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The Spirit of 1914 in Austria-Hungary

IZVLEČEK

DUH LETA 1914 V AVSTRO-OGRSKI

Članek preučuje »duh leta 1914« v Habsburški monarhiji – mit, da je v prvem poletju velike vojne, ko so bili vojaki poslani v boj proti srbskim in ruskim sovražnikom, celoten imperij prevevalo navdušenje. Pojasniti skuša, koliko je bilo to razpoloženje spontano, koliko pa so ga z vrha usmerjale državne oblasti. Ugotavlja, da sta ob mobilizaciji oba navedena dejavnika vplivala drug na drugega. Prek izkušenj različnih udeležencev si prizadeva prikazati dejansko raznolikost čustev v prvih tednih bojev. Številni mladeniči so se priglasili v vojsko v pričakovanju pustolovščin, veliko monarhističnih patriotov ali nacionalistov je videlo vojno kot priložnost za »preporod« svojih ciljev, tisk pa je skoraj soglasno trdil, da javnost podpira vojno. Vendar se je za to fasado upanja skrivalo prav toliko prestrašenih ljudi, zlasti med starejšimi. Stroga cenzura poročanja, uvedena na začetku vojne, je prikrivala te negativne odzive, vendar jih lahko najdemo v dnevnikih in spominih iz tega obdobja. Iz njih je tudi razvidno, da je bilo začetno navdušenje kratkotrajno. Številni vojaki so hitro izkusili vojne grozote, zlasti na vzhodu, in travmatična doživetja so jih popolnoma spremenila. Na domači fronti je šok sledil malo kasneje, ob prihodu seznamov žrtev in beguncev. Do oktobra leta 1914 so prvotna pričakovanja, izražena v začetnem »duhu«, že začela bledeti. Država se je morala soočiti z možnostjo totalne vojne, v kateri je bila njena sposobnost, da zaščiti prebivalstvo, na usodni preizkušnji.

Ključne besede: Avstro-Ogrska, duh leta 1914, prva svetovna vojna, patriotizem

ABSTRACT

This article studies the »spirit of 1914« in the Habsburg monarchy, the myth that an enthusiastic mood prevailed across the empire during the first summer of the Great War when troops were sent off against the Serbian and Russian enemies. It seeks to explain how far this mood was spontaneous or directed from above by the state authorities, and finds that both interacted with each other as mobilization occurred. It also seeks through a range of voices to show the actual diversity of emotion in these early weeks of hostilities. Many young men enlisted in order to pursue an adventure, many imperial patriots or nationalists viewed the war as an opportunity for some »rebirth« for their cause; the press was largely unanimous in suggesting popular support for the war. However, un-

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derneath this façade many individuals were as much fearful as hopeful, particularly the older generation. The strict censorship of news from the start of the war obscured these negative voices, but we find them in diaries and memoirs of the time. These also suggest that the early excitement was short-lived. Many soldiers quickly experienced the horror of war, especially in the east, and felt changed utterly by the trauma. On the home front, the shock came more slowly as casualty lists and refugees surfaced. By October 1914 the initial expectations, encapsulated in the early »spirit«, were already waning. The state had to face the prospect of total war, where its ability to protect its population was fatally put to the test.

Keywords: Austria-Hungary, spirit of 1914, World War I, patriotism

One hundred years ago in October 1914, the »spirit of 1914« had probably already evaporated across much of Austria-Hungary. This was true among civilians in Ljubljana or in Prague, or even in Vienna and Budapest where there had perhaps been most enthusiasm for the war. But it was true too for many soldiers at the front, where the initial excitement about victory, the hope of glory and adventure, was quickly disappointed. The Habsburg armies did not quickly crush little Serbia; nor did they manage a quick victory over Russia in the east. Instead, the troops were retreating right back to Cracow in Galicia, while in the Balkans it was Serbia's army that was penetrating into Bosnia-Herzegovina. This suggests to us immediately that the »spirit of 1914« – the enthusiasm that accompanied the outbreak of war – lasted only a few months. However, this time period measured in days and weeks was also relative because of what was experienced. Many civilians and soldiers felt in the summer of 1914 that they were living a whole lifetime of experiences. One officer wrote later that by late August he had drawn a line under his former life, for he was now entering a different world where events around him were constantly speeding up.¹ The war, which started with an energetic spirit, began in the space of two months to transform itself from life into death. Indeed, we might say that the spirit of 1914 disappeared as the phenomenon of mass death began to appear in towns and villages across the Monarchy.

I want to analyse further this short period, this spirit of 1914. It helps us understand the different mindsets as the war started across Europe. It introduces us also to the various allegiances which existed in the late Habsburg monarchy: a complex mixture of imperial, national, regional and social. This contemporary spectrum of loyalties has often been hard for historians to resurrect or imagine, often obscured by the national mindset of later generations in a Central Europe of national states. Yet we need to imagine it if we are to comprehend how allegiance to the empire moved in a

¹ Constantin Schneider, *Die Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1919*, ed. Oskar Dohle (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau, 2003), 41, 45.

national-regional direction as the war progressed. The war also, while it slowly exacerbated nationalist tensions, was a time when many citizens first really encountered other nationalities from across the monarchy. This was either because refugees came into their home region (for example the 15,000 who reached Prague by early 1915), or because they themselves moved - as soldiers or as refugees. The four years of war therefore became an experiment in a true multinational (Habsburg) mission. It failed of course, but to understand that failure we must explore the hopes and expectations that were there at the start of the war. It was above all the military authorities who tried to push forward the multinational patriotic fusion and to minimize any national or regional differences. Because this led to major population movements, we cannot focus on one region or nationality in isolation when discussing the wartime empire. We must aim to range widely – beyond for example a local Slovenian experience – for that is how many individuals actually experienced the war.

In studying the spirit of 1914 several questions immediately emerge. How did this spirit manifest itself? How can historians really measure it through the sources available? To what extent was it directed and managed by the authorities, or was it spontaneous from below? Finally, how long did it last? For the authorities, certainly, it was crucial to try to extend and maintain the population's apparent commitment to the war. But how could that best be achieved, and how far did it require compulsion from above? Let us start by examining the spirit of 1914 in all its diversity.

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On 26 July 1914 in Celovec [Klagenfurt], there appeared a special edition of the *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, the main German newspaper. It announced triumphantly: »An enthusiasm for war has now broken out! The tension, which for weeks has been lying on us like an oppressive nightmare, has given way to a liberating sigh of relief«. The paper noted that on the streets of Celovec that afternoon there were many groups of people engaged in lively conversation, everyone interested and anxious about what would happen next. The next day at noon, a huge yellow hot-air balloon named »Steiermark« [Štajerska] was launched by the »Carinthian Committee for creating an Austrian Airforce«. It rose quickly in a north-westerly direction. When it was over the city, the small team on board threw out a mass of leaflets onto the population below. These bore a clear message: »Austria-Hungary! The army of our beloved fatherland is being partially mobilized: you should fulfil your patriotic duty enthusiastically! Long live our Emperor and King!«²

It is notoriously difficult to interpret this spirit of 1914 which suddenly seemed to dominate across the Habsburg lands. For as Manfred Rauchensteiner has noted, it had mass-psychological traits.³ What we can say is that, as in Germany (on which

² »Teilweise Mobilisierung des Heeres,« *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, Sonder-Ausgabe, 26 July 1914. Also *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 28 July 1914, 1339.

³ Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie 1914-1918* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau, 2013), 149.

historians usually focus), a myth of universal war enthusiasm across Austria-Hungary quickly developed, and it was repeated in many political and military memoirs over the next few decades.⁴ Unlike Germany, however, the official Austro-Hungarian legend would be challenged after 1918 by a strong counter-myth in some of the Habsburg successor states. This questioned how far there was really popular support for the war in the summer of 1914. It proposed – in line with interwar nationalist narratives – that among some nationalities, there had been real reservation if not hostility towards the Habsburg war against Serbia and Russia. This was especially the case with the Czechs, but if we look hard we can find it among all other peoples of the Habsburg monarchy as well. There were always positive and negative national stereotypes circulating about »loyalty« but we as historians must seek to deconstruct them.

Certainly in 1914 many individuals who were strongly loyal towards the empire were pleasantly surprised at the »spontaneous« patriotic displays – such as the dramatic »Steiermark« balloon – as well as the smooth process of military mobilization. Some were convinced that there was a public consensus for war. Thus, one German-Austrian officer recalled in his memoirs a ubiquitous »giddy enthusiasm« everywhere: all national hatred had disappeared and the only opposition came from »depressed hypochondriacs«.⁵ One general staff officer, Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, also stopped being anxious about the war when he realized that the monarchy seemed so united.⁶ He identified the German-Austrian, Magyar and Croatian peoples as the most positive in terms of their morale, but the fact remained that even Czech reservists (in contrast to late 1912) were being called up without difficulty: »With proud determination«, he wrote later, »the armies advanced in the south and the north against the enemy«.⁷ A German novelist from Moravia (Karl Hans Strobl) noted both a horror and a fascination about the whole experience. He likened it to the eruption of a volcano: »What an amazing colossal feeling it was, to be part of this flare-up of millions of souls, to be carried away with the red-hot lava of this crater, filled with holy anger, indignation and good conscience«.⁸

But it was young men who seemed to be most excited about mobilizing their fellow-citizens. Many had been practising for such an adventure in the decade before

⁴ For Germany, see Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). There is no comparable analysis for Austria-Hungary, but see the useful discussion about mobilization in Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), chapter 2.

⁵ Schneider, *Die Kriegserinnerungen*, 22-23.

⁶ Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *Die Katastrophe. Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten* (Zürich, Leipzig, Vienna: Amalthea-Verlag, 1929), 29-30. See also Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, *Ein General im Zwielicht. Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horstenau. Band 1*, ed. Peter Broucek, (Vienna, Cologne, Graz: Böhlau, 1980), 285.

⁷ Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, ed., *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914-1918. Band 1: Das Kriegsjahr 1914* (Vienna: Verlag der Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen, 1931), 26.

⁸ Karl Hans Strobl, *K.P.Qu. Geschichten und Bilder aus dem österreichischen Kriegspressequartier* (Reichenberg: Heimatsöhne, 1928), 13. Strobl even (p.15) felt that Czechs and Germans were united in this struggle.

1914. The last years of peace had seen an increase in youth groups across the empire – socialist, nationalist or religious. Most of these had an idealistic mission, and their adult mentors were encouraging them to mix healthy outdoor sports with a more serious goal of transforming an unhealthy society. For example, Austrian socialist leaders tried to keep a tight control on the minds of working-class youths. New Catholic or nationalist youth groups shared a common aim. They were fighting for either Catholic or nationalist »rebirth«, in order to resist the increasing dangers of modernity in the twentieth century.⁹

We can use one youth movement, the German Wandervogel in Bohemia, as a vivid example of this phenomenon. The Bohemian Wandervogel had been created in 1911; it sought (as in Germany where it originated) to reassert true, healthy German values in a society corrupted by a superficial bourgeois culture. But in Bohemia, in the context of Czech-German nationalist tensions, the hundreds of Wandervogel recruits were also told that their mission had a major national ingredient: it was about confronting the Czech enemy. As Karl Metzner, a leading Wandervogel teacher, announced in June 1913, in Bohemia there was a high-ranking general who commanded all Wandervogel battalions: they could be mobilized when he ordered it.¹⁰ This militant mentality had an impact on many male teenagers who saw the war-adventure of 1914 as a new stage in their national mission; it was a struggle out of which a »national rebirth« would surely emerge. Thus one youth leader noted in July 1914, »From this young generation a new nation will arise: for our descendants it will be better when this purifying stream has rushed through society«.¹¹ Another youth leader wrote: »I curse the war because it brings discord into my calm beautiful world [...] However, I must bless it as the cleansing storm which may launch a fresher era«.¹² War therefore would wash away the dirt and the rubbish of the old world.

Many public figures in different parts of the empire shared this sense of opportunity, this chance to complete a special national or social mission. When general mobilization was announced, they spontaneously justified the final Habsburg »defensive« struggle against Russia and Serbia and placed themselves openly at the empire's service, sounding a patriotic and inclusive note for others to follow. The Austro-Hungarian episcopacy, for example, made a united stand, even if it was nuanced to suit their various national congregations. Archbishop Csernoch of Hungary

⁹ See for example, Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Bauvolk der kommenden Welt: Geschichte der sozialistischen Jugendbewegung in Österreich* (Vienna: Veröffentlichungen des Ludwig-Boltzmann-Instituts für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, 1975). Daniel Langhans, *Der Reichsbund der deutschen katholischen Jugend in der Tschechoslowakei 1918-1938* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der Dt. Vertriebenen, 1990), 17-25.

¹⁰ Karl Metzner, »Zum inneren Ausbau des österreichischen Wandervogels«, *Burschen heraus! Fahrenblatt der Deutschböhmen*, June 1913, 11-13.

¹¹ Rudolf Feldberger, »Wandervögel«, *Burschen heraus!*, July 1914, 156.

¹² Johannes Stauda, *Der Wandervogel in Böhmen, 1911-1920. Band 2*, ed. Kurt Oberdorffer (Reutlingen: Verlag Harwalik, 1975-1978), 64. For more context on German Bohemia, see Mark Cornwall, *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 40-56.

preached that the aims of the war were sacred and just. Bishop Anton Jeglič of Ljubljana preached that the struggle threaded together God, Austria and the Slovenian people in a common cause: the welfare of Slovenes was tightly linked to the church and the empire.¹³

The literary world of Vienna and Budapest also declared its imperial patriotism (although there were exceptions: Karl Kraus, Arthur Schnitzler or Endre Ady). In Budapest it was not only traditional writers like Ferenc Herczeg who felt that national existence and civilization was at stake. Enthusiastic too were the radical writers gathered around the modernist journal *Nyugat*. Miksa Fenyő for example exclaimed, that »I sense my Hungarian identity with unexpected intensity«.¹⁴ And from Vienna's lively *fin-de-siècle* culture, most notorious was the behaviour of Hugo von Hofmannsthal who felt this was a historic moment for revitalizing the Austrian mission. Although Hofmannsthal served only briefly at the front, he threw himself into public service at the War Ministry, organizing charitable support for soldiers and their families. This was all much to the disgust of the satirist Karl Kraus, who despised anyone who praised war from the comfort of their arm-chairs. But Hofmannsthal continued to proclaim Austria's historic mission in patriotic writings and celebrated the monarchy in his wartime lecture tours.¹⁵ Elsewhere in the Austrian university world there were similar hopes that an Austrian rebirth would occur, closely linked to some German renewal. Thus, one Austrian Catholic historian welcomed the war because, he said, it would give birth to a new »Greater Austria« which would satisfy all its peoples.¹⁶

Yet for most of those living in the empire's towns and cities, it was surely the choreography in their streets which had the greatest impact on the public mood. We can glimpse this from the way it was reported and presented in regional newspapers.¹⁷ Only to some extent was the urban behaviour formally organized by the authorities. Much was »spontaneous«, even if much behaviour matched what individuals felt was expected of them when they heard their state was endangered. The cities of

¹³ József Galántai, *Hungary in the First World War* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1989), 69. Pavlina Bobič, *War and Faith: The Catholic Church in Slovenia 1914-1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹⁴ Ivan Sanders, »Hungarian Writers and Literature in World War I,« in *East Central European Society in World War I*, eds. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 146-47.

¹⁵ Heinz Lunzer, *Hofmannsthals politische Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1914-1917* (Frankfurt a.M., Berne: Peter Lang, 1981). See also Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus. Apocalyptic Satirist. Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1986), 295-97. W. E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992), 166-71: Yates notes in fact Hofmannsthal's patriotic yet ambivalent views about the horror of the war.

¹⁶ Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, 143.

¹⁷ See Andrea Orzoff, »The Empire without Qualities: Austro-Hungarian Newspapers and the Outbreak of War in 1914,« in *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion and Newspapers in the Great War*, ed. T.R.E. Paddock (Westport CT: Praeger, 2004), 161-99. See also for some comparative thinking: L.L. Farrar, »Reluctant Warriors: Public Opinion on War during the July Crisis 1914,« *East European Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 417-46.

Prague, Zagreb and Celovec were typical. On 31 July 1914, Prague's mayor, Karel Groš, publicly assured the governor of Bohemia that the city's population was loyal towards Emperor Franz Joseph. A few weeks later, on the emperor's 84th birthday, the city was decked in imperial and provincial flags; shop-windows displayed busts of the monarch as during his jubilee celebrations in 1908; and Groš after attending a mass in the Tyn church made another declaration of public loyalty.¹⁸ In Zagreb it was the same phenomenon. On the monarch's birthday the city was lit up. About 50,000 people took to the streets with lamps, so that the city was truly »swimming in a sea of light«. As one newspaper reported, the crowds shouted for their king and condemned the Serbs and murderers: »Enthusiasm for the old ruler was indescribable, but also for the war which he has declared on the enemy«.¹⁹

In Celovec, meanwhile, the Landespräsident Alfred von Fries-Skene, had regularly appeared before the street crowds since July, responding to their public clamour. To stormy applause he told one large crowd: »Since the creation of the Habsburg Alpine state, our Carinthia has been a solid bulwark against every enemy. Her sons stand faithful and constant towards emperor and empire. Proud and firm like Carinthia's mountains are the sons of her inhabitants, fearless and brave«. On 5 August, at a meeting of Celovec city council, the mayor recalled how the people clearly sympathized with the house of Habsburg in the face of Serbian-Russian provocation. He proposed a council resolution declaring that Celovec was totally loyal to the dynasty; the motion was carried unanimously.²⁰

As these press reports imply, the urban crowds in the first weeks of mobilization significantly contributed to the »spirit of 1914« across the monarchy. They suggest a public spontaneity from below which the authorities then tried to control and organize. The historian Jeffrey Verhey has noted this for Germany (but confines his sources mainly to press reports). The crowds across the Habsburg empire were often »active« (not just by-standers), and they performed certain rituals which followed a tradition seen on previous patriotic occasions.²¹ The crowds' character also changed steadily during the first six weeks of hostilities. Some were »curious«, some were »excited«; some »celebrating«, some »despairing«. We should be careful not to generalize from such behaviour, especially as reported in the regional press. But it is still one indicator of the diversity of mood at the start of the war, important because of its impact on both the authorities and the less active citizens who simply watched but were then motivated to respond. In Prague for example, the »curious crowd« was often to be seen as war was declared, with thousands gathering outside press offices on Wenceslas

¹⁸ *Čas*, 31 July 1914, 2; 15 August 1914, 4. Groš in succeeding years regularly made such statements of dynastic loyalty: Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka 1914-1918* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 2001), 205.

¹⁹ *Ilustrovani list* (Zagreb), 22 August 1914, 794-96.

²⁰ *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 31 July 1914, 1363; 6 August 1914, 1405.

²¹ Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*, 22. See also as an incisive study of crowd behaviour, Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary 1848-1914* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000).

square; they moved between different newspaper offices, waiting for the latest special editions which were issued at key moments.²²

In Celovec, a more traditional patriotic ritual took place among very loyal citizens. It was linked closely to preparations for military enlistment. The *Klagenfurter Zeitung* reported that the patriotic displays on the streets were fully inclusive – there were »thousands of people of every age and gender and of the most diverse nationalities« – but also spontaneous. We cannot quite say how far this was true. In fact, the crowds on 30 July seemed to take a special preordained route through the city, following a military parade that was celebrating mobilization. On this tour they stopped outside the house of the local military commander, then the house of Fries-Skene and his wife, before finishing on the square in front of a statue of Empress Maria Theresa. Here the three national anthems of the Triple Alliance were played; for it was expected that Italy would still be an ally rather than stay neutral.²³

Only occasionally did this façade of »street loyalty« slip, showing that not everyone was obedient. There were some »despairing« crowds – for example, those who despite government assurances in the press feared that the war would damage their savings. A cartoon in one Hungarian satirical magazine from early August 1914 could still portray an angry crowd trying to storm a bank, their faces anxious, their walking sticks raised in the air. The caption noted that the first siege of the war was not against enemy Belgrade, as one might expect: it was against the domestic banks to recover their deposits.²⁴

Yet this negative picture was unusual. Most newspapers, even before real censorship was imposed in early August, suggested a broad consensus. In the words of the *Reichenberger Zeitung*, observing the response on the streets of Reichenberg in north Bohemia: »Spontaneous enthusiasm possessed the crowd, in a way never seen before. One felt that the resolution of the crisis matched the feelings and emotions of inhabitants. Now the die is cast, there will be no peaceful outcome [...] now it is arms which will decide!«²⁵ So according to the press – the main medium for coordinating public news across the vast empire – the story was the same. Thousands of hearts were beating as one. All men were eager to enlist. All women were ready to focus their efforts with charity work on the home front.²⁶

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With all this the Habsburg authorities could feel very satisfied. In Hungary, even a socialist newspaper like *Népszava* decided to fall in line and postpone any criticism of

²² See »V Praze,« *Čas*, 26 July 1914. »Rozruch v Praze,« *Čas*, 27 July 1914.

²³ »Imposante patriotische Kundgebung,« *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 31 July 1914, 1363.

²⁴ *Bolond istók*, 9 August 1914, 5.

²⁵ »Die Aufnahme der Kriegsnachricht in Reichenberg,« *Reichenberger Zeitung*, 26 July 1914.

²⁶ See for example, *Reichenberger Zeitung*, 1 August 1914, 4. This appealed for, but also suggested, widespread social unity. See also, *Reichenberger Zeitung*, 5 August 1914, 3: »Mit der grössten Opferwilligkeit hat sich die ganze Bevölkerung Reichenbergs in den Dienst des Vaterlandes gestellt!«

events.²⁷ The Prime Minister, Count István Tisza, felt his political enemies had now become »polite and boring little boys«. Another satirical cartoon from 6 December 1914 showed Tisza dressed as St Nicholas and carrying a basket of fruit for these boys (Apponyi and Andrassy): even if unable to produce the expected Christmas victory, he could at least distribute fruit in the form of a »parliamentary peace«. ²⁸ Yet as Tibor Hajdu has recently shown, this façade of consensus concealed a range of opinions about the war across Hungarian society, not least among the Serb minority who in the summer had already shown treacherous sympathy with the Serbian enemy.²⁹ Only in 1916 would the political and social façade begin to shatter more widely across Hungary, including amongst the majority Magyar population.

In the Austrian half of the empire, meanwhile, we find a different story, a more overtly negative dimension to the »spirit of 1914«. Here, where no parliament was sitting to proclaim political consensus, there was arguably more state imposition of that patriotic spirit, and in August it became steadily heavier. In late July, the Prime Minister, Count Karl Stürgkh, had ordered all crownlands to focus on the war mission and deal strictly with anyone who showed indifference or hostility.³⁰ The emergency laws introduced to achieve this allowed the banning of demonstrations, arbitrary arrest without trial, and a strict censorship of the press to ensure an official presentation of war news. This management of the war mood was usually hidden from the public view, or at least rarely part of the public discourse. But we know it existed and, via press and postal censorship in particular, it soon began to affect everybody. Alongside the publicly uplifting spirit of 1914, there was also an underlying vigilant mentality which had been present in the previous years. The authorities now moved especially to arrest those Russophile and South Slav suspects who had been fingered and classified in recent months or years. In peacetime the state had usually behaved rather cautiously even against irredentists on the southern and eastern borders. But as part of the patriotic wave it was suddenly possible quietly to arrest these Serb and Ruthene »traitors« with no regard to civil liberties. A minority would be given public trials, some would be subject to summary court-martial (and executed), but the majority would be imprisoned indefinitely.³¹

In noting this latent state vigilance – since most of this activity was not publicized to the rest of the empire – we can understand better the broad range of personal emotions concealed in this initial period of the war. Usually because of censorship they emerged later, in diaries and letters, or in memoirs which tended to distort the

²⁷ Galántai, *Hungary in the First World War*, 64.

²⁸ Ibid., 58. See also the cartoon »Mit hoz a Mikulás,« [»What Nicholas brings«] *Bolond istók*, 6 December 1914, 3.

²⁹ Tibor Hajdu, »1914: A magyar közvélemény alakulása a hadüzenet előtt és után,« [»1914: Hungarian Public Opinion before and after the Declaration of War«] *Hadtörténelmi közlemények*, 3 (2014): 611–27. See also Leo Valiani, *The End of Austria-Hungary* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 75.

³⁰ Christoph Führ, *Das k.u.k. Armeoberkommando und die Innenpolitik in Österreich 1914–1917* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Böhlau, 1968), 27.

³¹ See the full study by Martin Moll, *Kein Burgfrieden. Der deutsch-slowenische Nationalitätenkonflikt in der Steiermark 1900–1918* (Innsbruck, Vienna, Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2007).

level of nationalist opposition to the Habsburg state. From these sources, immediately, we can detect some basic division in outlook between young and old in their response to the war. The old could be found warning young men who seemed too enthusiastic. As one new Vienna recruit, Wilhelm Möller, recalled: »My mother was a complete pessimist: she did not believe in our army nor in the fortunes of war: she prophesied a very unhappy time«. ³² From Tyrol there was a mixture of voices. Many of course suggested it would all be over in a fortnight, but some elders thought two years more likely; their voices were drowned out. At the railway stations in Tyrol the enthusiasm was always accompanied by an underlying seriousness. One farmer wrote in his diary: »The train was decorated with flowers, leaves and flags, but our thoughts were serious, death seemed to be not far away. The songs were sad, sad like birds on the snow«. ³³ As the trains travelled west across the monarchy and into Galicia, they were met at every station by women who cheered the soldiers with flowers, wine and cigarettes. But the men were always uncertain about their destination and how long they would be away from home. For Wilhelm Möller, the shock came at the end of August in eastern Hungary when he met his first train of wounded soldiers; he heard lurid tales about the retreat before Russian forces. »After our train departed, we felt a total change of mood in the carriage: everybody sat silently in his place and thought about [a victorious end of the war]«. In Galicia, Möller noted that, in contrast to Hungary, there was no celebration at the railway stations; instead they found a landscape of »miserable cottages, and a poor ragged people«. ³⁴

For most soldiers the real change in mood came after they entered the war zone. As one Hungarian officer - an artist in civilian life - noted, the banter and black humour of the men turned sour amidst the chaos. Time became concentrated on the present: »We think of nothing: nothing of the future, nothing of the past. Only of what is, now. What's past is gone. The future could last five minutes. The only reality is the present«. ³⁵ The memoirs of one Austrian officer, Constantin Schneider, similarly describe how events speeded up after the hundred-mile march to the frontline, how the thrilling expectation was then shattered by mass death in the first encounters with Russian forces. The boyhood boldness of many changed into fear as they entered the »danger zone«, and then horror and panic as they tried to survive in the front-line »death zone« where all rules were abandoned. ³⁶ The »spirit of 1914« - which for many had meant a quick escapade alongside other young men - became a struggle for existence as the Russian steamroller advanced. First there had been a

³² ÖStA, Kriegsarchiv, Vienna, Nachlaß Wilhelm Möller, B/180, Nr 1/I, »Meine Kriegsdienstzeit 1914-1918«, 3.

³³ Hans Heiss, »Andere Fronten: Volkstimmung und Volkserfahrung in Tirol während des Ersten Weltkrieges,« in *Tirol und der Erste Weltkrieg*, eds. Klaus Eisterer and Rolf Steiniger (Innsbruck, Vienna: Österreichischer Studien Verlag, 1995), 142, 145.

³⁴ Möller, »Meine Kriegsdienstzeit 1914-1918«, 13.

³⁵ Béla Zombory-Moldován, *The Burning of the World: A Memoir of 1914*, trans. Peter Zombory-Moldován (New York: New York Review of Books, 2014), 42.

³⁶ Schneider, *Die Kriegserinnerungen*, 121.

sense of history at work, sweeping the men of the Habsburg army forward. Now it seemed to be working against them, forcing them into a personal struggle for survival. By September the army had already lost its early euphoria, with the old officer corps decimated on the Balkan and Eastern fronts. A new life began of the survivors struggling to make sense of defeat and death. When the wounded returned home, many felt alienated either by those who mouthed sympathy and curiosity, or by the false euphoria still present. One officer returning to Budapest after a few months recalled »the unadorned and harsh reality behind all the sympathy and the solemn extolling of heroism«. The reality at home, he felt, »was that everyone had become engaged in a determined, sullen fight for life. It was a fight waged in complete silence and secrecy, but was none the less fierce for all that«.³⁷

When then did the euphoria end on the home front? In late August 1914, when the Landsturm soldiers departed for the front there were again celebrations in many towns and signs of optimism.³⁸ Yet already in September the lists of the dead and missing began to multiply in the newspapers. They were soon eighteen columns long in the *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, while it was in November that such lists appeared in *Slovenec* in Ljubljana. So the gap between expectation and reality began to widen at different speeds across the hinterland and no simple generalization is possible. Some people perhaps only became less enthusiastic and more detached when they learnt officially about the army's failure to take Belgrade in December or, secretly, about the horrors of the Carpathian winter campaign. Some women, with husbands or sons at the front, would remain stoical: they had to stay committed in some way for the sake of their loved ones, often channelling their »patriotism« into humanitarian work. Some men at home were simply pleased to have escaped the draft either through illness or exemption. Others – like Franz Kafka in Prague – despite his abhorrence of official patriotism, remained keen to join up in order to escape boredom at home by participating fully in some kind of »war-immersion«.³⁹

Other individuals had been publicly sceptical from the start. It was from September that this wider »disloyalty« or detachment became clearer to the authorities and they began to react. As the early enthusiasm died away, the military welcomed new patriotic displays but found different degrees of engagement from leaders in society. For example, German politicians from Bohemia-Moravia openly supported the war, but most Czech leaders were hesitant and ambivalent.⁴⁰ On 4 August Karel Kramář in a Czech newspaper had already failed to mention the Habsburgs when he wrote about what would happen to the Czechs after the war.⁴¹ The implication was obvi-

³⁷ Zombory-Moldován, *The Burning of the World*, 95.

³⁸ See »Grosse patriotische Kundgebung am Alstädter Platz,« *Reichenberger Zeitung*, 29 August 1914, 5-6.

³⁹ For a discussion of Kafka's ambivalence see Mark Cornwall, »The First World War,« in *Kafka in Context*, ed. Carolin Duttlinger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka*, 52, 166-67.

⁴¹ Zdeněk Václav Tobolka, *Můj deník z první světové války*, ed. Martin Kučera (Prague: Karolinum, 2008), 13.

ous. Czech national leaders expected some reward, some imperial reform, as the price for supporting a new Habsburg war. However, there was not one simple stereotype of Czech scepticism as nationalist writers later pretended. In these early months – and also later – there were always some signs of Czech-Habsburg patriotism, a belief that a Czech future was bound up with Austrian fortunes too.⁴² The problem was that the Habsburg military did indeed suspect Czechs of disloyalty, because of their leaders' silence and because of signs of growing Czech insubordination at the front. In September for example, the politician Vaclav Klofáč, who was certainly an anti-Austrian »traitor«, was suddenly arrested without charge. It was perhaps a sign that the authorities felt the war to be entering a new phase and initial expectations required adjustment. Security had to be tightened on the home front, removing potential traitors, and strictly controlling the flow of information around the empire. It was the reality of »total war«.

* * *

In September 1914 the radical Czech newspaper *Čas* duly warned, »This war will last a long time and we are only at the beginning«.⁴³ The Habsburg regime had been preeminent in launching a war in late July and, initially, it found a lot of support for the patriotic crusade against Serbia and Russia. In this short first period, however, many expectations were floated which the state would never fulfil. Even if thousands of young men followed the call-up quite reluctantly, the best of their hopes was that it could be a short adventure with a quick victory. Instead, the soldiers became cogs in a huge military machine from which they could rarely escape except through injury, death or capture. All became, both physically and mentally, caught up in the momentum of a war which affected most parts of their lives. This included Conrad von Hötzendorf himself who was notoriously fatalistic. His confidence too was shattered early on when his son Herbert was killed, but he felt only victory could save the empire (and enable him to marry his beloved Gina).⁴⁴ Others interpreted the sacrifice in a less traditional way. Often they were stunned and silenced by what they had seen at the front, but sometimes they sought a positive way forward, a creative »rebirth« for themselves out of the destruction.⁴⁵

Civilians too, after the early euphoria, still expected benefits as the war continued. The »spirit of 1914« had exaggerated what could be achieved quickly. By 1915 the mood was changing, and hidden aspirations from peacetime began to appear. These hopes – social or national – were often contradictory; some had been there at the start of the war, hidden under the show of Habsburg patriotism, and they would slowly begin to clash with the official Habsburg war mission. For the Austro-Hungarian regime, a major task after 1914 would be to prolong the early patriotism

⁴² Ibid., 18.

⁴³ *Čas*, 8 September 1914, 1.

⁴⁴ See Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston, Cologne: Humanities Press, 2000), 158-59.

⁴⁵ See Zombory-Moldován, *The Burning of the World*, 126.

on the home front. Tied to the initial strategy of controlling and monitoring the popular mood, the authorities would turn to new pro-active methods of propaganda in order to justify the imperial crusade. These included annual campaigns in Austria and Hungary of subscription to war bonds; cultural exhibitions which engaged the public in a sanitized picture of the war; and war charities to aid widows, orphans and the wounded. The medium of film was a particular novelty, vastly expanded alongside the number of wartime cinemas (150 each in Vienna and Budapest by 1915), in order to entertain and educate with a patriotic message.⁴⁶

But in the end all depended on the empire winning and exiting the war with its territory intact. August 1914 had showed the authorities what patriotic unity could be like but, as we have seen, this was always a veneer which concealed many hopes and anxieties. The first public wave of optimism about a victorious Habsburg war disappeared with the summer of 1914. In its place came new expectations which matched the reality of mass death and sacrifice. The longer the war continued, the more pressure was placed upon the Habsburg authorities to deliver results in their role as protectors of the population. In this light the »spirit« which had been conjured up in August 1914 seemed quite ephemeral and also dangerous. For neither the regime nor the bulk of the population had thought seriously about how to manage life after the patriotic surge.

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⁴⁶ For a study of how these initiatives operated in Vienna, see Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Similar analyses are needed for other wartime cities of the empire.

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DUH LETA 1914 V AVSTRO-OGRSKI

POVZETEK

Zgodovinarji so analizirali »duh leta 1914« – mit o navdušenju javnosti ob izbruhu prve svetovne vojne – v več evropskih državah, udeleženi v tej vojni, niso pa še opravili poglobljene analize za Avstro-Ogrsko. Namen tega članka je nadgraditi dosedanje študije z nizom vprašanj o varljivem »duhu«: kako ga izmeriti, ali je bil spontan ali nadzorovan s strani države, kako dolgo je trajal in kako bi lahko vplival na nadaljnji potek vojne. V tiskanih zgodovinskih virih ne manjka dokazov o patriotskem navdušenju avgusta 1914. Sodobnikom se je tak odnos pogosto zdel spontan in skladen s pozitivnimi pričakovanji glede izida kratke vojne. Del tega je bilo tudi navdušenje, ki je navdajalo številne mladeniče v pričakovanju kratkotrajne pustolovščine, pa tudi patriote ali nacionaliste iz različnih delov monarhije, ki so upali, da bo vojna omogočila nekakšen »preporod« in razrešila težave iz obdobja miru. Vendar je to postavljatstvo večinoma sledilo tradicionalnemu vzorcu iz predhodnih patriotsko obarvanih dogodkov in se je vsekakor pogosto prepletalo s pričakovanji oblasti glede lojalnosti do države v kriznih časih. V tem smislu lahko razumemo sporočila Katoliške cerkve ali številnih lokalnih oblasti, ki so javno zapri-segle podporo novi »defenzivni« habsburški misiji. Tudi časopisje iz vseh koncev monarhije je ubralo skoraj enoglasno patriotsko noto, kar je delno prikrilo dejstvo, da je bila avgusta 1914 uvedena stroga cenzura razširjanja informacij. Izredna zakonodaja, ki je bila sprejeta v obeh delih monarhije, je obla- stem dejansko omogočila uravnavanje javnega razpoloženja, če je to preseglo sprejemljive parametre. V prvih mesecih se to ni zdelo tako nujno glede na javne čustvene izlive, vendar so za kulisami potekale tudi množične aretacije, zlasti južno- in vzhodnoslovanskih osumljencev. Šele pozneje so se v dnevnikih, spominih in državnih dokumentih razkrili tudi negativnejši vidiki »duha leta 1914«: tisti, ki so bili pesi-mistični glede izida vojne in sovražno nastrojeni do državnega patriotizma, zlasti pa tisti, ki jih je za sabo potegnila državna pobuda s podporo vplivnih krogov. Za številne vojake je bila pot na fronto potovanje v neznano in zato mogoče celo razburljiva pustolovščina. Duh leta 1914 se je zanje spremenil, ko so izkusili ognjeni krst na fronti in grozote »območja smrti«, ki so popolnoma preoblikovale njihov pogled na svet. Nasprotno se je začetno navdušenje večine civilistov na domači fronti poleglo malo pozneje, ko so prispeli prvi sezname žrtev in so se na njihova območja začeli zatekati begunci z vzhoda in juga. Za vse na vojaških in domačih frontah se je začel boj za preživetje, ko so se sovražnosti razvile v »totalno vojno«. Ljudje so svoje poglede prilagodili novim pričakovanjem, kaj bi jim država morala zagotoviti ob koncu spopada. Habsburški režim pa se je moral ukvarjati z vprašanjem, kako ohraniti moralo z vrsto novih patriotskih pobud. Glede na to se je »duh leta 1914« izkazal za kratkotrajnega in tudi nevarnega: ustvaril je nerealna pričakovanja, ki jih država ni bila sposobna izpolniti.