As a primary cause of this problem, the k.k. doctor cited the tendency of those in charge of selecting recruits to choose only the men who displayed every quality desirable in a soldier: a powerful physique, good looks, and readiness for training, and rejecting all others as weaklings. The selectors wanted the best recruits for their own branches, such as the technical troops, or cared only about fulfilling the required number of recruits from their sector. Additionally, the commanders of the replenishment regions did not have enough familiarity with their areas because their superiors transferred them too often. During nine years of working for the army in four different replacement districts, the doctor had seen the transfer of eight recruiting commanders, the same number of recruiting officers, nine *Landwehr* representatives, and eighteen regimental physicians. Under such conditions no stability or knowledge of the region or its recruits existed. To combat these defects, the author of the article recommended limiting the frequency of transfers among the recruiting commanders and officers as well as broadening the physical requirements for the designation of fitness. Therefore, recruits who did not

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<sup>215</sup> Dr. F. Presl, “Einige Bemerkungen über unsere ungünstigen Heeres-Ergänzungs-Resultate im Hinblicke auf die derzeit giltige Instruction zur ärztlichen Untersuchung der Wehrpflichtigen,” *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine (O.)* 32 (1886), 197. The Military Science Society began in the summer of 1867.

<sup>216</sup> Presl, “Einige Bemerkungen über unsere ungünstigen Heeres-Ergänzungs-Resultate im Hinblicke auf die derzeit giltige Instruction zur ärztlichen Untersuchung der Wehrpflichtigen,” 198.

completely fulfill the standards could still serve in noncombatant positions and allow the more physically fit to take on active service roles.<sup>217</sup> Thus, the k.k. army would find an internal remedy for the flagging number of recruits without having to beg parliamentary delegates for more funding. The doctor's article reveals the inefficiency within the Habsburg military, where the major problems stemmed not so much from insufficient budgets but rather from inadequate instructions and faulty implementation in addition to instability from excessive transfers issued with no regard for the good of the army as a whole.

### **Raising Intellectual Levels: One Year Volunteers and Military Schools**

Growth in the number of soldiers alone, however, remained insufficient for success. As one officer pointed out, "A mere numerical addition is certainly still no guarantee for an increase in power; it requires an expanded cadre, produces therefore significantly greater expenditures, demands a large amount of training, clothing, weapons, food, pay, and would be, if not completely fit for war, a burden for the field commander, a weakness for the army, a danger for the state."<sup>218</sup> The leading minds concurred on the necessity of raising not only the number but also the abilities, especially intellectual, of the officer corps, and in particular the junior officers. In a proposal of 26 December 1866, John communicated to Franz Joseph that the standing army needed an increase both in numbers and in the intellectual level of the officer corps.<sup>219</sup>

Therefore, the authors of the 1868 *Wehrgesetz* established the *Einjährig-Freiwilligen*, or one-year volunteers, in order not only to increase the number of officers, especially in the reserve formations, but also to raise the general intellectual level of the officer corps. Through this

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<sup>217</sup> Presl, "Einige Bemerkungen über unsere ungünstigen Heeres-Ergänzungs-Resultate im Hinblick auf die derzeit gültige Instruction zur ärztlichen Untersuchung der Wehrpflichtigen," 199-209.

<sup>218</sup> B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866), 44.

<sup>219</sup> FML Franz Freiherr von John, "Allerunterthänigster Vortrag des Kriegsministers," *Wiener Zeitung*, Nr. 317, 31 December 1866, 1030.

institution the Austro-Hungarian high command targeted the educated bourgeoisie. “The purpose of the institution of one-year volunteers in the k.k. Austro-Hungarian monarchy,” so wrote an officer in 1872, “is to offer the intelligent, young people suited for military duty the opportunity to be able to acquire within one year the higher scientific training and an easier intellectual grasp of things, which ought to take the greater part of three years.”<sup>220</sup> While this assessment emphasized the benefit for the volunteers, the high command looked upon the bourgeoisie as a source for the betterment of the military. Even conservatives like Archduke Albrecht saw the need for one-year volunteers and reserve officers from the educated middle class because of the perceived beneficial influence of education on the victorious Prussian campaign of 1866. If k.k. leaders wished to transform the Habsburg army into an army of the people by universal conscription, then they could not reject the intellectual potential of the bourgeois population.<sup>221</sup>

The implementation of this progressive idea of obtaining a group of junior officers from the bourgeoisie, however, proved less helpful than the Austro-Hungarian high command had hoped. By the end of 1870 the number of one year volunteers serving in the army totalled only 1652, with another 3212 on leave of absence with their service deferred.<sup>222</sup> After one year of training, the volunteers took a test. If they passed the examination, they received a commission as a reserve officer.<sup>223</sup> Results from the test, though, failed to provide a large number of

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<sup>220</sup> Quoted in Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 77.

<sup>221</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 76.

<sup>222</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1870* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1872), 528-529.

<sup>223</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 76.



successful qualifications. Only roughly half of the 1355 volunteers in 1869 passed the examination, while a mere third of the 1752 applicants of 1870 received reserve commissions.<sup>224</sup>

Over the next fifteen years, the numbers did not improve, as only 35% of the one-year volunteers became reserve officers. By 1878, army statistics listed 5143 total officers for the reserve formations, which numbered 524,660 troops, or 1 officer per 102 men.<sup>225</sup> The regular army rolls consisted of 15,594 officers for 806,259 soldiers, or 1 officer per 52 men, as compared to the 20,517 officers, or 1 per 39 men, in 1866.<sup>226</sup> The statistics of the major European military powers reveal a striking comparison. In 1875 France possessed a ratio of 1 officer per 16 men for the standing army. Germany in 1877 had 1 officer per 22 men for peace and 1 per 41 for war. Russia held a ratio of 1 officer per 22 soldiers for its peace footing and 1 per 30 for its war footing.<sup>227</sup> Even including the *Landwehr* and *Honvédség* officers, the Austro-Hungarian army did not have enough non-commissioned officers. Thus, junior officers had to take on duties that sergeants normally handled.<sup>228</sup> This deficiency helps to explain the presence of overqualified officers in positions that lower ranking men normally would have held, especially because too many high ranking officers existed for the available positions befitting higher rank. Once again, as in the case of the recruit contingent, the Habsburg high command proved themselves capable

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<sup>224</sup> *Militär-statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1870* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1871), 211.

<sup>225</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1877* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), XI, 4-5; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 83.

<sup>226</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1877* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), XI, 4-5; "Ideen über die Mittel zur Heranbildung der für den Bedarf einer Armee in Österreich von der in Neuester Zeit postulirten Stärke - nahezu einer Million Soldaten - nöthigen Anzahl intelligenter Ober- und Unterofficiere," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867), 177.

<sup>227</sup> Frederick Martin, *The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the Civilised World for the Year 1878* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 70, 102, 380.

<sup>228</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 83.

of finding, considering, and debating innovative and even progressive ideas, but did not ensure their success by properly implementing the new measures.

The military schools appeared as the obvious sphere for instituting reforms that would provide more intellectual officers that could rival the Prussians, whom the Austro-Hungarian high command deemed worthy of imitation.<sup>229</sup> Because of the events of 1866 and the recent fast pace of change in military spheres, many Habsburg army leaders believed success in future wars would depend on intellectual ability.<sup>230</sup> Albrecht and John first aimed at broadening the knowledge of the officer corps by requiring officer aspirants to pass examinations in German and the language of their regiment, mathematics, practical measuring, terrain knowledge and cartography, geography, history, military administration, training and exercise regulations, service regulations, army organization, the tactics of the three main military branches (infantry, cavalry, and artillery), engineering, permanent fortifications, and weaponry. Additionally, these prospective officers from the cadet schools and the regular army should participate in practical exercises and solve practical military problems.<sup>231</sup> Thus, officers would prove not only their knowledge of all parts of the army and the interconnections of the various branches but also their ability to think under the friction of battlefield conditions.

The increasing prominence of Liberal ideas in the war ministry of Kuhn led to changes in military education. Kuhn promoted reforms to ensure fiscal responsibility and expanded army educational curricula to include more technical and humanistic training. Therefore, the war

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<sup>229</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 494; Bernhard von Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn* (Berlin: A. Hoffman & Comp., 1893), 254.

<sup>230</sup> A.B., "Über Officers-Schulen der Truppen," *ÖMZ* 3 (1869): 337.

<sup>231</sup> Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn*, 260-263; Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 495; Josef Ritter Rechberger von Rechkron, *Das Bildungswesen im österreichischen Heere vom dreissigjährigen Kriege bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna: R. v. Waldheim, 1878), 66-67.

minister, with the help of Colonel Eduard Baron Pechmann von Massen, implemented measures to save money by constricting the number of military schools, such as combining four artillery schools into one Military Technical School and assigning the training of subalterns to troop schools. Kuhn also restricted entrance into higher military institutions until the age of fourteen.

Additionally, in an effort to make army education more compatible with public schooling and thus able to provide graduates with skills applicable to civilian life, the war minister and Pechmann required trained officers as teachers for specific courses, more contact for students with society outside the military, and stricter means of measuring worthiness for advancement to higher classes.<sup>232</sup> Thus, the Austro-Hungarian army could save 250,000 florins per year while achieving higher levels of education, a shorter time for training a larger number of subalterns, and an increase in the kind of humanistic and technical training that the Prussians used in their military institutions.<sup>233</sup> As an example of more humanistic training, students in the war college had to pass examinations not only in army organization, tactics, administrative and operative general staff service, military history and strategy, military geography, fortifications, weaponry, and terrain, but also in public and international law, economics, business, natural science, including chemistry and physics, and German literature, ranging from national epics and myths to prose and poetry from the Middle Ages to Leibnitz, Gottsched, Klopstock, Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Wieland, Herder, and more recent works of history and philosophy.<sup>234</sup> Such

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<sup>232</sup> Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn*, 266-268; Rechkron, *Das Bildungswesen im österreichischen Heere vom dreissigjährigen Kriege bis zur Gegenwart*, 30-33; Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 496.

<sup>233</sup> Colonel Eduard Ritter Pechmann von Massen, "Über die Reform der Militär-Bildungsanstalten," *ÖMZ* 2 (1867): 336-346.

<sup>234</sup> *Prüfungs-Fragen aus den Studien-Fächern der K.K. Kriegsschule für das Jahr 1877* (Vienna: L.W. Seidl & Sohn, 1877), KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 44, Lehrpläne, Stundeneinteilung, Organisation der KS, Denkschrift KS 1852-1877.

education certainly would not produce officers steeped in backward ideas and conservatism, but rather more progressive thinkers.

These reforms addressed both financial and educational areas to improve the military schools in all aspects. Combining schools and raising the entrance age saved money while the introduction of more humanistic and technical training broadened the overall education of Habsburg officers, especially in the *Kriegsschule*. The recurring problem of practical application, however, stymied these measures and brought criticism from Albrecht and others within the Austro-Hungarian army, as will be seen in a later section.

### **Raising Intellectual Levels: Military Journals**

Another means the high command employed to raise the intellectual level of the officer corps, especially for those who had already graduated from the army's educational institutions, consisted in the newly established Military Science Society and its publication *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* as well as greater emphasis on the role of the *ÖMZ*. In the summer of 1867 several officers in Vienna founded the Military Science Society, "the purpose of which was, in a true patriotic sense, 'to oppose the overgrowing pessimism in the army [from the defeat of 1866] and' to strengthen 'its self-confidence through the cultivation of its moral and scientific element.'"<sup>235</sup> John, the minister of war at that time, promoted the *Verein*, especially as an organization for stimulating the technological training of younger officers: "With the speedy progress in all branches of knowledge, it is necessary for everyone more than in earlier times to think about comprehensive further education."<sup>236</sup> After Kuhn became war minister, he also took charge of the Military Science Society and expanded its extent to encompass not just the officers

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<sup>235</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908: Eine Geschichte dieser Zeitschrift anlässlich ihres 100jährigen Bestehens* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1908), 26.

<sup>236</sup> "Mittheilungen aus der Abtheilung für Kriegswissenschaften des k.k. Militär-Casinos in Wien," *ÖMZ* 1 (1868): 203.

in Vienna but rather the officer corps of the whole army. With his encouragement, the *Verein* began to publish its own journal in 1870. This publication grew to include two large volumes of over 1000 pages per year. With an emphasis on military science, the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* published critical articles as well as bibliographical lists of works concerning military topics, including publications from other countries. The articles of this journal focused primarily on analyses of new technology as well as critiques of tactics and strategy from recent publications and conflicts. Thus, the *Organ* provided an opportunity for Habsburg officers to discuss important military questions influencing modern warfare in a forum promoting truth and frankness. From 600 members in 1870 the Society increased to 3633 by 1900 while fostering the establishment of military science societies in the provincial garrisons.<sup>237</sup>

Overlapping somewhat the work of the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine*, the editors of the *ÖMZ* also tried to raise the intellectual level of the Austro-Hungarian officer corps by publishing critical articles from authors both inside and outside the empire in an effort to make the *ÖMZ* the best military journal in Europe. Valentin Streffleur, the editor from 1860 to 1870, numbered the contributors at 214 in 1862, and counted 2439 subscribers by 1869.<sup>238</sup> The journal printed articles about military matters by captains and lieutenants as well as high ranking officers who used its pages to spread their views to the officer corps, in many cases anonymously. In addition, the *ÖMZ* published decrees from the emperor and war minister as well as commentaries about changes and transfers in the Austro-Hungarian army. The contributors took great interest in reporting on new technology and the actions of foreign armed forces. Writers devoted long articles to the events of wars both past and contemporary with detailed maps and charts.

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<sup>237</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908*, 26-31.

<sup>238</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908*, 18.

In Zitterhofer's index of *ÖMZ* articles, the category of military history takes the greatest number of pages at 68. This amount, however, includes accounts of modern campaigns that the authors reported as they took place. Therefore, these articles belong more to current events than to military history. Tactics took the next highest number of pages with 31, then weapons and shooting methods, and army and troop histories at 23, army organization 22, and other topics, such as troop training and regulations, biography, strategy, military education, and technology with fewer pages.<sup>239</sup> Thus, *ÖMZ* authors covered a broad variety of military topics without stressing any one too greatly. The large number of articles about tactics revealed the importance which theorists gave to the changing battlefield situations of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although many writers chose to publish analyses of campaigns from earlier Habsburg wars, these articles did not represent a majority of the *ÖMZ*'s works. The topics that aroused the most debate concerned new technology and its effects on strategy and tactics as well as training and education.

Allmayer-Beck asserts the difference in the goals for which Archdukes Albrecht and Wilhelm aimed in the *ÖMZ* and Kuhn strove in the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine*. Whereas the archdukes saw the secret to the art of war in the classical thoughts of men such as their father Archduke Karl, Kuhn and the Liberals believed their publication should focus on leadership technique for officers who would have to lead a command in battle rather than those who would make merely strategic decisions. Allmayer-Beck maintains the revival of the *ÖMZ* had no greater success than its first run, because "the transposing of military historical sayings

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<sup>239</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleuers Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908*, 39-42.

into knowledge founded in reality presupposes an already theoretically schooled officer corps and could be the point just as little after 1866 as before.”<sup>240</sup>

This harsh assessment of the value of the *ÖMZ* fails to take into account the views of the editors and contributors who saw officer training as something more than attempting to apply the maxims of past leaders and theorists to practical situations. Allmayer-Beck also does not consider the changes that took place in the *ÖMZ* after 1866 and the efforts of its editors, especially Streffleur, to broaden the knowledge of the officer corps.<sup>241</sup> In addition, the *ÖMZ* printed the writings of the Military Science Society from 1867 until 1870, while the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* published articles that did not necessarily correspond to Kuhn’s agenda, such as General Staff Lieutenant Alois Ritter von Haymerle’s defense of the general staff war college.<sup>242</sup> Allmayer-Beck does, however, bring attention to the rivalry between Albrecht and Kuhn as well as their conflicting ideas by pointing out Kuhn’s conviction that the *ÖMZ* did not suffice and another military journal needed to educate the officers.<sup>243</sup> The redundancy that this rivalry caused, not only in creating the *Organ* but also other periodicals that claimed to belong to “the new era of the army” and “reject the old tradition for ever,” added to army and officer expenses without bringing about the unity from which the Habsburg military could have benefitted so much. Streffleur claimed Austrian intellectuals and artists had only recently begun to show tolerance and cooperation in their pursuit of knowledge. Previously these men had displayed only envy and censure while tearing down the efforts of others. Members of the military still showed the desire for one-sidedness and self-idolization rather than

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<sup>240</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 70.

<sup>241</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908* 20-21. Streffleur wrote on a variety of topics spanning from campaign studies, tactics, and topography to railroads, statistics, and marriages in the Russian army.

<sup>242</sup> Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908*, 27; Alois Ritter von Haymerle, “Über Generalstabsschulen,” *O.* 1 (1871): 339-357.

<sup>243</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft,” 70.

concerted progress in science.<sup>244</sup> The intensity of this rivalry led one *ÖMZ* writer to lament the propensity of the debaters to lose sight of objectivity as they “tried more often to achieve victory only by personal invective. . . ., when we see things dragged into the street, which in every family are washed in its own house like dirty laundry.”<sup>245</sup>

Gauging the impact of the *ÖMZ* and the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* on the Austro-Hungarian officer corps presents difficulties. In 1863, 98 out of 216 general officers subscribed to the *ÖMZ*. The statistics for staff officer subscriptions provided an even worse showing with a mere 81 of 464 receiving the journal.<sup>246</sup> By 1869, despite the calls for greater intelligence among the officer corps, only 2439 or 13.7% out of 17,704 officers purchased the *ÖMZ*.<sup>247</sup> In 1867 the *ÖMZ* advertised the introduction of a military library composed of twelve books that would offer a comprehensive knowledge base for officers who could not afford their own collection of all the great martial works. The author of the report lamented the troubles that previous attempts to promote military literature had encountered, especially because of the dearth of participants: “The difficulties with which our own journal itself still has to struggle, despite the ever louder call for the greater diffusion of technical material, gives us the measuring stick of trouble and danger with which other military editorial staffs must also wrestle. There are unfortunately not too many officers among us who earnestly desire to study scientific works, but still fewer who actually buy them.”<sup>248</sup>

Financial constraints limited the means of Habsburg officers to purchase subscriptions or books to enhance their intellectual abilities after graduation from one of the military schools.

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<sup>244</sup> Streffleur, “Über die Einsetzung eines Militär-Unterrichtsrathes,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 21.

<sup>245</sup> “Ein Mahnwort,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1870): 225.

<sup>246</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 62.

<sup>247</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1870*, 528; Zitterhofer, *Streffleurs Militärische Zeitschrift 1808-1908*, 18.

<sup>248</sup> . . . .er, “Literatur. Recension. Österreichische Militär-Bibliothek,” *OMZ* 1 (1867), 129.



István Deák argues that most officers did not qualify as independently wealthy, and their pay, especially for lieutenants and captains after mandatory expenditures, failed to provide adequate funds for extra expenses, such as the military journals.<sup>249</sup> Insufficient pay, however, did not account for low subscription rates in all cases. Little interest in intellectual activity can also explain the indifference to martial literature for some officers. Certainly Arthur Schnitzler's stereotype of the dissolute, arrogant, uncultured, insipid Lieutenant Gustl did not apply to the Austro-Hungarian officer corps universally.<sup>250</sup> Even if Schnitzler's exaggerated description of Gustl had some basis of truth in regard to certain officers, who followed the example of Benedek and had no interest in reading military journals, not all members of the Habsburg officer corps believed that the only important things in life consisted of duels, women, and drinking.

Non-military writers did not register the only complaints against the lack of interest in cerebral pursuits among Habsburg officers. The Liberals, both inside and outside the army, noted the anti-intellectual bent of the officer corps before the Austro-Prussian War, when "the average troop officer did not read much in any case. Reading was considered rather unmanly..."<sup>251</sup> The catastrophe of Königgrätz, though, discredited the anti-intellectual attitude of leaders such as Benedek and Henikstein, who bore responsibility for the disaster. The call for raising the intellectual level of all parts of the armed forces resounded throughout the army. Albrecht and Beck realized the necessity of training more intelligent officers, especially in the general staff, with more practical application of knowledge through staff rides and realistic maneuvers.<sup>252</sup> Following the close of the 1866 campaign, the *ÖMZ* printed several articles

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<sup>249</sup> Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 120-123.

<sup>250</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Leutnant Gustl* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1901).

<sup>251</sup> Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 110.

<sup>252</sup> Feldmarschalleutnant (FML) Erzherzog Albrecht, No. 1017 "Allerunterhänigster Vortrag," 21 August 1866, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 22, 1866; Beck, "Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armees-

bewailing the inability of Habsburg officers to think during battle and asserting the need for leaders who relied on their practical knowledge of warfare rather than automatons who attempted in vain to achieve victory through brute force and martial spirit.<sup>253</sup> Certainly, the support of the Austro-Hungarian high command for the major military journals after 1866 must have increased the influence of these works. The founding of military science societies in many garrisons throughout the empire afforded officers the opportunity for both giving and hearing lectures that later appeared in the pages of the journals. The increasing number of articles and authors during the later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also show a greater interest in the intellectual side of military pursuits. These journals provide excellent opportunities to see the thoughts and ideas that Habsburg officers debated while proving that the Dual Monarchy's officer corps did not wallow in backwardness and ultra-conservatism as historians such as Gunther Rothenberg and A.J.P. Taylor suggest.

### **Raising Intellectual Levels: Promotion Regulations**

The attempt to reform promotion regulations presents an excellent example of how the Austro-Hungarian high command tried to solve a problem with theory but failed because of practical application and rivalry. After the defeat of 1866 Albrecht and John realized the irregularities and disadvantages of the existing promotion regulations. Both men saw that problems had arisen as many officers had requested pensions at the beginning of the war because

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Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften," 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien.

<sup>253</sup> Htr., "Degen und Feder," *ÖMZ* 2 (1866): 41-48; "Über die Ursache der Mißerfolge bei der österreichischen Nordarmee im Kriege Preußens gegen Deutschland im Jahre 1866," *ÖMZ* 2 (1866): 349-352; B.P.S., "Unsere Aufgabe," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 38-41; "Praxis und Routine. - Wissenschaft und Kunst. - Betrachtungen über den Kriegsschauplatz in Böhmen von 1866 und die auf demselben stattgehabten Kriegsereignisse dieses Jahres. (Aus den Schriften eines Veteranen des österreichischen Heeres)," *ÖMZ* 4 (1866): 181-183; "Ideen über die Mittel zur Heranbildung der für den Bedarf einer Armee in Österreich von der in neuester Zeit postulirten Stärke - nahezu einer Million Soldaten - nöthigen Anzahl intelligenter Ober- und Unterofficiere," *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 177-182; "Der österreichische Armee der Zukunft," *ÖMZ* 1 (1868): 127-128.

of age, ill health, or inadequate physical fitness for the strains of campaigning. Therefore, many new and unproven officers gained promotions to replace the old or unfit. During the war, certain units had suffered heavy casualties, and thus subalterns with little experience received promotions to fill the gaps in the officer corps. These promotions created a situation in which men who had entered the army only in 1866 outranked officers who had served for years. In addition, the need to put the military on a wartime footing required an increase of officers and promotions, which then at the recurrence of peace left a large number of officers without commands befitting their rank. The promotion regulations had not proven capable of handling these issues.<sup>254</sup>

Therefore, the war minister and the army commander instituted reforms to solve the officer promotion problems on 24 April 1867. In an effort to bring younger and more intelligent men into positions of command, officers who showed outstanding performance in battle could receive promotion. Officer aspirants who had superior test scores in the military academies as well as spotless records would gain promotions more readily. A reserve officer corps would exist for use in time of war. The high command also placed age limits for older officers in active service in order to eliminate the need to replace a large number of officers who could no longer meet the physical requirements for battle leadership.<sup>255</sup> While these reforms offered a scenario beneficial for officers who displayed intelligence, courage, and skillful command as well as for the army, they also resulted in an even larger number of pensions and raised the question of how to form and employ a reserve officer corps during a long peace.

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<sup>254</sup> Albrecht and John, "Die Beförderungsvorschrift für die k.k. österreichische Landarmee vom 24. April 1867," *ÖMZ* 2 (1867) 137-145.

<sup>255</sup> Albrecht and John, "Die Beförderungsvorschrift für die k.k. österreichische Landarmee vom 24. April 1867," 146-156.

The more conservative system, however, never received the chance to prove whether it could solve the problems permanently because Kuhn replaced it quickly with his own more progressive idea of introducing equality throughout the army with testing. The war minister, hoping to advance the most intelligent and talented officers, tried to introduce a meritocracy based on talent throughout the military. Therefore, Kuhn eliminated the right of the *Inhaber*, or proprietor of a regiment, to decide promotions. Candidates, even for the ranks of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel, would prove their abilities by taking competitive examinations. These measures gave the war minister almost complete control over the advancement process, as the emperor usually followed his recommendations.<sup>256</sup> Beck and Albrecht both objected strongly to these innovations because they removed the possibility of extraordinary promotions in peacetime and diminished the importance of the general staff. Kuhn's reforms also caused resentment on the part of older officers who felt chagrin at seeing themselves subordinate to men younger and less experienced. In addition, Albrecht charged the testing system contained too much theoretical rather than practical knowledge and necessitated extremely mild grading for anyone to pass.<sup>257</sup>

Kuhn's system, though more suitable for the time of peace in which it operated, resulted in disgruntlement on the part of senior officers and in subjective grading. Theoretically, the liberal war minister's measures appeared feasible on paper. Nevertheless, the practical application failed for two reasons. First, the Habsburg army remained unprepared for the implementation of equality, not necessarily because of antiquated views of the dynastic principle, but rather because officer candidates came from all over the empire and thus from peoples with

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<sup>256</sup> Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," 72-73; Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 358, 374.

<sup>257</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 50-51.

extreme variances in education. Second, though the idea of basing promotions on examination appeared as an objective method, subjectivity unavoidably entered. No system can provide perfection, because once human beings become involved, errors and subjective views affect practical application.

When General der Kavallerie Alexander Baron von Koller of the Constitutional Party replaced Kuhn as war minister in 1874, Beck and John, who became the new general staff chief, introduced a new set of promotion regulations in 1875. These prescriptions greatly limited extraordinary advancement as an honor rather than a right, and based promotions for staff officers on practical knowledge proven during a year of service instead of competitive examinations.<sup>258</sup> Thus, the general staff gained an elite status as the producer of trained specialists. In this time of technological progress, experts in the various areas of military science held the key to advancement instead of officers who had connections with socially or monetarily influential people.

Rivalry ruined what good could have come from either Albrecht's or Kuhn's system. The program that finally began at the end of the decade following the Austro-Prussian War introduced a compromise. The Habsburg general staff gained an elite position, similar to the same organ in Prussia, and therefore ended any hopes of all officers, even of the same rank, holding equal status. However, promotions went to officers who displayed superiority in technical knowledge while in practical service, thus ability based on merit, rather than social influence or financial considerations. Though leadership on the battlefield could come into consideration, the system suited the years of peace which Austria-Hungary experienced until 1878 and then again until 1914.

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<sup>258</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 375.

## Rivalry and Reform

Kuhn's reforms in regard to the general staff and other positions, such as the general directors of the artillery and special weapons, formed part of his plan "to unite all military power as much as possible in his own hands."<sup>259</sup> By rendering all other Habsburg army commands mere *Hilfsorgane* without any independence whatsoever, even the permission to issue instructions to their branches before receiving approval from the war ministry, Kuhn not only recreated the situation of one man wielding too much power, the situation that Beck wanted to avoid, but also introduced even more bureaucracy into the army.<sup>260</sup> The requirement to obtain the war minister's stamp on all correspondence increased the already vast amount of paperwork within military offices and slowed the workings of the various commands. The testing for advancement in the general staff proved complicated and favored theoretical knowledge rather than the desired practical abilities for battlefield leadership. As Wagner stated, "Hence many false conclusions and irregularities resulted, and even war proven officers often scored worse than others."<sup>261</sup>

Because of these problems, Kuhn's reforms, though he wished the betterment of the Habsburg forces, failed to produce the results he had wanted. Instead, they brought about great opposition from both Albrecht and Beck, who did not see the liberalization of the army as an improvement. Beck, who normally played the role of peacemaker in the many disputes among Austro-Hungarian military leaders, firmly resisted Kuhn's attempts to abolish the general staff corps. The head of the military chancellery argued for the strengthening of the general staff as the key to future operations of the army by increasing training opportunities, such as maneuvers

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<sup>259</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 237.

<sup>260</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 238.

<sup>261</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 375.

with large troop formations.<sup>262</sup> Streffleur countered the idea that one man should have total control over the military, particularly in education. The *ÖMZ* editor favored the introduction of a board for discussing suggestions and making decisions affecting the intellectual leadership of military institutions because of the many areas of study involved in military training.<sup>263</sup> Foreign Minister Andrassy, who according to the war minister possessed a “gypsy nature,” considered Kuhn anti-Magyar and thus an opponent. The foreign minister also opposed Kuhn’s proposals for war against Russia and *revanche* on Prussia.<sup>264</sup> Thus, the war minister, like his predecessor, had succeeded in antagonizing all the other powerful members of the military and even important government officials.

In addition to his liberal reform policies during his tenure as minister of war, Kuhn laid himself open to criticism primarily because of his shortcomings in procurement. Kuhn might have avoided criticism for the slow procurement process if he had not bragged about his accomplishments and lobbied for war against Prussia in 1870. In several messages to the emperor, Kuhn strongly underscored the readiness of the army for war and the advantages of Austro-Hungarian participation with France against Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War. The war minister declared 1870 the best opportunity for Habsburg *revanche* against Prussia while possibly offering a chance to weaken Russian aggression in eastern Europe.<sup>265</sup> The other

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<sup>262</sup> Beck, “Promemoria über Armee-Verhältnisse,” August 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien; Beck, “Theilweise Ursachen des gegenwärtigen schlechten Armee-Geistes und Mittel, welche zur Hebung desselben beitragen dürften,” 1867, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 66, Studien; Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 36-37.

<sup>263</sup> Streffleur, “Über die Einsetzung eines Militär-Unterrichtsrathes,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 19-22; “Über die Errichtung eines Militär Lehrer-Seminars,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1867): 239-240.

<sup>264</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 49-50; Srbik, *Aus Österreichs Vergangenheit*, 211.

<sup>265</sup> Kuhn, No. 70 “Bitte des Reichs-Kriegs-Ministers FML Frh. v. Kuhn, Gesuch um Enthebung von seinem Posten und seinen politische Gedanken über eine Beteiligung an einem deutsch-französischen Kriege,” 20 July 1870, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien; “Memoire des Kriegsministers Freiherrn v. Kuhn über die Teilnahme der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie am Kriege zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich,” July 1870, in Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte*, 457-460.

government officials as well as military leaders, except ironically Albrecht, however, rejected Kuhn's proposals. Franz Joseph, even though he permitted partial mobilization for armed mediation, did not fully believe Kuhn's bragging about the military capabilities of Austria-Hungary. Therefore the emperor called for a board of inquiry to investigate the army's actual war readiness. The findings of this board revealed grave deficiencies in almost all departments of the k.k. military. The infantry still needed 200,000 Werndl rifles with 40,000,000 bullets. The cavalry showed a shortage of 30,000 Werndl carbines, a number that the board report considered only a minimum. While the field artillery had a sufficient amount of cannon, the coastal batteries fell short by 120 9cm and 100 8cm guns as well as 50 mortars.<sup>266</sup> Fortress artillery required 5000 rifled and 3000 smoothbore cannon with 500 shot per weapon upon completion of the projected fortification plans throughout the empire. In addition, the infantry showed a deficiency of 30,000 shirts and 28,000 uniform coats as well as 14,000 caps. The reserve cavalry needed horses. The telegraph troops had not yet received miles of line, and the railroad divisions revealed a shortage of tools. Aside from the field artillery, only the engineer corps possessed full equipment.<sup>267</sup>

Seeing the unready state of the army, Albrecht did not forfeit this excellent opportunity to lambast his rival publicly. In an anonymous booklet, *The Year 1870 and the Military Power of the Monarchy*, the archduke compared the Austro-Hungarian army to the recently victorious

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<sup>266</sup> Though coastal batteries do not appear as a necessity for entry into the Franco-Prussian War, the report stated these cannon as a need for any mobilization, such as in the case of a conflict with Italy.

<sup>267</sup> 1870 Präs. 16-13/3, 5. Abtheilung des k.k. Reichs-Kriegsministeriums. No. 99/j. "Nachweisung über jene Ausrüstungs-Gegenstände, deren Bestellung anlässlich der jüngsten Mobilisirungs-Vorarbeiten angeordnet wurde; ad Reskript Präs. No. 3788 vom 20. Oktober 1870," 14 November 1870, KA KM Präsidium, Karton Nr. 314, 1870 15/33-21/10; 16-13/3, 7. Abtheilung des Reichs-Kriegsministeriums. "Nachweisung in Folge Praesid.-Erlaß No. 3788 vom 20. Oktober 1870, über die wegen der letzten Mobilisirungs-Verhältnisse geschehenen Bestellungen an Heeres-Ausrüstungs-Gegenstände," 25 Oktober 1870, KA KM Präsidium, Karton Nr. 314, 1870 15/33-21/10; Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 39-40.



Prussians and thus revealed the shortcomings of Kuhn's administration for everyone to see. Albrecht pointed out not only the deficiency in Werndl rifles, which he placed at 340,000-390,000 to arm the reserve forces as well as the line infantry, but also the difficult logistical problems Habsburg troops would endure if they entered a war with two rifles of different caliber.<sup>268</sup> Although the archduke observed that the parliamentary representatives did not grant enough funds for reserve provisions and that the other ministers opposed the amount requested by the army as unattainable, he lamented the dearth of unity within the military stemming from the Dual Monarchy arrangement. Blaming the administration of the army for negligence and confusion in war preparations resulting in insufficient provisions and equipment, especially for mobilization, Albrecht declared that without agreement and cooperation among leaders, "mutual distrust and ill-will, self-overestimation and despondency, friction and special interests are produced and increase."<sup>269</sup> Clearly the archduke targeted Kuhn's attempts to unify the k.k. army under his control as well as his boasts about Austria-Hungary's war readiness and return to great power status.

During the next few years, Albrecht persisted in attacking the war minister's administrative abilities. As inspector general of the army, the archduke had ample opportunities to criticize all aspects of the Habsburg military, including weapons, equipment, training, and tactics. In a military conference in 1873, Albrecht used Kuhn's own liberal ideas against him when he pointed out the burdensome bureaucracy in the k.k. army because of the war minister's acquisition of supreme martial power. The archduke recommended the partition of command as an important principle of all constitutional states.<sup>270</sup> Though Albrecht's reports to the emperor

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<sup>268</sup> Albrecht, *Das Jahr 1870 und die Wehrkraft der Monarchie*, 71-72.

<sup>269</sup> Albrecht, *Das Jahr 1870 und die Wehrkraft der Monarchie*, 39-40,73.

<sup>270</sup> No. 22, "Militär-Conferenz 1873," KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien, 20-23.

never failed to find fault with most of Kuhn's policies to the point of revealing his personal antipathy for the war minister, the archduke's findings exposed serious problems that Kuhn had not resolved. As Lackey correctly stated, "Kuhn completely rejected the idea that some of the inspector general's observations might have some merit; he saw them only as personal attacks on his character and administration of the armed forces."<sup>271</sup> Thus, because of rivalry the Habsburg military lost any chance of remedying the important issues short of finding a new war minister, as Albrecht, as a member of the royal family, had firm hold over his own position as inspector general of the army.

Kuhn's educational reforms also came under attack. The "Pechmann system" of military education proved unsatisfactory to almost all martial circles, as the military newspapers, especially those with the support of Albrecht, proclaimed. The journal authors contested that the results of the new educational system had not fulfilled the promises of improvement, but had instead worsened the situation. The young sons of officers had no place for military training until the age of fourteen and thus created a heavy burden on their families. The general staff's war college fell into neglect. The broadening of subjects and fewer years in the cadet schools rendered the students' education superficial, yet more burdensome. The examiners graded so leniently that a student could better his position by gaining a merely passing mark in several subjects rather than achieving an excellent grade in one specialty.<sup>272</sup>

The combination of opposition from Albrecht, Beck, and Andrassy doomed Kuhn to eventual replacement.<sup>273</sup> The war minister offered his resignation to Franz Joseph in 1872,

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<sup>271</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 48-49.

<sup>272</sup> Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn*, 335-336.

<sup>273</sup> Srbik, *Aus Österreichs Vergangenheit*, 216.

though the emperor did not dismiss him until 1874.<sup>274</sup> After only six years in office, Kuhn departed and Alexander Baron von Koller took his place. Koller himself lasted only two years before retiring because of poor health. In the decade following the Austro-Prussian War, a time of vital importance for reforming the Habsburg military, three men had held its most prominent position. The instability within the war ministry increased the difficulty of introducing measures that would last long enough to solve the main problems.

### **Conclusion**

After 1866, the call for reform spread throughout the k.k. military. The entire army leadership recognized the need to resolve critical issues that had resulted in defeat. Many officers proposed solutions. The majority realized that the Habsburg army required new breech-loading rifles and universal conscription to compete with the other European powers. Better leadership would result in more favorable outcomes in campaigns. Thus, the new leaders began procuring the Werndl rifles and trying to adapt the old Austrian tactics to suit the improved weaponry. Albrecht and John instituted an improved set of promotions regulations. Kuhn tried to transform the military educational establishments with Liberal ideas of scientific testing and advancement by merit. While dealing with a new and much more complex political arrangement because of the *Ausgleich*, the high command forged a *Wehrgesetz* that could raise Austrian military might to a level that would ensure great power status for the Habsburg empire.

Austro-Hungarian military leaders marred their own attempts at reform, however, by failure in practical application as well as rivalry within the high command. In the decade following the calamity of Königgrätz, three war ministers held office. All the important members of the high command maintained differing positions on the reform program, ranging

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<sup>274</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 49-56.

from keeping the army as a dynastic organ to remodeling the military to resemble civilian institutions. Albrecht, John, Beck, and Kuhn had various ideas which did not always mesh. Each wanted his own part of the military, the war ministry, the *Armeeoberkommando*, the inspectorate, the military chancellery, the general staff, to control army operations. Except for Beck, each desired absolute power in military affairs. The rivalry that arose, especially the vindictive revulsion of Kuhn and Albrecht for each other, crippled attempts to form a united leadership and bring about effective reform. Yet, despite these problems, the Habsburg military did improve in certain areas during the decade after the defeat of 1866.

The ideas and theories that officers raised about improving the status of the troops and rendering them loyal subjects of the emperor sounded excellent. Articles in the military journals proposed learning the languages of the common soldiers for better communication and fulfilling the culturo-historical role of the Habsburg army in making recruits into patriots of the Habsburg empire. Yet officers did little in practice to effect lasting change. The high command eliminated flogging in 1867 and ordered officers to treat the rank and file with more humanity. Leaders made provisions for better medicinal care and supplies.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless, critics still blamed the poor conditions of army life for the high mortality rate among Habsburg troops.<sup>276</sup> Various nationalities, especially the Slavic peoples who felt chagrin at the favoritism of dualism for Hungarians and Austrians, saw no reason to give full support to a government that did not treat them fairly.

In tactics, the k.k. army showed progress. Attempting to adapt to the new technology of the breechloading rifle and ever increasing firepower, military leaders advocated the elimination of frontal assaults in closed order. Yet many tacticians still favored the offensive as they strove

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<sup>275</sup> Srbik, *Aus Österreichs Vergangenheit*, 185-186.

<sup>276</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 83.

to find ways to close with the bayonet. While eschewing cavalry charges against infantry, officers tried to find other roles for mounted troops, such as reconnaissance and security patrols. Nevertheless, some adhered to gallant shock tactics. The desire to learn from the most recent battles resulted in an obsession with Königgrätz and the Franco-Prussian War, campaigns that seemingly proved the decisiveness of the attack against the passivity of defense. Yet steps toward more reasonable tactics that accounted for the devastating fire of the breech-loader and the viability of the defense had taken place.

Strategically, almost all Habsburg officers still believed in the effectiveness of permanent fortifications. This view did not take into account the improvements in artillery that rendered fortresses obsolete, while at the same time it necessitated vast sums of money that parliamentary representatives refused to grant. Although the high command insisted that the stinginess of the Delegations hampered weapons procurement and other necessary reforms, internal corruption and mismanagement of funds especially held the army back from meaningful progress. Thus, despite concentrated efforts to improve the Austro-Hungarian army, the k.k. high command met only partial success before its next military encounter in 1878.

### Chapter 3 - Adapting in Bosnia-Hercegovina

Defying the inclemency of extraordinarily unfavorable weather, the hardships of impassible ground and unavoidable privations of every kind, my brave troops have broken the resistance of a misled, fanatical population in glorious battles, have constantly held high the honor of our flags through their exemplary manful discipline and long-standing valor, and successfully solved increasingly difficult tasks in a short time.

The high level of battle discipline, the extraordinary perseverance and marching proficiency, which have been displayed exceptionally by all troops and divisions, have merited undivided acknowledgement; they are the results of the sacrifice and laborious toil of many years, which now may recognize the most beautiful pay in the just recently executed deeds.

I thank the commanders for their circumspect leadership and for their enterprising conduct of operations - I thank the generals, officers, and men of the Second Army - I thank finally all the members of the army, of my navy and of both my *Landwehren*, who were called to contribute to the solution of a difficult task, for their always proven loyalty to duty, for their self-sacrifice, for their perseverance, and for the uniform cooperation of everyone, whereby all results could be achieved, which henceforth will take an honorable place in the history of our fatherland.<sup>277</sup>

Thus, Emperor Franz Joseph praised and congratulated his army for its successful conquest of Bosnia-Hercegovina, a small Balkan part of the Ottoman Empire to the south of the Dual Monarchy, in 1878. The invasion had lasted less than twelve weeks, though the campaign extended longer than Austria's defeat at the hands of Prussia in the so-called Seven Weeks' War of 1866. Bosnia-Hercegovina presented an excellent scenario for the Austro-Hungarian military to test its new weaponry and tactics as well as the effects of reforms in other areas, such as army organization, military education, and supply network. Although the forces of one small Balkan province of the Ottoman Empire certainly did not qualify as a major European military power, the Bosnian campaign still allowed ample opportunities to judge the battlefield performance of

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<sup>277</sup> Franz Josef, "Armee-Befehl vom 19.10.1878," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift (ÖMZ)* 3 & 4 (1878): 1-2.

the k.k. army. A war against a lesser opponent also presented an easier task than a struggle against Prussia, Russia, France, or even Italy. Victory, though hardly ever in doubt, injected a renewal of confidence into the Habsburg troops that had been shaken twelve years earlier. Even parliamentary delegates and public opinion took a more positive view of the Dual Monarchy's armed forces despite poor spending decisions by the military. Yet, the exaggerated praise of Franz Joseph failed to take into account the problems that the Austro-Hungarian army experienced even against irregular forces. Some of these problems also appeared in k.k. analyses of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, especially in strategy and tactics.

### **Lessons from the Russo-Turkish War**

The Russo-Turkish war offered an opportunity for Habsburg leaders to learn from the experiences of other armies. Tactically the Russians “remained true to shock tactics.”<sup>278</sup> At Plevna, where the Turks repulsed Russian assaults during a period of over four months from 19 July 1877 until 12 December, as well as other engagements, the majority of the attacks came from the front and rarely aimed for the flanks of the enemy.<sup>279</sup> Major General L.L. Baron Zeddeler, who led a Russian column against the redoubts of Gorni Dubnik near Plevna and fell wounded by a bullet in the stomach, criticized his superiors for relying on closed order assault formations that aimed for achieving victory with the bayonet rather than open order and firepower.<sup>280</sup> Despite the heavy losses the Russian attackers suffered while failing to gain their objectives, Austro-Hungarian officers found little of interest from the Russo-Turkish campaigns.

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<sup>278</sup> General Baron Zeddeler, “Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im letzten Kriege,” *ÖMZ* 3-4 (1878): 221.

<sup>279</sup> Thilo von Trotha, “Tactical Studies on the Battles around Plevna,” translated by First Lieutenant Carl Reichmann U.S. Army (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberley Publishing Co., 1896), 210-211. Von Trotha held the rank of captain in the German army.

<sup>280</sup> Zeddeler, “Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im letzten Kriege,” 222-223. Zeddeler earlier had warned the Russian high command about the dangers of attacking troops equipped with breechloading rifles, but to no avail. (Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 71)

One officer even commented, “One cannot draw anything positive from these experiences; at most one can learn how one should not fight.”<sup>281</sup> Another officer in his analysis of the war concentrated on the mistakes of the Russians and Turks and especially noted the failure of the Russian generals to adapt their tactics to the needs of the situation. Rather than carefully reconnoitering enemy positions and preparing attacks with sufficient strength, the Russians launched disjointed attacks that did not use the advantages of firepower.<sup>282</sup> Instead of realizing the futility of frontal assaults on entrenched positions and the ensuing enormous casualties, however, k.k. officers continued to advocate direct attacks, though in swarms rather than columns, as the next tactical manual from the war college indicated.<sup>283</sup>

Habsburg officers interpreted the lessons of the Russo-Turkish War for cavalry and artillery the same way as for infantry. Preferring to look at the mistakes of the Russians and Turks rather than trying to apply their experiences to improve Austro-Hungarian methods, k.k. analyses of the 1877-78 Balkan campaigns agreed with Zeddeler’s assessments of the inept Russian employment of cavalry and artillery.<sup>284</sup> One Habsburg general staff officer concluded that massed cannon could have a favorable effect on battle and that the Russians had neglected to use their guns effectively.<sup>285</sup> This viewpoint, however, merely confirmed what other k.k. officers had argued before the Russo-Turkish War. Similarly, Austro-Hungarian analysts of the war

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<sup>281</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Victor Ritter von Neuwirth, “Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im Feldzuge 1877-78, im Vergleiche mit unseren tactischen Vorschriften,” *ÖMZ* 1-2 (1879): 294.

<sup>282</sup> Hauptmann Emil Medycki, “Die tactischen Lehren, welche aus dem russisch-türkischen Kriege 1877-78 resultiren,” *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine (O.)* 22 (1881): 17-18, 29.

<sup>283</sup> K.u.k. KS Taktik I. Jahrgang 1881/2 Vorträge des Major Anton Gartner, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 59, Studienbehelfe: Strategie und Taktik; Lieutenant Colonel Alois Hauschka, “Zur Entwicklung der Kampfweise der österreichischen Infanterie seit 1867,” *ÖMZ* 3-4 (1879): 170-172.

<sup>284</sup> Zeddeler, “Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im letzten Kriege,” 223-224.

<sup>285</sup> Neuwirth, “Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im Feldzuge 1877-78, im Vergleiche mit unseren tactischen Vorschriften,” 289-291; Medycki, “Die tactischen Lehren, welche aus dem russisch-türkischen Kriege 1877-78 resultiren,” 20-21.



stated that the numerous Russian mounted troops had little impact on the outcome of the conflict as the Tsar's commanders ordered their cavalry only to engage in scouting missions and guarding the infantry's flanks during battle.<sup>286</sup> A *Honvéd* captain claimed that mainly because of terrain positional battles took place instead of *rencontre* encounters. These battles did not favor mounted units, which sometimes had to fight on foot in entrenched positions. Remarking that infantry could fulfill such tasks better than expensive cavalry, the *Honvéd* officer ended his article with the exclamation that the next great war should take a completely different course suited for mounted warfare. For this reason, according to the writer, Russia increased the number of cavalry in the Tsarist army after the war. As a result, Russian mounted troops outnumbered the Austro-Hungarian and the French cavalry forces 3 to 1 and the German mounted branch 2 to 1.<sup>287</sup> Thus, the Habsburg high command did not stand alone as a supporter of equipping large numbers of cavalry, as Russia and Germany had far more mounted troops and France possessed just as many as the k.k. army.

Strategically, despite the slight impact that permanent fortifications had on the war, Habsburg officers continued to adhere to their previous convictions about the usefulness of the cordon system of fortresses. The author of one *ÖMZ* article, citing the Russo-Turkish War as proof as well as wars from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, even claimed that cost did not matter in regard to improving old and building new fortresses because of their immense influence on war.<sup>288</sup> The 1877-78 war also proved the advantages of field fortifications. At Plevna the Turks constructed redoubts and other temporary defenses which thwarted three major Russian assaults with heavy

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<sup>286</sup> Neuwirth, "Das Gefecht der russischen Infanterie im Feldzuge 1877-78, im Vergleiche mit unseren tactischen Vorschriften," 287.

<sup>287</sup> Captain Alexander Pervulesco, "Einiges über der Verwendung der russischen Cavallerie," *ÖMZ* 1-2 (1880): 189-201.

<sup>288</sup> y., "Über Befestigungen," *ÖMZ* 3-4 (1878): 116-124.

losses. A total of 40,000-50,000 Turkish troops held off Russian forces of 120,000 men and 510 cannon.<sup>289</sup> Only close investment of Plevna by the Russians, resulting in a siege rather than a pitched battle, and the subsequent shortage of supplies on the side of the Turks ended the engagement with a Russian victory.<sup>290</sup> The effectiveness of field fortifications had already impressed Austro-Hungarian officers before the Russo-Turkish War. Just after the Seven Weeks' War the author of an *ÖMZ* article criticized the Habsburg leadership for not employing the advantages of entrenchments at Königgrätz.<sup>291</sup> The Franco-Prussian War, the Russo-Turkish War, and the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina all strengthened the conviction of k.k. officers for using field fortifications. These wars, however, did not impress the high command with the uselessness of permanent fortresses, even though the cordon system had very little effect on the outcomes of the conflicts.

### **Recognizing Railroad Advantages**

Austro-Hungarian leaders did think that the Russo-Turkish War proved the usefulness and importance of railroads and engineer forces for mobilizing men, transporting troops on campaign, and supply trains. General Staff Captain Carl Regenspursky, who later became the instructor of tactics and strategy for *Landwehr* staff officers, criticized the Russian army for not employing enough technical troops and taking advantage of the Rumanian rail system during the mobilization and the crossing of the Danube in 1877.<sup>292</sup> The Russo-Turkish conflict confirmed previous convictions of the significance of railroads and the engineering corps among k.k. officers. After 1866 First Lieutenant Moriz Brunner, who taught the fortifications course at the

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<sup>289</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Carl Geissner, "Über flüchtige Befestigungen mit Rücksicht auf die jüngsten Kriegserfahrungen und Übungen mit dem Infanterie-Spaten," *O.* 20 (1880): 313.

<sup>290</sup> Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 60-74.

<sup>291</sup> "Die flüchtigen Befestigungen auf dem Schlachtfelde bei Königgrätz," *ÖMZ* 3 (1866): 327-328, 333-334.

<sup>292</sup> Captain Carl Regenspursky, "Vorträge über den russisch-türkischen Krieg im Jahre 1877," *O.* 16 (1878): 20-21.

Technical Military Academy and directed the fortification of Przemyśl, had advocated tying the imperial cordon system of fortifications together with the railroad lines to enhance communication and to transport troops more quickly.<sup>293</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War also provided lessons on the benefits of efficient railroad usage in many aspects of war, such as mobilization, communications, the transport of supplies, munitions, troops, sick and wounded, as well as both offensive and defensive strategic and tactical operations.<sup>294</sup> Despite the recognition of the immense advantages that good utilization of railroads offered, all the European powers except Germany had failed to organize their technical troops correctly and provide them with the necessary equipment and training to perform their duties. Therefore one *ÖMZ* writer proposed the formation of a railroad division independent from the other technical troops. The rail forces must have soldiers specially trained in railroad operations as well as sufficient equipment because civilian administrators and rail workers had proved inadequate both in numbers and ability during wartime. Finally, the army should operate its own rail line for training purposes.<sup>295</sup>

Members of the Habsburg high command also concurred concerning the importance of railroads for the k.k. army. For years Beck had advocated expanding the empire's rail network, especially to speed the mobilization process. Kuhn had tried to wrest control over railroad construction away from the civil governments in Vienna and Budapest, in particular to improve lines leading to Galicia, the most probable theater for a war with Russia. The general staff, however, criticized Kuhn's mobilization plans because they did not make adequate use of

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<sup>293</sup> First Lieutenant Moriz Brunner, "Reichsbefestigung und Eisenbahnen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1868): 133-134, 147-148.

<sup>294</sup> A., "Die Eisenbahnen im deutsch-französischen Kriege 1870," *ÖMZ* 1 (1871): 191; Colonel Winterhalder, "Eisenbahnen als Kriegsmittel. Mit Rückblicken auf ihre Leistungen im Kriege 1870-71," *ÖMZ* 1 (1876).

<sup>295</sup> "Die russische Bahnbenützung im Jahre 1877. Eine Aufforderung zur Reorganisation der Feld-Eisenbahn-Truppen," *ÖMZ* 4 (1877): 23-28.

existing railroads. The general staff report noted, though, the limited networks in the northern and eastern parts of the monarchy and the need to build more rail lines that would employ double tracks and make sense for military requirements of transportation, deployment, and communications. Archduke Albrecht agreed about the necessity of constructing an extensive rail system to Galicia to connect the cordon system of permanent fortresses and to shuttle troops there in case of a Russian attack.<sup>296</sup> Thus, the Austro-Hungarian high command agreed concerning the advantages of railroads and desired to enact substantial improvements in the empire's rail networks. Habsburg military leaders did not lag behind other European powers in their willingness to adopt new technology and spent great amounts of time and effort planning the best routes and means to attain their goals. In practice, however, these objectives remained difficult to complete and slow to realize, mainly because of monetary difficulties. Parliamentary representatives did not always see military necessity as decisive in projecting rail lines rather than routes that fostered business and trade.

### **The Bosnia-Hercegovina Campaign**

The Peace of San Stefano, which ended the Russo-Turkish War, outraged Austria-Hungary. Contrary to secret agreements between Russia and the Dual Monarchy before the war, the Peace of San Stefan entailed an increase in Russia's influence in the Balkans through the establishment of a large Bulgarian state under the patronage of Russia. While Russia gained immensely by this arrangement, Austria-Hungary did not receive the agreed upon compensation of taking over Bosnia-Hercegovina. The treaty not only upset the Habsburg state but also other European powers, especially Britain. Therefore, the powers met at the Congress of Berlin, where they made a new arrangement that split Bulgaria into three sections and allowed Austria-

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<sup>296</sup> Scott Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army: Friedrich Beck and the Rise of the General Staff* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 43-44, 61, 113.

Hungary to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina indefinitely. With the approval of the other European powers, the Dual Monarchy's army prepared for the invasion of the two Turkish provinces.<sup>297</sup>

On 29 July 1878, the XIII Corps of the k.k. army with 82,000 troops under the command of Feldzeugmeister Joseph Baron Philippović invaded Bosnia from Croatia, and on 1 August the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of 9000 men under FML Stefan Baron Jovanović entered Herzegovina from Dalmatia.<sup>298</sup> Both military and civilian leaders had expected a simple expedition meeting little resistance. Foreign Minister Julius Count Andrassy expressed his opinion "that it was more a question of a military stroll than a war operation."<sup>299</sup> Only a few members of the army, such as Colonel Friedrich Beck, head of the imperial military chancellery, realized the difficulties inherent in waging a campaign in rugged, undeveloped land with a mostly hostile population.<sup>300</sup> As General Daniel Baron von Salis-Soglio, a veteran of 1866, wrote, "Consequently, from the beginning Austria employed not so many war ready troops as had been actually necessary and were later proven as necessary."<sup>301</sup>

Both the XIII Corps and the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division met with stiff resistance early in the campaign. Irregular soldiers of the Moslem and Orthodox parts of the population opposed the takeover of their land as they did not welcome Catholic invaders who they felt treated the Slavic peoples within the empire as inferiors. Renegade Turkish regulars with artillery support also fought against the Austro-Hungarian forces.<sup>302</sup> Because of the unexpected number and abilities

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<sup>297</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs, 1814-1918* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1969), 119-122; C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 592.

<sup>298</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Herzegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878* (Vienna: k.k. Generalstab and L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1879), 114, 276-277.

<sup>299</sup> FZM Daniel Freiherr von Salis-Soglio, *Mein Leben und was ich davon erzählen will, kann und darf* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1908), vol. II, 76.

<sup>300</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 77.

<sup>301</sup> Salis-Soglio, *Mein Leben und was ich davon erzählen will, kann und darf*, vol. II, 76.

<sup>302</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 101-102.

of the enemy and the inadequate training of k.k. troops in countering guerilla tactics, the Habsburg invasion bogged down, even suffering setbacks in early August.<sup>303</sup> Philippović repeatedly asked for reinforcements, but managed to take his main objective, the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 19 August.<sup>304</sup> Jovanović entered Mostar, the capital of Hercegovina, on 5 August.<sup>305</sup>

The capture of the political centers, however, did not end the campaign. The irregular enemy forces still continued the fight throughout the rest of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Realizing the inadequate number of Habsburg forces already engaged, the k.k. high command mobilized six more divisions, which raised the total number of Austro-Hungarian troops to 153,000. By the end of this supposedly small campaign, the k.k. army had mobilized 250,000 men, one quarter to one third of its wartime strength, though not all fought in battle.<sup>306</sup> The official Habsburg estimate of enemy forces amounted to 79,200 insurgents and 13,800 regulars for a total of 93,000 men and 75 cannon. Although not all the insurgents took part in pitched battles against Austro-Hungarian forces and never appeared on the field simultaneously or under a unified command, especially in Hercegovina, they represented 25% of the Moslem population of Bosnia-Hercegovina and 12% of the total population of both provinces.<sup>307</sup> In all, Habsburg troops fought 61 engagements ranging from skirmishes to the taking of Sarajevo, and suffered losses of 5020 men and 178 officers dead, wounded, or missing for a total of 5198 casualties.<sup>308</sup>

### **Difficulties of Counterinsurgency**

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<sup>303</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 126-146, 242-257.

<sup>304</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 420-451; Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 78-79.

<sup>305</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 288-296.

<sup>306</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 79; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 102.

<sup>307</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 884-885.

<sup>308</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, Beilage 12, II-X.

Certainly, the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not qualify as a war against another military power. Rather, the 1878 campaign became more of a counterinsurgency effort in comparison with the recent k.k. conflicts of 1848, 1859, 1864, and 1866. From this viewpoint, the great numerical superiority of more than 2.5 to 1 that Austro-Hungarian forces enjoyed does not appear overwhelming. Instead of interpreting the difficulties which the Habsburg army encountered in Bosnia-Herzegovina as indications of ineptitude in using vast advantages in numbers and weaponry, the military historian should look at the campaign as a small war against an enemy employing mainly guerilla tactics. The U.S. Army aims for at least 3 to 1 numerical superiority for counterinsurgency operations and a 5 to 1 ratio for urban assaults, although the Department of Defense's *Handbook on Counter Insurgency* refers to the 10 to 1 ratio that some military authors set as the minimum requirement for defeating insurgencies.<sup>309</sup> According to these calculations, the k.k. operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina appears as a great success with a strength ratio under the requirements for modern counterinsurgencies. The small number of Habsburg casualties, 2% of all mobilized troops, attests to the overall accomplishment of the Austro-Hungarian army, especially considering not only the low death and wounded rate, 946 and 3980 respectively, but also the mere 272 men missing.<sup>310</sup> The last number indicates that desertions did not represent a major problem for k.k. forces during this campaign, contrary to the experiences of 1866.

Conditions in the two provinces rendered normal military operations extremely difficult. Bosnia-Herzegovina possessed little infrastructure. Aside from the insurgents, the mountainous terrain with dense forests and few navigable roads made travel laborious and the transport of

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<sup>309</sup> Major Joshua Thiel, "COIN Manpower Ratios: Debunking the 10 to 1 Ratio and Surges," *Small Wars Journal* (Jan. 15, 2011): 1.

<sup>310</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Herzegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, Beilage 12, X.

artillery and supplies onerous. Soldiers had to make heroic exertions to drag the cannon “where only the trace of a road existed.”<sup>311</sup> Inclement weather added to these arduous circumstances, thus further hindering transport and communications.<sup>312</sup> Yet the Habsburg troops covered ground quickly enough to take the political capitals and other strategic locations in less than three weeks from the start of the campaign.

The nature of the k.k. army’s opponents also provided obstacles that the k.k. army had not encountered against most of its recent enemies. In the words of one officer, Habsburg troops fought “against a desperately courageous, barbaric enemy, who had beforehand an exact knowledge of the land and clothing suitable for it.”<sup>313</sup> According to the official Austro-Hungarian history of the occupation, the local inhabitants possessed a warlike character which they developed during many years of fighting. Even without the desperation, barbarity, and bellicosity that Habsburg officers attributed to the irregulars, the enemy presented a difficult foe. Usually eschewing the offensive unless holding overwhelming numerical superiority or the advantages of surprise, the irregulars used defensive tactics that skillfully made use of their familiarity with the terrain and the firepower of their rifles, though only a little more than a third had breech-loaders. The rest carried either muzzle-loaders or older guns. Unlike the Austro-Hungarian forces, the insurgents did not have to rely on supply trains, but rather garnered provisions from the local population by requisitioning or relied on their leader, who often held large amounts of land. The simple clothing and equipment of the Bosnians and Hercegovinians helped the irregular forces blend in with the inhabitants while allowing for quick movement that gave them a great advantage over the heavily laden k.k. soldier accustomed to easier terrain and

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<sup>311</sup> Major von Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” *O.* 18 (1879), 418-419.

<sup>312</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 888.

<sup>313</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 418.



better provisions. As the official history summed up the situation, “Difficult terrain, the dearth of resources in most regions, which became theaters of operations, finally the still unbelievably unfavorable weather conditions were the most powerful and faithful allies of the insurgents and compensated by far for any disadvantages that could arise for them from the small number of combatants.”<sup>314</sup>

This situation resembled colonial conflicts of other nations, such as Germany in Southwest Africa from 1904 to 1907. Like the Bosnians and Hercegovinians, the Herero in Southwest Africa held the advantage of familiarity with the terrain as well as the ability to blend in with the local inhabitants. However, comparison displays important differences between the two campaigns. The Herero at first employed an offensive strategy while attacking German outposts and telegraph lines, whereas the Bosnians and Hercegovinians fought almost exclusively on the defensive. The Herero also possessed better weaponry than the Habsburg opponents. In addition, the Austro-Hungarians, as invaders rather than suppressors of a revolt, did not attempt to exterminate their enemies, as the Germans tried to do in Southwest Africa.<sup>315</sup> Unlike the Germans, the Dual Monarchy’s army did not advocate the absolute destruction of the enemy, but rather the political goal of pacification.

### **Adapting Tactics: Infantry and Cavalry**

To combat the Bosnians and Hercegovinians Habsburg forces employed an offensive strategy with offensive tactics. This choice of methods also corresponded with the overall purpose of the campaign, which necessitated an invasion to take possession of the provinces. The success of the operations in Bosnia-Hercegovina only confirmed the use of the assault in

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<sup>314</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 885-888.

<sup>315</sup> Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 7-43.

battle. As the insurgents did not form defensive positions in depth, however, Austro-Hungarian troops found that flanking movements for attacking the sides and rear of the enemy worked well.<sup>316</sup> The k.k. soldiers made use of their superiority in Werndl breechloading rifles. The most effective weapon against the irregulars, though, consisted of artillery, especially the recently acquired 80 and 90mm field guns. Habsburg soldiers discovered the great fear and respect that the insurgents held for cannon as well as the beneficial effect that one or two artillery shots had in clearing enemy positions.<sup>317</sup> One k.k. officer described the effect of the field guns: “In battle there appeared most often the endeavor to shake the enemy with artillery fire and to push him from his most advantageous positions by threats from the flanks and rear.”<sup>318</sup> Thus, Austro-Hungarian leaders employed the tactics which they had learned in recent wars, well-placed cannon fire and flanking movements in the spirit of Moltke. As another Habsburg officer wrote of his experiences during the campaign, “Our regulations have proven themselves complete in regard to battle formations, events and leadership in battle. Strikingly, nothing new has come forward. The events played out in general analogous to those of the spring weapons exercises - the pushes and rushes forward made themselves noticeable.”<sup>319</sup> Thus, the Habsburg army still used offensive tactics emphasizing the rush forward to the assault. Yet, the troops also showed flexibility in stressing the importance of artillery and the preference for movement to enable attacks on the flanks and rear of the enemy rather than the front.

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<sup>316</sup> Captain Norbert Spaleny, “Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers,” *O.* 19 (1879): 169.

<sup>317</sup> Spaleny, “Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers,” 170; *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 888.

<sup>318</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 418.

<sup>319</sup> Spaleny, “Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers,” 173.

The tactical lessons that students in the k.k. war college learned reflected these themes, which differed little from the ideas of 1870/71. Major Anton Gartner's manual written after the invasion underscored artillery fire before the attack as an integral part of weakening the firepower of the defender. However, Gartner did not reject the frontal assault with its fulfillment in the bayonet fight.<sup>320</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Alois Hauschka, the teacher of tactics for general staff officers, stated emphatically that the Austro-Hungarian exercise regulations did not go to the extreme of avoiding frontal attacks over open ground culminating in the bayonet struggle. Hauschka maintained that neglecting frontal assaults in training exercises stemmed from the overreaction of officers to the events of 1866. Similarly, the lieutenant colonel claimed the difficult terrain of Bosnia and Hercegovina, not the general uselessness of frontal attacks, dictated the frequent resort to flanking movements. Since 1875, the k.k. army had returned to the right way of thinking according to Hauschka: "The exercise of the frontal assault is the foundation of correct training of infantry for the battles of a great war."<sup>321</sup> In other words, great powers attacked frontally, despite the lessons of recent conflicts, which showed that modern weapons could halt frontal attacks. Although officers in Bosnia and Hercegovina had adapted to the reality of the battlefield by attacking the flanks and rear of the enemy rather than the front, *Kriegsschule* instructors and writers continued to interpret warfare according to their preconceived notions favoring the offensive.

The cavalry played an insignificant battlefield role in Bosnia-Hercegovina. For the most part, mounted troops executed security and scouting operations while performing important

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<sup>320</sup> K.u.k. KS Taktik I. Jahrgang 1881/2 Vorträge des Major Anton Gartner, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 59, Studienbeihilfe: Strategie und Taktik, 78-79.

<sup>321</sup> Hauschka, "Zur Entwicklung der Kampfweise der österreichischen Infanterie seit 1867," 170-172.

service for communications and supply trains.<sup>322</sup> Only 13,313 horses accompanied the initial invasion force.<sup>323</sup> This small number in comparison to the infantry resulted from the terrain of the two provinces, whose mountains and forests did not prove conducive to cavalry maneuvers. Yet the 1881-1882 war college tactical manual still addressed the topic of mounted attacks on infantry, though stressing the importance of artillery or infantry support for the cavalry. While admitting the difficulties that modern warfare entailed for cavalry charges, Major Gartner insisted that occasions existed for mounted troops relying on their speed to assault infantry, such as at the beginning or end of battles when the footsoldiers had not settled into their positions or had suffered losses from enemy fire.<sup>324</sup>

Some officers, however, realized that the change in weapons technology reduced the opportunities for shock as an effective form of attack for cavalry. Retired Major Friedrich Baron Mühlwerth-Gärtner, lamenting the paucity of people who understood modern cavalry, asserted the dearth of opportunities for charges. Other than the rare occasion for surprise or assaulting infantry already badly shaken by artillery and rifle fire, mounted attacks constituted “an absurd beginning” and held extremely small chances for success: “All the pluck, the resolute determination to cut the enemy infantry to pieces, are completely useless if the losses of the cavalry during the charge reach a height as on the days of Wörth, Vionville and Sedan.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 419; Spaleny, “Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers,” 172.

<sup>323</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 98, Beilage 7.

<sup>324</sup> K.u.k. KS Taktik I. Jahrgang 1881/2 Vortrage des Major Anton Gartner, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 59, Studienbehefte: Strategie und Taktik, 170.

<sup>325</sup> Major Friedrich Freiherrn Mühlwerth-Gärtner, “Der Reiterangriff auf Infanterie,” *O.* 17 (1878): 29-30. Large bodies of French cavalry suffered heavy losses in futile attacks on Prussian infantry in 1870.

Nevertheless, at the 1877 k.k. cavalry maneuvers near Czegléd, Hungary, Major Karger criticized the overuse of frontal assaults and the few attempts to attack the opponent's flanks.<sup>326</sup> The desire to retain cavalry as a purely offensive weapon with its culmination in shock and saber slashing still permeated the mounted branch of the Austro-Hungarian army as well as some prominent members of the generalcy. Major General Johann Baron Waldstätten, who had taught at the war college, published several military works, and commanded the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade during the occupation of Bosnia, exemplified this view by saying, "Cavalry has not changed its essence for one hundred years, it has no new weapon, no other means than before. The breechloader and revolver enter very little into the question."<sup>327</sup> The idea of relying on firepower and using a revolver to fire a salvo into the enemy's ranks before the impact of collision had hardly any adherents in the mounted branch of the Habsburg army.<sup>328</sup> Major Emil Dembscher expressed the old feudal view of cavalry when he attempted to refute Karger and Mühlwerth-Gärtner in an 1879 *ÖMZ* article. Claiming mathematical proofs of the devastating effect of firepower on mounted forces as inconsequential, Dembscher bragged that excellent morale and the offensive spirit will conquer all obstacles. Therefore, the k.k. army must engender in its mounted forces coldbloodedness and scorn for danger in order that the Habsburg cavalry "will remain the descendants of the old knighthood, the noblest of all weapons!"<sup>329</sup> With such ideas within the Austro-Hungarian officer corps, the refusal to reduce the number of mounted troops in the army comes as no surprise.

### **Adapting Tactics: Steel-Bronze Artillery**

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<sup>326</sup> Major Karger, "Czegléd. Studie über die im September 1877 dort stattgehabten Cavallerie-Manöver," *ÖMZ* 3-4 (1878): 51.

<sup>327</sup> Major Emil Dembscher, "Cavallerie-Attaken," *ÖMZ* 1-2 (1879): 245.

<sup>328</sup> Pervulesco, "Einiges über der Verwendung der russischen Cavallerie," 197.

<sup>329</sup> Dembscher, "Cavallerie-Attaken," 258-260.

At least in regard to artillery, k.k. writers agreed that this branch had gained greater usefulness on the battlefield. The experiences of 1870 proved the benefits of massed cannon formations as the Prussians had achieved victory at Sedan by hemming in the French with artillery firing along the whole battleline.<sup>330</sup> One lieutenant colonel maintained that even though infantry still decided battles, cannon offered great advantages to the military leaders who employed them effectively to support the other branches.<sup>331</sup> The invasion of Bosnia-Hercegovina also supported the increased role of artillery in battle as the insurgents feared the Habsburg cannon shots more than any other part of the k.k. army.<sup>332</sup>

Austro-Hungarian artillery had seen substantial improvement just before the invasion of Bosnia-Hercegovina. In 1876 and 1877, the k.k. army finally received the new steel-bronze 80mm and 90mm field guns that the war ministry had tried to obtain since before the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>333</sup> The chronic problem of financial struggles with parliamentary representatives, who still distrusted the army's procurement decisions, contributed to this delay.<sup>334</sup> Other causes, however, exacerbated the procurement situation as well. The fast pace of technological innovation made decisions extremely difficult as new weaponry appeared rapidly. In the eighteen years before 1879, the Habsburg army adopted four different artillery systems in succession.<sup>335</sup> Not only did these quick changes to new cannon cost large sums of money, but

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<sup>330</sup> Captain Hugo von Molnar, "Die Verwendung der deutschen Artillerie in der Schlacht bei Sedan," *O.* 20 (1880).

<sup>331</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Hotze, "Reglement-Studie XXXV. Das Exercir-Reglement der k.k. Artillerie. Für Infanterie- und Cavallerie-Officiere," *ÖMZ* 1-2 (1879): 148.

<sup>332</sup> Benkiser, "Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878," 418; Spaleny, "Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers," 170; *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 888.

<sup>333</sup> Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 450.

<sup>334</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 45.

<sup>335</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Michael Trapsia, "Beitrag zur Verwendung der Streitkräfte. (Der Kampf der Infanterie.)," *O.* 18 (1879): 217-218.

they also sparked great debate and required extensive testing to reach the right assessments of new technology.

In 1873, Major General Artur Maximilian Count Bylandt-Rheidt, who would become war minister in 1876, submitted to the imperial military chancellery a report describing the findings of the army's committee for testing new weaponry. With the approval of the committee, Bylandt-Rheidt recommended the procurement of the German Krupp steel breechloading cannon as the best artillery pieces in Europe.<sup>336</sup> Major General von Salis-Soglio, president of the technical and administrative military committee from 1876 to 1880, wrote that the majority of the members of the committee in 1875 favored the Krupp steel gun over the steel-bronze version of Major General Franz Baron Uchatius, the head of the gun manufacturing division at the k.k. army's Vienna arsenal. Uchatius' steel-bronze barrels weighed far more than the lighter steel of Krupp, like "a corpulent bulldog" compared to "a slender greyhound." The heavier caliber weapons especially could not withstand the pressure from the burning powder.<sup>337</sup>

Nevertheless, the Habsburg military leaders chose the inferior weaponry because of the inability of Austro-Hungarian factories to produce steel barrels and the supposed danger of buying from a foreign firm. In addition, as the Vienna arsenal had already lost the contract for breechloading rifles to the private manufacturer Josef Werndl, the k.k. ordnance experts did not want to allow the award of another lucrative contract to go outside their institution.<sup>338</sup> In order to start making the steel-bronze barrels, however, the arsenal needed completely new equipment. By the time production began, the Uchatius guns had already become outmoded as the Krupp cannon shot more efficiently and cost less. As Salis-Soglio later wrote, "Our steel-bronze

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<sup>336</sup> GM Artur Maximilian Graf Bylandt-Rheidt, No. 5 Memoire uber den Stand der Bewaffnungsfrage, 22. XI. 1873, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>337</sup> Salis-Soglio, *Mein Leben und was ich davon erzählen will, kann und darf*, vol. II, 69-70.

<sup>338</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 84.

monster must be considered a stillborn child.”<sup>339</sup> Uchatius tried to improve his invention, especially for the higher caliber weapons, which the Habsburg leaders had to order from Krupp. The attempts failed, though, and consequently Uchatius committed suicide on 4 June 1881.<sup>340</sup> The episode of choosing steel-bronze over steel reveals the poor decision making of the k.k. high command as Austro-Hungarian military leaders elected to reject the advice of the technical committee and instead purchase a far more expensive, yet inferior model rather than buy from a foreign firm. This selection would haunt the k.k. army until its demise in the First World War because Habsburg leaders never fully replaced the steel-bronze guns. This example also shows why the Delegation members did not place full trust in the budget requests of the military. Though Liberal representatives preferred that the army buy from local businesses, poor spending choices by the war ministry caused delegates to distrust the army’s financial decisions.

After the choice of steel-bronze artillery, Austro-Hungarian officers attempted to proclaim the superiority of Uchatius’ invention over Krupp steel by publishing comparisons and tests of the different metals. Steel-bronze somehow always won.<sup>341</sup> According to one k.k. officer, “So much the more honorable is the victory which the youthful steel-bronze has carried off over the proven combatant, cast steel.... The halo which mystery mongers and the persisting influence of preconceived opinion have bestowed on cast steel has been annihilated as if by a magic blow.”<sup>342</sup> The performance of the Uchatius cannon during the Bosnian campaign even

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<sup>339</sup> Salis-Soglio, *Mein Leben und was ich davon erzählen will, kann und darf*, vol. II, 70.

<sup>340</sup> Salis-Soglio, *Mein Leben und was ich davon erzählen will, kann und darf*, vol. II, 70; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 844.

<sup>341</sup> “Die Ring-Hohlgeschosse des Generals von Uchatius,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1875): 119-126; Hauptmann Ottomar Volkmer, “Über Stahl-Bronce,” *O.* 10 (1875): 246-247; Volkmer, “Vergleichende Gegenüberstellung des neuen österreichischen und deutschen Feld-Artillerie-Materiales,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1877): 160.

<sup>342</sup> “Die Uchatius-Kanonen,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1875): 107.



impressed the press.<sup>343</sup> Yet the weight of the k.k. artillery caused problems in the rugged terrain of Bosnia and Hercegovina, where lighter mountain guns proved more suitable.<sup>344</sup> Thus, the Habsburg army continued to take part in tests to engage the best technology for cannon, which the Krupp works continued to produce.<sup>345</sup> Despite the overwhelming praise for Uchatius' inventions, Austro-Hungarian purchases of German guns and constant searches for improvements in artillery innovations reveal the dissatisfaction with the new products of the Vienna arsenal, though the Habsburg high command would not procure better artillery for many years.

### **Non-adapting Strategy: Permanent Fortresses**

The occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina rarely involved the attack or defense of permanent fortifications. Most of the fortresses in the two provinces dated back to feudal times and had fallen into decay. Newer constructions had a relatively small size most suitable for police forces or protection against robbers. During the war they served more to secure communications or as field fortifications rather than permanent fortresses as they provided protection merely against infantry fire.<sup>346</sup> The limited effect of permanent fortifications, or *Befestigung*, on the invasion, however, did not dissuade Habsburg officers from their conviction on the usefulness of the cordon system. Austro-Hungarian military journals continued to publish articles favoring permanent fortresses and temporary field fortifications in a permanent style.<sup>347</sup> Even officers who doubted the wisdom of updating old fortresses still believed in the effectiveness of *Befestigung* and showed concern only for the expense of enabling them to

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<sup>343</sup> "Die Feuerprobe unserer Wehrverfassung," *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, 21. October 1878, Nr. 83, 2.

<sup>344</sup> Benkiser, "Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878," 419.

<sup>345</sup> v.B., "Die neuesten Versuche mit der Krupp'schen Panzerkanone," *ÖMZ* 4 (1877): 112-114.

<sup>346</sup> *Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 52-53.

<sup>347</sup> "Verschanzungen und Festungen," *O.* 19 (1879): 157-159.

withstand modern artillery fire.<sup>348</sup> Clearly, the k.k. high command and officer corps failed to realize that the greater maneuverability of modern warfare as well as the ever-increasing impact of artillery on fortresses had rendered permanent fortifications obsolete. Even while engaged in a guerilla war, fortresses continued to occupy the minds of Austro-Hungarian military thinkers. Thus, instead of abandoning the idea of upgrading old and building new fortresses, Habsburg leadership continued to waste money on the cordon system.

### **Civil-Military Criticism**

Although the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina proved a success, the press criticized the Habsburg army, mainly because of the inability of the military to conclude the campaign more quickly. In Vienna the *Neue Freie Presse*, in answer to the question of why the k.k. troops had such difficulties defeating “undisciplined hordes” of insurgents, responded that the blame lay not with Philippović but with Andrassy for not providing the army with enough forces.<sup>349</sup> The military papers not surprisingly expressed similar sentiments to avert criticism from the Austro-Hungarian army and locate the delays in the actions of the civilians. Andrassy, however, lashed back at the supporters of the military by stating that a peaceful occupation should have taken place and accusing Philippović and his subordinates of escalating the danger. According to Andrassy, the commander wanted an exciting adventure full of chances for laurels, not a quiet takeover, which in reality did not prove feasible. In addition, the foreign minister insisted that Habsburg troops could have seized Sarajevo on 17 August. Instead, Philippović ordered his subordinate FML Karl von Tegetthoff to wait for him before entering the city so that

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<sup>348</sup> Graf Geldern-Egmond, “Über die neuesten Versuche mit Eisenpanzern und deren Anwendung auf die Lösung der Befestigungsfrage,” *O.* 16 (1878): 355-371.

<sup>349</sup> “Die Occupation,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 20. August 1878, Nr. 5021, 2.

the commanding officer could reap the glory of victory.<sup>350</sup> The Liberal newspapers agreed with Andrassy and after the invasion criticized the army's inadequate handling of the campaign.<sup>351</sup>

Habsburg military leaders, just as after the Austro-Prussian War, publicly blamed civilian officials for army shortcomings in 1878. Officers claimed that the foreign minister had blocked the mobilization of sufficient forces at the start of the invasion despite Philippović's repeated requests for more troops. Military circles issued the usual accusations about parliamentary stinginess in funding the extra expenses of occupying Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>352</sup> The *Neue Freie Presse* complained that the k.k. army used up the 60 million kronen which the Delegations granted the government "for the case when the further development of eastern events should make the development of military strength an unavoidable necessity in regard to maintaining the essential interests of the monarchy." Yet the author of the article did not blame the Habsburg high command for consuming so much money as much as he accused Andrassy of concealing the real reason for the special credit, the seizure of two foreign provinces. Making the situation even worse, the foreign minister in his request for appropriations had not included the costs of the civilian administration of Bosnia and Hercegovina after the conclusion of military operations.<sup>353</sup> Although the last accusation had little merit, considering Andrassy's overly optimistic pre-invasion view of easily and thus inexpensively occupying the two provinces, the article shifted blame for consuming such a large extraordinary credit so quickly to the civilians in the Habsburg government rather than the army high command.

### **Self-Criticism, Recognition, and Learning Lessons**

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<sup>350</sup> Eduard von Wertheimer, *Graf Julius Andrassy, sein Leben und seine Zeit* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913), vol. III, 152-155.

<sup>351</sup> *Tagespost*, 15. January 1879, Graz.

<sup>352</sup> Ludwig Ritter von Przibram, *Erinnerungen eines alten Österreichers* (Stuttgart-Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1912), vol. II, 78-79.

<sup>353</sup> "Wien, 19. August," *Neue Freie Presse*, 20. August 1878, No. 5021, 1.

Internally k.k. leaders, however, acknowledged that problems in the military had arisen during the campaign. The high command had projected too small a force for the operation, and even those who saw the numbers as insufficient had acquiesced to the low estimates.<sup>354</sup> FML Beck, who headed Franz Joseph's military chancellery and issued the operational orders, had realized the danger of not employing enough force against determined enemies. Nevertheless, Beck had convinced the war ministry and the general staff to reduce the number of troops needed for initial mobilization in order to win over the civilian officials in Vienna and Budapest to approve the occupation. When the invasion forces encountered delays because of the heavy resistance of Bosnian irregulars, Beck claimed that the high command had only envisioned a limited mission, not a pacification.<sup>355</sup> This argument, not completely truthful as Beck had known that the operation would require more troops than the original number, provided yet another example of the k.k. army's manner of dissembling in dealing with the civilian part of the government in military matters.

Moritz Baron von Auffenberg, later war minister from 1911 to 1912, participated in the Bosnian invasion as a general staff officer in the 61<sup>st</sup> infantry brigade. During and after the campaign, Auffenberg remained unimpressed with the reserve troops and officers, who could not maintain discipline and cohesion on the march. The future minister of war blamed this failure on the insufficient homogeneity between the officers and soldiers, as former one year volunteers did not necessarily speak the language of their men.<sup>356</sup> This assessment differed from that of another staff officer who claimed that the one year volunteers had performed their duties well, thus

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<sup>354</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 102.

<sup>355</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 77-79.

<sup>356</sup> Moritz Freiherr von Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang - eine Lebensschilderung* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), 44-45.

proving the efficacy of instituting the *Einjährig-Freiwilligen* in 1868.<sup>357</sup> Auffenberg admitted that the regular troops and the reserves fought well enough in battle, although most had no desire or interest in seizing two Turkish provinces for the Habsburg Empire. Austro-Hungarian reserve units merely did their duty against an enemy that had already given up for the most part.

Auffenberg also saw the leadership of several non-commissioned officers as deficient during a river crossing that stalled under enemy fire: “Against an equally matched opponent the undertaking would hardly have succeeded.”<sup>358</sup> The future war minister in general did not regard the Bosnian campaign very favorably as he did not find there an opportunity for distinction.<sup>359</sup>

The battle leadership of Baron Waldstätten impressed Franz Count Conrad von Hötzendorf, a general staff officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during the invasion of Bosnia and future chief of the general staff.<sup>360</sup> However, Conrad criticized other officers for not leading the troops energetically enough and treating the enemy too leniently.<sup>361</sup> Although a general staff officer, like Auffenberg, who experienced little direct combat in his first campaign, Conrad viewed the war differently than the future war minister. While supervising the stripping of dead bodies to preserve uniforms, Conrad felt that the war revealed “the relentlessness of the struggle for existence.”<sup>362</sup> Clearly, the future Great War chief of the general staff saw the seizure of Bosnia and Hercegovina as a very important event, both in underscoring the offensive tactical lessons and aggressive leadership he learned from Waldstätten and confirming Conrad’s social Darwinian ideas that he had acquired before 1878. This aggressive tactical thinking resembled

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<sup>357</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 419.

<sup>358</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang - eine Lebensschilderung*, 46.

<sup>359</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang - eine Lebensschilderung*, 50.

<sup>360</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, Inc., 2000), 20.

<sup>361</sup> Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Mein Anfang: Kriegserinnerungen aus der Jugendzeit 1878-1882* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1925), 31-35.

<sup>362</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf*, 20.

more the German military culture of absolute destruction as described by Isabel Hull, though without the emphasis on social Darwinism, than the less radical ideas of Albrecht and Beck.<sup>363</sup>

The main problem for the Austro-Hungarian army in Bosnia and Hercegovina, though, aside from the insufficient number of men at the beginning of the campaign, came in the form of supply and equipment. Most officers blamed the difficulties of supplying the soldiers on the roughness of the terrain which hindered the train from keeping up with the troops.<sup>364</sup> Colonel Georg Baron von Holtz, however, claimed that the supply lines failed to function properly because of poor preparation and staff work. The colonel also criticized the tactical arrangements of k.k. forces as well as the general staff's intelligence reporting. As a result of Habsburg mismanagement, the troops did not possess equipment suitable for mountain warfare.<sup>365</sup> Major Benkiser of the general staff corps agreed that the Hungarian pants and boots that some of the soldiers wore did not meet the demands for fighting in rugged terrain.<sup>366</sup>

For the most part, though, the k.k. high command remained satisfied not only with the overall outcome of the 1878 campaign but also with the performance of the individual branches of the army. After an inspection tour in Bosnia during October 1878, Beck reported that the Austro-Hungarian army had successfully broken armed resistance to the occupation, although Habsburg displeasure at the extended campaign resulted in the removal of Philippović from command.<sup>367</sup> Archduke Albrecht headed a commission of inquiry which expressed overall

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<sup>363</sup> Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 1-4.

<sup>364</sup> Benkiser, "Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878," 419; Spaleny, "Eindrücke and Wahrnehmungen während der Occupations-Campagne in Bosnien vom Standpuncte des Troupiers," 172.

<sup>365</sup> Georg Freiherr von Holtz, *Von Brod bis Sarajevo* (Vienna, Leipzig: Stern, 1907), 184-191.

<sup>366</sup> Benkiser, "Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878," 419.

<sup>367</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 80. Philippović officially requested permission to return to his previous position as commanding general in Prague.

satisfaction with the military aspects of the invasion.<sup>368</sup> Some army officials, however, criticized Beck for mobilizing so many troops for a small operation against an irregular enemy.<sup>369</sup> The former war minister Kuhn wrote in his diary that Beck had sent more soldiers to Bosnia and Hercegovina than Radetzky had at his command in Italy in 1848-49. Kuhn also lamented that Beck, as head of the emperor's military chancellery, had gained control over military leadership within the Habsburg army.<sup>370</sup> The former war minister, however, writing in the secrecy of his personal papers, hardly constituted a prominent member of the high command. Thus his thoughts stemmed as much from resentment against the success of a man who had worked for Kuhn's dismissal as from an unbiased analysis of the Bosnian campaign. Victory, even over a seemingly insignificant foe in the Balkans, proved difficult to belittle.

Success did not mean though that the Habsburg army had nothing to learn. When the Austro-Hungarian government attempted to introduce conscription in Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1881, a revolt broke out among the local population. To quell this uprising, the k.k. military evacuated small posts instead of trying to defend all positions. The commander in Bosnia, FZM Hermann Baron von Dahlen, isolated the area in revolt and called in reinforcements before engaging in battle.<sup>371</sup> Officers avoided the distinctive insignia, such as the black trousers, caps, sashes, and swords that differentiated them as leaders from the enlisted men and gave the enemy obvious targets. Habsburg soldiers also received better equipment than in 1878, especially boots more suited to the rugged terrain. The troops learned from their previous experiences to make their own provisions for food rather than relying on supply trains to catch up. The officers shared in the privations of their men and showed great talent for improvisation and humor while

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<sup>368</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 246, note 77.

<sup>369</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 82.

<sup>370</sup> FML Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld, *Nachlässe Kuhn*, Karton Nr. 670, 14-15, 34.

<sup>371</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 103.

trying to alleviate the difficulties of campaigning in challenging conditions.<sup>372</sup> Austro-Hungarian officers, at least in this small operation, had finally started implementing the directives of the k.k. manuals, especially preparing attacks with artillery fire and using terrain advantageously.

Leaders as well as the rank and file had showed themselves capable once again of adapting to the situation and had learned how to fight better from the recent conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Yet certain problems arose just as before. Provisions for the troops in the field ran short as the suppression dragged on from November 1881 until May 1882, more than twice as long as the 1878 campaign.<sup>373</sup> The war minister had to issue an order to conserve ammunition in February 1882 because the munitions service had not kept pace with the consumption of supplies. Because of the ensuing revolt the k.k. military not only had to raise troop commitments to six divisions along with a naval squadron but also request an extra 8 million florins from the Delegations while spending over 30 million to suppress the uprising.<sup>374</sup> The Habsburg high command, however, responded to the problems and achieved victory over the insurrection, thus showing the ability to adapt and learn from past experience.

### **Parliamentary Criticism and Favor**

Although the parliamentary representatives granted the Habsburg high command's requests for extra funding to suppress the revolt, members of the Delegations still criticized military spending. During the debate for the 1880 budget the Moravian delegate Fux, a member of the Delegations army budget committee, raised the issue of pensions in the Austro-Hungarian army. While not begrudging a pension to officers who had served their fatherland well and

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<sup>372</sup> Josef Maria Aloysius Graf von Stürgh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: Paul List Verlag, 1922), 35, 48-49.

<sup>373</sup> Charles Jelavich, "The Revolt in Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1881-2," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 31, No. 77 (June 1953): 434.

<sup>374</sup> "Wien, 27. Januar", "Inland," *Neue Freie Presse*, 28. Januar 1882, Nr. 6258, 1-3; Charles Jelavich, "The Revolt in Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1881-2," 424; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 104.



earned their retirement pay, Fux complained of seeing others who had received pensions for ill health not only gallivanting in “Pensionopolis” (Vienna) but also zealously hunting and mountain climbing in other areas. The delegate found it strange as well how many officers who passed the intellectual and physical requirements for advancement “suddenly became invalids and quickly obtained a pension.” Fux attributed many cases of premature pensions to the k.k. practice of allowing influential people to create positions for their proteges by pushing an officer of higher rank to retire. Fux’s mention of forming a new commission to test the validity of pension claims met with laughter among the delegates.<sup>375</sup> Obviously the parliamentary representatives did not see the solution to the army’s pension problem as yet another board, more proof of the overly bureaucratic Habsburg military. Although the army had made progress during the 1870s with better promotion and pension regulations, the large number of officers who received pensions because of “nervous breakdown” or “general exhaustion” revealed increasing leniency to grant pensions by the pension arbitration commission.<sup>376</sup>

Fux also elicited laughter from the delegates when he brought up the common k.k. use of overqualified officers for positions that subordinates could easily fill, such as a fieldmarshal commanding a division, a major general leading a brigade, and a colonel heading a *Landwehr* infantry battalion that a captain had commanded earlier and another captain led now. This situation resulted from the superabundance of high ranking officers in the military together with an insufficient number of non-commissioned officers. The representative pointedly asked, “Why

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<sup>375</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), 75.

<sup>376</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 151-152.

does it not happen also in the realm of civil administration that a governor is replaced by precinct officers or a financial district director by a tax collector?”<sup>377</sup>

Delegate Fux accused the government ministers of self-deception if they believed the Habsburg war ministry’s claim of a savings of 4 million florins in the proposed budget. The parliamentary representative wondered how the army could save so much when its projected reforms would result in the permanent increase of officer wages, a military tax oppressive for the population, better provisions for the rank and file, and the procurement of new fortress cannon. While Fux supported improving the food supplied to k.k. soldiers, the delegate questioned the necessity of fortifying the imperial capital. He also recommended reductions in the “not decisive parade service” and in the number of absentee commanders.<sup>378</sup>

Nevertheless, Fux pointed out that the Austro-Hungarian army had the smallest budget of all the European military states of similar rank. While Russian expenses had increased from 219 million florins in 1865 to 365 million in 1879, French outlays had risen by 60% to 270 million, and the Germans had 213 million or 110% more than in 1865, the Habsburg budget had actually decreased half a million florins to 115 million. The parliamentary delegate, however, believed that the k.k. military expenses weighed more heavily on the Austro-Hungarian people than the army budgets of France and Germany did on their populations. The total income of France’s population in 1871 amounted to 8 billion, while Prussia’s, not Germany’s, income came to 4 billion. The sum of the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire in comparison totaled a mere 800

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<sup>377</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880, 74.

<sup>378</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880, 74-76.

million. Yet Fux declared himself ready to vote in favor of the 115 million florin budget that the war minister presented to the Delegations.<sup>379</sup>

Dr. Sturm, speaking on behalf of the Delegations committee for the army budget, differed with Fux on the actual sum of the war ministry's proposal. Sturm asserted that the Delegations must take into consideration not only the cost of the *Ordinarium* but also the *Extraordinarium* as well as the *Landwehr*, the *Honvéd*, and the troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina. All of these sums raised the total to 130 million florins, and thus surpassed the 1865 k.k. budget. Sturm, however, was encouraged in the war minister's desire to find ways to save money and hoped that this wish would translate into significant savings in the future.<sup>380</sup> The old problems plaguing promotions and pensions continued to exist despite the assurances of the war minister FZM Artur Maximilian Count Bylandt-Rheidt that Habsburg leaders always took proper measures to avoid errors in awarding advancement and retirement payments.<sup>381</sup> Yet for the most part the delegates brought up no major objections to the military budget.

None of the delegates spoke of outrageous expenses although Fux did mention the large sums set forth for fortifications. The Austro-Hungarian high command still favored pouring immense amounts of money into permanent fortresses. The Habsburg military, however, did not stand alone in its convictions about the importance of fortifications. According to general staff captain Hugo von Molnár, France spent over 35 million on upgrading the fortresses along the German border, and Germany 100 million for the expansion of 23 fortified places throughout its empire. Even the Italian government granted 18 million for improving fortresses, especially

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<sup>379</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880, 73.

<sup>380</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880, 71-72, 79-80.

<sup>381</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880, 78.

along the Austro-Hungarian border, while Habsburg parliamentary delegates balked at giving 200,000 florins to continue fortifying the supposedly crucial fortress of Przemyśl in Galicia.<sup>382</sup>

After 1878, though, the Delegations had fewer objections to military spending.

### **Fruits of Victory: Public and Parliamentary Approval**

One reason for this change in the attitude of the parliamentary representatives stemmed from the success of Austro-Hungarian armed forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina. According to Andrassy's biographer, Eduard von Wertheimer, the residents of the Habsburg empire had formed their opinion of the k.k. military primarily from the defeats of 1859 and 1866 and since then from the parliamentary debates. The victorious occupation of the two Turkish provinces in 1878, though, presented the army as the triumphant arm of the government, more effective than the diplomats. Because Austro-Hungarian troops had fulfilled the mandate of the Congress of Berlin to take Bosnia and Hercegovina, public opinion both within the Habsburg Empire and abroad now saw the k.k. army as proof of the great power status of the Habsburg empire.<sup>383</sup> The press also helped promote this victorious image of the military as many newspapers reported the progress of the k.k. forces during August, September, and October 1878. The *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung* even boasted that the campaign had eliminated national differences among the various peoples of the empire as "Germans, Slavs, Hungarians, and Italians fulfilled their duty in equal fashion and fought with equal enthusiasm for the honor and good of their common fatherland."<sup>384</sup> Though without the exaggerated style of the press, Major Benkiser still wrote truthfully that most of the parliamentary representatives in both halves of the empire honored the army in their speeches while public opinion in the press towards the military took "a completely

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<sup>382</sup> Hauptmann Hugo von Molnár, "Über Heeres-Budgets. Eine militär-statistische Studie," *O.* 14 (1877): 130-131.

<sup>383</sup> Wertheimer, *Graf Julius Andrassy, sein Leben und seine Zeit*, vol. III, 156-157.

<sup>384</sup> "Die Feuerprobe unserer Wehrverfassung," *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, 21. October 1878, Nr. 83, 2.

different position than was the case just a few years before.”<sup>385</sup> Foreign newspapers also noted the support of the Austro-Hungarian people for the army in Bosnia. The French newspaper *Le Figaro* reported that even the Hungarian population rejoiced at the fall of Sarajevo.<sup>386</sup> The British press published a British statesman’s view of Austria-Hungary as a strong power in itself and one of the best administered in Europe.<sup>387</sup>

The debate of the Delegations for the expenses of the Habsburg navy in 1880 illustrates the change in attitude of the parliamentary representatives very well. Hardly any discussion took place at all even though the war ministry asked for funds to build new ships, an unusual request during the 1870s and 1880s. The presenter of the Delegations budget commission report, Dr. Ruß, succinctly stated that the first installment for a new battleship, the *Tegethoff*, appeared now in the *Extraordinarium* rather than the *Ordinarium* and that the first two installments for two new gunboats appeared in the *Ordinarium*. The one deduction that the commission recommended for the two gunboats came from a desire for better business accounting methods, not because anyone considered the two new boats unnecessary. When the president of the Delegations opened the floor for the general debate concerning the naval budget, no discussion took place. The special debate consisted merely in the approval of the Delegations for the various parts of the *Ordinarium* request, amounting to 7,674,552 florins, and the *Extraordinarium*, an additional 900,350 florins. Even the sum of 600,000 florins for the first installment of building the new battleship did not garner any objections.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 419-420.

<sup>386</sup> “La Presse Étrangère au Jour le Jour,” *Le Figaro*, 25 Aout 1878, 2.

<sup>387</sup> “Arrival of the English Mail,” *The Argus*, 12 September 1878, 6.

<sup>388</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), 84-86.

Naval expenses comprised a small part of the total budget of 197,961,512 for the k.k. military, a mere 4.4% and roughly half of the expenses for maintaining troops in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>389</sup> Certainly, outlays for the maritime branch of the Habsburg armed forces did not consume excessive amounts of funding. However, of all the great military powers of Europe, Austria-Hungary had the least cause for building up a fleet of battleships. While Britain and France had already held overseas possessions for many years, Germany, Russia, and Italy had also begun to acquire colonies in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Franz Joseph, though, did not engage wholeheartedly in the imperialist drive to gain lands in Asia and Africa. Therefore, the k.k. navy saw its main purpose as the protection of the Habsburg part of the Adriatic coast and its few ports. Although Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff had defeated Italy at the battle of Lissa in 1866, Austria-Hungary still felt the Italian navy constituted the greatest threat. Especially during the political isolation of the Habsburg Empire before the signing of the Dual Alliance with Germany in 1879 and the Triple Alliance that included Italy along with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1881, the k.k. military believed in upgrading its naval strength. This view, though, did not coincide with the reality of the Habsburg situation, which hardly required great naval power to defend the empire's Adriatic coast. The funds spent on the navy could have gone to other more vital needs, such as the procurement of Krupp cannon. Nevertheless, the Delegations granted the florins that the war minister requested for the navy.

The more favorable attitude of parliamentary representatives also stemmed from the economizing measures of the war minister, FZM Bylandt-Rheidt, in whom Dr. Sturm expressed confidence during the 1880 Delegations budget debate.<sup>390</sup> Bylandt-Rheidt, a veteran of 1848-

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<sup>389</sup> Budget Übersicht, 1868-1911, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe.

<sup>390</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), 72.

1849 in Hungary and a general staff officer in Italy in 1859, had presided over the artillery committee in 1864 and the Technical and Administrative Military Committee in 1869 before becoming war minister in June 1876.<sup>391</sup> Leading the Ministry of War until 1888, Bylandt-Rheidt, a proponent of more constitutional government, held the position longer than any other Austro-Hungarian war minister, thus giving stability to the k.k. military during his tenure.

## **Conclusion**

The occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1878 gave the Habsburg army a chance to test the new reforms and weaponry that the high command had implemented over the previous twelve years. Even though the irregular opponents which Austro-Hungarian forces encountered in the two Turkish provinces could not compare with the armies of the military powers of Europe, k.k. troops still had ample opportunities to prove the benefits of the reforms since the catastrophe of 1866. The breech-loading Werndl rifles gave the Habsburg infantry a distinct advantage over the insurgents. The 80mm and 90mm field guns as well as the new mountain mortars instilled fear in the enemy and provided devastating fire for destroying prepared positions. Although having little influence in battle, the cavalry proved valuable by performing security and reconnaissance service while supporting difficult communications in undeveloped lands. The emphasis on more open tactics with flank attacks rather than closed frontal assaults found success on the Bosnian and Hercegovinian battlefields. Officers and men for the most part had fought well together with the officers sharing in the hardships of the rank and file and no nationalistic problems arising. In general, the k.k. army had adapted to rough conditions and performed well in 1878 and again in 1881-1882 when insurgents had risen in revolt in the two provinces.

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<sup>391</sup> *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* Vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957), 132.

Problems, however, still existed. The supply system had broken down. The campaigns had lasted longer than expected and required a large number of additional troops. Tactical manuals continued to advocate frontal attacks culminating in the bayonet fight. A significant group of cavalry officers believed in the primacy of shock and *élan* in the use of the mounted branch. The Habsburg high command insisted on maintaining and upgrading the cordon system of permanent fortresses. Rivalry persisted among military leaders, though Bylandt-Rheidt had succeeded in bringing more stability to the war ministry.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 had given another opportunity to observe the changes in modern warfare. This conflict revealed the increasing importance of massed artillery on the battlefield as well as the inanity of frontal assaults on fortified positions. Cavalry more than ever before contributed not by participating in battle but rather by performing vital reconnaissance and security roles. Temporary fortifications proved extremely effective, especially at Plevna. The mobilization process showed the need for greater use of technical troops and railroads for quick and effective deployment of forces. Habsburg officers, though, tended to interpret the lessons of the Russo-Turkish War in ways that reinforced their previous ideas, whether right or wrong, instead of instigating a rethinking of the methods of war.

Chronic financial difficulties continued to exist as well. The k.k. high command still had not solved the excessive pensioning and the influence of patronage on promotions. The Habsburg army also spent vast amounts on permanent fortifications. Parliamentary representatives questioned spending money on parades and absentee commanders. Yet the Delegations devoted less time to debating the military budget than before and mentioned fewer examples of army wastefulness. Victory not only covered the army's deficiencies but also created more favorable views among the delegates as well as public opinion.



Major Benkiser made a very significant point at the end of his article on the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina: “The principal benefit of the last campaign consists of the raising of the self-confidence of the army.”<sup>392</sup> Even with the introduction of the new *Wehrgesetz* in 1868 and the procurement of better weaponry for all branches of the armed forces, the k.k. military needed an opportunity to prove its worth once again on the battlefield. The invasion of the two Turkish provinces at the behest of the other European powers at the Congress of Berlin delivered the desired result: military success for the Habsburg troops. With the renewed confidence of the press and the civilian government, the Austro-Hungarian army could enter the next phase of its development as the high command endeavored to compete with the rest of Europe in the ever increasing pace of technological innovation during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>392</sup> Benkiser, “Rückblick auf die Operationen zur Besetzung Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” 419.

## Chapter 4 - From Progress to Reversion

Captain Reska, a retired Habsburg cavalry captain, drawing from the writings of the German Hegelian philosopher Conrad Hermann on the philosophy of history, stated, “As once force had to be overcome by sense of honor in order to bring the moral element to supremacy, so in future handicraft will be surpassed by science in order to bring the intellectual into prominence. - This is the next stage in the progress of history, that certainly appears threatened by a still closer reaction, which at least in our army will be prevented only by a universal effort.”<sup>393</sup>

Reska aptly assessed the most important aspects of the age that all European armies had entered by the 1880s. The era of fast-paced technological innovation created a quandary for military high commands. In the presence of multiple versions of new weapons, in particular the repeating rifle and ever-improving artillery, leaders had to make not only the right decision for procurement but also a quick enough choice to stay ahead or at least keep pace with the other powers. At the same time, as technology presented more and more inventions for the use of armies, too early a choice would result in an obsolete weapons system. High-ranking officers had the responsibility of choosing correctly among all the alternatives and thereby asserting the supremacy of the intellect through science over mere handicraft. For the Habsburg high command, less funding than the other European powers created even more difficulty. Imprudent spending decisions only exacerbated this situation as the Austro-Hungarian army wasted large sums on needless permanent fortifications and naval expenditures.

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<sup>393</sup> Rittmeister des Ruhestandes Reska, “Die neue Aera,” *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* (O.) 15 (1877): 101.

While military establishments faced this dilemma of making difficult decisions in such a rapidly advancing technological environment, leaders also had to fend off the backward-looking members of the army, especially among the older officers and those in the cavalry, where advocates of shock and *élan* still had great influence. Such reactionary attitudes remained embedded in the Austro-Hungarian mounted forces as well as other branches and thus prompted Reska's remark that a concerted opposition to retrogression must exist, a reference to Franz Joseph's personal motto *Viribus Unitis*. Under the general peace of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the k.k. high command had to persevere in the attempt to adapt to the requirements of modern warfare. Therefore, after the 1878 campaign in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the revolt there in 1881-1882, without the benefit of testing reforms in actual combat or even observing the wars of other powers, Austro-Hungarian leaders had to update tactics, procure new weaponry, decide the role of each branch, prepare defenses for the empire, improve the railroad and communications network, and raise the standards of military education. Moreover, the high command faced the ever-present obstacle of convincing the Delegations to fund the expensive demands of the armed forces. Following the victory of 1878, however, the k.k. military appeared capable of successfully overcoming these challenges.

Despite the difficulties of this era, the Austro-Hungarian high command improved the weaponry of the infantry and adapted the role of cavalry to the modern battlefield. The war ministry remained stable and relations with the Delegations continued favorably. The first half of the 1890s, however, proved a disastrously harmful turning point for k.k. development as the offensive *à outrance* returned to the tactical sphere with the rise of Conrad von Hötzendorf and the death of Archduke Albrecht. Along with these events, the increasing problem of numerical

inferiority in comparison with the other European powers as well as mismanagement of funds foretold future ruin for the Austro-Hungarian military.

### **Repeater Rifles and Tactics**

One of the major decisions for Habsburg military leaders consisted in procuring a repeating rifle with magazines to compete with the rest of the European powers. The Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke, victorious in 1866 against Austria and in 1870 against France, stated before the German parliament that the magazine rifle epitomized the competitive strivings of all great powers to retain their status of major military might and thus the procurement of repeaters became an unavoidable decision.<sup>394</sup> A military chancellery memorandum of October 1886 detailed the history of the repeater with the advantages and disadvantages of the various models based on the extensive testing that the k.k. army had done with the new weapons. The memorandum's main emphasis, though, lay in stressing the necessity of acquiring magazine rifles for Austro-Hungarian troops, not only in the main army but also for the reserves. The Werndl breechloaders, already 12 to 14 years old, had reached the end of their usefulness. Now Habsburg forces needed the technological superiority of the repeater to render the army battle ready.<sup>395</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian high command and the officer corps almost universally supported the acquisition of repeating rifles and thus displayed a continual interest in new technology. War Minister FZM Artur Maximilian Count Bylandt-Rheidt underscored the importance of the new weapon to the Hungarian Delegations committee thus: "Do you have the courage to set our army

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<sup>394</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Gustav Rattenhofer, "Die Taktik des Repetirgewehres," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift (ÖMZ)* 1 (1887): 230.

<sup>395</sup> No. 6 Memoire über die Nothwendigkeit der Beschaffung von Repetirgewehren, Oktober 1886, Kriegsarchiv (KA) Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM) Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien, 29-30.

with its present rifle against an enemy with the repeating weapon? I don't!"<sup>396</sup> Years before, at the request of the k.k. leadership, officers had engaged in experiments to find the best model of magazine rifle. One officer optimistically concluded that the procurement of the repeater for the Habsburg infantry would raise the Austro-Hungarian army to the highest rank of all European states, most of which had already begun exploring the capabilities of magazine rifles. The French navy had even started to issue repeaters to its sailors by 1879.<sup>397</sup>

Although Franz Joseph approved the procurement of the Mannlicher repeating rifle for the Habsburg military in 1886, the new weapon did not reach the hands of the soldiers until 1889.<sup>398</sup> This rifle, the invention of the Austrian arms designer Ferdinand Baron von Mannlicher, used a straight-pull bolt action and a five round *en bloc* clip. Though prone to collect mud and dirt that would clog the bolt action, the Mannlicher repeater shot accurately and dependably as it contained fewer components than most other rifle designs. Thus, the new rifle represented a significant upgrade over the single shot Werndl.<sup>399</sup> Austro-Hungarian army leaders realized the necessity of introducing the magazine rifle in order to keep pace with the other European nations and thus maintain the Habsburg Empire's status as a major military power. According to one of the favorite sayings of contributors to the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* and the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine*, "Standing still is a step backwards."<sup>400</sup> This saying aptly fit the k.k. view on the necessity of acquiring the Mannlicher magazine rifle.

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<sup>396</sup> Ratzenhofer, "Die Taktik des Repetirgewehres," 230.

<sup>397</sup> Oberlieutenant Franz Tscherin, "Über Repetir-Gewehre," *O.* 20 (1880): 183-188.

<sup>398</sup> Major-Auditor Dr. Emil Dangelmaier, "Unser Kaiser als militärischer Gesetzgeber," *ÖMZ* 4 (1898): 246.

<sup>399</sup> "Miscellen. Das Repetir-Gewehr von Mannlicher," *O.* 15 (1877): 343-344; John Walter, *The Rifle Story* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), 190.

<sup>400</sup> "Modificirter Gewehr-Aufsatz, Modell 1873/77," *ÖMZ* 1 (1881): 94.

Questions arose, however, regarding how the repeating rifle would affect tactics. Austro-Hungarian officers agreed that the new weapon would change how armies fought, though difference of opinion surfaced as to how much change would take place. One officer argued that the principles of fire tactics ought to remain unchanged but the depth of troop formations might have to alter.<sup>401</sup> Another officer incredibly advocated thicker square formations in the face of repeating weapons.<sup>402</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Gustav Ratzenhofer of the general staff corps, the leading interpreter of the 1874 k.k. regulations, author of several tactical manuals, and one of the only officers to assert his doubts publicly about the wisdom of arming Habsburg troops with repeaters, warned about the dangers of wasting ammunition at an extraordinary rate with magazine rifles. Basing his judgment on the target practice of Austro-Hungarian soldiers, who shot only three bullets per minute rather than the six or seven a trained marksman would, Ratzenhofer reiterated his belief that k.k. infantryman received poor training. Unlike peacetime target practice when no pressure to shoot quickly existed, the battlefield presented a completely different situation. During a firefight the nervous and poorly trained soldier will shoot as quickly as he can and thus waste all his ammunition. The magazine rifle would only exacerbate this problem. Therefore, regardless of the obvious advantages of the repeater, the Habsburg army would have to instill fire discipline in the troops before the men could make efficient use of the new weaponry.<sup>403</sup>

Despite the exponential increase in firepower that the repeating rifle caused, the Austro-Hungarian high command failed to adapt k.k. battle tactics correctly to account for this dramatic

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<sup>401</sup> Hauptmann Freiherrn La Motte, "Über die Anwendung der Anschlagsrichtungen mit den Infanterie- und Jäger Gewehren M. 1873/77 und M. 1867/77," *O.* 32 (1886): 86-87.

<sup>402</sup> Major Kasimir Zaiaczkowski Ritter de Zareba, "Die taktische Gliederung im Kampfe mit Rücksicht auf die Feuerkraft des Repetir-gewehres und die Inversion," *ÖMZ* 1 (1889): 258.

<sup>403</sup> Ratzenhofer, "Die Taktik des Repetirgewehres," 220-228.

rise in destructive force. In 1870 a division could fire 40,000 rounds per minute with breechloaders. By 1890 the same division could shoot 200,000 rounds per minute with magazine rifles.<sup>404</sup> FML Zeno Count Welser von Welsersheimb, a former adjutant of Archduke Albrecht in 1866 and land defense minister from 1880 to 1905, pointed out that the new 1889 Infantry Regulations, though, failed to emphasize the art of shooting. Welser stressed the importance of gaining fire superiority with accurate shooting rather than relying on the number of bullets fired. Explaining that a soldier could shoot on average 100 bullets in 10 minutes, the land defense minister calculated that each man would consume all his ammunition within half an hour and thus become inoperative for battle. Rather, well-aimed shots would produce more hits and bring about victory through more efficient and effective firepower.<sup>405</sup>

Nevertheless, tactical manuals from the Habsburg war college continued to advocate frontal assaults culminating in bayonet charges, and train future general staff officers to adhere to these ideas.<sup>406</sup> Although k.k. infantry regulations emphasized the great difficulty of the frontal assault, the instructions impressed upon officers the necessity of bringing firepower forward for decisive results. Therefore in field exercises troop leaders continued to drive towards the enemy and instill an offensive mindset in the soldiers. The contradictory stance of stressing the importance of firepower while constantly pressing forward ensured the retention of an attacking spirit in the Austro-Hungarian army.<sup>407</sup> Despite this spirit, the Habsburg military had made progress since 1866 in adapting tactics to the increased fire of breechloading and repeating rifles.

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<sup>404</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 138.

<sup>405</sup> FML Zeno Graf Welser von Welsersheimb, 8: Taktische Studie, Jänner 1890, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 67, Studien.

<sup>406</sup> Ritter von Czibulka, Taktik II. Jahrgang 1883/4, KA Militärschule, Kriegsschule, Karton Nr. 59, Studienbeihelfe: Strategie und Taktik; Oberstlieutenant Alfred von Englisch-Popparisch, K.u.k. KS Taktik I. Jahrgang 1889/90, II. Theil, KA Militärschule, KS, Karton Nr. 59, Studienbeihelfe: Strategie und Taktik.

<sup>407</sup> Oberst Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914* (Wien: Adolf Holzhausens Nachfolger, 1929), 127.

With more emphasis on firepower, Albrecht and Ratzenhofer opposed the offensive *à outrance* of the past and allowed the use of the defensive to enter tactical debates. This improvement, however, began to reach an end with the rise of Franz Count Conrad von Hötzendorf to prominence within the k.k. military.

### **Conrad's Offensive Tactics and the 1889 Infantry Regulations**

Conrad, future chief of the general staff and architect of Austria-Hungary's war plans in 1914, taught at the *Kriegsschule* as a tactics instructor from 1888 to 1892. Hötzendorf's early career recommended him for the position. First in his class at the war college, Conrad had demonstrated an excellent grasp of the principles of education for staff officers there. During the twelve years between his graduation and his appointment as instructor of tactics, Hötzendorf had gained some combat experience and medals in Bosnia as well as established for himself a reputation as a tactical innovator. This reputation stemmed from articles that Conrad wrote for the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine*, in which he argued for the benefits of earthworks and open order tactics in addition to more practical mapping.<sup>408</sup> Also during his tenure as chief of staff for the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Lemberg, Hötzendorf achieved prominence for his stance against excessive use of the parade ground and the establishment of the first modern training ground in Austria-Hungary. This accomplishment as well as the articles influenced high-ranking members of the Habsburg army to consider Conrad an innovative and dynamic thinker who would help the Dual Monarchy's military continue its progress towards

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<sup>408</sup> Conrad von Hötzendorf, "Einiges über den süd-hercegovinischen Karst in militärischer Hinsicht," *O.* 24 (1882): addendum; Conrad, "Ueber militär-geographische Behelfe," *O.* 26 (1883): 411-423.



modernization. Thus, Beck, who served as chief of the general staff from 1882 until 1906, appointed Hötendorf to the most influential post in the *Kriegsschule*.<sup>409</sup>

While teaching tactics, Conrad emphasized the importance of the offensive and morale as necessary for achieving decisive results. Tactical and strategic tasks and exercises from the years Hötendorf taught focused almost completely on attack and very little on defense except for rearguard actions on the march.<sup>410</sup> Conrad's teaching notes, which he published as a commentary on the new k.k. *Exerzirreglements* of 1889, called for more exercises with the bayonet, a part of infantry training that had declined since 1866.<sup>411</sup> Constantly focusing on the role of morale and psychology in battle, Hötendorf instilled in his students the love of the offensive at all costs while denigrating the benefits of defense and field fortifications, a change from his earlier writings.<sup>412</sup>

The introduction of smokeless powder for rifles also eliminated any chance of running under the cover of smoke that rendered the defender unsure of where to fire, as Colonel Reinländer had proposed for attacking breechloaders in 1871.<sup>413</sup> The combination of repeating rifles and smokeless powder made frontal attacks over open ground suicidal. Yet the new Infantry Regulations of 1889, written to incorporate the Mannlicher repeater into k.k. tactics, took on a more offensive spirit than the previous regulations of 1874. Though acknowledging the superiority of firepower, the regulations maintained the possibility of platoons or swarms of

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<sup>409</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, Inc., 2000), 37-38.

<sup>410</sup> K.u.k. KS Lehrstoff und Übungen, Wien 1891 (Studienjahre 1889/90 und 1890/1), Grundsätze der Strategie, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 44, Lehrpläne, Stundeneinteilung, Organisation der KS, Denkschrift KS 1852-1877.

<sup>411</sup> Franz Conrad von Hötendorf, *Zum Studium der Taktik. I. Theil: Einleitung und Infanterie* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1891), 111-112.

<sup>412</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 44-45.

<sup>413</sup> Colonel Wilhelm Reinländer, *Vorträge über die Taktik* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Son, 1870-71), KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 59, Studienbeihelfe: Strategie und Taktik, 1-9.

soldiers using ground cover to attack the enemy already bombarded by artillery and thus thwart the advantages of the defense. The bayonet charge would form the final stage of the assault. The authors of the regulations, however, realized 30% casualties would most likely result during such offensive maneuvers.<sup>414</sup> Once again, the Austro-Hungarian infantry instructions prophesied the battles of the First World War twenty-five years before they took place, though the casualty estimates proved optimistically low.

The 1889 Infantry Regulations made official a growing desire among the Habsburg officer corps to return to past tactics of shock and *élan*, which some officers had never given up. During the 1880s some k.k. military writers expressed reservations about the success of bayonet attacks, especially with untrained reserves.<sup>415</sup> The preference for the offensive and the decisive role of morale, however, never left the war theory of the Austro-Hungarian army. As one *ÖMZ* author said, “For a moment the danger appeared to lie near that one - just as in past centuries - will seek salvation in the rigid defensive, but finally the conviction that positive results are to be found only in the offensive maintained the field.”<sup>416</sup> Always trying to solve the problem of attacking enemies possessing increasingly greater firepower, while proving unwilling to consider the defensive as a viable option, Habsburg officers looked to earlier methods of successful assaults.

This view belonged especially to younger officers who had not experienced the effect of the breechloader in battle. One *Landwehr* major advocated a return to mass linear tactics, claiming with poor timing that the age of guerilla warfare had passed.<sup>417</sup> Relying on examples

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<sup>414</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 41-42.

<sup>415</sup> “Der Anlauf mit dem Bajonnet,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1882): 262-270.

<sup>416</sup> F. Ebh., “Einige Betrachtungen über den Infanterie-Angriff mit Hinblick auf die Bestimmungen des Reglements,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1883): 229.

<sup>417</sup> Major Baron Boecklin, “Das Infanterie-Feuer im Gefechte. Eine tactische Studie,” *O.* 22 (1882): 444.

from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as more recent campaigns, in particular a successful Boer attack on British troops in Africa on 27 February 1881, another k.k. officer argued that no case of attacking troops annihilated by fire existed: “The attack with shining weapons, the storm, the old reliable thrust tactics, the shock on foot, is unstoppable, unconquerable, just like the shock of cavalry, if fresh troops not unnerved by long *Schnellfeuer* lead.” Even the repeating rifle could not withstand the assault of troops defying death and wielding the nimble bayonet.<sup>418</sup> Clearly, even after the 1874 Infantry Regulations emphasized firepower, the offensive spirit still remained strong within the k.k. officer corps. Archduke Albrecht, the inspector general of the Habsburg army, dismissed as absurd the idea that no closed order advances in deep formations ever took place any more despite the lessons of recent wars, especially the Austro-Prussian War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Russo-Turkish War, with their appalling losses and unsuccessful assaults.<sup>419</sup> Habsburg officers misinterpreted these lessons because, even though frontal assaults failed for the most part during these campaigns, the victor in each war, France in 1859, Prussia in 1866 and 1870, Russia in 1877-78, and Austria-Hungary in 1878, had employed offensive strategy and tactics.

After the publication of the 1889 Infantry Regulations and the introduction of the Mannlicher magazine rifle, the offensive spirit gained even more intensity. As tactics teacher at the Habsburg war college, Conrad had a significant influence over the one hundred general staff officers from the 1888-1890 and 1890-1892 classes who would implement the new regulations in maneuvers and instruct the soldiers how to use the new weaponry. By the end of the First World War, sixty of the seventy students from Conrad’s classes who had remained in the army had

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<sup>418</sup> Hauptmann Ferdinand Kudelka, “Feuer und Bajonett,” *O.* 25 (1882): 322-323.

<sup>419</sup> Erzherzog Albrecht, 2: Bemerkungen zum Bericht über die Manöver des 8. und 9. Korps im August 1885, Arco, 6. XII. 1885, KS MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 67, Studien.

reached the rank of colonel with fifty-one achieving major general or higher. Thus, throughout the last quarter century of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Conrad's proteges had an increasing influence on k.k. strategy and tactics.<sup>420</sup> This influence meant the inculcation of the offensive spirit à *outrance* that stemmed from Conrad's mixture of Clausewitzian thought and social Darwinism in military matters: "The goal of war is the lasting conquest of the enemy's will."<sup>421</sup> These words resembled Clausewitz's saying, "War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."<sup>422</sup> Conrad, however, interpreted the need to dominate the opponent's will as the call for the offensive: "The attack works not only by paralyzing the enemy, but also by inspiring one's own troops; it lends them a higher zeal, enables thereby their own power, demands the moral annihilation of the enemy, and works against their own moral depression, - it works therefore doubly on the goal, as what is described as 'moral superiority.'<sup>423</sup>

Other officers also expressed ideas that corresponded with Conrad's words. Instead of seeing the advantages that the increase in firepower from the repeating rifle gave the defensive, contributors to the *ÖMZ* and the *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* continued to advocate the attack as the stronger form of war, primarily because the repeater did not grant more morale to the defender.<sup>424</sup> Likewise, smokeless powder did not render the defensive more powerful.<sup>425</sup> One author asserted that all great commanders from antiquity to the present possessed the offensive spirit, which maintained the power of the initiative and imposed the will

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<sup>420</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf*, 40.

<sup>421</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 4.

<sup>422</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

<sup>423</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 14.

<sup>424</sup> E.K., "Der moderne Infanterie-Angriff," *ÖMZ* 1 (1893): 182.

<sup>425</sup> Hauptmann Gaj, "Betrachtungen über den Einfluss des rauchschwachen Pulvers auf Taktik, Ausbildung und Erziehung von Oberst Wentzel Porth, Commandant des Inf.-Regiments Nr. 101," *ÖMZ* 2 (1892): 68-69.

of the attacker on the defender: “It is better to be the hammer than the anvil.”<sup>426</sup> Even one officer, who admitted the rarity of successful frontal assaults in modern warfare, contended that the offense still provided a better option than the defense because military history revealed that the great aggressive leaders gained decisive victories. The advantage belonged to the attacker who had a positive goal and acted to fulfill a plan rather than the defender who remained passively waiting to react to the move of the offensive side.<sup>427</sup> One writer under the pseudonym *Éclair* argued troops who possessed excellent morale will always conquer an enemy with superior weaponry but lower morale. *Éclair*, as well as other officers, loved to repeat the famous words of Suvarov, an eighteenth century Russian general, “The bullet is a fool, the bayonet a hero.”<sup>428</sup> Like Conrad, these officers stressed the importance of the attack to enhance morale and impose one’s will on the enemy.

In addition, k.k. military writers put great trust in the lesson which they gleaned from studying past campaigns, that the aggressor always won crushing battles. Instructors, including Conrad, remained obsessed especially with the masterpieces of Moltke, the Bohemian campaign of 1866 and the Prussian victories in 1870. The *Kriegsschule* tactical manuals contained examples almost exclusively from these campaigns.<sup>429</sup> Thus, Moltke’s ideas of the superiority of the offensive and envelopment maneuvers became embedded in Austro-Hungarian officers more than ever before. Though most officers agreed with the 1889 Infantry Regulations on the necessity of achieving fire superiority, the push forward, or *Drang nach vorwärts*, still took

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<sup>426</sup> “Initiative und Offensive,” *O.* 38 (1889): 166-187.

<sup>427</sup> Major von Czogler, “Einflüsse der modernen Kleinalibergewehre und des rauchschwachen Pulvers im Gefechte,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1891): 48-49.

<sup>428</sup> *Éclair*, “Bajonnett und moralische Erziehung,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1893): 37, 42.

<sup>429</sup> Ritter von Czibulka, *Taktik* II. Jahrgang 1883/4, KA Militärschule, Kriegsschule, Karton Nr. 59, Studienbehelfe: Strategie und Taktik; Oberstlieutenant Alfred von Englisch-Popparisch, K.u.k. *KS Taktik* I. Jahrgang 1889/90, II. Theil, KA Militärschule, KS, Karton Nr. 59, Studienbehelfe: Strategie und Taktik.

priority. Attack formed the best method of battle; the enveloping attack formed the best method of attack as long as firing did not hinder the *Drang nach vorwärts*.<sup>430</sup> This line of thought made sense for the k.k. high command because the Habsburg army would most likely fight any future wars allied with Germany in Moltke's style of warfare, even though the offensive did not fit the abilities of the smaller Austro-Hungarian military.

### **Military Education: Intellectual Training and Tactics**

Bylandt-Rheidt, war minister from 1876 to 1888, continued education in Austro-Hungarian military institutions in the manner that his predecessors, FML Franz Baron Kuhn von Kuhnenfeld and General der Kavallerie Alexander Baron von Koller, had established for civil schools. Perceiving the benefits for military institutions as well as students, Bylandt-Rheidt regulated the curriculum of each k.k. officer school to correspond as closely as possible with the public educational institutions.<sup>431</sup> Thus, students entering army academies from civil schools would make smooth transitions to military institutions just as officers who had graduated from army schools would adjust easily to public educational facilities. Some Habsburg officers, including Ratzenhofer, even envisioned military training as part of the public school curriculum. This innovation would make sense for any state using universal conscription and thereby enhance the army's fighting ability. The military could then employ soldiers who had already received some training before entering the army and save both time and money forming the new recruits into battle ready warriors.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Hauptmann Ferdinand Fidler von Isarborn, "Studie über den Infanterie-Angriff," *ÖMZ* 2 (1892): 230.

<sup>431</sup> Bernhard von Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn* (Berlin: A. Hoffman & Comp., 1893), 337.

<sup>432</sup> "Über militärische Erziehung der Volksjugend," *ÖMZ* 1 (1881): 220; Major E.M., "Vortrag über die theoretische und praktische Ausbildung des Unterofficiers und Soldaten der Infanterie," *ÖMZ* 3 (1883): 215; General-Major Alois Ritter von Haymerle, "Unsere Infanterie-Cadetenschulen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1884): 245-246; S., "Eine Studie über unser Militär-Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen," *ÖMZ* 4 (1890): 180.

Realizing the problems of Kuhn's system of testing, which relied too much on theory, Bylandt-Rheidt stressed the importance of both theoretical and practical knowledge. The war minister wanted military graduates, especially among the general staff, to prove proficient in all branches of the art of war. Therefore, military schools emphasized familiarity with the most recent innovations in warfare as well as target practice and staff rides. Two years of service in one of the army branches would solidify the theoretical knowledge gained in the educational institutions.<sup>433</sup> Practical training also formed a recurrent theme in the articles on education in the *ÖMZ*. While still maintaining the merits of theory, officers emphasized the necessity of practical application in the form of war games and field exercises, especially for tactics.<sup>434</sup>

During the 1880s and afterwards, staff rides became a prominent part of military training for both staff officers and general officers. Archduke Albrecht and especially FML Friedrich von Beck-Rzikowsky proved instrumental in establishing these practical exercises. As chief of the general staff from 1881 to 1906, Beck had great influence over the staff rides and tried to make all field exercises as realistic as possible. Beck and Albrecht also expanded these training practices to include all branches of the army, including the reserves in the *Landwehr* and *Honvéd*, in both offensive and defensive roles. The Habsburg military held the first exercises involving more than one corps on each side ever to take place in Europe in 1893 at Güns in Hungary.<sup>435</sup> Thus, because of these measures, the k.k. army showed great progress in realistic training for the modern battlefield.

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<sup>433</sup> Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn*, 370, 391, 412-413.

<sup>434</sup> Major E.M., "Vortrag über die theoretische und praktische Ausbildung des Unterofficiers und Soldaten der Infanterie," 218; Haymerle, "Unsere Infanterie-Cadetenschulen," 241-242; Oberst -w-, "Aphorismen über Schulung und Ausbildung der Truppen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1884): 89; S., "Eine Studie über unser Militär-Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen," 185; E.v.C., "Zur theoretischen Fortbildung der Officiere und Cadetten," *O.* 50 (1895): 171-179.

<sup>435</sup> Scott Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army: Friedrich Beck and the Rise of the General Staff* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 91-94.

Within the k.k. academic institutions, the greatest emphasis fell upon tactics. In the infantry cadet schools, students of the third year studied tactics three hours per week and fourth year students four hours. No other subject received as much attention, especially in the third and fourth years, though cadets of the fourth year spent four and a half hours per week in the course on fortifications and fortress warfare and studied terrain and the German language for more total hours spread out over more years. The stress on tactics stood out even more obviously at the general staff's war college. In this institution students spent four and a half hours per week on the tactical course until 1885 when the number of hours reached six. This amount represented twice as much time as students spent studying strategy, three times more than the terrain course, and four times more than the courses in weaponry, army organization, engineering and fortifications as well as military penal law.<sup>436</sup> This emphasis on tactical training explains the influence that the instructor of tactics could have on prospective staff officers. Thus, Conrad, who began teaching tactics at the *Kriegsschule* three years after the expansion of the tactics course, took advantage of the additional time to instill his ideas in the classes of 1888-1892. Along with Conrad's charismatic teaching style, the extra hours spent absorbing his views reinforced the conviction on the necessity of retaining the initiative and the offensive at all costs in the future high-ranking officers of the Habsburg army of World War I.

Even with the great emphasis on practical training and tactics, some officers criticized the educational system of the k.k. army. Major-General Alois Baron von Haymerle, the author of various political works as well as a biography of FML Josef Count Radetzky, revealed that despite reforms, the Austro-Hungarian educational institutions suffered from frequent turnover of instructors and incompetent teachers who had too much freedom in methodology. Haymerle

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<sup>436</sup> Poten, *Geschichte des Militär- Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens in Österreich-Ungarn*, 413-415, 428-432.



also complained that cadet schools placed too great an emphasis on mathematics and not enough on tactics.<sup>437</sup> Another officer revealed how instructors, especially incompetent substitutes, wasted up to one quarter of the instructional time both in the classroom and during field exercises with inadequate preparation and too frequent breaks.<sup>438</sup> Once again the Habsburg army had difficulty in practical application. The reforms had merit, yet the high command did not ensure competence and stability among the teaching body.

Creating a united military capable of offensive actions formed a significant part of Austro-Hungarian training. As one k.k. first lieutenant wrote, the psychological side of education had taken greater prominence in modern times because “weapons techniques and the raising of great masses of warriors can find a limit, but the psychological, inner worth of an army cannot.”<sup>439</sup> According to Habsburg officers, not only could an Austro-Hungarian military joined together in love of fatherland and monarch display the ability for successful offensive operations but also compensate for numerical inferiority in comparison to the other European powers. Therefore k.k. officers increasingly advised their comrades to take on the role of teachers for the rank and file coming from so many ethnic backgrounds within the empire. Only officers rather than socialists could perform the vital social task of educating the population in love of monarch and fatherland, performance of duty, courage in the presence of death, and repression of selfish nationalistic feelings.<sup>440</sup> Because officers as true patriots had no nationality or politics, the corps

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<sup>437</sup> Haymerle, “Unsere Infanterie-Cadetenschulen,” 241-250.

<sup>438</sup> Major E.M., “Vortrag über die theoretische und praktische Ausbildung des Unterofficiers und Soldaten der Infanterie,” 216-218.

<sup>439</sup> Oberlieutenant Ludwig Uhle, “Über das Anerziehen des Muthes,” *O.* 21 (1880): 96.

<sup>440</sup> Oberlieutenant Friedrich Lax, “Die sociale Aufgabe des Officiers,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1893): 235-236, 245-246; Hauptmann Stefan von Buchwald, “Zur Psychologie des Soldatenstandes,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1895): 148; L.S., “Der Officier als Lehrer der Mannschaft,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1895): 277-281.

provided the perfect group to transmit the military spirit to recruits and thus the rest of society.<sup>441</sup> To achieve this goal, the new military school instructions issued in the 1890s stressed intellectual training and practical knowledge to enhance morale so that officers would learn to think and in turn teach the soldiers to think as well.<sup>442</sup> Conrad's charismatic style of instruction which encouraged discussion and input from the student body suited this impetus well and increased his popularity.

### **Tactical and Numerical Disconnection**

The offensive tactics of Conrad and the 1889 Infantry Regulations failed to coincide with the numerical inferiority of the k.k. army in comparison to the major European militaries. Calculations of the peacetime and war strengths of the European powers in 1891 put Habsburg forces at a numerical disadvantage as years of smaller recruit contingents had widened the gap between Austria-Hungary's forces and most of the other military powers. The k.k. army's standing army amounted to 300,499 men, or 350,708 including the *Landwehr* and the *Honvéd*. Germany had a peacetime footing of 511,657, France 591,188, and Russia 602,186, or 818,033 with the reserve troops. Only Italy with 276,013 men had a smaller land army than Austria-Hungary. The war footing numbers made an even starker picture of the declining Habsburg military strength. The k.k. army could put 1,010,310 soldiers in the field, or a total of 1,862,249 including all reserves, *Landwehr*, *Honvéd*, and the third line of troops, the *Landsturm*, which contained all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and forty-two, though with extremely little training. In contrast, Germany could mobilize 2,416,300 men not counting reserves, France 1,395,000, or 3,040,000 including reserves and territorial armies, and Russia

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<sup>441</sup> O.v.St., "Soldatengeist und Soldatenpflicht," *ÖMZ* 1 (1893): 134-136.

<sup>442</sup> Lax, "Die sociale Aufgabe des Officiers," 86; Oberstlieutenant Franz Rieger, "Über den Wert und die Pflege der moralischen Kraft," *ÖMZ* 4 (1895): 34-45; E.v.C., "Zur theoretischen Fortbildung der Officiere und Cadetten," 148.

1,187,951, or a total of 2,420,746 with the second reserve line but without the third. Even Italy's wartime army amounted to 679,517 men, and 2,844,339 reserves and militia.<sup>443</sup> Of all the major continental European military powers, Austria-Hungary possessed the smallest wartime army and the second smallest peacetime footing. These numbers hardly indicated the offensive option as the best Habsburg choice for both strategy and tactics, especially considering the very real possibility of a multi-front war with some combination of Russia, Italy, and the Balkan states. Yet, as one k.k. captain wrote to prove the eternal predominance of the offensive, "One shortened the bayonet, and formed the rifle into the present precision weapon - and Austria's combat strategy remains the attack!"<sup>444</sup> Offensive strategy and tactics filled the k.k. officer corps with pride and feelings of the worthiness of Austria-Hungary as a first rate military power.

### **The Realistic View**

Some voices of reason, however, did exist among k.k. officers. Adolf Horsetzky von Hornthal, a lieutenant-colonel in the general staff and teacher of strategy at the war college from 1884 to 1888, offered a different perspective on frontal attacks. As a veteran of Königgrätz in 1866 as well as the 1878 Bosnian campaign, Horsetzky had more battle experience than Conrad and many of the younger officers advocating the offensive. The lieutenant-colonel noted that frontal assaults hardly ever proved successful even in Napoleon's time and far less so in more modern warfare.<sup>445</sup> Horsetzky's experience and reputation as a noted military writer in Austria-Hungary lent credibility to his thoughts. However, once Conrad appeared as tactical instructor at the *Kriegsschule* in 1888, the same year Horsetzky ended his time at the war college, the general staff students latched onto the younger man's charismatic way of teaching and became

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<sup>443</sup> "Die Stärken aller Armeen Europas," *ÖMZ* 1 (1893): 76-77.

<sup>444</sup> Isarborn, "Studie über den Infanterie-Angriff," 215.

<sup>445</sup> Oberstlieutenant Adolf Horsetzky von Hornthal, "Ueber Napoleonische und moderne Offensiv-Operationen," *O.* 32 (1886): 151.

devoted not only to Conrad's ideas but also to his person. According to his former students, Conrad encouraged open debate and discussion in the classroom in order to arrive at solutions to tactical problems. In this way, he became not only an instructor but also the friend of his students while guiding them to accept his theories.<sup>446</sup>

Another officer asserted the greater difficulty of the attack because of the distinct advantage in firepower that every improvement in rifle technology grants the defensive. Troops who use the repeating rifle well should repulse every assault, even offensives of far superior manpower, while inflicting heavy casualties before the attackers reach a point one hundred paces in front of the defensive line. Thus, the defenders should never have to retreat.<sup>447</sup> Land defense minister Welser von Welsersheimb contended that the attempt to gain fire superiority while attacking was illusory and a fatal mistake against a well-chosen defensive position. Swarm lines could be effective not in deep formations but in small groups that took advantage of the initiative and looked to surprise the enemy.<sup>448</sup>

Lieutenant-Colonel Nikolaus Ritter von Wuich's weapons study guide for first year war college students in 1890-1891 explained how the bayonet played a lesser role on the modern battlefield because of the increased firepower of breechloading and repeating rifles. Statistics revealed that wounds from bayonets or sabers during the 1866 Bohemian campaign totaled a mere 3% of all Austrian casualties, while only 1% of Prussian losses at the battle of Pravelotte in 1870 came from *blanken Waffen*. In addition, Wuich showed the negative impact the bayonet had on accurate shooting. The bayonet affixed to the rifle weighed more and partially blocked

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<sup>446</sup> August Urbański von Ostrymiecz, *Conrad von Hötzenndorf* (Graz-Leipzig-Vienna: Ulrich Mosers Verlag, 1938), 66; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzenndorf*, 39-40.

<sup>447</sup> Oberst Alexander Ulmanský, "Über die Änderungen in der Taktik der Infanterie, welche die Einführung des Repetirgewehres bedingt," *O.* 38 (1889): 24-26.

<sup>448</sup> FML Zeno Graf Welser von Welsersheimb, 8: Taktische Studie, Jänner 1890, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 67, Studien.

the aim of the shooter. These hindrances resulted in lower accuracy. Habsburg troops also engaged in much less target practice with the fixed bayonet as it fatigued the men faster. Because of these drawbacks, the infantry regulations prescribed fixing the bayonet onto the rifle only just before the final assault.<sup>449</sup> Nevertheless, the same students who heard these views from Wuich listened to the ideas of Conrad and preferred the tactical instructor's liking for shock and the bayonet attack.

Another voice that should have had great influence on the Habsburg officer corps came from Archduke Albrecht. The Inspector General wrote in 1888 about the dangers that a long peace presented for the military. The longer an army fights no wars, the more the officers forget the lessons of previous campaigns. New leaders gain little experience and learn "the precepts of theoretical doctrinaires, incompetent armchair pedagogues of smooth training grounds." The archduke saw the same situation happening to the k.k. military as took place before 1866. Too much formalism in battle methods had become rooted in the Austro-Hungarian army as well as too great a desire to follow the latest trend that seemed to lead unswervingly to victory. Neglecting the impact of firepower on advancing troops and especially the demoralizing effect of suffering heavy losses in a matter of minutes, theorists called for frontal assaults in specific formations without flexibility. Albrecht noted that the era of Napoleonic tactics had passed and that firepower had given superiority to the defensive. No certain formation can render one side unconquerable in battle but instead can lead to passivity and loss of initiative. Rather every battle presents different obstacles. Thus, all officers, from the highest ranks down to corporals, must display independence of thought, quickly grasp the situation, and prove their ability to act

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<sup>449</sup> Oberstlieutenant Nikolaus Ritter von Wuich, k.u.k. KS Waffenwesen I. Jahrgang 1890/1, KA Militärschule, KS, Karton Nr. 66, Studienbehelfe: Waffenwesen, 1-2.

on their own to achieve favorable results through proper use of terrain and flank attacks.<sup>450</sup> Even the words of the most experienced and successful commander in the Habsburg army, the victor of Custoza in 1866, could not dissuade the majority of k.k. officers, including Conrad and his followers, from the mistake of looking to the offensive, and especially shock tactics, as the only means of victory. Without the charisma of Conrad or close contact with the rising generation of staff officers in the war college, the aged Albrecht did not have the same opportunity to influence young military students as the popular tactical instructor did.

### **Cavalry Tactics: Shock v. Reconnaissance**

The tactical employment of cavalry also involved the use of shock tactics. Regarding this branch of the army, most Austro-Hungarian officers took a more realistic approach because of the realities of the modern battlefield. Mounted troops presented much larger targets for the increasingly accurate and far-shooting rifles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the rapidity of breechloader and especially repeater fire negated the main advantage of cavalry, speed of movement. Therefore, according to an experienced man like Lieutenant-Colonel Viktor Baron von Neuwirth, a veteran of the Italian campaigns in 1859 and 1866, mounted forces should devote their energy to reconnaissance and securing the flanks of infantry against enemy cavalry charges rather than attempt to participate in pitched battles.<sup>451</sup> As another officer stated, “The times of great cavalry attacks in battle are over; this is a principle of recent war leadership.”<sup>452</sup> The lessons of the Franco-Prussian War supported this view of the ineffectiveness of cavalry against infantry. The murderous fire of breechloaders sobered the enthusiasm of military leaders

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<sup>450</sup> Erzherzog Albrecht, “Aphorismen über Infanterie-Ausbildung,” Wien, December 1888, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 21, Studien.

<sup>451</sup> Oberstlieutenant Viktor Ritter von Neuwirth, “Über den Aufklärungsdienst der Cavallerie und dessen Verwerthung bei der Befehlgebung der höheren Commanden im Felde,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1881): 219.

<sup>452</sup> L., “Zur Cavallerie-Verwendung im Gefecht,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1885): 243.

for mounted charges. The introduction of magazine rifles raised even more doubts about the use of cavalry, “and maintained a cautious *noli me tangere* as advisable, perhaps up to the lessons of the next campaign.”<sup>453</sup> Thus, the Habsburg cavalry continued to adapt to the realities of modern warfare by reducing the role of mounted troops in combat.

Yet this note of doubt, with the insinuation that the next war might change the battlefield back to favoring cavalry, contained hopes of reviving the glorious days of horsemen swooping down on infantry and laying waste with sword and pike. Even the officer who asserted the end of the days of great cavalry attacks believed exceptions to this principle existed.<sup>454</sup> The majority of officers who believed in preserving the honor of the cavalry by insisting on the battle worthiness of the mounted branch belonged to the cavalry. Major Emil Dembsher in a series of articles for the *ÖMZ* claimed proponents of the breechloader exaggerated the weapon’s effect. Mounted charges could still ensure success as long as the horsemen took advantage of conditions to surprise opposing infantry. Thus, cavalry should not become mere mounted infantry, a role that constituted an exception in the cavalry regulations.<sup>455</sup> Officers persisted in affirming the possibility of successful assaults on infantry, but with the proviso of surprise. The regulations supported these assertions while suggesting that attacks take place in swarms or even lines.<sup>456</sup> One officer even proposed a return to deep formations to use shock to full advantage. This same officer maintained that as infantry could no longer assault enemies armed with repeating rifles,

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<sup>453</sup> “Über die Ausbildung der Cavallerie für den Kampf mit der Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1889): 209.

<sup>454</sup> L., “Zur Cavallerie-Verwendung im Gefecht,” 243.

<sup>455</sup> Major Emil Dembsher, “Über Verwendung und Ausbildung der Reiterie im Feuergefecht zu Fuss,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1881): 1, 18-19; Dembsher, “Hat die Cavallerie aufgehört eine Waffe zu sein?” *ÖMZ* 2 (1881): 281-282; Dembsher, “Kleine Beiträge für die Ausbildung und das Dienstleben im Heere. 12. Cavallerie gegen Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1881): 248.

<sup>456</sup> “Angriffs-Formation der Cavallerie auf Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1889): 197-199.

cavalry should take the offensive because mounted troops could employ surprise and terrain better than infantry to charge before the enemy could fire.<sup>457</sup>

Fantasies such as mounted forces charging so fast that infantry cannot fire even one salvo indicated the desperation of cavalry officers to retain the glory of past Austrian horse units in the days of Prince Eugene of Savoy and Empress Maria Theresa. The desire to preserve the honor and glory of the Habsburg cavalry drove officers to seek the offensive as a means to instill this sense of past greatness in the troops. Major Heinrich Baron von Pitreich of the general staff, who would later become commandant of the war college and then minister of war in 1902, wrote of cavalry going, “not shaken, forward! and, if necessary, headlong into battle!” Using the well known “Better to be the hammer than the anvil” slogan, Pitreich asserted in 1881 that mounted warriors still valued greatness and expected nothing more than undertakings full of honor.<sup>458</sup>

Ten years later a colonel used almost the exact same words as Pitreich while stating his conviction that fortune favors the bold. Even if the results of charging headlong into battle turn out unfavorably, cavalry “remain the weapon of glory” as “modern horsemen, despite the improved fire weapons, wish to remain true to the example of their glory crowned ancestors.”<sup>459</sup>

The new role of reconnaissance and communications service did not suit dreams of honor and renown for the mounted branch. FML Leonidas Baron von Popp, a general staff officer, former instructor of strategy at the central cavalry school, and veteran of 1859, 1866, and 1878 as well as the head of the imperial military chancellery from 1881 to 1889, proposed eliminating the engineer companies attached to cavalry units so that mounted forces could perform more important tasks without the encumbrance of technical troops. Popp even suggested that by

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<sup>457</sup> Oberst Gaudernak, “Die Cavallerie und das jetzige Infanteriegewehr,” *O.* 43 (1891): 3-4, 15-17.

<sup>458</sup> Major Heinrich Freiherr von Pitreich, “Cavallerie im Dienste der Strategie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1881): 90.

<sup>459</sup> Gaudernak, “Die Cavallerie und das jetzige Infanteriegewehr,” 20.



removing the *Pioniere* the army could add another cavalry regiment while saving the paltry sum of 4875 florins.<sup>460</sup> To fund the extra cavalry regiment, though, instead of saving money or procuring more and better artillery, the Austro-Hungarian military requested 433,858 more florins in the ordinary budget submission and an additional 195,000 florins for the extraordinary budget for 1891. This request for more cavalry stemmed from the desire to keep pace with the other European powers, which all had more mounted troops, as the writers of the budget report recognized.<sup>461</sup> Ideas about enlarging the number of k.k. cavalry also resulted from dreams of great feats and disdain for subsidiary duties such as reconnaissance and communications. As Major Dembscher expressed the cavalry officer's view, successful charges against infantry during field exercises showed how mounted forces could fulfill greater tasks than mere "postal service."<sup>462</sup>

Hopes of restoring past grandeur also sparked debates about the best weaponry for cavalry. After 1866 the Austrian high command issued carbines to the mounted troops, though the Uhlan regiments, traditionally lance regiments, received only 32 carbines per squadron. The attempt to equip men with both weapons failed because of the extra weight and the burden of learning to wield a lance and a carbine. In 1880, the number of carbines per Uhlan squadron rose to 48.<sup>463</sup> This situation caused Lieutenant Colonel Markus von Czerlien, an intelligent Uhlan officer, to quote from *Modern Cavalry* by the Canadian officer George Taylor Denison, an award winning expert on cavalry: "Cavalry in most armies is equipped almost exactly as it was at the

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<sup>460</sup> FML Leonidas Freiherr von Popp, No. 48 Memoire über die Aufstellung eines 42. Kavallerie-Regiments und über die Ausrüstung der Kavallerie mit Feld-Telegraphen-Material, 1888, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

<sup>461</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehenden Heeres für das Jahr 1891. Sub-Beilage III zu Beilage A2, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe, 4-5; Beilage B2, 17.

<sup>462</sup> Dembscher, "Kleine Beiträge für die Ausbildung und das Dienstleben im Heere. 12. Cavallerie gegen Infanterie," 248.

<sup>463</sup> "Abschaffung der Pike bei den k.k. Uhlanen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1889): 214.

time when Alexander the Great led them against the Persians.”<sup>464</sup> Only in 1884 did every man in Uhlan regiments discard the lance and take up the short rifle.<sup>465</sup> This decision to end the use of lances, however, put the Austro-Hungarian military far in advance of the other major European powers, which still employed the outdated weapon for cavalry.

These changes in favor of firepower for cavalry brought about a wave of objections from mounted officers who feared the introduction of firearms would harm the dash and spirit of the equestrian branch.<sup>466</sup> Major Dembscher complained that forcing cavalry to fight on foot and rely on firepower, a situation that in his opinion happened too often during maneuvers, would cause the men to renounce success with *blanken Waffen* and resort too easily to the defensive.<sup>467</sup> Even a voice from the infantry, who acknowledged the overall importance of firepower, claimed cavalry could profit little from rifles. Though mounted troops should know how to fire effectively, speed, saber, and lance comprised the main weapons of horse warriors.<sup>468</sup> Still in 1889 the call for bringing back the lance issued from the pages of the *ÖMZ*. A return to the pike would restore the flagging morale of the k.k. cavalry and enable the first wave of horsemen to crash into the enemy with greater impact. The Viennese Arsenal had even stored away the old lances, which all Uhlans hoped would return to their hands in the near future.<sup>469</sup>

Habsburg cavalry officers did not stand alone, however, in their preference for the lance and saber. Among the various European military powers during this time of technological

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<sup>464</sup> Oberstlieutenant Markus von Czerlien, “Ueber Einheits-Cavalerie und einige die Ausbildung und Verwendung der Reiterei berührende Fragen,” *O.* 22 (1881): 309.

<sup>465</sup> “Abschaffung der Pike bei den k.k. Uhlanen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1889): 214.

<sup>466</sup> Czerlien, “Ueber Einheits-Cavalerie und einige die Ausbildung und Verwendung der Reiterei berührende Fragen,” 317.

<sup>467</sup> Dembscher, “Über Verwendung und Ausbildung der Reiterei im Feuergefecht zu Fuss,” 1.

<sup>468</sup> Hauptmann Ludwig Freiherr von Gottesheim, “Die Cavallerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1882): 183, 193-195.

<sup>469</sup> “Abschaffung der Pike bei den k.k. Uhlanen,” 223-224.

change and modification, as Lieutenant Colonel Czerlien attested, “a veritable chaos of principles had come into employment.” While the French cavalry no longer used lances, the Germans issued no revolvers to their mounted troops. French, German, and Russian Cuirassiers rarely used carbines, though the Russian Cossacks went into battle with pike, carbine, and revolver. German Uhlans and Italian *Lancieri* carried a lance and carbine. Most nations distributed lances to Uhlans, Cuirassiers, and Hussars. Only France equipped its cavalry with both revolver and carbine, whereas Turkey provided the only example of issuing a magazine rifle to mounted forces.<sup>470</sup> Thus, Austria-Hungary certainly showed no more backwardness than most other states. Other than France, the Habsburg Empire proved the most capable of adapting cavalry weapons and tactics to the requirements of the modern battlefield and its dominating firepower.

Yet, certain k.k. officers called for the Habsburg high command to imitate their German allies, whose cavalry performed numerous massed attacks on infantry during training exercises, in order to instill belief in the prospects of successful charges among Austro-Hungarian mounted troops.<sup>471</sup> Though Habsburg officers, such as Conrad, admired the Prussian victories of 1866 and 1870 and devoted great energy in trying to incorporate the ideas of Moltke into the k.k. army, nevertheless as time passed, Austro-Hungarian exercises revealed that the heavy losses of recent mounted assaults had impacted Habsburg military thinking. In 1881 one lieutenant colonel complained that k.k. peace exercises contained too little realism. Military leaders contrived situations that allowed for big battles and daring deeds at the expense of training

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<sup>470</sup> Czerlien, “Ueber Einheits-Cavalerie und einige die Ausbildung und Verwendung der Reiterei betreffende Fragen,” 274.

<sup>471</sup> M.v.B., “Ein Beitrag zu dem Thema ‘Der Reiter-Angriff auf Infanterie’,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1884): 171.

horsemen for the more important task of reconnaissance.<sup>472</sup> By 1889, however, complaints arose from the opposing camp that Habsburg cavalry no longer learned how to attack infantry and hardly ever practiced charges during exercises.<sup>473</sup> One officer who had declared the need for more cavalry training for attacking infantry in 1884 reversed his position by 1893. Instead of exercises in shock tactics, the officer promoted reconnaissance training both strategic and tactical as the primary task of mounted troops unable to assault infantry armed with repeaters.<sup>474</sup>

During the decade following the Bosnian campaign of 1878 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, the Austro-Hungarian cavalry made progress in adapting to the modern battlefield. The Habsburg high command emphasized reconnaissance and security operations rather than charges and shock tactics during maneuvers and exercises. Most of the *ÖMZ* and *Organ* contributors who wrote articles about the cavalry during the 1890s affirmed reconnaissance as the primary task of cavalry and the great difficulty of charging infantry under modern battlefield conditions.<sup>475</sup> As one author said, “All theoretical affectations with assault forms and assault lines against infantry physically or psychologically unbroken or awaiting the attack are and remain idle paper wishes.”<sup>476</sup> Because of this stress on duties outside pitched battle, the k.k. mounted troops exchanged their lances and sabers for revolvers and carbines. Thus, even though some cavalry officers disputed the wisdom of such changes, Austro-Hungarian leaders

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<sup>472</sup> Oberstlieutenant Felix Freiherr von Pach, “Der Friedensübungen der Cavalerie,” *O.* 22 (1881): 640.

<sup>473</sup> M.v.B., “Ein Beitrag zu dem Thema ‘Der Reiter-Angriff auf Infanterie,’” 171; “Über die Ausbildung der Cavallerie für den Kampf mit der Infanterie,” 209.

<sup>474</sup> M.v.B., “Ein Beitrag zu dem Thema ‘Der Reiter-Angriff auf Infanterie,’” 171; M.v.B., “Einiges über Aufklärungs- und Gefechtsübungen grösserer Cavalleriekörper,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1893): 127-128.

<sup>475</sup> Gaj, “Betrachtungen über den Einfluss des rauchschwachen Pulvers auf Taktik, Ausbildung und Erziehung von Oberst Wentzel Porth, Commandant des Inf.-Regiments Nr. 101,” 67-68; M.v.B., “Einiges über Aufklärungs- und Gefechtsübungen grösserer Cavalleriekörper,” 127-128; Oberstlieutenant Ferdinand Schneider, “Cavallerie vor! Eine kriegsgeschichtliche Studie,” *O.* 46 (1893): 293-294; “Manöver-Reflexionen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1894): 39-41.

<sup>476</sup> o, “Die Friedens-Arbeit der österr.-ung. Cavallerie. Von Marcus von Czerlien, k.u.k. Generalmajor,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1895): 291.

implemented reforms that revealed Habsburg progress beyond the majority of the other major European military powers.

### **Artillery: Tactics and Numbers**

For the third military branch, Habsburg leaders agreed on not only the importance of field guns but also the use of artillery in battle. Therefore, less debate regarding cannon took place in the k.k. military journals. Austro-Hungarian officers concurred about employing artillery in masses to produce the greatest amount of firepower and thus gain superiority over the enemy at decisive points.<sup>477</sup> Although artillery still formed a supporting weapon for infantry, officers considered field guns essential for attaining effective levels of firepower and achieving ultimate victory.<sup>478</sup> Field guns formed a necessary part of the army both for offensive and defensive purposes. Even though artillery itself could not charge and thus appeared more defensive, infantry required cannons to weaken the enemy before a successful assault could happen.<sup>479</sup> At the same time, artillery had to provide an invincible wall for shattering enemy attacks.<sup>480</sup> As one k.k. captain expressed the role of field guns on the battlefield, “In the attack-battle breaking a path for the masses of infantry in a destructive way, in the defense the iron rock, on which even the most violently rushing waves of the enemy assault smash powerlessly.”<sup>481</sup> High morale also comprised a prerequisite for the effective battlefield performance of cannoneers. Gunners had to

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<sup>477</sup> Major Otto Maresch, “Über die Führung der Artillerie im Manöver und Gefechte,” *O.* 26 (1883): 382-398; Major Karl Edler von Reznicek, “Ein Beitrag zur Ausbildung der Technik des Infanterie-Gefechtes,” *O.* 38 (1889): 218; Oberst Hugo von Molnár, “Einiges über Verwendung der Feld-Artillerie,” *O.* 46 (1893): 1-3; Hauptmann Bodo Roebbelen, “Über Bildung und Leitung grösserer Artilleriekörper im Gefechte,” *O.* 46 (1893): 367; Oberstlieutenant Ludwig Baron Gottesheim, “Die Artillerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1895): 258-259.

<sup>478</sup> Gottesheim, “Die Artillerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit,” 258.

<sup>479</sup> Gottesheim, “Die Artillerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit,” 258; Gaj, “Betrachtungen über den Einfluss des rauchschwachen Pulvers auf Taktik, Ausbildung und Erziehung von Oberst Wentzel Porth, Commandant des Inf.-Regiments Nr. 101,” 68.

<sup>480</sup> Molnár, “Einiges über Verwendung der Feld-Artillerie,” 16; Gottesheim, “Der Artillerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit,” 259-260.

<sup>481</sup> Roebbelen, “Über Bildung und Leitung grösserer Artilleriekörper im Gefechte,” 368.

display composure and cold-bloodedness, especially in the face of charging infantry and cavalry, in order to fulfill the tasks of modern artillery.<sup>482</sup>

Unlike rifles, cannon had not developed as quickly and dramatically from 1877 to 1892 according to First Lieutenant Anton Christl of the *Kriegsschule*. Whereas European armies had changed the equipment of infantry at least twice during this time period, artillery had remained the same except for an expansion in number and an increasing recognition of the importance of field guns in battle.<sup>483</sup> Though Christl spoke mainly for Austria-Hungary rather than other states, this situation did not present difficulties as long as all armies possessed similar cannon. If even one state, however, made significant improvements to field artillery, then the other military powers would have to imitate the innovations or find even better technology.<sup>484</sup> During the 1880s, though, Habsburg officers remained convinced of the excellence of the Uchatius steel-bronze cannon and maintained that the k.k. field guns met all the requirements of the modern battlefield better than the weapons of other states. A *Landwehr* officer, concurring with a Prussian artillery major, claimed the field guns of the Viennese arsenal rivaled the Krupp artillery of Prussia as the best in Europe while Italian cannon ranked a close third.<sup>485</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1890s, Habsburg officers realized the k.k. artillery needed to take advantage of technological innovations to procure better field guns. Just as infantry rifles had increased in firing speed, accuracy, and range, cannon needed to fire faster and farther to compensate for

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<sup>482</sup> Reznicek, "Ein Beitrag zur Ausbildung der Technik des Infanterie-Gefechtes," 218; Gottesheim, "Der Artillerie in den Kriegen der Neuzeit," 262.

<sup>483</sup> Oberlieutenant Anton Christl, "Über das Schießen der Feld-Artillerie," *ÖMZ* 2 (1892): 231-232.

<sup>484</sup> Hauptmann Justus Jahn von Jahnau, "Die Schnellfeuer-Kanonen und der Zukunftsfortschritt der Feld-Artillerie," *O.* 38 (1889): 207.

<sup>485</sup> Hauptmann Alexander Pervulesco, "Vergleichende Schilderung der Bewaffnung der Feld-Artillerien in den fünf grossen Militär-Staaten Europa's, insbesondere mit Rücksicht auf die Beweglichkeit und Feuerwirkung derselben," *ÖMZ* 2 (1881): 43-44.

these improvements in handguns.<sup>486</sup> One officer, citing the example of the Russian field artillery's inability to destroy the Turkish fortifications at Plevna in 1877, advocated mortars with their higher trajectory as the solution to obliterating improved fieldworks and thus raising the effectiveness of the k.k. artillery.<sup>487</sup> Once again, Habsburg officers realized the importance of new technology and engaged in debates on how to employ innovations to improve battlefield performance.

The main problem for the Habsburg high command, however, consisted in the k.k. army's numerical inferiority in field guns. In an 1882 memorandum regarding advisable changes in the organization of the field artillery, FML Archduke Wilhelm, the General Artillery Inspector and younger brother of Albrecht, stated the need to increase the number of field pieces to between 1540 and 1620. While this augmentation would significantly improve the Austro-Hungarian artillery branch, the additional guns would not raise the k.k. army to the level of the other major European military powers.<sup>488</sup> By 1891 Habsburg leaders had still not remedied the deficiency in cannon. Austro-Hungarian officers realized the financial sacrifice required to procure more field guns.<sup>489</sup> One officer proposed more and better training to attain fire superiority on the battlefield without spending money on purchasing more guns or improved material.<sup>490</sup> This solution could only compensate somewhat for the far greater numbers and superior material that other armies possessed. Even though the k.k. leadership realized the

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<sup>486</sup> Jahnau, "Die Schnellfeuer-Kanonen und der Zukunftsfortschritt der Feld-Artillerie," 207; Christl, "Über das Schießen der Feld-Artillerie," 232; Oberstlieutenant Nikolaus Ritter von Wuich, "Das Zukunfts-Feldgeschütz," *O.* 46 (1893): 143-151.

<sup>487</sup> J.v.M., "Die Feldmörser," *O.* 38 (1889): 324-339.

<sup>488</sup> Erzherzog Wilhelm, FML, General-Artillerie-Inspector, No. 50 Denkschrift über vorzunehmende Änderungen in der Organisation der Feld-Artillerie, Jan. 1882, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

<sup>489</sup> Jahnau, "Die Schnellfeuer-Kanonen und der Zukunftsfortschritt der Feld-Artillerie," 207; Oberlieutenant Anton Christl, "Das Schiessen von Brisanzgeschossen aus Feldgeschützen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1891): 124.

<sup>490</sup> Roebelen, "Über Bildung und Leitung grösserer Artilleriekörper im Gefechte," 367-368.

importance of the artillery branch in modern warfare, the official statistics from 1891 revealed the small number of soldiers assigned to field guns. Of the 1,015,792 men in the Habsburg army, only 80,343 or 8% served in the field artillery compared to 639,154 or 62.9% in the infantry and 91,278 or 9% in the cavalry. Adding the fortifications artillery (20,929 or 2%) and technical artillery (2814 or .3%) brought the artillery forces to 104,086 or 10.2% of the total strength of the k.k. military.<sup>491</sup> The other major European armies dedicated a higher percentage of men to artillery than the Habsburg army: France 14%, Italy 14%, Germany 12.5%, Russia 11%.<sup>492</sup> The Austro-Hungarian military needed more funding, or better yet, more responsible and purposeful spending of the funds available from the Delegation grants.

In 1891, the Habsburg high command requested 4,607,600 florins to upgrade the artillery branch. This budget submission included 2,100,000 florins to improve or replace the M. 1861 muzzleloading guns that the Austro-Hungarian army stationed in many fortresses. Thus, the k.k. artillery still employed thirty year old cannons in 1891 and proposed to replace these outdated weapons with M. 1875s and other steelbronze Uchatius guns.<sup>493</sup> Clearly, the Habsburg artillery suffered from not only antique weaponry but also the inferior quality of the cannon from the Vienna arsenal. The plan to continue to arm permanent fortifications with these guns merely compounded the errors as these weapons would come into action only if potential enemies chose to attack the fortresses which the cannon defended. Surely Habsburg leaders could have used 2,100,000 florins much better to upgrade the k.k. field artillery and thereby bridge the gap between the Austro-Hungarian military and other leading European powers by procuring

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<sup>491</sup> "Militärische Statistik des österreichisch-ungarischen Heeres für das Jahr 1891," *ÖMZ* 4 (1892): 229.

<sup>492</sup> J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1891* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 479, 538, 693, 868-869.

<sup>493</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehendes Heeres für das Jahr 1891. Beilage B2. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe, 2-4.



superior Krupp guns. The Habsburg high command, however, viewed the Uchatius cannon as adequate artillery based on tests, such as the *Landwehr* officer cited in his article.<sup>494</sup> K.k. leaders also believed in the necessity of the cordon system of permanent fortresses to defend Austro-Hungarian borders from invasion in case of a multi-front war.

### **Permanent Waste: the Cordon System**

As in previous decades, the Habsburg high command could have saved large sums of money in the area of permanent fortifications. The cordon system continued to consume vast amounts of florins that the k.k. army could have used for procuring more and better artillery. Yet Austro-Hungarian officers insisted on the necessity of upgrading and expanding old fortresses while building new ones. One engineer captain explained the rationale for this view in a lecture at the Military Science Society at the Galician fortress of Przemyśl in 1882. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of permanent fortifications, the captain concluded that Austria-Hungary needed the cordon system because future wars most likely would involve multiple fronts. In order for the k.k. army to fight in more than one theater, military leaders would have to use fortresses to strengthen the various parts of the divided Habsburg army. The captain argued that permanent fortifications could also influence a whole province, such as Galicia where Przemyśl stood, and provided the only means to secure an open area like Galicia while ensuring a safe connection with the rest of the empire. Despite the high cost of fortresses as well as their immobility and the need to employ field worthy troops for garrisons, permanent fortifications remained the best method of supporting the k.k. military both offensively and defensively.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Pervulesco, "Vergleichende Schilderung der Bewaffnung der Feld-Artillerien in den fünf grossen Militär-Staaten Europa's, insbesondere mit Rucksicht auf die Beweglichkeit und Feuerwirkung derselben," 43-44.

<sup>495</sup> Hauptmann Franz Schlögelhofer, "Ueber permanente Befestigung," *O.* 26 (1883): 29-54.

Students at the *Kriegsschule* subscribed to these ideas as well. Captain Heinrich von Vefsel praised the merits of fortifications in his manual on *Befestigung* for 1887-1888. For Vefsel the purpose of fortifications consisted of enabling a small amount of power for the greatest possible resistance. This definition applied primarily to the defensive but also indirectly to the offensive.<sup>496</sup> Such ideas corresponded perfectly with the Austro-Hungarian military's view of its weak geographical position in regard to future wars. Facing potential enemies on three sides with Russia to the northeast, Italy to the southwest, and the volatile Balkans to the south, k.k. military leaders saw the cordon system of permanent fortifications as the best means to defend against multiple threats simultaneously.<sup>497</sup> This consideration appeared logical, especially because of the small number of troops that Austria-Hungary could field compared with the other European powers. Therefore, little debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of permanent fortresses took place in the k.k. military journals during the 1880s and 1890s.

Instead of debating the merits of the cordon system, Habsburg officers argued about the worth of fieldworks. Many writers advocated the use of temporary works. Captain Vefsel's *Befestigung* manual applied to both permanent and temporary fortifications.<sup>498</sup> Another officer viewed Austria-Hungary as the foremost pioneer in employing fieldworks because the Habsburg high command issued spades to all the infantry on 25 February 1870, thus before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. The k.k. army continued to emphasize the importance of building

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<sup>496</sup> Hauptmann des Geniestabes Heinrich Ritter von Vefsel, k.k. KS Befestigungskunst 1887/8, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 61, Studienbehelfe: Befestigung und Festungskriege, 1-2.

<sup>497</sup> Schlögelhofer, "Ueber permanente Befestigung," 30, 35-37.

<sup>498</sup> Vefsel, k.k. KS Befestigungskunst 1887/8, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 61, Studienbehelfe: Befestigung und Festungskriege.

temporary fortifications by not equipping engineer troops with rifles but only tools.<sup>499</sup> One k.k. officer revealed the effect of fieldworks in battle by comparing the casualties of French and German forces at Gravelotte. French troops who fought in trenches and behind earthen walls suffered only 3.5% losses, whereas French units that erected no defenses lost 15% of their men. The Turkish works at Plevna in 1877 only confirmed the immense benefits of building temporary fortifications on the battlefield.<sup>500</sup>

As one officer wrote in an article entitled, “Temporary Fortifications in the Service of the Offensive,” the main objection to temporary fortifications stemmed from the belief that fieldworks implied an overly defensive approach to war.<sup>501</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Wenzel Porth, who had turned to military writing after suffering a serious wound during the Austro-Prussian War and published numerous articles, warned against trusting immobile positions because this overly defensive mindset gave up the advantages of the offensive and let the enemy dictate the battle conditions.<sup>502</sup> Another officer called temporary fortifications “harmful palliatives” and attempted to prove fieldworks less effective in war than permanent fortresses.<sup>503</sup> According to officers who followed these ideas, temporary fortifications harmed the *Drang nach vorwärts* that the infantry regulations emphasized “from the last man to the highest leader.”<sup>504</sup> Thus, whether from the opinion that fieldworks did not provide enough defensive advantages or because temporary fortifications proved too defensive, k.k. officers insisted on the need to build or

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<sup>499</sup> Mgg., “Über das Verhalten der Infanterie beim Angriffe und der Vertheidigung flüchtiger und Feldbefestigungen,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1884): 104-105.

<sup>500</sup> Hauptmann Franz Rieger, “Die flüchtige Befestigung im Dienste der Offensive,” *O.* 29 (1884): 282.

<sup>501</sup> Rieger, “Die flüchtige Befestigung im Dienste der Offensive,” 274.

<sup>502</sup> Oberstlieutenant Wenzel Porth, “Das Vertrauen auf starke Positionen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1887): 300.

<sup>503</sup> Schlögelhofer, “Ueber permanente Befestigung,” 31-34.

<sup>504</sup> Oberlieutenant Alois Hein, “Über „flüchtige Befestigung“; deren Verwendung im modernen Kampfe; Friedensausbildung,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1892): 157.

upgrade permanent fortresses, especially in the vulnerable province of Galicia.<sup>505</sup> Even Lieutenant Colonel Ernst Baron von Leithner, who acknowledged that improvements in the smokeless powder and maneuverability of artillery along with better observation through the use of electric lights and balloons rendered permanent fortresses indefensible, suggested better methods of defense rather than the abandonment of old fortifications. Leithner, who would later become general inspector of the engineer corps, advocated stronger armor to protect the walls of fortresses as well as a more complex system of fortifications like the methods of the famous 17<sup>th</sup> century French engineer Vauban.<sup>506</sup>

The Habsburg military, however, did not stand alone as a proponent of permanent fortifications. Other European states, including Germany, France, and Russia, also began building complicated fortress systems with expensive metal plating. In 1894 the French army held fortification maneuvers in which infantry storm assaults and artillery barrages tested the quality of the new methods of construction.<sup>507</sup> The main difference for the Austro-Hungarian high command, though, consisted of the large size and vulnerability of the Habsburg empire. Forming defensible frontiers against possible opponents drove the k.k. leadership to spend vast sums on the cordon system of permanent fortresses to alleviate the difficulties of multi-front conflicts instead of using the funds to procure more artillery.

This objective applied specifically to the province of Galicia, which formed the most likely theater of any future war with Russia. The geographical conditions of Galicia, however, presented a difficult task for military operations, especially for defense. An 1889 general staff report described the impracticability of maintaining forces and establishing bases in Galicia's

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<sup>505</sup> Major Alfred Miksch, "Der Realismus im Festungskriege," *O.* 50 (1895): 237; Toilow, "Studie über Länderbefestigung," *ÖMZ* 1 (1895): 195.

<sup>506</sup> Oberstlieutenant Ernst Freiherr von Leithner, "Der heutige Stand der Befestigungsfrage," *O.* 50 (1895): 19-20.

<sup>507</sup> Leithner, "Der heutige Stand der Befestigungsfrage," 23-26.

numerous swamps and heavy forests. The challenging conditions rendered the gathering of resources and finding adequate quarters for troops problematic. The author of the report concluded, “In its totality the Russian-Galician theater of war gives no attractive picture.” Only hard work and exertion would provide a solution.<sup>508</sup> The northern and eastern frontiers provided no defensible positions nor did the three rivers, the Dniester, the Moldova, and the Ceremuș that crossed the province. With little road and rail access through the Carpathian mountains, which bordered Hungary, the Habsburg army faced a more difficult predicament than Russia in waging a campaign in Galicia.<sup>509</sup>

Nevertheless, the k.k. high command considered no option other than defending the province with permanent fortifications, especially Przemyśl. FML Anton Baron von Schönfeld, chief of the general staff from 1876 to 1881, stressed the necessity of completing and extending the fortresses of Przemyśl and Krakau. Temporary fortifications constituted merely a help and even an opiate for theorists who believed in the superiority of fieldworks.<sup>510</sup> Officers writing in the military journals agreed with Schönfeld’s assessment of permanent fortifications as the only means of securing Galicia against Russian invasion.<sup>511</sup> The chief of the general staff, FML Beck invariably recommended further upgrades and the final completion of the Galician fortresses in his annual memorandum for the emperor.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Generalstabs-Oberst Wasiliew, *Militärische Würdigung des Grenzgebietes Russland-Galizien zwischen Weichsel und Bug*, 1889, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 800, Diverse Studien 1882-1914.

<sup>509</sup> Graydon A. Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 3.

<sup>510</sup> Chef des Generalstab FML Anton Freiherr von Schönfeld, No. 54 Memoire über die Nothwendigkeit des Ausbaues von Przemyśl und Krakau, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

<sup>511</sup> Schlögelhofer, “Ueber permanente Befestigung,” 31; Toilow, “Studie über Länderbefestigung,” 195.

<sup>512</sup> FML Friedrich Graf Beck-Rzikowsky, “Denkschrift für 1893,” “Denkschrift für 1894,” “Denkschrift für 1895,” KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 740, Denkschriften des Chef des Generalstabes 1893-1900.

Upgrading the defenses of Przemyśl and Krakau, though, cost the k.k. army vast amounts of money. In 1891 alone, the Habsburg high command asked for 2,000,000 florins from the Delegations for the improvement of the Galician fortresses. In this request, the military recognized the significant progress of artillery technology and acknowledged the inadequacy of previous methods of rendering the fortifications strong enough to resist modern guns. Therefore, engineers would have to build new works as well as transform temporary sections of the fortresses into permanent constructions with metal armor.<sup>513</sup> The recognition of technological advances in artillery, however, indicated that the permanence of these upgrades would not last forever. Austro-Hungarian military leaders had already spent over 10 million florins on these fortifications.<sup>514</sup> Rather, with more innovations in the future, fortresses would soon require costly improvements yet again.

The Habsburg army could have spent the millions of florins used to upgrade permanent fortifications on improving the military in other ways. Instead of requesting 2,320,000 florins for fortresses in 1891, not including improvements at Krakau, and indicating the need for another 1,200,000 for the completion of permanent works in the Tirol along the Italian border and at Cattaro, one of Austria-Hungary's main ports on the Adriatic, the k.k. high command could have employed the funding for necessary procurements, such as more repeaters or smokeless powder. In the same year, the army submitted a request for 4,000,000 florins for magazine rifles and 3,000,000 for smokeless powder.<sup>515</sup> Military leaders could have used the 2,320,000 florins for

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<sup>513</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehendes Heeres für das Jahr 1891. Beilage B2. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe, 12.

<sup>514</sup> Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 405.

<sup>515</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehendes Heeres für das Jahr 1891. Beilage B2. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe, 1, 4, 11-13, 17; Sub-Beilage III zu Beilage A2, 4.

fortresses and the 628,858 florins for the unnecessary new cavalry regiment, totaling 2,948,858 florins, to cover the costs of the 1891 installment for repeating rifles or smokeless powder. The high command could have also used the money to procure weapons and equipment for 14 new batteries of field artillery.<sup>516</sup>

### **Parliamentary Favor**

The delegates from the parliaments of the two parts of the Dual Monarchy hardly ever granted the full amounts that the Habsburg high command requested. The reductions that the representatives approved, however, stemmed more from a desire not to burden the inhabitants of the various parts of the empire who voted for the delegates rather than disapprobation of the army's spending decisions.<sup>517</sup> The heated exchanges of the 1860s and early 1870s between war ministers and parliamentary representatives did not take place during the terms of Bylandt-Rheidt and his successor FZM Ferdinand Baron von Bauer, who served as minister of war from 1888 to 1893. Bylandt-Rheidt especially impressed the delegates with his efforts to curtail expenditures while Bauer's responses during the debates displayed good will and understanding about the various concerns of the representatives.<sup>518</sup> Thus, gaining the trust of the majority of the representatives, Bylandt-Rheidt and Bauer proved capable of obtaining adequate funding from the Delegations while most delegates appeared willing to work with the needs of the war ministry. These good relations coincide with British historian Alan Sked's argument that even

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<sup>516</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehendes Heeres für das Jahr 1898. Sub-Beilage zur Beilage B. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Entwürfe, 15.

<sup>517</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 3. Sitzung der 27. Session am 2. December 1891 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1891), 48.

<sup>518</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 4. Sitzung der 12. Session am 6. Februar 1880 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1880), 79-80; 3. Sitzung der 27. Session am 2. December 1891, 51-54.

nationalists within Austro-Hungary did not desire the dissolution of the resilient Habsburg Empire.<sup>519</sup>

The main issues that delegates had with the Austro-Hungarian military involved better conditions for the rank and file as well as increased army purchases from imperial businesses instead of foreign firms.<sup>520</sup> Although parliamentary representatives preferred to grant the k.k. army's budget requests in smaller installments than the Habsburg high command desired, delegates had few criticisms of the requests themselves. Neither permanent fortifications nor battleships raised difficulties other than disagreements about the installment amounts. Some delegates even shared the concerns of certain officers, such as the possibility of wasting ammunition with repeating rifles, and proposed similar suggestions about the possibility of public schools providing some military training before students entered the army.<sup>521</sup>

In regard to the fleet, delegates approved the navy's increased reliance on Austro-Hungarian industry for procurement. The Delegations did not object to granting 11,834,122 florins for naval expenses, including 1,372,000 florins out of a total of 5,940,000 that the navy proposed for new battleships and Danube submarines. The representatives argued in the same way as the military that the Habsburg empire needed more warships to compete with the navies of the other European powers. Great Britain possessed 58 fully modern battleships, France 26, Russia and Germany 17 each, Italy 12, and Spain 8. Austria-Hungary had only 3, the same number as Greece, hardly a major maritime power. The ships that the k.k. navy had built in the 1860s and 1870s no longer met the requirements of modern sea battles. Thus, the Habsburg fleet

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<sup>519</sup> Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London: Longman, 1989), 299-300.

<sup>520</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 3. Sitzung der 27. Session am 2. December 1891, 47-48, 51, 123, 133, 137-138.

<sup>521</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 3. Sitzung der 27. Session am 2. December 1891, 49-50.



required new battleships to continue the great success that the representatives proudly remembered.<sup>522</sup> Though Austria-Hungary hardly qualified as a seafaring power, both military men and parliamentary delegates shared the belief that the Habsburg empire must increase the k.k. fleet dramatically to maintain its great power status. This consideration as well as the benefits that naval orders for ships gave to imperial businesses and industries convinced representatives to grant millions of florins over a number of years for battleships and submarines that would become obsolete very quickly if not by the time of completion.

The success of the k.k. army during the 1878 campaign in Bosnia-Hercegovina persisted in the minds of the delegates along with the efforts of Bylandt-Rheidt to save money wherever possible in military spending. With favorable relations between the Delegations and the war ministry, Habsburg officers had little to complain about funding. Although the representatives usually chose to grant army requests in installments rather than in full, the delegates rarely disapproved of the reasons for which the war ministers made the requests. The causes of the k.k. army's financial problems stemmed more from the Habsburg high command's choices in spending, such as inordinately expensive permanent fortresses and battleships, rather than parliamentary stinginess.

### **Stability in the High Command**

Parliamentary favor resulted from a more stable war ministry, where FZM Bylandt-Rheidt maintained control until 1888 when ill health forced him to retire. During his twelve year tenure Bylandt-Rheidt gave stability to an essential part of the k.k. high command, which three men had held in the previous ten years. With more solidity and less squabbling within the military administration, Bylandt-Rheidt proved capable of greatly improving the Habsburg army

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<sup>522</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrathes*, 3. Sitzung der 27. Session am 2. December 1891, 137-144.

and gaining the trust of parliamentary representatives. The war minister succeeded in convincing the Delegations to fund the introduction of the Mannlicher repeating rifle. Under his direction military education continued to progress in both warlike and civil fields. The Army Shooting School took on a greater role as a permanent establishment with an inspector and resident instructors who formed an advising committee for training and procurement.<sup>523</sup> Under Bylandt-Rheidt the k.k. military continued to show interest in adapting to new technology. Just as the Habsburg Empire improved economically and politically during the latter half of the nineteenth century as historians David Good, Barbara Jelavich, and Alan Sked argue, the Austro-Hungarian army also made progress.<sup>524</sup>

Railroads formed an important area for the war minister, who fought against the decentralization of the state *Eisenbahnen*.<sup>525</sup> Beck, now chief of the general staff, fully supported Bylandt-Rheidt in this struggle against private interests taking over the railroads because the army could use rail lines under state control much more easily during war time. The general staff chief had long noted the inadequacy of Austro-Hungarian railroads and thus worked diligently with the war minister to remedy this situation, especially regarding the lines connecting Galicia to the rest of the empire. Beck annually informed Franz Joseph of the status of the imperial railways in his detailed memoranda and made recommendations for future improvements.<sup>526</sup> During the 1880s rolling stock for the Galician railroads increased by 50%,

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<sup>523</sup> Walter Wagner, *Geschichte des K. K. Kriegsministeriums, II. Band 1866-1888* (Wien-Köln-Graz: Hermann Böhlhaus: 1971), 251-252.

<sup>524</sup> Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*; Barbara Jelavich, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs, 1814-1918* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1969); David Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>525</sup> *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* Vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957), 132.

<sup>526</sup> Beck, "Denkschrift für 1893," "Denkschrift für 1894," "Denkschrift für 1895," KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 740, Denkschriften des Chef des Generalstabes 1893-1900.

and by 1891 ninety-six trains could depart daily for the northeastern province, almost three times more than in 1881.<sup>527</sup> Bylandt-Rheidt and Beck also influenced the creation of a general directorate for state railroads in 1882, which would combine with the k.k. army's rail directorate for military transport that the war minister had formed in 1878.<sup>528</sup> The main reason for the dramatic development of the railroads to Galicia at this time consisted of the desire to prove the ability of the Habsburg military in any future war with Russia. Because Germany would mobilize enough troops to launch an offensive against the Russians, Austro-Hungarian war planners wished to show how the k.k. army could successfully cooperate with its ally. If Germany defeated Russia alone, Austria-Hungary would face the humiliation of having failed an ally along with the question of Habsburg worthiness as a great power. As Beck wrote to Franz Joseph in 1883, the k.k. army needed victories too.<sup>529</sup>

Bylandt-Rheidt also simplified the organization of the Austro-Hungarian military by making more boards and organs directly answerable to the war ministry. The minister of war thus succeeded in establishing the war ministry's independence from Archduke Albrecht, the general inspector of the army. Instead of occupying a subordinate position to the inspectorate, Bylandt-Rheidt promoted the war ministry as responsible only to the emperor. The war minister even proposed that Albrecht's report reach Franz Joseph through the ministry of war rather than directly. As a result these reforms engendered the resentment of the archduke. The emperor, however, approved Bylandt-Rheidt's proposals. Although Albrecht remained displeased with

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<sup>527</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 114-115.

<sup>528</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 115; Wagner, *Geschichte des K. K. Kriegsministeriums, II. Band 1866-1888*, 174.

<sup>529</sup> Lackey, *The Rebirth of the Habsburg Army*, 115.

this arrangement, the general inspector acquiesced.<sup>530</sup> Thus, even though tension existed between Albrecht and Bylandt-Rheidt, the bitter antagonism of the Kuhn era remained outside the k.k. high command and hindered neither reform nor adaptation to the needs of modern warfare. Clearly, the Habsburg army had made definite progress.

The next war minister, FZM Ferdinand Baron von, a graduate of the engineering academy, worked to improve the technical abilities of the Habsburg military, especially the artillery and *Pioniere*. Under Bauer's term the infantry obtained the Mannlicher repeating rifle and smokeless powder that Bylandt-Rheidt had received permission to procure. After his sudden death from sickness in 1893, FZM Rudolph Baron von Merkl held the war ministry for less than two months before General der Kavallerie Edmund Baron von Krieghammer took the position from 1893 to 1902.<sup>531</sup> Relations among the various components of the high command remained relatively amicable during the tenures of Bauer and Merkl and made possible the continued progress of the k.k. military. The appointment of Krieghammer, however, brought much more tension to the Habsburg army than the previous three war ministers.

### **Albrecht: Voice of Reason**

Krieghammer did not have many quarrels with Albrecht, though, as the archduke died on 18 February 1895. Historians such as Gunther Rothenberg and Walter Wagner have blamed Albrecht for holding back the Austro-Hungarian army from adapting to the requirements of modern warfare.<sup>532</sup> This criticism, however, unjustly blames the archduke for the failings of the Habsburg military. Certainly Albrecht held antiquated views on strategy as his advocacy of the

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<sup>530</sup> Wagner, *Geschichte des K. K. Kriegsministeriums, II. Band 1866-1888*, 228-235; Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 365.

<sup>531</sup> *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* Vol. 1, 55, Vol. 6, 231, Vol. 4, 271-272.

<sup>532</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 101, 112, 122; Wagner, *Geschichte des K. K. Kriegsministeriums, II. Band 1866-1888*, 10.

cordon system of permanent fortresses proved.<sup>533</sup> The archduke's insistence on fortifying Przemyśl not only cost the k.u.k. army millions of florins that could have been used to procure better artillery but also proved fatal for thousands of soldiers in the First World War. The formation of more cavalry also comprised an important part of the archduke's military thinking.<sup>534</sup> Yet, the rest of the Habsburg high command shared Albrecht's ideas on *Befestigung* and the need for more cavalry as well. Therefore, the archduke cannot take all the blame or even the majority for decisions that others made who agreed with him.

Albrecht did take part in the rivalry within the high command. As a member of the house of Habsburg and a proponent of the dynastic principle, the archduke always argued that the army formed the strongest bulwark of the monarchy against ethnic divisions as well as socialist and liberal ideas.<sup>535</sup> This idea proved true as the Austro-Hungarian army held together thousands of soldiers from various ethnic backgrounds until the very end of the Habsburg Empire even after the government had started to collapse.<sup>536</sup> Albrecht's viewpoint solidified his own position in the military because of his imperial status and high rank. Thus, when differences arose over power among the various members of the high command, especially with the war ministers Kuhn and Bylandt-Rheidt, Albrecht strove to retain the control he had held previously at the time of the *Armeeoberkommando*. Gradually, however, he relented and accepted a lesser role within the army.<sup>537</sup> Again, though the archduke took part in bitter disputes, in particular with Kuhn, the blame should not fall entirely on Albrecht for the rivalries. The disputes with the war ministers

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<sup>533</sup> Albrecht, No. 25, "Uiber die Vorbereitung eines Kriegsschauplatzes mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Karpathenländer," July 1871, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>534</sup> Albrecht, *Das Jahr 1870 und die Wehrkraft der Monarchie* (Vienna: Faesy & Frick, 1870), 21-24.

<sup>535</sup> Albrecht, No. 27, "Hauptbedingungen für den Bestand und das Gedeihen der Armee," August 1873, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>536</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 216.

<sup>537</sup> Wagner, *Geschichte des K. K. Kriegsministeriums, II. Band 1866-1888*, 228-235.

centered mainly around army organization and control issues. While opposing certain suggestions, the archduke argued for maintaining stability in the military and opposed change for the sake of change.<sup>538</sup>

The archduke did not try to thwart the technological advancement of the Austro-Hungarian army but rather proposed the procurement of better weaponry, especially infantry rifles.<sup>539</sup> Albrecht also desired better equipment for the troops in the form of lighter packs, tougher shoes, and warmer clothing in case of a war with Russia that might require a winter campaign.<sup>540</sup> Later k.u.k. military leaders, including Conrad, sadly did not share the archduke's concern for the rank and file as the troops' sufferings from inadequate clothing during the 1915 Carpathian winter campaign revealed.<sup>541</sup>

In order to remedy Habsburg numerical inferiority in comparison to the other European military powers, a problem that Albrecht clearly recognized, the archduke called for soldiers to stay in wartime formations during peace instead of dividing into separate units spread throughout the empire. In this way, mobilization could proceed more quickly without the confusion of forming new units. In addition, commanders should reside with their troops rather than remaining absentee and only joining their commands at the outbreak of war and peace.<sup>542</sup> These practical considerations exemplified the archduke's approach to war. For Albrecht practicality

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<sup>538</sup> Albrecht, No. 27, "Hauptbedingungen für den Bestand und das Gedeihen der Armee," August 1873, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien.

<sup>539</sup> Albrecht, No. 1086 Allerunterthänigster Vortrag, 27 August 1866, Karton Nr. 22, 1866.

<sup>540</sup> Albrecht, No. 49 "Memorandum (Organisations-Studie betr. Mobilisierung)," Ende Jan. 1888, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

<sup>541</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 3.

<sup>542</sup> Albrecht, No. 49 "Memorandum (Organisations-Studie betr. Mobilisierung)," Ende Jan. 1888, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien; Albrecht, No. 28 "Promemoria über die Zuteilung und Verwendung von Generalen des Ruhestandes," Feb. 1887, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 64, Studien; Albrecht, No. 38 "Studie über die Vermehrung der Wehrkraft der Monarchie," Ende Dez. 1886, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

reigned, especially in the realm of tactics. Proving his ability to learn and adapt to the changes in warfare, the archduke realized that success on the modern battlefield consisted of achieving firepower supremacy. Therefore, Albrecht insisted that no frontal assaults over uncovered ground take place against breechloaders or repeating rifles. Instead, the practical use of terrain and artillery should direct every officer's analysis of the battle situation and determine the action, whether offensive or defensive, that the troops should take. If the offensive promised the most success, flank attacks should provide the best chances. Formalism embodied in adhering to only one method, such as the offensive *à outrance*, should never rule the commander on the battlefield.<sup>543</sup> At the time when a return to more offensive tactics arrived in the form of the 1889 Infantry Regulations and the writings of Conrad, the Habsburg army lost its most influential voice against the offensive at all costs with the death of Albrecht in 1895.

## **Conclusion**

The early 1890s proved a decisive turning point for the Austro-Hungarian army. As the high command issued new Mannlicher repeaters and smokeless powder to the troops, new infantry regulations arrived as well. These manuals instructed officers to strive for the offensive and revived the bayonet assault, which had fallen out of favor in the previous two decades. At the same time the appointment of Conrad as teacher of tactics at the *Kriegsschule* gave a great impetus to offensive ideas for the classes of 1889-1890 and 1890-1891. These general staff students became the majority of the high ranking officers during the First World War and inculcated the Habsburg army on all levels with these tactical ideas. The death of Albrecht took away the most prominent voice against a reversion to previous tactics of shock and *élan*.

Although the k.k. military made progress in employing mounted troops primarily for security

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<sup>543</sup> Erzherzog Albrecht, "Aphorismen über Infanterie-Ausbildung," Wien, December 1888, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 21, Studien.

and reconaissance duties, many cavalry officers welcomed the return to shock tactics in the infantry and hoped for the same revival in the mounted branch as well.

Artillery use remained stable, emphasizing massed formations to support both offensive and defensive combat. The main problem for the artillery, however, resulted from numerical inferiority in comparison with the other European powers. As the Austro-Hungarian army lagged farther and farther behind Germany, France, and Russia in numbers of men and weapons, the Habsburg high command continued to make questionable spending decisions. Instead of taking advantage of parliamentary favor to procure better and more cannon, the k.k. army insisted on wasting millions of florins on the inferior steel-bronze Uchatius cannon and permanent fortifications, especially the fortresses of Galicia, decisions which would prove detrimental to the Austro-Hungarian army in World War I.

In education, Habsburg leaders stressed the importance of practical application of theory in exercises, maneuvers, and staff rides. Intellectual ability among the officer corps continued to comprise a major objective of k.k. training. Practical application, however, remained a constant problem for the Austro-Hungarian high command as officers still favored the offensive on the training grounds. The growing emphasis on tactics in the *Kriegsschule* opened the way for Conrad's view of the tactical offensive to spread throughout the army.

During the 1880s the Austro-Hungarian high command remained stable under the leadership of Bylandt-Rheidt and Bauer as war ministers along with Beck as chief of the general staff. The bitter friction and rivalry of the Kuhn years no longer embroiled k.k. military leaders. Although Albrecht had differed with the war ministers over the organization of the high command and control of the army as a whole, the archduke relented on many of his ideas and took a lesser role. Beck continued his work as peacemaker among the other leaders. Not until



the appointment of Krieghammer to the war ministry did major friction return once again to the high command. The combination of rivalry at the top of the Habsburg army's structure with the revival of offensive shock tactics and continual mismanagement of funds forecast future disaster for the Austro-Hungarian military.

## Chapter 5 - Financial Shock: Conradian Tactics and Wasteful

### Spending

“Woe to the weak!”<sup>544</sup> Thus the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna described the international situation as the nineteenth century came to a close. Europe had formed two groups aligned against each other: the *Dreibund* of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy, and the *Zweibund* of France and Russia. With a peace footing of 359,878 men and a war footing of 1,826,940 in 1901, the Habsburg Empire revealed definite numerical weakness in comparison with the other major continental powers because of low yearly conscription numbers. In peacetime Germany had 580,023 soldiers, France 589,444, and Russia 1,100,000. Only Italy possessed smaller numbers with 263,684 troops. In war, the inferiority of Austria-Hungary stood out more starkly as Germany could put over 3,000,000 men in the field, France 2,500,000, and Russia 4,600,000. Even Italy could field 3,308,650, though more than 2,000,000 qualified as territorial militia.<sup>545</sup> The numerical superiority of the Russo-French alliance with its 7,100,000 troops compared to the less than 5,000,000 men of Germany and Austria-Hungary brought this weakness into even greater contrast. As Germany and Austria-Hungary could not rely upon the assistance of Italy, the untrustworthy member of the alliance and former foe of the Habsburg empire, the *Dreibund* remained at a disadvantage to the *Zweibund*.

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<sup>544</sup> A.S., “Zur Geschichte des Krieges. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft,” *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 1 (1897): 148. The author of this article is most likely the retired FML Adolf Freiherrn von Sacken, a former teacher of tactics at the *Kriegsschule*, director of the military history bureau in the war archives of Vienna, and author of numerous military-political works.

<sup>545</sup> Frederick Martin, Sir John Scott Keltie, Isaac Parker Anderson Renwick, Mortimer Epstein, Sigfrid Henry Steinberg, and John Paxton, *The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the Civilised World for the Year 1902* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1902), 396, 572-573, 647, 806, 1002.

Therefore, Austria-Hungary needed to take significant measures to compensate for the numerical disadvantages of its military position. With the constant burden of inferiority weighing upon the Habsburg army, the k.u.k. high command continued the attempt to develop the imperial forces in ways that would compensate while maintaining Austria-Hungary's great power status. However, Habsburg officers perpetuated the same mistakes that had plagued the k.u.k. military previously. Thus, tactics took on an even more offensive course with emphasis on the will and the spirit to overcome superior numbers. The high command poured increasingly immense sums into permanent fortifications and battleships while neglecting the procurement of better artillery. During the two decades before the First World War, the last chance for the Austro-Hungarian army to remedy the failures of earlier years, k.u.k. military leaders failed repeatedly to learn the lessons of modern warfare that favored the defensive and implement the necessary requirements for an army in the weak position of the Habsburg empire.

### **Solution for Numerical Inferiority: Morale**

Near the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several authors commented that the end of the million man army drew near. The German staff officer, Major Wilhelm Leopold Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, prophesied the rise of a new Alexander the Great, who would use a small force of well-trained and well-equipped men to defeat the numberless hordes of the enemy.<sup>546</sup> Similarly, a k.u.k. captain pointed out the numerous occasions throughout history when troops, smaller in number but better armed and trained, defeated more numerous opponents and thus rendered immense armies unnecessary.<sup>547</sup> Even more emphatically the retired FML Adolf Baron von

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<sup>546</sup> Wilhelm Leopold Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Das Volk in Waffen. Ein Buch über Heerwesen und Kriegführung unserer Zeit* (Berlin: R. v. Decker's Verlag: 1883), 4-5.

<sup>547</sup> Hauptmann Otto Berndt, *Die Zahl im Kriege. Statistische Daten aus der neueren Kriegsgeschichte in graphischer Darstellung* (Wien: G. Freytag & Berndt, 1897), 133-134, 142-144. The Habsburg army adopted the title k.u.k. (*kaiserlich und königlich*) instead of k.k. (*kaiserlich-königlich*) in 1889 as a concession to Hungary for

Sacken in several articles of the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* argued for the elimination of the unwieldy and expensive armed forces of the military powers which would flood the battlefields of Europe with millions of destructive men and weapons. Massive militaries with universal conscription and the support of the whole populace would bring about wars of annihilation and battles of despair, which the states would lead *à outrance* until “the last reserves, the last levy of the defeated have been utterly destroyed.” Then the victors, amid countless cripples and sick, will remap Europe while slicing up the conquered lands, and thereby leave the losers full of thoughts of revenge.<sup>548</sup>

Such a ghastly war certainly filled Austro-Hungarian military leaders with trepidation, especially as the outcome did not look propitious for the weaker Habsburg army. The peace conferences of the 1890s held no guarantees of everlasting peace, which constituted mere utopias, while the European states continued to enlarge their military might.<sup>549</sup> Therefore, ideas of returning to a professional army of volunteers rather than a massive force of conscripts understandably appealed to k.u.k. officers. A study about the means to develop the war power of the Habsburg military summed up the difficulty: “Universal conscription exists among us only in theory, but not in reality, because the claims for exception by the available able-bodied people liable for conscription are completely heterogeneous.”<sup>550</sup> Although certain reasons for exception merited consideration, too many received exemptions. Of those men who qualified for

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the passage of the 1889 army law. Hungarian politicians viewed this addition of the ‘u’ as recognition of the equal status of Hungary with Austria according to the *Ausgleich* of 1867.

<sup>548</sup> A.S., “Zur Geschichte des Krieges. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1897): 107-151; A.S., “Der Zukunftskrieg und die Staatswehr. Eine militärisch-politische Studie,” *ÖMZ* 3 (1897): 1-32; A.S., “Das Ende der Millionenheere. Ein Mahnruf zur Jahreswende,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1897): 193-205.

<sup>549</sup> Oberstlieutenant Auditor Dr. Emil Dangelmaier, “Die Friedens-Conferenz,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1899): 243-246.

<sup>550</sup> “Studie über den Ausbau unserer Wehrmacht auf Grund des neuen Wehrgesetzes,” Wien. Aus der kaiserlich-königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1894, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 70, Ausbau der Wehrmacht 1896, 3.

conscription, the army divided them into three classes: three-year recruits for the standing army, two-year recruits for the *Landwehr*, and the rest for the *Landsturm*, which never received any training. Thus, the army remained far too small to fight a successful war with another great power and would have to employ the *Landwehr* in the front lines from the beginning of any war instead of as a reserve.<sup>551</sup> Incapable of raising the number of Austro-Hungarian troops dramatically, Habsburg theorists looked for other solutions to the predicament of inferior numbers. The option of falling from the ranks of the great military powers or failing to fulfill the duties of the alliance with Germany never entered into consideration.<sup>552</sup>

Therefore, k.u.k. officers studied history for precedents when smaller forces conquered larger adversaries. One officer attributed victory not so much to overwhelming numerical advantage but rather to superior leadership, equipment, and weaponry as well as luck.<sup>553</sup> Other officers emphasized the necessity of the “inner worth” of the army. Sacken wrote, “Not in numerical strength but in the inner ability and solidity, in the mobility and impulsive power is the true worth of the army to be sought and in this direction must its development also be sought.” After all, Prussia had defeated France in 1870-1871 without the benefits of universal conscription.<sup>554</sup>

### **Conradian Tactics: the Superior Morale of the Offensive**

This view meshed perfectly with the tactical doctrine of Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the influential tactical instructor at the *Kriegsschule* from 1888-1892, foremost interpreter of the

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<sup>551</sup> “Studie über den Ausbau unserer Wehrmacht auf Grund des neuen Wehrgesetzes,” Wien. Aus der kaiserlich-königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1894, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 70, Ausbau der Wehrmacht 1896, 3-4.

<sup>552</sup> A.S., “Zur Geschichte des Krieges. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft,” 107.

<sup>553</sup> Berndt, *Die Zahl im Kriege. Statistische Daten aus der neueren Kriegsgeschichte in graphischer Darstellung*, 130.

<sup>554</sup> A.S., “Zur Geschichte des Krieges. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft,” 150; A.S., “Das Ende der Millionenheere. Ein Mahnruf zur Jahreswende,” 196-197, 205.

k.u.k. infantry regulations, and chief of the general staff from 1906 to 1911 and again from 1912 to 1917. Conrad believed in achieving moral superiority over the enemy as the means to victory. Only the offensive could give this advantage to soldiers while demoralizing opponents who depended on the will of the attacker by taking defensive positions.<sup>555</sup> Belief in the power of the offensive spirit coincided with Conrad's Social Darwinism, which set the stronger over the weaker, no matter who possessed numerical superiority.<sup>556</sup> The stronger always attacked. This view also suited Conrad's desire to raise the sunken prestige of Austria-Hungary and restore the Habsburg empire to great military power status. As chief of the general staff, Conrad constantly tried to convince the emperor, the war ministers, the foreign ministers, and anyone else he could find that Austria-Hungary must engage in preventive wars to raise the sunken prestige of the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>557</sup>

Conrad's *Zum Studium der Taktik* provides the essential points of his tactical thought. Hötendorf compiled this 815 page work as a publication of his teaching notes at the war college. Throughout the introduction, in which Conrad discussed victory and defeat, the principle of superiority, initiative, activity and passivity, and attack and defense, he always stressed the necessity of seizing the initiative, achieving activity and the attack while forcing the enemy to remain passive in defense and merely react to the moves of the attacker. All depended

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<sup>555</sup> Franz Conrad von Hötendorf, *Zum Studium der Taktik. I. Theil: Einleitung und Infanterie* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1891), 14, 25-26.

<sup>556</sup> Dieter Hackl, "Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötendorf," (Mag. Phil. Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, 2009), 107.

<sup>557</sup> K. und k. Chef des Generalstabes. Geh. Nr. 141, n.d., KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 738, Conrad: Persönliche Studien, Studien über Festungskrieg, Korrespondenz mit Ährenthal, Korrespondenz mit Berchtold und Potiorek; Korrespondenz in Angelegenheiten Ährenthal: Geheimes Promemoria 15 August 1909, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 738, Conrad: Persönliche Studien, Studien über Festungskrieg, Korrespondenz mit Ährenthal, Korrespondenz mit Berchtold und Potiorek; Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1954-1968), 2 Bd., 284-286; Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, Josef Brauner, Eduard Czegka, Jaromir Diakow, Friedrich Franek, Walther Heydendorff, Rudolf Kiszling, Franz Mühlhofer, Ernst Wisshaupt und Georg Zobi, *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914-1918 (ÖULK)* (Wien: Verlag der Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen, 1930-1938) 1: 41.

on maintaining superior morale in order to inflict one's will upon the opponent: "The goal of war is the permanent conquest of the enemy's will."<sup>558</sup>

In this spirit Conrad devoted 105 pages (13% of the whole book) to the attack while only 45 pages (5.5%) to defense. Although the author discussed artillery for 115 pages, the part on infantry encompassed 168 pages. The main focus of the most important section of the work centered on infantry as the decisive offensive weapon. This 155 page section entitled "Vom Gefecht" described the actions that infantry should take during battle to achieve offensive victory by an assault culminating in a bayonet attack.<sup>559</sup> The combination of superior morale and the infantry offensive epitomized the tactical thought of Conrad, which he strove to instill in the Habsburg officer corps, especially the general staff officers.

### **Conradian Influence: the *Kriegsschule* and the Officer Corps**

When Conrad became chief of the general staff in 1906, he stipulated changes in the curriculum and teaching method of the *Kriegsschule*. Placing more emphasis on tactics and the character of the general staff officer, Conrad stressed the ability of officers relying on superior morale to organize and lead troops, even in frontal assaults, and therefore to gain experience in offensive exercises.<sup>560</sup> Several years later, the chief of the general staff put great weight on the psychological training of staff officers rather than the calculation of numbers in the Clausewitzian spirit of the philosophy of war. However, Conrad recommended his own study

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<sup>558</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 4-28.

<sup>559</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 31-347, 359-473, 547-701.

<sup>560</sup> Conrad, "Gesichtspunkte für die Reorganisation der Kriegsschule," 1907, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 44, Lehrpläne, Stundeneinteilung, Organisation der KS, Denkschrift KS 1852-1877, 8.

*Zum Studium der Taktik* with its idealization of the offensive rather than the Prussian theorist's discussion of defense and attack.<sup>561</sup>

The k.u.k. war college revealed the influence of the former instructor of tactics. Even before Conrad became chief of the general staff, tactical courses focused on the offensive far more than the defensive. Lists of study themes for tactics from 1902 to 1906 persisted in asking for assessments of the armies fighting offensive battles rather than the defenders. These lists especially concentrated on the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, with primary emphasis on the attacking side. For the 1902-1903 list, 22 of 33 questions came from 1866 or 1870-1871, in the 1903-1904 list, 28 of 36 focused on 1866 and 1870-1871, and for the 1905-1906 list, 21 of 32. The majority of the other questions also stressed the importance of the attack in studying offensive battles from the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The same predominance of the Prussian offensive victories in 1866 and 1870-1871 appeared in the study theme lists for strategy and military history.<sup>562</sup> Obviously, the Habsburg army's obsession with the theories of Moltke and offensive warfare had not diminished but rather increased over the three or four decades since the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian conflicts. As the conqueror of both the Austrian army in 1866 and the French army, supposedly the best military in Europe in 1870, the Prussian commander held the primary place of honor in the eyes of most Habsburg officers. Conrad's immense knowledge of the 1870-1871 war and the ideas of his "hero" Moltke influenced

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<sup>561</sup> Conrad, "Direktiven für die Leitung der Kriegsschule," Wien am 6./X. 1910, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner).

<sup>562</sup> K.u.k. KS Verzeichnis der Studienthemen im Jahre 1902/3; K.u.k. KS Verzeichnis der Studienthemen im Jahre 1903/4; K.u.k. KS Verzeichnis der Studienthemen im Jahre 1904/5; K.u.k. KS Verzeichnis der Studienthemen im Jahre 1905/6, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 44, Lehrpläne, Stundeneinteilung, Organisation der KS, Denkschrift KS 1852-1877.



considerably the exaggerated role of the Prussian field marshal's battles in the education of future k.u.k. general staff officers.<sup>563</sup>

After Conrad became chief of the general staff, the emphasis on offensive tactics, especially the victories of Moltke, as well as the necessity of superior *élan* took even greater precedence in the *Kriegsschule*. Lesson plans revealed how Conrad had incorporated his ideas of the primacy of the offensive and superior morale into the curriculum of the war college. In the second year of tactical instruction, students toured the battlefields of Bohemia and Moravia. The military history course focused on the 1866 Bohemian campaign and especially the Franco-Prussian War as an example for the details of modern offensive war during the third year. The Bohemian and Moravian battles, however, comprised an essential part of every year of study, not just the second and third.<sup>564</sup> In all classes and study rides, the instructors emphasized the necessity of seizing and holding the initiative and the offensive as well as the importance of will and spirit for superior morale.<sup>565</sup> Thus, the Habsburg military saw the secret to success on the battlefield in emulating the offensive victories of maneuver that the Prussians achieved in 1866 and 1870.

Other documents showed the same emphasis on the offensive. An analysis of the Battle of Spichern in 1870 concluded that the Germans did not press the attack vigorously enough and

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<sup>563</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, Inc., 2000), 39.

<sup>564</sup> K.u.k. Kriegsschule 1910. Lehrplan für die k.u.k. Kriegsschule und Anhaltspunkte für die Feststellung der Studienerfolge. Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner). KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner), 10, 17-18.

<sup>565</sup> K.u.k. Kriegsschule 1910. Lehrplan für die k.u.k. Kriegsschule und Anhaltspunkte für die Feststellung der Studienerfolge. Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner). KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner), 16; Conrad, "Gesichtspunkte für die Reorganisation der Kriegsschule," 1907, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 44, Lehrpläne, Stundeneinteilung, Organisation der KS, Denkschrift KS 1852-1877, 12-15; Nr. 14 res. de 883, 16 Beilagen zum Studienplan, 2 Taktik, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner).

thus could not dislodge the weak French adversary.<sup>566</sup> On a different occasion during the Franco-Prussian War, however, according to a k.u.k. study guide, a German unit successfully charged across an open field and broke through two numerically superior French lines with the bayonet because of will power and confidence in their own superior abilities.<sup>567</sup> The author of another Austro-Hungarian tactical study took the occasion to remark expressly that an attack across open ground in the face of modern infantry fire could still succeed. The German failure at St. Privat in 1870 had resulted from poor leadership and insufficient numbers, not the terrain or the devastating fire of the French rifles.<sup>568</sup> Conrad himself pointed out the battle of Mars-la-Tour in 1870 as the best engagement for detailed study and testing.<sup>569</sup>

Habsburg tactical instructors tried to apply Moltke's ideas to future campaigns. The writer of a k.u.k. study regarding an Austro-Hungarian advance into Galicia against the Russians compared the Habsburg movements with Moltke's invasion of France in 1870. The main danger consisted in the possibility of the three projected armies becoming too greatly separated during the advance. To counter this problem, the study author recommended that k.u.k. forces live off the land to move faster and overrun the enemy before the Russians could realize the Austro-Hungarian weaknesses.<sup>570</sup> This study proved accurate in depicting the major difficulty for Habsburg troops in maintaining contact with each other and not allowing large gaps to occur

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<sup>566</sup> K.u.k. KS I. Jahrgang 19.../... Taktik. Verteidigung des Kaninchen Berges in der Schlacht von Spichern am 6. August 1870, KA Militärschule, KS Karton Nr. 69, Studienbehelfe: 1912/1914.

<sup>567</sup> "Das Detachement Bolstenstern am 26. u. 27. Dezember 1870," KA Militärschulen, KS Karton Nr. 67, Studienbehelfe: 1912/1914.

<sup>568</sup> K.u.k. Kriegsschule I. Jahrgang 19... Taktik. Angriff der 1. Gardeinfanteriebrigade auf St. Privat am 16. August 1870. Bemerkungen. KA Militärschulen, KS Karton Nr. 68, Studienbehelfe: 1912/1914.

<sup>569</sup> K.u.k. Chef des Generalstabes. Korpsbefehl Nr. 24. Wien, am 24. Oktober 1910. KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner).

<sup>570</sup> K. und k. Kriegsschule. Res. No. 706. Wien, am 10. Dezember 1913. KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner), 1-2, 9, 12.

while advancing in the face of far numerically superior forces.<sup>571</sup> Not only did the offensive ideas of Moltke not alleviate the problems for the k.u.k. army in 1914 but also the recommendations to live off the land for faster movement and overrun the enemy before Habsburg weaknesses became obvious amounted to an impossible hope. Glossing over the problems with hopeful yet unrealizable solutions rather than rectifying the faulty strategy with a defensive operational scheme only confirmed the fixation of Austro-Hungarian theorists for the offensive. No prominent k.u.k. strategists or tacticians even considered the defense as a viable option, however, because they believed great military powers gained victory only by attacking, not by defenses that merely reacted to the will of the opponent.

The extreme emphasis on tactics in the *Kriegsschule* led Major-general Alfred Krauss, the commandant of the war college from 1910 until 1914, to lament that instructors taught tactics as the most important field completely detached from all others and therefore led exercises only for independent units in battle situations rather than maneuvers involving all the aspects of war. Thus, instead of working together with the operational general staff service and taking into consideration the great significance of provisions and supplies for soldiers in the field, tacticians treated their work in isolation. Krauss, however, like most other Austro-Hungarian military writers, used examples from the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars to illustrate his point.<sup>572</sup> The fixation on Moltke's campaigns had even infected men like Krauss, who found fault with the exaggerated importance of tactics in Habsburg military education.

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<sup>571</sup> Graydon A. Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 15-16.

<sup>572</sup> Generalmajor Alfred Krauss, k.u.k. Kriegsschule. Res. Nr. 91. Uebungsreise 1911. Abschrift der Zuschrift an Hauptmann d. Glst. von Langer. Wien, am 22. Februar 1911, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43, Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlaß Theodor Körner).

The obsession with the Prussian victories of 1866 and 1870 spread throughout the Habsburg officer corps during the two decades before the First World War even more than in previous years. Hardly any writers expressed opinions contrary to the ideas of Conrad or failed to mention the ideas and victories of Moltke after Conrad began publishing his tactical works. This agreement became pronounced especially during the last half of the 1890s as article writers emphasized the necessity of seizing the initiative and maintaining high morale as well as the constant *Drang nach vorwärts* while repeatedly referencing Conrad's *Zum Studium der Taktik* and the Infantry Regulations of 1889 that stressed the offensive.<sup>573</sup> In the words of one author, "The good soldier will constantly decide for the attack where feasible in small and great conditions. Let us always remain mindful that posterity rarely weaves a wreath of glory for the successful defender."<sup>574</sup> Once again, Austro-Hungarian theorists strongly advocated the offensive as the only means to victory and military prestige.

Few voices of reason in line with the thoughts of Archduke Albrecht surfaced at this time. Most of these writers, unwilling to put their own names on criticisms of the prevalent ideas in the Habsburg army, published their articles in the military journals anonymously. Questioning the wisdom of incessantly striving for the offensive, these officers showed the advantages that repeating rifles and smokeless powder offered for the defensive while revealing that certain

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<sup>573</sup> Oberst z.D. Maschke, "Die Infanterietaktik der Gegenwart, Eine Studie," *ÖMZ* 3 (1896): 97-169; Oberstlieutenant des Generalstabs-Corps Johann Schirmbeck, "Zum Dienst-Reglement für das k. und k. Heer. II. Theil, 3. Auflage, 1896," *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine (O.)* 53 (1896): 241-284; Oberstlieutenant Strobl, "Über Taktik-Aufgaben auf kriegsgeschichtlicher Grundlage," *ÖMZ* 1 (1897): 208-234; Oberstlieutenant des Generalstabs-Corps Wilhelm Buschek, "Der taktische Verband im Gefechte," *ÖMZ* 2 (1897): 157-177; Hauptmann Albert Margutti, "Die Entscheidungsuchende Vertheidigung," *O.* 54 (1897): 190-206; *Hónved* Hauptmann Dionys Horvath de Nagyvarad, "Der Wert der Anerziehung der Initiative," *O.* 54 (1897): 319-344; Oberst Ebhardt, "Hauptmomente der Entwicklung der Taktik im österreichischen Heer von der Zeit Kaiser Maximilian I. bis Gegenwart," *ÖMZ* 3 (1898): 1-30; Oberlieutenant Orestes Ritter von Bischoff, "Die Erziehung des Soldaten zu besonders anstrengenden und gefährvollen Unternehmungen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1899): 75-95.

<sup>574</sup> E.v.K., "Taktische Meinungen und Mahnungen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1896): 108-133.

situations called for defensive fighting.<sup>575</sup> One writer, taking the name Simplex in a demand for simplicity in tactical theory, called for the golden mean between attack and defense rather than the offensive *à outrance* and accused k.u.k. tacticians of returning to the Middle Ages by instructing infantry to use rifles like lances because of the bayonet.<sup>576</sup> Another officer agreed that bayonets offered no advantage, not even psychological, but instead hindered shooting, wasted time for affixing to the gun, and helped little in hand to hand combat as the men instinctively used the rifle butt to club the enemy.<sup>577</sup> A third author complained that during field exercises judges invariably ruled the attacking forces victorious over the defenders no matter how the troops performed because the offensive side always possessed more soldiers.<sup>578</sup> Yet even among these officers the majority still did not propose a defensive strategy and tactics for the Austro-Hungarian army but rather assessed the offensive as the more desirable form of battle while emphasizing the importance of gaining the initiative for high morale.<sup>579</sup> Thus, no one dared to offer an effective solution for the increasing numerical gap between the k.u.k. military and the other European powers by proposing a strategical and tactical defensive with the goal of taking the offensive only after the exhaustion of futile enemy attacks.

The maneuvers of the Habsburg army during the decade preceding the First World War exhibited the preference for the offensive.<sup>580</sup> FML Karl Maria von Lang, a well-known military

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<sup>575</sup> Margutti, "Die Entscheidungsuchende Vertheidigung," 190-206; H. von W., "Die Infanterie im Schlachtenfeuer der Zukunft," *ÖMZ* 3 (1898): 193-226; S., "Beiträge zum Studium des Infanterie-Angriffes in der Bataille rangée," *ÖMZ* 4 (1899): 105-137.

<sup>576</sup> Simplex, "Die verbannte Einfachheit," *ÖMZ* 4 (1896): 1-20.

<sup>577</sup> S., "Beiträge zum Studium des Infanterie-Angriffes in der Bataille rangée," 135-136.

<sup>578</sup> Ir., "Ein Wort zur Frage des Infanterie-Angriffes," *ÖMZ* 4 (1896): 193-195; Ir., "Ein Wort zu § 20 der Instruction für die Waffenübungen des k.u.k. Heeres," *ÖMZ* 1 (1897): 42-45.

<sup>579</sup> Ir., "Ein Wort zur Frage des Infanterie-Angriffes," 193-195; Margutti, "Die Entscheidungsuchende Vertheidigung," 190-196; H. von W., "Die Infanterie im Schlachtenfeuer der Zukunft," 193-202; S., "Beiträge zum Studium des Infanterie-Angriffes in der Bataille rangée," 105-106.

<sup>580</sup> Moritz Freiherr von Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang: Eine Lebensschilderung* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), 173.

writer in Austria-Hungary, commented on the emphasis on assaults during the large army exercises of 1907, 1908, and 1909.<sup>581</sup> Regarding the relationship of attack and defense, Lang wrote “the attacker remains constantly in the advantage and superior to the defender.”<sup>582</sup> Likewise, Lang stated the necessity of every soldier maintaining the fundamental conviction that “safety and victory lie only in the attack.”<sup>583</sup> A general staff colonel commented that troop exercises contained more and more frontal attacks without artillery support in the last years before the Great War.<sup>584</sup> Judges declared that the side that brought more units most quickly to certain ‘decisive points’ had won the exercise, regardless of the interaction of infantry and artillery. Even though all officers knew that both branches must work together to achieve victory, in practice this close support never took place.<sup>585</sup> War Minister Auffenberg also noted the insistence on constant *Drang nach vorwärts* to increase *élan* during maneuvers with little consideration for artillery or losses.<sup>586</sup> This stress on the offensive continued up to the First World War even to the point of ordering massed cavalry to charge entrenched infantry at the maneuvers of 1913.<sup>587</sup> The obvious purpose of the great Habsburg field exercises consisted in inculcating every member of the Austro-Hungarian army with the offensive *à outrance* as

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<sup>581</sup> FML Karl von Lang (GdI), “Betrachtungen über die Armeemanöver 1908 in Westungarn mit Rücksicht auf applikatorische Besprechungen hierüber,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1909): 1829-1854; Lang, “Betrachtungen über die Manöver des 3 und 14 Korps im Kärnten vom 2 bis 7 September 1907,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1910): 699-730; Lang, “Betrachtungen über die großen Herbstmanöver in Mähren vom 8 bis 11 Sept. 1909,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1193-1234.

<sup>582</sup> Lang, “Betrachtungen über die Armeemanöver 1908 in Westungarn mit Rücksicht auf applikatorische Besprechungen hierüber,” 1853.

<sup>583</sup> Lang, “Betrachtungen über die Manöver des 3 und 14 Korps im Kärnten vom 2 bis 7 September 1907,” 730.

<sup>584</sup> Oberst Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914* (Wien: Adolf Holzhausens Nachfolger, 1929), 129-130.

<sup>585</sup> General der Infanterie Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg* (München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921), 96.

<sup>586</sup> Moritz Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege* (Wien: Ullstein & Co., 1920), 52-53.

<sup>587</sup> Rudolf Kiszling, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este: Leben, Pläne und Wirken am Schicksalsweg der Donaumonarchie* (Graz: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1953), 263-264.

preparation for the next war. This methodology revealed a failure to grasp and implement the lessons of the most recent wars.

### **Failure to Learn: Lessons of the Boer War**

During the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, k.u.k. officers rethought the tactical instructions of the 1889 Infantry Regulations because of the surprising events of the Boer War. This conflict between the Boers, or Dutch settlers in South Africa, and the British from 1899 to 1902 gave stark proof of the advantages that modern weaponry gave to the defender. With repeating rifles, machineguns, smokeless powder, and excellent defensive positions, the Boers succeeded in inflicting heavy casualties while stopping British assaults. Thus, the British had to change tactics. Instead of the combination of fire and movement culminating in a bayonet charge, British leaders sent half a million men into the field while employing flying columns of British mounted infantry along with attacks on Boer farms and the incarceration of Boers in concentration camps. With such drastic measures the British gained victory, not with frontal assaults.<sup>588</sup>

The surprising tactical success of the Boer defense sobered the optimistic offensive view of some Habsburg officers. Because of the strong impression that the Boer fire discipline, field fortifications, and economic use of ammunition gave, Austro-Hungarian military writers tempered the overly offensive viewpoint of the 1889 Infantry Regulations. FML Gustav Ratzenhofer, the lead interpreter of k.u.k. infantry regulations before the rise of Conrad, stated that the Boer War reinforced the lessons of 1866 and 1870: frontal assaults against modern rifles only worked in peace maneuvers, not on the battlefield. British troops, like the Austrians in the Austro-Prussian War, made the capital mistake of relying too heavily on mere courage to gain

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<sup>588</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 139-144.

victory.<sup>589</sup> Other officers stressed the importance of firepower, especially precise shooting rather than mass fire, over the bayonet charge.<sup>590</sup> Storm tactics could only prove effective if fire had already broken the resistance of the enemy.<sup>591</sup>

Even the new infantry regulations of 1903, the product of a commission led by Franz Ferdinand and including Conrad, emphasized the need for the attacker to establish fire superiority before storming defensive positions. Yet these same regulations instructed officers to lead their troops as close as possible to the enemy before opening fire and then to use denser swarm lines to achieve as much firepower as possible.<sup>592</sup> In effect, the new k.u.k. infantry regulations, which the Habsburg high command had designed to take into consideration the lessons of the Boer War, merely restated the fire and movement tactics of the British with a greater emphasis on gaining fire superiority before the bayonet charge. Austro-Hungarian tacticians had failed to learn the real lessons of British defeat and Boer victory and chose to maintain the offensive spirit rather than turn to the defensive first and then look for opportunities to counterattack according to the ideas of Clausewitz. After all, the offensive side had won the war in the end.

The main k.u.k. tactical theorist, Conrad von Hötzendorf, misinterpreted the events of the Boer War. In his book *Infanterische Fragen und die Erscheinungen des Boerenkrieges*, Conrad claimed that poor British morale and insufficient *élan* had caused disaster for the offensive forces. The increased firepower of magazine rifles and machine guns had not brought victory to

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<sup>589</sup> FML Gustav Ratzenhofer, "Rückblick auf den Krieg in Südafrika," *ÖMZ* 1 (1901): 97-103.

<sup>590</sup> Hauptmann Rudolf Meißner, "Moderne Infanterie," *O.* 64 (1902): 163-214; Hauptmann Wilhelm von Reinöhl, "Die Entwicklung der Feuertaktik der Infanterie," *O.* 68 (1904): 1-33.

<sup>591</sup> z, "Taktische Folgerungen aus dem Burenkriege nach Boguslawski," *ÖMZ* 1 (1903): 227-240; z, "Infanterische Fragen und die Erscheinungen des Boerenkrieges von F.C.v.H.," *ÖMZ* 1 (1904): 12-29.

<sup>592</sup> Generalmajor Otto Meixner, "Das Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen vom Jahre 1903," *O.* 70 (1905): 93-110.



the defensive-minded Boers because other successful attackers in previous wars, such as the Prussians in 1870, had won despite heavier casualties than the British suffered. The British had just not carried out the assaults correctly. Besides, European soldiers would never aim as well as the Boers, who learned how to shoot at an early age. Therefore, the offensive still maintained superiority over the defensive and would prove effective in future wars.<sup>593</sup>

Most Habsburg officers followed Conrad's analysis of the Boer War in their own articles. While expressing admiration for the impressive defense of the Boers, k.u.k. military writers blamed the British for poor reconnoitering and preparation of the attacks. The solutions to the problem of successful attack echoed Conrad and the infantry regulations of 1903. Calling for more initiative and higher morale, officers advocated gaining fire superiority over the enemy by advancing as close as possible with as many rifles as possible before shooting and then charging with the bayonet. Though proposing more target practice because accurate fire raises morale, these authors still concluded that modern weaponry required a greater sense of *Drang nach vorwärts* as in the regulations.<sup>594</sup> The bayonet remained an essential part of Austro-Hungarian

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<sup>593</sup> Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Infanterische Fragen und die Erscheinungen des Boerenkrieges* (Wien: Seidel & Sohn, 1903), 6, 14, 58.

<sup>594</sup> Oberst von Kirchgäesser, "Erfahrungen und Lehren aus dem südafrikanischen Krieg," *ÖMZ* 1 (1900): 230-237; Kirchgäesser, "Kritische Betrachtungen über die Ereignisse auf dem südafrikanischen Kriegs-Theater," *ÖMZ* 3 (1900): 99-112; Generalstabs-Officier, "Zusammengewürfelte Gedanken über unsere Reglements. Der Kampf um die infanteristische Feuerüberlegenheit," *ÖMZ* 1 (1901): 22-31; "Der Kampf um die infanteristische Feuerüberlegenheit," *ÖMZ* 1 (1901): 264-269; Generalstabs-Officier, "Zusammengewürfelte Gedanken über unsere Reglements. Nochmals: 'Der Kampf um die infanteristische Feuerüberlegenheit.' - Die Formation der zum Feuertreffen bestimmten Compagnien. - Der eigentliche Angriff unter der Bajonnetkampfe," *ÖMZ* 2 (1901): 74-87; "Die neuen Infanterie-Reglements in Frankreich und in Österreich-Ungarn," *ÖMZ* 4 (1901): 283-316; Hauptmann Freiherrn Henriques de Ben, "Vergleich des Entwurfes zum Exercier-Reglement für die k. und k. Fußtruppen mit dem bisher in Kraft gestandenen Reglement," *O.* 64 (1902): 310-343; Oberlieutenant J.L., "Über den Angriff im alten und neuen Reglement," *O.* 64 (1902): 344-355; L.F.v.G., "Schlagworte über die Taktik der Zukunft," *ÖMZ* 2 (1903): 831-840; Hauptmann des Generalstabskorps Franz Schnetzer, "Die modernen Angriffsströmungen und unser Exerzierreglement," *ÖMZ* 2 (1903): 899-927, 1003-1029; Smekal, "Einiges über den Infanterieangriff," *O.* 69 (1904): 257-299.

tactics despite the insignificant role *blanke Waffen* played in the Boer War as the British attackers hardly ever reached the defenses and the Boers possessed no bayonets.<sup>595</sup>

Some k.u.k. officers recognized the excellent morale of the Boers as the source of success. This realization meant, however, that the defenders possessed a greater psychological advantage as well as fire superiority over the British attackers, who became demoralized because they could not even see the Boers behind the field fortifications.<sup>596</sup> Nevertheless, in an effort to prove the merits of the k.u.k. insistence on offensive operations, Habsburg military authors censured the Boers for defending in a purely passive manner with no plan for counterattacking.<sup>597</sup> The British won the war in the end as the attacker.<sup>598</sup> Thus, despite recognition of the superiority of fire and the advantages that modern weaponry gave to the defender, the majority of Austro-Hungarian officers agreed with Conrad and the 1903 infantry regulations that the offensive offered the only means for victory.

### **Failure to Learn: Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War**

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 confirmed the k.u.k. preference for the offensive and trust in the superiority of high morale. At Port Arthur the Japanese attacked the excellent Russian defensive positions no less than six times between August and November 1904 with no effect while suffering heavy casualties. Not only had the Russians fortified the town with

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<sup>595</sup> Kirchgäesser, "Kritische Betrachtungen über die Ereignisse auf dem südafrikanischen Krieg," 235; Generalstabs-Officier, "Zusammengewürfelte Gedanken über unsere Reglements. Nochmals: 'Der Kampf um die infanteristische Feuerüberlegenheit.' - Die Formation der zum Feuergefechte bestimmten Compagnien. - Der eigentliche Angriff unter der Bajonnetkampf," 85-87; Henriques de Ben, "Vergleich des Entwurfes zum Exerzier-Reglement für die k. und k. Fußtruppen mit dem bisher in Kraft gestandenen Reglement," 318-319; Schnetzer, "Die modernen Angriffsströmungen und unser Exerzierreglement," 1024-1025; Smekal, "Einiges über den Infanterieangriff," 265, 299; Meixner, "Das Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen vom Jahre 1903," 98-99.

<sup>596</sup> Kirchgäesser, "Erfahrungen und Lehren aus dem südafrikanischen Krieg," 236; L.F.v.G., "Schlagworte über die Taktik der Zukunft," 839-840; Reinöhl, "Die Entwicklung der Feuertaktik der Infanterie," 26-27; T.R.v.Z., "Über Angriffstaktik nach den Erfahrungen des südafrikanischen Krieges," *O.* 68 (1904): 133-135.

<sup>597</sup> Kirchgäesser, "Erfahrungen und Lehren aus dem südafrikanischen Krieg," 230-231; Smekal, "Einiges über den Infanterieangriff," 259; Oberst Wenzel von Porth, "Kriegslehren," *O.* 70 (1905): 212-213.

<sup>598</sup> z., "Infanterische Fragen und die Erscheinungen des Boerenkrieges von F.C.v.H.," 24.

extensive mutually supportive forts and trenches but also had employed the new technology of recoilless, quick-firing artillery, howitzers, and explosive shells. The combination of firepower from rifles and cannon with entrenched defense in depth thwarted the Japanese attempts to break the Russian lines and rendered the battlefield a precursor to the warfare of the First World War.<sup>599</sup> In order to achieve victory, the Japanese had to resort to methodical siege tactics which brought about the capitulation of Port Arthur because the Russians ran out of ammunition and provisions.<sup>600</sup>

The other major land battle of the Russo-Japanese War involved a flanking movement in the spirit of Moltke by the Japanese at Mukden. This attempt, however, did not result in a brilliant victory of maneuver, but rather three weeks of incessant shelling and failed assaults. Though the Russians retreated because of the Japanese bombardment, the Japanese could hardly claim victory as the casualties of both sides had roughly equaled each other. Nor could the Japanese press the advantage because of their heavy losses and thus allowed the Russians to escape. The war ended as a result of the Japanese naval victory of Tsushima and the ensuing domestic turmoil in Russia, not demonstrations of the superiority of the offensive.<sup>601</sup>

Yet the Japanese, the attacking combatant, had won the war while the Russians, fighting on the defensive, had lost. For Habsburg military theorists, the answer to Japanese success and Russian failure had to lie in the offensive strategy and tactics of the victorious side. Therefore, k.u.k. officers tried to explain the superiority of Japanese tactics. Instead of blaming the failure of Japanese frontal assaults on the futility of attacking opponents using the benefits of heavily fortified positions and destructive weaponry, the Austro-Hungarians praised the incessant *Drang*

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<sup>599</sup> Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914*, 152-155.

<sup>600</sup> Major des Geniestabes Alexander Kuchinka, "Vorträge. Der Kampf um Port Arthur," *ÖMZ* 2 (1905): 892; Major des Generalstabscorps Maximilian Ritter von Hoen, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg," *O.* 70 (1905): 168-169.

<sup>601</sup> Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914*, 156-159.

*nach vorwärts* of the attacks. Because offensive fire had proved incapable of dislodging the Russians from their fortifications, the Japanese had resorted to bayonet charges. Even though these assaults rarely had any positive effect, Habsburg theorists equated the offensive shock tactics with the overall success of the Japanese military during the war.<sup>602</sup>

Morale and offensive spirit comprised the part of the Japanese method of warfare that impressed k.u.k. officers most. The Japanese soldiers displayed, in the eyes of Austro-Hungarian military thinkers, the highest level of the offensive *à outrance*. Not only did the Japanese attack at all costs but also the Japanese won the war. Thus, Habsburg officers believed the strategic and tactical offensive confirmed the tactics of Conrad and the k.u.k. infantry regulations and pushed for the offensive even more than before as the only means for victory.<sup>603</sup> The success of Japan in a war against a numerically superior enemy inspired Austro-Hungarian theorists to think the Habsburg army could use the same methods and win future conflicts. Therefore, k.u.k. officers continued to stress the offensive and the development of morale as the answer to the problems of

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<sup>602</sup> Hoen, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg," *ÖMZ* 1 (1905): 679; Hoen, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg," 158-159, 169; Oberstleutnant Albin Regele, "Port Arthur," *O. 71* (1905): 81-82; "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern," *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 120-121; Oberleutnant Erwin Franz, "Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandschurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite," *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 449-452; Hauptmann des Generalstabskorps Karl Kratochwil des Szt. Kereszthegey, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Betrachtungen und Folgerungen," 1101-1102; Major Adalbert von Dani, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern. Die Infanterie der I. japanischen Armee im Feldzug gegen Rußland," *ÖMZ* 2 (1906): 1773; Dani, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern. Die Infanterie der I. japanischen Armee im Feldzug gegen Rußland," *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 107-119; Hauptmann Silvio von Spieß, "Bemerkungen zur infanteristischen Aufklärung und Angriffstechnik," *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 24-31; Lang, "Das Infanteriegefecht," *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 417-419, 595; Generalmajor Otto Meixner, "Truppenausbildung und Truppenführung," *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 807-808; Oberst Rudolf Rudel, "Das neue Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 415.

<sup>603</sup> Hoen, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg," 168-170; Hauptmann Josef Putzker, "Lose Gedanken über das moderne Gefecht," *O. 71* (1905): 243-248; "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern," 120-121; Franz, "Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandschurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite," 452; Kratochwil, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Betrachtungen und Folgerungen," 1101; Dani 1907, 107; C.H., "Über das innere Wesen der japanischen und neuzeitlichen Offensive. Eine kriegspsychologische Studie," *ÖMZ* 2 (1907): 1426-1428; Spieß, "Bemerkungen zur infanteristischen Aufklärung und Angriffstechnik," 45-50; Lang, "Das Infanteriegefecht," 417-419; Hauptmann Lehar, "Kriegsmoral; deren Vorbereitung im Frieden. Auf Grund des Studiums des russisch-japanischen Feldzuges," *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1729-1733.

inferior numbers and weaponry during the last years before World War I.<sup>604</sup> Statistics reporting a lower percentage of casualties for attacking troops during the Russo-Japanese War than in previous conflicts appeared to support the view that the offensive provided the greatest chance for success.<sup>605</sup> German historian Günther Kronenbitter stated correctly that Austro-Hungarian officers firmly believed that the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War proved the continual superiority of the attack filled with *élan* even over more numerous defenders.<sup>606</sup> Instead of learning the real lessons of the war in Manchuria, Dual Monarchy officers, especially in the general staff, used the Russo-Japanese experiences to confirm the pre-existing preference for the offensive that stemmed from the adoration of Moltke's victories in 1870-1871.<sup>607</sup>

In articles analyzing the causes of victory, many Habsburg officers used the phrase *Wille zum Siege*, or "will to victory," to define the winning psychological attitude of the Japanese soldiers, and thus of every conquering army.<sup>608</sup> Austro-Hungarian military authors began using

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<sup>604</sup> Putzker, "Lose Gedanken über das moderne Gefecht," 243-248; Lang, "Über die taktische Ausbildung der Infanterie," *O.* 72 (1906): 219-244; "Der Infanterieangriff über offenes Terrain," *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 393-403; Lang, "Das Infanteriegefecht," 792; FML von Woinovich, "Die Schlacht von Maximilian Csicseric v. Bacsány, k.u.k. Oberst," *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1326-1327; "Mitteilungen der Armeeschießschule. Heroische Zug eines Unteroffiziers," *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1215-1216; "Mitteilungen der Armeeschießschule. Schüttere und dichte Schwarmlinie im Feuerkampfe," *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1841; "Mitteilungen der Armeeschießschule. Über das Sprungweise Vorgehen," *ÖMZ* 1 (1909): 843; Major Wilde, "Die Technik des Infanterieangriffes auf Grund reglementarischer Bestimmungen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1509-1524; "Neuerungen im Heereswesen im Laufe des Jahres 1910," *ÖMZ* 1 (1911): 822; Rudel, "Das neue Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen," 403, 422-425; Hauptmann Albert von Ungard, "Betrachtungen über das Problem der Feuerüberlegenheit," *ÖMZ* 1 (1913): 689-697; Nn., "Neue Reglements. Eine kritische Studie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1913): 981-983; Ein Truppenkommandant, "Über die moralische Vorbereitung zum Kriege," *ÖMZ* 1 (1914): 577-608.

<sup>605</sup> Lang, "Das Infanteriegefecht," 795-796.

<sup>606</sup> Günther Kronenbitter, *"Krieg im Frieden." Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmacht politik Österreich-Ungarns 1906-1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 84.

<sup>607</sup> Moritz Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkrieg* (Wien: Ullstein & Co., 1920), 51-52.

<sup>608</sup> "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mikämpfern," 121; Franz, "Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandchurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite," 452; Kratochwil, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Betrachtungen und Folgerungen," 1101; Spieß, "Bemerkungen zur infanteristischen Aufklärung und Angriffstechnik," 50; Lehar, "Kriegsmoral; deren Vorbereitung im Frieden. Auf Grund des

this phrase in 1906, the same year that the second edition of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's *Der Wille zur Macht* came into publication. The concept of the "will to power" in a military sense meant the desire to overpower the enemy by means of superior morale. This idea coincided perfectly with the views of Conrad in *Zum Studium der Taktik* and other k.u.k. writers who stressed the paramountcy of morale and impressing one's own will on the enemy.<sup>609</sup> The 1909 sketch for the new infantry regulations used the phrase *Wille zu siegen* as one of the all-important means of spurring the troops on to self-sacrifice, perseverance, and a spirit of enterprise.<sup>610</sup> As one k.u.k. major said, "The attacker's senses and striving culminate in the strong will: forwards to the enemy, cost what it will."<sup>611</sup>

Other Viennese authors, such as the psychologist Alfred Adler, who incorporated Nietzsche's ideas into his theory of individual psychology, and the English-born yet pro-German Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who during the First World War wrote a series of war essays entitled *Der Wille zum Sieg und andere Aufsätze*, expressed the same views as the Habsburg army.<sup>612</sup> The excessive emphasis on the power of the will for victory also corresponded with the increasing accentuation of the importance of the individual in the years before World War I. Austro-Hungarian military writers expressed the necessity of developing the thinking ability and

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Studiums des russisch-japanischen Feldzuges," 1733; Ungard, "Betrachtungen über das Problem der Feuerüberlegenheit," 697; Ein Truppenkommandant, "Über die moralische Vorbereitung zum Kriege," 608.

<sup>609</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 4, 14; Woinovich, "Die Schlacht von Maximilian Csicseric v. Bacsány, k.u.k. Oberst," 1326-1327; "Mitteilungen der Armeeschießschule. Schüttere und dichte Schwarmlinie im Feuerkampfe," 1841; Wilde, "Die Technik des Infanterieangriffes auf Grund reglementarischer Bestimmungen," 1521; Ungard, "Betrachtungen über das Problem der Feuerüberlegenheit," 690-691.

<sup>610</sup> Entwurf. Taktisches Reglement für die k.u.k. Fustruppen. II. Heft. Gefecht. (Wien: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1909), KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 1-4, 12-13, 15.

<sup>611</sup> Wilde, "Die Technik des Infanterieangriffes auf Grund reglementarischer Bestimmungen," 1521.

<sup>612</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 104; Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Der Wille zum Sieg und andere Aufsätze* (München: Hugo Bruckmann, 1918).

personality of each officer and the discipline and intelligence of every soldier.<sup>613</sup> Colonel Rudolf Rudel stated this idea best: “The intellectual and psychological power of the individual is in today’s nerve-shattering battle, despite all the progress of technology, the best and most successful weapon.”<sup>614</sup> Thus, by stressing the importance of the psychological strength of each officer and soldier in training, the Habsburg army employed philosophical ideas prevalent during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to drive soldiers on to offensive victory, which would depend on the thinking and fighting ability of every individual.

The other military powers also saw the Japanese victory as a result of an attacking spirit as well as the passivity of the Russian defense. This view confirmed the preference for the offensive that permeated the infantry regulations of modern armies.<sup>615</sup> The k.u.k. infantry regulations found the greatest similarity in the 1906 German regulations.<sup>616</sup> This likeness stemmed not only from the alliance between the two states but also from the fixation of Austro-Hungarian theorists like Conrad on Moltke’s offensive ideas and the Prussian victories of 1866 and 1870-1871.

The Japanese infantry instructions exuded the offensive spirit, emphasizing “lust for the attack” as well as the “iron will” of commanders and troops and the decisiveness of the bayonet for victory.<sup>617</sup> The new Japanese 1909 exercise regulations for infantry, written to incorporate

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<sup>613</sup> “Der Infanterieangriff über offenes Terrain,” 407; Wilde, “Die Technik des Infanterieangriffes auf Grund reglementarischer Bestimmungen,” 1512-1513; Rudel, “Das neue Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen,” 425; Ungard, “Betrachtungen über das Problem der Feuerüberlegenheit,” 690-691.

<sup>614</sup> Rudel, “Das neue Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen,” 425.

<sup>615</sup> Meixner, “Das Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen vom Jahre 1903,” 98; Wilde, “Die Technik des Infanterieangriffes auf Grund reglementarischer Bestimmungen,” 1509-1510.

<sup>616</sup> Lang, “Das Infanteriegefecht,” 429-432.

<sup>617</sup> Evidenz-Bureau des k.u.k. Generalstabes. Japan 1907. Infanterie Exerzierreglement 2. Teil. Das Gefecht. Exerzierreglement Fol: 593-622. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911. The Evidenz-Bureau collected documents and statistics of foreign armies and drew up reports on these topics for the chief of the general staff.

the lessons of the Russo-Japanese War, expressed the *Offensivgeist* even more than previous editions.<sup>618</sup> Stressing the necessity of seizing the initiative and maintaining superior morale, the Japanese regulations, as translated by the Evidence Bureau of the k.u.k. general staff, stated: “The attack is in general the only way to victory, the commander chooses another means only when pressed by necessity.”<sup>619</sup> The Japanese regulations impressed Habsburg officers as the instructions of a victorious yet smaller military power against the largest European military, an army that Austria-Hungary could very likely face in a future war. Though the extreme offensive spirit of the Japanese regulations greatly inspired k.u.k. thinkers, many Habsburg theorists found the source of this spirit, and thus the most important part of Japanese success, in the perceived love of fatherland and monarch that not only the Japanese soldiers but also the whole population possessed.<sup>620</sup> The excellent morale and enthusiasm of the Japanese people and army appealed to Austro-Hungarian officers, who still considered the role of the k.u.k. military as the educator of the various peoples of the empire in patriotism paramount.<sup>621</sup> Thus, everything about the Japanese victory over Russia inspired Habsburg theorists: a smaller army defeating a larger, the offensive spirit, the support of the population.

### **New Infantry Regulations: Conradian Offensive**

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<sup>618</sup> Generalstabhauptmann Theodor von Lerch, “Das neue japanische Infanteriereglement,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 260-278.

<sup>619</sup> “K.u.k. KS I. Jahrgang 1912/13 Taktik. Studie über die sukzessive Entwicklung des Angriffsverfahrens der japanischen Infanterie und die wichtigsten Bestimmungen über das Gefecht im japanischen exerzierreglement für die Infanterie vom Jahre 1907 /:Entwurf:/ u. 1909,” KA Militärschulen, KS Karton Nr. 67, Studienbehelfe: 1912/1914, 15.

<sup>620</sup> “K.u.k. KS I. Jahrgang 1912/13 Taktik. Studie über die sukzessive Entwicklung des Angriffsverfahrens der japanischen Infanterie und die wichtigsten Bestimmungen über das Gefecht im japanischen exerzierreglement für die Infanterie vom Jahre 1907 /:Entwurf:/ u. 1909,” KA Militärschulen, KS Karton Nr. 67, Studienbehelfe: 1912/1914, 15; Franz, “Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandschurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite,” 452; Kratochwil, “Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Betrachtungen und Folgerungen,” 1103; Lehar, “Kriegsmoral; deren Vorbereitung im Frieden. Auf Grund des Studiums des russisch-japanischen Feldzuges,” 1733.

<sup>621</sup> Oberstleutnant Oskar von Shießler, “Die Ausbildung unserer Jungmannschaft,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1909): 787.



When Conrad determined to write a new set of infantry regulations for the k.u.k. army, the ideas of the Japanese military influenced the Austro-Hungarian instructions.<sup>622</sup> The 1909 sketch for infantry tactical regulations displayed devotion to attack as the only means of success, the culmination of assaults in bayonet storms, and the prominence of morale in inflicting one's will on the enemy and seizing the initiative. The regulations significantly underscored these points: "An infantry filled with lust for attack, physically and psychologically persevering, well-trained and well-led will fight successfully against a numerically superior enemy." Regarding morale the sketch spoke emphatically: "The strength of morale forms in war the most powerful driving force of all performance, it stimulates the use of the means of battle and is often of greater significance for success than the relationship of numbers and the skill of leadership."<sup>623</sup>

The instructions also emphasized the need for frontal attacks, while stating that "the attack alone with the all-inspiring and never tiring thought 'forwards towards the enemy' brings decisive results." Although the regulations emphasized fire superiority as the means to victory, the storm with bayonet charge still remained the final step for breaking the resistance of the defender. The infantry assault "remains irresistible in the most difficult situations, if an effective, powerful fire prepares the way." Artillery must prepare the attack and make the assault easier for the infantry. The ground troops, however, must never become dependent on the artillery or wait for artillery fire to attack. The frontal infantry assault culminating in the bayonet charge "forms an essential and unavoidable part of the whole infantry attack and

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<sup>622</sup> Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. Referat über den Stand des neuen Exerzierreglements für die Fußtruppen - Ende Oktober 1909. Mit 11 Beilage. KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 1-2; zu Res. Glstb. Nr. 122 von 1911, KA Fol: 1-74: KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911.

<sup>623</sup> Entwurf. Taktisches Reglement für die k.u.k. Fusstruppen. II. Heft. Gefecht. (Wien: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1909), KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 1-4, 12-13, 15.

becomes the rule for the greatest part of the battle front.” Thus, while acknowledging the importance of firepower the new regulations emphasized Conrad’s ideas of morale, the will for victory, and the offensive as the necessary means to achieve victory.

A board of 33 of the highest ranking generals and colonels in the k.u.k. army, including the heir to the throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand as well as Archdukes Friedrich and Eugen, reviewed the sketch for the infantry regulations and offered critiques but did not discuss the overemphasis on the offensive. The majority (19) approved the new instructions as essential progress, though Archduke Eugen and several other generals recognized the difficulties of the new sketch, which required more initiative and independent action from subordinates, and called for more intensive training of non-commissioned officers.<sup>624</sup>

Ten reviewers took a middle position on the proposed infantry regulations. These men expressed concern that the sketch, which called for more individual training in battle discipline and thus less formalism and drill, did not correspond with the special situation of the Austro-Hungarian military. Because of the multi-ethnic composition of the Habsburg army and the low level of intellectual training that many recruits received before entrance into the armed forces, the ten reviewers of the middle position felt that while the new regulations promised progress

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<sup>624</sup> Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. Referat über den Stand des neuen Exerzierreglements für die Fußtruppen - Ende Oktober 1909. Mit 11 Beilage. KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 6-7; Beilage 12 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nr. 3882 von 1909. General der Infanterie Liborius Frank, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; Beilage 13 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nr. 3882 von 1909. F.M.Lt. Borojević, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; Beilage 14 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. Generalmajor Stephan Sarkotić, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911.

and adaptation to the modern battlefield, k.u.k. officers and soldiers might not prove capable of implementing the instructions.<sup>625</sup>

The four reviewers who rejected the sketch for the infantry regulations included Franz Ferdinand and Feldzeugmeister Oskar Potiorek, who would command the k.u.k. army against Serbia in World War I. These high-ranking men criticized the new instructions for replacing training and drill on the exercise field and in parades with education that focused too heavily on the individual soldier. Fearful of losing the Habsburg tradition of discipline and cohesion among the troops, Franz Ferdinand, Potiorek, and the two other generals could not approve regulations that emphasized the initiative and independence of lower ranking officers. For the tactical part of the sketch, however, the men who rejected the new instructions had little criticism while focusing on details rather than the main ideas.<sup>626</sup> Thus, none of the 33 reviewers found fault with the sketch's devotion to attack as the only means of success, the culmination of assaults in

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<sup>625</sup> Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. Referat über den Stand des neuen Exerzierreglements für die Fußtruppen - Ende Oktober 1909. Mit 11 Beilage. KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 6; Beilage 9 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nr. 3882 von 1909. General der Infanterie Artur Ritter von Pino, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; Beilage 10 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. FML Blasius Schemua, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; Beilage 11 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nr. 3882 von 1909. Oberst Ferdinand Ritter von Marterer, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911.

<sup>626</sup> Abt. 5. Nro. 3882 von 1909. Referat über den Stand des neuen Exerzierreglements für die Fußtruppen - Ende Oktober 1909. Mit 11 Beilage. KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911, 5-6; Beilage 7 zum Erlaß Abt. Nr. 3882 von 1909. Generaltruppeninspektor General der Infanterie Ferdinand Fiedler, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; Beilage 8 zum Erlaß Abt. 5. Nr. 3882 von 1909. General der Infanterie Oskar Potiorek, KA Fischer 6282/O-KA/94 Fol: 343-429, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743 Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; General der Kavallerie und Admiral Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand. Res. No. Me/2. Entwurf des neuen Exerzierreglements, Wien, am 15. Dezember 1910. KA Fol: 1-74: KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911; General der Kavallerie Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand Res. No. M/177. Taktisches Reglement für die Fußtruppen. 4. September 1909. Bemerkungen zum Entwurfe des taktischen Reglements für die k.u.k. Fusstruppen. KA Fol: 1-74: KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 743, Exerzierreglement und Entwürfe 1907-1911.

bayonet storms, and the prominence of morale in inflicting one's will on the enemy and seizing the initiative. These men, most of whom would hold important commands during the First World War, all agreed with the offensive *à outrance* of Conrad's tactical ideas. The infatuation with the attack had consumed the most influential part of the Habsburg officer corps as well as the members of the general staff, who had absorbed Conrad's views at the war college and would assist in drawing up battle plans for the next war.

### **Failure to Learn: Lessons of the Balkan Wars**

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 provided the last opportunity for Habsburg officers to assess the state of modern warfare. A *Kriegsschule* report on the lessons of these conflicts, however, expressed the same ideas as Austro-Hungarian military theorists had previously held. While acknowledging the great effect of firepower, especially from artillery, and the difficulty of attacking under heavy shrapnel and rifle fire, the author of the report asserted the possibility of successful assaults. The attackers must spring forward with lightning quickness and charge through the places empty of enemy shots. The bayonet, though rarely useful during the day, gave great results at night. Because of the doubtfulness of achieving fire superiority, psychological superiority bore victory. Therefore, lance and saber, which instilled fear in the enemy, proved the indispensability of *blanken Waffen*. Likewise, storms with music and unfurled flags immensely boosted of morale and brought success. As the report concluded, "One may smile in peace about such things as flags and music, but whoever took part in this war could say as the first lesson which he took home that the value of morale is higher than the value of shooting, higher than the value of numbers, higher even than the value of tactics and

practicality.”<sup>627</sup> With these ideas, k.u.k. officers tried to compensate for the inferior numbers and weaponry of the Habsburg army. Such an approach, however, could lead only to disaster in a war against a far numerically superior and equipped opponent like Russia or a more experienced enemy like Serbia.

### **Cavalry Tactics: Theory and Practice**

For cavalry Austro-Hungarian officers took a more realistic view. Instead of adhering to the offensive *à outrance* like the infantry, mounted troops focused increasingly on reconnaissance and security duties. With the advent of repeating rifles and smokeless powder as well as more effective artillery fire, k.u.k. military writers realized that cavalry could no longer assault opposing infantry and artillery with shock tactics as in previous centuries.<sup>628</sup> Although authors insisted on the importance of morale and cavalry spirit, and even the possibility, though rare, of attacking infantry and artillery if conditions of enemy weakness and the chance of surprise existed, the paucity of articles in the Habsburg military journals showed the sparse debate on the use of mounted forces.<sup>629</sup> Even Conrad declared cavalry had little hope for success

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<sup>627</sup> K.u.k. KS Res. Nr. 594 Beiliegend wird eine Sammlung von Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen, die während des Balkankrieges von Mitkämpfern und Augenzeugen gemacht wurden, zur Verwertung ausgegeben. Wien, am 10. November 1913, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43 Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlass Theodor Körner), 1-10.

<sup>628</sup> Major Wilhelm Buschek, “Aufklärung und Verschleierung,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1896): 218; Hauptmann H. Sallagar, “Über Verwendung der Cavallerie im Aufklärungsdienste,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1899): 8; Hauptmann Ludwig Berger, “Infanterie gegen Reiterei,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1899): 82; Ein Honvéd-Officier, “Infanterie gegen Reiterei,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1900): 139-168; Pk., “Berittene Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1901): 50; Ein General, “Treffenformation grösserer Kavalleriekörper,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 886; General der Kavallerie Gaudernak, “Der Kavalleriekampf,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 185; Gstbsmajor Franz Graf Zedtwitz, “Dienst und Verwendung der Divisionskavallerie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1911): 655; Generalmajor Ernst von Horsetzky, “Zur Frage der Divisionskavallerie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1913): 33-34; Obstl. Franz Graf Zedtwitz, “Über Kavallerieverwendung bei Übung aller Waffen,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1914): 609-620.

<sup>629</sup> Buschek, “Aufklärung und Verschleierung,” 212; Feldmarschall-Lieutenant von Molnár, “Ein Wort zur Frage der Divisions-Cavallerie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1899): 1-7; Bdt., “Gedanken über unsere Waffe’, der österreichisch-ungarischen Kavallerie gewidmet,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 593; Ein General, “Treffenformation grösserer Kavalleriekörper,” 886; “Über Angriffsformen grösserer Kavalleriekörper,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 905.

in attacking infantry unless the foot troops had suffered demoralization previously or the cavalry used surprise.<sup>630</sup>

The experiences of recent wars, especially the Russo-Japanese War, did not reveal any new lessons about cavalry. Austro-Hungarian officers noted the poor performance of mounted troops on both sides in 1904-1905. The mountainous terrain and, according to one k.u.k. officer, the absence of a mounted tradition and cavalry spirit in Japanese soldiers, limited the Japanese cavalry to the role of mounted infantry.<sup>631</sup> With few recent examples of successful mounted warfare, Habsburg military writers returned to the experiences of forty years earlier in the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>632</sup> Most, however, realized, unlike the Germans, who continued to promote the possible success of mounted shock with *blanken Waffen* against infantry during maneuvers, that the time of cavalry charges against infantry and artillery had passed.<sup>633</sup> Instead, Austro-Hungarian officers advocated equipping cavalry with machineguns and rifles to achieve fire superiority as well as training cavalry to fight as mounted infantry. K.u.k. military authors also favored employing modern technology, such as telegraphs and other communication devices in addition to bicycles and automobiles, to help the cavalry with reconnaissance.<sup>634</sup> By the advent of the First World War, the cavalry of the Dual Monarchy

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<sup>630</sup> Conrad, *Zum Studium der Taktik*, 351.

<sup>631</sup> Hoen, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg," 679; Franz, "Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandchurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite," 450-451; Kratochwil, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Betrachtungen und Folgerungen," 1102; Dani, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern. Die Kavallerie der I. japanischen Armee im Feldzug gegen Rußland," *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 624-627; Hauptmann Ignaz Rodić, "Chancen von Reitermassen in Flanke und Rücken des Feindes," *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1275-1277.

<sup>632</sup> Oberstlieutenant A. Strobl, "Cavalleristische Kriegsspiele auf kriegsgeschichtlicher Grundlage," *ÖMZ* 2 (1897): 201-203; Ein General, "Treffenformation grösserer Kavalleriekörper," 878; "Über Angriffsformen grösserer Kavalleriekörper," 891; Rodić, "Chancen von Reitermassen in Flanke und Rücken des Feindes," 1275-1277.

<sup>633</sup> Rodić, "Über Feldartilleriewirkung. Eine Replik," *ÖMZ* 2 (1912): 1687.

<sup>634</sup> Hauptmann August Urbanski, "Militärische Ausnützung des Fahrrades," *ÖMZ* 4 (1899): 217-266; Pk., "Berittene Infanterie," 47; Hauptmann Höfer, "Vorträge. Radfahrer und berittene Infanterie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1905): 676; "Eine neue Schießinstruktion für die Kavallerie," *ÖMZ* 2 (1905): 1385-1398; Höfer, "Radfahrer und berittene Infanterie," *O.* 70

alone among European armies had ceased to carry lances.<sup>635</sup> Thus, the Habsburg army proved once again an interest in new techniques and a willingness to try the latest technological innovations.

Yet this theoretical interest did not gain practical application as much as some officers desired. A 1911 general staff study guide ignored the more recent wars while giving examples only from 1866 and 1870 for security and reconnaissance service. The Austro-Hungarian high command failed to implement the new ideas stemming from the experiences of the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War by equipping the k.u.k. cavalry with sufficient firepower, especially machine guns. As a result, the Habsburg mounted branch entered the First World War with the same attacking mindset as the infantry, despite the regulations and theoretical writings of many officers.<sup>636</sup>

### **Artillery: Insufficient Numbers and Quality**

Technology certainly played a major part in the artillery branch. The advent of smokeless powder, increasingly greater range, faster rate of fire, higher precision as well as recoilless cannon, heavy howitzers, and high-explosive shells rendered artillery more effective on the battlefield.<sup>637</sup> In 1905 one military writer asserted that artillery effect had become twenty-four to thirty-fives times greater than in the Franco-Prussian War and that one modern field gun

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(1905): 21-42; Bdt., “‘Gedanken über unsere Waffe’, der österreichisch-ungarischen Kavallerie gewidmet,” 594; “Verwendung und Leistungsfähigkeit der Maschinengewehre bei den grösseren Manövern in Böhmen 1905,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 704-713; Oberstleutnant Berndt, “Über Maschinengewehre und Feuergefecht der Kavallerie,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1906): 1737-1761; Rodić, “Chancen von Reitermassen in Flanke und Rücken des Feindes,” 1286-1288; “Mitteilungen der Armeeschießschule. Bekämpfung feindlicher, Schutz der eigenen Maschinen-gewehre im Reiterkampfe,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1910): 949-957; Hauptmann Kosmutza, “Die neuen Technischen Unterrichte für die Infanterie und Kavallerie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1911): 657-674; Oblt. des Kriegsministeriums Eduard Brunner, “Unsere Radfahrerkompagnien,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1912): 1663-1669.

<sup>635</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 41.

<sup>636</sup> Heinrich Mast, “Die Aufklärungstätigkeit der österr.-ung. Kavallerie bei Kriegsbeginn 1914,” *ÖMZ* Sonderheft I (1965): 9-10.

<sup>637</sup> Fl., “Einfluß moderner Artilleriewirkung auf den Aufklärungs- und Sicherungsdienst,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1914): 621-635.

could fire as much as five hundred rifles could shoot per minute.<sup>638</sup> Artillery officers thus realized the larger significance that artillery would take in future wars.<sup>639</sup>

Statistics from the Russo-Japanese War, however, created doubt among some infantry officers concerning the impact of field guns in the next conflict. One officer published a chart indicating the declining effect of artillery on the battlefield. In 1870-1871 French troops had suffered 25% dead and wounded from cannon fire, 70% from rifles, and 5% from *blanke Waffe*. In 1904-1905 Japanese losses from artillery amounted to only 13.09%, whereas rifles had inflicted 83.15% casualties and *blanke Waffe* 3.76%.<sup>640</sup> Captain Ignaz Rodić agreed while printing his own numbers for the Russo-Japanese War: less than 8% losses from artillery, over 90% from rifle fire, and less than 1% from *blanke Waffe*. To emphasize the decreasing influence of field guns, Rodić also provided statistics to show that the Russians and Japanese used far more artillery in 1904-1905 than the French and Germans in 1870-1871, and thus the number of rounds in the latter war surpassed the former by at least three to four times, though with much less effect.<sup>641</sup>

This assertion elicited a strong response not only from k.u.k. artillery officers but also a German general.<sup>642</sup> These writers issued rebuttals against Rodić's views by stating that mere

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<sup>638</sup> Major Franz Ruprecht, "Über moderne Artillerieverwendung," *ÖMZ* 1 (1905): 27, 178-179.

<sup>639</sup> Hauptmann Alois Kalteis, "Die Kräfte-Verhältnisse und die Schießausbildung der Feld-Artillerien der continentalen Großmächte," *ÖMZ* 1 (1901): 4; Hf., "Zur Feldartilleriefrage," *ÖMZ* 2 (1905): 875-877; Casey, "Die schmalspurigen Feldhaubitzen bei den Manövern in Südtirol," *ÖMZ* 1 (1906): 193-194; Oberst Ernst von Horsetzky, "Eindrücke vom Artillerieinformationskurse in Hajmáskér 1908," *ÖMZ* 1 (1909): 245-247; Oberleutnant Johann Hanika, "Ist die Artilleriefrage gelöst?" *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 533, 549; Fl., "Einfluß moderner Artilleriewirkung auf den Aufklärungs- und Sicherungsdienst," 621-635; Hauptmann Ludwig R. v. Eimannsberger, "Unsere Artillerietaktik," *ÖMZ* 2 (1914): 1021-1034; Oberst M. Gärtner, "Über Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Balkankriege 1912/13," *ÖMZ* 2 (1914): 1035-1061, 1185-1212.

<sup>640</sup> Dani, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern. Die Artillerie der I. japanischen Armee im Feldzug gegen Rußland," *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 642.

<sup>641</sup> Rodić, "Welchen Einfluß dürfte die Feldartillerie auf den Gefechtsverlauf in einem kommenden Kriege üben?" *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1530-1532.

<sup>642</sup> Rodić, "Über Feldartilleriewirkung. Eine Replik," 1685-1702, 1865-1876.



numbers did not provide adequate proof of success or failure in war. Rather tactical results determined the effectiveness of field guns, which had caused great loss of morale during the Russo-Japanese War while thwarting attacks and destroying defenses. This demoralizing impact of artillery resulted in both offensive and defensive troops becoming passive and incapable of achieving objectives.<sup>643</sup> Rapid firing field guns had annihilated whole columns of infantry within minutes.<sup>644</sup> Artillery officers attributed the smaller hit percentage of Russian and Japanese field guns to the difference in size and roughness of terrain between the French countryside and Korea as well as the greater use of cover and open order tactics in 1904-1905.<sup>645</sup> In addition, most officers concurred that the Russians and Japanese had failed to employ artillery for maximum effect.<sup>646</sup>

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, which gave a foretaste of World War I combat, confirmed Habsburg officers' belief in the increasing impact of field guns on war. The *Kriegsschule* report on the lessons of the Balkan Wars devoted six out of ten pages to artillery while concluding that field guns had more material and psychological effect than before.<sup>647</sup> In the same manner the author of an *ÖMZ* article on these wars claimed greater damage both in numbers and morale for artillery against infantry. This writer even asserted that field guns had

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<sup>643</sup> Oberleutnant Anton Schiebl, "Der artilleristische Standpunkt," *ÖMZ* 1 (1911): 1269-1272.

<sup>644</sup> Casey, "Die schmalspurigen Feldhaubitzen bei den Manövern in Südtirol," 193-194.

<sup>645</sup> Hauptmann Theodor Baeck, "Über Feldartilleriewirkung. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Einschätzung auf Grund der Ergebnisse des russisch-japanischen Krieges," *ÖMZ* 1 (1911): 832-844.

<sup>646</sup> Baeck, "Über Feldartilleriewirkung. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Einschätzung auf Grund der Ergebnisse des russisch-japanischen Krieges," 840-841; Franz, "Vorträge. Episoden und Eindrücke aus dem mandschurischen Feldzuge auf japanischer Seite," 450; Hoen, "Vorträge. Der russisch-japanische Krieg," 680; Hoen, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg," 162-163.

<sup>647</sup> K.u.k. KS Res. Nr. 594 Beiliegend wird eine Sammlung von Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen, die während des Balkankrieges von Mitkämpfern und Augenzeugen gemacht wurden, zur Verwertung ausgegeben. Wien, am 10. November 1913, KA Militärschulen, Karton Nr. 43 Kriegsschulakten 1886/1914, Mobilisierungsplan, Befehle für die Lehrer (aus dem Nachlass Theodor Körner), 1-10.

proven vital for frontal assaults, and therefore victory, and that artillery had more material and psychological impact than infantry fire.<sup>648</sup>

Yet, despite all the indications from the Russo-Japanese War and the Balkan Wars, Conrad, chief of the general staff and the most important man in the Habsburg military, continued to focus on infantry as capable of gaining victory through assaults without artillery support. Even though Conrad devoted a large section of his tactical study to artillery and the role of field guns in achieving fire superiority, the 1911 infantry regulations, largely a product of the chief of the general staff's ideas, insisted on the independence of foot troops: "The infantry is the main arm. Able to fight at long range or at close quarters, in defence or in attack, the infantry can use its weapons with success against any enemy, in every type of terrain, by day as well as by night. It decides battles: even without support from other arms and against a numerically superior enemy it is capable of attaining the laurels of victory, if only it has trust in itself and has the will to fight."<sup>649</sup> Conrad and the rest of the k.u.k. high command feared too much reliance on artillery would harm the will to attack.<sup>650</sup> Under the influence of this erroneous belief, the Habsburg army suffered catastrophic losses in the early campaigns of the Great War.

The greatest problem for the k.u.k. artillery remained the same as in previous decades: numerical inferiority. In comparison with the rest of the primary continental military powers of Europe, Austria-Hungary lagged far behind. According to an 1899 *ÖMZ* article, the Habsburg army possessed 43 field pieces per division. Germany had 78, France 63, Russia 56, and even

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<sup>648</sup> Gärtner, "Über Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Balkankriege 1912/13," 1035, 1038, 1061, 1209.

<sup>649</sup> *Exerzierreglement für die k.u.k. Fußtruppen* (Wien: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1911), 1.

<sup>650</sup> Erich Gabriel, "Die wichtigsten Waffen der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee 1918," *ÖMZ* 6 (1968): 436.

Italy surpassed the k.u.k. artillery with 48 guns.<sup>651</sup> By 1911 the ratio had worsened as Austria-Hungary had only 6 cannon per division for every 8 in Russia, 9 in Serbia, and 12 in Germany.<sup>652</sup>

Not only did the Austro-Hungarian artillery suffer from inferior numbers but also from deficient quality. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Habsburg army still used the steel-bronze Uchatius cannon from 1875. This weapon weighed more yet shot rounds half the weight of Germany's Krupp 1893 model while having a maximum range over 1000 meters less.<sup>653</sup> The French M. 97 could fire 18 rounds per minute with 300 pieces of shrapnel per round or 5400 pieces altogether, the equivalent of the fire from 386 rifles. The German M. 96 shot 10 rounds per minute with 300 shrapnel pieces or 3000 total, equal to 214 rifles. The k.u.k. M. 75 could shoot only 6 times per minute with 173 to 250 pieces of shrapnel or 1038 to 1500 altogether, as much as 74 to 107 rifles. At maximum output the Habsburg weapon barely shot more than the Russian and Italian field guns, which shot roughly 1400 pieces of shrapnel per minute, corresponding to 100 rifles. The artillery officer who published these statistics estimated that in overall performance and quality the German cannon surpassed the k.u.k. pieces by 120%, and the Russians outperformed the Uchatius weapons by 100%. The Italians exceeded the Austro-Hungarian cannon by 25%, and the most modern field guns displayed 300 to 400% greater ability.<sup>654</sup>

Therefore, a universal call for new and more field guns arose from the Habsburg artillery officer corps. Reluctantly admitting that the Uchatius pieces no longer met the requirements of modern warfare, these men printed analyses of various weapons, especially howitzers, and how

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<sup>651</sup> Kalteis, "Die Kräfte-Verhältnisse und die Schießausbildung der Feld-Artillerien der continentalen Großmächte," 8.

<sup>652</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkrieg*, 42.

<sup>653</sup> Oberstlieutenant Johann Witsch, "Das zukünftige Feldgeschütz und die Schnellfeuer-Kanonen," *O.* 52 (1896): 374.

<sup>654</sup> Ruprecht, "Über moderne Artillerieverwendung," 28-29.

to use new cannon with greatest benefit on future battlefields.<sup>655</sup> The k.u.k. high command set up a commission in 1896 to upgrade the M. 75 as well as construct new artillery weapons. Representatives from the technical military committees, the Vienna Arsenal, and the Blumauer powder factory met under the presidency of the inspector general of the artillery.<sup>656</sup> Obviously, with the presence of members of the Arsenal and the Blumauer factory, the commission did not even consider foreign suppliers, such as Krupp. In order to gain favor with Austro-Hungarian politicians and public opinion, necessary to obtain sufficient funding for expensive cannon, the Habsburg military looked to businesses within the empire to manufacture new artillery.<sup>657</sup> This method, however, allowed only halting progress because of the political unrest within the empire, which brought parliament to a halt from 1897 to 1902. Therefore, the k.u.k. army could not renew the ten-year military agreement between the two parts of the Dual Monarchy that should have happened in 1899 nor could any progress take place in the artillery question until the unrest had subsided.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Witsch, "Das zukünftige Feldgeschütz und die Schnellfeuer-Kanonen," 395; "Die mobile Belagerungs-Artillerie der europäischen Militärstaaten," *ÖMZ* 4 (1897): 176-184; S., "Die Organisation der Feld-Artillerie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1902): 189-191; A.N.O., "Anfangsgeschwindigkeit. Ein Beitrag zur Feldgeschützfrage," *ÖMZ* 1 (1902): 223; Major Adolf Weigner, "Vom Feldgeschütz," *ÖMZ* 1 (1903): 58-74; -i-, "Die Feldgeschützfrage," *ÖMZ* 1 (1904): 131-141; Ruprecht, "Über moderne Artillerieverwendung," 26-44, 178-194; Hf., 871-883; "Zur Reorganisation der Feldartillerie," *O.* 72 (1906): 33-49; Artillerieingenieur Kühn, "Leichte Feldhaubitzer," *ÖMZ* 1 (1907): 78-99, 280-290; Hauptmann Adler, "Über die Zugehörigkeit der Belagerungshaubitzendivisionen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1907): 1023-1032; Hauptmann des Generalstabskorps Paul Winterstein, "Über Führung und Ausbildung der Feldartillerie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 228; A.B.C., "Mehr Haubitzen!" *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1931-1935; Hanika, "Ist die Artilleriefrage gelöst?" 531-554, 731-748; Hauptmann Moriz Mansch, "Betrachtungen über Einstellung schwerer Geschütze in der Feldartillerie," *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1235-1250; Oberstleutnant Ludwig Sündermann, "Über Artillerieverwendung," *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 33-35.

<sup>656</sup> -i-, "Die Feldgeschützfrage," 131.

<sup>657</sup> "Zur Reorganisation der Feldartillerie," 33.

<sup>658</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 129-136.

Although the commission quickly approved upgrades to the M. 75, which became the M. 96, the procurement of new weaponry did not come until much later.<sup>659</sup> In 1908 the k.u.k. artillery had still not completed the last stage of procuring new guns, and only by 1909, thirteen years after the commission began, had all regiments finally received and trained with the new M. 5, a product of four years earlier.<sup>660</sup> With these new cannon, the Habsburg artillery now equalled the Germans and French with 144 guns per corps and surpassed the Russians' 120 and the Italians' 108.<sup>661</sup> Although these numbers showed great progress for the Austro-Hungarian army, statistics for the total amount of artillery and guns per division just before the First World War (42 for Austria-Hungary, 48 for Russian, and 54 for Germany) revealed the vast inferiority that still existed for the Habsburg military.<sup>662</sup> By 1913 Germany had raised the number of cannon per corps to 160 and France to 184. For every 1000 men Germany had 6.5 guns, Great Britain 6.3, France 5, Italy 4, Austria-Hungary 3.8-4, and Russia 3.75. Even Rumania had more cannon per 1000 soldiers than the Habsburg army.<sup>663</sup> Also the k.u.k. artillery did not supply each field piece with as much ammunition as the other powers and thus negated any advantages that came from equal or superior numbers per corps.<sup>664</sup>

Therefore, as in the case of infantry, Habsburg artillery officers attempted to compensate for inferior numbers in other ways. Many k.u.k. writers called for more training as well as the

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<sup>659</sup> -i-, "Die Feldgeschützfrage," 131-132.

<sup>660</sup> "Neuerungen im eigenen Heerwesen. Die Reorganisation der Feld- und Gebirgsartillerie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 1083; "Neuerungen im Heerwesen im Sommerhalbjahr 1909," *ÖMZ* 2 (1909): 1815.

<sup>661</sup> Oberstleutnant Alois Vollgruber, "Die Geschützzahl und die taktische Artilleriereserve," *ÖMZ* 2 (1913): 1847.

<sup>662</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 174.

<sup>663</sup> Evidenzbureau des Generalstabes. A. Nr. 98 Res. Übersicht der bei den Divisionen (Korps) fremder Armeen organisationsgemäßen DOTIERUNG mit ARTILLERIE. 30 Sept. 1913, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 739, Vorträge und Referate 1910-1914.

<sup>664</sup> Vollgruber, "Die Geschützzahl und die taktische Artilleriereserve," 1858.

ever present demand for higher morale and the will for victory for every individual soldier.<sup>665</sup>

The new artillery regulations that came with the issuing of the new weapons also stressed the need for more practical training.<sup>666</sup> Tactically artillery officers advocated the support of infantry to gain fire superiority and to enable assaults as the highest task of field guns.<sup>667</sup> Yet despite the recognition of the need for cooperation between infantry and artillery in the regulations, practical application on the exercise field failed to instill this idea in the troops.<sup>668</sup> For the Habsburg military the *Drang nach vorwärts* applied just as much to artillery as to infantry. These ideas fit perfectly with the tactical views of Conrad, the k.u.k. infantry regulations of 1911, and the regulations of every other European power.<sup>669</sup>

Ideas of compensating for inferior numbers with more training resulting in greater precision shooting could have worked for a different army. The two-year service of Austria-Hungary, however, did not allow the necessary time to train recruits to reach a level surpassing

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<sup>665</sup> S., "Artillerie im Infanteriefeuer," *ÖMZ* 4 (1900): 97-146; Kalteis, "Die Kräfte-Verhältnisse und die Schießausbildung der Feld-Artillerien der continentalen Großmächte," 5, 19; Ruprecht, "Über moderne Artillerieverwendung," 194; Hauptmann Wilhelm Knobloch, "Schweres Mörserfeuer," *ÖMZ* 2 (1908): 1415; Horsetzky, "Eindrücke vom Artillerieinformationskurse in Hajmáskér 1908," 245-252; Kommando der Schießschulabteilung der Feldartillerie, "Erwiderung auf 'Eindrücke vom Artillerieinformationskurse in Hajmáskér 1908'," *ÖMZ* 1 (1909): 771; Leutnant Viktor Cajanek, "Erfahrungen des russisch-japanischen Krieges für die Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Feldkriege," *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1059-1071; Hauptmann Max Kralupper, "Die Ausbildung unserer Festungsartillerie für den Angriffskrieg," *ÖMZ* 1 (1913): 465; Eimannsberger, "Unsere Artillerietaktik," 1033-1034.

<sup>666</sup> "Neuerungen im Heerwesen im Sommerhalbjahr 1909," 1816-1817.

<sup>667</sup> Knobloch, "Die Artillerie im Kampfe gestern und heute," *O.* 68 (1904): 308-309; Dani, "Der russisch-japanische Krieg: Urteile und Beobachtungen von Mitkämpfern. Die Artillerie der I. japanischen Armee im Feldzug gegen Rußland," 636-637; Winterstein, "Über Führung und Ausbildung der Feldartillerie," 226; A.B.C., "Mehr Haubitzen!" 1935; Cajanek, "Erfahrungen des russisch-japanischen Krieges für die Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Feldkriege," 1061-1061; Mansch, "Betrachtungen über Einstellung schwerer Geschütze in der Feldartillerie," 1245; Sündermann, "Über Artillerieverwendung," 33; Oberstleutnant Karl Hroch, "Disponierung der Artillerie im Gefecht," *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 594-597; Oberleutnant Geza Lajtos von Szentmaria, "Unterstützung des Infanterieangriffes durch Artillerie, bei besonderer Berücksichtigung der Tätigkeit der Artillerie," *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 599-617; Casey, "Zur Disposition der Artillerie im Gefechte," *ÖMZ* 1 (1913): 115; Major Lottspeich, "Zur Disposition der Artillerie im Gefechte," *ÖMZ* 2 (1913): 1677; Eimannsberger, "Unsere Artillerietaktik," 1023-1029; Gärtner, "Über Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Balkankriege 1912/13," 1061.

<sup>668</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 54-55.

<sup>669</sup> Vollgruber, "Die Geschützzahl und die taktische Artilleriereserve," 1848.

all the other militaries of Europe. As one anonymous author wrote in the *ÖMZ*, “The previous conduct of our neighbors for war gives us no right to this arrogant assumption.”<sup>670</sup> In addition, the Habsburg army did not provide enough ammunition and time for artillery shooting practice to become superior to other armies.<sup>671</sup> Each battery in the k.u.k. army fired only 208 shots per year in comparison with 464 in Germany, 390 in France, 366 in Italy, and 480 in Russia.<sup>672</sup> Finally, the decision to pursue offensive tactics at all costs, even to the point of “exposing oneself recklessly,” could never compensate for numerical inferiority in the face of well-trained opponents.<sup>673</sup> As in the case of infantry, though, the Austro-Hungarian high command desperately wanted to keep pace with the rest of Europe, and thus refused to admit inferiority.<sup>674</sup> Once again, the combination of *Drang nach vorwärts* with the desire to maintain the appearance of a great power did not coincide with the weak military reality of the Habsburg empire.

As always, finances remained decisive for the k.u.k. military in procurement decisions. New artillery cost enormous sums of money. In 1902, the Habsburg army received 38,000,000 Kronen as a one-time extraordinary credit for new artillery weaponry and 15,000,000 in 1904. Yet in 1905 the war minister asked for and received an additional 50,000,000 Kronen as another one-time extraordinary credit and proposed 119,000,000 more for the future.<sup>675</sup> The Austro-

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<sup>670</sup> S., “Die Organisation der Feld-Artillerie,” 222.

<sup>671</sup> S., “Artillerie im Infanteriefeuer,” 145; Winterstein, “Über Führung und Ausbildung der Feldartillerie,” 228; Cajanek, “Erfahrungen des russisch-japanischen Krieges für die Verwendung der Feldartillerie im Feldkriege,” 1071; Kralupper, “Die Ausbildung unserer Festungsartillerie für den Angriffskrieg,” 465.

<sup>672</sup> Kalteis, “Die Kräfte-Verhältnisse und die Schießausbildung der Feld-Artillerien der continentalen Großmächte,” 18.

<sup>673</sup> Eimannsberger, “Unsere Artillerietaktik,” 1034.

<sup>674</sup> Eimannsberger, “Unsere Artillerietaktik,” 1021.

<sup>675</sup> Summar über das Gesamterfordernis des Heeres für das Jahr 1905. Beilage D. Vorlage des gemeinsamen Kriegsministeriums, A. Heer, an die Delegation des hohen Reichsrates, betreffend das Ansuchen um die Bewilligung des Teilbetrages von 50,000.000 K als einmaliges ausserordentliches Erfordernis zur Fortsetzung der Beschaffung des neuen Feldartilleriematerials. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 807, Budget-Entwürfe. In 1892 Austria-Hungary adopted the gold standard and set the value of the Krone, the new currency, as 2 Kronen for 1 florin.

Hungarian army continued to receive extraordinary grants for artillery: 20,000,000 Kronen in 1906, 30,000,000 in 1907, 15,000,000 in 1908 and again in 1909, 8,000,000 in 1910, and 4,000,000 in 1911 for a total of 195,000,000 Kronen over the ten years since 1902.<sup>676</sup>

Even with this large sum, though, the k.u.k. high command considered another series of large extraordinary credits necessary for the further development of the artillery branch. With the finalization of a new military law for the Dual Monarchy in 1912, the first since 1889, and the ensuing rise in the recruitment allotment, Habsburg military leaders requested an extraordinary credit of 250,000,000 Kronen at a rate of 41,000,000 per year over the next six years. Of the 250,000,000, the chief of the general staff GdI Blasius Schemua projected 170-185,000,000 for cannon, howitzers, and mortars, whereas the war minister FML Baron Moritz Auffenberg von Komarów forecast 198,000,000 for more divisions and especially ammunition per cannon.<sup>677</sup>

Certainly the rapid pace of technological innovation precipitated the need for such vast amounts of money for new guns. The backward state of the k.u.k. artillery also necessitated an upgrade. Even though the Habsburg artillery had received new weapons by 1909, just three years earlier, some antique guns still saw use. Fifty-one year old M.61s defended permanent fortifications. Thirteen-year old M.99s as well as two other models served in the mountain

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<sup>676</sup> Summar über das Gesamt-Erfordernis des stehenden Heeres für das Jahr 1912. Beilage F. Vorlage des Kriegsministeriums, A. Heer, an die Delegation des hohen Reichsrates, betreffend das Ansuchen um die Bewilligung des Teilbetrages von 4,000.000 K als einmaliges ausserordentliches Erfordernis zur Fortsetzung der Beschaffung des neuen Feldartilleriematerials. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 806, Budget-Enwürfe.

<sup>677</sup> Zusammensetzung des ausserordentlichen Kredites von 250 Mill. Kr. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite; Spezialkredit 1912 Vorlage des Kriegsministeriums, Erfordernis für die Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial und zur Durchführung fortifikatorischer Maßnahmen. 250 Millionen Kredit. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.



artillery.<sup>678</sup> Even the relatively new M.5s had overly heavy Uchatius steel-bronze barrels with short range.<sup>679</sup> In addition, by the time all the troops would receive the new weapons six years later, the M.5s would have become outdated thirteen-year old artillery, and the army would need more modern guns. The other more recent models would suffer similar fates. Understandably, the k.u.k. high command tried to render such a large expense palatable to the finance ministers and the parliamentary delegates by stretching the funding over six years. This plan, however, contained the significant flaw of prolonging procurement. Thus not only did the Austro-Hungarian army ensure that some weapons would face obsolescence almost before their date of issue but also most of the troops would never receive artillery that met the requirements of modern warfare before the outbreak of World War I.

### **Financial Imprudence: Permanent Fortifications**

The Habsburg high command's insistence on spending money in the wrong areas only aggravated the problem of procuring new artillery quickly. As in previous decades, permanent fortresses comprised a major part of the k.u.k. budget. From 1894 to 1899, the Austro-Hungarian army spent 31,975,000 Kronen (18,550,000 on fortresses themselves and 13,425,000 on arming fortifications). During the next six years another 20,860,000 (6,860,000 for fortresses and 14,000,000 for arming) went to *Befestigung*. At the end of 1904, the war ministry desired an additional 49,500,000, though requesting only 16,500,000. The Galician fortresses of Krakau and Przemyśl absorbed more than half of these sums.<sup>680</sup> The high command deemed

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<sup>678</sup> Spezialkredit 1912 Vorlage des Kriegsministeriums, Erfordernis für die Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial und zur Durchführung fortifikatorischer Maßnahmen. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.

<sup>679</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 174.

<sup>680</sup> Walter Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 408-409.

these amounts very insufficient, however, because of the need to upgrade old fortifications to withstand modern siege artillery. In 1908 Conrad estimated a total of 450,000,000 Kronen necessary to render the borders of the Habsburg Empire defensible.<sup>681</sup> In 1911 the war ministry calculated another 36,300,000 for permanent fortresses.<sup>682</sup> Of the 250,000,000 extraordinary credit request of 1912, the war minister bookmarked 27,000,000 for permanent fortresses while the chief of the general staff projected 55,000,000.<sup>683</sup> More *Befestigung* also required more fortress artillery.<sup>684</sup> Instead of placing these guns in permanent fortifications that might or might not see action in the next war, the Habsburg high command could have deployed more artillery in the army and thus helped to compensate for the k.u.k. deficiency in field weaponry.

According to the calculations of 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian historian Walter Wagner, the Austro-Hungarian army spent 178,000,000 on *Befestigung* from 1868 to 1912. This figure does not include the millions that the k.u.k. high command requested but which the Delegations cut back. Although, as Wagner points out, this number represented merely a little over 1% of all military expenditures, a comparison with figures for weaponry procurement presents a different point of view. From 1868 to 1876 arming the Habsburg army with Werndl breechloading rifles cost 69,180,000, while adapting the Werndls for better ammunition and procuring an ammunition reserve by 1886 cost another 16,290,000. The Austro-Hungarian military spent 144,550,000 on Mannlicher repeating rifles by 1905 for a total of 229,970,000. Similarly with artillery expenditures, the k.u.k. high command consumed 31,250,000 on the M.75 Uchatius

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<sup>681</sup> Denkschrift 1908: 8. Abtheilung Zu int. res. No. 106/mob. von 1908, Beitrag zur Denkschrift für das Jahr 1908. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 742, Denkschriften des Chef des Generalstabes 1906-1914.

<sup>682</sup> 1911 Budget: VII Permanente Befestigungen. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.

<sup>683</sup> Spezialkredit 1912 Vorlage des Kriegsministeriums, Erfordernis für die Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial und zur Durchführung fortifikatorischer Maßnahmen. 250 Millionen Kredit. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.

<sup>684</sup> "Neuerungen im Heerwesen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1912): 1148-1149.

steel-bronze cannon, 34,780,000 for the acquisition of smokeless powder, and 193,810,000 for new weaponry from 1899 to 1912, altogether 259,840,000.<sup>685</sup> As 147,560,000 went to artillery costs between 1910 and 1912, the k.u.k. army spent more on permanent fortresses up to 1910 than modern artillery. Even so, Conrad complained about the extremely small budgetary means devoted to fortresses, especially in comparison to Italy.<sup>686</sup> Minister of War Auffenberg also bemoaned the insufficient spending on permanent fortifications, which resulted in too much reliance on aged fortresses such as Przemyśl.<sup>687</sup> Clearly *Befestigung* ranked high among the military priorities of the Habsburg Empire and rivalled the acquisition of new rifles and cannon, despite the obvious lesson from 1866 that an army with inferior weapons cannot win a war regardless of how many permanent fortresses may exist.

Yet the Austro-Hungarian officer corps continued to support the cordon system of permanent fortifications throughout the empire as a means of defending the borders during a multi-front war and thus compensate for inferior numbers of soldiers. Though some military writers observed that the French fortresses had failed to thwart Prussian forces in 1870-1871, hardly anyone called for the abandonment of costly fortification upgrades. Instead of logically concluding that the immense power of modern artillery and the ability of armies to bypass permanent fortifications had rendered fortresses obsolete, k.u.k. officers merely stated the need to change the style of *Befestigung* and make walls and redoubts stronger.<sup>688</sup> Only the engineer

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<sup>685</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 589.

<sup>686</sup> FML Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit 1906-1918* (Wien: Rikola Verlag, 1921), 1: 424.

<sup>687</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkrieg*, 44-45.

<sup>688</sup> F., "Gedanken über Festungen, Festungskrieg und die Feuertaktik in demselben," *ÖMZ* 4 (1896): 196-209; Major Karl Kuk, "Die Vertheidigungsfronten einer Festung," *O.* 54 (1897): 101-134; Oberst M. Magdalenitsch, "Die Staatenvertheidigung und die Fortification am Endes des XIX Jahrhunderts," *ÖMZ* 1 (1899): 97-152; Oberlieutenant Max von Schönowsky, "Der Grenzschutz," *ÖMZ* 2 (1901): 59-73; "Die Grundzüge des zukünftigen Landesbefestigungssystem in Deutschland," *ÖMZ* 4 (1901): 80-85; Hauptmann August Zell, "Folgerungen aus den Kriegen in Südafrika und Ostasien für den Angriff auf Befestigungen," *ÖMZ* 2 (1907): 1565-1590; Oberleutnant

general inspector FML Baron Ernst von Leithner opposed pouring more money into the permanent fortifications of Galicia. Leithner based this judgment, however, on the open nature of the land, which fortresses could not control, rather than the inability of antiquated permanent fortifications to resist modern artillery.<sup>689</sup>

Habsburg military authors also stressed the increasing importance of field fortifications. Conrad realized that the more expensive and rapidly aging permanent fortresses became, the greater significance provisory fortifications held.<sup>690</sup> The strength of the Boer and Russian defensive positions in the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War supported this idea. While Austro-Hungarian officers showed the ability to learn lessons from the most recent conflicts, *ÖMZ* articles centered on the advantages of field fortifications for the offensive and how to attack fortified positions.<sup>691</sup> The spade, rather than hindering the offensive spirit, increased morale and prepared the victory that the rifle won.<sup>692</sup> Obviously, even the engineer and pionier troops had absorbed the *Drang nach vorwärts* concept of Conradian tactics as well as the Nietzschean supremacy of the will, the *Wille zur Siegre*. As one author wrote, “We have seen that

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Johann Hanika, “Neuerungen in der permanenten Fortifikation. Ein Vorschlag,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 229-260; Major Graf Lavaulx, “Die Wirtschaftsfrage in der Befestigung,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1910): 1549-1568.

<sup>689</sup> Franz Forstner, *Przemysl: Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1987), 57-58.

<sup>690</sup> K.u.k. Chef des Generalstabes. Alleruntertänigster Vortrag. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 742, Denkschriften des Chef des Generalstabes 1906-1914.

<sup>691</sup> Pionnier-Hauptmann Rudolf Seissl, “Über Befestigung der Schlacht- und Gefechtsfelder,” *ÖMZ* 4 (1897): 127-146; Kuk, “Die Vertheidigungsfronten einer Festung,” 101-134; “Die Grundzüge des zukünftigen Landesbefestigungssystem in Deutschland,” 80-85; Oberst Ernst Freiherr von Leithner, “Ein Plevna von einst und jetzt,” *O.* 65 (1902): 329-346; R.S., “Einfluß der modernen Feuerwaffen auf die flüchtigen Befestigungsanlagen der Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1906): 1576-1582; Hauptmann Hans Schwalb, “Moderne Schlachtfeldbefestigung im Lichte russisch-japanische Kriegserfahrungen,” *O.* 72 (1906): 277-318; Zell, “Folgerungen aus den Kriegen in Südafrika und Ostasien für den Angriff auf Befestigungen,” 1565-1590; “Anhaltspunkte für die Durchführung von Feldbefestigungen bei der Infanterie,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1908): 995-1016; Lavaulx, “Die Wirtschaftsfrage in der Befestigung,” 1549-1568; Hauptmann Freiherr von Majneri-Kampen, “Widerstandsdauer einer Sperre,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1912): 1181-1186; Hauptmann Ludwig Berger, “Beitrag zur Taktik des Festungskrieges,” *ÖMZ* 2 (1913): 1321-1343.

<sup>692</sup> Leithner, “Ein Plevna von einst und jetzt,” 346; “Anhaltspunkte für die Durchführung von Feldbefestigungen bei der Infanterie,” 1012-1013.

victory does not belong to the one who contents himself with pure repelling in strong positions, but to the one who pursues a positive goal through the offensive with the strong will to victory.”<sup>693</sup>

During the decade before the First World War, the k.u.k. military spent a large quantity on coastal fortifications. The army high command deemed this expenditure necessary because of the greatly expanded Habsburg navy. The fleet needed fortified ports for protection while in dock.<sup>694</sup> Even Conrad, the foremost proponent of offensive warfare, supported the idea of upgrading coastal fortresses because of his successful amphibious assault on the important port of Pola during maneuvers.<sup>695</sup> Therefore, the first proposal for coastal fortifications amounted to 112,500,000 Kronen and rose to the outrageous number of 300-350,000,000. Realizing that the Delegations would never grant such an enormous amount, the war minister and the chief of the general staff reduced the request to fit the minimal program of 155,000,000 for all fortifications.<sup>696</sup>

### **Financial Imprudence: the Navy**

The navy itself comprised an immense source of spending. Between 1873 and 1912, the Austro-Hungarian military consumed 818,370,000 on ship building, with 606,910,000 between 1905 and 1912.<sup>697</sup> The former amount represented more than the Habsburg army spent on rifles, smokeless powder, artillery, and permanent fortifications combined between the Austro-Prussian War and World War I. The naval budget had almost tripled from 56,080,000 Kronen in 1904 to

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<sup>693</sup> Schwalb, “Moderne Schlachtfeldbefestigung im Lichte russisch-japanische Kriegserfahrungen,” 318.

<sup>694</sup> Berger, “Küstenbefestigung,” *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 427-454.

<sup>695</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 65.

<sup>696</sup> Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 411-414.

<sup>697</sup> Wagner, “Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung,” 589.

170,200,000 in 1912.<sup>698</sup> Yet the chief of the navy, Vice-admiral Count Rudolf Montecuccoli degli Erri, protested the rejection of his budget proposal during the ministerial meeting on 8-9 July 1912.<sup>699</sup> Despite this temporary setback, the navy continued to receive vast credits. Conrad expressed his surprise and complained to the emperor in 1913 and 1914 that the navy obtained 426,000,000 Kronen, more than the 400,000,000 the general staff chief wanted for the ground forces which would decide the future of the monarchy.<sup>700</sup>

The enormous expenditure on the k.u.k. fleet appeared justifiable to the Austro-Hungarian high command, though, for several reasons. Even though three 20,000 ton battleships cost 100,000,000 Kronen each, or more than the Habsburg army spent on rifles or artillery during the previous forty years, the naval section of the war ministry nevertheless tried to rationalize such outlays. The primary cause for naval spending resulted from the Austro-Hungarian fear of falling too far behind the other European states. World powers ruled the sea. Germany and Russia had built strong fleets in a short time to take part in the rampant imperialism of the decades before the First World War. The Habsburg empire needed to do the same to prove itself a world power.<sup>701</sup> Even Italy, Austria-Hungary's main rival for control of the Adriatic Sea, where the only Habsburg ports existed, had embarked on a major push for naval funding. The Italian navy received a grant of 566,600,000 lire for use from 1912 to 1918.<sup>702</sup> Montecuccoli, the

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<sup>698</sup> Wagner, "Die k.(u.)k. Armee - Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," 591.

<sup>699</sup> Besondere Kredite 250 Mill. Ministerkonferenzen Juli 1912. K.u.k. Chef des Generalstabes. Bericht über den Verlauf des gemeinsamen Ministerrates am 8 und 9 Juli 1912. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.

<sup>700</sup> K.u.k. Chef des Generalstabes. Rapport bei Sr. Majestät, Schönbrunn 15 Oktober 1913, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 739, Vorträge und Referate 1910-1914; Rapport bei Sr. Majestät am 4/6 1914, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 739, Vorträge und Referate 1910-1914.

<sup>701</sup> LSchK.v.B., "Kriegsschiffstypen und ihre Anwendung auf unsere Verhältnisse," *ÖMZ* 1 (1909): 607-624.

<sup>702</sup> Besondere Kredite 250 Mill. Ministerkonferenzen Juli 1912. K.u.k. Militärattaché in Rom. Abschrift. Nr. 22/3 Neuer 60 Millionen Kredit für das Heer und 21 ½ Millionen für die Kriegsmarine. 1. Juni 1912. KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 808, Budget, Besondere Kredite.

last of the k.u.k. admirals who had fought at the victorious battle of Lissa in 1866, strongly believed the Austro-Hungarian navy must match Italy's fleet in order to compete for domination in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas.<sup>703</sup> The rest of the Habsburg high command, including Conrad and Franz Ferdinand, also desired a powerful fleet to raise the Dual Monarchy's position among the other great European powers.<sup>704</sup>

Not only did the k.u.k. military want to protect the imperial coast but also project Habsburg power throughout the world and thus reach a prominent position as a world power. A strong navy with attack capabilities presented the only solution for this goal, which coincided perfectly with the offensive mindset of Austro-Hungarian military doctrine. All the other powers had already gained overseas acquisitions. The Habsburg Empire could not remain behind. The geographical position and meager coastline of imperial lands made no difference. In addition, a big fleet would stimulate industry and business. As the k.u.k. navy cost Austro-Hungarian citizens a mere 3.5 Kronen per head in comparison to 4 Kronen in Japan, 6.8 in Italy, 8.5 in Germany, 10.6 in France, and 23.6 in Great Britain, the people of the Habsburg empire could afford an increase in naval expenditures, according to one Dual Monarchy officer. The only requirement for success consisted of an impulse from the will of the people.<sup>705</sup>

### **Parliamentary Favor**

The will of the people, according to newspapers in both Vienna and Budapest, however, did not accord with the will of the military, even if the parliamentary voices voted for the

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<sup>703</sup> Lothar Höbelt, "Die Marine" in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. 5 *Die Bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 716-718.

<sup>704</sup> Kronenbitter, "*Krieg im Frieden.*" 183-184.

<sup>705</sup> Linienschiffsleutnant Alfred Dietrich Edlen von Sachsenfels, "Die Bedeutung einer Flotte," *ÖMZ* 2 (1914): 1063-1079.

granting of large sums for the k.u.k. army and navy.<sup>706</sup> In 1904, the year that debates took place about the first major increase in naval expenditures, many representatives in the Delegations who opposed these grants, and even some of those who approved funding for the military, also voiced the concerns of the people about the increasing tax burden for military expenditures.<sup>707</sup> These same concerns entered the 1911 debates over the extraordinary budget request for 1912.<sup>708</sup> Among certain parts of the populace, though, the desire for a strong navy grew more and more. The Austrian Navy League, founded in 1904 on the model of the popular German Navy League, contained 4389 members with twenty-five local chapters in large cities by 1910 and 44,617 by 1914.<sup>709</sup> This organization enjoyed the sponsorship of Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Habsburg throne, as well as other prominent political figures and industrialists who wanted a larger navy to stimulate business and industry.<sup>710</sup> In addition, the Austrian Navy League canvassed for Dreadnoughts primarily to create a powerful naval strike force for the Habsburg Empire.<sup>711</sup> As the League's monthly paper, *Die Flagge*, expressed the organization's viewpoint, "History teaches us that no nation can maintain its great power status in the long run without naval prestige, without sea power!"<sup>712</sup> This naval enthusiasm and desire for great power status through

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<sup>706</sup> "Die Delegationen," *Pester Lloyd*, 5. Februar 1911, Nr. 31, 6; "Wien, 4. Februar," *Neue Freie Presse*, 5. Februar 1911, Nr. 16688, 1.

<sup>707</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 3. Sitzung der 40. Session am 30. Mai 1904 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1904), 90, 4. Sitzung der 40. Session am 31. Mai 1904, 278, 298-302, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 380.

<sup>708</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1911), 459, 486, 504, 507-508, 510, 516, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 906, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 946.

<sup>709</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1994), 194; Milan N. Vego, *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy 1904-1914* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), 56.

<sup>710</sup> 28 25.09.1904. Verein zur Förderung der österreichischen Schifffahrt an Erzherz. F.F. betr. Vereins-gründung, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 208, Nichtprotokollierte Stücke 1898-1914.

<sup>711</sup> Vego, *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy 1904-1914*, 56.

<sup>712</sup> Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism*, 178.



a large navy infected parliamentary representatives as well as a growing number of the populace.<sup>713</sup>

The main issue for the delegates both in 1904 and 1911, however, centered on army and naval support for business and industry.<sup>714</sup> Representatives from the western half of the Dual Monarchy accused the Habsburg military, especially the navy, of giving too many contracts to Hungarian firms.<sup>715</sup> Delegates from Hungary supported the budget requests of the navy in particular because, even though the costs of producing ships within the Habsburg Empire rose 10% above foreign manufacture, the k.u.k. marine commandants always tried to purchase within the empire and had promised contracts for Hungarian industry.<sup>716</sup>

Some delegates also criticized the army for issues that did not involve economics. Certain Slavic representatives raised the usual complaints during the debates of 1904 and 1911 about favoritism for German and Hungarian-speakers in the army while addressing the language difficulties for soldiers of different ethnic backgrounds who could not communicate with their officers.<sup>717</sup> Other delegates brought up the need for better treatment of recruits and for pension

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<sup>713</sup> Kronenbitter, "Krieg im Frieden." 183.

<sup>714</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 3. Sitzung der 40. Session am 30. Mai 1904, 92-93, 94-98, 100-104, 109, 4. Sitzung der 40. Session am 31. Mai 1904, 286, 296, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 375-379; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 471-474, 478-484, 490, 493-496, 499-501, 505, 513, 11. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 627, 650-652, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 902-903, 908-909, 911-912, 917-918, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 941, 945, 956-960, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1105-1110, 1115, 1120.

<sup>715</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 373-375, 382; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 467, 488-489, 492, 496-498, 506, 512, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 910, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 941, 960.

<sup>716</sup> "Die Delegationen," *Pester Lloyd*, 5. Februar 1911, Nr. 31, 6; "Die Delegationen," *Pester Lloyd*, 14. Februar 1911, Nr. 38, 4; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 388; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 918.

<sup>717</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 3. Sitzung der 40. Session am 30. Mai 1904, 87, 118, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 375-377; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der*

reform as well as the elimination of superfluous officials.<sup>718</sup> The majority of these demands, however, came from delegates who approved the military budget requests and desired the k.u.k. high command to continue improvements in these areas in return for parliamentary favor towards army and navy funding. Although problems of pensioning and too much bureaucracy still existed in the Habsburg military, politicians did not find these issues of overwhelming importance in comparison with economic concerns.

Only a small number of representatives, including the Social Democrat Dr. Wilhelm Ellenbogen, objected to granting military requests for strategic or tactical reasons. Asserting the impossibility of rivaling any of the major naval powers that Austria-Hungary might face in a future war, such as Great Britain, France, or even Italy, these delegates declared that spending 400,000,000 Kronen for four Dreadnoughts would not render the Habsburg fleet the equal of any of these nations. Rather the k.u.k. navy would require four times the funding to give Austro-Hungarian ships enough offensive power to attack the way the naval command desired. In addition, sea battles, whether losses or victories, would never affect a war decisively for the Habsburg empire, a land power. Instead of building four Dreadnoughts, which would become obsolete by the time of launching, the k.u.k. navy should stay within the boundaries of financial responsibility by investing in smaller vessels, such as submarines, torpedo boats, and mine ships,

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*Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 477, 492, 11. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 631, 640, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 947-950, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1104-1105.

<sup>718</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 3. Sitzung der 40. Session am 30. Mai 1904, 94-95; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 507-508, 511, 517, 11. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 636-638, 642, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 903, 907, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 945, 954-955, 957-958, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 1104-1105, 1114, 1119-1121, 1124, 1141.

to defend the small coastline and few ports of Dalmatia. Also protecting Austria-Hungary's small merchant marine did not warrant the immense expense of producing modern battleships.<sup>719</sup>

The parliamentary delegates who supported the army and navy budget requests disagreed emphatically with these wise assessments. Echoing the ideas of the k.u.k. military, these representatives repeatedly argued during the debates of 1904 and 1911 that the Habsburg empire must maintain or restore its great power status. Only large credits would enable the army and navy to keep pace with the other powers, who continued to spend exorbitant amounts on arming, as well as remain a dependable ally, capable of helping Germany and waging campaigns without assistance. If Austria-Hungary chose to lag behind Germany, France, Russia, Italy, and Great Britain, and thus become a second rate power, Habsburg business and political interests would suffer greatly. Overseas business especially required a strong fleet for support. Therefore, not only did the army need enough funding to carry out offensive operations but also the navy demanded sufficient credits to build Dreadnoughts to attack enemy ships. Parliamentary speakers even brought up the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war and the importance of spirit and morale to compensate for inferiority in numbers and weaponry. Additionally, delegates appealed to their colleagues to vote for the military credits at least so that Austro-Hungarian soldiers, relatives and constituents of the representatives would not go to war with outdated weapons against vastly superior rifles and artillery.<sup>720</sup> Clearly, by voting for the military credits, the

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<sup>719</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 459-469, 474-476, 485-487, 489, 504-505, 508, 516, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 912.

<sup>720</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 3. Sitzung der 40. Session am 30. Mai 1904, 86, 102, 118, 4. Sitzung der 40. Session am 31. Mai 1904, 277-285, 296, 304, 306, 320-322, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 372-373, 375-377, 379, 386; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 456-457, 478-481, 499-504, 901-902, 906-909, 911-912, 917, 920, 11. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 625-626, 646-647, 652, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 901-902, 906-909, 911-912, 917, 920, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 945, 956, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1103, 1115-1118, 1122, 1128, 1130, 1133-1136.

majority of the parliamentary representatives approved the k.u.k. military's desire to retain great power status.

Major support for army and navy budget requests also stemmed from the economic benefits that delegates realized both for their voters and themselves. Whether representing industrial firms or making profits from private investments, these politicians both in 1904 and 1911 trusted the war ministers FZM Heinrich Baron von Pitreich, who served as minister of war from 1902 to 1906, and GdI Franz Baron Schönaich, who held the position from 1906-1911, as well as the naval commanders-in-chief Admiral Hermann von Spaun and Admiral Rudolf Count Montecuccoli to give army and navy contracts to Austro-Hungarian businesses.<sup>721</sup> Similar to the years of good relations between the army and the Delegations during the tenure of FZM Arthur Maximilian Count Bylandt-Rheidt in the 1880s, the representatives voiced confidence in the k.u.k. high command on several occasions, especially in comparison to the antagonism that war minister GdK Edmund Baron von Krieghammer had inspired.<sup>722</sup> As one delegate said, "If there is a question of military matters, the opinion of the experts stands far higher to me than the opinion of Dr. Ellenbogen."<sup>723</sup>

Yet these same military experts claimed that Austria-Hungary should spend hundreds of millions on a fleet that could never have a major influence on a future war rather than using the funding to procure modern artillery more quickly. Replacing outdated field guns certainly would

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<sup>721</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 4. Sitzung der 40. Session am 31. Mai 1904, 286, 5. Sitzung der 40. Session am 1. Juni 1904, 375-377, 388; *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 465, 471-474, 479, 493, 499, 513, 11. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 627, 12. Sitzung der 45. Session am 2. März 1911, 902, 912, 924, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 941, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1136.

<sup>722</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 10. Sitzung der 45. Session am 1. März 1911, 493, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 948, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1131, 1136.

<sup>723</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1115.

have rendered the k.u.k. army more battle ready than four Dreadnoughts that hardly left port during World War I. These experts also underscored the necessity of making all parts of the Habsburg military into offensive forces despite obvious inferiority in numbers and weaponry, both in the army and navy. Although the parliamentary delegates must share part of the blame for approving funding for unnecessary ships and permanent fortresses, the largest fault falls upon the Austro-Hungarian high command for judging the fleet and *Befestigung* worthy of such prominence in military spending. Thus, the claim that apologists for the Austro-Hungarian army such as Hugo Kerchnawe and Oskar Regele as well as historians such as C. A. Macartney make that parliamentary stinginess caused Habsburg military defeat does not explain the reality of the situation.<sup>724</sup> The Dual Monarchy's high command received sufficient funding from the Delegations. The procurement choices that military leaders made, however, displayed poor judgment in spending parliamentary grants.

### **Financial Imprudence: Tank Rejection**

A perfect example of poor judgment in budget expenditures arose from the *Motorgeschütz* of First Lieutenant Gunther Burstyn, an engineer in the k.u.k. railroad regiment. Burstyn had designed an armored car that had proven battle-worthy during the 1906 maneuvers, especially because of the ability to quickly flank the enemy.<sup>725</sup> Seeing the success of his motorized vehicle, Burstyn invented a model for a tank with the capability of swiftly traversing any terrain and obstacles. This vehicle would possess not only armor for resisting infantry fire and shrapnel but also a light *Schnellfeuer* cannon to knock out opposing artillery and machine

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<sup>724</sup> Hugo Kerchnawe, *Die Vorgeschichte von 1866 und 19??* (Vienna: C.W. Stern Verlag, 1909), 5; Oskar Regele, *Feldzeugmeister Benedek und der Weg nach Königgrätz* (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1960), 2-6; C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 791.

<sup>725</sup> R.L. DiNardo and Austin Bay, "The First Modern Tank: Gunther Burstyn and His Motorgeschütz," *Military Affairs* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan. 1986): 13.

guns.<sup>726</sup> Although only in model form and without battlefield testing, this tank created the possibility of greatly enhancing the movement and firepower of the Austro-Hungarian army, especially in offensive actions.

Burstyn submitted his tank model to the war ministry but without success. The inventor did not have a self-propelled version and thus could not demonstrate the full abilities of his armored vehicle. Three months later the war ministry passed the model on to department after department until the invention received a negative appraisal from the Technical-Administrative Military Committee. Viewing Burstyn's tank model as nothing more than another armored car, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Wolf, an artilleryist in charge of the automobile section with no training as an engineer, judged the invention useless for transporting cannon or any other purpose. Therefore, the k.u.k. army could not spare the funds to develop and test a working model.<sup>727</sup>

In rejecting Burstyn's invention, the Technical-Administrative Military Committee lost an excellent opportunity to upgrade both the firepower and movement capabilities of the Habsburg army. Although Wolf failed to recognize the use of the tank in battle, the lieutenant colonel and his committee made the same mistake as the German army. The Artillery Commission in Berlin also judged Burstyn's model impracticable and no new weapon.<sup>728</sup> None of the other European powers had developed tanks or foreseen the great advantages of all-terrain vehicles equipped with cannon on the battlefield. The failure of the k.u.k. military to test and put

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<sup>726</sup> Oberleutnant Gunther Burstyn, "Das Motorgeschütz," *ÖMZ* 1 (1912): 305.

<sup>727</sup> Daniela and Ewald Angetter, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945): Sein 'Panzer' - eine bahnbrechende Erfindung zur falschen Zeit am falschen Ort* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 46-49; Walther Albrecht, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945) und die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1973), 82-84.

<sup>728</sup> Angetter, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945): Sein 'Panzer' - eine bahnbrechende Erfindung zur falschen Zeit am falschen Ort*, 50; W. Albrecht, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945) und die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe*, 85-86.

Burstyn's tank into production stemmed not from technological backwardness or conservatism but rather from misjudgement and poor financial decision-making. By 1912, the Austro-Hungarian high command had determined to spend extraordinary credits from the Delegations on much needed artillery yet also on Dreadnoughts and permanent fortresses. Instead of wasting millions on immensely expensive but useless battleships and quickly obsolete fortifications, the k.u.k. army would have taken a far greater step towards restoring the great power status of the Habsburg empire by investing in Burstyn's tank.

### **The High Command: Stability and Views of Technology**

During the last decade before World War I the Habsburg high command regained the trust of parliamentary representatives that Krieghammer had antagonized as war minister from 1893 to 1902. As a cavalry troop officer, Krieghammer brought little organizational and statesmanlike experience to the war ministry. Instead of carrying on the good relations that had endured in the tenures of Bylandt-Rheidt and his successor FZM Ferdinand Baron Bauer, Krieghammer succeeded in antagonizing not only both the Austrian and Hungarian parliaments but also the chief of the general staff FML Friedrich von Beck-Rzikowsky and the naval commander-in-chief Spaun. Finally, as the friction became insupportable and Krieghammer proved incapable of coming to an agreement with the Hungarian parliament on a new army bill, Emperor Franz Joseph removed Krieghammer from office.<sup>729</sup> The next war ministers, Pitreich, Schönaich, GdI Moritz Baron Auffenberg von Komarów, who ran the war ministry from 1911-1912, and FM Alexander Baron von Krobotin, who held the position from 1911 to 1917, restored

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<sup>729</sup> *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* Bd. 4 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957), 272; "Der Rücktritt des Kriegsministers Baron Krieghammer," *Neue Freie Presse*, 19. December 1902, Nr. 13763, 1-2; "Wien, 20. December," *Neue Freie Presse*, 21. December 1902, Nr. 13765, 1-2; "Baron Krieghammer †," *Pester Lloyd*, 21. August 1906, Nr. 190, 1; Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *Franz Josephs Weggefährte* (Vienna: Amalthea Verlag, 1930), 364-365.

parliamentary confidence in the war ministry.<sup>730</sup> This restored confidence helps to explain the favor that the Delegations showed the Habsburg army during budget debates.

During the decade before the First World War, Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne and a man of extremely strong opinions, had great influence on the k.u.k. army. The *Thronfolger* took some of the responsibilities of Archduke Albrecht in 1895 as a roving inspector of all aspects of the military. Franz Ferdinand also formed his own sixteen-member military chancellery that rivalled the chancellery of the emperor while receiving better intelligence from a complex and wide network of sources.<sup>731</sup> As in the case of Conrad, the imperial heir played a large role in the appointments and dismissals of members of the high command. Franz Ferdinand influenced the removals of Beck as chief of the general staff, Pitreich and Schönaich as war ministers, and GdI Blasius Schemua as general staff chief, as well as the appointments of Schönaich and Schemua in addition to the naming of Auffenberg to the war ministry.<sup>732</sup> The primary reason for the heir's involvement in dismissals and appointments stemmed from Franz Ferdinand's wish for men of action to lead Austria-Hungary as a great military power in international relations. This desire led the *Thronfolger* to welcome Aloys Count Lexa von Ährenthal to the foreign ministry as well as favor Pitreich, Conrad, and Auffenberg as opposed to Beck and Schemua.<sup>733</sup> The need to act like a great power dominated the thinking of the k.u.k. high command including the heir to the throne.<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle der Delegation des Reichsrates*, 13. Sitzung der 45. Session am 3. März 1911, 948, 15. (Schluß-) Sitzung der 45. Session am 4. März 1911, 1131, 1136.

<sup>731</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 141.

<sup>732</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 137, 147, 161, 164, 167-168; Nr. 4/Vstd. betr. Reichskriegsminister Schönaich, Rücktritt, 1 Reservatexhibiten des Vorstandes der Militärkanzlei 1911, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 207, Reservatakte.

<sup>733</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 140.

<sup>734</sup> "Austria-Hungary. The Military Question." *The Advertiser*, Monday 2 January 1911, 9. *The Advertiser* was published in Adelaide, Australia.



Yet Franz Ferdinand saw the army as an internal peacekeeping force rather than a means of external aggression. Therefore, the imperial heir emphasized military appearance, especially in the form of impressive parades, drills, and exercises with cavalry charges rather than realistic maneuvers. In regard to technology the *Thronfolger* presented a paradox. Franz Ferdinand enthusiastically supported the navy and the budding Austro-Hungarian military aviation branch. The *Thronfolger* also willingly used automobiles during maneuvers while remarking that the future belonged to the motorized vehicle.<sup>735</sup> Nevertheless, Franz Ferdinand believed in the superiority of devotion to the fatherland, obedience, and confidence as the means to victory. In addition, during maneuvers the imperial heir revealed his penchant for the offensive, ignoring the lessons about firepower from the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War while ordering a cavalry charge against infantry in 1913.<sup>736</sup> As Auffenberg commented after the Great War, certain members of the high command held “an aversion for technical perfections,” regarding “the most modern means of war more or less as sport,” while seeing “the cavalryman brandishing the sword as still the ideal warrior and combatant.”<sup>737</sup>

This neglect of technology, however, did not infect the whole k.u.k. military nor even the whole house of Habsburg. Archduke Leopold Salvator as General Artillery Inspector called for an extensive and intensive increase in not only the number but the quality of artillery using the latest technology.<sup>738</sup> Archduke Wilhelm had called for more modern artillery thirty years

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<sup>735</sup> W. Albrecht, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945) und die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe*, 14-15.

<sup>736</sup> 9 Antrag Sr. k.u.k. Hoheit über freizügige Anlage der Kaisermanöver 1901, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 201, Studien; 16 Moritz Ritter von Auffenberg, GdI. Studie: Stellung und Aufgaben eines nächsten Kriegsministers, Nov. 1910 (mit einem Referat der Militärkanzlei), KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 201, Studien (reference is in Referat, 4); Rudolf Kizling, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este: Leben, Pläne und Wirken am Schicksalsweg der Donaumonarchie* (Graz-Köln: Herman Böhlhaus Nachf. Ges. M.B.H., 1953), 63-64, 263-264; Kronenbitter, “*Krieg im Frieden.*” 91-92.

<sup>737</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkrieg*, 43.

<sup>738</sup> 7 K.u.k. Generalartillerieinspektor. Res. Nr. 308. Sanierung der Offiziersverhältnisse der Zahl u. Qualität. Erz. Leopold Salvator, FZM to FF, n.d. KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 201, Studien.

earlier.<sup>739</sup> Archduke Albrecht had promoted the procurement of breechloading and repeating rifles. Even Franz Joseph later in his life did not deserve the reputation for skepticism in regard to technology that historians have given the emperor. Stories of Franz Joseph's aversion for modern technology, such as telephones, elevators, and motor cars, provide entertaining anecdotes.<sup>740</sup> These episodes, though, exaggerate the notion of the emperor's backwardness. Franz Joseph, especially later in his reign, trusted his military advisors while not opposing the procurement of new weaponry. During the corps maneuvers of 1906, the emperor expressed his displeasure and disdain for Burstyn's armored vehicles that frightened his horse. However, Franz Joseph also praised the performance of the automobile troops and thus recognized the usefulness of motorcars on the battlefield.<sup>741</sup>

In general the Austro-Hungarian high command and officer corps showed great interest in modern technology. The plethora of articles in the k.u.k. military journals, the establishment of technical schools for the army, the recognition of the military possibilities of aviation as well as various studies on new weapons prove that aversion for technology did not constitute a problem for the Habsburg army.<sup>742</sup> Imprudent decisions concerning how to spend the limited funds of the Austro-Hungarian military revealed one of the major mistakes that led to defeat during the early campaigns of the First World War.

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<sup>739</sup> Erzherzog Wilhelm, FML, General-Artillerie-Inspector, No. 50 Denkschrift über vorzunehmende Änderungen in der Organisation der Feld-Artillerie, Jan. 1882, KA MKSM Sonderreihe, Karton Nr. 65, Studien.

<sup>740</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 127.

<sup>741</sup> "Die Manöver des 1. und 2. Korps in Schlesien vom 31. August bis 4. September 1906," *ÖMZ* 2 (1906): 1723; W. Albrecht, *Gunther Burstyn (1879-1945) und die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe*, 14-15.

<sup>742</sup> *ÖMZ* and *O.*, passim; *Inventar des Kriegsarchiv Wien*, I. Band (Wien: Ferdinand Berger, 1953), 174; Referat über den Versuch mit dem Caterpillar am 31. März 1914 bei Malacka, Hptm. Josef Schitler, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 800, Diverse Studien 1882-1914; Studie über das erste Einschließen mit Granaten, Jänner 1896, Oberst Djiczukh, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 799, Diverse Studien 1882-; Studie über Fesselballon, Oberst Schleyer, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 799, Diverse Studien 1882-; Über Fragen des Telgr. Büro, 1907, Schleyer, KA Generalstab Operationsbüro, Karton Nr. 799, Diverse Studien 1882-.

## Conclusion

The combination of the infatuation with the offensive *à outrance* and inept financial choices doomed the k.u.k. military to defeat in the First World War. With the appointment of Conrad as chief of the general staff and the rise of his former war college students to high-ranking positions, no more voices against the constant *Drang nach vorwärts* arose in the army. *Kriegsschule* courses drilled ideas of attack into general staff students, who would develop battle plans and lead troops in World War I. Learning the wrong lessons from the Russo-Japanese War, k.u.k. theorists saw the example of Japan, a smaller power, defeating the much larger army of Russia as an example of how to conquer a probable future opponent. Austro-Hungarian officers viewed patriotism and *élan* as well as the offensive spirit of the Japanese soldiers as the secrets to success. Thus, Habsburg military thinkers hoped to compensate for inferior numbers and weaponry with offensive strategy and tactics along with high morale.

The cause for the k.u.k. inferiority in men and weapons stemmed not just from a shortage of funding as Austria-Hungary spent less for military purposes than the other European powers. The main problem for the Habsburg army came from incompetent spending decisions. The high command considered pouring more money into the fleet more important than procuring rifles and artillery because of the desire to obtain overseas acquisitions and protect commerce like the other European powers. Similarly, permanent fortresses ranked high among k.u.k. priorities, higher than developing a tank for mobile warfare. Such choices in addition to the desire to attack at all costs would create a situation in which Habsburg forces entered war at a grave disadvantage. Both the love of the offensive and the poor choices in spending rose from the desire to maintain great power status for the Dual Monarchy. Nevertheless, these decisions

resulted in exactly the opposite: the loss not only of great power status but also of the monarchy itself.

## Chapter 6 - The Catastrophe of the Offensive

Blood red lightning flashes over the walls of the old winged lion, and the sky is a single sea of fire.

From the clouds rush the enemies and pour over the sleeping Austria. And their goal is the old Phaeacian city on the Danube with the golden Stephansdom.

And each one takes a piece of loot, and the House of Habsburg flees lamenting into foreign lands.

That is the end of the proud winged lion. And its inhabitants will mourn lost happiness.

But too late!<sup>743</sup>

Thus spoke Cassandra, the cursed priestess of Apollo and prophetess whom no one believed, in Gustav Sieber's 1913 novel *Quo Vadis, Austria?* Sieber wrote his work describing the life and difficulties of a loyal Austro-Hungarian officer true to the emperor and fatherland shortly before the outbreak of World War I. Comparing the Habsburg empire to ancient Troy, the novelist's protagonist lamented the poor status of a once powerful state. According to a member of the military chancery of the imperial heir Franz Ferdinand, the primary concern that the author addressed comprised the weakness of Austria-Hungary's position in foreign politics, or in other words, the loss of great power status.<sup>744</sup> This concern encompassed not only lower-ranking officers but also the high command as General Baron Moritz Auffenberg, war minister from 1911 to 1912, expressed the low regard that the Dual Monarchy held as a world power among the other nations.<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>743</sup> Gustav Sieber, *Quo Vadis, Austria? Ein Roman der Resignation* (Berlin: "Vita" Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1913): IX-X.

<sup>744</sup> 6 Untertänigste Meldung betr. den Militärroman "Quo Vadis, Austria? - ein Roman der Resignation von einem österreichischen Offizier" 27.09.1913, KA MKFF, Karton Nr. 208, Nichtprotokollierte Stücke 1898-1914.

<sup>745</sup> Moritz Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege* (Wien: Ullstein & Co., 1920), 35.

Although Cassandra's prophecy came true by 1918, the Habsburg Empire did not have to suffer military catastrophe in 1914. With strategy and tactics suitable for the inferiority in numbers and material of the k.u.k. army, Austro-Hungarian military leaders could have forged a defensive plan to enable Habsburg forces to fight successfully the two-front war against Russia and Serbia. However, the combination of the strategic and tactical offensive *à outrance* with deficiencies in men and weapons because of inept spending decisions made defeat inevitable for k.u.k. armies in Galicia, Bosnia, and Italy.

### **Pre-War Strategy: Austro-Hungarian Offensives and the Schlieffen Plan**

Before Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia on 28 July 1914, Conrad von Hötzendorf, as chief of the general staff and *de facto* head of the k.u.k. army, had drawn up a plan to counter the armies of Russia to the northeast and Serbia to the south. The chief of the general staff designed this plan to crush Serbia first, then turn the victorious Habsburg forces to defeat slowly mobilizing Russia. Conrad divided the k.u.k. troops into three groups: *Minimalgruppe Balkan* with eight to ten divisions against Serbia, *A-Staffel* with twenty-eight to thirty divisions against Russia, and *B-Staffel* with twelve divisions to support either of the other groups for offensive operations. While this arrangement appeared brilliant in theory, Conrad failed to consider the difficult transportation issues of the Habsburg railroads, especially the insufficient number of lines and cars between Galicia and Bosnia. Once the chief of the general staff committed *B-Staffel* in either direction, long delays would retard the twelve divisions from reversing course if need arose in the other theater.<sup>746</sup> As General Baron Josef von Stürgkh, the k.u.k. representative at the German headquarters, later wrote, the forces facing Serbia consisted of "too little, as was

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<sup>746</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), 159; Norman Stone, "Moltke-Conrad: Relations between the Austro-Hungarian and German General Staffs, 1909-1914," *The Historical Journal* IX, 2 (1966): 205.

proven later in so tragic a way, for a success, too much for a merely defensive stance. A half measure, which, as always, can have only an evil result.”<sup>747</sup> The troops of *B-Staffel* took no part in the Serbian offensive while arriving too late to do anything more than participate in the retreat in Galicia.<sup>748</sup> The size of the Austro-Hungarian army only contributed to the confusion and difficulty. Without experience in transporting large numbers of troops, the railroads could not handle the requirements of mass army movements.

Another problem with this plan occurred in regard to cooperation with Austria-Hungary’s ally Germany. Lieutenant General Helmuth von Moltke, the nephew of the famous victor of 1866 and 1870-71 as well as the chief of the German general staff, remained true to the Schlieffen Plan of his predecessor, Lieutenant General Count Alfred Schlieffen. This plan called for eight-ninths of the German army to deliver a knockout blow against France while a mere twelve to fourteen divisions defended East Prussia against a Russian invasion. Only after victory over France would the bulk of the German army go east to destroy the Russians.<sup>749</sup>

The implications of the Schlieffen Plan for Austria-Hungary meant that the Habsburg army would have to bear the brunt of the Russian offensive with little help from Germany. Moltke not only desired k.u.k. forces to help defend East Prussia but also to take the offensive in Galicia and thus divert Russian troops away from German territory. This wish remained almost an impossibility, however, with Conrad’s plan of invading Serbia, as the Habsburg army could not embark upon offensives in both theaters with any hope for success. Thus, the plans of the Central Powers had neither any concrete operational coordination nor foundation in the reality of

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<sup>747</sup> Josef Stürgh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: Paul List Verlag, 1922), 287.

<sup>748</sup> General der Infanterie Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg* (München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921), 135.

<sup>749</sup> Graydon A. Tunstall, *Planning for War against Russia and Serbia: Austro-Hungarian and German Military Strategies, 1871-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 261-262; Stone, “Moltke-Conrad: Relations between the Austro-Hungarian and German General Staffs, 1909-1914,” 206.

k.u.k. abilities.<sup>750</sup> This situation resulted in the need for Germany to support the Dual Monarchy's armies almost continually later in the war.

In addition, Conrad had no intention of remaining on the defensive in any theater. Even though the Austro-Hungarian chief of the general staff expressed his conviction that Habsburg forces in Galicia could not take the offensive without the promise of a German attack from East Prussia, Conrad rejected any defensive ideas in a desire to win a purely k.u.k. decisive victory.<sup>751</sup> Instead, the Austrian wrote to Moltke that, "In my decided aversion against any waiting and in my conviction of the worth of the initiative, I will seize the forward deployment and the fastest offensive possible."<sup>752</sup> This view coincided with the peacetime ideal of seeking a decisive offensive in the form of earlier wars, such as the elder Moltke's victories in 1866 and 1870 that Conrad admired so ardently.<sup>753</sup> In this way, Conrad endorsed the Clausewitzian doctrine of the annihilation of the enemy as the goal of warfare, or as American historian Isabel Hull called the idea "absolute destruction."<sup>754</sup>

Although the requirements of the Schlieffen Plan bound Conrad to attack the more powerful Russian army while simultaneously fighting Serbia, the offensive always suited the plans of the Habsburg general staff chief in any case. As General Anton Pitreich, chief of staff for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in Galicia, wrote after the war, "Attack had become almost routine."<sup>755</sup> Despite

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<sup>750</sup> Generalleutnant Ernst Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918* (Stuttgart: Bergers Literarisches Büro und Verlagsanstalt, 1924), 21; Holger H. Herwig, "Disjointed Allies: Coalition Warfare in Berlin and Vienna, 1914," *The Journal of Military History* 54, 3 (July 1990): 274-276; Tunstall, *Planning for War against Russia and Serbia*, 264.

<sup>751</sup> Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 23-24, 104.

<sup>752</sup> FML Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit 1906-1918* (Wien: Rikola Verlag, 1921), 1: 399.

<sup>753</sup> Oberst Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich, *1914: Die Militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe, und Zusammenhänge* (Wien: Selbstverlag, 1934), 5.

<sup>754</sup> Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>755</sup> General Anton Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer* (Klagenfurt: Artur Kollitsch, 1930), 82.



the inferiority of k.u.k. troops in numbers and weaponry, Austria-Hungary could have taken no other action without compromising the great power status that Habsburg leaders envisioned for the empire. If k.u.k. forces stood on the defensive against Serbia while attacking Russia, the possibility of defeat at the hands of the Serbs existed, as in the minds of the Austro-Hungarian high command only the offensive brought victory. Deploying enough troops to have a decisive advantage against Serbia, though, involved denuding Galicia of sufficient numbers to ward off the Russians. Although prudence dictated the defensive on at least one front, great powers always attacked.

The consideration of upholding the alliance with Germany as a great power also necessitated an Austro-Hungarian attack on Russia. The German high command had already long held a low opinion of Habsburg military capabilities. Schlieffen considered the k.u.k. army inferior to the Russian not only in total numbers but also in the combat abilities of individual units. Therefore, he regarded Austro-Hungarian assistance in the East as a chimera.<sup>756</sup> Even the German emperor Wilhelm II had inquired on different occasions with some skepticism about the war readiness of Habsburg troops, especially the artillery.<sup>757</sup> The most influential leaders of the Dual Monarchy's army as well as the majority of the officer corps regarded the military as the most important bulwark of the great power position of Austria-Hungary.<sup>758</sup> Thus, the only way for the k.u.k. high command to prove the worth of Habsburg military force consisted of seizing the initiative in all theaters of war.

### **Disaster in Galicia**

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<sup>756</sup> Herwig, "Disjointed Allies: Coalition Warfare in Berlin and Vienna, 1914," 272-273.

<sup>757</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 127.

<sup>758</sup> Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, Josef Brauner, Eduard Czegka, Jaromir Diakow, Friedrich Franek, Walther Heydendorff, Rudolf Kiszling, Franz Mühlhofer, Ernst Wisshaupt und Georg Zobi, *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914-1918 (ÖULK)* (Wien: Verlag der Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen, 1930-1938) 1: 40.

Attempting the impossible, however, proved exactly the opposite of what Conrad had hoped. The early battles of the First World War turned into a catastrophe of epic proportions for the Habsburg army. According to the official Austrian history of the war, the k.u.k. forces in Galicia at the beginning of the 1914 summer campaign amounted to 38.5 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions against 46.5 Russian infantry and 18.5 cavalry divisions.<sup>759</sup> These numbers, though revealing the great numerical disadvantage of the Habsburg forces, do not disclose the whole situation as the 38.5 infantry divisions included the troops of *B-Staffel* that did not arrive in Galicia until engagements with the Russians had already begun. Also one third of the Austro-Hungarian units consisted of inadequately trained *Landwehr* troops who, like all other k.u.k. infantry, used the same 1886 model repeating rifle that had last received an upgrade in 1895, almost twenty years before the First World War.<sup>760</sup>

In addition, according to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian historian and archivist Rudolf Jeřábek, each Russian division surpassed the k.u.k. units by 60-70% in infantry, 90% in light field artillery, and 230% in heavy guns as well as 33% more machineguns.<sup>761</sup> Moreover, the quality of the majority of the Russian artillery far exceeded the Habsburg cannon, which still included 12 obsolete M. 99 and M. 99/04 howitzers with steel-bronze barrels per division.<sup>762</sup> These howitzers only received 330 rounds per weapon in comparison to the 500 rounds for the field guns, while two-thirds of this ammunition consisted of shrapnel rather than high explosive shells

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<sup>759</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 158, 175-177.

<sup>760</sup> Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 23; Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 39-40.

<sup>761</sup> Rudolf Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," in *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990), 153.

<sup>762</sup> Erich Gabriel, "Die wichtigsten Waffen der Österreichisch-ungarischen Armee 1918," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift (ÖMZ)* 6 (1968): 436-438.

for destroying fortified positions.<sup>763</sup> The poor financial decisions of the k.u.k. high command to spend hundreds of millions of Kronen on Dreadnoughts and permanent fortifications instead of modern artillery now adversely affected the Austro-Hungarian troops on the battlefield. As FML Alfred Krauss, former commandant of the *Kriegsschule* and the holder of numerous important staff and command positions during the First World War, later wrote, “The infantry had to pay for this mistake in blood, because they had to attack the insufficiently shaken enemy.”<sup>764</sup>

A defensive strategy in Galicia would have suited the Habsburg inferiority in men and artillery.<sup>765</sup> Prudent strategy, however, did not suit the ideas of Conrad, who believed in the psychological importance of winning the first battle. The *Drang nach vorwärts* with the accompanying reliance on high morale ruled operational and tactical planning at the cost of the material prerequisites for victory.<sup>766</sup> Despite the grave deficiencies of the k.u.k. army, the general staff chief ordered an offensive against the much stronger Russians because he believed that only attack could achieve success.<sup>767</sup> Such an attack meant that Austro-Hungarian troops had to spread out so that Russian forces would not turn the Habsburg flanks. Unlike the theater of war in the West where trench lines quickly covered the terrain from the North Sea to Switzerland and limited maneuver while turning the conflict into siege warfare, the Eastern front provided vast expanses for large-scale movement. In the rolling plains of Galicia, the k.u.k. army groups, advancing to the north, northeast, and east, became more and more separated from each other. Although the troops going north and northeast met roughly equal numbers of

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<sup>763</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 78-79; Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 94-95.

<sup>764</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 95.

<sup>765</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 87; Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 58-60.

<sup>766</sup> M. Pitreich, *1914: Die Militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe, und Zusammenhänge*, 229.

<sup>767</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 155.

Russians and even achieved some tactical successes, seven to eight Austro-Hungarian divisions moving east encountered twenty-one Russian divisions. Without the advantages of the defense, disaster ensued for the Habsburg units. Rushing headlong without sufficient artillery support into a greatly superior enemy, k.u.k. troops suffered crushing losses in futile frontal assaults. Nevertheless, Conrad, disconnected from the realities of the battlefield, refused to believe the reports of his generals confirming the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Russians. Instead, the general staff chief ordered more attacks from the already exhausted Austro-Hungarian troops. The outcome turned out even worse than the previous assault: more than 20,000 casualties and 70 guns lost.<sup>768</sup> The size of the Habsburg army, much larger than any that Conrad had ever commanded in maneuvers, magnified the general staff chief's mistakes while rendering communications and control more difficult than ever before.

As the official Austrian history, usually favorable to Conrad, later wrote, "The experiences of the first campaign had overturned much of what possessed troops and leaders in peace training."<sup>769</sup> Conrad, nevertheless, thought that the pummeled Habsburg troops still retained the *Wille zum Siege* and could thus achieve decisive victories regardless of the situation.<sup>770</sup> Hearing reports from captured Russian officers that k.u.k. units had attacked with more ferocity than the Japanese in 1904-1905, the general staff chief looked for another

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<sup>768</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 147-257; *ÖULK*, 1: 155-258; Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1993), 128-136; Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), 81-89; Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, Inc., 2000), 154; Graydon A. Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 15-16; Dieter Hackl, "Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf," (Mag. Phil. Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, 2009), 67-73; Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 154-155; Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, "Der Sommerfeldzug von 1914 gegen Rußland," *ÖMZ Sonderheft I* (1965): 34-39; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 180; Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 91-97.

<sup>769</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 449.

<sup>770</sup> Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 105.

opportunity for an offensive. Especially after learning of the German victory over Russia at Tannenberg, Conrad desired to restore not only the prestige of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a great power but also his own reputation as a commander.<sup>771</sup> The defensive nature of the German action in East Prussia did not lessen the humiliation of the k.u.k. staff chief from the losses in Galicia.

Therefore, Conrad ordered yet another offensive to take back the lost ground. Though gaining early tactical successes, the outnumbered Habsburg army could not maintain any advantages. Yet Conrad continued calling for more assaults from all units of the Dual Monarchy army in Galicia against greater enemy numbers and artillery until finally even the k.u.k. chief of the general staff admitted retreat as the only option.<sup>772</sup> After less than a month of combat, the Austro-Hungarian military had lost most of Galicia as well as 350,000-400,000 men and 300 guns, or almost 50% of the Habsburg forces facing Russia at the beginning of the war.<sup>773</sup> The offensives of Conrad could not have garnered a more abysmal result. General Krauss stated after the war that the chief of the general staff had transgressed the principle of war that the inferior party should repulse the attack of the stronger before assaulting the weaknesses of the enemy.<sup>774</sup> A defensive posture would have held part of Galicia for longer than three weeks with fewer casualties. Certainly, the defensive could have brought no worse defeat as strong entrenchments

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<sup>771</sup> Oberst Maximilian Freiherr von Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914* (Wien: Adolf Holzhausens Nachfolger, 1929), 26-113; Sondhaus, 154; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 89; Hackl, "Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf," 73.

<sup>772</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 272-392; ÖULK, 1: 259-338; A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 130; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 89-90.

<sup>773</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 130-131; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 180; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 91; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 158.

<sup>774</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 138-139.

with artillery support would have afforded enough protection for the Habsburg troops to compensate for inferiority in numbers and material.

In withdrawing from most of Galicia, the k.u.k. military also left behind the fortress of Przemyśl with a garrison of 120,000 men. These soldiers now became not only completely useless to the Austro-Hungarian war effort but also a source of more casualties as Conrad focussed his next offensive on relieving the fortress. After the debacle of the first Galician campaign, the Habsburg general staff chief joined with the victor of Tannenberg, General Erich Ludendorff, to attack the Russians and relieve Przemyśl in late September and October. Once again, the k.u.k. offensive met with early success and even rescued the Galician fortress, but Habsburg troops had to retreat in the face of superior Russian numbers. Repeated Austro-Hungarian attempts to cross the San River failed abysmally. With little support from the artillery, which felt lucky to have an average of four rounds per day, the infantry could not break through the Russian entrenchments.<sup>775</sup> Conrad's next scheme, a complex plan to lure the Russians forward while withdrawing and then strike the enemy unexpectedly in the flank backfired. The k.u.k. forces, not the Russians, received the flank attack with another 40,000 casualties and withdrew to the relative safety of the Carpathian Mountains.<sup>776</sup> The prewar neglect of artillery in the Habsburg army precluded any small chance of success the outnumbered Dual Monarchy troops held. Though the Austro-Hungarian artillery branch performed as well as possible, the emphasis on infantry as the only truly important force rendered field guns ineffective.<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 138-139; *ÖULK*, 1: 356-513.

<sup>776</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 181; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 96-97, 99-100; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 159; Franz Forstner, *Przemyśl: Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1987), 164-195.

<sup>777</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 82-83.

Once again, Conrad's attacks resulted in heavy losses for the Austro-Hungarians as more of Galicia fell into the hands of the Russians. Considering the poorly trained *Landsturm* and *Ersatzreserve* troops who had filled the ranks of the battered units from the first campaign, k.u.k. forces had performed reasonably well. The leadership of Conrad, however, failed just as before by putting Habsburg soldiers into situations too difficult for inexperienced men to succeed. The will for victory could not overcome superior numbers and weaponry. Yet Conrad did not learn from the mistakes of the opening battles and allow the Austro-Hungarian forces to take advantage of field fortifications. Ample use of entrenchments would have allowed decimated units to recuperate while affording time for new replacements to acquire some familiarity with weapons and the requirements of modern warfare. Instead, Conrad relied on the *Wille zum Siege* of his subordinates to perform the impossible. The general staff chief formed this idea so prominent in his tactical thought thus: "We must compensate for our paucity of soldiers with activity."<sup>778</sup> However, as Colonel Maximilian von Pitreich, general staff chief of various k.u.k. divisions and army groups on the Russian front and the son of the former minister of war Heinrich von Pitreich, wrote after the war, "We have learned in war often enough that the concentration of cannon is for the most part more important than the iron will for victory of different leaders."<sup>779</sup>

### **Cavalry Failure**

In the open expanses of Galicia the Habsburg army could have also used more mobility. The Burstyn tanks that the Technical-Administrative Military Committee of the k.u.k. general staff rejected could have helped compensate for the fewer numbers of the Austro-Hungarian military. The hundreds of millions wasted on Dreadnoughts could have procured hundreds of

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<sup>778</sup> Gustav Stöckelle, "Der Feldzug von Limanova-Lapanów 1.-20. Dezember 1914," *ÖMZ Sonderheft I* (1965): 39.

<sup>779</sup> M. Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914*, 155.

tanks to help fill the gaps in the Habsburg lines or protect the flanks. Poor financial decision-making brought catastrophe for the k.u.k. military.

Cavalry could also have provided more mobility for Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia. Although mounted troops formed inviting targets for enemy artillery and machine gun fire, cavalry units could have at least alleviated the difficult communications and coordination problems of the widely separated k.u.k. army groups. This possibility, however, never surfaced as Conrad had sent the Habsburg mounted forces on a long reconnaissance ride in the spirit of the Southern cavalry in the American Civil War. The Austro-Hungarian raid extended through an area of Galicia 250 miles wide and 90 miles deep and achieving success became an almost impossible task. Not only did the vastness of the Galician expanse wear out the horses but also the k.u.k. mounted troops encountered dismounted Russian cavalry and infantry units that inflicted heavy losses on the attacking Habsburg horsemen. Only one engagement between mounted forces took place. The battle took place at Jaroslavice on August 21 and featured saber-wielding cavalry in a traditional mounted battle. With no decisive result, the outcome had no bearing on the overall campaign, however, especially when a Russian infantry unit intervened.<sup>780</sup> Although k.u.k. officers knew the futility of cavalry attacking entrenched infantry and the regulations had not advocated this kind of assault, practical application failed as horsemen full of bravado charged the enemy regardless of the actual situation.<sup>781</sup> The Russians had learned from the experiences of the Russo-Japanese War to dismount and employ fire like infantry, whereas the Habsburg cavalry still sought the traditional mounted encounter, which accomplished

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<sup>780</sup> Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 125-127; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 180; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 80.

<sup>781</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 83; Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkriege*, 41; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 152-153.



little.<sup>782</sup> A last minute attempt to impress upon the k.u.k. cavalry the importance of fire tactics did little to change the battle methods of the Austro-Hungarian mounted branch.<sup>783</sup>

The primary result of all this riding and fighting on the part of the Austro-Hungarian cavalry consisted of the exhaustion of not only the men but also, and more importantly, the majority of the available horses. The saddles that had looked so impressive on parade did not prove adequate for long rides in war and rubbed off the horses' skin. Thus, many horsemen returned leading their mounts rather than riding.<sup>784</sup> Only 26,800 cavalymen remained battle-ready by the beginning of October.<sup>785</sup> Even Conrad admitted the k.u.k. mounted branch failed because of poor training and equipment unsuited for the modern battlefield.<sup>786</sup> Yet responsibility for the debacle lay primarily with the chief of the general staff for demanding the impossible. According to one cavalry officer, achieving success on a raid covering too large an area against an enemy superior in numbers, firepower, and tactics proved too much for Habsburg horsemen.<sup>787</sup> With the cavalry out of action, the k.u.k. army had insufficient reconaissance and flank security troops. Infantry units that could have performed other more important tasks, such as preparing entrenchments for a strong defensive position, now had to attempt to compensate for the cavalry without possessing the same mobility.

Once again, the Habsburg military high command displayed a poor sense of how to spend limited funding. Instead of wasting money on unserviceable saddles or even cavalry that most Austro-Hungarian officers realized played a limited role in modern warfare, k.u.k. leaders should

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<sup>782</sup> FML Josef Metzger, "Der Krieg 1914 gegen Rußland," in *Der große Krieg 1914-1918*, ed. Max Schwarte (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1922), 5: 26.

<sup>783</sup> Heinrich Mast, "Die Aufklärungstätigkeit der österr.-ung. Kavallerie bei Kriegsbeginn 1914," *ÖMZ Sonderheft I* (1965): 9-10.

<sup>784</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 80.

<sup>785</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 357.

<sup>786</sup> Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, 4: 877.

<sup>787</sup> Mast, "Die Aufklärungstätigkeit der österr.-ung. Kavallerie bei Kriegsbeginn 1914," 15-17.

have developed and procured armored vehicles like Burstyn's tank. These vehicles, after extensive testing and development, not only could have helped perform the same tasks as cavalry in protecting the army's flanks and providing mobility for faster communications and contact with other units but also could have eventually taken the offensive role that mounted troops could no longer achieve. Pre-war financial decisions created a situation almost impossible for Habsburg victory. Rather than compensating for numerical inferiority with superior equipment and weaponry, the Austro-Hungarian high command exacerbated k.u.k. deficiencies with inept spending on useless battleships, poorly-equipped cavalry, and outdated or vulnerable permanent fortresses.

### **Przemyśl: Permanent Failure**

Przemyśl again became the focus of Conrad's attention for the next offensive in January 1915. After more indecisive sallies from the Carpathians against the Russians in November and December and the successful thwarting of the Russian thrust towards Cracow at the battle of Limanowa-Lapanów, the Habsburg chief of the general staff returned to his fixation for relieving the permanent fortress of Przemyśl.<sup>788</sup> Even though Habsburg soldiers had suffered immensely during the campaigns of the summer and fall, Conrad failed to perceive the impossibility of the task he now presented to his men. Conrad's offensive *à outrance* strategy had sacrificed 1,250,000 soldiers with no beneficial result by the end of 1914. In addition, k.u.k. soldiers had lost confidence in the abilities of the Habsburg high command.<sup>789</sup> Yet the official Austrian history of the First World War, written by former general staff officers loyal to Conrad, echoed the staff chief's belief in the unconquerable ability of troops of "unbroken will."<sup>790</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 563-600, 765-812.

<sup>789</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 12.

<sup>790</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 600.

Once more, instead of allowing the battered Austro-Hungarian troops to settle into defensive positions with artillery support, the k.u.k. *de facto* commander-in-chief ordered a series of frontal assaults to push back the Russians beyond Przemyśl. In the bitter cold and frozen mountains, the attacks amounted to suicidal efforts to perform the impossible, though the soldiers fought admirably. The drive to assault the enemy rendered ineffective the little artillery support that the Dual Monarchy troops possessed, just as in the earlier campaigns.<sup>791</sup> Making almost no progress against the well-entrenched enemy from late January through February 1915, Habsburg forces incurred huge losses that the badly-equipped Austro-Hungarian army could ill afford. In addition, the wintry conditions not only bogged down the offensive but also caused even more casualties from frostbite and freezing.<sup>792</sup> In this situation, surprise, so important to k.u.k. offensive theory, proved impossible to obtain.<sup>793</sup> Incapable of learning from past experience, whether the battles of other armies in the Russo-Japanese War and the Balkan Wars or the campaigns of the Habsburg forces in World War I, Conrad provided little support in the form of artillery or even hand grenades for the attacking forces of the Dual Monarchy. Even though the high command realized the grave deficiencies of the Habsburg forces, k.u.k. leaders relied upon the soldiers to do the impossible.<sup>794</sup> According to the chief of the general staff, spirit and high morale should suffice.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 191-192.

<sup>792</sup> August von Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege: Erinnerungen aus meiner vierjährigen Tätigkeit als bevollmächtigter deutscher General beim k.u.k. Armeeoberkommando* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1920), 7-8; *ÖULK* 2: 94-179; Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 66-113; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 184; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 113; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 163, 165; Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 156; Hackl, "Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf," 90.

<sup>793</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 3.

<sup>794</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 200.

<sup>795</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 81-82.

Following the repulse of the first attacks, Conrad responded with the only solution he ever considered: more assaults. Applying a tactical offensive solution to strategic problems, the general staff chief failed to look at the situation from an operational standpoint.<sup>796</sup> The same fruitless result took place. For roughly four weeks thousands of k.u.k. soldiers hurled themselves against the Russian field fortifications. These insane attacks gained hardly any ground and had no effect on the besieged fortress of Przemyśl. A third wave of assaults produced no effect. Instead of receiving relief from the siege, the commander of the permanent fortress had to surrender on 22 March with 3500 officers and 120,000 men suffering from starvation. This number pales, however, in comparison to the 673,000 soldiers lost during the Carpathian winter campaigns to relieve Przemyśl.<sup>797</sup> Thus, the permanent fortress that cost at least 52,500,000 Kronen before the war provided no advantage during the campaigns.<sup>798</sup> On the contrary, Przemyśl consumed not only the 120,000 soldiers of the garrison, who had to surrender while hardly affecting the war in any way, but also the 673,000 casualties lost in the attempts to relieve the fortress. Almost 800,000 Austro-Hungarian men sacrificed themselves for no gain whatsoever. By the end of these vain offensives, according to the official Austrian history of the war, the k.u.k. military resembled “a *Landsturm* and militia army,” rather than the force of a great power.<sup>799</sup>

Even if Conrad had succeeded in regaining Przemyśl, the k.u.k. general staff chief would not have tried to make proper use of the fortress in any case. Despite the efforts of Habsburg

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<sup>796</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 99-100.

<sup>797</sup> ÖULK 2: 180-224; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkrieg*, 8-9; Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 212; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 185; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 114-116; Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten* (Wien: Amalthea Verlag, 1929), 42; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 203-208; Hackl, “Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf,” 90-91.

<sup>798</sup> Forstner, *Przemyśl: Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung*, 121.

<sup>799</sup> ÖULK, 2: 271.

officers to stress the offensive capabilities of permanent fortifications, the primary benefit of Przemyśl, or any other fortress, consisted of bolstering a strong defense as the anchor for the position. A defensive stance along the San and Dniester rivers in Galicia would have employed the advantages that Przemyśl offered. Conrad never considered this option seriously, however, as the chief of the general staff viewed the defense as the choice of the weak. The strong only attacked, and as a great power, Austria-Hungary must attack as well. Any other strategy would show weakness, loss of prestige, and the sunken status of a second rate power.

Therefore, even though the Russians had resumed the offensive, pushing Habsburg forces farther back over the Carpathians into Hungary and threatening the important passes over the mountains, Conrad chose to attack once again. Far from the battlefields where Austro-Hungarian units suffered immeasurably from cold and malnutrition, the general staff chief never realized the realities of the winter campaigns and visited the troops only three times in three years.<sup>800</sup> As Colonel Pitreich said, “If the conditions for victory are not created, the strongest will is worth nothing.”<sup>801</sup> Thus, the same results stemmed from the same causes: frontal attacks against a numerically superior enemy in strongly entrenched positions with artillery support brought more heavy losses.

### **Gorlice-Tarnów: German Support and Success**

The campaign continued in the same fruitless manner until German reinforcements arrived to steady the k.u.k. front and launch a counter-attack. This combined German-Austro-Hungarian Gorlice-Tarnów offensive had great results as the Germans provided the necessary artillery and numbers for such an operation to succeed. Beginning in early May, the Central

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<sup>800</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 58; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 101-102; Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 11; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 177.

<sup>801</sup> M. Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914*, 155.

Powers drove back the Russians while recovering not only the fortress of Przemyśl but also almost all of Galicia by the end of June.<sup>802</sup>

The successful Gorlice-Tarnów campaign restored some of the k.u.k. confidence and prestige lost during the earlier disastrous offensives. The Germans, however, took the larger share of credit for the victory, even though the Habsburg army provided more troops for the attacks. Without German support, especially in artillery, though, the Austro-Hungarian military would never have proved capable of pushing the Russians out of Galicia.<sup>803</sup> FML Arthur Baron Arz von Straussenburg, commander of the k.u.k. 6. Korps and future chief of the general staff, remarked, “Under the thundering noise we had the impression of having a Vulcan working before us; this was still new for us Austrians with our artillery so weak in number and for the most part suffering from deficiency in ammunition.”<sup>804</sup> The Habsburg decision makers had determined Dreadnoughts and permanent fortresses more important than modern field guns. With the money spent on battleships and Przemyśl, the k.u.k. army could have procured sufficient artillery and shells to rival the other armies of Europe.

### **Naval Weakness**

While Austro-Hungarian units suffered catastrophic losses in Galicia, the Habsburg navy accomplished little in the Adriatic Sea. As on land, k.u.k. forces met numerical inferiority at sea. In May 1914, Austria-Hungary possessed only 105 ships in comparison to the 166 of the Entente

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<sup>802</sup> Arthur Albert Arz von Straussenburg, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 57-92; ÖULK 2: 315-504; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 11-19; Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 163-208; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 185-186; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 120-143; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 173-175; Jeřábek, “The Eastern Front,” 157; Forstner, *Przemyśl: Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung*, 264-275; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 211-214; Hackl, “Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf,” 92-94.

<sup>803</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 198-199.

<sup>804</sup> Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 60.

powers in the Adriatic and near vicinity. The Entente preponderance in cruisers, destroyers, torpedo craft, and submarines made the Habsburg disadvantage even greater.<sup>805</sup> Nevertheless, the k.u.k. preference for the offensive had penetrated the navy as well. Thus, the commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian navy, Grand Admiral Anton Haus, desired a great sea battle that would destroy the enemy fleets, such as Vice Admiral Wilhelm von Tegethoff had won against Italy at Lissa in 1866. The number of French and British ships in the Mediterranean, however, deterred Haus from attempting anything rash. Therefore, the Habsburg admiral limited naval operations primarily to coastal defense and raiding, mainly by submarines. Though this strategy proved successful in keeping the Entente away from Austro-Hungarian ports, the k.u.k. navy had no effect on operations outside the Adriatic.<sup>806</sup> This situation meant that the hundreds of millions of Kronen spent on Dreadnoughts provided no positive results for the Habsburg military as the huge battleships merely remained idle in port and did not contribute to the defensive. Instead of wasting funding on Dreadnoughts, the k.u.k. high command could have constructed 6 scout-cruisers, 20 destroyers, and 35 submarines for the cost of 1 Dreadnought.<sup>807</sup> Such procurement decisions would have coincided far better with the defensive and raiding strategy that Haus chose. Using the money to buy more artillery or to develop tanks also would have given the Austro-Hungarians more chances for success in Galicia.

### **Serbian Campaign: Debacle and Disgrace**

Disaster struck for the Austro-Hungarian military not only against the Russians but also against the Serbs, though the latter catastrophe did not have the same dimensions as the former. Nevertheless, the inability to defeat a small Balkan country resounded as an immense loss of

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<sup>805</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy 1904-1914* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), 178.

<sup>806</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1994), 251, 256-270.

<sup>807</sup> Vego, *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy 1904-1914*, 194-195.

prestige. K.u.k. leaders made several mistakes in the Serbian campaign. First, the Habsburg high command underestimated the capabilities of the enemy. Instead of attributing Serbian successes in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 to superior leadership and training in the Serbian army, most k.u.k. reports concentrated on the ineptitude of the Turks. One Austro-Hungarian officer noted “the main reasons for recent Serb successes lay in the inferior numbers and general low quality of the Turkish forces in Macedonia. The young Serb army cannot yet be considered the equal of the great power armies.”<sup>808</sup> Even the author of a *Kriegsschule* report who praised the courage and *élan* of the Turkish troops focused on the weakness of Turkish artillery training and leadership as the primary cause for Serbian victory.<sup>809</sup>

Rather than a weak, inferior army of a small Balkan nation, the Habsburg military faced a Serbian force filled with high morale, recent experience in modern warfare, and confidence in the excellent leadership of the Serbian commanders. In addition, Serb soldiers possessed greater motivation to fight because of hatred for the Dual Monarchy and a desire to protect their homeland.<sup>810</sup> In comparison, the Austro-Hungarian army contained no members of the rank and file who had participated in combat and few officers of any rank who had actually fought in battle. Those officers who did have combat experience, such as Conrad and FML Moritz Baron Auffenberg von Komarów, had experienced war only against irregular troops during the invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina thirty-six years earlier in 1878. Obviously, these conditions did not correspond to the realities of Great War battlefields with weaponry greatly advanced over more than three decades. Thus, the most experienced commanding officer in the Habsburg army

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<sup>808</sup> Quoted in Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 182.

<sup>809</sup> K.u.k. KS 1912/13 Die Schlacht von Kumanova am 23ten und 24ten Oktober 1912, KA Militärschulen, KS Karton Nr. 67, Studienbehelfe: 1912/14.

<sup>810</sup> Kurt Peball, “Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914,” *ÖMZ Sonderheft I* (1965): 21.



possessed less practical knowledge garnered from actual experience in combat than the lowest-ranking veteran of the Serbian military.

In addition, k.u.k. forces enjoyed no numerical or technical superiority over the Serbs. Habsburg troops numbered 282,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry and 744 cannon at the outset of the campaign, though only 219,000 footsoldiers, 5100 horsemen, and 522 guns remained after the departure of some of *B-Staffel* for Galicia. Against these forces Serbia set 264,000 infantry with 11,000 mounted troops and 828 field pieces.<sup>811</sup> Inadequately trained *Landsturm* units equipped with obsolete Werndl breechloaders composed more than half of the Dual Monarchy's forces in the Balkans.<sup>812</sup> In addition, the only heavy k.u.k. field gun could shoot a mere 5000 meters, far less than the 8000 meter range of the enemy guns.<sup>813</sup> Even though some Serbian units did not possess enough weapons for every man, the Serbs compensated with better leadership, experience, and the advantages of defense.<sup>814</sup>

The second mistake of the Austro-Hungarians consisted of constantly taking the offensive. The commanding general, FZM Oskar Potiorek, a rival of Conrad, ordered an offensive to knock Serbia out of the war as quickly as possible in accordance with the ideas of the chief of the general staff.<sup>815</sup> While this plan suited the political goal of avenging the assassination of the Habsburg heir Franz Ferdinand by young Serbs under the direction of Serbian military intelligence officers, the offensive strategy of Potiorek did not correspond to the

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<sup>811</sup> Rudolf Jeřábek, *Potiorek: General im Schatten von Sarajevo* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1991), 108. Rothenberg, drawing from A. Pitreich and the *ÖULK* for the Austro-Hungarian statistics, sets the total amount of Habsburg troops throughout the Serbian campaign at 460,000 and the Serbian number at 450,000, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 182.

<sup>812</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 108.

<sup>813</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 94.

<sup>814</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 79.

<sup>815</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 182; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 75; Peball, "Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914," 26.

military realities of the situation. Without superiority in numbers or weaponry, the k.u.k. forces had little hope of gaining a decisive victory over the more experienced Serbian army. However, the desire to prove great power status also drove the k.u.k. high command to call for an offensive against Serbia. The mood of public opinion within the monarchy pressed for a quick, decisive blow before Russia fully mobilized.<sup>816</sup> As a military power, Austria-Hungary could not allow a small Balkan state to defy the Habsburg Empire and escape unscathed, especially if Serbia dared to invade Bosnia-Herzegovina and capture Sarajevo.<sup>817</sup> As Major-General August von Cramon, the German liaison officer at the k.u.k. headquarters, wrote after the war, “if the Danubian Monarchy left the eternally unruly Balkans alone, it would cease to be a great power.”<sup>818</sup> Therefore, though a defensive posture would have fit the occasion, the prestige of Austria-Hungary necessitated a punishing attack on a presumably weaker opponent.

Potiorek also had his own reasons for an offensive. As Conrad’s rival, the commander of the k.u.k. troops facing Serbia needed a victory to bolster his hope of becoming the next general staff chief.<sup>819</sup> Conrad himself, despite later protests of innocence for the ensuing events, fully approved of Potiorek’s attack, as the original plan of sending *B-Staffel* to the Balkans revealed.<sup>820</sup> Like all the other high-ranking Habsburg officers, Potiorek believed that only the offensive could give decisive results. Before the war, the Balkan army commander wrote that anyone wishing to begin a great war defensively did not recognize the nature of the k.u.k. military.<sup>821</sup> Potiorek also

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<sup>816</sup> M. Pitreich, *1914: Die Militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe, und Zusammenhänge*, 90.

<sup>817</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Der Sommerfeldzug von 1914 gegen Rußland,” 32.

<sup>818</sup> Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 200.

<sup>819</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 161; Peball, “Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914,” 25.

<sup>820</sup> Stürgkh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen*, 288; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 183; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 79; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 162.

<sup>821</sup> M. Pitreich, *1914: Die Militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe, und Zusammenhänge*, 92.

considered an offensive as the best means to solve the defensive tasks of guarding the borders of both Bosnia-Hercegovina and Hungary against a Serbian invasion.<sup>822</sup> Therefore, a quick strike into the heart of Serbia comprised the sole strategy both to stop any Serbian attacks and to knock the enemy out of the war.

Yet, Austro-Hungarian war games earlier in 1914 had predicted defeat against the Serbs.<sup>823</sup> In addition, a general staff study several years before the war had indicated that an invasion of Serbia from Bosnia would invite disaster.<sup>824</sup> Nevertheless, Potiorek, disregarding these accurate predictions as well as the deficiencies of the troops and equipment he possessed, attempted the impossible just as Conrad had done in Galicia. Attacking from Bosnia without enough artillery over the mountainous ground of western Serbia that the enemy knew far better than any k.u.k. officers, the Habsburg commander in the Balkans invited disaster.<sup>825</sup> In mid-August 1914, Potiorek waged a campaign using strategy similar to Conrad's first offensive in Galicia and thus committed the same mistakes as the chief of the general staff. The two Austro-Hungarian armies in Bosnia, separated by more than 100 kilometers, had little communication with each other as the advance into Serbia commenced. While driving deeper into enemy territory, contact became even more difficult and thus removed the possibility of mutual support. The gap between the two armies exposed the flanks of the k.u.k. forces. As Habsburg troops penetrated farther into Serbia, supply became increasingly difficult. The combination of these mistakes with the rough terrain and the advantages of the defense for the Serbs, who knew how

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<sup>822</sup> M. Pitreich, *1914: Die Militärischen Probleme unseres Kriegsbeginnes, Ideen, Gründe, und Zusammenhänge*, 93-94; Allmayer-Beck, "Der Sommerfeldzug von 1914 gegen Rußland," 33; Peball, "Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914," 22.

<sup>823</sup> Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 153; Peball, "Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914," 24-26.

<sup>824</sup> Stürgkh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen*, 288.

<sup>825</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 149.

to establish strong field fortifications quickly, resulted in defeat after less than two weeks.<sup>826</sup>

The choice of the offensive to accomplish defensive needs had resulted in frightful losses not only in men but also prestige for the Habsburg monarchy while raising Serbian confidence even higher than before.<sup>827</sup>

Potiorek, just like Conrad, responded to setbacks only by planning another offensive. This time, however, the Serbs attacked first in September. Once again, the offensive party found initial success. Austro-Hungarian troops, though, using the strength of the defense, halted the Serbian drive and counterattacked, sending the enemy back to Serbia three weeks later.<sup>828</sup> Despite the little defensive training in the Habsburg army, k.u.k. forces found victory in a true offensive defense according to the ideas of Clausewitz, who advocated choosing the attack only at the moment when the enemy assault had broken down.

The Austro-Hungarian commander now judged the situation opportune for a renewed offensive against the reeling Serbs. In theory, Potiorek's thinking appeared plausible. In practice, however, the same reasons as before advised against another invasion of Serbia: mountainous terrain, poor supply and communications, insufficient number of troops and weaponry, an enemy superior in fighting ability and morale. In addition, the offensive did not begin until November when the weather had started to deteriorate with rain and snow, which rendered movement even more difficult. None of these concerns hindered Potiorek from seeking a decisive victory over the Serbs though. After four weeks of combat, the Austro-Hungarians

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<sup>826</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 102-152; Gunther E. Rothenberg, "The Austro-Hungarian Campaign Against Serbia in 1914," *The Journal of Military History* 53, 2 (April 1989): 137-138; Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 118-132; Jonathan E. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914-1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44-61.

<sup>827</sup> Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 90.

<sup>828</sup> Kabisch, *Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918*, 138-139; *ÖULK*, 1: 603-647; Peball, "Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914," 27-28; Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 143-148.

had succeeded in pushing the Serbian army farther into Serbia but at the cost of half the k.u.k. forces. Now overextended and out of supplies, Habsburg troops presented a prime target for counterattack. From 2-15 December, the Serbs drove Potiorek's men back over the Bosnian border and ended the k.u.k. attempt to knock Serbia out of the war.<sup>829</sup>

The outcome of the Serbian campaign amounted to a military stalemate. Both armies by mid-December no longer had the ability to mount another offensive. Even though inflicting 273,804 casualties on the Habsburg army, the Serbs had barely forced the Austro-Hungarian troops out of Serbia and could not continue the advantage with 132,000 casualties of their own.<sup>830</sup> Considering the differences in training, experience, and leadership between the two armies, Habsburg troops had fought remarkably well once again under difficult conditions despite the ineptitude of k.u.k. leadership.

Politically, however, the Serbian campaign resulted in a resounding defeat for Austria-Hungary, which lost its former great power status in the Balkans.<sup>831</sup> The official Austrian history, authored by former general staff officers, called the outcome "politically a grave loss in prestige and validity for the Danubian Monarchy."<sup>832</sup> As a great power confronting a smaller state, the Habsburg government and military high command had expected an easy victory, avenging the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and maintaining great power status. When the fighting ended without success, no one could regard the Dual Monarchy on the same level as the

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<sup>829</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 651-762; Rothenberg, "The Austro-Hungarian Campaign Against Serbia in 1914," 141-143; Peball, "Der Feldzug gegen Serbien und Montenegro im Jahre 1914," 28-30; Jeřábek, *Potiorek*, 166-193; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 184-188; Hackl, "Der Offensivgeist des Conrad von Hötzendorf," 91-92.

<sup>830</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 759, 762; A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 108-109. The *ÖULK* figures include sick and missing as well as dead, wounded, and prisoners.

<sup>831</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 38.

<sup>832</sup> *ÖULK*, 1: 762.

other European first-rate powers, who considered the Habsburg empire almost dead.<sup>833</sup> Germany urged Austria-Hungary to restore lost prestige by yet another offensive against Serbia.<sup>834</sup> By the end of December 1914, though, Conrad had other ideas: the relief of Przemyśl and the ensuing winter debacle in the Carpathians.

Another invasion of Serbia would have suited the capabilities of the k.u.k. army far better than an offensive against the entrenched Russians. Although Potiorek had failed to crush Serbia, the Serbs had exhausted their military abilities. One more strong push, from the north rather than through the rugged western Serbian terrain, would have finished the Balkan state. This option would have required transferring troops from the Russian front and going to a completely defensive stance in Galicia, a choice that Conrad would have never taken. Great powers never defended. The Balkan campaign should have achieved a very different result, however. If Conrad had allowed *B-Staffel* to stay in the Balkans and invade Serbia instead of arriving in time only to participate in the Galician disaster, the extra Habsburg troops driving into Serbia from the north would have provided the opportunity to take the enemy in the flank. Even though a campaign of envelopment would have taken longer than the k.u.k. high command desired because of conditions in Serbia, the presence of numerical superiority would have at least given the chance of crushing the Serbian army. Conrad could not allow this plan, though, as such a choice did not correspond to the necessity of Austro-Hungarian offensives on all fronts.

### **The Results of Catastrophe**

This infatuation with the offensive caused catastrophic losses and the destruction of the Habsburg army. In less than one year, k.u.k. forces suffered over 2,000,000 casualties. The 1914 campaigns in Galicia resulted in 979,000 men lost out of 2,232,000. The Carpathian winter

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<sup>833</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 166.

<sup>834</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 24.

war claimed another 793,000 with the fall of Przemyśl. Even the victorious Gorlice-Tarnów campaign in 1915 lost 500,000 soldiers. The combination of these offensives with the Serbian invasions totalled 2,546,000 casualties, almost a million more than the total number of men in the Austro-Hungarian army at the beginning of the First World War.<sup>835</sup> Thus, with the majority of trained fighters out of commission, the Habsburg military became a militia relying on partially trained or untrained men who would not have met the service qualifications at the start of the conflict. As Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, an Austro-Hungarian staff officer, wrote after the war, “These workers and farmers clad in field gray uniforms were cannon fodder far more than conscious warriors.”<sup>836</sup>

Similarly, the k.u.k. officer corps suffered immense losses. By the end of 1914, almost half the career and reserve officers, or 22,310, counted among the casualties. The high number resulted especially from the practice of officers leading assaults in front of the troops. Just as with the rank and file, the Habsburg high command had to rely on young officers who had little training and in some cases had not qualified for officer status before the war.<sup>837</sup> Therefore, in the officer corps inexperience in combat and unfamiliarity with the men reigned. This situation only exacerbated the insufficient training and fitness of the replacement forces the officers had to lead and greatly impaired the combat effectiveness of the Austro-Hungarian army as a whole.

Nevertheless, the k.u.k. army showed amazing resilience. Despite the disastrous losses from the campaigns of 1914 and 1915, the officers as well as the rank and file, whether trained veterans or inexperienced replacements, attacked over and over again in the seemingly endless

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<sup>835</sup> *ÖULK*, 2: 118, 141, 270, 279, supplement, Beilage 1; Jeřábek, “The Eastern Front,” 157-158.

<sup>836</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 64.

<sup>837</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 194; Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 39.

offensives of Conrad. One tsarist general remarked that the ability of the k.u.k. army, which the Russians considered completely defeated, to mount repeated attacks surprised Russian leaders.<sup>838</sup> Though exceptions occurred, the majority of the Habsburg troops fought admirably under extremely difficult conditions, especially when under capable officers.<sup>839</sup> These men, who merely obeyed commands and charged headlong towards the enemy, shared no part of the blame for Austro-Hungarian defeats.<sup>840</sup> The narrowminded offensive strategy and tactics of Conrad and the rest of the high-ranking k.u.k. officers as well as imprudent spending decisions led to the catastrophic Habsburg losses of the First World War.

### **More Offensives**

Despite the weak state of the k.u.k. military, which cried out for a prudent defensive stance in Galicia, Conrad decided on yet another offensive against the Russians in the late summer and fall of 1915. This attack, the so-called *schwarzgelbe* or black and yellow offensive, took place without German support because the k.u.k. chief of the general staff wanted to restore the prestige and self-confidence of the Austro-Hungarian army. The opposite happened, however, with 230,000 more casualties and no gains from 26 August to 15 October.<sup>841</sup> Conrad proved once again that devotion to the offensive no matter the situation brought only disaster and loss of morale, not the spoils of victory.

The troops that futilely charged Russian entrenchments from August to October 1915 should have invaded Serbia for a far more likely success. The German high command had

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<sup>838</sup> Stöckelle, "Der Feldzug von Limanova-Lapanów 1.-20. Dezember 1914," 46.

<sup>839</sup> ÖULK, 1: 42-47; A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 192; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 185, 187, 192; Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 71-72.

<sup>840</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 98.

<sup>841</sup> ÖULK, 3: 51-175; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkrieg*, 27-30; Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 157; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 287-296.



advised Conrad to attack the Serbs in December 1914 and ever more pressingly since March 1915 but to no avail. The k.u.k. general staff chief always refused because of offensives in Galicia. Conrad also desired Bulgarian participation in an offensive against Serbia. Otherwise, the Austro-Hungarian commander-in-chief would not consider another invasion. Yet the chief of the general staff planned offensive operations against Russian and even Italy, which had recently entered the war against the Central Powers during the spring of 1915.<sup>842</sup> Certainly, an attack on severely weakened Serbia would have had greater possibilities for victory than any offensives against the numerically superior Russians and Italians. A strong k.u.k. proposal for a knockout blow on the small Balkan state would have forced Bulgaria to join Austria-Hungary earlier in order not to lose the opportunity of reaping part of Serbia as spoils of war.

By the time an invasion of Serbia finally took place on 5 October 1915, the failed offensive in Galicia had dragged on for six weeks before ending in defeat nine days later. The Habsburg military supplied only one army against Serbia, while Germany devoted one and Bulgaria two. Instead of sending a larger k.u.k. force to attack the Serbs, Conrad's main concern revolved around putting an Austro-Hungarian general in charge of the operation. Always focused on maintaining the prestige of the Habsburg Empire, the chief of the general staff fought over command with the Germans and caused strained relations among the Central Powers.<sup>843</sup> As for the campaign itself, the invading armies easily defeated the Serbs within six weeks because of numerical superiority, especially in artillery.<sup>844</sup> Rather than worrying about command relationships, Conrad should have assigned a much larger contingent of k.u.k. soldiers to the

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<sup>842</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 189-191.

<sup>843</sup> Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 32.

<sup>844</sup> Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 34-35; *ÖULK*, 3: 187-336; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 191; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 297-301.

Serbian campaign. Then demands for control over the offensive would have held more weight in conformity to the number of troops involved. Thus, Conrad could have conquered Serbia in a predominantly Habsburg invasion and restored some belief in Austro-Hungarian military abilities. With only one k.u.k. army group participating, however, no one could fail to realize the secondary role that Austria-Hungary played among the Central Powers.

### **The Italian Menace**

At the same time as the offensives against Russia and Serbia took place, the Dual Monarchy also had to form a front against its former ally Italy, which declared war on the Habsburg Empire on 23 May 1915. In this theater Conrad had to remain on the defensive. Now fighting a three front war against Russia, Serbia, and Italy, the k.u.k. military did not have the manpower to wage offensive campaigns. Nevertheless, the Austro-Hungarian general staff chief devised a plan for luring the Italians over the mountains, then falling upon the unsuspecting enemy.<sup>845</sup> This strategy, while not the offensive *à outrance* of previous Habsburg campaigns and thus more realistic for the situation, still employed surprise and assault according to Conrad's tactical ideas. The great numerical superiority of the Italians with 460,000 men and 1810 field pieces as opposed to 228,000 k.u.k. soldiers and 640 guns, however, rendered Conrad's idea impractical.<sup>846</sup> When the German high command heard of the plan, General Erich von Falkenhayn, chief of the German general staff, refused to send any troops to support such insanity. Thus, against his will, Conrad had to use the excellent defensive positions that the Alps offered instead of any preferred offensive actions.<sup>847</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> General Erich von Falkenhayn, *The German General Staff and its Decisions, 1914-1916* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920), 102.

<sup>846</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 190.

<sup>847</sup> Falkenhayn, *The German General Staff and its Decisions, 1914-1916*, 103.

This strategy proved highly beneficial for the outnumbered Austro-Hungarians along the Italian frontier. Eleven times the Italian army assaulted the strong defensive positions of the Habsburg military between the summers of 1915 and 1917. Eleven times k.u.k. troops easily repulsed the attacks while inflicting heavy casualties on the Italians.<sup>848</sup> Austro-Hungarian forces had wisely reinforced the mountainous terrain with field fortifications and thus rendered the frontal assaults of the Italians suicidal.<sup>849</sup> Permanent fortresses along the Italian border had little effect on the battles as the majority could not withstand heavy shelling or guarded areas of lesser strategic importance.<sup>850</sup> The millions spent on these fortifications for the most part provided nothing for k.u.k. soldiers. Field fortifications gave far more advantages than their permanent counterparts. The money wasted on fortresses should have gone to more and better artillery, which would have strengthened Habsburg positions and compensated for the inferiority in the number of men on the Italian front.

The entry of Italy into the war against the Dual Monarchy also worsened the k.u.k. navy's position. The Italian fleet added another 137 ships to the Entente powers in the Mediterranean and thus limited even more than before the possibilities of any Austro-Hungarian offensive actions at sea. Aside from a partially successful raid on the undefended Italian coast with the majority of the Habsburg fleet before the Italian navy arrived from the south, Haus adhered to coastal defense and submarine attacks on the enemy. This strategy remained the most effective stance for the k.u.k. fleet, which inflicted a loss of 33 Entente ships while losing only 9 Habsburg boats. The battleships, though, the supposed offensive part of the Austro-Hungarian navy,

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<sup>848</sup> *ÖULK*, 2: 733-792, 3: 345-520, 4: 667-706, 5: 21-108, 631-683, 6: 133-184, 431-487.

<sup>849</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 53.

<sup>850</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 188.

played no role whatsoever in k.u.k. operations in the Adriatic.<sup>851</sup> Thus, the hundreds of millions of Kronen granted for modern battleships floated in the form of Dreadnoughts at the port of Pola instead of procuring vital field pieces for the Russian, Serbian, and Italian fronts.

### **Technical and Tactical Progress: Artillery and Cavalry**

As the war continued, the Austro-Hungarian artillery branch greatly improved not only in number but also in quality. Industrial production rose as factories produced more modern field guns, such as the 15 cm M. 14 field guns, 15 cm M. 15 howitzers, 24 and 38 cm M. 16 howitzers, and 42 cm M. 16 and M. 17 howitzers. These larger and more powerful weapons no longer used steel-bronze barrels and thus replaced the old M. 99 and M. 99/04 models as well as the M. 5 guns that the Habsburg high command finally realized could not perform the tasks of modern artillery on First World War battlefields. The Germans and Turks even adopted the new k.u.k. 7.5 cm M. 15 mountain artillery during the war, and the Italians continued to use these guns after the war ended. With the new cannon, each k.u.k. division had 68 guns and rivalled in quantity and quality the artillery of the other powers. The Habsburg army also developed better mortars and flamethrowers as well as new machineguns and hand weapons. Each battalion had 8 machine guns, twice as many as at the beginning of the conflict. This increase signified great progress for the Dual Monarchy. However, despite the presence of much better and more numerous field pieces, the Austro-Hungarian army could not supply k.u.k. units with a sufficient number of light machine guns and handguns until the last stage of the war.<sup>852</sup> Habsburg industry also had difficulty throughout the war while attempting to compensate for the initial shell

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<sup>851</sup> Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism*, 273-295.

<sup>852</sup> Gabriel, "Die wichtigsten Waffen der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee 1918," 436-439; A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 312-314.

shortage, which became a chronic problem.<sup>853</sup> Thus, even with more and better artillery, the firepower of Austro-Hungarian field pieces could not equal the other major military powers because of the deficiency in ammunition, an even worse problem for the Dual Monarchy than for the other main belligerents.

By March 1917 the k.u.k. military had 5700 field and mountain cannon and 1530 heavy pieces but only 7000 machineguns, 2100 mortars, 1100 grenade launchers, 664 infantry cannon, and 320 trench mortars. Nevertheless, by the end of the war, the k.u.k. artillery had increased from 369 light, 28 heavy, and 74 mountain batteries to 864 light, 328 heavy, and 324 mountain formations. However, the k.u.k. military never developed any tanks despite the continued presence of Burstyn within the army. General Arz von Straussenberg, who became general staff chief in 1917, while later recounting the war mentioned not Burstyn's model but only *Honvéd* Colonel Benesch's tank, which the war ministry received in 1915. Because of a deficiency in material and time as well as the judgment that tanks had limited usefulness for mountain warfare, the Habsburg high command decided against the development of this new weapon.<sup>854</sup> Thus, the Austro-Hungarian army missed another opportunity to take advantage of the technological expertise of an officer who had invented a working model of a decisive means of war.

Although the Austro-Hungarian military made great strides in artillery, the problem inherent with issuing new weaponry to troops with little training remained. Even at the beginning of the war, reserve troops had no idea how to use much of the issued equipment.<sup>855</sup> This situation worsened during the war as new troops rushed to the front without adequate training, especially for the more technical weapons, such as artillery. Experienced soldiers, who

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<sup>853</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 95.

<sup>854</sup> Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 142, 259-260.

<sup>855</sup> Josef Neumair, *Im Serbischen Feldzug 1914: Erlebnisse und Stimmungen eines Landsturm Offiziers* (Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia, 1917), 34-35.

had never fired the M. 15, M. 16, and M. 17 field guns and howitzers, had to learn how to operate the new weapons on the battlefield. Some weapons, such as grenade launchers, required improvisations to suit the battlefield, especially in the mountains along the Italian front.<sup>856</sup> Thus, though the Habsburg army equalled the other military powers in cannon per division and in quality of individual guns, the k.u.k. artilleryists did not possess the same proficiency as the soldiers of other nations.

The cavalry of the Dual Monarchy also progressed during World War I by putting into practice the idea of horsemen as mounted infantry that Habsburg officers had envisioned before the conflict. By 1917 only one division remained as a traditional cavalry unit. The rest of the mounted branch fought on foot with the result that little difference remained between infantry and cavalry.<sup>857</sup> As the official Austrian history of the war said, “Machineguns, carbines, and spades had become their most trusted weapons.”<sup>858</sup> Learning the lessons of war in practice, Austro-Hungarian military leaders realized horses had little place in the reality of the modern battlefield. In addition, the k.u.k. army had great difficulty replacing the animals lost in the August 1914 Galicia raid as well as finding enough provisions for new horses. Therefore, the Habsburg high command determined units which could perform both infantry and cavalry tasks gave greater advantages than troops fighting only while mounted.

Austro-Hungarian officers also realized the importance of the defense and entrenching as the war progressed. Therefore, technical troops took on a greater role in both attack and defense. K.u.k. soldiers learned to use the terrain and dig in even while assaulting as Habsburg military

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<sup>856</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 313-314.

<sup>857</sup> Auffenberg, *Aus Österreich-Ungarns Teilnahme am Weltkrieg*, 41; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 194.

<sup>858</sup> *ÖULK*, 4: 122.

leaders tried to adapt to the realities of the modern battlefield.<sup>859</sup> Though Dual Monarchy forces did not achieve the proficiency of the Germans in storming enemy positions, Austro-Hungarian officers and troops showed a willingness to learn from experience and put into practice the lessons of previous First World War campaigns.

### **Failure in Italy and Galicia**

While the k.u.k. army continued to recover from early reverses and make progress in artillery, cavalry, and technical troops, Conrad merely saw more resources and opportunities for offensives. The chief of the Habsburg general staff desired to punish the perfidious Italians for betraying the alliance with the Central Powers and saw a chance to raise Habsburg prestige with a victory over another military power. Rejecting Falkenhayn's suggestion of continuing the purely defensive strategy against Italy and Russia, Conrad concocted a grand plan of envelopment in the style of the elder Moltke.<sup>860</sup> As usual, however, the general staff chief failed to take into account the realities of mountain warfare, especially in winter. The two month delay in starting the assault as well as the concentration of large numbers of men and field pieces for the attack lost any chance for surprise that Conrad treasured so highly. Difficult terrain complicated the offensive, which beginning on 15 May 1916 bogged down shortly after small successes. Nevertheless the Austro-Hungarian general staff chief, believing the enemy had won only because of greater morale and the *Wille zum Siege*, insisted on driving k.u.k. troops forward and amassing more casualties until 17 June. By that point, continuation of the offensive had

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<sup>859</sup> *ÖULK*, 4: 102-103, 116-131.

<sup>860</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 55-56.

become not only a waste of manpower and resources but also impossible because of the Russian Brusilov offensive in Galicia.<sup>861</sup>

This attack on Habsburg forces had great success primarily because Conrad had denuded the k.u.k. defenses against Russia to bolster the fruitless assault on the Italians.<sup>862</sup> The removal of nine divisions, including most of the k.u.k. army's best troops, along with a large number of field guns, machineguns, and ammunition, exposed the entrenched Austro-Hungarians to the Russian offensive.<sup>863</sup> General Alexei Alexandrovich Brusilov easily broke through the weakened k.u.k. positions on the 4 June, the first day of the attack and thirteen days before Conrad finally admitted the offensive against Italy had failed. Only sending five divisions back to Galicia, despite knowing of the Russian plans well before the assault, the Habsburg general staff chief had to call upon Germany yet again to compensate for the Austro-Hungarian inability to cope with the Russians. Falkenhayn sent troops from the German reserve and the western front to halt the Russian advance. By the end of September, the Brusilov offensive ended but only after taking most of Galicia and causing another 613,587 casualties for the k.u.k. army.<sup>864</sup>

Because of Conrad's perpetual insistence on offensive operations on at least one front, in this case against Italy, the Habsburg military suffered another catastrophic defeat. Although k.u.k. troops had established strong entrenchments opposite the Russians, Austro-Hungarian

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<sup>861</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 194-195; ÖULK, 4: 253-356; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 53-66; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 245-246; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 183-187; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 339-343.

<sup>862</sup> Stürgh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen*, 288; A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 275.

<sup>863</sup> Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 159; Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 57; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 64.

<sup>864</sup> ÖULK, 4: 359-664, 5: 117-220; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 345-352; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 196-197; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 246-263; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 188-189.



leadership proved deficient as soldiers did not exercise enough, learned little about defensive fighting, and continued to practice assault techniques.<sup>865</sup> Defense both in Galicia and along the Alps would have enabled the Austro-Hungarians to continue building military resources while conserving manpower. As Colonel Pitreich wrote later, however, “It was precisely the sickness of our time that it wished to know nothing of the defensive and that it considered defense only as an evil, which could not be overcome quickly enough.”<sup>866</sup> Well over half a million casualties meant more inexperienced and poorly trained replacement troops filling the ranks of the Habsburg army and thus further eroded any Austro-Hungarian pretensions of great power status.

### **Secondary Status**

For the rest of the war the Dual Monarchy’s military rarely waged any campaign without German support. When Rumania joined the Entente nations on 27 August 1916 near the end of the Brusilov offensive, the Central Powers formed the Danube Army, a combination of Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Turks. In a campaign that lasted from early September 1916 until early January 1917, the Central Powers launched a two-pronged invasion of Rumania. Taking the capital Bucharest and most of Rumanian soil, the Danube Army easily and effectively knocked Rumania out of the war.<sup>867</sup> Though Habsburg troops had fought well during the campaign and formed a large part of the invading forces, German commanders led the combined army and reaped praise for the victory.<sup>868</sup> No doubt existed about the subordinate role of the Dual Monarchy in regard to the war effort.

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<sup>865</sup> *ÖULK*, 4: 373-374; Jeřábek, “The Eastern Front,” 158-159.

<sup>866</sup> M. Pitreich, *Lemberg 1914*, 168.

<sup>867</sup> *ÖULK*, 5: 223-358, 449-628; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 80-85; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 414-417; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 197; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 264-281.

<sup>868</sup> *Arz, Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 102-120; Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 192.

The Central Powers agreed on a unified command on 13 September 1916, as the Rumanian campaign started. This arrangement stipulated that the German emperor Wilhelm II would serve as supreme commander with Hindenburg and Ludendorff in actual control of military operations. Although Austro-Hungarian officers, especially Conrad, complained about the new structure because of the ensuing loss of prestige for the Dual Monarchy, the events of the first two years of the war had illustrated the ineffectiveness of the k.u.k. army when fighting alone. Continually requiring German help, Habsburg military leaders had already suffered the humiliation of having to work under German commanders or receiving German chiefs of staff. The September 1916 command arrangement merely confirmed the predominant role that Germany played in the Central Powers' relationship.<sup>869</sup> Although the world power status of Austria-Hungary suffered greatly, the military situation demanded that considerations of prestige no longer control Habsburg thinking.<sup>870</sup>

Clearly, German officers had no delusions concerning the great power status of the Dual Monarchy. The German Major General Hans von Seeckt, who served as chief of staff for Archduke Charles, the heir to the Habsburg throne, held an extremely negative view of Austro-Hungarian commanders. According to Seeckt, only German leadership could produce victory on the eastern front because k.u.k. leaders displayed little initiative, knowledge of the troops, responsibility, training, or prestige.<sup>871</sup> Ludendorff, comparing Austria-Hungary to Bulgaria and Turkey because of the need for German support to maintain the weak Habsburg army, wrote of the First World War as a struggle of "Germany and its allies against the great European military

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<sup>869</sup> Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 66-73; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 198-199; Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 268-269.

<sup>870</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 58.

<sup>871</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 198, 206.

powers.”<sup>872</sup> Obviously, the Dual Monarchy did not rank as one of the major powers but merely an ally of Germany.

### **The New Emperor and the Army**

During the Rumanian campaign, Emperor Franz Joseph died at the age of eighty-seven after sixty-eight years of rule. His heir Charles assumed supreme command over the army and made all operational decisions, while the chief of the general staff took on a subordinate position. Several months later, on 1 March 1917, Charles dismissed Conrad as chief of the general staff because of Conrad’s continuous defeats, refusal to take a lesser role, and desire to continue the war. While the former general staff chief became the commander of a k.u.k. army group on the Italian front, General Arz von Straussenburg, who had performed well in the field and showed himself willing to take a position subordinate to the new emperor, assumed the direction of the general staff.<sup>873</sup> Charles had finally replaced the incompetent Conrad, but far too late to save the weakened Habsburg military. Even if the removal of Conrad had taken place earlier in the war, doubt remains as to whether another high-ranking officer would have rejected the desire for more offensives and developed a more defensive strategy. Conrad’s ideas had disseminated throughout the k.u.k. officer corps as his former students at the *Kriegsschule* filled forty-nine of the highest Austro-Hungarian military positions by 1917.<sup>874</sup> These men agreed with the offensive doctrine of the former chief of the general staff. Other high-ranking officers, such as Auffenberg, maintained that Conrad grasped the right principles of war but exaggerated the offensive in practice. Thus, despite Conrad’s great intelligence and dedication, superficial tactics that emphasized the offensive at all costs entered into maneuvers and did not correspond to the

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<sup>872</sup> Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1921), 66.

<sup>873</sup> *ÖULK*, 6: 68-72; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 100; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 202-203.

<sup>874</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 198-199.

correct theory.<sup>875</sup> Even one of the greatest critics of Conrad, FML Alfred Krauss of the general staff, concluded that the former general staff chief's greatest mistake was the failure to implement effective strategy and operations rather than a mistaken insistence on the tactical offensive with ensuing huge casualties.<sup>876</sup> Certainly a large number of prominent Habsburg officers did not learn the primary lesson of the Great War: the supremacy of the defense.

Charles, like most members of the royal family, had little training, though the new emperor had gained experience from commanding army groups on the Italian front during the war. Charles devoted great energy in doing good by restoring humaneness to the battlefield and improving the conditions of the k.u.k. soldiers.<sup>877</sup> The emperor outlawed physical punishments and executions in the field as well as duels. In addition, the Habsburg army could no longer engage in strategic bombing that might harm civilians or use gas without Charles's approval. Some officers disapproved these reforms because of the fear of losing discipline among the troops.<sup>878</sup> These measures, however, marked an improvement in the treatment of the rank and file while no reports emerged concerning a decrease in discipline or willingness to fight.

On the contrary, Austro-Hungarian forces responded to the call for another offensive against Italy and performed their duty as usual. With the exception of some Slavic troops, especially Czechs, desertions did not cause excessive problems for the multinational Habsburg army until the very end of the war.<sup>879</sup> During the July 1917 Kerensky offensive, which the Russians launched at the command of Alexander Kerensky, the second prime minister of the

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<sup>875</sup> Moritz Freiherr von Auffenberg-Komarów, *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang: Eine Lebensschilderung* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), 173.

<sup>876</sup> Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, 162.

<sup>877</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 198-202.

<sup>878</sup> Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 134-136; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 95.

<sup>879</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 390-391; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 187; Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 197-198.

Russian Provisional Government after the fall of the tsar in the previous spring, the Czechoslovak Brigade, predominantly formed from former k.u.k. soldiers, joined in the attack. Czech propagandists later exaggerated the effect of this unit on Habsburg forces as the Russian offensive stalled after some initial success. With German help, Austro-Hungarian troops counterattacked, regaining the lost ground and driving the enemy even farther back than before.<sup>880</sup> Again the k.u.k. army required German support to withstand another Russian assault. At least the new Habsburg high command knew better than to order another fruitless offensive in Galicia. By remaining on the defensive, Austro-Hungarian forces had the chance to recover and push back the Russians while cooperating with German troops.

The success of the Central Powers on the eastern front revived Habsburg hope for a victorious offensive against Italy. Charles desired no German help for this endeavor. Instead, the new emperor wanted to employ only Austro-Hungarian forces in an attempt to revive the prestige of the Dual Monarchy with a victory over Italy, the hereditary enemy. The presence of German troops would harm the spirit of Habsburg units.<sup>881</sup> This proposal, however, did not please Ludendorff, who held little trust in the battleworthiness and leadership abilities of the k.u.k. army. Therefore, the German general sent seven divisions to support the offensive. Under the direction of German commanders, who made all the important decisions, the assault troops gained great success. During this battle of Karfreit (Caporetto), beginning on 24 October 1917, Habsburg and German forces pushed back the Italians seventy miles. Using the new German tactics of sudden saturation bombardment and infiltration rather than the long cannonades and frontal charges of previous years, the attack units inflicted over 300,000 casualties on the Italian

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<sup>880</sup> *ÖULK*, 6: 213-336; Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 159-162; Jeřábek, "The Eastern Front," 160.

<sup>881</sup> Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 171; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 126-127.

military. As in most Great War offensives, though, the successful troops outdistanced the supply lines and had to halt. By mid-November, the Italians had established a new line along the Piave River and thus ended the offensive.<sup>882</sup> Although Habsburg soldiers had supplied the majority of the troops for this endeavor, German leadership and tactics had created the victory. Charles's wish for a solely k.u.k. triumph did not receive fulfillment. No one failed to see the Germans as the power responsible for such great success, not Austria-Hungary, which FML Krauss later called a "dying" state.<sup>883</sup>

### **Progress and Reform**

Before the war ended, the k.u.k. high command tried to implement reforms stemming from the lessons of the modern battlefield. In March 1915, Conrad developed a plan for reorganizing the army after the war would end. This plan emphasized especially the creation of a reserve army.<sup>884</sup> Charles and Arz, realizing that peacetime never offered the best opportunity for instituting such measures, decided to draw up a new program and begin reforming the army during the war. Based on experiences from Great War campaigns, the reform plan called for a peacetime army of 594,000 with a permanent supreme command structure. This much larger military would consist of sixty infantry divisions and ten cavalry with seventy-two light field pieces and twenty-four heavy per division as well as a mortar battery and an anti-aircraft battery. The presence of more technical troops, including sapper and communications units, in addition to a much larger air branch showed the recognition of the importance of technology for modern war. In addition, each division would have a special assault battalion to employ the new German

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<sup>882</sup> ÖULK, 6: 493-669; Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 174-185; Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 217-252; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 501-509.

<sup>883</sup> Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 301.

<sup>884</sup> Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, "Heeresorganisation vor 50 Jahren: Planungen und Maßnahmen für den Friedensausbau der k.u.k. Wehrmacht nach beendigtem Kriege," *ÖMZ Sonderheft* (1967): 18.

infiltration tactics. Officers had to master the art of both the attack and the defense while studying the methods of other armies.<sup>885</sup>

Although the determination to keep ten cavalry divisions revealed a certain persistence in retaining formations that no longer had much use for the battlefield, these troops constituted fewer mounted units than Conrad's plan. Charles and Arz stressed the necessity of cavalry fighting in the style of infantry by increasing the number of machine guns per unit and relying on firepower rather than shock. The emperor and his chief of staff also determined to employ artillery in mobile units rather than stationing cannon in fortresses.<sup>886</sup> Thus, the new program definitely emphasized the roles of infantry, artillery, and technical troops while lessening the importance of cavalry and permanent fortifications. K.u.k. leaders proved again the ability to learn from experience, though obviously this reform program came too late to save the Dual Monarchy.

As in the past, practical application also presented difficulties for the Habsburg military. Reorganizing the army in the midst of a war entailed numerous troop transfers and much marching, which did little to enhance the morale of the rank and file. Several officers objected to the confusion and fatigue that the men experienced during the reforming of units.<sup>887</sup> Certainly, the Austro-Hungarian army needed reorganization though, especially with the high casualties and ensuing haphazard replacement arrangements that produced provisional units of varying strengths. Although the First World War ended in defeat for the k.u.k. military and the

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<sup>885</sup> Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 257-259.

<sup>886</sup> Allmayer-Beck, "Heeresorganisation vor 50 Jahren: Planungen und Maßnahmen für den Friedensausbau der k.u.k. Wehrmacht nach beendigtem Kriege," 22-24.

<sup>887</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 248; Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg*, 247; *ÖULK*, 7: 55.

dismantling of the Habsburg Empire, Charles's reform program would have set the framework for the modernization of the Austro-Hungarian army during peacetime.

### **The Last Offensives and Final Defeat**

K.u.k. forces had sustained vast losses in both men and material by the beginning of 1918. Yet, with the support of German forces, the Habsburg military had gained victories against the external enemies: Serbia, Russia, Rumania, and Italy, while achieving some stability from reorganization. The Austro-Hungarian army proved incapable, however, of solving the internal issue of supply. Shortages of coal and food became more problematic than producing sufficient weapons and ammunition. This difficulty applied not only to the military but also to the industrial workers, many of whom went on strike. To relieve this situation, the army sent rations to the workers, and thus rendered the k.u.k. supply predicament desperate.<sup>888</sup>

Nevertheless, the Habsburg high command regarded another offensive against Italy as the best means for the Dual Monarchy to prosecute the war. Even though the Austro-Hungarians had gained success in the previous assault on Italian positions, the present difficulties confronting the k.u.k. army made an attack inadvisable. Still looking for a knockout blow against Italy and under the influence of German prodding, Charles ordered the offensive, which began on 6 June 1918. Facing a numerically superior enemy that had French and British support, especially in air and armor, the Habsburg offensive had no chance for victory. Within two weeks of almost fruitless assaults costing another 142,500 casualties, Charles signaled a retreat.<sup>889</sup> The last Austro-Hungarian offensive failed, just as every other solely k.u.k. offensive during the war. For an army with so many inexperienced and poorly trained troops suffering from malnutrition

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<sup>888</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 210-211.

<sup>889</sup> ÖULK, 7: 207-359; Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 262-273; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkrieg*, 164-173; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 570-579.



as well as inadequate supplies and ammunition, attack amounted to insanity. The temptation to emulate German successes and eliminate Italy without relying on German intervention became too great for a high command desiring to restore the former prestige of the Habsburg military.

Similarly, the k.u.k. navy attempted an offensive action against Entente ships in the Adriatic in the spring of 1918. This sortie marked the first and only time during the First World War that the whole Habsburg fleet, including the four Dreadnoughts, attacked enemy vessels. The new fleet commander, Rear Admiral Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya, felt a major action would raise morale, which had fallen because of low rations and inactivity. The sortie, however, garnered the opposite result. An Italian torpedo boat surprised the newest Austro-Hungarian Dreadnought, the *Szent István*, and sank the battleship with two hits. Horthy then called off the attack and returned to port after rescuing most of the Dreadnought's crew.<sup>890</sup> The most modern Dreadnought that the Dual Monarchy produced went to the bottom of the Adriatic Sea without firing a shot. This ship, as well as the three other Dreadnoughts, accomplished nothing throughout the whole war. Instead of wasting hundreds of millions of Kronen on useless battleships that did not even participate in a major sea battle during the Great War, the k.u.k. high command should have employed the funding to procure modern artillery or develop tanks that would have benefitted the army in Italy far more than four anchored Dreadnoughts.

The combination of defeat with supply difficulties, which reduced k.u.k. troops to starvation rations, as well as nationalistic sentiments within the Habsburg empire resulted in an increasing number of desertions.<sup>891</sup> Almost 250,000 soldiers deserted in the early part of 1918 in addition to mutinies in other units. The Austro-Hungarian army, however, continued to defend

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<sup>890</sup> Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism*, 334-336.

<sup>891</sup> Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe: Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten*, 332-335.

the lines against Italy until the end of the war. For two days, 24-25 October, k.u.k. forces withstood the attacks of Italian and French troops. With little food and other provisions, Habsburg units began to mutiny as the Austro-Hungarian military crumbled. On 3 November, the k.u.k. high command ordered the remaining troops to cease firing.<sup>892</sup> Altogether, out of 8,000,000 men, the Habsburg army suffered 2,707,200 casualties, the majority in offensive actions.<sup>893</sup> Another 1,943,000 counted among the wounded.<sup>894</sup> The percentage of losses for Austro-Hungarian troops surpassed that of any of the other major combatants.<sup>895</sup> Surely defensive positions with strong entrenchments and adequate artillery support would have limited the immense numbers of deaths, wounds, and captures.

## Conclusion

The First World War resulted in the death of the Habsburg Empire, just as Sieber's Cassandra had foretold. The k.u.k. military also ceased to exist as the Entente powers divided up the Dual Monarchy into smaller states. The German liaison officer Cramon contended after the war that Habsburg military power perhaps might have sufficed to defeat Serbia alone.<sup>896</sup> Entering the war on two fronts against enemies superior in numbers and weaponry, however, the Austro-Hungarian high command needed a strategy that suited the disadvantageous position of the Habsburg army. As Austria-Hungary's only ally, Germany, put the majority of the German army into an enveloping maneuver against France according to the Schlieffen Plan, Conrad's troops faced the forces of Russia in Galicia with little support. The obvious strategy, despite

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<sup>892</sup> ÖULK, 7: 565-757; Arz, *Zur Geschichte des großen Krieges 1914-1918*, 333-338, 356-378; A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 390-395; Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 191-197; Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers: Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 613-616; Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 216-218.

<sup>893</sup> ÖULK, 7, supplement 1, Beilage 37.

<sup>894</sup> Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, 218.

<sup>895</sup> Susan Everett, *History of World War I* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 248.

<sup>896</sup> Cramon, *Unser Österreich-Ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, 200.

Germany's proddings, would have consisted of a defensive stance along the San and Dniester rivers that could have taken advantage of the expensive fortress of Przemyśl. At the same time, defense against Serbia would have afforded k.u.k. soldiers the opportunity to train with new weapons as well as time for the Dual Monarchy's industry to produce the artillery that the high command had ordered before the war. Entrenched positions with the support of field guns on both fronts would have given the Habsburg army the chance to survive the initial campaigns of World War I until German units arrived from the failed campaign on the Western front.

Such prudent ideas, however, did not correspond with the offensive strategy and tactics of Conrad and the k.u.k. infantry regulations. Conrad possessed only one solution to every military problem: the offensive *à outrance*. As General Baron Josef Stürgkh, the Austro-Hungarian representative at the German headquarters, noted, Conrad "was considered erroneously as the right man for chief of the general staff." Though regarded as an expert in tactics and troop leadership, Conrad failed in every solely Habsburg offensive.<sup>897</sup> Despite the Austro-Hungarian inferiority in men and weaponry, the k.u.k. chief of the general staff believed that the *Wille zum Siege* would give Habsburg troops higher morale than the enemy and thus the ability to overcome the numerical superiority of Russia. This attitude had imbued the whole Austro-Hungarian officer corps, especially the highest ranks, which Conrad's former students at the war college filled. One officer over forty years after the war attributed one of the k.u.k. military's victories over Russia to the "unshakeable will for attack" of Habsburg forces.<sup>898</sup> Yet General Pitreich wrote after the First World War, "The morale of these troops who had to experience such an especially heavy baptism of fire was worth much too little."<sup>899</sup>

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<sup>897</sup> Stürgkh, *Politische und militärische Erinnerungen*, 288-289.

<sup>898</sup> Stöckelle, "Der Feldzug von Limanova-Lapanów 1.-20. Dezember 1914," 46.

<sup>899</sup> A. Pitreich, *Der Österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer*, 82.

In addition, concern for the great power status of the Dual Monarchy committed the k.u.k. high command to an aggressive approach to war. According to Habsburg military theorists, only attacking strategy and tactics, like the enveloping battles of the elder Moltke in 1866 and 1870, brought victory. Great military powers always attacked. Therefore, Austria-Hungary, in order to prove its rank among the European states, had to employ offensive strategy and tactics to achieve success. In particular against Serbia, a second rate military nation, the k.u.k. army needed a quick knockout blow to show the world how a great power deals with smaller foes.

The offensive *à outrance*, however, did not constitute the only error for the Habsburg military. Imprudent pre-war spending decisions compounded the mistake of the weaker k.u.k. army assaulting more numerous enemies. Rather than focusing procurement decisions on upgrading the artillery branch by purchasing more modern field pieces and mortars, the Austro-Hungarian high command poured immense sums into permanent fortifications and Dreadnoughts. Raising the number of cannon per infantry division to equal or even exceed the allotments of enemy formations would have accomplished far more than spending millions to build and upgrade fortresses and battleships that did not provide much help during the war.

The combination of offensive strategy and tactics with poor spending decisions caused catastrophe for the k.u.k. military. The numerically inferior Habsburg army entered the First World War without adequate field pieces and ammunition. Even after disaster struck in the opening campaigns in Galicia and Serbia, Conrad insisted on more offensives, even in the bitter winter of the Carpathian mountains with poorly trained replacement troops. Only when German forces arrived to support Austro-Hungarian units did the Dual Monarchy achieve victory. Yet

Conrad continued to try to mount offensives to restore the sinking prestige of the k.u.k. army without success.

After the new emperor Charles dismissed Conrad, the offensive doctrine remained as the Habsburg military launched two assaults on Italy in the last years of the war. Charles did begin a program of reforms, however, to raise the fighting capabilities of the Austro-Hungarian army. These reforms came too late, though, to rescue the disintegrating Dual Monarchy. Suffering from malnutrition, inadequate supplies, and demoralization, k.u.k. troops began to mutiny and surrender to the enemy. Though resilient throughout the war, the army could no longer exist in the political and social turmoil at the end of the conflict. Under the conditions of 1918, defeat had become inevitable for the Habsburg military. The Austro-Hungarian army, however, did not have to endure early and repeated disasters. The mistakes of undertaking offensive strategy and tactics that did not fit the abilities of k.u.k. forces and weaponry combined with imprudent spending on permanent fortresses and battleships to ensure catastrophe for the Dual Monarchy.

## Conclusion

“A great general does not need to hold on to prevailing theory; others cling only to secondary greatness. While the latter are ruled by theory, the born general - and there is only such - rules theory and art.”<sup>900</sup> Thus General Alfred Krauss wrote of the difference between Moltke and Benedek thirty-five years after the Austro-Prussian War. Krauss also applied this distinction to the leaders of the First World War while claiming that the Dual Monarchy possessed no men of greatness to display “the hard, inflexible will, the will for action, for battle, for victory.”<sup>901</sup>

This analysis has merit in that Conrad and the majority of high-ranking k.u.k. officers during World War I adhered staunchly to the doctrine of the offensive in the face of mounting casualties and catastrophic defeats. Instead of conforming military doctrine to the realities of the battlefield, Conrad and his followers futilely attempted to force Habsburg soldiers to do the impossible: frontal assaults without artillery support against numerically and materially superior defenders in entrenched positions. Similarly, without sufficient artillery preparation Benedek ordered Austro-Hungarian troops to assault Prussian infantry firing the needle gun in 1866. Much like Benedek’s attacks, Conrad’s tactics removed any chances that the Austro-Hungarian army held for victory in the Great War.

Krauss’s words, however, failed to deliver a complete picture of the causes for Habsburg defeat both in 1866 and 1914-1918. Not only did Krauss omit the problem of imprudent

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<sup>900</sup> General der Infanterie Alfred Krauß, *Moltke, Benedek und Napoleon* (Wien: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1901), quoted in Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, “Heeresorganisation vor 50 Jahren: Planungen und Maßnahmen für den Friedensausbau der k.u.k. Wehrmacht nach beendigtem Kriege,” *ÖMZ Sonderheft* (1967): 27.

<sup>901</sup> General der Infanterie Alfred Krauß, *Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage: Erinnerungen und Urteile aus dem Weltkrieg* (München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921), 301-302.

spending decisions on the part of the Austro-Hungarian high command but also the former k.u.k. general stressed the *Wille zur Siege* far too much. Military success does not depend solely on the will of leaders for victory, as all leaders desire to win. If that idea were valid, then the Dual Monarchy should have achieved more success during both the Austro-Prussian War and the Great War. Benedek, though pessimistic, certainly wished to win a great victory in 1866 and relied on *élan* too much. Surely, Conrad, with his constant offensives and desire to restore the fallen prestige of the Habsburg Empire and army, maintained the will to win. The tenacious will of a leader far from the battlefield, however, cannot compensate for grossly inferior numerical and material deficiencies. Therein lay the causes of the military demise of k.u.k. forces.

The words of Krauss also fail to take into account the ability of leaders to learn from mistakes and form new ideas. The Habsburg military high command displayed this ability throughout the years between 1866 and 1918. Following the disaster against Prussia during the Austro-Prussian War, Archduke Albrecht, Beck, and John, the new high command, realized the tactical errors Benedek committed in Bohemia. Immediately these men started reforming the Austro-Hungarian army in an effort to restore lost prestige for the Dual Monarchy and maintain the Habsburg empire as a great power. Thus, the new leadership forbade frontal assaults against enemies wielding breechloading rifles and determined to procure breechloaders for Habsburg soldiers. The new war minister Kuhn also attempted to reform military education by implementing testing for promotions and emphasizing the intellectual training of the officer corps. Rivalry, especially between Albrecht and Kuhn who disagreed about the best methods of reform, however, slowed the reforms until Kuhn's dismissal in 1874.

Despite this delay, the Austro-Hungarian army made great progress in fighting methods and weaponry during the years following 1866. Finding an opportunity to display these

improvements, the Habsburg military welcomed the mandate of the Congress of Berlin to invade Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878. Although the mostly irregular enemy forces in the Balkans did not constitute an opponent worthy of great power status, the Habsburg victory in Bosnia-Herzegovina restored the confidence of the Dual Monarchy's population in Austro-Hungarian military ability. More importantly, the representatives of the Delegations, which determined the funding for the Habsburg army, softened their view of military appropriations and began to agree more willingly to the army's budgetary requests. War Minister Bylandt-Rheidt especially promoted good relations with the parliamentary delegates by proving fiscal responsibility in the Habsburg military and thereby convinced the Delegations to fund the purchase of repeating rifles in the 1880s.

However, problems still occurred within the Dual Monarchy high command. The two main issues involved tactics and spending decisions. Despite the move towards less offensive tactics and the insistence on using terrain and artillery to support infantry during the 1870s and 1880s, the reforms stayed more within the realm of theory rather than practice. On the exercise field and during maneuvers, Austro-Hungarian officers, contrary to the instructions of the regulations, instilled attacking methods into the men while paying little attention to defensive principles. This spirit of the offensive continued among certain members of the Habsburg officer corps, especially in the cavalry. Mounted officers, decrying the smaller role that horsemen would play in future wars, attempted to maintain the offensive power of cavalry in charging infantry. The Dual Monarchy's military high command, nevertheless, became one of the first European powers to eliminate the lance from mounted units and stress the importance of firepower for all branches.



The other major problems for the Austro-Hungarian high command involved procurement decisions. With far less funding than the rest of the great military powers, Habsburg leaders had to make wise spending choices to keep pace with the other European armies. The decisions of the Dual Monarchy's military leadership, however, did not entail a prudent use of funds. Instead of ensuring that the Austro-Hungarian artillery, the strongest branch of the Habsburg army in 1866, maintained the quantity of field pieces per division that other militaries possessed, the k.k. high command decided that upgrading and building permanent fortresses offered greater advantages for defending the borders of the empire. Compounding this problem, Austro-Hungarian military leaders decided to produce artillery using inferior Uchatius steel-bronze barrels from the Viennese Arsenal rather than purchase from foreign firms, such as Krupp in Germany. This foolish decision wasted vital funds on poor material that weighed more and shot a smaller distance than the lighter steel barrels. Thus the k.k. artillery became the worst among the major European states.

Imprudent spending decisions and insufficient practical application of theoretical tactical reforms stymied the progress that the Habsburg army had made during the 1870s and 1880s. Despite great interest and debates about new technology and methods of war because of innovations in weaponry, the Austro-Hungarian military continued to lag behind the other armies of Europe. This situation worsened dramatically during the 1890s when two events reversed the improvements which the Dual Monarchy's army had made. First, Conrad von Hötzendorf became tactical instructor at the *Kriegsschule* from 1888-1892. Second, Archduke Albrecht died in 1895.

With the rise of Hötzendorf to the most important position in the Habsburg war college, the obsession with the offensive and especially the victories of Moltke in 1866 and 1870

permeated the staff officers who studied under Conrad. These men held most of the high-ranking positions during the First World War and thus pushed the offensive *à outrance* according to the instructions received at the *Kriegsschule*. The death of Albrecht removed the most influential voice of reason concerning tactics that would suit the ever-increasing firepower of both infantry and artillery with the advent of repeating rifles and more destructive field guns. Though Albrecht had advocated greater use of cavalry and permanent fortresses, the archduke perspicaciously opposed useless frontal assaults against well-trained and equipped soldiers. After 1895 few officers dared resist the reversion to the former offensive tactics that Conrad endorsed so vehemently.

By the time Conrad received the post of general staff chief in 1906, no more discussion took place over the correct form of tactics. The new regulations in the last two decades before the Great War focused more and more on assault methods while emphasizing the role and importance of the bayonet, especially for morale. In order to compensate for numerical and material inferiority, Conrad and the majority of the k.u.k. officer corps looked to the *Wille zur Siege* to provide the advantage. During the years preceding World War I, the chief of the general staff and his subordinates adhered more strenuously than ever to the dictates of the offensive. Instead of learning the lessons of recent wars, Austro-Hungarian officers interpreted the events of the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Balkan Wars to fit preconceived notions of the supremacy of the offense, the higher morale and will power of the attacker, and the passivity of the defense that the conflicts of 1866 and 1870 had supposedly proven. Interpreting especially the victory of the smaller Japanese army over the Russians in 1905 as the result of superior will and offensive ability, Habsburg officers took morale and attack as the secrets of success against a likely future opponent. Although seeing the devastating effect of artillery fire with explosive

shells, shrapnel, and grenades, k.u.k. writers chose to leave the true lessons of modern warfare in theory rather than translate these ideas to the battlefield. After all, the offensive side always won.

At the same time, Conrad and the rest of the Dual Monarchy's high command realized the grave deficiencies in Austro-Hungarian artillery. In a desperate attempt to rectify this situation, the war ministers appealed to the Delegations for extraordinary funding. Though the parliamentary delegates approved most of the k.u.k. requests, the Habsburg army could not procure enough new cannon and ammunition nor sufficiently modern field pieces to equal the artillery of the enemy in the First World War. In addition, the Austro-Hungarian military decision-makers chose to spend immense sums of money on permanent fortresses and especially Dreadnoughts rather than modern field guns or tanks. Great power status played a major role in regarding battleships so highly. The delegates who approved funding for superfluous naval projects echoed the Habsburg military's refrain of needing Dreadnoughts to maintain the Dual Monarchy's place among the great powers as well as foster overseas business ventures. The latter consideration appealed strongly to parliamentary delegates who represented business interests within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, the k.u.k. army, with approval from the majority of the Delegations, spent hundreds of millions of Kronen on useless fortresses and battleships rather than providing Habsburg soldiers with the necessary material and technology for victory.

Entering World War I with fewer soldiers and inferior weaponry, especially artillery, than the Entente powers, Austria-Hungary required strategy and tactics that would present the chance for success. The offensive *à outrance* approach of the *de facto* commander-in-chief Conrad provided the opposite. During the opening campaigns both in Galicia and Serbia, only the

defensive, in at least one theater, could have afforded the possibility of victory for k.u.k. forces. Instead, Conrad ordered attacks against superior opponents. These mindless assaults resulted in catastrophe, destroying the majority of the trained Habsburg fighters and transforming the Dual Monarchy's military into a militia of poorly equipped reserves. Though Austro-Hungarian troops showed amazing resiliency and the k.u.k. army strove vigorously to adapt to the realities of the modern battlefield while upgrading in particular the artillery branch, the Habsburg high command merely saw more occasions for offensives. Every solely Dual Monarchy offensive ended in defeat and added to the disastrous losses of the army. Only when employing the defensive or attacking with the support of Germany did Austria-Hungary achieve success. Rather than restoring the great power status of the Habsburg Empire, the offensive strategy and tactics of k.u.k. leaders culminated in not only the destruction of the Dual Monarchy's army but the very empire the soldiers tried to defend. The combination of imprudent prewar spending decisions and the obsession with the offensive eliminated any hope of a Habsburg victory in the First World War.

During the war, primarily after the dismissal of Conrad as general staff chief, the Austro-Hungarian high command showed the ability to learn from the experiences of Great War battlefields. The reforms that Emperor Charles and his chief of staff Arz implemented and proposed revealed that these men realized the necessity of possessing excellent artillery in sufficient numbers as well as the waning importance of cavalry. In addition, k.u.k. leaders recognized that permanent fortresses played little part in the outcome of campaigns, whereas tanks held a decisive role. At the same time, however, no one mentioned the waste of money on Dreadnoughts that mainly sat in port for most of the war. For tactics, the reform program required officers to gain proficiency in both attack and defense. The many critics of Conrad's

offensive ideas assured that the Habsburg officer corps would adapt strategy and tactics to the conditions of future battlefields. While officers such as Krauss still maintained the necessity of the *Wille zur Siege*, the new Austro-Hungarian military leadership appeared to have formulated a plan for future success based on the experiences of the First World War.

Whether this plan would have succeeded remains unknown. With the fall of the Habsburg monarchy and the splitting of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into multiple smaller states, the k.u.k. high command never had the opportunity to test the reform program completely. Just as in regard to the disaster of 1866, Habsburg officers during the First World War recognized most of the problems that had caused the catastrophe. The practical application of theory, however, had never constituted a forte of the k.u.k. high command. Though new formations and the raising of the quantity and quality of artillery formed practical accomplishments, the introduction of new tactics comprised a different question. Training officers and soldiers to fight according to new styles of warfare would have required great patience and time on the exercise field. Spending decisions also constituted a more difficult issue, although Charles and Arz had already started well in procuring modern field guns and desiring to acquire tanks rather than upgrade permanent fortresses. The ultimate outcome of the new reform program remains, however, at best an intriguing counterfactual.

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