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ETHNICITY AS A PROBLEM FOR GRAND STRATEGY: CONRAD VON HÖTZENDORF, NATIONALISM AND THE HABSBURG IMPERIAL ARMY AT WAR, 1914-1916

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Kelly McFall, M.A.

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The Ohio State University 1998

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Alan Beyerchen, Advisor
Professor Geoffrey Parker
Professor Ahmad Sikainga

Approved by

Alan Beyerchen
Advisor

History Graduate Program
ABSTRACT

The image usually associated with the Habsburg army of the First World War is that painted in Jaroslav Hasek's famous novel *The Good Soldier Schweik*: a sloppy, undisciplined and comically inefficient fighting force. Perhaps as a result, few historians have studied the army and its role in the war in any depth. This is unfortunate, because the Habsburg Army and the Dual Monarchy as a whole offer an important example of the functioning of a multi-ethnic army and empire.

This dissertation, based on research in the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna and guided by Dr. Alan Beyerchen, the chair of my dissertation committee, aims to discover how the commanders of the army understood the problems facing the army and the Monarchy, and how they attempted to solve them. One part of this investigation is a discussion of the grand strategy of the army during the war. What did the army's leaders believe they were fighting for? Why were they at war? How did they attempt to win the war? Given the apparent weaknesses of the
Monarchy, how did they propose to fix the state? Why did the Monarchy lose the war?

The complex issues inherent in a multi-ethnic army form the second basic theme of this dissertation. While the Habsburg army was officially anational but multi-ethnic, the situation in reality was much more complex. The prewar officer corps on the eve of the war resembled a caste or a guild more than a profession, and its primary loyalty was to the emperor rather than to an ethnic group or the state. The army, however, was struggling to deal with the inroads nationalism was making in the rank-and-file, in the reserve officers, and in society at large. How did "anational" officers understand the phenomenon of nationalism? How did they attempt to solve the problems nationalism posed to the prosecution of the war? How did they attempt to make a multi-ethnic army work in an environment that rejected a multi-cultural ethic?

I argue in my dissertation that the distinctive culture of officership in the Habsburg army played a key role in the conduct of the war and in its efforts to deal with the challenges of a multi-ethnic army. The weltanschauung of many of the officers, best displayed in its commander, Conrad von Hötzendorf, was an uneasy mix of social-Darwinism, an
almost feudal sense of honor and status, and a faith in a centralized, anational state. Isolated from society, and trained since an early age in the spirit of a multi-ethnic state, the officer corps had a specific and inadequate understanding of nationalism. Fearing nationalism as the enemy of everything they believed, they saw in every problem evidence of the power and attractiveness of national sentiment. And, by the turn of the century, this seductive opponent was making inroads into even the army itself. Their solution was the reformation of the state along central, anational lines (following the example of what they saw as the only successful institution in the Monarchy, the army). This also required, however, the strictest suppression of any expression of national sentiment within and outside of the army.

This dissertation will shed light on the strategy and conduct of the First World War. More broadly, I aim to suggest ways to approach the study of multi-ethnic armies in general. The events of the past fifty years have created a number of states with multi-ethnic armies—India, Russia, Canada, etc. Consequently, it is important to understand the ways in which such institutions work and "feel." I do not believe that the Habsburg example will lead to specific
"lessons" which can be applied to the present. I do hope, however, that it will suggest the types of questions that should be asked, and the types of issues that might prove important in understanding these bodies.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a cliché to say that a dissertation could not be written without the help of many others, but it is nonetheless true. It is no less customary to offer thanks to those people who assisted in the many phases of a dissertation. That it is customary, however, does not diminish my gratitude towards those who have given me aid in the past five years.

First and foremost, I would offer thanks to my two advisors. Dr. Williamson Murray gave me a sound foundation in the study of military history and guided the initial stages of the project. After Professor Murray's retirement, Dr. Alan Beyerchen agreed, with very little notice, to take me on as his student. Advising a student on a dissertation is a big commitment, but Dr. Beyerchen has given his time freely, offered sound advice, and guided me through all aspects of life as an ABD. To him I owe many thanks.

Many professors and archivists have spent more time
than they probably care to remember discussing my dissertation, guiding me through the research process, and especially through the mammoth collection of records, papers and manuscripts. All of the archivists at the Staatsarchiv in Vienna were extremely helpful, but I would like to single out Dr. Peter Broucek, Dr. Robert Rill, and Dr. Peter Jung. Special thanks go to Dr. Rudolf Jerábek, who, although in a separate department of the Staatsarchiv, sat patiently and listened to me talk for hours and hours. Outside of the archives, Dr. Manfried Rauchensteiner and Dr. Holger Herwig have listened to my ideas, given me useful advice, and guided my path. Dr. Gary Shanafelt gave me useful feedback and helpful guidance regarding the diplomatic affairs of the Monarchy. Last, but certainly not least, Dr. Geoffrey Parker and Dr. Ahmad Sikainga cheerfully agreed to serve on my dissertation committee and have offered careful critiques and useful bibliographic references.

A number of friends at Ohio State and elsewhere have read portions of this project, Andrew Long, Geoffrey Megargee, Jeff Lewis, Amy Alrich, and others have read and commented on portions of my dissertation. My conversations with Alon Rachamimov during our time in the archives in
Vienna helped me through the long Vienna winter and stimulated my interest in my research and in the Monarchy in general. Meredith Hindley pitched in with last minute help in tracking down sources on coalition warfare. Finally, Wilfried Gansterer in Vienna generously allowed me to camp in his small apartment in Vienna during the warmest month of the year as I returned for a second trip to the archives.

As significant as all of these people have been, however, none have been as important to my completing my dissertation as my wife Laura, whose support and patience made this all possible.
VITA


1989 . . . . . . . B.A. History, Michigan State University

1992 . . . . . . . M.A. History, The Ohio State University

1989-present . . . . Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History
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INTRODUCTION

Do we really need another study of the First World War? The field has exploded in the past few years as interest has grown in the relationship between the First World War and the rise of fascism and between the war and the system of international relations in the twentieth century. Especially in the field of cultural history, the war has assumed a pivotal place. Modris Eckstein, Jay Winters, and others have leapt into the discussion started years ago by Paul Fussell. The study of the First World War, subordinate for the quarter-century following 1945, has become popular again.

But this attention has centered primarily on the role of the "western" states—Britain, France and Germany. The wave of new cultural studies has focussed on the nature and memory of trench warfare in France. More traditional research has concentrated largely on tactical and operational adaptations to the problems posed by the machine-gun and rapid-firing artillery on the western
Even the primary historical association in America devoted to the war is named the Western Front Society.

In all of this, historians have paid much less attention to the experience of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and specifically that of the Habsburg Monarchy. A few interesting and important studies of the Monarchy's experience in the war exist, by authors such as Holger Herwig, Manfried Rauchensteiner, Gunther Rothenberg, and others. But by and large the Habsburg Monarchy's role in the war, aside from the never-ending debate about causation, remains understudied.

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There is a large literature, even for Austria-Hungary, on the coming of the First World War. Many of these works, although not focused specifically on the question of grand strategy, touch on it in their treatment of other issues. See, among others, Bridge, *Austria-Hungary among the Great Powers*, (New York, 1990), Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*, (London, 1991), and the literature cited in these works. The
This is unfortunate, because the Habsburg role in the war was both crucial and complex. The Habsburg Empire was unique among the combatants. In an age of nationalism and a war frequently characterized as "total," and thus somehow national, Austria-Hungary was a throwback. Within the borders of the Habsburg Monarchy, people spoke 12 languages (and numerous local dialects), belonged to as many ethnic groups, and prayed to three different Gods. Yet they all, at least officially, pledged allegiance to the Habsburg

diplomatic correspondence for the period is contained in Ludwig Bittner, ed., Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914, (Vienna, 1930).

In addition, the literature on Habsburg diplomatic efforts during the First World War, especially relating to its alliance with Germany and its efforts to get a separate peace under the Emperor Karl, is large, if uneven. See Gary Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914-1918, (East European Monographs, 1984), which has an excellent bibliography, Gerard Silberstein, The Troubled Alliance, German-Austrian Relations, 1914 to 1917, (Lexington, 1970), and the sources cited below. The most relevant memoirs and diaries include Ottokar Czernin, In the World War, (New York, 1920), Istvan Burian, Austria in Dissolution. trans. Brian Lunn, New York, 1925), the biography of Leopold Berchtold by Hugo Hantsch, Leopold Graf Berchtold, Grandseigneur und Staatsmann. 2 Vols. (Graz, 1963), which is largely made up of excerpts from Berchtold's diary, and two diaries by prominent Austrian politicians, Josef Redlich, Schicksaljahre Österreich: Das politische Tagebuch Josef Redlichs. ed. Fritz Fellner, 2 Vols. (Graz-Köln, 1953-1954), and Joseph Maria Baernreither, Der Verfall des Habsburgerreiches und die Deutschen, Fragments eines Politischen Tagebuches 1897-1917, ed. Oskar Mitis, (Wien, 1938).
Emperor in Vienna. Only the British Empire came close to matching the complexity of the Habsburg Monarchy.

This complexity, in the early twentieth century, threatened to tear the Monarchy apart. Both inside and outside the Monarchy, nationalism threatened the basic idea of a multi-ethnic state. Within the borders of the Monarchy, people (Austro-Germans as well as minority nationalities) began identifying themselves first as members of a specific nationality and only afterward as a citizen of the Habsburg Empire. Outside, Serbs, Italians, the pan-Slavs of the Russian Empire and others fed the nationalist fire. It seemed that the army was the last resort of the anationalist spirit that had characterized the empire for so many years.

The question that arises, then, is how those who still believed in the Monarchy attempted to solve these problems. To a large extent, this depended on how they viewed nationalism. Could nationalism be "suppressed?" Or did it

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'Something of a debate exists today regarding the concepts of nationality, ethnicity, and tribalism. I believe that all of these, as forces or entities that lead humans to locate their identity at least in part in a larger group (one not necessarily defined by religion, politics, or economics), are in essence different manifestations of the same phenomenon. However, I recognize that this view is not universally shared.'
have to be accommodated? Could a multi-national state (today, we would prefer the term "multi-cultural") in which the nationalities could look across the border to nation-states composed of their "brothers" survive? Or was nationalism such an overpowering magnet that it would inevitably tear a multi-national state apart?

This dissertation will focus on the way in which the officers making up the high command of the Habsburg Army tried to solve the problems of the Monarchy during the first years of the First World War. In a state where even the bureaucracy had abandoned its professional ideals of anationalism, the officer corps was the strongest bastion of "Monarchism" remaining. Officers were trained from the beginning of their career to be indifferent to national concerns, and to place their loyalty instead in the Emperor. Given this tradition of anationalism, the way the commanders of the army sought to solve the problems of the Monarchy has an intrinsic value. This study tries to understand the answers these officers chose, and the ways in which they came to them.
The study of the Monarchy during the war has a specific and interesting history.\textsuperscript{5} The same national tensions that led to the collapse of the Monarchy dominated historical examination of the conflict through the 1950’s. Thus, the historians of the successor states paid little attention to aspects of the war that did not lead to Austria-Hungary’s disintegration. Conversely, those writing military history in interwar Austria, primarily former officers, systematically whitewashed the army’s role and performance in the conflict.\textsuperscript{6} That they did so mattered little to ordinary Austrians, who paid more attention to politics and the simple struggle to survive than they did to the history of the First World War in the first turbulent decades of the country’s existence.

Only in the 1960’s did academic interest in the war grow, sparked by the fifty-year anniversary of the war and


the growing publicity surrounding the Fritz Fischer debate in Germany. A number of graduate students working under Ludwig Jedlicka at the University of Vienna began writing dissertations discussing aspects of the Monarchy’s experience in the war. At around the same time, a scattering of American and British scholars, Gunther Rothenberg primary among them, began to take an interest in field. These studies, largely narrative, but without the biases of previous attempts, began to lay out the issues and concerns of the military history of the Monarchy.

Interest in the Monarchy, its military and its role in the First World War has grown steadily but slowly in the last twenty-five years. Both in Austria and abroad, a number of thoughtful studies of aspects of the Monarchy’s military history during the last years of its existence have emerged. To some extent, archivists and other non-academic historians have led this study. But academic historians have also played a crucial role.

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Despite this more recent attention, however, gaps remain in our knowledge of the war effort of the Monarchy. A number of careful and thorough studies of individual campaigns exist.\textsuperscript{8} There are also a number of studies dealing with specific issues in the military history of the Monarchy immediately before and during the war.\textsuperscript{9} The recent

\footnotesize

publication of two broader treatments of the war, Manfried Rauchensteiner's excellent survey of the Monarchy's war effort, and Holger Herwig's lengthy treatment of the war from the perspective of the Central Powers, have offered a broad overview of the war which was missing until now.10

This leaves a gap, though, in the middle, and it is this gap that I hope to fill. In essence, this dissertation will examine the grand strategy of the Habsburg Monarchy from the perspective of its military commanders. Grand strategy is more than simply military strategy. Instead, it implies an effort to ensure the best possible long-term future for the state (or nation). Thus, grand strategy encompasses politics, economics, and diplomacy as well as military strategy. Policy makers (whether diplomats, generals, politicians, or otherwise) do not necessarily have a grand strategy, nor is their grand strategy necessarily successful. But, in an age when the interests of the nation-state, or of its component parts, have become widely accepted as the appropriate unit of analysis, the Grand Strategy of its

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10The only real survey of the Monarchy during the war before Rauchensteiner's work was the two volume study by Arthur May, The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918, (Philadelphia, 1968), which treated the war itself quite generally.
leaders, or the lack of any such strategy, has become paramount.

Formulating a successful grand strategy for the Monarchy required dealing with two very different and often mutually opposing considerations. First, the Monarchy had to remain strong enough to defend itself against external enemies. Most obviously this meant winning the war. Simultaneously, it required protecting the Monarchy's postwar position and interests, as well as preserving the strength necessary to defend these interests. But beyond military considerations, it also meant solving the political problems that had plagued the Monarchy since the middle of the nineteenth century. Quite simply, this meant solving the problem of nationality. Even more so than for other states, for the Habsburg Monarchy, grand strategy was concerned explicitly with politics and the proper role and shape of the state.

It is in describing the army's attempts to deal with these questions that my contribution lies. Fundamental to its answers was the culture of officership within the officer corps of the Habsburg Army. In effect, their existed in the officer corps a cult of anationalism, founded on imperial obedience, rituals of subservience and service, and a sense of identity within the officer corps of being a caste apart.
(or above) from the rest of the Monarchy. This self-understanding, and the corresponding understanding of the character and strength of nationalism, would play a key role in the formation of Grand Strategy.

I hope that this study will prove valuable to three separate audiences. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is military historians, especially those interested in the First World War. While we know a great deal about individual campaigns, no one has discussed analytically the broader question of the grand strategy of the Habsburg army. More generally, the Habsburg Army during the war was at the center of a two-tiered coalition. Besides the military alliance with Germany (an alliance which threatened the independence of the Monarchy at the same time as it offered military advantages), the military leadership had to operate in a political structure which resembled an internal coalition more than it did a unitary state. Many, even most, wars are fought between alliances, and historians are accustomed to treating politics as a contest between a variety of interest groups. But the peculiar history and shape of the Habsburg Monarchy, combined with the way in which leaders (both German and Habsburg) felt free to appeal for support across coalition boundaries made for an exceptionally complex and
challenging political environment one could term a two-tiered coalition. Examining the way in which such cross-cutting coalitions operated should shed valuable light on the dynamics of coalition warfare in general.

But this study is more than a traditional military history. I am especially fascinated by the ethnic complexity of the Habsburg Monarchy. As such, I hope my efforts to analyze the response of the army to nationalism will prove valuable to historians of Austria-Hungary in general. The army as an institution played a key role in the history of the Monarchy. Accordingly, its efforts to accommodate, suppress, or escape issues of nationality form an important thread in the history of the late Habsburg Monarchy.

Finally, I hope that this study will be valuable to people interested in multi-ethnic militaries in general, a growing concern today. Multi-ethnic armies are more common than is often assumed. China, India, Russia and Canada are only a few of many possible examples. These forces face many of the same problems, regardless of time period or location. The Habsburg experience suggests questions and approaches that are germane to all multi-ethnic armies. Among others, the appeals and weaknesses of anationalism play a key role in this study. Similarly, the Habsburg Army offers a case study
in the tradeoffs between nationalism and operational effectiveness, a key issue to any multi-ethnic military. Before the war, at least most of the time, the army gave priority to operational effectiveness (in the form of rapid mobilization) above fears of national agitation. This would change in interesting and suggestive ways soon after the conflict broke out. Finally, the ways in which the Habsburg army, avowedly anational in composition, intervened in politics sheds light on the ways in which short-term and long-term considerations of nationality interact.

This dissertation began as a study of the military strategy of the Monarchy during the war. It then became a biography of Franz Conrad von Hützendorf, the Chief of the General Staff of the Monarchy from 1906-11 and again from 1912-1917. But, as often happens in the course of years of research, my interests shifted in mid-course. I have become increasingly fascinated with the question of ethnicity and the role it played in the thoughts and actions of the military. This question has shaped the final product tremendously.

However, the winding path my research has taken has led to a number of choices, some voluntary and some imposed by
the pressure of time and money, regarding the source material I have employed and the limits I have set for myself. First, I am most interested in the way that the officer corps understood and reacted to nationalism. However, for the purposes of this dissertation I am examining a relatively small group of officers, primarily those associated with the High Command. To an extent, limits of time and income made this decision for me. However, there are good reasons for framing the study in this fashion. I am most concerned with examining the way officers trained to be anational reacted to nationalism. As I will argue in the first chapter, most prewar officers accepted the culture of officership characteristic of the Habsburg Army. However, because of the need to recruit and train new officers quickly during the war, those men who became officers during the war increasingly lacked the anational ethos of the prewar officer corps, turning more and more to rely on and feel themselves members of their German ally. Furthermore, few prewar officers survived the first year or two of fighting. Only those officers in command positions escaped. Consequently, although my study deals with a very small group of people, it is not as small, comparatively, as one might at first expect.
Still, this sample is something of an artificial construct. In particular, it treats the minority of officers who were acknowledged nationalists, men like Alfred Krauss or Carl von Bardolff, very much on the margin. With a few important exceptions, most of these officers did not occupy positions important to the conduct of the war. Moreover, these officers are somehow conceptually less interesting. Most of the officer corps wrestled throughout the war with the conflict between the ethnic movements surrounding them and the anational training of their youth. Accordingly, I feel somewhat justified in concentrating on the majority of officers rather than the minority. Still, I recognize that further work needs to be done, especially in the way in which regimental and battalion level officers dealt with issues of ethnicity, language, and culture.

Finally, to a great extent my dissertation still concentrates on the activities of Conrad. This of course reflects the origin of my interest in this issue. It also, however, derives from Conrad’s position within the bureaucracy of the army. As in most armies at the turn of the century, the Chief of the General Staff had an extraordinary amount of influence and control. This was especially true of Conrad, who was at least initially well-loved by most of the
pre-war army and who interested himself in the minute details of his command. Moreover, the records left behind by the Armeeoberkommando (AOK), the High Command of the Habsburg Army during the war are dominated by those documents Conrad wrote, approved, or initiated. Exceptions do exist, of course, and I have utilized the personal papers and diaries of Rudolf Kundmann and Josef Schneller, two of Conrad’s closest assistants, extensively. But the records left behind to some extent dictate this concentration on Conrad.

I have also chosen to end the dissertation with Conrad’s relief in late February of 1917. Concluding with the war very much in progress was a deliberate choice. I am primarily interested in the reaction of the military, and especially the officers, to the problems facing the Monarchy. There were many reasons for Conrad’s relief, but primary among them was the desire of the new Emperor, Karl I, to take over active command of the Monarchy’s military and diplomatic effort. The decision-making process, and the amount of input the military had into these decisions, changed drastically after Conrad’s relief. Moreover, historians, especially diplomatic historians, have paid far more attention to the search for peace which characterized the Monarchy’s war

11Foreign words will be underlined on first use throughout
effort in 1917 and 1918 than they have to earlier events. Accordingly, I chose to make Conrad's relief the end point of my study.

The records used in this study are located at the Kriegsarchiv (War archive) in Vienna. Most important were the records of the AOK during the war. I also consulted the records of the Kriegsministerium (the War Ministry), the Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (the Emperor's Military Chancery), the Apostolisches Feldvikariat (the Military Clergy), and a variety of personal papers. These collections, in general, were quite complete and admirably organized. Although the records in Budapest, Prague, and the capitals of the other successor states would have shed additional light on the events I discuss, I unfortunately lack the time and the language skills to take advantage of them at this time. I hope to be able to take advantage of them in the future.

The Habsburg Monarchy was a unique and complex state. In order to avoid possible confusion in the body of this study, it seemed useful to provide a brief introduction to the political structure of Austria-Hungary. I make no claim
here to completeness, but hopefully this short discussion will help guide those unfamiliar to the complications so characteristic of the Dual Monarchy.

The Habsburg Monarchy in 1900 belonged both to the eighteenth century and to the twentieth. In the same city, the art of Gustav Klimt and Oscar Kokoschka created storms of controversy while the Emperor, Franz Joseph, demanded that his residence, the Hofburg, be lit with candles and kerosene lamps rather than electric lights. In eastern Galicia, Ruthenian (we would now call them Ukranian) peasants farmed according to time-honored traditions while the Industrial Revolution was making inroads in Bohemia. The Minister-Presidents of "Austria" had to play politics in Parliament, while Franz Joseph reigned solely on the basis of birth.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\)One must take great care when writing about the Habsburg Monarchy. The shorthand which comes immediately to mind, "Austria," is, of course, meaningless, for while Hungary referred to a specific region with specific political rights and responsibilities, the term Austria had no meaning other than a vague regional association. The equivalent to "Hungary" in the Dual Monarchy was awkwardly titled "The Lands and Peoples represented in the Reichsrat," and stretched from Trieste to Krakow. For the purpose of variety, this will use "Austria-Hungary," "The Habsburg Monarchy," "The Dual Monarchy," and "The Habsburg Empire" to refer to Franz Joseph's monarchy, while Cisleithania, the customary term used during the time period under discussion, will be used as an equivalent of the rather clumsy official title for the non-Hungarian lands. In cases where doubt may
Perhaps most importantly, while every soldier pledged allegiance to the emperor and the Monarchy, the peoples of the Monarchy were increasingly nationalistic.\textsuperscript{13}

As the twentieth century dawned, the rulers of the Habsburg state were finding it increasingly difficult to finesse these contradictions. An empire created through agreements of marriage and inheritance rather than forged by war and diplomacy, the Monarchy's status had begun to slip as early as the Revolutions of 1848. The rebellions and revolutions of the middle 1840's had proved unable to unify peasants, workers, students and nationalists into a coherent whole, and the willingness of Russia to intervene against reasonably exist, I will attempt to be especially clear as to which state I am referring to.

Hungary sealed the fate of those who supported independence. However, the problems that had led to revolution did not go away, and the next 20 years saw a continual and highly emotional debate over the nature and structure of political power in the Monarchy. An initial effort to preserve the political system by "Germanizing" the empire failed, and the Emperor, Franz Joseph, found himself forced to negotiate a new way of running the empire. A series of proposals in the late 1850's and early 1860's failed to win general support, leaving the Prussian military to demonstrate conclusively the need for reform in 1866. Hungary jumped on the opportunity to force Franz Joseph to compromise, creating a constitutional regime quite different from that which had existed previously.

The "Dual Monarchy" was a unified state in only a limited sense. The Ausgleich, the official name of the agreement reached between Hungary and the Emperor in 1867, created two halves of the Monarchy--Hungary and the remainder

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of the Habsburg lands, termed "Cisleithania." Each of these states had a representative body, the parliament, which passed legislation and dealt with most of the political issues of the day. These governments were headed by minister-presidents, as well as a number of other ministers responsible for those affairs delegated to the two halves of the Monarchy individually.

The Ausgleich also provided for a small governmental superstructure that dealt with the areas in which the two states made policy in common. This was composed of three "cabinet level" officials, the Minister of War (with control over the common army—but not the military bodies of the separate states), the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Finance (who, after 1908, in addition to financial affairs, had administrative control over the newly annexed provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina as a way of

15The Ausgleich functioned de facto as a "constitution" until the end of the Monarchy, although, strictly speaking, the term is legally incorrect. See Kann, p. 333-340. The whole matter was complicated by the fact that the two versions of this agreement (essentially a treaty—although an "internal" treaty rather than an international one) were different—the Hungarian version stressed the common bond with the Emperor (with the implication that no unified state structure existed above the two signatories), while the "Austrian" version assumed, among other things, the legal existence of a "Monarchy" as a state superior to both halves. See Sked, pp. 188-9.
avoiding political conflict over the issue), with the corresponding bureaucratic support. A legislative body, called the "Delegations" and drawn from the members of the parliaments of each half of the empire met periodically to give its acceptance to the budget, including military expenditures. The Delegations exerted little control over policy-making for the Empire as a whole. In fact, the two halves of the delegations actually met and voted in separate locations except in the case of an extraordinary stalemate. In practice, power was concentrated in the hands of the common ministers, who met, under the leadership of the Emperor and joined by the minister-presidents of each parliament, in a Joint Council of Ministers (Gemeinsam Ministerialrat). This body existed completely outside of the legal provisions of the Ausgleich.

Within this structure, politics in at least the Austrian half of the Monarchy became increasingly (although

16This peculiar arrangement allowed Hungary to argue that the body was an ad hoc arrangement which happened to meet regularly rather than an institution of a Habsburg Monarchy existing above the two halves of the Empire, while still giving it a say in budgetary matters, most importantly in determining the level of funding for the army.

17When the Emperor chose not to attend, leadership over the meeting fell to the Foreign Minister, who was the most powerful minister in the Monarchy.
never completely) democratized between 1867 and 1914, but in a way very different from that in other countries. In most of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, politics revolved around class. Political debate centered around the distribution of power and wealth among farmers, the wealthy, the middle-class, and the industrial working class. Nationality was assumed to be above politics, and allegiance to the nation was taken for granted. Indeed, this was one reason German politicians found socialism so frightening just before the war, for it threatened this national consensus on the subject and conduct of politics.

In the Habsburg Monarchy, the primacy of nationalism gave politics a completely different character. With only a few exceptions,\textsuperscript{18} national concerns drove politics and party structure in Austria-Hungary. This is not to argue that class considerations played no role, but instead that voters applied economic and social criteria to a range of parties severely restricted by nationality. It was inconceivable for a Czech who owned a small business to vote for the (German) Christian Social party, even if this was the best choice

\textsuperscript{18}Specifically the German Liberal party, becoming weaker and weaker toward the end of the century, and the Socialist party, understandably small given the relative lateness of the Monarchy's industrialization
economically. Significantly, Habsburg Jews, belonging to none of the "nations" of the Monarchy, voted almost unanimously for the German Liberal Party, the only party proposing allegiance to the state rather than to a nation.¹⁹

Many of the economic provisions of the Ausgleich applied for a strictly limited period of time. Items such as tariffs, the imperial bank, the railroad system, and, most importantly, the relative amount each part was to pay toward the common expenses of the Monarchy were renegotiated at ten year intervals. Each side during these discussions fought bitterly to gain the best settlement it could. Thus, these clauses of the Ausgleich functioned almost invariably as dividing rather than unifying forces.

Whether this governmental system could have provided the basis for a stable, prosperous state is an unanswerable question. Crucial for the future fate of the Monarchy, it did not. Despite the fact that the Ausgleich gave Hungary a

key role in determining the foreign policy of the Monarchy, most prominent Hungarians never accepted it as a final solution. Instead, they continued to agitate for more power within the Dual Monarchy. This same power struggle occurred in Cisleithania, where the nationalities competed for influence and power. As a result, the Monarchy never experienced a period of stable, "constitutional" government that would have allowed it to focus on the economic and financial challenges it faced.

The military structure of the Monarchy was peculiar indeed. Divided into three parts, it was based primarily on the common army. This force, administered by the Minister of War and under the supreme command of the Empire, was one of the few institutions that existed at the level of the

Monarchy. The extent of its commonness was a matter of considerable debate before the war. Originally called the k.k. Armee, (kaiserlich-königlich, or imperial-royal) the Hungarian government had agitated successfully to change it to the k. und k. Armee (kaiserlich und königlich, or imperial and royal), implying that the army was a joint project between two equal states joined simply by a common ruler rather than an instrument of a state which existed above Hungary and Cisleithania.

In addition to the common army, both states possessed their own militia (for Cisleithania the Landwehr, for Hungary the Hônved). Initially conceived as a manpower reserve for the common army, Budapest had gradually won for the Hônved allocations of artillery and machine guns, transforming the forces into something more like separate armies than a convenient way to organize training and mobilization of manpower reserves.

This, then, was the Monarchy in 1914. A clumsy set of institutions, it had nevertheless managed to hang together for better or worse for hundreds of years. Nationalism posed the long-term threat to its existence. But few among the nationalities actually hoped for its collapse in the near future. Instead, most hoped to win more autonomy and
privileges within the state. It was military defeat that led directly to its disintegration.
"If the army is split, if it loses its spirit, so is the Dynasty lost and Austria will exist no more." Archduke Albrecht to Crown Prince Rudolf.

"In deinem Lager ist Österreich." Franz Grillparzer.

In a novel published in 1907 entitled Our Last Battle: The Testament of an Old Imperial Soldier, the army officer Hugo Kerchnawe offered a fictional warning about the future of the Habsburg Monarchy. The book, published anonymously, depicted Austria-Hungary struggling to resist a coalition of enemies including Italy and Serbia. Simultaneously, however, it had to suppress serious internal unrest. Kerchnawe portrayed the Habsburg army fighting in the streets of Vienna and in Hungary against a political revolution, much as it had done in 1848. This time, the army failed to hold the

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2(Vienna-Leipzig, 1907). See also his later novel Der Vorgeschichte von 1866 und 19??, Von einem alten kaiserlichen Soldaten, (Vienna, Leipzig, 1909).
Monarchy together. As the title implies, the book described the Monarchy's downfall.

Kerchnawe's book captured the nightmare scenario envisioned by those loyal to the Habsburg Monarchy. His predictions seemed quite realistic in the context of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Although marital diplomacy (and reliability) had built the Empire, it was the army that had served as the most important and most reliable defender of its integrity. Unfortunately, its ability to do so was coming increasingly into question at the end of the nineteenth century.

While the simple phrase "defending the Monarchy" appears unambiguous, "the Monarchy" had a variety of different and often contradictory meanings. Most obviously, the "Monarchy" was personal—made up of the ruling dynasty and supported by those who had pledged loyalty to it. This Monarchy was a feudal institution, not at all analogous to Frederick the Great's understanding of his position as 'first servant of the state.' Most citizens of the state that this dynasty ruled were somehow 'outside' the Monarchy, serving it but not 'in' it. Only a small minority, primarily the high aristocracy and especially the officer corps, could participate in this Monarchy.

Another way to understand the Monarchy was as the (unitary) state composed of the lands that owed allegiance to the Habsburg family. This Monarchy existed above any
national, ethnic, or familial allegiance. All citizens were members of this expanded Monarchy. Indeed, they were members of the Monarchy first and only then members of their region. The ruling dynasty, in this case, was simply the caretaker and symbol of the body politic.

Those who maintained that Austria-Hungary was not a single state, but an empire composed of many peoples, contested both of these definitions. In their view, the Monarchy was simply a result of a long process of addition.\(^3\)

While the Emperor considered all born within the state’s borders constituent parts of his possessions, many of these citizens believed themselves first citizens of their “nation,” and only secondarily (and often reluctantly) citizens of Austria-Hungary and members of the Monarchy.

It was this peculiar entity that the army had to defend.

At heart, the officer corps adopted, to varying degrees, a mix of the first two definitions of the Monarchy. In either case, protecting the Monarchy encompassed two very different tasks. The first was defense of the state against external enemies. Just as or more important, however, was the defense of the Monarchy against those of its citizens who criticized,

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\(^3\)To use a current American analogy, the Hungarians and other nationalities viewed Austria-Hungary as a tossed salad, with all of its component parts clearly distinct. Moreover, it was a salad where the chef and the red peppers had reached an agreement before the peppers were added. Thus, in the eyes of the Hungarians, the peppers retained the right to jump out of the salad at any time, or at least deserved a say as to what kind of and how much dressing was to be used.
rejected, or in some way opposed their Emperor. During the
last half of the 19th century, while the army had suffered
several reverses, it had at least performed this role
adequately enough. However, at the turn of the century, the
forces arrayed against the Monarchy seemed likely to
overwhelm the defenses erected by the army. The Monarchy, and
the army that protected it, was under siege.

Understanding the Habsburg decision for war in July of
1914 and the army’s attitude toward and conduct of that
conflict requires understanding that fear. The army saw
itself as the fortress of the Monarchy. Within the
sheltering walls of this fortress the Monarchy could
withstand the assaults against it. But, of course, fortresses
do not just function defensively. Instead, they offer
rallying points from which the garrison can influence and
even dominate the surrounding area. In the same way, the
army’s protection and stature offered the Monarchy an
opportunity to venture symbolically into the hostile
territory around it (in this case the citizenry of the
Austro-Hungarian state-sometimes faithful to the Monarchy,
but often neutral or even antagonistic), suppress dissent and
win support. Now, in the first years of the twentieth
century, this fortress seemed threatened. This chapter will
argue that the self-understanding of the officer corps (in
some sense the garrison of the fortress), drawn primarily
from the historical memory and institutional culture of the
army, played a key role in the response of the officer corps to this danger. Secondly, it will argue that the perceived weakness of the army and Monarchy prompted many officer to suggest solutions well before 1914.

1. The Culture of Officership in the Habsburg Army

"Military culture" is notoriously difficult to define. Yet it plays a key role, informing the assumptions and shaping the behavior of officers and rank and file at all times (although not necessarily in the same ways). Of the variety of explanations for the creation and diffusion of military culture proposed by historians, two seem especially important. One possibility is that military culture is developed and disseminated through the educational institutions of the army, especially those attended by the officer corps. A second way to understand the formation and propagation of military culture is the idea of "formative experiences" proposed by Barry Posen. Posen argues that certain events, whether battles, political struggles, or something else, sear themselves into the collective memory of

military forces, shaping their attitudes and behaviors for decades. In the case of the Habsburg army, the "formative experience" was clearly the revolutions of 1848.

In a century that began with the Napoleonic wars and included the forcible ejection of the Habsburg monarchy from "Germany," the Revolutions of 1848 had perhaps the most significant impact on the army and the emperor. The Monarchy in 1848 experienced a crisis that was both social and national, and which threatened to undermine the legitimacy and power of the Habsburg state. In the end unwilling to compromise with the revolutionaries and lacking popular support, the Monarchy turned to the army as its savior. In Italy, the army fought an extended campaign against a military invader. In Prague and Vienna, it suppressed civil unrest and revolution. In Hungary, with Russian assistance, it defeated the secession efforts of Hungarian insurgents. In each case it was military power which rescued the Monarchy. The abbreviation WJR (standing for Windischgratz, Jelacic and Radetzky) which served as a popular referent for the army in the 1850's symbolized the combination of battlefield success and domestic repression that carried the

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6 Often written WIR and viewed as Franz Joseph's personal "plural."
Monarchy through the year.

Both Franz Joseph and the leaders of the army took from this experience that the army's role in maintaining internal security was as or more important than its role as a defense force against invasion. This was not a unique or radical insight, of course. Internal security was a key responsibility for all European armies. However, it became less and less important for the states of "western" Europe as the threat of revolution receded with the (admittedly slow) rise of living standards and the development of national feelings. The change in priorities is best demonstrated by the movement toward professionalism among the western armies. This professionalism defined the mission of the army as defense against external enemies and argued that the military should devote its complete attention to this task. In contrast, the Habsburg Monarchy and its army never felt secure enough to abandon its role as police force.


The most detailed of the many biographies of Franz Joseph remains the three volume work by Egon Caeser Conte Corti, Vom Kind zum Kaiser. Kindheit und erste Jugend Kaiser Franz Josephs I. und seiner Geschwister, (Graz-Vienna-Salzburg, 1950), Mensch und Herrscher, Wege und Schicksale Kaiser Franz Josephs I zwischen Thronbeseigung und Berliner Kongreß, (Graz-Vienna-Altötting, 1952) and Der Alte Kaiser, Franz
had from childhood enjoyed many aspects of the military anyway, and had been trained to regard himself as an aristocrat with all the interests and traditions that this implied. However, the events of 1848 added their own distinctive imprint. He spent much of the revolution in Italy in the army of Radetzky. Here, the military atmosphere and Radetzky's success against Italian invaders impressed him greatly. From this vantage point he witnessed the forced flight of the royal court from Vienna and the violence in the streets of Vienna and Prague. It could not have escaped his attention that he became emperor only because of the pressure of revolution. Indeed, it took him less than two months to proclaim the army the key to recovering from the events of 1848.

It is important to underline that Franz Joseph was not a military emperor in the same way as Wilhelm II of Germany or Joseph II. He had little interest in military technology or


Franz was appointed on his thirteenth birthday Inhaber of a Dragoner regiment. After visiting this regiment a little over a year later, he began to sign his letters simply "Franz, Oberst." Egon Caesar Conte Corti and Hans Sokol, Kaiser Franz Joseph, (Graz-Vienna-Cologne, 1960), p. 16.

in strategy and tactics. He never saw himself as the "first soldier" of the state. Still, he remained convinced that the military was the foundation of the Monarchy, and that he retained, as was his right as emperor, ultimate control over it. This was best symbolized by his habit of wearing an officer's uniform. As he suggested shortly after becoming emperor, the army must become one of the three levers (Hebel) of the Monarchy.

The leadership of the army, mostly drawn from the aristocracy, drew the same conclusions. To be sure, a certain amount of national discontent had occurred in the army during the revolutions, especially among Italian troops stationed in Lombardy and Venetia. Moreover, a number of Hungarian troops and officers, although fewer than was believed at the time, had left the army to fight with the revolution. Yet, people as diverse as Schwarzenberg, Radetzky and Albrecht all concluded that the army had saved the Monarchy.

Naturally, the army and the monarch worked to prevent another revolution most intentionally during the decade after

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14 Sked, Survival of the Habsburg Empire.
1848.\(^\text{15}\) Coinciding with the turn toward absolutism in government in the 1850's, the military leadership played an active role in politics and administration.\(^\text{16}\) Their perception of the threat from the liberal middle-class guided their actions. Thus they moved to rebuild parts of Vienna to make it easier to suppress civil unrest. More importantly, however, they believed it necessary to isolate the military from the rest of society, to build a moat around the fortress. As the anonymous author of the pamphlet "Unsere Armee" wrote

> If no traitors and fakers sneak in, where no nearer connection with the citizens is established, where all intimate acquaintance with the Pflisterwirtschaft (sic) falls away and no reconciliation and fraternization occurs, there the military spirit remains, in a word, unendangered, unshaken and untouchable.\(^\text{17}\)

A more liberal camp would criticize the intentional separation of the army from society as a tactic to ensure its


\(^{16}\)Several of Franz Joseph's primary advisors were military men, most notably Karl Ludwig Count Grünne, the Adjutant General. Several field commanders, for instance Radetzky and Haynau (in Budapest) also retained extensive political and civil powers years after the revolutions ended.

dependability during the 1860’s. However, driven by the fear of civil insurrection, the basic premise that the army had to serve to ensure internal peace remained widely accepted.18

The question then becomes, how did this shape, directly and indirectly, the Habsburg army in the fifty years before 1914. On the one hand, the army was unable to retain the influence it had possessed over internal policy during the 1850's.19 On the other, the army remained committed to its efforts to prepare for a possible revolution.20 It spent scarce money on internal improvements offering security in case of rebellion. More important however, were its efforts to counteract the threat to the allegiance of the army to the Monarchy posed by the creation of the Honvéd.21

18Rothenberg points out that the army, even during times of external crisis, felt compelled to leave up to 25 percent of its forces within the Monarchy to guarantee internal control. Rothenberg, The Army of Francis Joseph, p. 58.

19Although it retained a more significant influence in foreign policy. See Franz-Josef Kos, Die Politik Österreich-Ungarns während der Orientkrise, 1874-75-1879, (Vienna-Cologne, 1984).

20As late as 1909 Franz Ferdinand complained that the inner section of Vienna had been almost completely stripped of troops, suggesting that, in case of revolution the army would not be able to reach the Hofburg (the residence of the emperor) in time. Leopold von Chlumecky, Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands Wirken und Wollen, (Berlin, 1929), p. 324.

21The Honvéd was a separate army organized in Hungary and under the control of the Hungarian government during peacetime. Budapest had demanded the formation of a force unsuccessfully for years, and the decision by the emperor to create the Honvéd represented an important concession to Hungarian national interests. The central government intended originally to limit the manpower and equipment
As Allmayer-Beck points out, the creation of the Honvéd (and its counterpart in Cisleithania, the Landwehr) meant that the structure of the military no longer matched its role as protector of the unitary Monarchy. The army and the leaders of the Monarchy spent the next 45 years attempting to counteract this development. This meant struggling against Hungarian efforts to expand the role, equipment, and traditions of the Honvéd. It also meant an intentional effort to reinforce the common traditions within the common army. Thus, the opening of the Army Historical Museum in 1891 was intended to serve as a focus for the traditions of the Habsburg army. At the same time and for the same ends, the War Archives began to publish a series of studies about the wars of Austria and the army encouraged the writing and publication of regimental histories.22

Despite these efforts, the attempt to strengthen the army's devotion to the Monarchy was not entirely successful. The army is often viewed as a "school for the nation," a place where people with diverse backgrounds, dialects and beliefs can be welded into a unified body which will support the state. Many of the leaders of the Habsburg army, and some available to the Honvéd. The Hungarian government proved unwilling to accept these constraints, and strove throughout this period to make the Honvéd equal in power to the central army and to win complete control over its formation, equipment, and activities.

politicians friendly to the Monarchy, hoped that the army would serve just such a role.\(^{23}\) They were not, by and large, successful. Indeed, given the constraints under which they worked, it is hard to see how they could have been. Success would have required several things: the induction of a critical mass of men who would return home and propagate their new ideas and experiences, or at least counteract the efforts of anti-Monarchy figures; an intentional effort to instill in the recruits an appreciation for the benefits of the Monarchy; and a relationship between the men and their officers which encouraged them to accept this new ideology.

Unfortunately for the army, meeting these conditions proved impossible. The advent of universal conscription met the most basic prerequisite. It is uncertain to what extent the army made efforts to instill in the common soldier a trust and faith in the Monarchy. However, given the army's attitude toward the lower ranks before the Austro-Prussian war, it is unlikely they were treated as capable of being educated or of thinking in any kind of sophisticated manner.\(^{24}\) But it was the social and physical isolation of

\(^{23}\) The leader of Franz Ferdinand's military chancery, Brosch von Aarenau, wrote "An army which is trustworthy, obligated only to the Kaiser, and blind to nationality appeared to him [Franz Ferdinand] to be the basic necessity of the Empire, the prerequisite for the existence of the Monarchy." Chlumecky, Franz Ferdinand, p. 359.

the officers that damaged the effort the most.

Patterns of officer recruitment, training and behavior during the 19th century created a distinct culture of officership in the Habsburg army. There were two main ways to become an officer in the Habsburg army. One was to become an einjährig-Freiwillige. Intended, as in the German army, primarily for educated middle-class men who wanted to shorten their mandatory term of military service, this allowed these men to serve only one year. They spent 6 months in training and 6 months with their unit in the army and, providing they passed a final examination, returned to civilian life as a reserve officer. Although the number of einjährig-freiwillige each year was a small percentage of the total

418-19. While much is known about the officer corps during this period, relatively little work has been done on the lower ranks of the army and their experiences in uniform.

25Here I am picking up on Keir's point about the importance of training and education in the formation and propagation of culture. The following discussion is based especially on István Deák's book Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918, (New York, 1990), but see also the discussion in Sked, The Survival of the Habsburg Empire, chap. 1., Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," pp. 99-110. and Robert A. Kann, "The Social Prestige of the Officer Corps in the Habsburg Empire from the Eighteenth Century to 1918," in Béla K. Kiraly and Gunther Rothenberg, eds., War and Society in East Central Europe I, (New York, 1979), pp. 113-37. There were a number of changes during the century in officer recruitment and education. I will focus here on the system as it existed after the reforms of 1874.

26These men seem to have had a significant amount of choice about where, when and with what unit they would serve. See Carl von Bardolff, Soldat im alten Österreich. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben, (Jena, 1938), pp. 29ff.
number of officers accepted into the army, over time they became a significant percentage of the officer corps. According to Rothenberg, by 1878 reserve officers made up almost 30 percent of the officer corps.\textsuperscript{27} The ethnic composition of these one-year volunteers did not match that of the regular officer corps.\textsuperscript{28} Nor did they have the same educational and family ties to the army. However, the fact that they spent only six months in contact with the troops makes them of only secondary interest here.

The second avenue to becoming an officer ran through the military school system, either through one of the two military academies, or through one of several lesser schools whose graduates spent several years as probationary cadets before commissioning. In most cases, the future officers entered the military education system at a young age. For a variety of reasons, most students were sons of former military officers. Although this was changing by the turn of

\textsuperscript{27}The Army of Francis Joseph, p. 83. In 1869 there were 1,355 volunteers, of which only half passed the exam and received a commission following their service. By comparison, in 1878 there were 12,055 regular officers in the service.

\textsuperscript{28}Allmayer-Beck argues that because the middle-class, in Cisleithania heavily German, disdained military service, other nationalities were overrepresented in this group. "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," p. 117. He suggests that the reserve officers were active in spreading nationalist propaganda within the military. On the other hand, Bardolff, a German nationalist who praises Hitler and the Nazi party in his memoirs, maintains that the reserve officers of all nationalities blended together with respect for each other's traditions. Soldat im alten Österreich, p. 33-4.
the century, it remained true to such a degree that it is reasonable to treat the officer corps as a caste. They were taught a wide variety of subjects, especially languages. However, the focus of instruction, especially in the social sciences, was on instilling patriotism rather than critical thinking. Although German was the language of instruction at the military academies, it appears that ethnic background was not a factor in the way the officers were treated.

The experiences of these men after graduation were remarkably uniform and further strengthened their ties with other officers. An officer could expect to be transferred several times and to served in most areas of the Monarchy. He was paid relatively little, and many were in debt to both their fellow officers and to civilians. He was not allowed to marry unless he and his bride could raise enough money to pay the kaution, a bond designed to insure that the couple

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29 When teaching history, according to the official doctrines of the military academies, "thought-provoking or critical presentations are to be avoided; on the other hand, every opportunity must be used to strengthen the patriotic and military consciousness of the pupils." Quoted in Deák, Beyond Nationalism, p. 88. This simply reflected Franz Joseph's position, stated much earlier, that "The worth of an army lies not so much in educated as in loyal and chivalrous officers..." Cited in Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," p. 29.

could live on the income at their disposal. Finally, the officer was expected to follow the code of honor prescribed for the officer corps. Almost medieval in character, this standard placed officers as defenders of the Monarchy well above civilians and required them to challenge civilians (or other officers) to duels to defend that honor.

This point is worth emphasizing. Unlike Germany, where dueling was becoming less and less acceptable at the end of the nineteenth century, it flourished in Austria-Hungary. This reflects the extreme emphasis the Habsburg officer corps put on honor. The honor code served as a badge separating the officers from the civilians and the bureaucrats of the Monarchy. The position of the officer caste was privileged and they knew it. Unsurprisingly, officers were obsessed with maintaining this distinction. A large percentage of the articles in the most important prewar journal of the officer corps, Streufflers Militarische Zeitschrift, dealt with questions of honor and its defense. Officers who failed to protect their honor (by ignoring insults directed at them by civilians, for instance) were humiliated and often drummed

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31 Naturally, this at least postponed marriage for many and prohibited it for some.
32 Deak, Beyond Nationalism, pp. 126-38.
out of the army. Honor, for many officers, was more important than anything else—even life itself. Importantly, this personal sense of honor extended to an international stage. Defeat with honor, at least for some of the army’s leaders, would prove more attractive than ignoble survival.

One result of this culture of officership was the absence of any personal relationship with the common soldier. In many cases, linguistic difficulties made this next to impossible anyway. To be sure, the officer’s education had included a number of languages. Moreover, all officers were required to learn the language or languages of their regiment within three years.³⁴ However, although almost all officers eventually achieved this, their level of fluency left much to be desired.³⁵ As a result, even officers who wanted to take

³⁴The Habsburg army’s method of dealing with languages was quite complicated. Three basic distinctions existed. The kommandosprache consisted of about 80 German words which everyone in the army was to know. Included in this were a number of basic commands used on the battlefield and during training. The Dienstsprache was also German. While this category was never completely defined, it essentially required all communications between the military authorities and the units of the army be conducted in German. Finally, the third classification was the Regimentsprache. This was simply the language(s) spoken preferentially by members of the regiment. If more than 20 percent of the members of the regiment spoke a language, it was considered a regimentsprache. This meant that many regiments spoke two languages, and some three or four. See Macartney, The Habsburg Empire, p. 556, fn. 2.

³⁵The journal of the war ministry wrote in 1862 that "our officers' ignorance of the languages of their men is the Austrian army's single greatest defect." Wawro, "An 'Army of Pigs'," p. 409. Nor was the kommandosprache well understood by the enlisted men. Wawro points out that, in the war of
an interest in the lives of their men found doing so
difficult or impossible. But few tried. Most, highly
conscious of their place in society, saw enlisted men as
simply unworthy of their interest. The inevitable
consequence was the failure of any effort to make the army a
"school for the state."*

The culture of the officer corps had a second, equally
significant implication. The officers with few exceptions
placed their loyalty in the Monarch rather than in their
region or nationality. Isolated almost completely from
civilians, and with a distinct esprit de corps revolving
around their view of themselves as officers, they took
seriously their role as defenders of the Monarchy. This is
1859, many enlisted men were bewildered by the German
commands they were given.

*It should be pointed out that these officers were faced
with a much more difficult task than would be true today. In
a pre-mass media age, the amount of variation within what was
nominally one language was extreme. Even when the officers
and men both spoke "german," misunderstandings and
miscommunications were quite possible.

This view contrasts with that of many contemporaries, yet
it seems accurate. See, as an example, Friedrich Funder, Vom
Gestern ins Heute. Aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik, 2nd.

One can, in fact, argue that their allegiance was to the
Monarch himself, rather than to the state which he headed.

This is emphasized by the customary use of "du" to address
other officers. While in practice this custom was influenced
by the rank and age of the officers involved, it remained
prevalent and served symbolically to emphasize the degree to
which the officer corps saw itself as a caste apart from the
rest of society.
perhaps best signified by coat they wore—the Kaiserrock. They swore allegiance to the Emperor, they wore his coat, and they believed in the Monarchy.

Finally, the officers held in common a particular understanding of the world around them. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the officer corps as a whole was uninterested in politics. As Franz-Josef Kos has shown, ties between the military and the political establishment (especially the Foreign Ministry) were already significant in the 1870's. Moreover, the officer corps, especially at its top levels, became increasingly politicized around the turn of the century. Still, compared to civilians, the officers had little experience with politics or the political system beyond a vague dissatisfaction with the way things were working. Politics in the Monarchy was driven by nationalism, and the resulting conflicts alienated the officer corps quickly. This in itself would prove important.

The revolutions of 1848 left the officer corps and the Emperor distinctly aware of the army's importance as the guarantor of the regime and the state. It served as the fortress within which the Monarchy rested, protected against enemies inside and outside of the state. One must admit that

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40 Kos, Die Politik Österreich-Ungarns, pp. 419-31.
41 This is the date preferred by Deák. Others have placed this development earlier.
the army did not fulfill this role perfectly or even, occasionally, adequately. The defeats of 1859 and 1866 had an enormous impact on the Monarchy. Moreover, military and economic weaknesses forced the Monarchy to ally with Germany and, after 1882, with Italy.

But the army's success or failure internally is more difficult to judge. Its leaders could have followed the path of what Alfred Stepan has described as a "new professionalism" of internal control in the Brazilian military in the 1960's. Stepan argues that the military in Brazil believed that internal subversion and revolutionary warfare, not invasion, posed the most significant threat to the state. Consequently, the Brazilian army focused its energies on the professionalization of its approach to internal security. The military, especially through its school systems, began to study the social, political and economic factors which underlay the rise of political and military opposition to the regime, and to develop doctrines for fighting against internal enemies. Believing that it had developed the expertise to deal with these problems, the military began to claim ever broader areas of civil life as its responsibility.42

While internal security was a major priority of many of the leaders of the Habsburg army, they never undertook this kind of intensive effort to develop a professional approach to internal security during this period. A concern for the immediate requirements of defense against mobs or revolution certainly existed, as did a belief that the officer corps had to support the Monarchy unquestioningly. However, before the turn-of-the century, the officer corps, outside of the high-ranking officers and the royal family, refrained from active intervention in politics.

Nevertheless, the cliche that the army was the embodiment of the Monarchy still seems correct. However, the source of this legitimacy was the mere presence of the army and the rituals and routines this entailed. The regular visual displays of the army—the Sunday concerts made famous in Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March*, the gaudy uniforms, the marches and parades—all functioned as a kind of signpost, giving the population a sense of the Monarchy's presence. The concern with which the army treated questions of flags, colors, and anthems during the war demonstrated that it was quite aware of the importance of this role.

More research is needed before we really understand the interaction between the army and the civilian population. It remains unclear how many people attended Roth's Sunday concerts, how many people viewed them as a symbol of the tolerant and benevolent Monarch as opposed to Austro-German
cultural imperialism, and how many simply came to gossip with their neighbors. In addition, we need to know more about the army's role in the active suppression of discontent. How many Czechs viewed the army as occupiers rather than protectors? To what extent was the presence of the army diffused into rural areas and small villages (especially in the urbanized areas of the Monarchy) as opposed to being quartered in big cities?

Still, it seems safe to argue that the army during the last 30 years of the nineteenth century played its role as bastion adequately enough. However, the future looked ominous. Popular discontent, both national and, to a lesser degree, social, was increasing both in extent and intensity. In addition, the military balance of power on the continent seemed to be tipping farther and farther against the Monarchy. The fortress army seemed in danger of being overwhelmed. Something had to be done.

2. Conrad von Hőtzendorf and Prewar Reform

On 15 November 1906, Franz Conrad von Hőtzendorf was named Chief of the General Staff of the army. He replaced Friedrich Beck-Rzikowsky, who had occupied the position since 1881 and was eased out at the age of 76. The troubles of the Monarchy were apparent well before Conrad's appointment. However, Conrad would make a serious attempt to shore up the
fortress walls of the army, albeit in a sporadic and impulsive way. Throughout the prewar period he attempted to intervene in domestic politics to strengthen the army through military reform, and experimented with new technology, tactics and training methods. Unfortunately, he failed to win support for significant improvement, leaving, in his mind, a resort to force as the only option.

Born in 1852, Conrad came from a family with a long tradition of military service. His father, who fought in

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43 No good biography of Conrad exists. The two most utilized works are Oskar Regele, Feldmarschall Conrad, Auftrag und Erfüllung, 1906-1918, (Vienna, 1955) and August Urbanski von Ostrymiecz, Conrad von Hötzendorf, Soldat und Mensch, (Graz-Leipzig-Vienna, 1939). Both Regele and Urbanski served as officers under Conrad and their discussions are quite clearly biased in his direction. See Graydon A. Tunstall, Jr., "The Habsburg Command Conspiracy: The Austrian Falsification of Historiography on the Outbreak of World War I," in Austrian History Yearbook, Vol. 27 (1996), pp. 181-98. There were also a number of thumbnail biographies published during the war, which functioned more as propaganda than serious research. As an example, Ludwig Pastor, Conrad von Hötzendorf. Ein Lebensbild nach originalen Quellen und persönlichen Erinnerungen entworfen, (Vienna-Freiburg im Breisgau, 1916). The memoir published by his second wife, Gina, is only occasionally interesting. Gina Conrad von Hötzendorf, Mein Leben mit Conrad von Hötzendorf, (Graz, 1963). Conrad authored two accounts of his military activities. Meine Anfang. Kriegserinnerungen aus meiner Jugendzeit, (Berlin, 1925) discusses his activities during the suppression of revolutionaries in Bosnia in 1879. More important is his five volume memoir Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, 1906-1918, (Vienna, 1922-1925). Conrad died before he was able to complete his work, and the memoir breaks off at the end of 1914. With the exception of the first 50 pages of the first volume of Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, both of these works are impersonal, dealing with military and diplomatic events in a day-by-day fashion and reprinting a large number of orders, letters, and other correspondence. The reliability of this copying remains unclear. Rudolf Jerábek, an archivist in the Kriegsarchiv
the Habsburg army during the peasant revolts in Poland in 1846, instilled in Conrad a deep loyalty to the Monarchy. Following in his father's footsteps, he joined the army early, attending the Maria Theresa military academy in Wiener Neustadt (the most prestigious of the military training schools). After a brief period of regimental service, he attended the Kriegschule in Vienna, graduating in 1876. His sole combat experience came during the occupation of Bosnia. In the following years he held a variety of command and staff positions, winning the respect and admiration of his men and his superiors.

Conrad was a complex and contradictory man. Although by instinct a loner and an introvert, he craved attention (although not necessarily credit). He disliked court and army politics, and was not particularly good at them, yet managed to get appointed Chief of Staff of the army of an intensely personal state. He was a self-professed atheist in a Catholic Empire. He wanted to be a stoic and claimed repeatedly that he would bear all his burdens without any

in Vienna, who has used these extensively, believes that Conrad cut out important sections and selectively omitted important documents, many of which are difficult or even impossible to trace). See also Solomon Wank, "Some Reflections on Conrad von Hützendorf and His Memoirs Based on Old and New Sources," Austrian History Yearbook. Vol. 1. (1965/1), pp. 74-88. Finally, Conrad after the war wrote a long collection of aphorisms, later collected and published by Kurt Peball under the title Private Aufzeichnungen aus den Papieren des K. u. K. Generalstaabs-Chefs, (Vienna-Munich, 1977).
emotion, yet was prone to wild mood swings and deep depressions. Although he claimed he kept these feelings buried deeply, it is difficult to believe they did not affect his work, especially after the death of his son in the opening battles of the war.

Conrad was at best indifferent to his appointment as Chief of Staff and at times firmly disliked the position. He in fact asked to be passed over when the job was offered to him. In many cases, this would be simply a case of false modesty (and indeed arrogance), but in Conrad's case it rings true. He accepted the position primarily out of an almost puritanical sense of duty. Conrad felt a great responsibility to his Emperor, the Habsburg Monarchy, and his position and role as an army officer. Duty forced him into a position he disliked and for which he was fundamentally not suited. In his letters to the wife he married in 1915 and to others, he stressed that his fondest dream was to retire to his beloved Tirol and enjoy nature. Trapped in his job, it is not surprising that he moved toward the ideals of the völkisch thinkers after the war.

Crucially, Conrad, like many of the Habsburg officers,

44 Although there is little doubt that Conrad felt flattered that other people believed him so important.

45 Urbanski's comments on the efforts of the commander of the Kriegsschule to instill in his pupils a full awareness of their duty to the Monarchy, the army, and themselves are noteworthy in this connection. Urbanski, Conrad von Hötzendorf, pp. 183-190.
was an outspoken Social Darwinist. He believed firmly that history was an endless series of conflicts, which would not, and could not, end. He commented after the war

... the events leading to the general war showed themselves to be only manifestations of the struggle for existence—the driving force in everything. ... Humanity will never form a congenial, peaceable herd. Struggle is as old as humanity, and it will last as long [und er wird auch so alt werden wie sie]. Certainly, philanthropic religions, moral instruction [morallehren] and philosophical doctrines will be able now and then to moderate humanity's struggle for existence in its crassest form, but will never succeed in removing it as the driving force in the world.\(^{46}\)

Humanity, grouped in modern times into states, would never manage to create an environment that was fundamentally peaceful. Accordingly, a state must always maintain the capacity to defend itself. In the final analysis, 'What is justice? [Recht] Justice is what the stronger wants.'\(^{47}\)

Finally, Conrad was at heart a man of action. Slow, careful calculation and patient waiting for a policy to mature did not come naturally to him. He felt instinctively that almost any kind of positive action was better than


\(^{47}\)Conrad, Privat Aufzeichnungen, p. 307. It is important to qualify this point. Conrad's Social Darwinism comes forward most strongly in his postwar writings, especially in his "Aphorisms" and in the introductory chapter to Aus Meiner Dienstzeit. It is much less noticeable in his prewar writings (although not absent entirely). Undoubtedly this is partly due to the professional nature of those writings. However, it is also likely that the shock of defeat and the simple fatigue of working non-stop for 12 years increased his devotion to this ideology.
indecision. That a third option was available, a policy of deliberate inaction, was known to him, but was so distasteful to his temperament as to be, usually, quickly dismissed. Quite often, this reluctance to await events would lead Conrad to jump from one idea to another, sometimes seemingly at random.

There was a fundamental tension in Conrad between the technological/bureaucratic requirements of the modern age, his military training, and his fundamentally romantic inner self. Despite his love for nature and feelings, the evaluation of Joseph Redlich, an Austro-german politician, was just as accurate,

> Everything "Demonic" is lacking in him, he is through and through a technician. He sees in policy only those forces that can be measured and weighed, corps, cannons, fortresses, etc. Public opinion, popular ideas, all immaterial problems of modern politics are unknown to him." 48

Conrad lacked an understanding for people on both an individual and a collective level, preferring factors that could be calculated. This is indicative of his training and background, and, indeed, that of the entire officer corps. The very isolation from society which was supposed to protect the officer corps from nationalism instead served to deprive it of experiences which might allow it to understand the

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people it was protecting. The only chance most officers had to see and understand nationalism was in the faces of Czech protesters, or in the angry refusal of Hungarian politicians to reject budget increases. Conrad was, in this sense, a product of his environment.

But, in the end, Conrad's personality combined three very different threads. He was, as one might expect from a military man, consumed with the importance of details. Unsurprisingly for a man who skipped from division commander to Chief of Staff of the entire army, he wanted to micromanage everything. At the same time, he was a Social Darwinist on a macro level, believing in the importance of conflict and convinced that scientific laws governed the behavior of societies over the long term. Yet on a personal level he was very much a romantic. This is reflected in his love for nature and of solitude, and, in a different sense, his willing acceptance of the idea that fate (or some such outside power) was in control of the world and could not be opposed successfully. And, finally, it was reflected in the way he made decisions, intuitively, based primarily on gut feelings and on broad, sweeping generalizations rather than

\[49\text{It is certainly true that, in the age when staffs were relatively small and the amount of paper being shuffled relatively manageable, most army commanders saw almost all of the paperwork produced by their armies. However, it is one thing to observe everything which is going on, and quite another to try and control everything. Conrad tended toward the latter.}\]
carefully considered calculations. An awkward mix, it would not serve Conrad or the Monarchy well during the war.

The manner of Conrad's elevation to the position of Chief of Staff was unusual enough to deserve comment. Serving as a division commander with the rank of Feldmarschall-Leutnant,\(^{50}\) Conrad jumped over several officers senior to him. His selection was a direct result of the unique role of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand. It was quite normal for close relatives of the reigning emperor to play important roles in the army. However, Franz Joseph's age, Franz Ferdinand's activist temperament, and the political skills of the leader of his Military Chancery, Alexander Brosch von Aarenau allowed him to become unusually influential.\(^{51}\) To this end, Franz Ferdinand relied on his Military Chancery not only in military affairs, but used it as a sort of planning center for the development of his ideas for reforming the Monarchy.\(^{52}\)

\(^{50}\)The approximate equivalent of a major-general in the American army. See the useful chart in Deák, Beyond Nationalism, p. 15.


\(^{52}\)On the nature of Franz Ferdinand's plans for political reform, see Rudolf Kiszling, Erherzog Franz Ferdinand von
Franz Ferdinand's interest in reforming the army led to Conrad's selection as Chief of Staff. Conrad had made his reputation with a series of books on tactics. These books were very well received and Conrad was widely perceived as one of the shining lights of the army. The two first met when the crown prince inspected the infantry regiment under Conrad's command, and met again several times in the next years. On each occasion, Franz Ferdinand was impressed by the way in which Conrad and units under his command performed. Thus, when the heir demanded that Beck be sacked after an unsatisfactory performance at army maneuvers, he handpicked Conrad as Beck's replacement.\(^5\)

By the time of Conrad's appointment, the forces threatening the army seemed increasingly strong. Believing in the future of the Monarchy became increasingly difficult in the face of nationalist agitation, especially in Bohemia and in the South Slav lands.\(^5\) The army had been forced to

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quell riots in Bohemia and also, significantly, in Graz, where Bosnian troops suppressed German nationalist riots, much to the displeasure of the German nationalist parties.\footnote{Rothenberg, p. 130.}

In addition, the socialists, especially in the major cities of Cisleithania, repeatedly took anti-military positions. Impressed by the climate of discontent, Franz Ferdinand as early as 1896 believed that the Monarchy was in "a time of crisis." He continued to argue that, in these circumstances, ". . . the army's main task is not the defense of the fatherland against an external enemy, but the protection and maintenance of the throne and the dynasty against all internal enemies."\footnote{Memorandum, Franz Ferdinand to Beck, May 1896. Quoted in Gunther Rothenberg, The Army of Francis Joseph, (West Lafayette, 1976), p. 129.} Little had changed since 1848.

Just as, or more, important, however, were the conflicts with Hungary. Slowly rising tensions between Hungary and the rest of the Monarchy exploded suddenly in 1902 when the government introduced a bill calling for an increase in the annual number of recruits. Unpopular in Cisleithania, the bill provoked a virtual rebellion in the Hungarian parliament. Although Franz Joseph proved willing to make

However, it is much easier to say that today than to see it at the time. For a more optimistic view of the nationality problem and the situation of the Monarchy, see Alan Sked, The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918, (London-New York, 1989).
concessions, the Hungarian Parliament continued to resist. In the end, Franz Joseph had to threaten the introduction of universal suffrage and the suspension of the Hungarian constitution to end Hungarian resistance. Before the tension eased, however, the army went so far as to distribute sealed orders to implement "Plan U," the military takeover of Hungary. Although the crisis abated, the situation remained strained.

Franz Ferdinand was acutely aware of the threat these conflicts posed. Conrad's appointment was one of a series of personnel changes during 1906 engineered by the Crown Prince to allow him to influence policy and strengthen the Empire. Conrad's role was to reform the army and make it a more effective and reliable instrument. In this, the two men agreed completely, and Conrad immediately began to make

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57 Including, importantly, greater prominence for the Magyar language (especially the use of Magyar as a regimental language even when only 20 percent of the men spoke it as their language of choice), the right to fly national colors alongside the imperial flag on military buildings and other symbolic concessions. Rothenberg, p. 133. Norman Stone, in his article "Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900-1914," (Past and Present, No. 33 (Ap 1966)) calls these concessions "relatively trivial." (p. 105). In the highly charged atmosphere of the time, this seems to understate their importance.

changes in the areas under his control. He promoted the investigation of new technology, including the airplane, the machine gun, and new kinds of heavy artillery.\textsuperscript{59} He pushed through the introduction of a new uniform for the infantry, one that would make it less conspicuous on the battlefield, although he was unable to force the cavalry to abandon its gaudy dress.\textsuperscript{60} He tried to shake up the officers of the General Staff, forcing them to spend time with the troops and become physically fit.\textsuperscript{61} He moved to make training exercises more realistic, limiting the amount of information available to commanders, and working the troops as hard as possible.\textsuperscript{62}

However, these kinds of technical changes, while important, would only go so far. For Conrad, the metaphor of the army as the bastion of the Monarchy was self-evident.

\textsuperscript{59}Regele, Feldmarschall Conrad, pp. 214-15.
\textsuperscript{61}Rothenberg, The Army of Francis Joseph, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{62}Indeed, he wanted to drive the troops so hard that Franz Ferdinand intervened, citing issues of expense and the need to conserve manpower as reasons to keep exercises within reasonable limits. Although issues of foreign policy would be much more significant, Conrad's estrangement from Franz Ferdinand owed at least a bit to arguments over internal military issues. Walter Wagner, "Die K. (U.) K. Armee-Gliederung und Aufgabenstellung," in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., Die Bewaffnete Macht, Vol. V. of Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918, (Vienna, 1987), pp. 625-7. See also Kiszling, Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand, pp. 64-5. As another example, Conrad and Franz Ferdinand clashed over Conrad's desire to take the flute-players from the military band and train them as gunners. Stone, "Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900-1914," p. 107.
The problems of the Monarchy were not just military, but political and diplomatic. These were the problems weakening the army. This implied, on the one hand, that issues involving with the army should include all levels of government, not just the Ministries of War. Conversely, though, Conrad believed it also justified his intervening in politics to protect the army and the Monarchy.

The single most important way to preserve the army, and thus the Monarchy, according to Conrad, lay in sustaining in the army what he called the "traditional Austrian spirit of community." Only this would allow the army to protect the interests of the Monarchy as a whole. To preserve this spirit, the army had to treat all nationalities impartially, valuing each person and nationality equally. As he wrote on 6 April 1907,

> Only in an army in which each of the nationalities can come to accept that they are viewed as completely equal will a unified spirit and attachment to the greater whole (be able to) endure. 

Language was key to maintaining this spirit of community. "Here lies the link between respect for the nationalities on the one hand and respect for the unified spirit and the firm

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^64 Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, p. 596.

^65 Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, p. 503.
leadership on the other. All other constructions do not correspond to the peculiarities of the Monarchy, and are therefore not tenable over the long run." Rejecting Hungarian efforts to raise the position of Magyar in the army, Conrad accepted without hesitation that German would have to remain the language of command. Indeed, he did not see how it could be otherwise. All officers would have to learn German. However, the common soldiers could and should use their language of preference (their "Muttersprache").

By creating an environment within the regiment in which people felt their rights and traditions were respected, he hoped to encourage an allegiance to the Monarchy as a whole. He commented in a later memorandum, "There may be no ruling nation [Herrenvolk] in the army." To be sure, Conrad was also worried about anti-military agitation in the Austrian half of the Monarchy, especially by the socialists. To counter this threat, he suggested an intensive effort to use the schools to instill a pro-army and pro-Monarchy attitude in the youth. The government must also, he argued, crack down on the distribution of anti-military propaganda, utilizing the law against high treason.

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66 Conrad, Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. I., p. 504. (dated 6 April 1907). This is the source of the previous quote as well. Of course, what seemed to Conrad to be simply a necessary concession to practical and historical concerns represented cultural imperialism to many of the minorities.

if necessary.\textsuperscript{68} However, it was the disintegrating effect of nationalism that most worried Conrad.

It is significant that the context of most of these proposals was the continuing conflict between Hungary and the rest of the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{69} Conrad believed the Hungarian demands for a special place within the Monarchy and their relentless efforts to Magyarize their minorities were the most important causes of the political turmoil. He thoroughly opposed Hungarian attempts to make the Honvéd into an army capable of fighting on its own and to force the common army to grant Magyar equality with German. Moreover, it was primarily Hungarian opposition that prevented the passage of bills allocating additional funding or other resources to the army.

Budget allocations for the army had fallen relative to those of its neighbors for some time.\textsuperscript{70} Conrad wrote in

\begin{itemize}
\item Contra, \textit{Aus Meiner Dienstzeit}, Vol. I., P. 545.
\item Indeed, Conrad's attitude toward the national minorities of Cisleithania was less kind than toward the Croats. I believe that this was based primarily on a belief that the Croats were suppressed, and thus had a right to be nationalistic, while the Czechs and the Serbs, living in a state which recognized their equality, opposed the Monarchy without any justification.
\item Wagner gives figures for budgeted military spending as compared to total state expenditures in "Die K. (U.) K. Armee-Gliederung und Aufgabestellung," pp. 590-91. In general, military spending amounted to somewhere between 22-30 percent of total state spending, although the army's share of this money had declined in favor of the navy. It is unclear whether Wagner includes in his figures the periodic extraordinary funding allocated to the military above and
\end{itemize}
1907, "When I assumed my present position, I knew that the army was in a poor way, but I had absolutely no conception of how bad it really was." He immediately began to badger the Foreign Minister and Francis Joseph for more money and more men. However, while the government pushed through a small increase in the manpower and funding of the army in 1912, Conrad's efforts to improve the material condition of the army were largely unsuccessful. To some extent, this was beyond the budgeted amount. If he does not, it is hard to reconcile his figures with those of Rothenberg. Rothenberg puts the military budget at 13.2 percent of all expenditures for 1905 (Wagner calculates it at almost 27 percent), and at 12.2 percent in 1906 (as compared to 27.75 percent).

71Cited in Rothenberg, The Army of Francis Joseph, p. 143. Only the socialists believed that too much money was being spent on the army. The party's paper, the Arbeiter Zeitung, editorialized in May 1914 "We spend half as much on armaments as Germany, yet Austria's gross product is only one-sixth of Germany's. In other words, we spend proportionately three times as much on war as Kaiser Wilhelm. Must we play Big Power at the cost of poverty and hunger?" Cited in Frederic Morton, Thunder at Twilight, (New York, 1989), p. 211.


73The army bill of 1912 increased the annual recruit contingent to 181,000 (136,000 for the joint army, with the rest split almost evenly between the Honvéd and the Landwehr), with further rises meaning that, by 1918, the total would amount to 236,300. To push this bill through the Hungarian parliament, it also provided that the average service obligation in the Joint Army would be decreased from three years to two, and the Honvéd and Landwehr were granted organic artillery (which the army had opposed). Auffenberg, the Minister of War, had become so frustrated with the budgetary impasse that in 1911 he had ordered on his own authority a number of artillery pieces.
simply a result of the fact that none of the parties in Cisleithania accepted responsibility for supporting military spending proposals.\textsuperscript{74} More important, however, was Hungarian opposition to any spending proposal that did not include provisions increasing the power of the Honvéd.

It was not just Hungarian demands for special rights within the army that worried Conrad. The Hungarian government itself, he believed, through its attempts at Magyarizing its own minorities, was producing the very nationality conflicts which it feared. Despite their efforts, he believed, magyarization had not yet succeeded. However, the very attempt had provoked unrest among the national minorities, especially the Croats, and led to ties with agitators in other states.\textsuperscript{75}

Conrad insisted that the government stop Hungarian separatism. This required, according to him, using Hungary's national minorities as allies against the Hungarian government.\textsuperscript{76} More seriously, he periodically advocated the use of force if Budapest insisted on continuing its


\textsuperscript{75}Conrad, \textit{Auf Meiner Dienstzeit}, Vol. I., p. 553. (7 February 1908).

\textsuperscript{76}Seemingly the exact opposite of his earlier prescriptions for the army. Conrad justified this by arguing that using the Croats against the Hungarians in actuality meant working to ensure Croatian allegiance to the Monarchy.
chauvinist policies. In one of his longer and more ambitious memoranda, that of 31 December 1907, he played with a complete reconstruction of the Monarchy to include (after a successful war against Serbia) the formation of a South-Slav "complex" within the Monarchy that would create a more advantageous distribution of forces among the nationalities. Unsurprisingly, these suggestions matched the spirit, if not the details, of the plans being discussed in the circle around Franz Ferdinand.

Internal dissension and resistance formed one threat to the Monarchy and the protection provided by the army. However, the potential of war with other states was just as alarming. In keeping with his belief in a Social Darwinist world and his personal need for a policy of action, Conrad began immediately after he became Chief of the General Staff to advocate war, whether against Italy, against Serbia, or, 


78"The creation of this south-Slav complex (he had earlier in this memo advocated the annexation of Serbian territory up to Nis) within the framework of the Monarchy would create a very advantageous balance of forces among the nationalities, which would make it possible to create order in the Monarchy." Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. I., p. 537. John Leslie, in his excellent essay "The Antecedents of Austria-Hungary's War Aims," in Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit, Band 20. Archiv und Forschung, (Vienna-Munich, 1993), suggests that this implied "... the restructuring of the Monarchy on a trialist basis with a South Slav third partner to Austria-Cisleithania and Hungary..." (p. 311) I believe Leslie is in fact correct, but the evidence in this memo alone is not sufficient to prove his point.
if forced, against both at the same time. Although the Foreign Ministry rejected all of these proposals (at least before 1914), they demonstrate how afraid Conrad was that his fortress army was in peril.

At heart, Conrad's pleas for war were reactive and defensive rather than aggressive and annexationist. This does not mean that he rejected seizing territory from Serbia. Indeed, he suggested several times incorporating much of Serbia into the Monarchy. In his programmatic memoranda of December 1907, he even discussed the Monarchy's need to expand into the Balkans and secure its links to the Adriatic.

However, he never fleshed out his proposals with detailed ideas for exploiting the newly conquered territories. Instead, he focused on how this would relieve the pressure on the Monarchy by ending the constant efforts by Serbia to win the allegiance of south-Slav members of the Monarchy. Simultaneously, these new territories would help stabilize the internal political condition of the Monarchy. How exactly this was to be accomplished remained nebulous. In general, it ranged from the "Bavarianization" of a relatively intact Serbia\(^{80}\) to vague calls to win the support of the


south-Slavs for the Monarchy by treating them fairly.\textsuperscript{81}

In much the same way, Conrad's repeated demands for war with Italy were more defensive than aggressive. Conrad served for several years in areas near the Italian border, and participated in the suppression of an irredentist riot in the city of Trieste in 1902. He was acutely aware of the prominent role of propaganda from Italy and the growing unrest among the Italian population of the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{82}


\textsuperscript{82}It is unclear, however, what caused Conrad to hate Italy so deeply. In his many memoranda in the First World War, the word "Italy" is almost always accompanied by an adjective like "perfidious" or "treacherous" or "criminal." This was despite the fact that he predicted before the war that Italy was unlikely to meet its alliance obligations. It is true that Conrad fell in love with the Tirol, and grew to consider it the very essence of Austria. However, the depth of his feelings probably derives more from his emotional and impulsive personality than any rational cause.

Gina tells a rather amusing story which sheds some light on Conrad. Gina and some friends had talked Conrad into travelling to Italy, which was against orders (logically enough, given the likely diplomatic repercussions of the Chief of Staff crossing the Italian border without permission or even notification). Naturally, the car broke down just over the Italian border, attracting the attention of an Italian border guard. Gina, who spoke fluent Italian, got out and spoke to the guard while Conrad remained in the car, slumped down in the backseat and tried not to be noticed. Eventually, Gina managed to convince the guard that they were Italians returning from a trip into the Monarchy, and the guard let them go. See Gina Conrad von Hötzendorf, Mein Leben mit Conrad, pp. 105-7.
Within weeks of assuming his position, he called for a preemptive war against Italy to end secessionist agitation and to stop Italy before its army grew strong enough to attack the Monarchy. The goals of such a war, elaborated at length in a memorandum attached to the mobilization plan of 1912/13, called for taking over the Italian fleet, an indemnity, and neutralizing the irredentist movement among the Italians of the Monarchy by colonizing the border region with Germans and Slavs.\(^3\)

Thus, Conrad's demands for war were fundamentally defensive. He advocated preemptive strikes to prevent efforts by the Monarchy's neighbors to destabilize it. He did refer to the need to establish naval dominance in the Adriatic and to spread the Monarchy's influence in the Balkans, but these plans were vague and never fleshed out. Conrad, at heart, was too much a man of action and impulse to prepare a careful, methodical plan for the long-range future. Instead, he moved from quickly from plan to plan in an effort to fix the Monarchy's problems immediately.

This, in the end, led to trouble with his patron, Franz Ferdinand. The Crown Prince had originally supported him against Franz Joseph's Military Chancery (Militärkanzlei

Seiner Majestät), which functioned as an advisory body to the emperor and had a great deal of influence, if little formal power. However, Conrad's constant demands for war increasingly disillusioned Franz Ferdinand, who believed the Monarchy could not afford to be distracted by military adventures. He remained on Conrad's side after the Chief of Staff was sacked in November of 1911 following a long and bitter conflict with the Foreign Minister, Alois Lexa Count Aehrenthal. Indeed, it was Franz Ferdinand who helped engineer Conrad's return to the position almost a year later. But Conrad's renewed calls for war after his reappointment led Franz Ferdinand to look elsewhere, and, by the summer of 1914, he was actively considering alternatives to Conrad as Chief of the General Staff. This was the situation when the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 changed everything.

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84 Hereafter MKSM or simply the Military Chancery.

85 Valuing Conrad's contribution to making exercises and training more realistic, the Franz Ferdinand's Military Chancery opposed the MKSM's desire to remove Conrad quietly, writing "This is not possible; one must allow Conrad a completely free hand. He is generally not understood, also not by the Kaiser. Conrad is no Chief of the General Staff for peacetime, rather exclusively one for war." Pantenius, Der Angriffsgedanke, p. 255.

3. Conclusion

The culture of officership in the Habsburg army, its memory of the events of 1848-9, and the ways in which it tried to learn from the revolutionary upheaval of that year played all shaped the way in which the Habsburg officer corps reacted to the First World War. The officer corps is best described as a caste, unified in experience, outlook and ideas. The officers believed themselves the last bastion of the Monarchy. They defined this Monarchy not as a collection of individual states, but as a unified whole. This whole was at the least embodied by the Monarchy, and, often, was considered the personal property of a feudal dynasty, a dynasty that the officers served and protected. To be sure, by 1900 cracks had appeared in this façade, but the basic loyalty to the Monarchy remained solid.

Conrad came to the position of Chief of the General Staff already imbued with these ideas. They would guide his actions throughout his tenure. His reform proposals, aimed primarily at strengthening the army and cementing its unified character, were guided precisely by this understanding of the army's role and purpose. An innovator tactically, his political proposals are not surprising at all—they emerged naturally from his education and experiences. It was the fear that the forces arrayed against the Monarchy, both without and within, would eventually break through, burrow under, or
even weaken from within the walls provided by the army which led Conrad to propose such drastic and desperate solutions.

It is important to note that Conrad was not alone. Many of the other officers in the army accepted his fears, and, often, his conclusions. Evidence of the attitude of lower-level officers toward nationalism is hard to find. However, their scorn for politics as usual is not. This frequently extended to a willingness and eagerness for war, most evident in the higher commanders. Blasius Schemua, the Chief of Staff during the period of Conrad's ouster, was not the only officer who believed, "We are already in the middle of war, we lack only the final decisive act." Conrad's voice was simply the loudest of many.

His inability to persuade the politicians of the need for drastic action is unsurprising. As an activist in a fundamentally conservative Monarchy, Conrad threatened to tear the carefully constructed and maintained web of compromises that constituted the political structure of Austria-Hungary in the twentieth century. But they serve to demonstrate how Conrad would act if he could secure of position of political power. His understanding of the

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8"Cited in Allmayer-Beck, "Die Bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," p. 140. Schemua displayed the typical attitude toward politics when he wrote "the Parliaments have proved quite incompetent, lacking in a sense of duty, activated by the lowest instincts, corrupt, without leadership, the right-minded people fearful and without the courage of their convictions." Cited in Stone, "Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900-1914," p. 108.
problems of and solutions for nationalism would change little during the First World War. What the conflict did do, however, was offer him the opportunity to win a powerful political position. If, that is, he could succeed militarily.
"Service with the troops gives rise to an incomparably higher feeling of satisfaction than a role as an advisor without power, who only works behind the scenes—often with the aid of intrigues and only with the utmost self-denial." Brosch von Aarenau, commenting on his frustration regarding politics.¹

"What consequences the assassination will have can not now be foreseen. . .  Unfortunately I have the impression that the future, even the immediate future, holds nothing good for the Monarchy. . .  it will be a hopeless battle, nevertheless it must be fought, since such an ancient Monarchy and such a glorious army can not disappear uneventfully. So I look forward to a bleak future and a bleak end of my life." Conrad, in July 1914.²

"It pains me to watch Conrad. He can not bear the position, to which fate has lifted him. . .  The eight years of struggle, first against Schönaich, then against Franz Ferdinand, have exhausted him terribly." Josef Redlich, in his diary entry of 9 September 1914.³

Policy-makers in Vienna in July 1914 could not plead ignorance of the likely consequences of their actions. Although few expected the war to last years and end in the disintegration of the Monarchy, they were quite aware of the

¹Quoted in Chlumecky, Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand, p. 158.

²Cited in Gina, Mein Leben mit Conrad, pp. 113-14.

danger of a continent-wide conflict. Even if they suppressed this risk in their minds, the likelihood that a war against Serbia would force Russia to intervene was well understood. Yet even Franz Joseph, by and large a force for peace in the years before the war, yielded to the call for action in July of 1914.

The reasons for this intense desire to force some kind of resolution were complex and varied from person to person. Yet, at heart, they boiled down to a single issue: the existence of Austria-Hungary as a European Great Power under the firm control of the Habsburg dynasty seemed endangered. Years of unsuccessful attempts to solve the Monarchy's problems peacefully left violence as the only alternative. Reluctantly but decisively, Franz Joseph and his advisors opted for war.

Conrad, of course, had pleaded for war since his appointment in 1906. Yet, by 1914, he acknowledged that the chances of success were far less than they had been ten or even five years before. Conrad championed war in 1914 more out of a desperate need to release the accumulated tension than out of any careful consideration of means and ends. To the extent that he calculated the long-term benefits of war, Conrad hoped that military triumph would lessen the national agitation within and from outside the Monarchy. Alternatively, the army and the Monarchy could at least perish honorably, not an unimportant consideration in view of
the importance honor held for the officer corps. The grand strategy of the army, therefore, relied on winning the war quickly to rally the population around the Monarchy.

Unfortunately, 1914 brought neither victory nor defeat. The Monarchy was left to fight a war it had never imagined. The battles of 1914, though, had an importance often overlooked. The autumn defeats in Russia and Serbia seriously shook Conrad’s (and the Monarchy’s) position. Nevertheless, Conrad emerged from this crisis the effective commander in chief of the Habsburg army. His personality and his political aims and visions would guide the army’s attempts to solve the problems of the Monarchy until his relief in early 1917.

1. The July Crisis

As was true for so much of Habsburg society, the bureaucratic structure by which the Monarchy made foreign policy was unique. While Franz Joseph retained final power over policy, all but the biggest decisions were made in the Foreign Ministry, one of the three common ministries of the Empire. Its head was, de facto, the most important minister

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in the state, serving as a kind of informal prime minister. However, his authority was circumscribed by the ability and willingness of others to intervene in policy making. The Delegations, the Austrian Premier and other state level officials had some influence over foreign affairs. However, the Hungarian Prime Minister and the military played much more important roles. The Ausgleich of 1867 entitled the Hungarian Prime Minister to a say over foreign policy. The extent to which he used this varied, especially since the Foreign Minister for much of the Dualist period was a Magyar (and thus likely to guide policy in ways Hungarian Minister Presidents found acceptable), but a determined prime minister could wield a great deal of power. The Chief of the General Staff and the Minister of War also wielded great influence. Both, after 1909, had the crucial right to correspond directly with the Foreign Minister and have private audiences with the Emperor. With politics in the Monarchy, at least at this level, heavily dependent on personality and influence, these were important privileges. Thus, foreign policy was primarily constructed by the foreign ministry, but influenced by a variety of power centers with widely varying motivations and demands.

Under the leadership of Leopold Berchtold, Foreign Minister since Aehrenthal’s death in 1911, the Monarchy’s
foreign policy had remained fundamentally peaceful. However, the Balkan wars had significantly damaged the position of the Monarchy. Although the squabbling which led to the Second Balkan War decreased the likelihood of an alliance system which would unify the entire peninsula, the Monarchy could scarcely be happy with the result: a Serbia almost doubled in size (and which quickly began to flirt openly with a unification with Montenegro promising access to the Adriatic), a Russian ambassador in Serbia who openly promoted pan-Slavist ideas, and an increasingly dubious Rumanian commitment to the Triple Alliance. Nor was Germany, ostensibly the Monarchy's faithful ally, willing to help. Indeed, Germany, with its economic aspirations in the Balkans and Near East and Wilhelm's familial ties to Greece, frequently opposed Berchtold's efforts to rescue the interests and prestige of Austria-Hungary.

Although Berchtold's policy had grown increasingly

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5 The only substantial biography of Berchtold is Hugo Hantsch, Leopold Graf Berchtold, Grandseigneur und Staatsmann, 2 Vols., (Gratz, 1963), which consists mostly of excerpts from Berchtold's diary. Both Bridge and Williamson give good accounts of the Monarchy's foreign policy during the prewar period. For specific topics, see B. E. Schmitt, The Annexation of Bosnia, (Cambridge, 1937), Ernst Helmreich, The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, (Cambridge, 1938), Franz Josef Kos, Die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen Österreich-Ungarns und Deutschlands in Südosteuropa 1912/1913. Die Adriahafen-, die Saloniki- und die Kavallafrage, (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 1996), and Samuel R Williamson, "Military Dimensions of Habsburg-Romanov Relations During the Era of the Balkan Wars," in Bela K. Kiraly and Dimitrije Djordevic, eds., East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars, (Boulder, 1987),
aggressive in the face of this crisis, its basic thrust remained diplomatic. The results of a comprehensive policy overview in June of 1914 demonstrate this clearly. The Matscheko memorandum, named after the Foreign Ministry official who drafted the proposal, summarized the results of this review. Addressed to Berlin (although never delivered in its original form), the memorandum was a plea for a vigorous diplomatic campaign to reverse the free fall of the previous years. It saw the efforts of Russia to create a Balkan alliance aimed at Austria-Hungary as the main threat. The Monarchy had to meet this challenge aggressively. Austria-Hungary should demand that Rumania make a public commitment to the Alliance. If it refused, the Monarchy should ignore German objections and turn to Bulgaria as its main ally in the Balkans. Taken as a whole, although a clear change in emphasis, the new line remained exclusively diplomatic in approach. Only the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife persuaded Vienna to turn to force.6

While Franz Ferdinand's assassination passed almost unnoticed in most European capitals, it provoked a flurry of activity in Vienna. Although Berchtold initially remained quiet, he soon accepted the arguments of many of his advisors and other government officials that the Monarchy had to teach

Serbia a lesson. Only Tisza held out for a peaceful solution to the crisis. Berchtold had one of the hawks in the Foreign Ministry, Alexander Hoyos, revise the Matschenko memorandum and travel to Berlin to plead for German backing.

As is well known, Hoyos received the assurance that Germany would back the Monarchy to the hilt. Tisza, the only remaining obstacle, was persuaded to support an ultimatum during the second week of July.

Berchtold, Franz Joseph and the others chose war because they believed the international balance was tipping increasingly against the Monarchy. F. R. Bridge argues that the choice for war was, if not exclusively, at least primarily a diplomatic decision, with little concern for

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7 The apparent success of military threats as diplomatic weapons in 1912 and 1913, the financial weakness which made the Monarchy unable to mobilize the army without using it, and Serbia's increasingly brazen conduct all contributed to this conclusion.


events within the Monarchy itself. In any case, it is certain that the civilian policy makers went to war reluctantly. Having grown accustomed to the idea of using force, they accepted it now as the least bad of all possible options. That just weeks earlier they had decided for an exclusively diplomatic strategy to salvage the position of the Monarchy emphasizes this point. Vienna chose war because the enemies outside the citadel were becoming strong enough to destroy the walls.

Many of the military leaders, and Conrad in particular, reacted much differently. Conrad, of course, had advocated war since he had become Chief of the General Staff. Aehrenthal, secure in his position, had deflected these demands and even forced Conrad out of office in the fall of 1911. Berchtold, less powerful politically and faced with a more threatening international situation, had less leverage.

Conrad, reappointed in late 1912 when war with Russia seemed likely, ignored Franz Joseph's warnings and began clamoring again for war. Although the revelations of the Redl

\[11\]"In this situation, internal political factors could hardly have any really determining effect on the government's decision either way." Bridge, The Habsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, p. 336.

\[12\]Conrad was called to an audience with Franz Joseph on 7 December, at which he pled with Franz Joseph for internal reform and aggressive military action. The Emperor rejected these proposals, whereupon Conrad asked that he be allowed to withdraw from consideration for the position. Franz Joseph, however, appointed him anyway. Chlumecky, who saw Conrad the next day, found him very depressed about the entire
espionage affair forced Conrad to maintain a low profile,\textsuperscript{13} he continued to intervene in foreign affairs. This included meddling in Albania, where he rejected Berchtold's faith in an independent Albanian state and hoped to exploit the Albanian willingness to fight.\textsuperscript{14} And, of course, following the assassination, Conrad returned to Vienna and pressed hard for a full military response.

That he pressured Berchtold and Franz Joseph is not surprising and his arguments were not new. Instead, they were simply a logical continuation of the demands he had made since his appointment. Conrad believed that the nationalities, if the Monarchy did not act, would conclude that the Monarchy was impotent and near death. A gradual transfer of allegiance from the Monarchy to the states surrounding the nationalities would inevitably occur without corrective action. This was merely a variation of the claims he had made in the past. For Conrad, the threat was not just


the barbarians at the gate, it was the likelihood that the walls themselves were weakening. The strength of the surrounding states was by no means irrelevant, but the primary danger remained the inability of the Monarchy to win the support of its population.

Importantly, many military figures agreed with Conrad. The Minister of War Alexander Krobatin, a hawk for years, backed Conrad's plea for war. Oskar Potiorek, the military governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina also urged violence. Indeed, he may have deliberately overstated the reaction of the Bosnian Serbs to the assassination to emphasize his pleas. In general, the rest of the high-ranking officers supported Conrad's ideas.

Although Conrad had real policy concerns which led to his calls for war, his actions in the July Crisis also reflected his frantic urge to relieve the constant tension. Conrad had never felt comfortable in the political arena that he occupied as Chief of Staff. Indeed, despite the sheer

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16He wrote to Brosch on 28 August 1908 "The reporters will not stop bothering me, directly and indirectly, but I have turned them all away, therefore I also count the Press as my enemy—this is, however, as with so much else in the world, irrelevant. . . . . I am like a person who has been placed in a society in which he does not fit." Chlumecky, Erherzog Franz Ferdinand, pp. 154. This sense of isolation, of not
volume of Conrad's political activities, he was not fundamentally a good politician. He was admittedly a popular and personable courtier. But he was much too blunt, much too unwilling at least to pretend to see the other's point of view, much too uncalculating to flourish in interpersonal politics. It was only because other people believed in his ideas that he had the clout he did.

Nor was Conrad an especially patient or thoughtful man. He was far happier with action than with planning, with instinct than calculation, a characteristic which would damage the war effort in many ways in the coming years. Thus, when an opportunity appeared to fight on the battlefield rather than in the meeting rooms of Vienna, Conrad grabbed it with both hands and held on. This helps to explain his apparently paradoxical emotional state in July and August. On the one hand, Conrad was clearly energized by the events of July and August. Yet, his confidence in the Monarchy's ability to win a war had decreased dramatically over the previous years. War in 1909 would have been a game with stacked cards, he later summarized, in 1912, the odds would have been even, but by 1914 it was va banque. As he quite fitting in, indeed, of a lack of confidence, was characteristic of Conrad.


wrote Gina, his future second wife, the war had to be fought, despite the likelihood of failure, "to satisfy the honor of the Monarchy". The chance to act, even if the situation was desperate, allowed Conrad to look to the future with anticipation.

2. The Opening Campaigns

Although a cliche, it is nevertheless correct to point out that everyone expected the war to be over by Christmas. This was certainly true of a war limited to the Balkans. It was just as true of the continental war that eventually erupted. Few political or military leaders thought any farther than the initial offensives; Habsburg military theorists were just as "offensive" in their thought as Joffre or Schlieffen. As is well known, their faith in the offensive proved misplaced, foundering in the face of machine guns and rapid-fire artillery and, more importantly, on the ability of governments to rally their citizens behind the nation. The shape these failures took, however, was important. The initial offensives cost the Habsburg army and Monarchy dreadfully, both in manpower and credibility. Yet, paradoxically, Conrad emerged from the first months of the war with even more power than he had had in August. Conrad

\footnote{\textit{Gina von H"{o}tzendorf, Mein Leben mit Conrad von H"{o}tzendorf}, pp. 113-14.}
would retain this position of strength, in spite of grumbling from Vienna and Budapest, until the catastrophes of 1916.

Wilhelm and the German Foreign Office had urged Hoyos to act quickly, irrespective of what policy Vienna adopted. Indeed, an immediate attack against Serbia might have forestalled Russian intervention, although this is doubtful. However, even without the delay needed to persuade Tisza, the requirements of military mobilization made it impossible to act quickly. Consequently, the Monarchy did not issue the ultimatum to Serbia until late July. In the interim, the diplomatic situation in Europe became much more threatening.

With the possibility of Russian intervention increasing, Berchtold and others occasionally doubted the wisdom of war. The details of the ensuing debates are complicated. What deserves emphasis here is that, each time Berchtold began to waver, Conrad argued vigorously for war. He did so without worrying about the possibility of Russian participation. Well before the war he had accepted the likelihood of Russian intervention to aid Serbia and he did not swerve from this position in 1914.\(^\text{20}\) Indeed, in a meeting on 31 July of the Joint Council of Ministers, as close to a cabinet as the Monarchy possessed, devoted to a discussion of the possibility of a settlement, Conrad spoke up for war even if

\(^{20}\text{Jerábek, Potiorek, p. 212.}\)
this meant mobilizing against Russia. Pressed to the wall by Conrad, and with the German army preparing to move, Berchtold, Tisza and the others stuck to their original decision.

The temporary uncertainty about Russian actions, however, threatened the smooth execution of the army's mobilization plans. The general staff, compelled to account for both Russia and the Balkans, had built a certain amount of flexibility into its prewar planning. It had divided the army into three groups. One, numbering nine corps, would move to Galicia to guard against the Russian threat. A second, smaller group, totaling three corps, would move immediately to the Balkans. The third, with four corps, would function as a swing force. In a war against Serbia alone, this group would move immediately to the Balkans. If Russia intervened, however, it would reinforce Galicia to fight the more threatening enemy.

This clear, calculated balance of threats and responses

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fell apart in July of 1914. Although intelligence reports from Austrian diplomats and businessmen in Russia suggested it would intervene, Conrad initially ordered the swing force, reinforced by an additional corps, to move against Serbia. However, on the evening of 31 July, after pleas for support from the German army and more certain of Russian intentions, Conrad reversed himself and decided to send the force north instead. However, faced with logistical and transportation difficulties, he decided to allow it to proceed to the Serbian border, and then turn around and head to Galicia.²³

Conrad was similarly indecisive about the military strategy to be followed. What plans existed with Germany called for the Austrian army to launch an offensive against Russia, while the German army concentrated against France.²⁴ After Conrad reversed his decision to send the swing group to the Balkans, he decided on a full-scale attack against

²³There has been a great deal of discussion and debate over the merits of this decision, and about the existence of these logistical difficulties. For our purpose, it is important only insofar as the decision kept this part of the army out of battle for several days. On the debate, see Norman Stone, The Eastern Front, 1914-1917, (New York, 1975), pp. 72-76.

²⁴The German Chief of Staff, Helmut von Moltke (the younger) had also made vague pledges of a German offensive against Russia. He clearly did not take these assurances seriously, seeing the offensives in the East simply as a spoiling attack designed to take pressure off Germany while it dealt with France. Conrad, on the other hand, took these promises quite seriously indeed. Norman Stone, "Moltke-Conrad: Relations Between the Austro-Hungarian and German General Staffs, 1909-1914," Historical Journal. 9  (1966), pp. 201-228. For Germany's eastern campaign in 1914, see Dennis Showalter, Tannenberg: Clash of Empires, (Hamden, 1991).
Russia. Accordingly, he initially instructed Potiorek, the commander of the Habsburg forces in the south, to stay on the defensive. However, pressured by Tisza and Berchtold, who believed that a southern offensive would favorably influence the neutral Balkan states, Conrad changed his mind on 14 August and accepted Potiorek's proposed offensive.

With forces split between two theaters and without significant support from its German ally, the Habsburg offensives quickly failed. Potiorek's August offensive against Serbia collapsed in a matter of days, and a second attack in September was no more successful. In the meantime, despite initial success, the attack against Russia broke down in the face of heavy casualties. The next months would be characterized by a see-saw of success and failure in the east. Potiorek's third try against Serbia in November began promisingly but collapsed the following month. By early December, the position of the Monarchy, despite Turkey's agreement to join the Central Powers, was grave indeed. In both the East and the South, the Habsburg forces


were in full retreat. Panic spread among political and diplomatic leaders, and even Conrad admitted that the situation looked grim.

Despite these failures, Conrad emerged at the end of the year in full control of the military effort of the Monarchy on all fronts. His position was considerably stronger than it had been at the beginning of the war. According to prewar planning, the Chief of Staff was supposed to serve as the effective commander of the Habsburg forces in times of war. This was in fact the way the command system was set up in late July. But Potiorek quickly challenged Conrad's authority, hoping to seize control over and win more resources for the offensive against Serbia. Taking advantage of prewar connections with Bolfras, who was angered by Conrad's refusal to keep Vienna completely informed, Potiorek won the support of the MKSM. Backed by Berchtold as well, Potiorek quickly won the Emperor's assent to his complete control over the operations in the Balkans. In this role, he reported directly to Vienna rather than to Conrad.27

The failure of the initial offensives in the east brought an even more serious challenge to Conrad's authority. Although Potiorek's star had waned somewhat, the leaders in Vienna were not content with Conrad either. Indeed, for a few days after 20 September, the possibility of Conrad's removal

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27 Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, pp. 131-2.
was actively discussed in the Emperor’s Military Chancery.\footnote{Jerábek, Potiorek, pp. 150-2. Potiorek had missed his chance to become Chief of Staff. Instead, Svetozar Boroevic, an army commander on the Eastern front at the time, was the main candidate to succeed Conrad. It would prove a constant throughout much of the war that the political leaders would be unhappy with Conrad, but, after sifting through the names of those who could succeed him, would decide that he was the best of a number of bad options.}

While Conrad survived this crisis (and a bitter exchange of letters with Artur Bolfras, the head of the Military Chancery, which left Bolfras scrambling to regain Conrad’s favor after the decision was made to retain the Chief of Staff\footnote{See the letters from Bolfras to Conrad of 24, 25 and 28 September 1914, in NL Conrad, 1450:474.}), he still had not gained the complete faith of either Bolfras or Franz Joseph.

German efforts to gain control over the eastern and southern fronts put Conrad’s position in doubt again just a month later.\footnote{Zimmerman and others hoped to launch a southern offensive, which would only happen under German command (see below, chap 4). Ludendorff and Hindenburg, who would have been happy to secure complete control, backed the proposal as well. See Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, pp. 169-71.} A variety of proposals were discussed during the first days of November, all aiming to grant control over military operations to Germany. It is a measure of the distrust in Conrad that Franz Joseph (notoriously unwilling to cede any power over the military) considered these suggestions seriously. Although they foundered on the objections of Conrad and the Grand Duke Friedrich, the
nominal commander-in-chief of the army, it was plain that Conrad's position remained threatened.\footnote{This debate further endangered relations between Conrad and Bolfras. Bolfras was forced to write an extremely apologetic letter to Conrad in the middle of these events, pledging his faith and trust in Conrad. This succession of command crises demonstrate both that Conrad himself was not an effective politician, but also that Bolfras, who valued the relationship with the Chief of Staff at the same time as he considered supporting his firing, was somewhat intimidated by Conrad's energy and intense nature. See Bolfras' letters to Conrad of 2 and especially 6 November 1914, in NL Conrad, 1450:474.}

Yet, by the turn of the year, Conrad's position as chief of the Habsburg war effort was unquestioned. In part this was due to a modest improvement in the military position. While the situation in the east remained grave, the Central Powers had managed to ward off the threatened Russian move through the Carpathians into Hungary and even inflict an operational defeat at the battles of Limanowa-Lapanów (1-15 December). Immediate defeat was no longer a possibility.

The change in the Monarchy's fortunes was slight, however, and Conrad's survival into 1915 needs more of an explanation. Documentary evidence, unfortunately, is slight. One element of the explanation must be Conrad's reputation among the officer corps. Affable, courteous and well-spoken, Conrad was well liked in the army, which had viewed him as something of a savior before the war. His strategic mistakes and the unmilitary atmosphere of his headquarters would cost him that respect, but, at this early stage of the war, his
popularity remained firm. This probably best explains Friedrich's decision to back Conrad in November, when Franz Joseph gave Friedrich the opportunity to accept or deny a unified command.

A second factor, probably more important, was the simple lack of talent to replace him. Conrad relieved a number of his army and corps commanders in the first months of the war. While Bolfras and Franz Joseph pleaded with Conrad to refrain from snap decisions regarding personnel, they fundamentally agreed with his assessments. The high-ranking officers of the army, Bolfras commented bitterly, had proven by and large incompetent. Only three names were seriously considered as Conrad's replacement—Potiorek, Alfred Krauss, and Boroevic. Potiorek, the most likely and well-connected of the three, was not only unpopular with the other officers, but lost his military reputation in the offensives against Serbia. Boroevic and Krauss, while suggested, were apparently never seriously considered.

The momentary military recovery in the north in December, combined with the fall from grace of Potiorek,

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32 Bolfras to Conrad, 18 October 1914, NL Conrad, 1450:474.

33 Krauss played an important role throughout the war. Relatively junior in rank, he would be the Chief of Staff for Crown Prince Eugen when the latter was commander of Habsburg forces in the Balkans (after Potiorek's relief) and then leader of most of the Habsburg forces facing Italy. Highly regarded, Krauss was a vehement German nationalist became a Nazi in the 1930s.
fired on 22 December, left Conrad in a commanding position at the head of the military hierarchy. Although some of the younger officers at the AOK, as well as some political figures, still opposed Conrad's authority, from the beginning of 1915 until the defeats of 1916, Conrad and the AOK, located in the small Bohemian town of Teschen until January 1917, would lead the military efforts of the Monarchy. This would prove a fateful development.

3. The Armeeoberkommando

A common critique of military history is the habitual reference to a single commander as shorthand for a complicated command structure, staffed by people with different (and often clashing) personalities, methods and goals. It is always true that decisions are made within a specific context that requires detailed examination. However, to a greater extent than is usual, Conrad centralized control of military strategy and policy in his own hands. Thus, it is useful to talk about "Conrad's" ideas and goals, while remaining alert to the influence of others.

In particular, the bureaucratic structure AOK was designed in a way that made it difficult for anyone other

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34 See the entries of November and December in the diary of Ferdinand von Marterer, Bolfras' assistant in the MKSM, cited in Jerábek, Potiorek, p. 188.
than Conrad and his immediate companions to influence decisions about the war as a whole. The nominal Commander-in-Chief of the K.u.K Army was Grand Duke Friedrich.\footnote{The symbolic role played by the royal family during the war deserves comment. As in Russia and Germany, supreme command rested officially in the hands of the reigning monarch, in this case Franz Joseph. This was no accident or triviality—it symbolized the absolute control of the crown over the military power of the state. Thus, the active participation of the royal family was an important symbolic demonstration of its right, and capacity, to rule.}

However, his role was largely ceremonial. Conrad quickly made it clear that he would not allow Friedrich an active role in military decision-making, and Friedrich rather gracefully

The problem was that Franz Joseph was simply too old to take his place at the head of the army. The simplest solution was to appoint the next in line to the throne to the position of army commander. This was indeed the plan before the war, and Franz Ferdinand had possessed a measure of control over military affairs even during peacetime. However, it was widely felt that Karl, the heir apparent after Franz Ferdinands death, was too young and inexperienced to assume the position of commander in chief. This left two brothers, Eugen and Friedrich, as the next logical choices. Eugen was the more qualified, although the younger, of the two.

However, stimulated by the failures of 1866, the Habsburg Monarchy had created a command system which looked very much like that of Germany, with a (in theory) highly trained and competent general staff, led by the Chief of the General Staff who would effectively run the army during the war. Consequently, the position of commander-in-chief, especially with the highly active Conrad as the Chief of Staff, required more ceremonial and diplomatic skills than military ones. Friedrich, older and calmer in temperament than Eugen, fit the bill, and was chosen as commander in chief. Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, pp. 111, 173-4. Edmund Glaise von Horstenau alleged that the lobbying of Friedrich's wife, Isabella, played a role in the appointment. See Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, Ein General im Zwielicht, p. 337. Glaise's memoirs, opinionated and detailed are a gold mine for people interested in the AOK, although they must be used critically.
accepted his role as figurehead.\textsuperscript{36} Thus, Conrad functioned as de facto Commander-in-Chief of the Habsburg army.

His closest companions were his chief-of-staff, General Josef Metzgar, and his aide-de-camp, Major (later Colonel) Rudolf Kundmann. Metzgar, almost invisible in the documentary record, was Conrad's faithful staff officer, coordinating and executing Conrad's decisions. Groomed by Conrad to be his successor, Metzgar was informed about all areas of the war and participated in all major decisions.\textsuperscript{37} However, it is impossible to say to what extent he played an active role in making these decisions as opposed to simply executing them. Most likely, although he undoubtedly discussed matters with Conrad both formally and informally, his role remained advisory in nature. The same is probably true of Metzgar's chief subordinate, Major (later Colonel) Oskar Slameczka.

Kundmann played a role out of proportion to his position. Conrad's confidant throughout the war, his unpublished diary remains one of the most important documentary records of the decision-making process. Kundmann

\textsuperscript{36}His adjutant, Generalmajor Herbert Graf Herbertstein, was not as willing to relinquish control to Conrad, and remained critical of Conrad's leadership throughout the war. Effectively, however, Herbertstein's criticisms were not significant until Conrad was already in trouble as a result of his military reverses.

\textsuperscript{37}Conrad, \textit{Aus Meiner Dienstzeit}, vol IV., p. 243. Metzgar's Nachlass in the archives is rather meager and unhelpful.
accompanied Conrad to most meetings—whether in Vienna, Berlin, or Pless, the site of the German High Command (the Deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung, hereafter DOHL) when it was located in the east. In addition, Conrad often sent Kundmann to represent him at meetings he was either too busy or not willing to attend, and used him frequently as a courier. Kundmann was well-placed to understand the war as a whole, and to influence, albeit informally, Conrad's ideas.\(^{38}\)

However, Conrad, Metzgar (and Slameczka) and Kundmann were the only significant officers who were tasked to think about the war as a whole. Below this superstructure, the AOK was divided into two "commands," the Operational Command and the Administrative Command (Etappenoberkommando). The Operational Command was divided into several different departments: the Operations Department, the Personnel Department, the Intelligence Department and a division that dealt with the press. The Operations department was itself

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\(^{38}\)Glaise recounts that, just after his arrival at AOK, he was assigned to keep the AOK war diary. This was supposed to consist solely of material that was outside the documentary record. However, the previous diarist, Schneller, had instead simply copied extensive sections of the documentary record. Glaise, not sure what he was supposed to do, went to Metzgar and asked for clarification. Metzgar laughed, and said that Glaise's interpretation of the instructions was correct, but that Kundmann was keeping his own diary in hopes of publishing it after the war. In order to head off any future competition, he had let it be known that the official diary should include only excerpts from other sources. See Glaise, Ein General im Zwielicht, Vol. I., pp. 330-331.

Whether this is true or not, it is clear that Conrad after most important meetings carefully recounted to Kundmann what had happened, which Kundmann then copied into his diary.
divided into separate "groups" by theater. Thus, at the beginning of 1915, two different groups existed, the R-Group (responsible for the Russian front) and the B-Group (responsible for the Balkans). After the Italian entry, a third group, the I-Group, was added, as was the Ru-Group after the Rumanian declaration of war against the Monarchy.

Significantly, the officers within these groups had authority only over events affecting their individual fronts. None had any official responsibility for making policy for the war as a whole. Indeed, they seem to have had no formal access to information regarding any front other than their own. The head of each Group reported daily to Conrad, but did so individually. Thus, there was no opportunity provided for Conrad to get input from other members of the command on the war as a whole. The result, unsurprisingly, was that the Group heads were concerned primarily with their own front, and fought to take resources and attention away from the

\[^{39}\]The diary of the head of the I-Gruppe, Major Karl Schneller, yields valuable—if obviously slanted—insights into the way the AOK functioned during the war. (NL Schneller, B/509:2). Schneller recounts how, during the “Inspections” (night watches that the heads of each group were required to stand periodically), he oriented himself to events on other fronts by snooping in the papers of the other Gruppen while their members were asleep. Schneller, Tagebuch, 18 August 1916. Relations between the various Gruppen degenerated during the Brusilov offensive to the extent that the members of the R-Gruppe put up portable barriers between them and the rest of the AOK in an effort to get more done. Schneller, Tagebuch, 10 July 1916.
others.40

There are, of course, other ways that information and ideas are transmitted beyond official meetings and briefings. Informal discussions around the dinner table, while exercising or "talking shop" during social events all offer opportunities to exchange ideas and information. This undoubtedly happened to some extent at Teschen. It is clear that a number of different cliques formed within the AOK.41 However, the influence of these informal networks on Conrad seems to have been minimal. Unlike many of the officers at Teschen, Conrad was something of a night owl—beginning work at 8 or so in the morning, eating a hurried lunch alone or with only a couple of close companions at 2 in the afternoon, and then taking the afternoon off (as did the rest of the AOK). While the afternoon "Pause" ended for most at 5 o'clock, Conrad frequently returned as late as 6 or 7, and then worked, essentially alone in his office except for Kundmann, until well after midnight.42 Given this routine,

40 One should be careful not to overdraw this point. It is typical for conflicts over resource allocation to occur between different theaters and different commanders. However, the general point is still worth making. This structure meant that only a very few people had responsibility for or knowledge about the war as a whole. There was no institutional provision made to allow Conrad to test his ideas and receive a reasoned and informed critique.

41 See the section entitled "Beim 'ersten' AOK," in Glaise, Ein General im Zwielicht, pp. 321-385.

42 See Glaise's description, pp. 344-350. Revealingly, Conrad reported to Friedrich twice a day, once in the early
it is not surprising that Conrad seldom saw many of the officers at Teschen, and certainly received their feedback only rarely.\textsuperscript{43}

In much the same way, Conrad strove to keep control over the military effort by holding the political leaders of the Monarchy, especially the Foreign Minister (first Berchtold, and then Istvan Burian after Berchtold's forced resignation in January of 1915) at arms' length. Both Berchtold and Burian believed (correctly) that success required close afternoon, once late in the evening. While this was supposed to happen at some reasonable hour, Conrad frequently kept Friedrich waiting until 1 or 2 in the morning. This speaks volumes about the relationship between the two.

\textsuperscript{43}Glaise's account of the visit of Tsar Ferdinand, the King of Bulgaria, in February of 1916 is quite revealing. For this visit, the members of the AOK had lined up to be introduced to Ferdinand. According to Glaise, Conrad failed miserably at this task, occasionally forgetting people's names and frequently misstating their position. Certainly, no commander would be expected to solicit ideas from everyone who worked at headquarters. Still, it seems indicative of the relationship between Conrad and his men. Glaise, Ein General im Zwielicht, p. 365.

This relationship grew worse after the arrival of Gina, Conrad's new wife, late in 1915. Much has been written about Gina, accusing her of gossipping, of disrupting the work patterns at the command, and generally acting unprofessionally. It is difficult to tell how much of this is accurate, and how much is simply jealousy or personal dislike. What seems undisputable is that, after Gina's arrival, Conrad became even more isolated from the rest of the people at Teschen.

Gina also affected Conrad's relations with the Germans. Women were not allowed at the German High Command or at Hindenburg's command center. Glaise records that the Germans were actively scornful of the command at Teschen, believing that the presence of women (Gina was not the only wife present) at the headquarters indicated a lack of seriousness among the Austrians. See Glaise, Ein General im Zwielicht, pp. 341-2.
cooperation between diplomatic and military policy. Conrad preached this as well. But, to Conrad, this meant that the diplomats would tailor their actions to match his military decisions. His treatment of the foreign office liaisons officers attached to AOK demonstrates this attitude clearly. Conrad and his subordinates quickly froze out the first of these, Wladimir Freiherr Giesl von Gieslingen (Austria-Hungary's ambassador to Serbia during the July Crisis). Accused of leaking military plans in his reports, he was first restricted to simple copying of the military reports in his communications with Berchtold, and later ignored completely. Giesl was finally replaced along with Berchtold in January of 1915, but his successor, Graf Thurn, had no more luck. Through most of the rest of Conrad's period as

4Conrad's treatment of Giesl did not meet with universal applause. Discussing the new diplomatic team with Conrad shortly after Berchtold's replacement, Bolfras offered a gentle plea to Conrad to treat Thurn better, suggesting that he would make an excellent dinner companion. (NL Conrad, 1450:153, Bolfras to Conrad, 14 January 1915). Conrad's reply is enlightening. Conrad wrote that the AOK ate in three groups—one comprising the younger officers in the AOK, a second representing various civil and military liaisons and representatives, and, finally, a third, including Conrad, the higher ranking officers at AOK and German liaison officers. This group grabbed their meals whenever they could, rarely gathering at the same time and place, and consequently could not include Thurn. (NL Conrad, 1450:153, Conrad to Bolfras, 17 January 1915). This description roughly matches that provided by Glaise. One can not escape the feeling, however, that Conrad was just as happy to have an excuse not to eat with Thurn. Conrad wrote to Gina somewhat later "Graf Thurn, Giesl's replacement, is absolutely no different from him... he is completely superfluous here and even harmful, since the more amateurs [are here], the more gossip and scheming [occurs]." NL Conrad, 1450:357, Conrad to Gina, 11 February
head of the army, the only real exchange of information between the AOK and the Foreign Office was a result of the personal friendship between Glaise and one of Thurn's subordinates, Sektionsrat Friedrich R. von Wiesner. Glaise claims that he and Wiesner struck a private agreement to furnish each other with information about military and diplomatic events.\textsuperscript{45} It is doubtful whether this relationship really kept Burián much better informed than he was already.

Conrad was also less than forthcoming with the other civil officials of the Monarchy. Both Tisza and Stürgkh complained repeatedly that Conrad kept them in the dark regarding military events. Finally, while Conrad's letters to Bolfras were frequent and lengthy,\textsuperscript{46} Franz Joseph often complained that the reports being sent to Vienna from AOK were skimpy and even incorrect. All of this fits the picture of a man determined to keep military power centralized in his own hands.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[46] The relationship between these men is interesting. Bolfras, was 76 years old when the war broke out and a veteran of the war with Piedmont in 1859. The two were, on the surface, good friends. Yet, Bolfras periodically tried to limit Conrad's power or even replace him, especially during the disastrous summer of 1916. Moreover, one gets the sense that Bolfras felt somehow inferior to Conrad. Whenever Bolfras is forced to scold Conrad—usually about the lack of information being sent to the Hofburg, one gets the sense that he is pulling his punches somewhat.
\end{footnotes}
Finally, Conrad's relationship with the German leadership, crucial to the successful conduct of a coalition war, was frequently tense. To some extent this was directly related to the larger issue of German-Habsburg relations, and will be dealt with in detail later. However, a few comments establishing the general pattern of their working relationship are worth making here.

The German Chief of Staff for most of the period dealt with here was Erich von Falkenhayn. Formerly Minister of War in Prussia, Falkenhayn replaced Hermann von Moltke (the younger) shortly after the failure of the Schlieffen plan.47

Conrad was somewhat reticent in his letters about Falkenhayn. However, one characteristic of the working pattern is significant. Falkenhayn and Conrad met frequently throughout the war, in Berlin when Falkenhayn and the DOHL were in the west, and almost daily (alternately at Teschen and Pless) when Falkenhayn was in the east. It is clear that Falkenhayn preferred this way of working and enjoyed the give and take of personal contact and discussion. Conrad, however, preferred working in writing, sometimes sending four, five,

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or even more lengthy messages a day to Pless. Meeting Falkenhayn face-to-face, Conrad often found himself unable to press his point home verbally.\(^4^8\) As a result, he frequently appeared to agree to a plan of action in person, but would return to Teschen and send off a detailed proposal that clashed completely with an agreement Falkenhayn thought they had reached the previous day. This did nothing to improve a relationship already made tense by the larger conflicts between the allies.

Conrad's relationship with the other German leaders with whom he interacted was much better. He admired Ludendorff immensely (although he frequently disagreed with the specific proposals the German supported), while dismissing Hindenburg as a figurehead.\(^4^9\) Perhaps most interesting is Conrad's judgement of August von Cramon, the DOHL's military liaison officer at AOK. Conrad respected Cramon greatly, occasionally soliciting his advice. When Conrad had to consult the DOHL, he did this exclusively through Cramon, virtually ignoring the Austrian representative with the

\(^{48}\) The two never communicated over the phone. Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers*, p. 201.

\(^{49}\) 'Ludendorff is a decisive, ambitious, very capable general, actually the mind and soul of Hindenburg, who is exalted and idolized even by us.' To this he adds, 'Falkenhayn (is) very temperamental, very ambitious, but does not possess Ludendorff's brutal toughness. But he wants to play first violin over Ludendorff. Good things rarely come from such differences.' NL Conrad, 1450:153, Conrad to Bolfras, 17 January 1915.
German command, Alois Klepsch-Kloth von Roden.\textsuperscript{50}

4. Conclusion

The unofficial but wide-spread Christmas truce of 1914 in some sense represented the last gasp of prewar European sensibilities. No one expected the war to last another four years, but it was widely understood that the conflict differed from the cabinet wars of Bismarck. Both the costs, human and material, and the willingness of people to bear these costs had raised the breaking points of European populations and governments higher than in any conflict since the religious wars of the sixteenth century.

This was not the war Conrad or the policy makers in Vienna had expected. It was, however, the war they had. It offered an opportunity as well as a burden. As fall faded into winter, Conrad began to reevaluate the grand strategic purpose of the war. Just as in peacetime, the conflict had both internal and foreign dimensions. Conrad believed firmly that the army would have to oversee the population closely to prevent internal dissension. But the war also offered a chance to push through the reforms he had proposed ever since he was appointed Chief of Staff. As the war settled into a

back-and-forth, Conrad and the AOK began to draft proposals to change the nature of the Monarchy and the way it treated its peoples.

Thus, the events of the fall of 1914 had a two-fold significance. On the one hand, the army, although it managed to stave off defeat, did so only at great cost. The battles of 1914 exacted a horrendous cost in manpower and equipment from the Habsburg army (as all armies). More serious from a military standpoint was that much of the prewar officer corps was, by the end of the year, lying dead in the fields of Galicia and Serbia, or recovering in hospitals behind the front. The Monarchy was thus from the first months of the war dependent on Germany for military support.

On the other hand, despite the military defeats, the army had lost neither the war nor its commander. For better or worse, Conrad’s position as de facto commander in chief after 1914 was accepted by all. As a result, he and his subordinates at the AOK were in a position to advocate his policies and solutions to the problem of nationalism. Conrad, the best example of the prewar kaisertreue ethic, thus became the spokesperson for the officer corps.

To make any of the changes Conrad desired, however, the army had to win, or at least draw, the war. Unfortunately, the military situation, momentarily stabilized in December, rapidly worsened. It would become so desperate that Conrad would, in the early spring of 1915, suggest making peace with
the Entente. Such a peace would end all of his efforts to solve the political problems of the Monarchy and the army. For the space of a few months, Conrad wavered from his prewar vision of victory or glorious defeat in favor of a decidedly bourgeois compromise.
CHAPTER 3

STAVING OFF DEFEAT

"The current war can not be compared with earlier wars, in which peace was concluded after a few small skirmishes and a bigger battle, after which the neutrals took care to ensure that neither of the two opponents were destroyed. The current war is a catastrophic event that reverberates not only through Europe, rather through the entire world, an event that only happens after a century-long pause and in fact is so great that it has no parallel in history." Conrad to Bolfras in a letter of 5 March 1915.

The failures of the Autumn offensives left Conrad and the army in an unexpected situation. Conrad had advocated war not as an offensive measure, but as a defensive one. The war was to heal the damaged faith in the Habsburg Monarchy, to prevent outside interlopers from exacerbating the internal problems of the Empire, and to strengthen the position of the army as the protector of the state and of the Monarchy. Unfortunately, battlefield defeats could only decrease the internal cohesion of the Monarchy. The war was not turning out the way Conrad had planned.

Conrad had argued in July 1914 that the war would end either in a victory that would restore the Monarchy to

\[1\] Kundmann Tagebuch, pp. n-o.

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greatness or in an honorable, if catastrophic, defeat. Yet, in May of 1915, he called on the new foreign minister, Istvan Burián, to conclude a separate peace with Russia. At virtually the same time he advocated ceding part of his beloved Tirol to Italy in return for a very uncertain promise of neutrality. In either case, Conrad now thought that the best the Monarchy could get was a return to the confusion and pessimism of 1912. In essence, he was abandoning his goal of recreating the Monarchy.

To understand Conrad’s temporary abdication of the effort to heal the national divisions in the Empire, it is necessary to examine the formation of military strategy in the winter and spring of 1915. In essence, reform was contingent on military success. Military success, of course, depended not just on battlefield events, but on industrial and manpower mobilization, successful manipulation of popular opinion, diplomatic efforts to change the balance of power, and a variety of other non-military measures. Nevertheless, as Conrad saw it, only military success could make political reform possible. Unless the war could be turned in the favor of the Central Powers, discussion of long-term reform and restoration was meaningless.

Accordingly, Conrad’s efforts to reverse the military decline become critically important. His solution, despite the failures of 1914, was to take the offensive against
Russia. The only way to win the war was to attack Russia in the East. An attack on Serbia would be meaningless. Only defeating Russia would deter the intervention of neutral Italy and Rumania. And (unstated but understood) only by defeating Russia could the Monarchy (and the army) buttress its legitimacy within the Empire. Only with the increasing threat of Italian intervention did Conrad turn away from the Eastern front.

1. The Strategy of Desperation: The Carpathian Offensive

Many citizens of Austria-Hungary greeted the new year in a somber mood. The military failures of the past months, the continual worry about Italy, and the lack of any foreseeable end to the war weighed on civilians and politicians alike. As Josef Redlich commented in his diary, "The window looking into the next year shows a dark future. What ever will happen, Europe, as it has existed since 1870, will be no more. . ."\(^2\) Conrad too was in a black mood. He wrote to Gina on 1 January 1915, "What will 1915 bring! Will it yet

\(^2\)Redlich was not completely without hope. His entry goes on to predict that, if the "Germans" developed their common conscience (Volksbewusstsein), and moved beyond their narrow nationalism ("und doch über den Nationalismus hinauskommen"), they would win the sympathies of the Germanic and Slavic peoples and become the leader of Europe. Josef Redlich, Schicksaljahre Österreich: Das politische Tagebuch Josef Redlichs. ed. Fritz Fellner, (Graz-Cologne, 1953-1954), Vol. I., p. 295.
surpass the previous year in misery and cruelty? I look forward to it with the greatest mistrust."³

A few had progressed beyond mere melancholy. Berchtold decided a few days into the year that the Monarchy had to make concessions to Italy or risk losing the war. One of his top subordinates, Janos Graf Forgách, went even farther. In a long memorandum written in early January, Forgách argued that the Monarchy needed to seek peace quickly or risk unacceptable losses and even disintegration. Although Berchtold never saw this (Forgách buried it after Berchtold's dismissal), it demonstrates that some in the Monarchy believed the Monarchy should get out of the war quickly.⁴

The same problems confronted Conrad and his subordinates at the Army High Command. Conrad was certainly aware of the dangers facing the Monarchy. However, he proposed a very different solution. The winter offensive in the Carpathians represented his attempt to solve the problems Forgách believed insoluble. As such, the offense was not a well-

³NL Conrad, 1450:357, Conrad to Gina, 1 January 1915.

⁴On this Denkschrift, see Fritz Fellner, "Zwischen Kriegsbegeisterung und Resignation-ein Memorandum des Sektionschefs Graf Forgách vom Jänner 1915," Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte. Alexander Novotny zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahre gewidmet, (Graz, 1975), pp. 153-62, and the discussion in Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, pp. 194-198. Forgách hoped to gain peace based on the status quo ante, which would, he acknowledged, require a great deal of pressure on Berlin. If it succeeded, however, the Monarchy could hope to retain its great power standing, while remaining at war threatened short-term misery and long-term destruction.
considered part of a long-term strategy for winning the war, but an effort to stave off defeat. Yet, in some sense, it did represent a consistent thread in Conrad's thinking—that the war could only be won through "action."

While Conrad would have liked to make strategic decisions without any outside input, this was clearly impossible. Instead he had to take into account the ideas of politicians in Vienna and of both military and political leaders in Germany. In Germany especially, the debate was both heated and confused. Perhaps most surprising was the evaluation of the new German Commander in Chief, Erich von Falkenhayn. By early November of 1914, Falkenhayn had concluded that the war could not be won. The Central Powers could win operational victories against Russia, but Russia's size and numerical superiority precluded driving it out of the war entirely. In the west, France could be forced to surrender, but as long as Britain remained in the war, beating France was meaningless. Germany had to find some other solution.

After discussing these ideas with several others (most prominently the leader of the German navy, Alfred von Tirpitz), Falkenhayn presented a new strategic plan to Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, on 18 November. Incapable of defeating the Triple Entente, Germany should try
to split the alliance in two, offering Russia and France a separate peace without annexations. Isolated, Britain, the only country Falkenhayn believed to be a long-term threat to Germany's position, would, hopefully, concede defeat. If not, it could be overpowered by the German navy.  

Not as pessimistic about the military situation as Falkenhayn, Bethmann listened reluctantly. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who believed that defeating Russia was possible and even likely if only Germany would concentrate its forces in the east, were even less excited. Finally, the strong man in the Foreign Office, Undersecretary of State Arthur Zimmerman, also disagreed. He argued that peace, at least peace without substantial annexations, would be in reality only an armistice. Given the opportunity to build up its armed forces, Russia would sooner or later attack again. The only option was to continue the war. Ideally, as Ludendorff proposed, Germany should weaken the Western front as much as possible and drive Russia out of the war. If this was impossible, Germany should instead concentrate its forces for an assault on Serbia, defeating it in an effort to convince Russia that the war was hopeless.  

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6 Zimmerman's memo of 27 November 1914 summarizing this argument is reprinted in Jacques Grunewald and André Scherer, L'allemande et les Problèmes de la Paix Pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale, (Paris, 1962). See also Fritz Fischer,
November and December saw a lively debate over policy within the Monarchy as well. Here, however, there was little talk of a separate peace. Indeed, Berchtold in the middle of December argued that Austria-Hungary could not seek peace before it defeated Serbia, since this was "(the) minimal success, without which our continued existence as a great power would be seriously endangered." With no real likelihood of a Serbian surrender, the war had to continue.®

To Berchtold, this meant an effort to free up a supply line to Turkey. Turkey's entry had seemed to offer important gains for the Central Powers, but had quickly become an albatross around their neck. Still worn out from the strain of the Balkan wars, Turkey needed help simply to stay in the war, let alone to launch an offensive operation. Most importantly, it needed munitions.

Getting supplies to Turkey, however, was nearly impossible. Shipping them through the Mediterranean, given


The period in late November and early December, when Potiorek's offensive appeared to be on the verge of knocking Serbia out of the war, was the exception. The reversals experienced during the Serbian counter-offensive were all the more demoralizing because of the hopes aroused by the capture of Belgrade. On the fall offensives against Serbia, see Jerábek, Potiorek, pp. 118-194 and Gunther Rothenberg, "The Austro-Hungarian Campaign Against Serbia in 1914," Journal of Military History. Vol. 53. No. 2. (April 1989) pp. 127-146.
the naval balance of power, was also out of the question. Finally, trying to send them through Rumania and Bulgaria was unlikely to succeed, since the neutrals could simply confiscate the weapons and use them for themselves. The only logical answer, Berchtold believed, was to clear the northeast corner of Serbia. Throughout November and early December the Foreign Minister lobbied for such an offensive.  

Conrad, then, was bombarded by advice from every quarter. In November and early December, facing an uncertain military situation both in Russia and in Serbia, he declined any and all proposals. By mid-December, however, having won a breathing space in the east, and with Potiorek's fall more and more likely, Conrad began to plan for the future. His solution was to attack Russia in an attempt to drive that state out of the war.

Conrad's focus on Russia derived from his belief that the long-term prospects for the Monarchy were poor and that the war had to end soon. The months of fighting had destroyed the core of the Habsburg army, both its officer

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10Berchtold solicited Bethmann's support as well, sending a telegram to Hohenloe asking Germany to transfer troops to Poland in order to free up Habsburg troops for an operation to clear a supply line to Turkey (which, he argued, had only six weeks of ammunition left). NL Conrad, 1450:119, Berchtold to Conrad, 24 November and reply, 25 November.
corps and the enlisted men. From the beginning of 1915 on, the army would be made up of people who were either too young or too old and who lacked any real training. Moreover, although at the moment both sides were lacking arms and munitions, the economic strength of the Entente meant that it would gradually overwhelm the Central Powers. Militarily, while the front in the east was stable at the moment, any Russian success, or even a continued stalemate, promised to turn the diplomatic situation against the Monarchy. As a result, the Monarchy had to attempt to win the war in the immediate future, or at least strike a massive blow. Without such a victory, Italy, whose military preparations would be finished by March, would join the Entente, followed quickly by Rumania. A declaration of war by either neutral would make the military situation untenable. The only way out was a powerful attack against Russia to deter the neutrals and move the war toward a conclusion.  

Conrad used a variety of arguments to convince Berchtold of the impossibility of an attack against Serbia. In the middle of December, arguing for the necessity of quick action to clear Galicia of Russian forces, he warned the Foreign Minister that Germany was seeking a separate peace with

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11 Conrad to Berchtold 21 December 1914, NL Conrad, 1450:131. It is unclear whether this memo was ever sent--it breaks off in the middle with no indication that it was ever finished. In either case, it provides a glimpse at the way Conrad was thinking.
Russia and planned to abandon the Monarchy, offering Austrian East Galicia to Russia as to win an agreement. Only quick diplomatic action and an attack against the Russians could force Germany to fulfill its alliance obligations. In the same way, although Conrad acknowledged the need to find a way to get munitions to Turkey, he made any attack on Serbia dependent on Bulgarian participation. Although Conrad wrote to Berchtold demanding concessions to win Bulgarian participation, it is unlikely that he seriously believed this could be accomplished. In essence, Conrad's position amounted to a rejection of Berchtold's proposed offensive.

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12NL Conrad, 1450:119, Conrad to Berchtold, 14 December 1914. Berchtold quickly dismissed this possibility, and again urged an attack against Serbia. NL Conrad, 1450:119, Berchtold to Conrad, 19 December 1914 (read 21 December). He repeated this four days later with a statement from Hohenlohe, who denied that Germany was seeking a separate peace at the Monarchy's expense. Germany could not afford such treachery, Hohenlohe suggested since "[there] exists not the slightest doubt, that Germany after the war, however it may turn out, will be the most-hated Power in the entire world." NL Conrad, 1450:119, Berchtold to Conrad, 23 December 1914.

13See the account of Conrad's discussion with Freytag on 18 November in Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. V., pp. 536-7.

14Berchtold on 29 and 30 December made one last attempt to persuade Conrad to reopen a supply line with Turkey. Berchtold here told Conrad that even Zimmerman was demanding an offensive against Serbia. Conrad responded quickly, dismissing Berchtold's suggestion and saying simply that he had done all he could. AOK, Op. Abt., Carton 11, Op. Nr. 5847. In a meeting held on 30 December at Teschen, Conrad finally won Berchtold over. See Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, p. 65, and Conrad's account of the conversation in Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. V. p. 956-8.
However, while Conrad could ignore or pacify the political leaders of the Monarchy, German support for the offensive, or at least assent to it, was indispensable. The main challenge to Conrad's plan was Falkenhayn. Conrad understood that the Habsburg army was too weak to conduct an attack on its own. As a result, he was forced to negotiate with his counterpart to win Falkenhayn's agreement. These negotiations took over a month.

Conrad was initially quite unsuccessful at persuading Falkenhayn of the merits of an eastern offensive. Serious discussions of the future began at Oppeln on 19 December, where the two discussed the situation at length but failed to reach any agreement. Reflecting Conrad's commitment to a Russian offensive, he rejected Falkenhayn's offer of reinforcements for the seizure of the northeast corner of Serbia. Returning to Teschen, he rebuffed renewed pleas by Berchtold for a Serbian offensive and continued his

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15 Although Falkenhayn would later claim that Conrad had accepted his plea to remain on the defensive in the east. Handwritten notes on the course of this conversation are in NL Conrad, 1450:143.

16 Operationally, Conrad's proposal differed significantly from the plans he would put forward only a couple of weeks later. At this point, Conrad was thinking about an operation centered well north of the Carpathian mountains. Falkenhayn argued that a defeat in the west would be more damaging to the Central Powers than one in the east. Conrad simply replied that, if Russia collapsed, everything else would fall into place.

campaign to convince Falkenhayn of the need for an eastern offensive.\textsuperscript{18} Significantly, he also went behind Falkenhayn's back to enlist the support of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, both of whom were only too happy to support Conrad's emphasis on the eastern front.\textsuperscript{19} Frustrated and faced with a budding insurrection in his own ranks, Falkenhayn asked Conrad to come to Berlin for another face-to-face meeting.\textsuperscript{20}

The meeting settled little, but it and the ensuing events demonstrate well Conrad's willingness to insist on his pet project until he wore his opposition down. Conrad met first with Falkenhayn early in the morning.\textsuperscript{21} Falkenhayn, noting that new German reserves would become available in early February, suggested employing them in the West to deal

\textsuperscript{18}Conrad to Falkenhayn, 27 December 1914, in NL Conrad, 1450:119.


\textsuperscript{21}Conrad, whose moods swung violently in the best of times, was quite depressed at this point in the war. See Conrad to Gina, 1 and 2 January 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:357. On the way to Berlin Conrad also became ill with the flu, spending much of the train ride back and the next few days in bed. This did nothing to increase his desire to be diplomatic.

Conrad's reaction to his illness did not endear him to his subordinates. Kundmann, in an uncharacteristic passage, wrote on 3 January "He [Conrad] always exaggerates. He is not the only one, everyone else has had the flu as well, but naturally, what happens to him is always the important thing, he couldn't care less about the others. Egotist." Kundmann Tagebuch, NL Kundmann, 15:2, 3 January 1915.
the English forces a crushing blow before the new English reserves (which Falkenhayn numbered at 250,000 men) could intervene. Conrad replied that a success in the west seemed unlikely to him (although he admitted, in an implicit accusation against Falkenhayn's reluctance to keep him informed, that he knew very little about events there). With Italy and Rumania likely to enter the war in the spring, a success somewhere was essential, and this would be easier to accomplish in the east.  

This was true despite the recent setbacks experienced by the army in the east, which had Falkenhayn greatly concerned. With both men unwilling to change the positions they had held for weeks, the discussion broke up. A second discussion later in the day, this time including Ludendorff, was just as fruitless. Without firm plans, the three agreed to put off the question until early February, when the German reinforcements being trained would

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22 Conrad dictated an extensive account of these meetings to Kundmann, who included it in his diary. A separate protocol is in NL Conrad, 1450:153. It differs in flavor but not in substance from the account in Kundmann.

23 The discussion about events in the East demonstrated the tension between Conrad and Falkenhayn. Pressed to defend the recent retreats in front of the Carpathians, Conrad first blamed the low manpower level in his front-line units. (Falkenhayn quickly responded that the Russians recycled the lightly wounded and the sick. Conrad retorted that the Austro-Hungarian army did that as well. In an aside to Kundmann, however, he pointed out that he had not mentioned to Falkenhayn that they were sent back to the front without weapons.) He then argued that the Habsburg retreat was no different than the German retreat on the Marne, sparking a lengthy and angry exchange.
be battle-ready.

Despite the logjam, Conrad got his way within a matter of days. Shortly after returning home from Berlin, Conrad went behind Falkenhayn's back again, telegraphing Ludendorff to ask for reinforcements so that he could launch an attack in the east. Ludendorff, scheming against Falkenhayn and focussed on the east in any case, quickly agreed. Officially informed of this on the fifth, Falkenhayn quickly telegraphed Conrad, asking why he had disregarded the decisions made in Berlin. Conrad's response simply repeated his argument about deterring the neutrals. To this end, he proposed using two divisions from the First Army (already in the east), three divisions from the Balkans, and four to five German divisions (which would remain under German command) for an offensive in the Carpathian mountains. On the same day, Conrad drew up a memo to Franz Joseph, outlining the arguments for an offensive against Russia.

Importantly, this message stressed not just the danger of Italian entry, but the need to relieve the fortress of Przemysl. Briefly surrounded during the opening campaign,

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the fortress by the beginning of January was again well behind the front lines, and running low on supplies. Its surrender would represent a substantial military (the fortress held close to 100,000 soldiers) and moral defeat for the Monarchy. It is not surprising that Conrad never invoked the need to rescue Przemysl in his debates with Falkenhayn (or with Berchtold, for that matter). The last thing Conrad wanted was to give Falkenhayn another reason to criticize the Austro-Hungarian army. Yet, Przemysl undoubtedly played an important role in Conrad's thinking about the strategic situation. Conrad would have insisted on an eastern offensive even if Przemysl had not existed. However, it is certain that the fortress influenced the nature of the offensive, for Conrad was by now insisting on an attack in the Carpathian Mountains instead of an operation further north.\textsuperscript{28}

This change would prove crucial, for a winter offensive in the Carpathians, no matter how necessary strategically, presented insurmountable obstacles operationally and

\textsuperscript{28}Rauchensteiner argues that the relief of Przemysl was the raison d'etre of the Carpathian offensive. I believe this is not quite true. That the question is not present in the debates between Falkenhayn and Conrad is understandable. However, Conrad's letters to Bolfras are usually more honest than those with other leaders, and they too display only a secondary interest in Przemysl. A rational conclusion might be that the siege determined the specific operational goals of the offensive (something which becomes more and more true during February and March), but not Conrad's basic desire to attack in the East.
tactically. Heavily wooded, snow covered and lacking any kind of road/communications net, any attempt to attack through the mountains was doomed to almost certain failure. Falkenhayn’s realization of this contributed to his unwillingness to agree to Conrad’s proposal. Yet, Conrad, who planned the offensive from his headquarters in Teschen, insisted that the Carpathians were actually “maneuver terrain,” with the forests being the only substantial obstacle. The terrain and the sheer length of the front, he argued, prohibited the construction of uninterrupted trench lines and fortified positions. His belief that fighting in the Carpathians was little different than fighting in Galicia goes a long way toward explaining his decisions in January and February.

Although Falkenhayn tried again the next day to persuade Conrad of the wisdom of a western offensive, Conrad’s intriguing and simple perseverance had worn the German down. Although discussion of the operation would continue

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29 Conrad made these comments at the 1 January meeting in response to Falkenhayn’s request that the Habsburg army construct a defensive line to oppose the Russian advance in the area. While it is possible that Conrad was simply lobbying against the defensive, his decisions in January and February imply that he really believed this. Kundmann Tagebuch, 1 January 1915.

30 Falkenhayn asked whether Conrad was certain a successful offensive in the Carpathians would ensure Italian neutrality, and suggested that the behavior of Rumania, Bulgaria and Turkey was dependent only on the situation in Serbia. Op. Abt., Carton 490, Op Nr. 6052. This telegram is reproduced in Kundmann's diary, where, however, it says that Falkenhayn
until almost the day it was launched, Falkenhayn surrendered on 8 January. Conrad had gotten what he wanted. Over the next few days, he informed Tisza, Stürgkh and Berchtold of the decision. The offensive began on 23 January—and quickly collapse in the face of almost impassable terrain, horrible weather and strong Russian

proposed employing forces against Italy, not Serbia. This seems unlikely. It is difficult to believe that, just after suggesting that Austria-Hungary cede territory to Italy in order to keep it neutral, Falkenhayn would propose using valuable resources to deter Italian entry. The version in Kundmann's diary is probably inaccurate. Conrad's reply stated simply that a diplomatic solution to the Italian problem was impossible, and deterrence depended solely on the Russian front. Op. Abt., Carton 490, Op Nr. 6059, 7 January 1915. Rejecting concessions to Italy, Conrad wrote "It appears to me that satisfying France would be much more effective for breaking the enemy alliance," not a phrase designed to make Falkenhayn happy.

Wilhelm changed his mind abruptly shortly after agreeing to the operation. Accordingly, Falkenhayn, Conrad and Ludendorff met in Breslau on 11 January, where they hashed out the issue yet again. The issues remained largely the same, and the decision for the operation was upheld in the end. However, as late as 16 January Falkenhayn and Conrad were still arguing over operational details. See Kundmann Tagebuch, 10-17 January.


Knowledge of the negotiations had been largely confined to AOK and the MKSM. Tisza had weighed in sporadically over the preceding month. Initially supporting an attack on Serbia, Tisza eventually supported the Carpathian offensive as the only alternative to concessions to Italy. See Jozsef Galantai, Hungary in the First World War, (Budapest, 1989), p. 108, and NL Conrad, 1450:155, Tisza to Conrad, 16 January 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:152, Conrad to Tisza, 19 January 1915, and NL Conrad, 1450:121, Tisza to Conrad, 27 January 1915.

However, rumors about the impending offensive were already circulating in Vienna in late December, see Redlich, Schicksaljahre Österreich, Vol. I. p. 294.
resistance.

Observing the military problems facing the Monarchy in January, Berchtold concluded that the Monarchy had to try a diplomatic solution, and suggested offering Italy immediate concessions in return for neutrality, a decision for which he was immediately fired.\textsuperscript{34} In contrast, Conrad did not accept the need for a radical change in policy. This was not because he was unimpressed by the dangers facing the Monarchy. However, he believed that the political and national costs of concessions to Italy were simply too high. Offering Italy even part of the Tirol would directly contradict Conrad's argument for war in the first place. While the situation at the front was grim, a military success was still possible, albeit only if the Central Powers managed to inflict a large-scale, if not decisive defeat on Russia. Such a defeat would keep Italy and Rumania neutral and save the national and political integrity of the Monarchy. Despite its dangers, it was worth a try.

Viewed objectively, the failure of the Carpathian offensive is unsurprising. The Carpathians, despite Conrad's insistence that they represented "maneuver territory," were

\textsuperscript{34}The Hungarian Istvan Burián, who had been Minister a latere and was a close friend of Tisza's, took Berchtold's place. Shocked by Berchtold's dismissal, Conrad quickly wrote to Burián outlining the plans for the Carpathian offensive and rejecting concessions to Italy. Unsurprisingly, Burián was happy to tell Conrad that he was not contemplating any deal with Rome. NL Conrad, 1450:152, Conrad to Burián, 16 January 1915.
almost impassable in the winter. The weather itself represented an opponent more deadly than the Russians. Moreover, the first few months of the war had cost the army many of its trained officers and men.\textsuperscript{35} Many of the units in combat since the beginning of the war were devastated. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Landsturm Regiment, for instance, reported in December that, out of the 106 officers present at deployment, it had only 4 left.\textsuperscript{36} Finally, while these human losses could, for the moment, be replaced, there were no weapons or ammunition to give the new soldiers.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35}According to the official history, officer casualties by the end of 1914 amounted to about 22,000, out of a prewar total of 50,000. Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg, Vol I, Beilage 1, Table 1. The figure of 50,000 includes all prewar officers, including supply, medical and veterinary as well as reserve officers. Proportionally, the loss in line officers was much higher than the already stunning figure of 44 percent. The casualty rate for enlisted ranks was about 44 percent (a remarkably similar figure). Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg, Vol. II, p. 10.


\textsuperscript{37}The supply shortages provoked Conrad to accuse the government of incompetence and to demand a military role in munitions production. Throughout December and January, Conrad urged the Ministry of War to increase the output of artillery shells. As late as 22 January, he wrote Krobatin that meetings held on 19-21 January had determined that even the level of production necessary to supply the army with the minimum amount of shells necessary to prosecute the war (which he estimated at 20 shells per gun per day) could not be reached before the end of January. The desired level of production (40 shells per gun per day), meanwhile, could not be met until April because of a lack of powder. Repeating his frequent complaint of prewar neglect, Conrad demanded that Krobatin purge the relevant department of the Ministry of War. Stocks of rifles and especially machine guns were
Conrad understood and ignored at least some of the operational problems of the Carpathian offensive. Moreover, to some extent, his decision can be blamed on the same neglect which led to many of the other failures of this war: an unfamiliarity with the terrain, a refusal to leave headquarters and to examine the situation first hand, and an unrelenting faith in the offensive. However, Conrad's decision displayed a deeper logic that ran consistently through all of the decisions he made during the war.

Conrad's decision making process was not, at heart, "rational." This does not mean that it was "irrational," simply that it was "arational." Psychologists have pointed out that people tend to make decisions in one of two radically different ways. One type examines all of the evidence, weighing the different options, and choosing the side of the "scale" which "weighs" more. The other makes decisions "intuitively," acting more by feel than by careful logic. These people say that the decision "feels" right, that they "know" that it is the right thing to do.

While the need to impress the neutrals and to relieve Przemysl were certainly valid military concerns, Conrad's argument was, at its most basic level, much simpler. Running consistently through his writing was the idea that the war was near its end and that the Monarchy had to act. The only also inadequate.
way to win the war was by beating the most important opponent first. Incremental improvements, such as the seizure of the northwest corner of Serbia, opening supply lines to Turkey, were meaningless if the war was almost over. The rest could be dealt with later.

This was Conrad's fundamental conviction throughout this period. There were certainly arguments in its favor (as well as against it). However, the fundamental premise, that only energetic, active policies could solve the problem, was a basic element of Conrad's personality. In this sense, his decision for an offensive on the Russian front was "intuitive" rather than logical. Unfortunately for him, the specific shape his ideas took made success almost impossible.

2. Struggling to Survive: Italy and Gorlice-Tarnow

Conrad’s long-term hopes for the future of the Monarchy rested on the need for military success. Conrad hoped that restoring the military reputation and position of the Monarchy would begin the process of restoring the Monarchy’s political stability as well. Conrad probably did not think of the Carpathian offensive in this way. Pressured at home and at the front, Conrad’s response was purely military. Still, an operational success, even if temporary, would have opened a space for political action. Unfortunately, its
failure simply made the situation worse.

Over the next three months, Conrad's ability to act disappeared. Instead, he was forced to react to the dangers facing him. Efforts to win the war were forgotten, and strategy became simply an effort to minimize losses. The sense of despair became so great that Conrad called at various times in March and April for peace with Russia or Serbia in order to concentrate forces against the Monarchy's former ally Italy. The military disasters of the winter led him to abandon his hopes of reconstructing the Monarchy in favor of simple survival. Only the success of the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive allowed Conrad to resume planning for the long-run.

Unlike in Germany, where a many-sided debate continued throughout the winter, Conrad and the new Foreign Minister essentially agreed with each other. Burián, if not quite the puppet of Tisza as was supposed at the time, was just as adamant about the need to protect Hungarian interests. In January of 1915, this meant keeping the Russian army on the northern side of the Carpathians and refusing to make concessions, territorial or otherwise, to Rumania. Fearful that Rumania would follow any concessions to Italy with territorial demands of its own, both Tisza and Burián rejected Italian demands as well.³⁸ Each hoped that military

³⁸See Burián's letter to Tisza shortly after taking office, reproduced in Istvan Tisza, Briefe, 1914-1918, 2 Vols.
success would ease the pressure on the Monarchy.

Unfortunately, the Carpathian offensive quickly ground to a halt. Poorly equipped, trained and led, the Austro-Hungarian forces made significant gains only in the weakly defended (and relatively unimportant) Bukowina. Elsewhere, the attacks broke down in the face of Russian resistance and, more importantly, miserable weather. Gains in the mountains were measured in tens of yards, a rate of advance more usual on the western front. In temperatures 20-30 degrees below zero centigrade, thousands froze to death without ever seeing a Russian soldier. Making matters worse, a Russian counterattack in early February succeeded in retaking almost all of its initial losses. A second attack, driven by the need to relieve Przemysl (whose commander was sending increasingly desperate messages about conditions in the fortress), was no more successful than the first. Conrad’s gamble to deter the entry of Italy into the war had failed.

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This was the context in which the debate over concessions to Italy, and the general course of the war, unfolded in February and early March of 1915. The question of how to deal with Italy was primarily a diplomatic one, resting in the hands of Burián. The Foreign Minister was firmly convinced that concessions would have disastrous diplomatic and domestic consequences. Worse, such a deal would not solve the problem, but simply prompt Italy to ask for more. The only possible course of action was to refuse to negotiate, and hope the military situation would improve. Tisza and other leaders firmly supported him in this view.

As long as Burián and Conrad agreed about policy, Conrad's role was primarily to support the foreign minister against internal opposition and, especially, against German pleas for negotiations. The failure of the first Carpathian offensive had pushed Conrad into something of a funk. His letters to Gina were depressed and pessimistic, while, in a letter to Bolfras on 1 February he sounded positively

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41 See his outline of the diplomatic situation and his proposed policy in the GMR meeting of 3 February 1915, in Komjathy, Protokolle, pp. 192-201.

42 On 6 February he wrote "You probably have no idea what a oppressively heavy, troubled and grueling times I am living through, it is as if everything had conspired against us." Two days later, he added "the past twelve months of suffering is probably the hardest and most awful period I have experienced in my entire life." NL Conrad, 1450:357.
besieged. However, even less trusting of Italian intentions than Burián, he continued to reject negotiations.

The two took this stand in the face of increasingly desperate appeals by the Germans for flexibility. Thoroughly frightened by the failure of the Carpathian offensive, Bethmann immediately pressed Vienna again to cede territory to Italy. To make these demands more convincing, he asked Falkenhayn to exert pressure on Conrad as well. Falkenhayn, only too happy to see Bethmann forced to turn to him for help, barraged the AOK with pleas for concessions. Leaving

43 Much of this letter is devoted to defending the army from criticism. He admitted that the German army was more physically fit than the Austrian, but blamed this on insufficient funding for prewar exercises (an unlikely explanation, since many of the men fighting in the Habsburg army in January of 1915 had been called up after the beginning of the war). He also blamed German censorship for making the performance of the German army seem more impressive, and criticized the German leadership for its interference in Habsburg foreign policy. See NL Bolfras, B/75, Conrad to Bolfras, 1 February 1915.

44 See the minutes of the meeting between Burián and Conrad in Teschen on 5 February 1915, where the two agreed to continue the policy on which they had agreed in January. Kundmann Tagebuch, 5 February 1915.

45 Falkenhayn painted the outcome of the war after Italian intervention in the blackest of terms. "The consequences of defeat are clear: the collapse of the great power position of both Germany and also the Danube Monarchy. It is even possible [ja es ist zu befürchten] that Panslavism in combination with the Italian and Rumanian irredenta would succeed in completely destroying the bonds of the Monarchy." Falkenhayn to Conrad, 8 February 1915, in NL Conrad, 1450:155. Bethmann pressured Burián from another direction at the same time, lecturing Hohenloeh on 6 and 10 February about the need for concessions. See Leo Valiani, "Italian-
no stone unturned, Falkenhayn even asked Josef Stürgkh, the  
Army High Command (AOK) representative at OHL and the brother  
of the Austrian minister-president, to persuade his brother  
to accept concessions.46

Despite the renewed German pressure, both Conrad and  
Burián initially remained unbending.47 However, the military  
reverses of the next month slowly convinced Burián that his  
position was untenable. Deathly afraid of the imminent  
Entente attack in the Dardanelles, the Germans had redoubled  
their efforts to convince Burián to compromise. Most  
importantly, they had decided to offer the Monarchy the  
Polish mining district of Sosnovice in return for

Austro-Hungarian Negotiations, 1914-1915." Journal of  

46Stürgkh reported Falkenhayn's pleas to Conrad on 12  
February (which Conrad passed on to Burián without  
significant comment) and again in a report on 18 February.  
Falkenhayn stressed the economic importance of raw material  
supplies from Rumania and Italy. According to Stürgkh,  
Falkenhayn did not view the immediate consequences of the  
intervention of Italy and Rumania as catastrophic, but  
believed the economic consequences would make the victory  
impossible in the long-term. This is a different argument  
from that of Conrad, who, as will be discussed below, was  
increasingly frightened that the Italian army would be in  
Vienna in a matter of weeks. It demonstrates well the  
differences between Conrad and Falkenhayn in their broader  
understanding of the war. Conrad's report to Burián of  
Stürgkh's visit on 12 February is in NL Conrad, 1450:121, as  
is Stürgkh's report of 18 February and the ensuing  
correspondence.

47See Conrad's exchange of letters with the commander of the  
forces facing Italy, Franz Freiherr Rohr von Denta, on 15 and  
16 February 1915 in NL Conrad, 1540:121 and the minutes of a  
meeting in Teschen attended by the leaders of both allies on  
20 February in NL Conrad, 1450:152.
concessions. Impressed by the failure of the offensive in the Carpathians and the chance that the attack on the Dardanelles would allow France and Britain to supply Russia with artillery and munitions, Tisza also supported negotiations. In the face of these arguments, Burián finally surrendered in early March.

Conrad accepted Burián's decision, albeit reluctantly. Only three days before the decisive meeting of the Joint Council of Ministers, he had written Bolfras to argue that it was not yet time for concessions. His comments during the decisive meeting, once again blaming the diplomats for their reluctance to follow his advice before the war, were laced with bitterness. Yet in the end, he gave in. Indeed, his pessimism about the military situation at least helped convince Tisza to support concessions.

His anger was not directed solely at the diplomats. From the opening offensives, Conrad had raged against the Germany's failure to fulfill what he perceived as firm prewar

49 See the minutes for the meeting of the GMR of 8 March in Komjathy, Protokolle, pp. 215-233.
50 NL Conrad, 1450:155, Conrad to Burián, 26 February 1915.
51 Redlich claims this in his diary entry of 9 March, Schicksaljahre Österreich, Vol. II., p. 23.
Falkenhayn's unwillingness to accept his eastern offensive had not made relations any easier. Worst of all, Germany had undercut Vienna's negotiating position by reassuring Rome that the Monarchy would make concessions. In response, Conrad argued, Germany should offer the Monarchy some of its own territory in compensation. But Conrad's reaction was not limited to a Realpolitik assessment of what concessions the Monarchy could extract from Germany. Instead, by this point in the war he had developed a bitter anger toward his supposed ally, a feeling fed by his recognition that Germany's military performance and capabilities exceeded that of his own army. This feeling of

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52For instance Conrad to "Hochverehrte Freund", 17 November 1914, in NL Conrad, 1450:147. See also Conrad to Bolfras, (19 or 20 December 1914), in which he wrote "The High Command in Germany is shortsighted . . . and disloyal. . . For now, we must certainly sweep this under the rug and before the world display the mask of the most secure agreement and faithfulness in the alliance--inside, however, I am sick of this partnership." Reproduced in Conrad, Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, Vol. V., pp. 542-43.

53Conrad first suggested this (in writing) on 26 February 1915 in a letter to Burian (NL Conrad, 1450:155). He repeated this suggestion several times in the next weeks. Most interesting is the already cited letter of 5 March. Here he wrote "Unfortunately, the highly disloyal behavior of Germany, which wants to salvage [salvieren] itself at our cost, has already been extremely harmful [to our negotiating efforts]. . . . We should therefore finally give up our chivalrous attitude [den Standpunkt der Ritterlichkeit] toward Germany and assume that of a brutal businessman. . . ." This is interesting beyond the simple diplomatic calculations it reveals. Conrad's view of the Germans as "businessmen,"--a modern, industrial idea, is clearly a negative one, opposed to the sense of honor and justice which presumably were a fundamental part of the Habsburg character.
inferiority added a caustic edge to his dislike.

Still, Conrad felt compelled to accept Burian's decision. The first days of March saw Conrad's mood swing as wildly as it ever did during the war. Operationally, things were not going well, and the strain was beginning to affect him physically. Yet, it was at this moment of crisis that the long-running drama in his personal life finally broke, as Gina's husband opted for divorce and Conrad and Gina decided to marry. Briefly ecstatic, Conrad quickly fell back into a deep depression as all realized that Przemysl would soon fall. Reverting to his old habit of blaming the politicians, he also uncharacteristically questioned his suitability to direct the war effort.

\[54\] In his letter to Gina on 2 March 1915 he complained that the stress had led to stomach problems, and, later, on 18 March, he blamed the stress for the frequent headaches he had recently developed. Both letters are in NL Conrad, 1450:357.

\[55\] See Gina's account of this in Mein Leben mit Conrad, pp. 32-38. Krobatin later told Gina that, at the conference the next day, no one had been able to understand why Conrad was so optimistic. Although Conrad claimed that he kept his personal feelings and moods completely divorced from his work, it is hard to believe they did not effect his performance and evaluations to some extent. This is especially true during the period from the outbreak of the war until Gina's agreement to marry him.

\[56\] Conrad to Bolfras, 17 March 1915 (NL Bolfras, B/75) is a good example of his shifting the blame to the politicians. In his letter to Gina of 15 March, he wrote "... a man who has as little luck as I does not belong in a leading position-since without luck nothing in the world succeeds..." NL Conrad, 1450:357. It is interesting to compare this to Conrad's letter to Moritz von Auffenberg-Komarow, who had recently been relieved of his command. Much of this letter
At this time of military crisis and psychological despair, Conrad briefly flirted with attacking Serbia. This was prompted above all by Falkenhayn's sudden decision to back such an offensive. Bethmann, Zimmerman and others had again pressed Falkenhayn to save Turkey. Initially reluctant, by 21 March Falkenhayn had accepted the desirability of an offensive against Serbia.\(^57\) He immediately turned to Conrad in an attempt to bring the Habsburg Chief of Staff on board.\(^58\) However, Conrad rebuffed Falkenhayn's suggestions.\(^59\) Even before the failure of a last gasp attempt to save Przemysl became evident, Conrad planned to continue the offensive despite the astonishing casualties the army had suffered.\(^60\) The only concession he made to the

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\(^57\)See Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, pp. 96 ff. An important factor in changing Falkenhayn's mind was the Entente operation against the Dardanelles. This threatened to force Turkey out of the war and radically alter the balance of power in the east.


military failures was to instruct Burián to persuade Rumania to join the Central Powers.\(^1\)

But Conrad then briefly changed his mind. Unwilling to allow Britain and France to take the credit for saving Serbia, Russia began a series of short, sharp counterattacks in the Carpathians, forcing Conrad to call for reinforcements. With Burián and Falkenhayn warning of the diplomatic consequences of further military failures, Conrad felt even more besieged than before.\(^2\) When Colmar von der Goltz, a German general posted in Turkey, returned to Teschen to plead for an attack against Serbia, Conrad finally agreed. He quickly wrote Falkenhayn and Burián suggesting an attack against Serbia if Bulgaria would join the assault and Germany could supply four additional divisions, which could not come

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Conrad cites casualty figures for the Second Army between 1 and 15 March (during the time of the relief offensive) of 23,891 KIA or WIA, with an additional 10,465 MIA/POW. A further 16,841 officers and enlisted men reported themselves sick. Thus, the total number of casualties for this two week period amounted to over a third of the strength of the Second Army at the beginning of March (144,848). Conrad to Bolfras, 17 March 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75.

\(^1\) As usual, Tisza’s refusal to offer the concessions to the Rumanian minority in Hungary necessary to win Rumanian support only reinforced Conrad’s belief in the need for internal reform. Conrad to Bolfras, 17 March 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75.

from the Russian front.  

However, he dropped the idea already the next day to return to his focus on the eastern front. Rejecting both Falkenhayn's cautious support of such an attack and Burián's stronger assent, Conrad again played up the danger posed by the Russian offensive. The Russian army, he argued, was four times stronger than the Habsburg defenders in the Carpathians and the mountain terrain precluded the use of new defensive tactics to offset Russian numerical superiority. As a result, the only option was to concentrate on the east and attempt (again) to win Rumanian participation.

In contrast, Conrad's next strategic idea was both much more serious and much more radical. On 2 April, Conrad wrote both Falkenhayn and Burián suggesting the Central Powers

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64 Janßen argues that von der Goltz convinced Conrad of the need for an attack on Serbia, and that Conrad abandoned his earlier reservations and supported it wholeheartedly. Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, pp. 100-1. This overstates the matter. Conrad's quick reversal simply underlines his impulsive decision-making process. In addition, the conditions Conrad attached to his agreement were essentially unreachable at that point in time. It is possible that Conrad never accepted the idea at all, but simply meant to sound conciliatory.


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begin efforts to get a separate peace with Russia.\textsuperscript{67} Italy, he argued, could not be appeased and was simply using the negotiations as a smokescreen. Even if Rome accepted Vienna's offer, it would simply retake the diplomatic offensive after a short pause. With no real way to ensure Italian neutrality (or, for that matter, that of Rumania and Bulgaria) and Italian intervention meaning certain defeat, something had to give.

The only real option was to seek a settlement with Russia based on the long-term interests of the Monarchy. The coastal area (which would be lost in a deal with Italy) was simply more valuable to the long-term fate of the Monarchy than East Galicia. As the basis for a deal (which should be negotiated with the cooperation with Germany), he suggested offering Russia full control over the Dardanelles, long the object of Russian diplomacy. In addition, the Monarchy would probably have to give up East Galicia to the San and the Dniestr. But, by recognizing Russia's possession of the Straits (and Constantinople) and a Russian sphere of influence over Rumania and Bulgaria, the Monarchy could in return ask for a free hand against Serbia and Montenegro. Finally, the Monarchy should strive to resurrect the earlier alliance between Germany, Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy. Germany, Conrad rather unrealistically suggested, had claimed

no special interest in Russian Poland, and thus would accept this arrangement without compensation.68

Whether this type of agreement would have proven advantageous to the Monarchy is irrelevant. There was simply no chance that it would occur. Germany was not about to accept Russian domination over Turkey, much less an end to the war in the east without any gains for itself. Nor was the Tsar, as the Germans had already discovered, willing to negotiate behind the backs of his allies.69 However, Conrad's proposal demonstrates the degree of desperation that accompanied the military and diplomatic problems of early spring.70 Conrad had urged war in 1914 in the belief that a

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68 Conrad did acknowledge that Germany might be concerned about the need to sacrifice Turkey in such a deal. If it did, he wrote, it should simply be asked which ally it could better afford to sacrifice—Turkey or Austria-Hungary. This, he seemed to think, would bring Germany to its senses.

69 Burián also believed this, commenting to Kundmann in Vienna on 3 April that it was quite unlikely that Russia would abandon France given the financial debts it owed banks in Paris. Kundmann, Tagebuch, 3 April 1915.

70 At the same time Conrad was urging peace, letters from Tisza and Stürgkh arrived at Teschen. Each of these addressed the danger of the exhaustion of the economic and human resources of the Monarchy. Both men suggested that call-ups be delayed, that more serious efforts to move superfluous rear-area manpower to the front be made, and that the army avoid unnecessary and costly frontal attacks. Implicitly, both believed that the war would continue for some time, and policy had to be made on that basis. Conrad's reply gave lip service to these problems, but demanded the manpower needs of the army be filled as they had been in the past. What is notable about his responses (which were drafted for him, and then revised by Conrad) is the lack of any sense that the war had to be viewed as a long-term struggle of attrition (despite a memo he sent to the Ministry
glorious defeat was better than a series of humbling reversals. Now the pressure of imminent defeat caused him to reverse that priority. Because Conrad’s ability to push reform depended on the prestige offered by military success, this meant simultaneously reconsidering his ideas of political reform.

By the beginning of April, Conrad had narrowed his options down to an eastern offensive or a separate peace with Russia. Faced with these alternatives, Falkenhayn really had no choice. Conrad applied still more pressure by insisting repeatedly on the need to impress the neutrals and by reneging on a commitment to leave the Italian border undefended. Afraid that Conrad would go to Russia behind

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of War shortly afterwards addressing the imminent manpower shortage). Obsessed with the immediate, Conrad still had no sense that the war would last more than a matter of months. Op. Abt., Carton 21, Op. Nr. 8672.


The exact course of the conversation on 4 April is interesting. Responding to Conrad, Falkenhayn insisted that Russia would consider a separate peace only if Serbia received the southern part of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Ragusa and Cattaro. Conrad replied "That is impossible. But Serbia is rather beaten down and would probably make peace in return for a guarantee of its former position and an outlet on the Adriatic, perhaps Durazzo." Understandably surprised, Falkenhayn pointed out that the Monarchy had gone to war to prevent just this. Conrad in turn said (according to the minutes present in NL Conrad) "Right, but that changed when Russia entered the war. The solution of the Serbian question must be (word illegible, but probably "postponed") until later." Although Conrad frequently said things he really did
Germany's back, and badgered by Ludendorff, who believed that operations in the west would achieve little, Falkenhayn finally abandoned his cherished western offensive. Again, Conrad's refusal to draw logical conclusions from a position of weakness forced Falkenhayn to accept the wishes of his weaker ally.

Typically, once Conrad won Falkenhayn's acceptance of an eastern attack, he proved willing to accept the German's (very different) ideas about the operational shape and conduct of the offensive. In a brief, matter-of-fact telegram, Falkenhayn suggested that the double-envelopment proposed by Conrad was unworkable. Instead, he proposed an offensive in the area of Gorlice, led by an army of eight German divisions transferred from the west, and joined by the Fourth K.u.K. army (with the whole operation under German command). Conrad quickly accepted this proposal, and the

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72Gerhard Tappen, the German Chief of Operations under Falkenhayn, complained "If Conrad is promised something, then Austria will quickly refuse Italy's conditions, we will have Italy as an opponent and we will still have to fight the war. If Conrad is not promised anything, Austria will make a separate agreement with Russia and we will have Russia alone at our neck." Cited in Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, p. 106.

73Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, pp. 106-8.


meeting between the two on 14 April focused on the question of command and the general goals of the offensive. In the end, the two agreed to launch a thrust involving the (new) German 11th army and the K.u.K. 4th army (totaling something over 190,000 men) in the area of Gorlice under the command of a German (Mackensen) who was to report to AOK. The goal of this offensive was a west-east breakthrough which, if successful, would be joined by a thrust from the mountains. Importantly, the two never discussed what would happen next.

The new offensive was to be the tool that would give the Central Powers leverage against Italy and Rumania. Confident of success, Conrad was willing to buy off Italy temporarily. Accordingly, he wrote immediately to Burián and Bolfras, warning that the military situation urgently demanded that Italy be kept out of the war and suggesting that Burián consider territorial concessions, with the understanding that the Monarchy would retake them as soon as possible.

But Burián was no longer sure he could keep Italy out of the war until the offensive (which was scheduled to begin in mid-May). Despite his offer to Rome (of the Welsh Tirol), he

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wrote Conrad, war with Italy had to be anticipated and planning for such a contingency had to begin immediately.\textsuperscript{78} Conrad, afraid that discussions of contingency plans would lead Falkenhayn to cancel the offensive in the east without any concomitant pledge to oppose Italy, pleaded repeatedly with Burián to reach an agreement.\textsuperscript{79} When Burián nonetheless insisted on discussing military options,\textsuperscript{80} Conrad objected that there was no realistic alternative to concessions. No real opposition could be gathered to oppose Italy, and an Italian declaration of war would see Italian forces in Vienna within five or six weeks.\textsuperscript{81} Instead, Burián should focus his attention on winning a German commitment for a later offensive to retake any concessions offered to Italy. To gain such a pledge, he suggested that Burián employ the threat of a separate peace with Russia as leverage.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} Burián to Conrad, 17 April 1915, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 18 April 1915.


\textsuperscript{82} Conrad argued that, with Italy bought off, the Central Powers could follow the attack against Russia offensives in the west designed to drive France and Britain from the war. They could then turn honorably against Italy, since the latter had broken its alliance commitments and acted unfaithfully. Conrad to Burián, 18 April 1915, AOK, Op. Abt., Carton 490, Op. Nr. 9229.
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Conrad to suggest the Central Powers open peace negotiations with the Entente immediately, with terms which would represent a substantial success for the Entente.\textsuperscript{64} Conrad rejected this immediately, but was not significantly more optimistic than Tisza. While the army prepared to attack Russia, its commander could only watch and wait.

3. Conclusion

No one in a position of authority in the Monarchy in the winter of 1914-1915 really understood the capacity of modern states to endure the demands of war. Even when Tisza and Stürgkh warned about the long-term implications of the manpower shortages in the Monarchy, they thought in terms of months, not of years. Although the war had not ended by Christmas, it would surely be over by the end of 1915.

\textsuperscript{64}Tisza argued that the Monarchy could not ensure that Italy stayed out of the war. Italian entry, with Rumania likely to follow, would almost ensure defeat. In the short term, he recommended that Conrad strip forces from the East (regardless of any offensive intentions there) in order to defend against Italy and launch a surprise attack against Rumania which might disturb its mobilization and persuade Bulgaria to join the Central Powers. This could possibly force Rumania out of the war completely, and at the least confront it with the prospect of heavy losses ("kolossalen Blutopfern") if it chose to fight on. In any case, the Central Powers should move to bring the war to a quick conclusion. Conrad's reaction to Tisza's suggestions was uniformly negative. Tisza's memo was sent on 1 May 1915 to Conrad, Burián, and the German Foreign Office. Conrad's copy is in NL Conrad, 1450:120.
all shared this assumption, and it shaped all of their policies.

Conrad deserves much of the blame for the Monarchy's position. He continued to hold on to his faith in the offensive well after events had proven it misplaced. He planned great offensives without ever understanding the kind of terrain or weather his army would face. He made decisions without carefully weighing means and ends, and, once made, he stuck by those decisions without taking new developments into account. In fact, he was temperamentally unsuited to a job that required this kind of rational, careful approach to decisions.

The logical question, then, is why Bolfras and Franz Joseph did not replace Conrad in the winter or early spring of 1915. It is impossible to say for sure, but some reasonable guesses can be made. Just as in the autumn, there was no logical candidate to replace him. After the wholesale purge Conrad conducted in the fall of 1914, only a few officers remained with extensive command experience. Although both Krauss and Boroevic did little to damage their chances in the winter, neither did they accomplish anything noteworthy. It is quite unclear whether any of the candidates would have done significantly better. More important, though, was probably the fact that Conrad and Burián were fundamentally in agreement when it diplomatic
policy. Both believed in the need to follow the "Hard Line," to borrow Gary Shanafelt’s label.\textsuperscript{85} Whether this would have saved Conrad in the case of another military disaster is unclear. But the success of the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive made this irrelevant.

The events of the winter of 1915 also demonstrate the difficulty of making policy in the Habsburg Monarchy. The traditional argument over the relative influence of \textit{Innenpolitik} and \textit{Aussenpolitik}, so prominent in Germany historiography, is meaningless in the context of the Monarchy, where both were tied inextricably together. The presence of so many minority nationalities within Austria-Hungary made political concessions into international issues and diplomatic decisions into political hot potatoes. This made efforts to address the danger posed by Rumania and Italy almost impossible, as Conrad quickly ran into the contradictory interests of Vienna and Budapest. Conrad was certainly lacking in political talent, but it is doubtful whether Bismarck himself could have untangled the web of interests hostile to efforts to make policy in the interests of the dynasty alone.

The debates and correspondence between Conrad and Falkenhayn also discredits the usual picture of the relationship between the Central Powers during the war. Austria-Hungary is often portrayed as simply Germany’s

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{85}Gary Shanafelt, \textit{The Secret Enemy}, p. 57.
\end{quote}
lackey, subordinate to Germany throughout the war. In contrast, between November 1914 and May of 1915, Conrad got his way at virtually every turn. Certainly, the rift between Falkenhayn and Ludendorff weakened the former, but Conrad took full advantage of the fact that Germany could not win the war without the Monarchy. Unable to stand by and watch Austria-Hungary collapse (or worse, negotiate a separate peace), Falkenhayn could urge, demand and even beg Conrad to act in the best interests of the Central Powers. However, when Conrad refused, there was little else Falkenhayn could do but give in.

In the face of the military disasters of the first six months of the war, Conrad’s (and the army’s in general) concern for internal reform dropped away. There had never been a carefully conceived plan to utilize the war as a spur for reform anyway, and the defeats of 1914 and 1915 left the leaders of the army concerned only with survival. Indeed, the events shook Conrad’s world so much that he even accepted the prospect of a separate peace over a glorious defeat. This may well have been the most rational choice for the Monarchy in the spring of 1915—but the values of the officer corps had never been “rational.” Conrad and his fellow officers would not begin again to think seriously about a long-term reconstruction of the Monarchy until the military situation turned in their favor. How this occurred, and the
consequences of these military victories, will be discussed in chapter five.

This does not mean, however, that the army ignored politics. Indeed, the army was perhaps most active politically during the first 12 months of the war. Importantly, however, they were more concerned with short-term goals than with long-term aims. Reconstructing the Monarchy was the most important end, but was impossible without winning the war, and winning the war required mobilizing and motivating the population to fight against the Entente. In essence, the walls of the fortress had to be shored up with temporary repairs until they could be fully rebuilt.
CHAPTER 4

DISCIPLINE AND DETERRENCE: MOTIVATION IN THE HABSBURG ARMY
DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

With no end to the war in sight, all of the questions that had been (to some extent) submerged in the wave of popular excitement in July and August reemerged. Could a multinational empire survive an extended conflict? How could the Monarchy best mobilize its resources to fight a long war? And, perhaps most important, would the soldiers actually fight for a Monarchy all believed they disliked intensely?

Given the concern Conrad had shown for the ability of a multi-national empire to hold together, one would have expected the AOK to think long and hard about issues of morale, discipline, and motivation. Instead, Conrad and his subordinates made only sporadic efforts to convince the Monarchy's soldiers to support the war effort. More importantly, they never questioned their basic assumptions about the willingness of the soldiers to fight and the best ways to motivate the men. Holding to the pessimistic worldview of the prewar period, Conrad and the AOK divided the army into two parts. The first, composed primarily of
Germans and Hungarians, was considered generally reliable in most, if not all, situations. The rest of the army, with the occasional exception of the Poles, was considered suspect at best and dangerously unreliable at worst. The high command made little effort to convince these men of the virtue and benefits of the monarchy. Instead, it resorted to preemptive and punitive measures to force the minorities to fight. Whatever the success of this policy in the short term, it was not likely to fulfill Conrad's long-term goals of building a more stable monarchy.

1. The AOK and motivation

For all the discussion about the dangers of anti-militarism and national discontent, few officers seem to have been interested before the war in ways to reinforce the willingness of the rank and file to fight for the Monarchy. A truly reliable picture can not be constructed without additional research. Yet, the prewar issues of the main professional journal of the Habsburg officer corps, Streufflers Militärische Zeitschrift, contained only a few articles devoted to questions of morale and discipline. In the ten years before the war, six articles appeared addressing the question of the pre-military education of youth in the Monarchy. Generally pointing to the recent Japanese victory over Russia, the authors repeated the
social-Darwinist ideas common throughout the rest of the West at this time. Japan had beaten Russia because it had trained its youth from very early on to be patriotic and courageous—virtues which had proven decisive during the war. Austria, if it hoped to flourish in a competitive world, had to follow the Japanese example. Although important, these articles said little about practical ways to convince the army to fight once a conflict had begun. A corresponding lack of interest is displayed in a list of lectures held under the auspices of the Militärwissenschaftliche Verein (the Society for Military Science, a popular officers’ association) during the winter semester of 1910/11. Only 5 out of about 150 such lectures had anything to do with morale or discipline.

Ironically, the only article that addressed in detail the question of motivating members of the army appeared on the eve of the outbreak of the war. Acknowledging the difficulty of creating a determined and inspired military in

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1For example, Major a. D. Maiszek-Buizenin "Über militärische Erziehung und Vorbildung in der Schule." Streuffler's Militärische Zeitschrift, January 1908, 71-86. Hungary, in contrast, was considered successful at instilling these virtues in its children.

2See the list of these lectures in Streufflers Militärische Zeitschrift, January 1911. Two years before this, only two out of roughly the same number of lectures had dealt with these issues. Most dealt with tactics, technology, military history, and questions revolving around the honor of the officer corp.

3The anonymous article "Über die moralische Vorbereitung zum Kriege," in Streufflers Militärische Zeitschrift, January 1914, pp. 577-608.
a multi-ethnic state, the author urged the officer corps to raise the morale level of the population by awakening them to the power and urgency of the Reichsidee. He presented a comprehensive program for accomplishing this, including stressing the glorious military history of the Monarchy at every opportunity (by teaching the men military history, by commissioning short, easy-to-read histories of victorious battles, by hanging portraits of successful military leaders, etc), attempting to create a "Cult of Heroes" which would not only glorify the individual heroes, but the broader concept of dying for the fatherland, the use of movies and slides for telling the history of the Monarchy, the distribution of pictures of the royal family, and a variety of other techniques. All in all, the author seems to have had a good grasp of the dangers inherent in the national situation of the Monarchy and the army, and a well-thought out plan for avoiding them.

Finally, there is some evidence outside of the professional journals that others were thinking about this. At least some thought was given in 1913 and 1914 to the introduction of a program of patriotic lectures to the men as a way to inspire them to fight for the Monarchy. Most active in this effort, however, were the military chaplains. Before the war, the clergy cooperated with the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Culture and Education to indoctrinate

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4 Kriegs Ministerium (KM), 5 Abt., 28-3 of 1914.

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the soldiers in their duty toward the Monarchy and toward the church, duties often seen as one and the same. Indeed, the Dienstbuch that laid out the official responsibilities and rights of the military clergy specifically required the clergy to urge the men to fulfill their duties and to inspire them to love the fatherland and the Emperor. The clergy were only too happy to comply.

Even before the war had really begun, the army displayed its suspicion of Serbian civilians within the Monarchy and soldiers drawn from the Serbian ranks. Discrimination and punishment of the national minorities during the first month or two of the war, while extensive, remained largely ad hoc and impromptu. The actual policies of the army toward

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5KM, Präs, 53-13/11 of 1910, Präs, 34-32 of 1911, and Präs, 34-32/2 of 1911. This last document is especially revealing. Bjelik, the Feld Vikar and thus the head of the catholic clergy, wrote to the KM asking for permission for the men to join already existing Catholic associations. He justified this by arguing that this would reinforce the moral and patriotic fiber of the men, in keeping with the Berufsidee of the military clergy ("THRONE, ALTAR FATHERLAND," capitals in original). The KM politely refused this request, suggesting that the clergy already did enough to strengthen the patriotic mood of the men. Whether Bjelik, who later proved dedicated to the role of the clergy in motivating the men to fight, was sincere or was merely attempting to play to the sympathies of his superiors is unclear. Still, the fact that he saw fit to pitch his argument in this direction is significant. See also the comments by Walter Wagner in "Die K. (U.) K. Armee," p. 539.

6Dienstbuch A-16, c, Section 19.

insubordination, desertion, and national agitation evolved gradually over the next few months. The fall of 1914 until the spring of 1915 would mark the most problematic period for the army until the Brusilov offensive of 1916. During this period, the army would adopt and implement most of the measures the AOK would employ throughout Conrad's period as Chief of Staff.

The army relied for much of the war on two related strategies for containing the effects of nationalism. On the one hand, the Army High Command (AOK) worked increasingly, often at the cost of tactical and logistical effectiveness, to avoid putting Serbs, Czechs, and other minorities in a position where they would be forced to fight against other Slavs or troops of their own nationality. On the other, the AOK tried to deter desertion (especially) and other forms of disobedience through the threat of increasingly harsh penalties aimed at the offending soldiers and, as the war continued, their families at home. These disciplinary measures were based on a simple attitude toward the national minorities. Rooted in preconceptions formed before the war and reinforced by a variety of incidents in 1914 and early 1915, the commanders of the army believed all non-German, non-Hungarian soldiers posed a potential threat to discipline. However, they thought that the trigger for anti-monarchical action lay most of the time in people who were agitators before their induction, and even more in the
actions of civilian nationalists who damaged the morale of
the soldiers. As a result, the army spent a great deal of
time and effort trying to defend itself against civilians
inciting disobedience.

In essence, the army thought of these civilians as the
carrier of the “disease” of nationalism. Nationalism, then,
was a disease, but one which could attack different areas of
an already infected body. Eventually, nationalism would
overwhelm the body’s defenses and cause death. But, in the
meantime, it threatened the function of individual limbs and
organs. The first line of defense, therefore, was to block
reinfection by preventing contact between the pathogen (the
civilians) and the army.

The primary protection adopted by the army to deter
civilian resistance was the threat and use of the harshest
possible punishments for such crimes. By imposing the death
penalty on civilians who encouraged soldiers to desert, to

Avoiding metaphors is impossible, but one must nevertheless
employ them with caution. I want to point especially to the
need for caution in picturing nationalism as a disease.
This metaphor, and the consequent (and overused) image of
the Monarchy as one of the “sick men” of Europe is quite
striking and was quite commonly employed among politicians,
journalists and other prominent figures in the pre-war
Monarchy. But, to my knowledge, Conrad never used this kind
of rhetoric. Because it fits their attitudes quite well, I
am employing it nonetheless, but it must be kept in mind
that I am here interpreting policies and discussions rather
than simply reporting what I have found. It is actually somewhat surprising that Conrad did not talk
about nationalism in biological terms. This would seem the
natural metaphor for a social Darwinist who already saw the
world in terms of biological, evolutionary metaphors.
disobey their officers or in some other way to subvert the war effort, the AOK believed some agitators would be deterred and others eliminated. The AOK had and used this power in the battlefield regions, where it quickly imposed martial law and the strictest penalties for civilians who engaged in espionage and anti-military actions. As Richard Spence makes clear in the case of the South Slav territories, the army imposed radical punishments often. The same seems to have been true in Galicia.

The achilles heel of this strategy, though, was that, in areas not under military control, the governmental bureaucracy had jurisdiction over these crimes. The army quickly decided that these officials were not energetic enough in pursuing anti-monarchy agitators. Indeed, many officers believed these bureaucrats the most nationalized group of people in the Monarchy. Accordingly, Conrad pleaded for the extension of martial law and the death penalty into rear areas for crimes that damaged the performance or

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reputation of the military. Unconvinced of the willingness of the bureaucracy to apply even mandatory punishments evenly, however, Conrad strove throughout the war to expand the area of the Monarchy under the legal control of the army. The arguments he used for both of these sets of proposals were the same. The civil officials were encouraging anti-monarchy agitation by their refusal to act forcefully against agitators, and only the army could be trusted to act quickly, impartially, and effectively.\footnote{For example, Op. Abt, Karton 13, Op. Nr. 6413. Führ deals with these efforts extensively, but focuses on the question of the AOK's effort to take over governmental control over the Austrian half of the Monarchy during the war, not on questions of discipline and motivation.}

The prime minister of the non-Hungarian half of the Monarchy, Karl Graf Stürgkh, and the rest of the government were unwilling to allow the army so much power. As a result, Conrad and the army felt compelled to do whatever possible to isolate newly inducted soldiers from the civilians and to identify and track suspected agitators. A variety of ideas regarding this problem were suggested as early as mid-autumn of 1914, both by the AOK, by the Minister für Landesverteidigung (the "Austrian" ministry of national defense), and by commanders of lower-level units.\footnote{For example, MfLV to AOK, 4 February 1915, in AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 17, Op. Nr. 6884, K.u.K. 4 Armeekommando (AK) to AOK, 13 March 1915, in AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 18, Op. Nr. 7436.} Out of these suggestions, a few standardized procedures were
instituted over the course of the first eighteen months of the war.

When an area was suspected of being disloyal, local commanders attempted to isolate newly inducted soldiers from the civilian population. One method was to move the training site to a small town or a secluded spot near its original base. Here the men were kept within the bounds of the camp, with no opportunity to go into town and interact with civilians throughout the training period. In the same way, civilians were not allowed to enter the camp or have any communication with the soldiers. The same principles were followed as the soldiers moved toward the train station and began their journey to the front. Contact with civilians was strictly prohibited (although in practice difficult to prevent), and the soldiers were supposed to be kept under strict observation to prevent any desertion or anti-military/anti-war behavior. In essence, rather than quarantine the ill, the army quarantined the healthy.

A larger-scale solution to the problem was simply to transfer a unit's Ersatz (replacement) battalion to another area. Since the early 1880's, the battalions of the army had generally been based near their recruiting area, or Ergänzungsbezirk. When the army was deployed, each


battalion left behind it a skeleton staff to administer the raising, organization and initial training of reserves (the Ersatzbatallion). This system meant that most units of the army would receive replacements drawn from one specific locale with a specific national composition. Even before the war, there was considerable fear that this system promoted the rise of national feeling within the army. Franz Ferdinand, in fact, had argued in 1896 that the army should move the regiments out of their ethnic areas. The increased reliability of the troops would more than compensate, he claimed, for the ensuing delay in mobilization time.\textsuperscript{15}

With the AOK and many field commanders increasingly convinced of the unreliability of Czech and Bosnian replacements, both the Ministerium für Landesverteidigung (in charge of the Landwehr, the "Austrian" national guard units) and the Ministry of War in early 1915 suggested transferring Ersatzbatallionen as a way of diluting the influence of nationalist agitators.\textsuperscript{16} By exchanging the Ersatzbatallion of a Czech battalion with one from an ethnically German area, German replacements would gradually stiffen the suspect unit, while the Czech replacements would be integrated into a reliable unit which would watch over them and prevent insubordination and desertion. Valuing reliability over


logistical and linguistic efficiency, the AOK continued to exchange Ersatzbatallionen throughout the war. In this case, the choice between operational effectiveness and national reliability was clear.

Finally, the AOK and those officers most directly involved in training worked hard to identify and isolate recruits who were politically suspect. State officials were required to notify the commanders of the incoming reservists of any inductee who had shown himself an enemy of the Monarchy (or simply a criminal) before joining the army. The training officers also had to compile a list of people who showed themselves against the war or the state. These men were at least put under strict surveillance (including censorship of their mail, both outgoing and incoming), and were occasionally placed immediately in preventative detention until the unit moved to the front. The commander, in the meantime, was to draw up a detailed list containing the names and evaluations of those men who showed themselves untrustworthy. He would then give this list to the frontline commanders when the replacement unit was moved into the battlefield areas, allowing the commanders to continue this process of surveillance and, possibly, isolation.17

Importantly, the army directed these measures primarily

at a few specific national groups, specifically the Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, and, to a lesser extent, the Rumanians. This is not to say that Germans and Hungarians who had shown antimilitary/socialist tendencies were ignored, but simply that, considered broadly, most of the effort aimed to prevent nationalist/separatist agitation, which was most prominent among the disenchanted minorities.\footnote{The treatment of returned prisoners-of-war demonstrates that, when the AOK believed all nationalities equally suspect, they treated everyone equally. All PoW's were to be placed in detention camps. After all were evaluated, those considered reliable would be placed in a regiment other than the one to which they had originally belonged, those considered to have deserted or to be unreliable for some other reason would be tried and sentenced. AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 36, Op. Nr. 15373 of 21 September 1915.} This is especially true regarding the transfer of Ersatzbattalionen where Czech and other minority units were almost always exchanged with Ersatzbattalionen from areas of German-Austria.

Once the men got to the front, the problem became somewhat different. A few officers even claimed that the problem disappeared, as it was impossible to misbehave when surrounded by so many soldiers.\footnote{AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 18, Op. Nr. 7088.} However, the evidence coming into the AOK as early as October and November of 1914 seemed to contradict this belief. Already, the number of deserters and prisoners-of-war indicated to Conrad that the army had a significant problem on its hand. This was especially true, the AOK believed, of Slav units, particularly the Czechs and the regiments from Bosnia-
Herczegovina.

The AOK did attempt to utilize the officers to persuade the men that it was not in their best interest to desert. Thus, the officers were to discredit widespread rumors that the Russians would allow prisoners to return home if they signed an agreement not to fight against Russia. Similarly, later in the war, officers physically unable to fight were detailed to give speeches to infantry units, emphasizing the poor conditions in Russian prison camps. These efforts were important. But Conrad fundamentally believed that encouragement and suggestion were not enough to stem the wave of desertions, if only because there were simply too few officers to influence the troops significantly.

Instead, one had to cut the diseased areas out of the body directly. The only way to do this was "through the most careful supervision and through draconian (disciplinary) measures." The AOK had struggled throughout the war to persuade the government to impose these punishments on civilians convicted of anti-military measures. With full control over the discipline and punishment of soldiers, the

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22 One problem, to which the AOK pointed in a communication of 23 February 1915, was that there were simply not enough officers to have a significant influence on the troops. AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 18, Op. Nr. 7470.
army did not hesitate to implement the same policies against misbehavior among the soldiers. These measures included, by January 1915, the death penalty without trial for desertion, for encouraging desertion, or for any action which led others to neglect or reject their military duty. Moreover, officers were expected to explain to their men the consequences of desertion, and point out to them that it was their duty to oppose desertion by force if necessary.24 Frustrated by the lack of success, the AOK supported a suggestion that all people returning from prisoner-of-war camps be subject to legal punishment.25 When threatening the soldiers themselves proved insufficient, the AOK and the Ministry of War resorted to threatening their families, ordering that the homes of deserters be searched for incriminating materials and the families be closely inspected for possible anti-monarchical sentiments.26

It is difficult to overemphasize the extent to which the AOK strove to prevent desertion through deterrence and punishment. At the same time, Conrad and the AOK understood that, if the nationalities were to be expected to fight, or at least to be useful to the Monarchy, they had to be put in


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a position which would offer the least temptation of desertion or misbehavior. This led to a second set of policies designed to prevent insubordination or anti-military activities.

One way to reduce the willingness of soldiers to desert was to keep them away from other soldiers of their own nationality. Thus, people suspected or known to be agitators were regularly taken away from their units, and assigned as individuals or in very small groups to German or Hungarian units. Here, they could do little damage and, surrounded by men devoted to the war effort and faithful to the Monarchy, would be forced to fight. The same practice was used on a bigger scale. Whole regiments deemed untrustworthy were inserted into reliable formations.

A specific example demonstrates how important the AOK viewed this intermingling of nationalities. In June of 1915, the AOK learned that the next Marschformationen in two regiments serving on the Italian front would be made up entirely of men of Italian nationality. After investigating, the AOK discovered that a low-level commander (the AOK apparently never learned the identity of this officer) had earlier ordered the preferential conscription of Germans into these units. Now, the supply of ethnically German recruits was exhausted. The result, Conrad commented acidly, was to

make the next marschformationen completely unreliable. Consequently, the AOK ordered that the number of Italians in these replacement units be lowered to under 25 percent. Only by diluting the carriers of nationalism in this way could the army contain the disease.²⁸

There was an alternative to isolating potentially dangerous agitators or units. The greatest danger of desertion or other discipline problems arose when troops faced men of their own nationality on the battlefield. The logical solution, then, was to deploy the army so as to prevent this from ever happening. The AOK reluctantly approved measures to avoid this situation as early as the autumn of 1914, and within months this became nearly standard policy. Thus, when possible, the AOK stationed units predominantly Italian in composition in the northeast, while Czechs and Serbs and Rumanians fought against the Italians. This created an obvious problem, since few men could be trusted to fight against the Russians, and operational demands made maintaining such a rigid distribution problematic in any case. Nonetheless, it did prove a reasonably successful way to prevent desertion and

²⁸Op. Abt., Karton 27, Op. Nr. 11777. One way to do this was outlined by the Ministerium für Landesverteidigung. Admitting that the law legally required the conscription of men of Italian nationality into the Tirolean regiments, the Ministry suggested that these men be sorted into a separate labor detachment, be given combat training, and at that point (when the legal obligations had been met) transfer them into other Marschformationen destined for other fronts. Op. Abt., Karton 27, Op. Nr. 12013 of 23 June 1915.
Finally, the AOK also selected out individuals and units it believed unreliable and employed them in labor battalions behind the front. In fact, officers occasionally resorted to this as a way to bypass legal regulations that seemed to require the use of nationalities considered untrustworthy. Whether this worked well is open to some debate. Some lower-level commanders believed that such open evidence that the army lacked trust in the minorities actually encouraged desertion. However, it remained army policy throughout the war.

All of these policies underline the centrality of the nationality issue in the minds of those entrusted with the defense of the Monarchy. There were explicit, widely acknowledged tradeoffs involved in each of these attempts to prevent insubordination and desertion. Dividing unreliable replacements among German or Hungarian units carried the danger of weakening the most effective units in the army. Transferring Ersatzbatallionen meant increased logistical and administrative burdens as well as increased linguistic variety. Ensuring that Italian units fought on the Eastern

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29 The transfers were both initiated by the AOK, and implemented as a response to suggestions from lower-level units. For the second, see August von Urbanski, *Das Tornisterkind*, in Nachlaß Urbanski, B/58.


31 Of course, most of these policies decreased linguistic
Front placed unnecessary demands on railroads, supplies, and administration. Not least important, culling unreliables and placing them in labor battalions meant depriving the front-line of needed manpower.

Conrad was well aware of these problems, but believed the danger posed by nationalism was simply more important than battlefield effectiveness. In 1916, suggesting that the success of mixing ethnic groups as a way to prevent desertion had been mixed, he asked his army commanders for their opinion. Although the responses confirmed that military effectiveness fell in such cases, on balance nationality was more important. The AOK agreed and ordered that the policy be continued. More than anything else, this demonstrates the way in which nationalism formed the lens through which Conrad and the officer corps viewed the world.

2. Alternative strategies for motivation

The approach adopted by the AOK to minimize national discontent and disciplinary problems was not the only one possible. Indeed, a number of different groups and uniformity. One regiment (from XX Korps) in late 1916 actually had eight distinct nationalities, none of which comprised over 22 percent of the unit. The difficulties of commanding such a unit are obvious. AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 96, Op. Nr. 35466 of 13 December 1916.

individuals suggested or actively employed other methods
designed to control national discontent or even to win the
allegiance of the men. What is interesting about these
approaches is not so much their existence, but the AOK's
reaction. In almost all cases, the AOK accepted the
suggestions of others, and echoed them in communications to
the Ministry of War. In some cases, the AOK even adopted
these proposals and sent them out to the army as official
policy. Yet, the AOK made little effort to build on these
ideas and create a proactive policy of persuasion to
accompany its deterrent efforts.

The group that worked most consistently to inspire the
troops to fight for the Monarchy was the military clergy.\textsuperscript{33} Emmerich Bjelik, the head of the catholic clergy, certainly
understood this to be one of his primary responsibilities.
The public sermons he preached and the pastoral letters he
wrote show a clear devotion to raising the morale and
determination of the population. Most obvious was a speech
he gave at the Stephansdom during December 1914. Here,
Bjelik preached that it was the duty of the citizens to

\textsuperscript{33}On the military clergy in general, see Viktor Lipusch, ed.,
Österreich-Ungarns Katholische Seelsorger im Weltkrieg,
(Graz, 1938). This must be used very critically, but
contains a great deal of useful raw material. See also the
first half of Richard Georg-Plaschka, "Contradicting
Ideologies: The Pressure of Ideological Conflicts in the
Austro-Hungarian Army of World War I," in Richard Georg-
Plaschka, Nationalismus, Staatsgewalt, Widerstand. Aspekte
nationaler und sozialer Entwicklung in Ostmittel- und
Südosteuropa, (Munich, 1985), which is drawn from the
material provided in Lipusch.
accept God's will, and thus the war God had given them, and to cleanse their hearts so that they could pray effectively and sincerely for the generals and the troops. As he had before the war, he also cited the performance of the clergy in inspiring the troops to fight for the fatherland as justification for occasional special requests. This underlines Bjelik's belief that his superiors saw this as an important role for the priests.

Many of the chaplains serving with the troops also understood their duties to include inspiring the troops to fight. The content in the huge number of reports they submitted demonstrates this understanding clearly. Not all of these reports reflected a desire to inspire the troops, but a substantial number did, and a few discussed it quite explicitly. Demeter Panaswycz, for example, serving in the Balkans in 1914, wrote that he attempted continually "... to influence the soldiers toward love of the fatherland, honor, and a feeling of duty as toward piousness and trust in God." The evidence provided by the standardized reports prevalent by late 1915 is even more convincing. As part of their report, each priest was required to record the subjects

34Kriegsarchiv, Apostoliches Feldvikariat (AFV), Karton 160, in a folder marked "R-481." Bjelik argued further that peace had made the people lazy and unbelieving, and the war was in some sense a retribution for the people's unbelief.

35AFV, Karton 177, Nr. 57431

of each sermon preached during the month. There were, of course, many sermons devoted to Christian issues which differed little from peacetime addresses. However, a substantial percentage, perhaps even a majority, of these sermons dealt with the soldiers' responsibility to the Monarchy. The report for December 1915 by the priest of the 20th infantry regiment provides an extreme example. He titled his sermons for the month 1. Fear of God and Love of Emperor, 2. Christ as a Soldier, 3. On Treason, 4. On the duties of Soldiers, 5. Explanation of the Pastoral Letter. Other favorite topics included the example of Paul as a soldier, Christ's sacrifice as a moral example, and "The Virtue of Obedience is the first prerequisite of Victory."

The example of Johann Parsch, a regimental priest and an important figure in the church after the war, also points to the expectation that the clergy would serve a military role. Parsch, who was perhaps unusual for believing that his Christian role should take precedence over his military function, recorded in his diary that he had been ordered by his superiors to give patriotic speeches. Ironically, in

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37 Report of 3 January 1916, in AFV, Karton 216. This pastoral letter most likely was Bjelik's Christmas Letter, which also dealt with the issue of martial virtues (Soldatentugend).


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an article entitled "Military Chaplains—Pastoral Instruction" published in *Pastoralblatt* (the newsletter of the Feldvikariat) in 1916, Parsch included the "instilling of martial virtues" [Soldatentugend] as one of the three tasks of the military clergy. Christianity, Parsch argued, "always stresses the virtues of one's class [Standestugend]: a catholic soldier must also be an absolute hero." Parsch offered explicit instructions regarding the most effective means toward raising this consciousness among the soldiers.\(^3\)

While it is unclear exactly how successful the clergy was in getting the soldiers to accept this message, there is considerable evidence that they were not particularly effective. Many priests complained that the officers (generally characterized as a- or even anti-religious) refused to order the men to attend mass and generally opposed the work of the clergy in whatever way possible.\(^4\) There is also at least some evidence that many priests were neither

\(^{3}\) *Pastoralblatt*, Nr. 2, 1916, in AFV, Karton 179. The other two responsibilities Parsch listed were the preparation of the soldiers for death in "Gnadestand" and encouraging the soldiers not to give in to the moral dangers and temptations of war.

\(^{4}\) For example, the report of Feldkurat Michael Stubauer, reprinted in Lipusch, ppp. 163-66. The Quartermaster Abteilung of the AOK had to issue an order in 1917 requiring the officers to give their men an opportunity to attend Sunday services. Qu. Nr. 55983 of 11 Oct 1917, cited in Lipusch, pp. 147-8.
particularly diligent nor particularly skillful.\textsuperscript{41} Most importantly, though, it appears that there were simply not enough priests.\textsuperscript{42} All in all, it seems safe to say the chaplains' message was at the least diluted, if not entirely dismissed.

What is most important here, however, is what is not found in the documentary record. Although the AOK and other commanders were well aware of the clergy's attempts to motivate the men, I have found only one attempt by the AOK to encourage and formalize this role. In May 1916, the Quartermaster Department distributed an order reporting the creation of an intensive religious education program designed to increase morale and motivation. The program was the brainchild of a division commander concerned by the unwillingness of his troops to fight for the Monarchy. The AOK quickly ordered all divisions to copy this effort and arranged for the distribution of priests who spoke the

\textsuperscript{41}See the entries in Parsch's diary in Höslinger, and a memo from Feldsuperioratleiter Anton Mintsek, in AOK, Quartermeister Abteilung, Karton 177, in a folder marked "1915-1917." Mintsek pleaded with the clergy to be patient and suggested that, even though the soldiers often refused to cooperate, the priests could not yell at the men or criticize them and must not forget their duty to inspire them to fight.

\textsuperscript{42}I have found only a couple of the actual complaints from regimental, division or corps commanders. However, a large number of replies from the Feldvikariat rejecting what are termed numerous complaints exist. The logical conclusion is that the complaints, whether verbal or in writing, were widespread.
This demonstrates perfectly the way the AOK approached motivation. When someone brought a successful program to the attention of the officers at the AOK, they were happy to recommend that it be adopted throughout the army. But there is little or no evidence that the AOK under Conrad ever thought to initiate such a program. Instead, they fell back on a reliance on deterrence and discipline shaped by their understanding of the nationalism question.

In the same way that armies often see the clergy as a tool to persuade the men of the moral virtue of their cause, they also view training as an opportunity for indoctrination. Many if not all armies use the initial training period as a chance to imprint upon their new soldiers the values of the service and the objectives for which they might fight. To a limited extent, the AOK tried this as well. However, due to a severe lack of time and material, and because of the focus on discipline and deterrence, the AOK largely neglected this opportunity. Most of the limited attempts to use this time for political indoctrination were made by individual commanders and only later reported to the AOK.

Although I have not been able to search the records of lower level units, there is evidence that a number of lower-level commanders tried to make use of the training period to raise the morale and willingness to fight of their

43 KM, 9 Abt., 17-12/4 of 1916.
soldiers. As early as February 1915, the military commander of Vienna suggested that, to combat anti-Monarchy propaganda, it was necessary for officers to instill in their trainees "... a pure military spirit, as well as a patriotic and dynastic feeling." To do this, the officers should spend time getting to know their men and winning their trust. Several months later, Pflanzer-Baltin, the commander of the 7th Army, made a similar suggestion. In training new inductees, Pflanzer argued, the "moral instruction" of the men was of crucial importance. The goal of this training was to produce "obedience," the first prerequisite for success in battle (itself a revealing statement). To do this, training must stress the need to defend the fatherland, the consequences of defeat and of being taken prisoner, the example of heroic victories and sacrifices, and the moral value of being awarded decorations for bravery. Revealingly, although Conrad approved Pflanzer's suggestions as a whole, he did not comment on the

44After the disasters of the first months of the war, training was divided into a short section in a centralized training center in the rear and then a second training period much closer to the front lines where the local commanders had much more authority. Of course, many men never received this second training period but were simply fed directly into the front lines.

45Also allowing the officers to identify and label likely troublemakers. KM, 5 Abt., 61-78.

section devoted to moral education. The number of such proposals in the records of the AOK and the Ministry of War are not overwhelming, yet there are enough to demonstrate that at least some commanders thought seriously about the need to raise the motivation and discipline of their men.

It would be incorrect to say that the AOK and the Ministry of War ignored the training period completely. The Ministry of War mentioned a number of times the need for officers to instill in their men during training a desire to fight for the Monarchy. Moreover, the AOK, late in 1914, urged that special attention be paid during training to awakening and advancing the patriotic feeling and thinking of the men.

One must also admit that it would have been extremely difficult to find the time or manpower to conduct a successful program of political indoctrination during training. The huge losses in men and officers during the first months of the war meant that available manpower reserves shrank faster than anyone had believed possible. The army quickly cut the training period for new draftees to eight weeks, but even this occasionally proved impossible. By 1916, with the casualty rate having moderated somewhat,

47 For example, Km, 5 Abt., 7-3 (1916).

48 Op. Abt., Karton 8, Op. Nr. 5105. AOK to KM, 8 December 1914. Even here, however, the original draft stressed the importance of strict discipline, and Conrad's only addition to the memorandum pointed to the need to excise unreliable elements quickly and completely.
the KM felt able to issue instructions that training would last a minimum of eight weeks, and preferably twelve, but even here felt compelled to remind commanders that it was unwise and counterproductive to shorten the training period arbitrarily. In either case, there was little or no time for an intensive program of political education or motivation. Moreover, with the demand for officers at the front so voracious, the only officers available for training were those who were permanent invalids, hardly those most likely to inspire patriotism. Still, the AOK made few efforts to overcome such difficulties or to make concrete plans instead of vague proposals.

A number of other potential opportunities existed that the army might have exploited. The army might have launched a propaganda campaign aimed at the men already with the fighting units, utilizing newspapers, speakers, and other materials. Some lower level commanders did adopt such a policy. For instance, the commander of the military district of Nagyszeben ordered his officers to spend as much time as possible with their troops (accompanying them to church, for instance), to focus training on instilling a martial spirit in the men (for instance, by challenging the Rumanians to show themselves as more heroic than any other nationality), and to single out those who had won medals for special

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compliments. Others, while content to respond to Russian propaganda on an ad hoc basis, were at least aware of the danger. In fact, the Information Department in the AOK in August 1915 created a separate group to assume responsibility for evaluating enemy propaganda and for the creation of counter-propaganda.

But there was really only one area in which the AOK took the lead in proposing political education and inspiration. This was the effort by Conrad and others to institute programs in the Monarchy's schools to train and inspire the youth before they entered the army. To some extent, this was simply a reaction to the need to exploit the manpower base of the Monarchy more effectively, and included shooting practice, gymnastics and exposure to a variety of military drills and practices. However, this program also included a component designed to make the students willing and even eager to become soldiers. Thus, officers incapable of service with the army gave lectures on military history and current events, stressing the heroic accomplishments of the army in the past and present. Arising naturally out of

50 Op. Abt., Karton 12, Op. Nr. 6129. Challenging the men to prove themselves superior to other nationalities would seem a fruitful approach to discipline, but I have found no evidence of it use anywhere else.


52 See AOK, Qu. Abt., Karton 1714, Op. Nr. 35567. I have been unable to track the actions of this group, but at most it attacked the problem in an ad hoc, rather than a comprehensive manner.

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prewar calls for such moral instruction and out of the overall AOK hopes regarding army reform, these efforts could conceivably have improved the performance of the army over the long term. In the context of the war, however, it is doubtful that they accomplished much.

A simple conclusion emerges from this brief examination of the ways in which the army and the Ministry of War attempted to motivate the troops. The AOK was concerned about discipline and motivation, and accepted and even encouraged suggestions and proposals. At heart, though, Conrad and the others believed only punishment and deterrence could prevent desertion and disaster. As a result, they made no real effort to implement a comprehensive program aimed at persuading the men of the virtues of the Monarchy.

Such a program would not arise until 1918, much too late in the war to be effective. Both the Bolshevik revolution and the newly active propaganda efforts of Britain and America led to increasing concern about the reliability of the men. In the spring of 1918, Conrad's successor, General Arz von Straußenburg, responded by creating the Enemy Propaganda Defense Agency (the Feindespropaganda-Abwehrstelle, or F-A) within the AOK.\(^{53}\) This organization

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\(^{53}\)See Plaschka, p. 269-71 . It is revealing that Arz and the others involved with the creation of the F-A were motivated more by fear of external influences than by the national problems that had existed since before the war. This was a reactive, not a proactive, effort. See the introductory lecture by Egon Freiherr von Waldstätten, the commander of the F-A, to officers being trained to serve in
was to create a comprehensive program to persuade the men that fighting for the Monarchy was in their best interest. Although it was given an impossible task, the efforts it made remain impressive.

Along with the elements of the F-A at the AOK, Arz ordered the creation of a network of propaganda officers distributed throughout the army. To help these officers, the F-A wrote and distributed a large number of pamphlets aimed at countering the themes of entente propaganda and socialist sentiment. In addition, the F-A coordinated presentations by a large number of lecturers who spoke both during training and while on visits to front-line units. From the examples that I have read, these lectures displayed a surprising realism. For instance, a lecture aimed at persuading the Czechs to fight for the Monarchy did not rely on flaccid references to the glorious history of the Empire, but instead contained a hard-headed examination of the economic prospects of a future Czech state designed to persuade the Czech soldiers that they were better off within the Monarchy. Although it is difficult to determine for certain, most of these lectures seem to have been presented by professors and

the new organization. AOK, Evidenz-Büro, Feindespropaganda-Abwehrstelle, Karton 3835.

54 These pamphlets included titles like "Why it is better to live in a Great Power," "England's War Aims," The Share of the Dynasty in the Development of Austria-Hungary," "The Catchword of Militarism" and simply "Stick it out."

55 AOK, Evidenz-büro, Karton 3836.
other notables. In addition, the AOK included the clergy in this effort. Again, the priests were instructed to stress patriotic and militaristic themes in their sermons and daily conversations with the men.\footnote{AFV, Karton 180.}

3. Conclusion

Given Conrad’s (and the army’s) prewar rhetoric about the dangers of nationalism, one would have expected the reliability of the manpower of the army to be one of his most important concerns. Indeed it was. But the focus of the AOK lay almost entirely on deterrence and avoidance rather than education and motivation. The next logical question is therefore to ask why this was.

The AOK’s decisions arose quite logically out of the military culture discussed in the first chapter. On the one hand, the culture of officership in the prewar army stressed the division between officers and the rank and file. The officers, acutely aware of their membership in a separate caste, saw their men quite consciously as uneducated, unskilled, and unworthy of an officer’s attention. Attempting to persuade the men to fight for the Monarchy, requiring a commitment of time and energy, and, even worse, care and concern, on the part of the commander ran counter to the prewar differentiation between the groups. The officers were
simply not prepared to think of their men as individuals capable of being educated.

Just as important, however, was the perceptual framework employed almost instinctively by Conrad and many of his compatriots in thinking about nationalism. As young children educated and raised in the army, they had absorbed the dominant ideological viewpoint taught by that institution. Stressing the need to be *Kaisertreu*, the ideological enemy was inevitably found in those who were "*Kaiserfeindlich.*" This black-white dichotomy was firmly in place well before the war and guided the AOK's response to the problems and opportunities of the war. It is important to note that the AOK did, in accordance with its anational ethos, discipline those who verbally or physically assaulted members of a national minority.\(^5^7\) However, in general, the high-ranking officers saw discipline problems primarily as a result of national discontent. Isolated from civilian life even after decades of service, the officers never had a reason to doubt this picture. Accordingly, they fell back on the stereotypes absorbed in their early years. Only strict discipline and threats of exaggerated punishment would prove effective against the nationalist infection. Nationalism, they believed, was so strong and so attractive that the picture of an anational, multi-ethnic army and Monarchy simply could not compete.

\(^{57}\)For example, AOK, Qu. Abt., Qu. Nr. 75686
The simple fact that the officers could conceive of nationalism only as a danger is worth attention. In other armies nationalism was a weapon, not a liability. Nationalism could rally the troops to fight for their country, inspiring devotion to the cause or simply steadfastness in defense. This alternative was almost never considered by the Habsburg officer corps. The army could have formed all-Czech units and tried to inspire them to demonstrate the martial skills of the Czech nation or offered them the carrot of increased national rights. Yet, such possibilities were almost never raised, indeed, could not be raised as long as the officers viewed nationalism as a threat rather than an opportunity.

The example provided by two other multi-ethnic armies of the period provides an interesting context. In Russia, the approach toward ethnicity was quite similar to that of the Monarchy. The Russian government exempted most of the central Asian territories from the draft altogether, although the army did accept volunteers from these areas during the war. The army made a concerted effort to distribute the remaining ethnic minorities widely throughout the force as a way to reduce opportunities for disobedience. The result was that perhaps 15-20 percent of each regiment was ethnically non-Russian. While the Russian army did allow a few all-national units, generally in response to the petitions of nationalist politicians, the Russian army largely followed
the divide and rule pattern adopted by the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{58}

The British followed a different pattern in wrestling with the problem of ethnicity in its Indian problem. For most of the nineteenth century, most of the Indian army (with the Bengal Army excepted), recruited from a specific area and accepted all races and castes living within that area. Some ethnically homogeneous regiments did exist, but they were few in number. However, with the growing danger that the army would have to fight Russia in Afghanistan, the army changed course in the 1890's. After this reform, companies were always ethnically pure, and regiments might be. Promotions were made on the basis of class as well, so that no Indian officer would command troops of another class. Largely a result of the rising popularity of the "martial races" idea, the hope was to produce well motivated units without producing a chance for the creation of an "Indian" patriotism. At the same time, though, the British were careful to avoid encouraging inter-caste or ethnic rivalries. When unit competitions were held, for instance, commanders were careful to provide multi-ethnic or multi-caste teams.\textsuperscript{59}

Whether the Habsburg policy was more or less successful than that of the British in India remains open to debate, because the degree to which the high desertion rate and poor


\textsuperscript{59}Stephen P. Cohen, The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation, (Berkeley, 1971), esp. pp. 32-
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formations being fed into the battlefield. A Ministry of War report in January 1915 claimed that the reserve formations were not assigned officers until two days before their departure to the battlefield, leaving no time for the officers to gain the trust of the men or to evaluate their reliability. Complaints about the lack of officers poured in from the front as well.

Moreover, the quality of the officers was also questionable. With the decimation of the regular officer corps, the Monarchy had to accelerate officer training and find new sources of future officers. These primarily came from the ranks of the educated middle-class, that is, from German-Austrians. These new officers often did not speak the language of their men nor did they attempt to win their trust. The result was described by Parsch in 1916

"How are the men treated? I assert that our militarism is a modern slavery. I thought during a war the men and officers would come together, [but] this is not the case. The men are screamed at, insulted, slapped, beaten, tied up. It is so seldom that I hear a good word toward a man. Selfishness is an idol. [Der liebe Egoismus ist der Abgot]. The soldiers must work for the commanders, build shelters. How this hurts me: the officers receive bread, wine, cigarettes, money, and the men must go without. A piece of hard meat, that one often can not eat, soup, that can not be enjoyed. If the officers had to take the place of the men for only a short time, march, carry heavy loads, go hungry, wear themselves out, then they would treat the men completely

That the Czechs and Serbs felt unappreciated and uninspired is hardly a surprise.

In this context, one must question the uniform and unimaginative approach of the AOK to motivation. To be sure, without a quick and victorious end to the war, national discontent was bound to accelerate. Moreover, the AOK was not the only group that accepted nationalism as the only acceptable badge of identity. However, it is also true that the nationalities believed themselves (correctly) distrusted and disliked. The strict discipline and precautionary actions of the AOK simply raised their willingness to think of themselves in national terms. The purely negative policy of the AOK proved, in the end, unsuccessful.

Such a statement is, of course, impossible to prove. It may well be that without the AOK's emphasis on discipline, desertion and other forms of disobedience would have been even higher. It is certainly true, moreover, that the multi-national army held together far longer than many expected in 1914. Nevertheless, in both an absolute and a relative (to other combatants) sense, the policy of discipline and deterrence failed to control desertion or to limit the importance of national sentiment.  

^Höslinger, p. 33.

^The AOK drew up twice-monthly reports detailing losses, including those missing in action or known to have become prisoners. Although such reports are inherently unreliable,
Ironies like this one deserve attention. Addressing the threat of nationalism through a faith in the state (or monarch) seems logical and even, perhaps, the best of a series of bad options. The results here, however, suggest that hidden dangers accompany this solution. It is complicated enough to create a system which instills in officers a faith in the state rather than in his or her ethnic group. It is apparently even more difficult to make such a system effective.

the consistently high number reported missing or taken prisoner is a convincing demonstration of the inability of the AOK to control its soldiers.
"The heart of the people, of the German people above all, is with the events in the Southwest. The war in the Southwest has brought with it the highest moral boost of our state. . . Also the political significance of the goals of the Italian front, Trieste, Pola, yes even Görz, surpass that of territorial gains in the Northeast. This is not just local patriotism. . ." Schneller, 15 August 1915

"One can plan nothing with our troops. No operation in the entire war was this simple, this certain, but even this has been botched [verpatzt]." Conrad, commenting on the failure of the Schwarz-Gelb offensive.

Conrad and Falkenhayn had planned the Gorlice-Tarnow campaign as a strictly limited operation. They hoped simply to deter Italy from entering the war and provide a breathing space for future operations. However, the attack was far more successful than they had expected. With the Russian armies uncoordinated and defenses weak, the German and Habsburg armies, using tactics developed on the western front, easily broke through the Russian front lines. Within days, it was clear that the operation had exceeded its original goals.

1Schneller Tagebuch, 15 August 1915.
2Kundmann Tagebuch, 13 September 1915.
However, military success did not necessarily translate into diplomatic or strategic triumph. Despite the advances in the east, relations with Italy grew increasingly tense. Deterrence having failed, Conrad, Burián, Tisza and the other leaders of the Monarchy had to decide what to do next. Could the Central Powers win what was now a four front war? Could they force Russia out of the war militarily? Should they continue to emphasize the eastern front, or should they use the breathing space provided by the initial success of Gorlice-Tarnow to attack Serbia, Italy, or in the West?

The summer of 1915, then, forced the leaders of the Central Powers to set explicit priorities for the future. For Falkenhayn, convinced that England was Germany’s real enemy and that the Central Powers could only win the war in the west, this was a non-issue. But the choices facing Conrad and the Monarchy were far more difficult, for they cut to the heart of the purpose of the war. The debates and decisions of the summer demonstrate graphically Conrad’s goals for the war and, to some extent, for the peace afterwards. The choices Conrad made, and the options he rejected, reveal clearly the way in which nationalism and his desire to reconstruct the Monarchy shaped his military strategy.

One key military assumption characterized the debates over strategy and policy during the summer of 1915, Conrad
and the other officers at AOK believed, as they had throughout the winter, that the war would be over in the foreseeable future. Neither the success in the east nor the entry of Italy had changed the fundamental constraints of manpower and material that determined this. The corresponding need to take the initiative and "solve" the problems facing the Central Powers shaped the debates over strategy and policy that would continue throughout the summer.

1. Facing up to the Italian Threat

Conrad had finally accepted the idea of concessions to Italy, albeit concessions to be retaken after defeating the other Entente powers. However, it quickly became apparent that the Italian government was unlikely to agree. Consequently, the AOK, the diplomats in Vienna, and the German leaders in Pless (the eastern site of the DOHL) and Berlin found themselves in a situation both promising and dangerous. While the dangers and opportunities were obvious, there was no consensus on the best way to avoid the first and exploit the second. During May and the first part of June, Conrad would consider two radically different responses. While he eventually accepted the continuation of the offensive against Russia, a consistent thread ran through his
calculations. This was his belief that Italy was the most important enemy of the Monarchy. Conrad supported the extension of Gorlice-Tarnow only because he could not win Falkenhayn’s agreement to focus on Italy.

With the bare minimum of forces deployed against Serbia, virtually none facing Rumania, and the offensive against Russia using all available forces in the east, the dangers posed by an Italian attack were indeed significant. In hindsight, the Italian army was painfully unprepared to fight in 1915. But in the spring of 1915, Italy seemed far more imposing—if not quite as threatening as Conrad, who repeatedly predicted that the Italian army would be in Vienna in a space of four or five weeks, believed. The despair in Vienna was quite reasonable.

But the concern over Italy was more than simply military. Rather, the Italian role in the war went to the heart of the national problems of the Monarchy. The Italian desire to “liberate” the Italians living in the Tirol and in Trieste was exactly the kind of irredentist nationalism that frightened the policy makers in Vienna and Budapest so much. On a practical level, this meant that Vienna could not compete with the Entente’s offer of the Tirol in return for Italian participation. More importantly, though, Italian success could reverberate throughout the Monarchy. In the past, the Monarchy could escape from a losing war simply by

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sacrificing a province. In the nationalized environment of 1915, there was no such easy release.

Dealing with Italy became Conrad’s number one priority and remained so through most of the summer. It is important to remember that even this was to a large extent a means toward an end. The end remained stabilizing the Monarchy and giving it a chance to recreate itself as a healthy great power. But the Italian threat necessitated a change in strategy in achieving this end. While Conrad’s military strategy changed several times during the summer, it revolved around ways to allow the Monarchy to focus on Italy.

This priority was the result of both conscious calculation and deep-seated, almost instinctive beliefs. As one reads Conrad’s letters and memoranda from the spring and summer of 1915, one sees a clear thread running through them, but it is one that is implicit, emerging in bits and pieces rather than as a coherent whole. The danger Italy posed was a direct result of its national threat. In part, this simply repeated the reasoning of politicians and diplomats, summarized in the previous paragraph. But Conrad’s fear went deeper. Italy, and the threat of Italian irredentism, was more dangerous than Serbia or Russia precisely because the Tirol and central Austria were, to Conrad, the most important parts of the Monarchy. More regionalism than nationalism (for, after all, the Tirol included Italians as well as
Germans), this largely subconscious evaluation shaped Conrad’s decisions about the scale of the threats facing the Monarchy and the appropriate responses.

To say that this judgement was either rational or irrational is too simplistic. Most likely, Conrad’s understanding of the danger posed by Italian irredentism stemmed from his years stationed near the Italian border. Moreover, the value he placed on the Tirol clearly stems from his love of the mountainous terrain of the area. In this sense, his belief that Italy represented a greater threat than Serbia or Russia was a rational, if impressionistic, evaluation of the value of various parts of the Monarchy. But this kind of reasoned calculation had long before given way to an instinctive dislike and hatred for Italy and Italians (although, consistent with his attitude toward the other minority nationalities, he continued to believe that the Italians in the Monarchy could be salvaged). Conrad’s advice to Bolfras, that the proclamation to be issued in case of war with Italy should portray Rome's action "not as war, rather as a cowardly, vulgar [gemeinen], treacherous raid, or rather robbery. . . ." was not just a propaganda tactic, but accurately reflected his feelings.\(^3\) Conclusions based on observation and experience were inextricably intermingled with emotional, instinctive responses to the perceived

\(^3\)Conrad to Bolfras, 17 May 1915, NL Bolfras B/75, reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 17 May 1915.
treachery and aggression of the dishonorable ally. As a result, a rational desire to fight the most dangerous enemy became intertwined with an emotional urge to turn against an opponent judged dishonorable. His strategic choices would reflect the same mix of reason and emotion.

With Conrad satisfied by Falkenhayn's agreement for an eastern offensive, the German leadership took the initiative in discussing the future. Convinced that Russia would not surrender, Falkenhayn looked for opportunities elsewhere. With Turkey running out of munitions and under pressure in the Dardanelles, and Rumania likely to follow Italy into the war, the position in the Balkans was dangerously weak. Accepting the risk of Italian intervention (although hoping to avoid it) Falkenhayn, Bethmann and the Foreign Office once again proposed a southern offensive.¹

Conrad initially responded warmly to the idea. On 15 April he wrote to Burián, informing him that Falkenhayn had again suggested an offensive against Serbia, that Germany was discussing the idea with Bulgaria, and that Burián might consider following the German example.² The next day, Conrad

wrote to the headquarters of the Fifth Army (facing Serbia), outlining the conditions for a future attack against Serbia, and asking Eugen and Krauss, who had taken over after Potiorek was relieved, to come up with a general draft for an offensive. While concentrating primarily on plans for the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive, Conrad continued to consider an offensive against Serbia over the next two weeks.

This idea, however, was always contingent on success in the East and keeping Italy quiet. Conrad was willing to attack Serbia only as long as Italy was somehow bought off and Russia driven back. Unfortunately, the chances of keeping Italy neutral were increasingly small. Conrad repeatedly urged Burián to make concessions. However, as Schneller's diary entries for the first days of May indicate, there was now little hope that Italy would agree. This led Conrad to call for the mobilization and the preparation of strong points along the Italian frontier, requests granted

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6Op. Nr. 9148, in NL Conrad, 1450:120. Conrad suggested a force of four to five Austro-Hungarian-German divisions attacking over the Danube and a Bulgarian-Turkish force of 100,000 men (six divisions) attacking in the general direction of Nis around the end of May.


9See Schneller Tagebuch, 5 May 1915 ff.
by Franz Joseph on 11 May. Vienna’s fear mere preparations for an Italian attack could lead Italy to conclude that the Monarchy had abandoned negotiations demonstrates clearly the weakness of the Monarchy’s position.

Although he contemplated an attack on Serbia throughout the first weeks of May, by 13 May Conrad clearly doubted the wisdom of such a move. During these same weeks, however, he also considered a more drastic alternative. The danger of a four-front war had already in April led Conrad to float the idea of a separate peace with Russia. He continued to flirt with this in the first days of May, suggesting that, if the offensive against Russia proved successful, the Central Powers should invite Russia to conclude peace so they

10 Schneller, Tagebuch, 11 May 1915.


12 On this date Conrad sent a general summary of the war to Burian, Bolfras and Falkenhayn. Here he maintained explicitly that a southern offensive could only occur if Italy remained neutral, and even then should wait until all of the Habsburg territory occupied by Russia was retaken. As Conrad believed that Italy would shortly enter the war, he was simply throwing Falkenhayn a bone with this proposal. If Italy, on the other hand, joined the Entente, the offensive in the East would have to be stopped at the San-Dniestr line (Conrad on the 12th had identified the crossing of the Dniestr as the main objective of the offensive) and the Serbian offensive canceled. Only if Italy was held at the border (which he believed impossible) and Bulgaria and Greece agreed to join in the assault could the Serbian offensive be undertaken. Op. Abt., Karton 525, Op. Nr. 10176.
could concentrate on Italy. He repeated this suggestion several days later. Finally, late in the month, he briefly suggested the possibility of peace with Serbia.

It is unlikely that Conrad believed a separate peace with either Russia or Serbia was likely. Indeed, Schneller suggested that Conrad had decided as early as 8 May that Russia was unlikely to enter negotiations. But the mere fact that he suggested them is worth comment. Conrad and the army had entered the war convinced that only victory or a glorious defeat would save the Monarchy. Faced with the likelihood of Italian entry and a three-front war (only three

13See Kundmann Tagebuch, 4 May 1915.

14Schneller Tagebuch, 8 May 1915, Conrad to Burián, 18 May 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120.

15His flirtation with peace with Serbia demonstrates how much he feared the consequences of Italian entry, and the degree to which he considered Italy the most important enemy of the Monarchy. On 27 May, the chief of the Evidenzbüro (the Intelligence Bureau in Vienna), Hranilovic, reported to Conrad that he had learned that Serbia would be willing to make peace on the basis of a division of Albania. Conrad wrote Burián on the next day, reporting that Serbia might be willing to work out a peace agreement. This would, he suggested, be quite advantageous militarily to the Central Powers. The letter is copied in Kundmann Tagebuch, 28 May 1915. Conrad again floated the idea in a letter to Bolfras on 31 May, where he also suggested attaching Serbia to the Dual Monarchy along the lines of Bavaria's position in Germany. Conrad to Bolfras, NL Bolfras, B/75. Also copied in Kundmann Tagebuch, 31 May 1915. Conrad followed up on this idea with Burián in a communication of 1 June 1915. NL Conrad, 1450:120. Burián had first broached the idea at a conference with Conrad, Falkenhayn and Bethmann-Hollweg on 25 May. See Kundmann Tagebuch, 25 May 1915.

16Schneller, Tagebuch, 8 May 1915.
fronts for the Monarchy, anyway), Conrad was willing to abandon such an either-or perspective. Undoubtedly, the losses of the fall and winter combined by the end of the first week of May with the momentarily more favorable bargaining position after Gorlice-Tarnow led Conrad toward a more pragmatic and less idealistic position. But such a plan, if it could be made into reality, made a great deal of sense. A separate peace with Russia and a victory over Italy might provide exactly the nationalistic surge Conrad believed necessary to begin resuscitating the Monarchy. Simultaneously, it would satisfy the driving hatred Conrad felt toward his former ally.

It is thus no surprise that Conrad was fixated by the middle of May on operations against Italy. While Falkenhayn continued to call for a southern offensive, Conrad argued busily for a decisive operation against the new Italian army. The geography of the border meant that any Italian assault would be funneled through a few narrow mountain passes. Conrad argued that a strong counterattack could shatter these forces as they emerged divided and disorganized from the mountain crossing. Indeed, Conrad on 19 May 1915 ordered Eugen to lead such an operation, which would be initially comprised of only 5 infantry divisions (!) with three additional divisions arriving by 5 June.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\)Conrad to Eugen, 19 May 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 526, Op. Nr. 10410. Unsurprisingly, Falkenhayn was dubious that such a
With Conrad simply refusing to attack Serbia, Falkenhayn finally withdrew his proposal. Insisting that a counterattack strategy against Italy was unfeasible, he substituted instead the continuation of the attack against Russia. This would require every available man on the eastern front. Yielding to the inevitable, Conrad accepted Falkenhayn's decision and ordered the adoption of a defensive position on the southwest front. Conrad was by no means a small force could destroy a new, 800,000 man army. See his comments during a conference between the two commanders on 17 May in Kundmann Tagebuch, 17 May 1915. Conrad's reply to Falkenhayn's skepticism was simple, "We must do it (win a victory), since otherwise . . . ." Both Falkenhayn and Conrad changed the number of forces supposedly available to move to the Italian front to suit their argument. The most divisions either ever claimed could be shifted to Italy (from both the Russian and Serbian front together) was 27 (although Conrad had earlier pointed out that, because of casualties, each Austro-Hungarian division was really equivalent to a brigade). By 20 May, Falkenhayn was arguing that only three divisions could be withdrawn from the Russian front (as well as five from the Serbian), making a counterattack unrealistic.

Janßen, Der Kanzler und der General, pp. 120-1. Discussions about the future of the attack against Russia had continued parallel to the negotiations about Serbia. Conrad had argued that the Gorlice-Tarnow attack should be continued and even widened, only to be broken off after the inevitable Italian intervention. For example, Kundmann Tagebuch, 13 May 1915.

Falkenhayn to Conrad, 20 May 1915, Telegram Nr. 1365r, in Op. Nr. 1450. Here he says that the departure of forces from the east could not begin until the next goal of the campaign in Galicia was reached, "that is, the final suppression [Niederwerfung] of the Russian offensive potential in Galicia."

confident that the few Habsburg units could hold the Italians for any length of time. But, until then, the Central Powers would attempt to drive Russia back.

This was undoubtedly a wise decision. Falkenhayn was correct to warn that the Italian army was not ready to fight and would advance only slowly even if unopposed. Moreover, an unopposed Italian advance (with Habsburg units waiting well east of the border while the Italians moved through the mountains) may well have triggered Rumanian intervention. The Rumanian Prime Minister Ion Bratianu had already informed the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, that he was willing to bring Rumania into the war in return for Russia's promise to guarantee substantial gains to Rumania. An apparent Italian victory might have tipped the scales in Bratianu's direction. Finally, it was quite unlikely that a Habsburg counterattack, carried out by a relatively small force and handicapped by a shortage of munitions, could have


The battles in the east flared up again beginning around 16-17 May. In them, the Central Powers had mixed success, with German units advancing slowly toward Przemysł while Austro-Hungarian units fought off a momentarily successful Russian offensive. Stone, The Eastern Front, pp. 140-42.

Glenn Torrey, "Rumania and the Belligerents, 1914-1916," in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 1., Nr. 3 (July, 1966), p. 183. Bratianu's demands included Transylvania, the Bukovina to the Prut river, the Banat, and parts of Hungarian counties along the Tisza river.
inflicted a decisive defeat on the Italians. If the counterattack proved unable to force an Italian retreat, Conrad would have given up the best defensive positions between the Italian border and Vienna without gaining anything in return.

Conrad's obsession with Italy, however, is critical. Focused throughout 1914 and the winter of 1915 on Russia, he now downplayed the importance of the eastern front. On the one hand, this was a simple matter of military operations. Without thinking too hard about the logistical difficulties facing the Italian army, Conrad feared that the Italian army threatened Vienna itself. Indeed, Conrad’s memoranda display the same unconcern for terrain, logistics and odds in May as they did in January and February. In this sense, his proposals were again arational and intuitive rather than logical and well-reasoned. But a more basic calculation was also involved. As discussed above, he believed fundamentally that Galicia was less important to the Monarchy than the Monarchy’s oldest possessions in the Tirol and central Austria. He remained hopeful that the offensive against Russia could persuade St. Petersburg to open negotiations. But he wanted to stop the attack in the east as soon as Italy opened hostilities. Only Falkenhayn’s refusal persuaded Conrad to change his plans.

His memoranda reveal another facet of Conrad's approach
to the war. At heart, Conrad believed that the only way to win was to take the offensive. Conrad made his reputation as a tactical specialist and worked hard before the war to make use of the airplane, the machine gun, and better artillery. Despite this, Conrad never really understood the lessons offered by the Western Front. In his mind, the defense was always weak, the offensive always threatening.\(^2^4\) As a result, the only real solution to the problem posed by Italian intervention lay in a counteroffensive. This inability to understand the tactical strength of the defensive would lead to many other similar decisions in the next two years.

2. The Turn to the East

With the war now expanding to a fourth front, Conrad and Falkenhayn were convinced that the balance of power had tipped toward the Entente. This only added to Conrad's conviction that the war could not, and would not, continue for the foreseeable future. He certainly did not believe it would end in a matter of weeks, nor did he during these months predict a final date beyond which the Monarchy could

\(^{24}\)Falkenhayn, in contrast, was well aware of the power of the defense. He argued during the discussions which concluded the debate over the strategy to be followed against Italy that the defensive had proven itself surprisingly effective during the war—in stark contrast to the offensive.
not continue. However, it seems clear that he thought the war could well be lost in a few months.

It was not certain, however, if the war could be won. Conrad remained convinced that the entry of Italy had been a turning point. Only by changing the balance in their favor could the Central Powers ensure victory. At the least, it was necessary to prevent any other country from jumping onto the Entente bandwagon. The offensive in Russia was one means to this end. Continued military success would impress the neutral states with the power of Germany and Austria-Hungary. More importantly, it could perhaps persuaded Russia to leave the war, allowing the Central Powers to concentrate on the fronts which really mattered to Conrad—Serbia and, most importantly, Italy. Although never really formalized as an intentional policy, the series of ad hoc decisions during June and July, all rested on this basic idea.

One way to change the balance of power was to convince the remaining neutrals to join the war. Both the Central Powers and the Entente had worked energetically in Bucharest and Sofia since the beginning of the war to convince the respective leaders to abandon neutrality. As May turned into June, Conrad turned his attention again to questions of diplomacy. With the war at a turning point, he believed the neutrals so important that the outcome of the conflict rested on their actions. Unsurprisingly, he was unwilling to yield
control over such a crucial aspect of grand strategy. Although Conrad claimed that he did not interfere in the tasks of the Foreign Office (frequently referred to as the Ballhausplatz, the street on which its offices were located), these assertions were manifestly untrue. Conrad during the month of June barraged Burian with suggestions. Moreover, suspecting that Burian was not convinced of the need to act quickly, he went behind Burian's back to Bolfras several times, hoping to force Burian into action.25

Conrad was willing to try almost every possible way to change the balance of power. In addition to recommending a negotiated peace with Serbia,26 he hoped to convince Turkey to declare war on Italy.27 He also supported the ongoing efforts to get Bulgaria to join the Central Powers. To this

25Conrad wrote Bolfras on 31 May 1915 "After the diplomats have brought us so auspiciously into this situation, and we have employed all military means to the fullest extent possible, it is now the task of diplomacy to search high and low in order to turn the political situation at least halfway in our favor." The letter continued, "But while the Entente diplomats made their presence felt here, there and everywhere, ours seem to hold to the long-familiar, condescending, unhurried negotiation style of antiquated prewar practice. The situation demands however the quickest, most decisive action, since otherwise our opponent will beat us to it." NL Bolfras, B/75. Conrad, in fact, suspected that Burian worried more about Hungarian interests than those of the Monarchy as a whole. See Conrad to Bolfras, 7 June 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75, reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 7 June 1915.


end, he urged the continuation of efforts to expedite a deal between Turkey and Bulgaria, giving Bulgaria the Maritza border. Bulgaria could then help Turkey defend Constantinople and deter Rumania, allowing Austria-Hungary to concentrate on Italy and Russia. Although he later conceded that the Entente's ability to offer Bulgaria substantial concessions made it difficult to match their offer, the military situation required it.

But Rumanian participation offered even more of a reward than Bulgarian, and Conrad now begged Burián to conclude a deal with Bucharest. With the Italian declaration of war, he wrote on 25 May, an active intervention of Rumania on the side of the Central powers would "presumably" lead to victory, while insuring Rumania's neutrality would make such a victory possible. Conversely, if Rumania joined the


29Conrad to Burián, 25 May 1915, reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 25 May 1915. Here, Conrad suggested that Burián offer Bulgaria Macedonia (including the zone still contested as a result of the Balkan wars), part of Serbia, and a part of the Dobrudscha (lost by Bulgaria during the Balkan wars) and a substantial amount of money as well as a promise to pay Bulgaria's war costs. Such a deal would have made Bulgaria a formidable power in the Balkans, perhaps threatening the long-term interests of the Monarchy in the region. For more on this issue, see below, chapter 6.
Entente, the war was in all probability lost. He repeated his pleas several times in the next days, and simultaneously asked Bolfras to support Conrad's proposals in discussions with Franz Joseph. In all cases, he had the explicit support of Falkenhayn, who was desperate to ensure that Rumania remained neutral.

In spite of all this Burián's efforts were unsuccessful. Indeed, at that very moment Rumania was close to joining the Entente. With the Russian army reeling,

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30 Kundmann Tagebuch, 25 May 1915.
32 Conrad to Bolfras, 31 May 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75, reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 31 May 1915. Conrad to Bolfras, 2 June 1915, Kundmann Tagebuch, 2 June 1915. Bolfras intervened with both Burián and Franz Joseph, but was unsuccessful. He suggested to Conrad that he should speak with Thurn, the representative of the Foreign Ministry at Teschen, for further information about the negotiations with Rumania and about peace with Serbia. Bolfras to Conrad, 5 June 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120.
33 Falkenhayn to Conrad, 2 June 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120. Falkenhayn claimed that he had information that Burián had deliberately missed an opportunity to win Rumanian military cooperation.
34 On 3 June, Burián wrote to Conrad that he was aware of Rumania's importance to the war effort and, implicitly, telling Conrad to stop bothering him. Burián to Conrad, 3 June 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120. The German Foreign Office, anxious to relieve Turkey, suggested that Vienna offer concessions for simple neutrality. Burián, however, refused. See Gerard Silberstein, The Troubled Alliance: Germany-Austrian Relations, 1914-1917, (Lexington, 1970), pp. 212-213.
Sazonov proved more and more willing to accept Bratianu's demands. By 19 June, Bratianu was so certain that Rumania would join the Entente that he directed the Rumanian general Dimitri Iliescu to draw up mobilization plans in preparation of war.35 Unable to offer Rumania what it really wanted, Transylvania, and unwilling to make even minor concessions to the internal Rumanian opposition, Burián had no leverage at all.

Unable to alter the situation through diplomacy, Conrad and Falkenhayn agreed to extend the attack in the East and see what happened. On 4 June, the AOK issued instructions regarding the future conduct of the eastern offensive.36 The objective of the renewed attack, strengthened by fresh German troops, was the city of Lemberg. Operationally, the capture of Lemberg would open up the prospect of a subsequent offensive northward between the Bug and the Vistula.37 More important, though, was the hope that military success would put further diplomatic pressure on Rumania and Serbia. In this way, chinks might be opened in the armor of the Entente, leading to defections and allowing Conrad to move against the "real" enemy, Italy. In any case, Conrad saw no other option. In early June, the Russian attack was still a poor

36NL Conrad, 1450:120.
37ÖULK, Vol. II., pp. 448-450.
second choice.

Others were not so cautious. Eugen and Krauss had already hinted at their desire to launch an offensive against Italy, as had Viktor Dankl, the commander of defensive forces in the Tirol (although only in a limited fashion). More significantly, at virtually the same time as the renewed offensive jumped off on the eastern front, Schneller decided to draw up a proposal for a future offensive against Italy. Schneller suggested that Italy was unlikely to make significant progress during the summer months, certainly not

\[38\] Most likely, they were thinking about an offensive well in the future, although neither Schneller or AOK were confident of this. See Schneller Tagebuch, 28 May 1915 and AOK to SWkommandon, 8 June 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 526, Op. Nr. 11340.

\[39\] Schneller Tagebuch, 4 June 1915.

\[40\] See Op. Abt., Karton 527, Op. Nr. 21200/iii. Referat über künftige Operationen gegen Italien, dated 19 June. See also Hans Jürgen Pantenius, Der Angriffsgedanke gegen Italien bei Conrad von Hötendorf, (Cologne, 1984), pp. 709-17. This is only the first of several such proposals Schneller submitted to Conrad. Whether Schneller was unique in this respect, or if Christophori and other members of the AOK made similar proposals about military matters is unclear (Schneider and Hranilovic both played a major role in formulating AOK policy toward domestic politics, but their actual military contribution appears to have been less significant). It may be that Schneller only appears more active because he left behind a diary which discusses the genesis of these plans. On the other hand, Schneller's proposals exist in the records of the AOK separately from his diary. I have found no similar proposals from R-Gruppe or B-Gruppe. Schneller's diary reveals a man who was what today would be called a "hard-charger," as well as being somewhat of a loner. He frequently noted in his diary "As usual, to bed again at 11 o'clock." With most of the rest of the AOK playing cards or watching movies until the early morning, such a routine did not seem to sit well with his companions.
enough to endanger staging areas for a future Austro-Hungarian offensive. Thus, it was reasonable to begin planning for a future offensive against Italy. As outlined in prewar plans, an attack should be centered in the mountains of the South Tirol. There, a force of 16 divisions would attack southward through the mountains and then breakout across the plains, aiming to reach the Adriatic and cut off the Italian forces still deployed in the east along the Isonzo River. To insure that the Italian forces did not escape during the initial attack, Schneller suggested a smaller assault in the east to pin down them down. The attack, under the general command of the AOK (which would move to this front, perhaps to Klagenfurt) and the immediate control of Eugen (who would command the forces in the Tirol, and provide the necessary clout to persuade the Germans to place their units under Habsburg control), would require a total of 28-32 divisions (7 of which were already stationed along the Isonzo river). It would take, Schneller estimated, 17 days to move the units into position, and two to three weeks for the first wave to break through into the plains south of the mountains. This meant that, to avoid the onset of winter weather in the mountains, the attack should begin, at the latest, in the first week of September. The goal of

His marginal comments demonstrate that Conrad was almost as optimistic about this as Schneller, an astonishingly quick turn-around from his position only 3 weeks before this.
the operation would be to trap as many Italian units as possible, and to drive the remainder behind the Etsch River, where they would be unable to play a significant part in the war.

Conrad's reaction demonstrated his assessment of the strategic situation in the summer of 1915. Instinctively, he wanted to support Schneller's scheme and his marginal comments were uniformly positive. He also agreed by and large with Schneller's calculations of the forces needed and the time that preparing and conducting such an offensive would require. Unfortunately, he was simply unable to spare any more forces from the eastern front to support an offensive strategy in the south. Schneller proposed simply stopping the eastern offensive at the Vistula-San-Dniestr line, which the Central Powers should transform into a fortified border. By this means, according to Schneller, the most significant war aim in the east would be reached.\textsuperscript{42} Conrad, in contrast, perhaps because he could not accept that such a defensive line could hold against Russian assaults, was unwilling to halt the attack. As a result, any attack against Italy required the willing cooperation of Falkenhayn, including several battle-worthy German divisions. It was quite clear to Conrad that Falkenhayn would refuse to send German

\textsuperscript{42}Schneller Tagebuch, 11 June 1915.
divisions to fight against Italy. Trying to change the overall balance of power remained the only option.

Over the next few weeks, Conrad grew increasingly optimistic about events in the East and his aims for the offensive against Russia changed accordingly. Already on 18 June, he suggested to Franz Joseph that the first priority was to force Russia to conclude peace. This represented a clear change from the original, limited (and, indeed, unspecified) aims of the offensive. Italy never left Conrad’s thoughts. But the military success against Russia encouraged Conrad to believe that bringing Russia to the negotiating table was a distinct possibility. The reward, besides reducing the long-term odds against the Monarchy in

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43 This was most obviously true because of Falkenhayn’s proven unwillingness to attack Italy while Russia and Serbia remained in the war. However, Falkenhayn, and the political leaders in Berlin, had shown themselves reluctant to provide even symbolic support for the Habsburg fight against Italy. Berlin had refused to declare war on Italy following Rome’s entrance into the war. Moreover, although Falkenhayn had sent several small units (grouped into a force called the "Alpenkorps) to the Italian border, he refused to allow these forces to initiate combat, or to admit publicly that they were there. This outraged Conrad, Dankl (who almost resigned over the issue) and the other Habsburg leaders. This led to an angry debate during the first two weeks of June, peaking on 11 and 12 June in an exchange between Conrad and Falkenhayn (see Op. Abt., Karton 26, Op. Nrs. 11168/I-VII 11773, 11228, Karton 525, Op. Nr. 11207, and Conrad to Falkenhayn, 11 June 1915, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 11 June 1915, and Falkenhayn’s reply, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 12 June 1915.

44 Conrad’s account of this meeting is in the Kundmann Tagebuch, 19 June 1915. According to Conrad’s account, Franz Joseph was skeptical that Russia would desert its allies, but Conrad assured him that the attempt had to be made nevertheless.
the war, was that peace in the east would allow Conrad to
turn against Italy.

Conrad was not so unrealistic as to believe that the
Monarchy alone could force Russia to admit defeat. He
continued to urge Burián to reach an agreement with Rumania,
telling the Foreign Minister that Rumanian assistance could
force Russia to leave the war.\(^4^5\) In addition, Conrad accepted
the need to limit the Monarchy’s demands, especially those
regarding the future of Russian Poland. As will be discussed
in chapter six, an extensive debate regarding the future of
Poland had begun shortly after war broke out. Conrad would
have preferred to annex Russian Poland to the Monarchy.\(^4^6\) But
breaking the military ring around the Monarchy was so
important that hopes of annexing the lands of Russian Poland
would simply have to be sacrificed.\(^4^7\) Still, the prospects

\(^4^5\)Whether this was true or not is an open question. Conrad
to Burián, 14 June 1915, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 14 June 1915.
He repeated these calls in the next few days. Conrad
understood that Rumanian participation would have to be
purchased, but believed that the price was going down with
every advance in the east. Conrad to Burián, 19 June 1915,
the need to get concessions from Germany in return for any
concessions offered to Rumania by the Monarchy. Also,
11890.

\(^4^6\)Conrad was not the only one. A major in the Polish Legion
in June suggested that a manifesto declaring the annexing of
Russian-Poland would ignite a revolution there supporting the
Central Powers. While Conrad was instinctively sympathetic
to this idea, he in the end rejected it.

\(^4^7\)Conrad to Bolfras, 14 June 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75, also
reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 14 June 1915.
of the Central Powers in June seemed brighter than they had been for a long time.

A proposal made several weeks later give a concrete example of Conrad's hopes.48 Conrad wrote Burián that, although the military situation at the present was favorable, the cost in both material and manpower had been enormous. In particular, the pool of manpower would be exhausted by the spring of 1916. Consequently, it was time for the Monarchy to think seriously about its war aims and how to achieve them in combination with its German allies. The goals of the war were clear: the defeat of Italy and the establishment of a border which would offer security against this treacherous (tückisch) enemy, then the solution of the south-Slav question through the unification of all of the south-Slavs within the Monarchy, and further, the inclusion of Poland within the sphere of influence of the Monarchy. This would improve the military position of the Monarchy in relation to Russia, which was unlikely to become friendly to the Monarchy, and in fact would much rather ally with Germany than with Austria-Hungary.


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However, Conrad acknowledged that the Monarchy could not get everything it wanted. If possible, it must reach an agreement with Russia, even if this meant abandoning hopes of territorial annexations or an indemnity. Preferably, such a peace would leave the Monarchy with a free hand against Serbia, but if Russia insisted on the survival of that state, the Monarchy would have to postpone the settling of accounts with the enemy in the south or integrate Serbia into the Monarchy (how this would work out over Russian opposition is not clear). Even more ambitiously, Conrad called for the restoration of the old Dreikaiserbund, stabilizing the eastern border of the Monarchy and allowing it to transfer forces to the other theaters of the war.49

Falkenhayn had also hoped to force Russia into a separate peace. On 3 June, he had suggested to Bethmann that the Central Powers should offer Russia an armistice (supposedly more acceptable to Nicholas than an outright separate peace), combined with a guarantee of an outlet to the Adriatic for Serbia.50 However, it quickly became clear to Falkenhayn that Moscow was not willing to betray its...

49This idea had come up several times before. As an incentive, Conrad was willing to offer Russia unrestricted through the Dardanelles as an incentive. Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 12750.

50Janßen, p. 125. Janßen comments about this proposal "The suggestion was so little thought through, so illusionary, that it can only be explained as a product of that wishful thinking which had characterized the German conduct of war since the battle of the Marne."
allies. Accordingly, he abandoned his proposal for the moment, and concentrated on improving the military situation of the Central Powers. With the offensive, launched on 12 June, close to reaching its goal of recapturing Lemberg, Falkenhayn toyed with transferring part of his force back to the west, where an English offensive was threatening. However, urged on by Hans von Seeckt and Wilhelm Groener, influential members of the German General Staff Corps, he decided on the 20th to allow the offensive to continue, while reserving any decision as to its future course for later.\textsuperscript{51}

While Conrad supported Falkenhayn's extension of the attack, Falkenhayn's hesitation contained the seeds of future conflict. Simply put, the long-term aims each held for the Russian offensive diverged widely. While Conrad hoped to force Russia into peace negotiations, Falkenhayn had largely given this up. In the short term, Conrad and Falkenhayn agreed to continue the general northern thrust of the German and Habsburg armies between the San and the Bug rivers.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51}See Das Reichsarchiv, \textit{Der Weltkrieg, 1914-1918}, Vol. VIII., (Berlin, 1925-1931), pp. 241-9. Falkenhayn continued to believe that the only way to win the war lay in an offensive in the west. However, his political position within the German state was weak, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff were calling for a massive attack in the northern section of the eastern front to drive Russia out of the war. With the Foreign Office simultaneously arguing for an attack against Serbia, Falkenhayn had no support for his cherished western focus, and felt compelled to continue the attack in the east, albeit on a strictly temporary basis. Jianßen, pp. 120-48.

\textsuperscript{52}Conrad to Falkenhayn, 22 June 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120 and Kundmann Tagebuch, 28 June 1915. Das Reichsarchiv, \textit{Der
However, the two never agreed on a medium- or long-term strategy. Buoyed by the capture of Lemberg,\textsuperscript{53} and ignoring the beginning of the first major Italian attack,\textsuperscript{54} Conrad continued to prod Falkenhayn to authorize an even more extensive operation over the next weeks, aiming to encircle and destroy the greater part of the Russian army in Poland. In the end, however, German units had won most of the gains against Russia and Falkenhayn had control over the remaining resources of the Central Powers. With the military position of the Monarchy drastically improved, Conrad was unable to utilize his weakness as a negotiating weapon. It was largely the bitterness felt by Conrad over Falkenhayn's somewhat tactless wielding of these advantages which would lead him, several weeks later, to launch his own eastern offensive, with disastrous results.

Conrad held to his position through the first half of July despite a number of efforts to persuade him to abandon the Eastern offensive. Krauss and Eugen hinted again about

\textsuperscript{53}On 22 June. The recapture of the capital of Galicia was the occasion for celebration throughout the Monarchy. Conrad was so impressed that he and his staff left Teschen on 23 July (one of only three times Conrad went to the front during the war) to visit the city.

\textsuperscript{54}Later called the First Battle of the Isonzo, this began on 23 June and lasted into the first week of July, with little result. See ÖULK, Vol. II., pp. 733-745.
their desire to launch an offensive on the Italian front.\textsuperscript{55}

About the same time, Schneller began to draft another proposal to attack Italy.\textsuperscript{56} Suggesting that Germany was unlikely to agree to a common offensive against Italy, and that a separate peace with Russia was unlikely, Schneller predicted that Germany and Austria-Hungary would turn away from the Russian front and attempt to win the war separately. The Monarchy should then turn against Italy, even if an attack could not be launched until the winter.\textsuperscript{57}

More interestingly, Tisza and Burián also tried to

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Although Krauss denied this. Krauss to Conrad, 7 July 1915, in NL Conrad, 1450:120.}

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Op. Abt., Karton 527, Op. Nr. 21200/IV, "Ergänzung zum Referat über künftige Operationen gegen Italien." 11 July 1915. See also Pantenius, pp. 718-723. The relationship between Eugen and Krauss and the AOK, especially Schneller and Conrad, was often tense. Eugen and Krauss formed, after Potiorek's dismissal, the only power base which could challenge Conrad's control over the army. Krauss repeatedly sent memoranda directly to the MKSM and to the Ministry of War without the knowledge or permission of Conrad. Schneller, in addition, continually suspected Krauss and Eugen of plotting to act independently, and especially to seize command of the war effort by launching an unauthorized offensive against Italy, which would force the direction of reinforcements to that front. Schneller raged against the arrogance and presumption of Krauss in the privacy of his diary.}

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Schneller suggested that the balance of forces was not likely to improve over the winter, especially since the flow of replacements to front-line units was due to stop after May of 1916. His second proposal resembled the first in most respects, although he abandoned the secondary attack in the east. It is worth noting that Krauss, Schneller and Conrad all agreed on the fundamental importance of the Italian front. Where they differed was on the best way to find the forces to attack the Italians.}
influence military strategy. Burián's efforts to force Rumania into the war, strongly supported by Conrad (although Conrad continued to reject a formal ultimatum), had failed miserably. Tisza, though, determined to preserve Magyar control over Transylvania, was unwilling to make significant concessions to Bucharest and suggested a more aggressive approach. In a memoranda forwarded to Conrad by Burián on 10 July, Tisza argued that the Central Powers should mass a

\[58\text{Conrad to Burián, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 12364. Conrad on 21 June had told Bolfras that it was necessary to get Rumania into the war, since it was evident that a separate peace with Russia was impossible. Conrad to Bolfras, 21 June 1915, Kundmann Tagebuch, 21 June 1915 and Conrad to Burián, 21 June 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 11784. Shortly after meeting with Bethmann and Jagow on 25 June, Burián had authorized the Habsburg ambassador to Bucharest, Ottokar Czernin, to offer Rumania the Bukowina and Bessarabia, in addition to German financial promises, in return for entry, an offer which would be valid for thirty days. Bratianu, however, was noncommittal and it was quickly apparent to Burián that Rumania was not to be won in this way. See Silberstein, The Troubled Alliance, pp. 215-16.}

\[59\text{Tisza had accepted the need for some concessions, but was unwilling to offer anything beyond some land in the Bukowina (and, refused explicitly to offer Siebenburgen). See Tisza to Czernin, 12 June 1915, Tisza, Briefe, Vol. I., pp. 247-8. Conrad, in contrast, was willing to offer much more.}

\[60\text{Burián to Conrad, 10 July 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, No Op. Nr. but in context of Op. Nr. 12750. Tisza forwarded to Conrad a separate copy on 11 July, see NL Conrad, 1450:120. In his cover letter to this note, Tisza stressed the danger of losing the Dardanelles and the need to clarify the situation in the Balkans. "The main question remains: do we want to save the Dardanelles and control the Balkans, or are we ready to abandon them both? If the first is the case, we must (utilize) the only means leading to this end: military pressure on Rumania." It is worth noting that while, during this period, the German representatives in Constantinople were submitting reports to Jagow stressing the dire lack of munitions (so much so that Janßen speculates that they may}
sizeable force (200-300,000 men) on the Rumanian border and demand that Rumania guarantee its benevolent neutrality. Tisza argued that there was a 90% chance that Bucharest would give in, clearing up the situation and opening supply lines to Turkey (and thus preventing the fall of the Dardanelles).

If Bucharest refused to accept Vienna's demands, the army should launch a swift attack against Rumania, defeating that country within two or three months. Either way, Tisza maintained, his proposal would clear up the murky situation in the Balkans for good. Burián chimed in on 11 July with a similar plan, proposing the massing of Habsburg forces on the border with Rumania followed by a note asking bluntly if Rumania intended to follow benevolent neutrality. Although Burián stressed that he did not advocate invading Rumania, he certainly intended to threaten the use of force.

Conrad, however, remained intent on the eastern offensive as a way to drive Russia out of the war, or at least to eliminate it as a significant threat for the near future. Accordingly, he replied to Burián and Tisza that nothing could be spared either to intimidate or attack Rumania, and claimed that success in Russia would lead

have deliberately exaggerated the shortage to put pressure on Falkenhayn, p. 132.), and Pallavicini, the Habsburg ambassador to Turkey also stressed this, Pomiankowski, the military attaché, was saying exactly the opposite to Conrad. See, for instance, Pomiankowski to Conrad, 19 July 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120.

Rumania to swing toward the Central Powers of its own accord.\textsuperscript{62}

In doing so, he essentially rejected Tisza's desire to let Magyar interests determine military strategy. On the surface, the decision to attack Russia was based solely on military criteria. As such, it was a wise choice. Without the German support that the offensive against Rumania would enjoy in 1916, the chances for a quick and painless success were low, and the risks to other fronts high. Yet, it is likely that Conrad would have rejected even an offensive with a high probability of success. In the end, Conrad was much more concerned about Italy than he ever would be about Rumania, and his military strategy reflected his evaluation of the relative importance of different parts of the Monarchy. Tisza's suggestion never really had a chance.

Still, Conrad remained convinced that the chance of defeating Russia justified postponing an attack against Italy. Thus, on 18 July, he informed Krauss that the military and political situation made an attack on Italy in the near future impossible.\textsuperscript{63} Instead, Krauss was to be as

\textsuperscript{62} His memo to Burián contains an interesting section discussing his ideas about the war aims of the Monarchy, see below, chapter 6.

careful as possible with men and munitions, since Conrad did intend to attack in the Southwest eventually, and the forces in Russia would be worn down from the fighting in the summer.

It is worth noting that, despite Conrad’s attention to the Russian front, he, Schneller and Krauss basically agreed about the best long-term strategy. All three saw Italy as the greatest threat to the Monarchy. The debate revolved around the best way to free up forces against Italy, not against the claim of the Italian front to the top priority. In contrast, Burián and Tisza, evaluating the threats posed by Italian and Rumanian irredentism differently, called for a qualitative change in Conrad’s approach. The proposed action against Rumania, while relatively small in scope, revealed a great gulf between the two strategic visions. The common element, however, remained the need to protect the Monarchy against nationalism.

\(^{64}\) The final draft of this memo was significantly different from the first draft, completed on 11 July (included with Op. Nr. 12600). Conrad originally indicated that an offensive in the winter was a possibility, and outlined a proposed offensive from the Tirol. The finished memo simply reminded Krauss that an operation at some point in the future was likely. What happened to persuade Conrad to tone down his references to a winter offensive is unknown. In addition, this memo is significant in its clear understanding that the war would continue into the winter and spring of 1916, the first explicit reference to this.
3. Trying to Regain Autonomy

Control of military strategy, however, was soon to slip out of Conrad's hands. Conrad had exploited his position as the weaker ally in the winter. But, this strategy would only be successful if Germany, and particularly Falkenhayn, believed that the Monarchy was near defeat. The news that Bulgaria on 23 July had agreed to send a representative to Pless to negotiate a military convention changed the equation. With Falkenhayn willing to go his own way, Conrad would be forced to accept an offensive against Serbia. He would also, however, insist that the operation in the east be continued on a more limited basis to retake the last Russian-occupied sections of East Galicia and to gain breathing room in front of Lemberg. This operation, the Schwarz-Gelb offensive, would be a disastrous failure, casting a shadow on the military capabilities of the Habsburg army.

Already on 27 July, Falkenhayn outlined to Conrad the terms of a possible military convention with Bulgaria and an

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offensive against Serbia. Falkenhayn was not entirely sure that the southern offensive was really the best strategy, but, having demanded the participation of the Bulgarians for months, there was no way he could tell the Foreign Office that the offensive was off. Conrad the next day replied that the thrust of the proposal was fine, but that he disagreed with the details. Adding insult to injury, on 27 July Conrad transferred a division from the Russian to the Italian front without asking Falkenhayn first, prompting an angry inquiry from the German.

In fact, Conrad disliked the idea. Instead of attacking Serbia, he continued to hope instead to finish the campaign against Russia quickly and then turn against Italy. Hoping to use Falkenhayn's request as leverage, Conrad asked Burián on 6 August if the Ballhausplatz had followed up on the

69 See the record of a conversation with Burián on 26 July and the next day, where Kundmann records Conrad as saying that "For me Italy stands in the foreground." However Conrad does seem to admit here that it would not be possible to defeat Italy or bring the war to an end by autumn. Kundmann Tagebuch, 26 and 27 July 1915. Metzgar told Schneller as late as 7 August that the course of operations against Italy remained uncertain, but an offensive was unlikely unless the diplomatic situation developed favorably. Schneller Tagebuch, 6 and 7 August 1915.
proposals he had made at the end of July. If neither a separate peace nor Rumanian intervention could be arranged, the Central Powers could no longer take the initiative, since without Rumanian assistance it would be impossible to strip enough forces from the Russian front to lead an offensive against the next most dangerous opponent (Italy). Instead, they would have to take the defensive. Given that manpower resources would run out in the summer of 1916, this would surely lead to defeat. The only strategic option left open would be an attack against Serbia with the cooperation of Bulgaria and Germany.

Although Burián's reply to Conrad's note of 6 August could not be found in the archives, it is clear that Conrad's hopes for a Rumanian intervention had been dashed. Falkenhayn had already pressed Conrad to stop the eastern offensive and turn his attention to other fronts, preferably Serbia. Ominously, Falkenhayn's descriptions of the

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71 Burián, afraid of a possible Italian offensive, was no longer sure that an offensive against Serbia was in the best interest of the Monarchy. Silberstein, The Troubled Alliance, p. 169. However, Conrad's lack of resistance to Falkenhayn's pleading for an attack against Serbia implies that Burián had told him that there was no possibility of Rumanian intervention in the near future.

72 Kundmann Tagebuch, 31 July 1915, Falkenhayn to Conrad, Nr. 5019 r., in Op. Abt., Karton 490, Op. Nr. 13720. The front was to be divided between Austria-Hungary and Germany in the same ratio as the borders of these countries with Russia (thus, 9:7 Germany to Austria). The close cooperation
negotiations with Sofia soon detailed Bulgarian demands for German command over any offensive against Serbia. This prompted Kundmann to write angrily that such an operation would signify the abdication of Austria-Hungary as a great power in the Balkans. However, as Kundmann acknowledged, unless Burián could persuade Rumania to intervene, Austria-Hungary had no choice but to accept.

In early August, Conrad reluctantly agreed to halt the general offensive in the east. From that point on, discussions between Falkenhayn and Conrad continued on two separate tracks. The first was the drafting of a military convention with Bulgaria and planning an attack against Serbia. Conrad seems to have accepted this as inevitable. Only the command question remained contested. Convinced that ceding command to a German would destroy any remnant of the Monarchy's prestige, Conrad demanded the appointment of an

between the German and Austro-Hungarian units, begun during the Carpathian offensive and intensified during the summer, would be ended and higher formations redistributed in a way which would concentrate German and Habsburg units in their own groups. ÖULK, Vol. II., p. 667.

It is unclear whether this is Kundmann or if Kundmann simply repeated Conrad's words. Either way, it is clear that the two shared this attitude toward German command. Kundmann, 5 August 1915.

Conrad to Falkenhayn, 1 August 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 490, Op. Nr. 13720. Conrad's mother died (not completely unexpectedly) later that night. The two were quite close, and it seems likely that this put him under even more stress than was usual. He certainly complained of stomach pains over the next day.
Austrian. Only reluctantly did he accede to the Bulgarian demand for Mackensen and, even then, command would technically flow first through the AOK. On the same day, the long negotiations between the three military leaders (Bulgaria was represented by Gantschew, who was given authority to sign a military convention) finally produced a draft acceptable to all.

Yet, seemingly at the end of long and intricate negotiations, the Bulgarians increased their demands. In addition to a military convention, they also wanted a formal alliance, spelling out their gains in case of additional military complications and requiring the Central Powers to subsidize the Bulgarian war effort. Both Burián and Conrad immediately objected but, pressed by Germany, had little choice but to accept a broader agreement. The final agreement, signed 6 September, created a five-year alliance. Each agreed to come to the aid of the others in the case of an unprovoked attack. Bulgaria would receive, in return for participating in the war against Serbia, a line running roughly north-south from the confluence of the Morava and Danube rivers to Prizren, where it veered west to meet the

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75Kundmann Tagebuch, 22 August 1915. The final decision was reached during discussions between the two on 22 August, and confirmed in a communication from Falkenhayn the next day. See Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nrs. 13740 (5 August 1915), 13830, and 13990/I (23 August 1915).

borders of Bulgaria had wanted in the San Stefano treaty of 1878. In addition, Austria-Hungary and Germany agreed to provide Bulgaria with substantial financial support. The same day the three signed a military convention committing Bulgaria to attack Serbia within 35 days (the deadline falling five days after the planned start of the German-Austro-Hungarian attack). Germany and Austria-Hungary each committed six divisions, Bulgaria four. The operation, as agreed upon in August, would be commanded by Mackensen under the nominal oversight of the AOK.

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78 In fact, Conrad and Burián did not see eye to eye on the alliance treaty as it eventually developed. In a debate which presaged that over war aims which would flare up at the end of the year, Conrad and Burián argued over the implications of the alliance treaty in early September. Conrad to Burián, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 14810/I (2 September), Karton 520, Op. Nr. 14901 (4 September), Karton 520, Op. Nr. 14940 (4 September) and Karton 35, Op. Nr. 14989 (10 September), and Burián's replies. Both agreed that the Germans were much too willing to satisfy Bulgaria and that Bulgaria (as it had asked in its original draft) should not be compensated for mere neutrality. They diverged, however, on the extent of territorial compensation Bulgaria should receive from Serbia. Conrad argued that these concessions, combined with the possibility of a Bulgarian union with Serbia (thus giving Bulgaria outlets to the sea on three sides) would make Bulgaria a clear rival for power in the Balkans. Its next goal, he suggested, would be Constantinople, cutting Austria-Hungary off from the Middle East. Secondly, he objected that the parts of Serbia which remained after Bulgaria received its share must be annexed by the Monarchy in order to end the Serbian agitation which had nationalized the South-Slavs. Making a claim that would become much more vivid in the next few months, Conrad insisted that only this would solve the long-term problems of the Monarchy, and any hesitation must be the result of Magyar chauvinism (Op. Abt., Karton 35, Op. Nr. 14989. Two different
While he accepted Falkenhayn's demands for an attack on Serbia, Conrad remained far more interested in events on the eastern front. As in June and July, Conrad remained convinced that beating Russia was the most important priority. Yet, questions of pride and prestige drove the decision to launch an exclusively Austro-Hungarian offensive in the east, made in the middle of August, more than simple operational considerations. In the end, Conrad continued to attack in the east as an attempt to prove that the Habsburg Monarchy could fight successfully on its own.

Relations between Conrad and the Germans had soured almost immediately. A mere month after the outbreak of the war, Conrad believed that the Germans had betrayed their prewar promises and left their ally to perish alone in the east. He never forgave Germany for this alleged treason. There were more substantial dangers, however. While the Monarchy needed Germany's support, its leaders were acutely aware of the dangers of becoming simply a German satellite. Conrad, Burián and others (accurately) saw German ambitions

communications from Conrad are labeled with the number 14989. The second, discussed below, is dated as 21 Sept, and marked "Do not send!"). Burián argued that a large Bulgaria, tied to the Monarchy through treaty obligations and owing its success to the Central Powers, would become the Monarchy's most reliable ally in the Balkans. In any case, internal politics made it impossible to annex Serbia.

79For example, see the letter from Conrad to "Hochverehrter Freund," 17 November 1914, NL Conrad, 1450:147.
everywhere.\footnote{See, for example, Pomiankowski's warning about German intentions in Turkey, in a letter to Conrad dated 4 February 1915, in NL Conrad, 1450:155.} Nor were Germany's representatives particularly tactful in discussing their hopes for the future. Already in 1914 the Bavarian representative to the AOK had talked with Conrad about the advantages Bavaria had won from its association with Germany, and how the Monarchy could win similar gains.\footnote{Untitled (and unfinished) Denkschrift by Conrad about the Monarchy's relationship to Germany. There is no date on this, but it is clearly after July 1916. NL Conrad, 1450:143. The Bavarian pointed specifically to the unreliability of the Czech troops, and how a closer relationship with Germany could reduce these problems.} Adding injury to insult, the Pan-German factions within the empire were hard at work trying to exploit the Monarchy's military difficulties. That Conrad perceived the behavior of the German government and army as arrogant and tactless simply exacerbated the difficulties.

Conrad had tried to use the propaganda and the press to counteract the military failures of the Monarchy. Early in the war, Conrad had suggested the writing of a popular history of the war as a way to bring the military accomplishments of the Monarchy to the attention of its citizens.\footnote{Op. Abt., Karton 5, Op. Nr. 3223. This was also designed to rally support behind military reform, see below, chapter 6. See also Op. Abt., Karton 7, Op. Nr. 4677 of 25 November 1914 and Op. Abt., Karton 7, Op. Nr. 4679 of the same date.) The idea was apparently dropped when it became obvious that the war would continue into 1915.} He watched the newspapers carefully as well to
ensure they reported Habsburg accomplishments promptly and fully. Along the same lines, he cooperated fully with the Kriegspressequartier when it suggested a biography of Conrad designed to counteract the growing Hindenburg-cult in Germany.83

Fundamentally, however, it was only military success, achieved unaided by the Germans, which would counteract the growing influence of Germany. Frustrated by Falkenhayn's continual cautions and the apparent loss of control over their destiny represented by the Serbian campaign,84 Conrad and the AOK, urged on by the commander of the Second Army, General Böhm-Ermolli, began planning a limited operation aimed at carving out a breathing space in front of Lemberg. Conrad informed Falkenhayn of the plan, designed to drive the

83Gustav von Hubka, "Licht ohne Schatten: Erwägungen zu den Biographie des Feldmarschalls Grafen Conrad von Hötzendorf." in NL Hubka, B/161:23, p. 6. The biography which emerged from this project was that written by Pastor, Conrad von Hötzendorf. Published in early 1916 and adorned with a handsome image of Conrad on the front cover, the title page describes Pastor as an imperial advisor, professor of history at the University of Innsbruck, and Director of the Austrian Historical Institute in Rome. Just below this, fancy lettering explains that a part of the profits from the book will be donated to the war effort. I am not aware of how many copies Pastor’s book sold. My copy of this book has the signature of an Elsa Zettel on the front cover. Although wildly impressionistic, this at least suggests that some women purchased the book, or received it as a gift.

84Schneller, who saw Conrad immediately after his return from talks with Falkenhayn in Pless on 10 August, wrote that Conrad "railed violently about the Germans, especially about their lack of tact and about their bragging." Schneller Tagebuch, 10 August 1915.
Russians out of East Galicia, on 14 August, and secured his agreement four days later.\textsuperscript{65}

Although Conrad paid lip service to supporting Ludendorff's offensive toward Wilna, the operational goals of this attack were relatively small. The resurrection of confidence in the Habsburg army and state, was the real aim. Only a military victory unaided by German troops or leaders could accomplish this. Accordingly, the efforts to sort-out the front-line units continued throughout early August. The operation, known as the Schwarz-Gelb (Black-Yellow, the state colors of the Monarchy) offensive, was to be conducted primarily by Habsburg troops. This led Falkenhayn to doubt the chances of success,\textsuperscript{86} but offered the opportunity for Austria-Hungary to regain some of the prestige it had lost during the first year of the war. To this end, there was even discussion of moving AOK toward the southeast, emphasizing physically the Habsburg character of this operation.\textsuperscript{87}

Unfortunately for the Monarchy and Conrad, the offensive quickly ran into trouble. With only a minimal numerical


\textsuperscript{87}Schneller, Tagebuch, 15 August 1915.
superiority over the Russian forces,®® Conrad hoped to encircle the Russian armies south of the Pripyet marshes. Jumping off on 26 August, the Habsburg forces advanced slowly, not taking Luck until end of the month. Progress toward Rowno was slow, and, unable to encircle the hard-fighting Russian forces, the mood in AOK began to worsen.®® With a Russian counterattack threatening in early September, Friedrich (undoubtedly following a suggestion from AOK) instructed his army commanders to order their subordinates not to issue any orders to retreat.®® The AOK, unhappy with the performance of the commanders on the spot, also began to interfere with day-to-day conduct of operations.

What began as a minor setback quickly grew into a festering sore. The next days saw a confused series of attacks by the Habsburg forces, as AOK attempted to force the

®®In divisions, the Austro-Hungarian forces included 38 1/2 infantry divisions and 8 1/2 cavalry divisions facing only 29 and 14 Russian infantry and cavalry divisions. However, gaping holes still existed in many of the Habsburg units, despite the recent arrival of the thirteenth Marschbatallion. In numerical terms, the Habsburg superiority was much less significant. ÖULK, Vol. III., p. 52.

®®Kundmann wrote on 3 September "I have no idea why, but when we fight without the Germans, nothing goes forward. The Russians are colossally tough." Kundmann, Tagebuch, 3 September 1915. Schneller echoed this sentiment, "This whole operation is one of the most shamefully-led that we have tried. An army lets itself be stopped by two brigades and muddles around until a much stronger opponent arrives." Schneller, Tagebuch, 3 September 1915. Schneller, of course, never supported the operation in the first place.

way to Rowno open. While the AOK pushed the offensive in Eastern Galicia, the Russian counterattack in the south grew increasingly powerful. In response Christophori, the leader of the R(ussia)-Group, asked for permission to keep Austro-Hungarian forces which had been scheduled to participate in the attack against Serbia and even to transfer forces from the Southwest front. With reports of Russian reinforcements arriving in Rowno and Conrad calling for a redoubled attack in Galicia, Falkenhayn echoed this suggestion on 10 September, saying that he would fill in the gaps in the offensive against Serbia with German troops. Conrad quickly took advantage of this to order the VI Corps to reinforce the threatened southern flank of the Habsburg army.

Pressed both by Falkenhayn and by Habsburg officers at the front and within the AOK, Conrad finally, and reluctantly, accepted the failure of the operation and ordered a halt to all operations, with the sole exception of the far left flank. However, the Russians refused to let

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91 Jerábek, Die Brusilowoffensiv, p. 87.
94 ÖULK, Vol. III., pp. 119-120.
95 Kundmann Tagebuch, 12 September 1915.
him off the hook. With the Russian counterattack continuing, Conrad and Falkenhayn scrambled to try and repair the damage. Conrad, by now in a thoroughly bad mood, on 17 September ordered the 4. Army to withdraw and pleaded with Falkenhayn for reinforcements. Falkenhayn quickly agreed to Conrad's request. Although Falkenhayn hoped to limit operations in the east, General Linsingen (the commander of the German forces sent to the aid of the Habsburgs) advised a limited offensive in Galicia to recover some of the lost gains. This operation, begun shortly after Linsingen's arrival (on 20 September), proved modestly successful. The AOK and

Schneller remarked on 13 September "Conrad makes the impression, that the events touch him deeply (ihm. . .sehr nahe gehen). He is actually an unfortunate man." Schneller, Tagebuch, 13 September 1915. Conrad even let himself go in front of members of the Foreign Ministry. Andrian, visiting the AOK, wrote to Burián on 15 September, that he felt it necessary to mention "How openly and how passionately Baron Conrad. . . gives expression to his irritation toward the highest German leaders and especially toward General Falkenhayn. . . . Conrad uses bitter words to describe the pettiness, arrogance and mala fides of the leading German military officers and about the shamelessness, with which they utilize our lesser resources and our consequent dependence on them for blackmail." Quoted in Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, p. 293.

Falkenhayn asked that these forces be under the joint command of AOK and DOHL. Conrad rejected this, however, and threatened to postpone or cancel the dispatch of forces to the Serbian front. Falkenhayn eventually conceded, although the two agreed to consult with each other regarding operations on the Eastern Front. Exchange of telegrams between Falkenhayn and Conrad on 17 and 18 September, Op. Abt., Karton 490, Op. Nrs. 15466/I, 15466/II, and 15466/III. Notably, Ludendorff, Conrad's ally against Falkenhayn for much of the year, lobbied against Conrad's request. OULK, Vol. III., p. 142.
Linsingen continued this attack for a week and a half before the increasing exhaustion of the attacking troops and the arrival of Russian reinforcements brought it to a halt. Unwilling to concede that the operation was over, Conrad called for a continuation of the attack after integrating the next batch of reinforcements into the attacking army. However, with Falkenhayn objecting at every turn and the situation at the front confused, Conrad delayed a decision for the offensive, and eventually conceded that the operation had failed.

The Schwarz-Gelb offensive, ostensibly a limited military operation but in actuality designed to restore the faith of the army and the population in the Austro-Hungarian army, turned into a disaster. Although little territory was gained or lost, casualties during the six-week long operation were severe. Losses (including the German South


100Jérbek, basing his account largely on the official history (which, as he demonstrates, underplays the offensive and its consequences significantly), lists a number of reasons why the offensive failed, including bad weather, poor morale among both men and officers, the exhaustion of the troops, many of whom had been fighting constantly for weeks, and operational mistakes both in AOK and at lower levels of command. Die Brusilowoffensive, pp. 103-105.
Army) amounted to 230,886 men, among them 5,386 officers. Significantly, 109,280 (about 47 percent) of these were listed as missing, of which Russian reports claimed about 100,000 were prisoners of war. This was not only out of line with casualties in the German army, but also seemed a significant increase for the Habsburg army itself.

Most troubling, to the commanders at the front as well as to AOK, was the perceived poor performance of the nationalities. The operation was supposed to demonstrate

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102 See Jerábek, Die Brusilowoffensiv, p. 198 for a comparison of Habsburg and German officer losses, based on figures in Reichsarchiv, Der Weltkrieg, Vol IX, p. 373.

103 This is difficult to prove statistically. A report, dated 30 April, drawn up by the Bureau of War Statistics and submitted to the Operations Department, summarizing losses for all combatant powers from the beginning of the war until middle of January 1915, lists the proportion of missing/captured to total casualties as 46.4 percent. (Op. Abt., Karton 24, Op. Nr. 9833). However, the increasingly astonished marginal notes on the biweekly reports from the Administrative Command imply that the AOK was becoming more and more concerned about the sinking morale of its forces, as measured by the willingness of the soldiers and officers to go over to the enemy.

104 The successes of the summer of 1915 seem, in actuality, to have calmed the situation in Bohemia. The reports of the War Supervisory Office (Kriegsüberwachungsamt), among others responsible for surveying public opinion, indicated that national discontent in Bohemia died down during the summer. For example, the report dated 5 September, claimed "In
the fighting strength of the Habsburg army. Instead, it seemed to show that it was incapable of fighting (at least on the Russian front) effectively without German assistance. Conrad's bid for independence had failed, and relations between him and Falkenhayn would become increasingly bitter.\textsuperscript{105}

The defeat also increased the burden placed upon Burián and the Foreign Ministry. On the one hand, the failure wiped out much of the diplomatic capital gained during the summer in Bucharest and Sofia. Just as importantly, the defeat weakened the position of the Monarchy vis-a-vis Germany.

Burián wrote Conrad during the first half of October

\begin{quote}
I would like to limit myself to stressing that my political conversation with the German statesmen, which in view of the elevated German self-esteem is at best not easy, is made still more difficult by
\end{quote}

conclusion, I can state with satisfaction that recently in the citizenry of Prague a decided turn for the better is to note—at least in terms of their testimony of loyalty against the enemy." Op. Abt., Karton 35, Op. Nr. 15124. The sporadic reports regarding the mood in the Ersatz battalions from Bohemia were also generally (although not universally) positive as well. See, for example, Op. Nr. 17083 (21 October 1915). Finally, the commander of the IX Corps argued in a report to AOK on 30 October that the performance of Czech units (like that of any unit) was dependent primarily on the quality of their officers (and not, implicitly, on nationalistic sentiment). Conrad was evidently displeased with this report, and requested that it be rewritten. Op. Abt., Karton 35, Op. Nr. 15873).

\textsuperscript{105}Schneller noted bitterly "The entire AOK now gives the impression of uneventfulness: this is probably because leadership has actually slipped away from us, aside from the Italian theater; decisions are now dictated by the Germans." Schneller, Tagebuch, 12 October 1915.
incidents like those mentioned above [the failure of several units to hold their position]. Justified wishes and demands [of ours] can be turned away with a certain appearance of justification with the argument that the common task has been damaged by the national unreliability of the Austro-Hungarian troops.\textsuperscript{106}

With German desires to formalize military and economic ties between the allies, the setbacks in the east decreased Vienna's maneuvering room even further.

Finally, the defeats in the east diminished Conrad's reputation and power within the Monarchy as well. Disappointment, reaching as far as Franz Joseph, manifested itself both in Vienna and Budapest. Tisza used the opportunity to demand the relief of the commander of the Habsburg Third Army (deployed against Serbia), General Tersztyánsky. This infuriated Conrad, who believed it was crucial to make clear that a Minister-President could not made decisions about military commanders.\textsuperscript{107} Nevertheless, he was unable to persuade Franz Joseph to retain Tersztyánsky. More importantly, Franz Joseph became increasingly impatient with Conrad's reluctance to provide him with complete information about military events.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106}Cited in Jerábek, \textit{Die Brusilowoffensiv}, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{107}At the same time, Franz Joseph demanded information about the replacement of Kövess, again infringing, in Conrad's opinion, on Conrad's rights as Chief of the General Staff. See Kundmann, Tagebuch, 19 September 1915.

\textsuperscript{108}Bolfras communicated the emperor's displeasure to Conrad on 12 September (Bolfras to Conrad, NL Conrad 1450/153).
Conrad, aided by the success in the Balkans in October, was able to quell these questions for the moment. But the failure in the east weakened his political position in ways that would become increasingly important in the spring and summer of 1916.

4. Addressing the Economic Problems of the Monarchy

By the Fall of 1915, the Central Powers had survived what seemed their most pressing threat, the entry of Italy, and won a series of operational victories on the eastern front. They stood on the verge of their most impressive success to date, the defeat of Serbia. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand would finally be avenged in October and November of 1915. Compared to this, the failure of the Habsburg army in front of Luck might seem a temporary setback.

However, underneath the surface, problems remained, and the way in which Conrad tried to solve, or simply ignored,
these problems reflects his basic priorities and his understanding of the Monarchy and the military. The primary challenge facing the Monarchy remained unchanged: its inability to mobilize the manpower, the financial and economic resources, and the popular support necessary to match the Entente. It was increasingly clear that the manpower reserves of the Monarchy were running low. As early as June, the Ministerium fur Landesverteidigung informed Conrad that the manpower reserves in Cisleithania would dry up in the early spring of 1916. By September, a commission called to consider the manpower question had decided that, without a third sweep through all the classes (with the resulting economic dislocation and morale problems), there were only enough replacements to last through April (for Cisleithania) or May (for Hungary).

The manpower situation was especially serious in the officer corps. The lack of experienced officers was

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109 Conrad, in response, suggested amending the law to allow 17 year-olds to be called up, as well as conducting another sweep through the classes which had already been called up once or twice (looking, in other words, for people who had been missed earlier, or who worked in jobs which were considered essential at he time, but were now eligible for military service). Op. Abt., Karton 27, Op. Nr. 11995.

110 Op. Abt., Karton 36, Op. Nr. 15802. Already, it was necessary to send large numbers of men on leave during the crucial harvest months because there were not enough men available at home to bring the crops in.

111 In July, the Ministerium fur Landesverteidigung informed the AOK that, beginning later that month, the monthly replacement battalion would consist of 125 men and 1 or 2
especially dangerous for the multi-ethnic Habsburg army. While the army had required officers before the war to learn the language of the regiment in which they served, officers who enlisted and were trained during the war (ethnically German for the most part, at least in Cisleithania, since they came largely from the educated middle-class) did not have the time or, often, the motivation to learn the language of the men under their command. Tactical effectiveness and morale suffered accordingly.

The AOK and the Ministry of War tried repeatedly to find the numbers necessary to fill the holes in the Habsburg army. However, all sides understood that these measures could only go so far. Thus, Conrad on 19 October, in a postmortem on the Schwarz-Gelb offensive, concluded that the most pressing concern for the army was the need to save manpower. To this end, even though Conrad explicitly blamed poor operational and tactical decisions by the officers at officers—although the officer shortage was severe enough that even this target might prove unattainable. Op. Abt., Karton 28, Op. Nr. 12493.

112 By August, the Ministry of War had accepted that the drafting of men 43-50 years of age was unavoidable. Another solution was to find able-bodied men in non-combatant jobs and replace them with men who had been wounded, or were too old to actually fight at the front. The summer of 1915 saw the first of a series of drives to identify and transfer such people. Understandably, the lower-level commanders were reluctant to cooperate, and both the AOK and the Ministry of War felt it necessary to remind them of their duty to the army as a whole. See for example, Op. Abt., Karton 33, Op. Nr. 14298 (August 1915)
the front, and their poor relationship with their men, for the defeat, his analysis encouraged lower-level commanders to tell the AOK when they thought an order was unwise. It also urged them again to be as sparing of manpower as possible in non-combatant jobs. Most importantly, however, Conrad urged his subordinates to replace human power with machine power whenever possible, most importantly through increased use of artillery.  

This was certainly a logical response to the shortage of manpower (and, in many ways, was similar to Falkenhayn's hope of destroying the French Army by attrition at Verdun). However, for Austria-Hungary, it was also unrealistic, for the Monarchy was just as short of material resources as it was of human. Throughout the summer campaign, the Austro-Hungarian units had been hampered by a shortage of munitions and equipment, leading to angry exchanges between Conrad and the political leadership and to competition between the

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114 As early as May, AOK was instructing the army commanders that the intensive operations of the previous weeks had made the munitions shortages much more serious. In response, the use of artillery was to be limited as much as possible. "All of the artillery has to be silent when an attack is not intended, when the enemy is not attacking, and no other especially promising target appears." Op. Abt., Karton 25, Op. Nr. 10514. This was echoed at various times in the succeeding months. See, for example, Op. Abt., Karton 30, Op. Nr 13012 (19 July 1915). This order also emphasizes the unreliability of the artillery, especially the 15 cm howitzer M14, and the lack of repairmen.
army and the navy for scarce powder and ammunition supplies. The situation was not helped by the fact that the army was simultaneously attempting to restructure and reequip the artillery forces of the army completely, increasing the burden on industrial production.\(^{115}\)

As so often, Conrad and the AOK believed the army most suited to solving the problem of equipment shortages. The most obvious was through the use of captured Russian weapons. This, however, put a corresponding pressure on munitions production, which had to diversify to produce new types of ammunition. More importantly, Conrad and the AOK attempted to intervene in the civilian economy to centralize control of munitions production.\(^{116}\) This led to an extended argument between Conrad and Krobatin during August and September of 1915 over the extent to which the AOK would control munitions production and resource allocation.\(^{117}\) The AOK also set out

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\(^{116}\)Governmental responsibility for this, at the level of the Monarchy, rested in the hands of a department (7. Abt and, more specifically, section 7/p) within the Ministry of War. Within each of the two sections of the Monarchy, various laws existed regulating the extent of the control the governments had over the economy. See Jozsef Galantai, Hungary in the First World War, (Budapest, 1989), p. 72-76, for a detailed discussion of this in the case of Hungary.

\(^{117}\)See Op. Abt., Karton 29, Op. Nr. 12725 (August 22 1915), and the succeeding correspondence. The results of this contest were essentially a draw. Conrad had already received a significant amount of say into munitions production earlier
to produce a series of reports analyzing the various components of the munitions-production process and proposing ways in which it could be improved.\textsuperscript{118}

Finally, throughout the summer a battle raged between Conrad and the political leaders of the Monarchy about the production of new weapons. Conrad, as discussed throughout, saw the war as an opportunity to restructure the army and prepare for a future war. Primarily as part of this effort, Conrad began a complete reconstruction of the artillery arm shortly after the war broke out. This effort, and parallel attempts to increase munitions supplies, immediately ran into the opposition of Tisza and, to a lesser degree, of Stürgkh. As usual, convinced that all those opposed to him were motivated simply by nationalist self-interest rather than an interest for the Monarchy as a whole, Conrad fought this opposition tenaciously.

Tisza and Stürgkh violently opposed the idea of ordering weapons that could not be produced within a few months and in the war, when it was agreed the 7. Abt. would be subordinated to the Inspektor der Technische Artillerie (a position within the AOK), much to the displeasure of the leader of the 7. Abt, Erzherzog Leopold, who had earlier nicknamed Conrad the "wooing [balzenden] Chief of the General Staff" for his practice of spending hours each day writing love letters to Gina. Hubka, \textit{Licht ohne Schatten}, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{118}See, for example, the report of Franz Höfer, Stellvertreter des Generalstabschefs, about saltpeter production, Op. Abt., Karton 36, Op. Nr. 15778, 21 September 1915. Höfer argued that Germany was trying hard to put the Monarchy into a situation of dependence on Germany in regard to munitions production.
were thus intended for use by the post-war army. They were primarily upset by Conrad's attempt to infringe on their domestic political authority. However, unwilling to pitch their arguments in this way, both, but especially Tisza, based his argument on the economic and financial weakness of the Monarchy. The present war had already cost a tremendous amount, and this price could only rise. Any expenditures aimed at the postwar army would have to wait until the economic conditions of the postwar Monarchy were known.119

This argument did not end in September of 1915. However, Tisza during that month made a revealing observation. In a letter to Krobatin,120 Tisza wrote that Conrad's proposed production plan, clearly designed with the postwar army in mind, was unacceptable, since "The borders drawn by the exhaustion of human resources are known to Your Excellency and the continuation of the war into the year 1917 must probably be seen as excluded." He pointed as well to the "most extremely alarming condition of our economic and

119 For example, Tisza to Burián (a copy of this went to Conrad), date unknown, but probably not long before 26 May, the date of Conrad's reply), in Op. Abt., Karton 25, Op. Nr. 10609. This correspondence continued throughout the summer, and was the subject of at least one GMR meeting. Komjathy, Protokolle, p. 233 ff.

financial strengths." Despite the military successes of the previous months, the basic calculus of the war had not changed. Both the political and military leaders of the Monarchy believed that the war would end within (roughly) a year. Any planning had to start from this basic constraint.

5. Conclusion

Implicit in Conrad's strategic plans and assumptions during the summer of 1915 was a changed attitude regarding the purpose and goals of the war. Conrad entered the war determined either to win a substantial victory or to perish in a blaze of glory. Defeating Serbia and Russia would regain, at least temporarily, the trust of the Monarchy's population and purchase a grace period in which the Monarchy could reform itself substantially. Without this reconstruction, the Monarchy would disintegrate slowly and painfully. Death with honor was easily preferable to this clumsy and dishonorable slide into disaster.

Conrad's decision to seek a separate peace as a prerequisite to concentrating against Italy demonstrated the appearance of a third option. Confronted with the reality of the war, and eyeing his long-hated Italian rival, Conrad
backed away from his black-and-white alternatives. As early as December of 1914, in a conversation with Czernin, he had backed away from his previous extremism and acknowledged that a compromise peace might be necessary. However, Conrad did not really accept this until evidence of the Italian willingness to enter the war became overwhelming. Then, as outlined earlier, he suggested several different peace proposals designed to lower the odds against the Central Powers.

The calculations behind these proposals demonstrate Conrad’s strategic priorities and choices from May until mid-August. The most important long-term priority was the need to solve the national problems of the Monarchy. The odds against the Monarchy, though, forced Conrad to choose the most threatening among the competing nationalisms of the Monarchy. This was an easy, and, by 1915, almost instinctive decision. Italy, Conrad believed, was clearly the most dangerous opponent, for the Italian minority lived in the spiritual heart of the Monarchy. Accordingly, Conrad strove

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121 Conrad told Czernin on 26 December 1914, "If we maintain the status quo and pay no war costs, we will have to be content, because it must be kept in mind, that at the beginning of the war we acted only against Serbia, in order to humble it, and, as a further goal, to integrate it into the Monarchy. But from the moment when Russia with its allies entered the war, therefore kindled the Great War, our war aim became a limited one, and could peak only in the maintenance of the Monarchy. One will have to be happy, if one emerges (from the war) with a black eye." Conrad, AMD, Vol. V., p. 911.
throughout the summer to find a way to attack Italy. His earlier concentration on Russia did not entirely disappear, but it was now a means to an end—the end of freeing up forces to fight Italy. As a result, Conrad accepted that military requirements might force Austria-Hungary to accept a separate Serbian state. It is important to remember, though, that Conrad viewed this as a strictly temporary solution, to be remedied as soon as the international situation allowed. Indeed, what he wanted was more an armistice than a peace agreement. But then, for a committed social-Darwinist, all peace agreements were, in the end, armistices.

What is striking about Conrad’s strategic calculus is the extent to which it derived from national concerns. The postwar financial and economic condition of the Monarchy, so crucial to Tisza, never played an important role in Conrad’s thinking. Although he did consider the possibility of centralizing the economy after the war, he never really understood or considered the economic and especially financial weakness of the Monarchy. In grand strategic terms this was clearly a mistake; the fact that the Habsburg Monarchy, outside of Bohemia and Vienna, lagged significantly behind Britain, France and Germany in the Industrial Revolution was a primary cause of many of the Monarchy’s problems.\textsuperscript{122} Conrad, though, was so obsessed by the problems

\textsuperscript{122}David Good’s argument in favor of reevaluating the Monarchy’s industrial and economic progress before the war
of nationalism and the immediate necessities of military policy that he missed the importance of the economy.

His hope of forcing Russia to conclude a separate peace was not particularly realistic. As Falkenhayn realized, the chances that Nicholas would abandon his allies at this point in the war were slim. Even less likely were more grandiose proposals for the creation of a Balkan coalition. However, just as interesting is what does not appear in these proposals. While a concern for public opinion was a constant in German discussions of war aims, it was entirely absent in Conrad's proposals. Two basic factors explain this lack. The first was that Austria-Hungary, despite moving toward democracy in the years immediately before the war, was still quite centralist and monarchist. Especially for an army officer, who had spent his entire life in the service not of the state, but of the monarch, and instinctively distrusted parliaments and democracy, concerns about public opinion were unlikely to occur.

Just as or more important, however, was the simple fact

\[\text{is convincing. But in military terms, it is relative progress which counts, and the Monarchy was clearly behind the Entente powers. David Good, The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1950-1914, (Los Angelos, 1984), especially chapter 8.}\]

\[\text{123At one point, for instance, Conrad proposed the construction of a Balkan block with Rumania, Bulgaria and Serbia. This would allow the Monarchy to dominate the Balkans and look economically and politically both east and west. Conrad to Bolfras, 7 July 1915, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 7 June 1915.}\]

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that the dynamics of public opinion in the Monarchy were different than in other states. Everywhere, people initially rallied to the flag to support the war effort. In most countries, calls to support the nation against its enemies sustained this emotion. Only slowly did support for the war erode in Britain, France and Germany. However, pleas for the people to support their nation was a strategy of only limited use to the Monarchy. Indeed, such calls were more likely to backfire than they were to increase popular support. Admittedly, the propaganda effort of the Monarchy was poorly organized, funded and executed.\textsuperscript{124} Moreover, indifference did not turn to active opposition until after the death of Franz Joseph. However, propaganda in the Monarchy could never have been as effective as in Britain or France. In this case, of course, this was an advantage. With so few emotionally invested in the war, the diplomats could function as if it was 1815, not 1915. But in the long-run, it would be a crippling disadvantage for the Monarchy.

On the other hand, the creation and maintenance of public respect and support for the army and the Monarchy (as opposed to parties or individual politicians) was critical. Without this support, the war could not be won. More importantly, unless both politicians and public respected the

\textsuperscript{124}Hildegund Schmolzer, Die Propaganda des Kriegspressequartiers im Ersten Weltkrieg, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1965.
army, Conrad’s chances of pushing through political reform were vanishingly small. And the ultimate reason for the war, still, was to stabilize the Monarchy. How Conrad hoped to do this will is the subject of the next chapter.
Overall, this war shows clearly what has to happen in the future, namely, brutal relentlessness against all elements hostile to the Monarchy, unrestrained persecution of the timid, by-the-book bureaucrats, insuring justice for all loyal elements, ending the elevation of one nation as ruler over the others. Therefore, exactly the opposite of that which has happened in the past.

Conrad von Hötzendörf to Arthur Bolfras, 17 January 1915

The Autumn offensive against Serbia found the quick success that the army had expected at the beginning of the war. With a 2:1 numerical advantage, and facing Serbian defenders who were divided geographically, the attackers captured Belgrade by 11 September 1915. By the time Bulgaria entered the war on 14 October, the Serbian forces were on the run. The Serbs tried frantically to put together some kind of defensive line while they waited for help from the Entente troops landing at Salonika under the French general Maurice Sarrail. However, although the attempt to encircle and destroy the Serb army failed, by the end of October Putnik

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1NL Conrad, 1450:153, Conrad to Bolfras, 17 January 1915
ordered a general retreat.²

The victory over Serbia, erasing for the moment the memory of the Schwartz-Gelb catastrophe, raised the confidence of the AOK to the highest levels of the war. This would have operational and diplomatic consequences which will be discussed in the next chapter. It also, however, persuaded Conrad that victory was possible, or even likely. After a summer in which Conrad had been prepared to compromise his prewar demands of victory or destruction, he now returned to the goals which had driven him to demand war. The Monarchy, if it was to survive as a great power (which was the only way Conrad could conceive of it), had to be renewed—both militarily and politically.

The policies suggested by Conrad and his advisors were driven by his army education and experience. Trained to be supranational, and with little practical experience in or knowledge of the world outside of the army, they saw the army both as a model and a tool to renew the greater society around them. The Social-Darwinism which flourished in the officer corps reinforced the importance of the army. Together, these impulses produced a consistent and characteristic set of political demands. As such, they are indicative of ways in which the experience of nationalism can impact one's thoughts and behaviors.

²For details of the campaign, see ÖULK, Vol. III., pp. 202-337.
1. Planning for military reform

The officer corp's ideas for reform can be separated into three separate threads. One is the way in which the army tried to reform the state to solve the nationality problems of the Monarchy. This went hand in hand with the second, the belief in the necessity to end by whatever means necessary any outside encouragement of centripetal nationalism. Just as important, however, and addressed here first, is the matter of military reform. No matter how stable the Monarchy became, without a more powerful army it would remain vulnerable to external enemies. The idea of the army as the bastion of the Monarchy is the best picture for this. Even if political reforms strengthened the willingness of the people to support the Monarchy, a numerically and materially weak army would still leave the Monarchy vulnerable to attack, with its enemies waiting eagerly just outside the fortress walls. Without reform, the Monarchy would lose its Great Power status. And, for Conrad and most officers, the idea of the Monarchy was inextricably tied up with its status as a Great Power. Existence as a small power was, to Conrad, synonymous with disappearance.

Conrad began pressing for military reform as soon as he was appointed Chief of the General Staff in 1906. The army,

\(^3\)The use of the word "Conrad" here points to a difficulty
he believed, was simply too small, too poorly trained, and too poorly equipped. Thus, he proposed a number of different plans to rectify the situation. All included a sizeable increase in the budget and manpower of the army. Just as important, however, was a series of measures designed to increase the army’s loyalty. Thus, Conrad proposed a series of measures to punish anti-military agitation, and suggested the introduction of military training and education into the school system. Opposed vehemently by the Hungarian government, and facing an uncertain (at best) financial outlook, these plans were quickly rejected. Only a few haphazard (and highly unofficial, to judge the legal maneuvering surrounding the purchase of new heavy-caliber artillery generously) measures to buttress the strength of

posed both by the mechanics of writing and the nature of the problem being discussed. As discussed in chapter two, one of the hazards of writing history is of obscuring the actual nature of the decision-making process by using a commander’s name as a convenient shorthand for more complex and extensive institutions and procedures. The alternative, however, is both cumbersome and inadequate. The awkwardness of pointing several times a page to a large number of men and positions is obvious. Just as important, however, especially in this case, is the fact that the exact chain of decisions and cloud of behaviors are nearly always obscure. Because of the pattern of behavior at the AOK, and because most of the documentary record of the Intelligence Department (the head of which, Hranilovic, played an important role in discussions about internal reform) was destroyed after the war, it is quite difficult to uncover individual responsibility for various decisions. Moreover, as stressed above, Conrad played a role out of proportion to his position, even granting the personal nature of command during this period. My makeshift solution is to refer primarily to Conrad, while pointing periodically to the fact that other officers at the AOK, especially Hranilovic and Josef Schneider, contributed to these debates as well.
the army were implemented.

Conrad's worst fears went unrealized in the fall of 1914. The nightmares of mass refusal to serve and widespread resistance in Bohemia and elsewhere had proven false. Instead, the Czechs had proven themselves by and large willing to fight for the Monarchy, although it was uncertain how long this would continue. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the Habsburg army performed significantly worse than that of the other states. All armies (with the possible exception of the British) went to war with tactics that led to massive casualties without parallel success. The real tactical and manpower problems for the Habsburg army came as a consequence of the destruction of the officer corps, as a result of morale problems as the war dragged on, and because the Monarchy was simply not prepared, economically or politically, to wage a conflict on this scale.

Still, without the advantage of hindsight, the army's performance in the fall of 1914 proved disappointing at best and frightening at worst. Already in September, Bolfras had complained to Conrad about the performance of the upper-level commanders. More important, however, was the performance of

\footnote{Reports from the War Supervisory Office generally stressed the favorable response of the Czechs to the war, but warned that their loyalty seemed to be fading in the face of military defeat. For example, Op. Abt., Karton 8, Op. Nr. 5124 (December 1914).}

\footnote{Bolfras to Conrad, 18 October 1914, NL Conrad, 1450:474.}
lower-level officers, stale from years of peacetime service characterized more by gambling and womanizing than by realistic training. The officers' failings were exacerbated by the lack of a solid core of non-commissioned officers. Criticized even by its own commanders, the reaction of German observers to the army's performance dripped with scorn. Adolf Wild von Hohenborn, the Prussian Minister of War, commented in November of 1914 "They (the Austro-Hungarian army) are no better than a militia! This is the mistake no one recognized, what a miserable army it is." Many in Berlin and at the German High Command shared this opinion.

It is not a surprise, then, that Conrad and the AOK began to formulate plans for a massive army reform program. In the meantime, Conrad tried to lay the groundwork for reform by proposing a public-relations campaign to persuade the public of its necessity. Finished during the winter, a

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6And by other Austrians. Redlich recorded in his diary entry for 6 January a conversation with Heinold, the Minister of the Interior for Cisleithania, who said, in Redlich's words, "die Offiziere seien vielfach unintelligent, im Kriegsministerium herrsche die vollste Departementsanarchie; Krobatin sei ganz unfähig für alles, was nicht Artillerie ist. . . . Wenn der Krieg lange dauert, werde eine Armeerevolte gegen den Generalstab ausbrechen." Redlich, Schicksaljahre Österreich, Vol. 2., p. 5.

7Quoted in Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, p. 168.

8AOK, Op. Abt., Carton 5, Op. Nr. 3223, 16 October 1914. This memo was sent to Krobatin (who undoubtedly favored the idea). From the marginal notes, several people reviewed it at various states of completion. It is possible that Conrad
working draft of the plan was dispatched to the MKSM, the Common Ministry of War, and the Ministers of the Landwehr and Hónved on 3 May 1915. This draft would serve as the basis for discussions for military reform for the rest of the war.

Its proposals were entirely consistent with Conrad's prewar suggestions. While he reluctantly accepted the need to retain the Landwehr and the Hónved, the proposal suggested the creation of a reserve army, to be organized in divisional units, which could be employed as first-line forces at the beginning of a future war. To raise the manpower of the army, the plan raised the number of men actually inducted into the army each year to 310,000. Believing that the army's budgetary problems before the war were the result of an overly powerful Parliament, this body would no longer be allowed to set the number of men inducted each year, but simply to determine the size of the army as a whole.

The plan outlined measures to increase the quality of the army as well. The length of service for recruits would

had made such proposals before, but I have found no evidence of any. The campaign would include newspaper and magazine articles, pamphlets, and, most interestingly, a "Memoire" about the war—a partly educational, but mostly propagandistic ("lehrhaftes") official history which would prepare the ground for the demands of the army.

9AOK, Op. Abt., Carton 22, Op. Nr. 9427. Although this plan is widely known, it has received little specific attention. It is the subject of Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck's article "Heeresorganisation vor 50 Jahren." in Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, Sonderheft I (1965), pp. 18-27, but the article provides very little analysis of the context in which the plan was produced.
remain constant, but their obligation after this initial service would be increased both in frequency and in length to make large exercises and significant training possible. It would end the practice of allowing reserve officers to spend only one year in active service, instead forcing them to spend a year with the troops (in return offering them a promotion to captain). It also proposed raising the number and quality of active officers. As a way to do this, it suggested an equalization of the rank structure in the military and governmental bureaucracy, with a corresponding pay increase for officers. Finally, the number of non-commissioned officers and low-ranking officers had to be increased as well. To this end, the plan proposed creating a number of bureaucratic positions reserved for retired army personnel. This would guarantee veterans a job, and lend the position of NCO a certain social status that would attract capable recruits.

Finally, Conrad argued that the civilian context in which the military functioned could not be ignored. States composed primarily of a single nationality could dispense with measures to ensure the loyalty of the population. The Habsburg Monarchy could not. Because the state could not trust the bureaucracy and judiciary to crack down on nationalist and anti-military agitation, new laws had to be written to force them to do so. Moreover, in order to ensure physically qualified recruits and, crucially, to instill a
feeling of allegiance to the dynasty, the school system had to be removed from the jurisdiction of the provinces and placed under the authority of the Common government.

Interestingly, the army here was envisioned as both the object and the agent of reform. In a straightforward manner, the provisions in the "Conrad Plan" (as Allmayer-Beck termed this proposal) would strengthen the ability of the army to protect the Monarchy--both against external enemies and internal discontent. But the political education before and during military service, combined with the new laws prohibiting anti-military agitation and propaganda, would also serve to convince the population of the advantages the Monarchy provided them. The practical experience of serving in an anational force would then cement the faith of the soldiers in the Monarchy rather than in individual ethnic groups. In this way, the army would participate in the broader moral and political reconstruction of the Monarchy discussed below.

The Conrad Plan formed the basis of discussions that continued throughout the war. Planning continued within the Ministry of War and the AOK on ways to implement these proposals even after it became apparent that victory was unlikely at best. However, Conrad was not content merely to plan for the future. Instead, he viewed the war as an opportunity to upgrade the material condition of the army through the back door, so to speak.
This formed a second broad thrust of army reform, which sparked conflict with the civilian governments both in Vienna and Budapest. The reequipping of the army began early in the war, and focused primarily on redressing the Monarchy's inferiority in artillery. By 1915, the draft of a complete reorganization and a significant upgrade of the artillery forces was complete. Just before completion, the AOK scrapped this project for a second, more ambitious plan.\textsuperscript{10}

Although one may question the effects of continual reorganization on the military effectiveness of the army, the technical advantages of the new equipment were clear. The reforms, however, had a broader significance, for they were not just intended to help the Monarchy win the war in which it was then engaged. Instead, they were intended to strengthen the army for the foreseeable future. To Conrad, a conceptual distinction between war and peace made little sense. While the physical and material expression of conflict might change, the struggle for existence never ended, and planning for "peace" was irrelevant at best and dangerous at worst.

This quickly led to a conflict between the army and Tisza and Stürgkh. Both, but especially Tisza, rejected the

\textsuperscript{10}Since Conrad's successor, General Arthur Arz von Straußenburg, decided in 1917 to restructure the army completely, the organization and equipment of the artillery remained in flux throughout the war. Fritz Franek, "Probleme der Organisation im ersten Kriegsjahre," in Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen, (1930), pp. 983-986, OULK, Vol. VII., pp. 50-3.
huge orders for materials and munition being placed by the army. Already on 10 February, the Joint Council of Ministers (the "cabinet" of the Monarchy) had decided to limit purchases of material to those needed during the war. This sparked an argument which began as early as May, and continued sporadically throughout the war. In part, Tisza and Stürgkh were simply trying to protect their power over financial policy from Conrad's encroachments. Tisza, however, stressed a different, more interesting argument as well. He claimed that the war was straining the financial resources of the Monarchy to the breaking point—or possibly beyond. No money could be spent on projects not devoted exclusively to winning the war. What good would it do to survive the war only to collapse under the burden of an overwhelming debt load? In the same way, Tisza later resisted the creation of more officer training schools because this implied the acceptance by the government of increased postwar funding for the army. Such permission could not be granted until after the war, when the state

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11 Conrad first rejected this principle in a note to Krobatin of 21 May. Here he claimed that the money spent up to this point in the war should actually be considered "mobiliation credits," since the government had left the army so poorly prepared. Moreover, he argued that a state could not fight a war "on the cheap." His main point, however, was to stress the importance of preparing the army for the postwar period. Op. Abt., Karton 24, Op. Nr. 9924/I.

could carefully examine its resource base.\textsuperscript{13}

Here Conrad's failure to understand the economic and financial character of modern war and modern states made conflict between him and Tisza inevitable. Disintegrative nationalism, anti-military socialism, and a divisive liberalism were to him the causes of the Monarchy's problems, not the failure of Austria-Hungary to go through the Industrial Revolution. Accordingly, Conrad demanded that the state ignore future financial demands in favor of increasing military spending. Military power was the first prerequisite of the state. Without it, the state, no matter how well funded, would collapse.

The flip side to this argument, however, was that the war offered the army a great opportunity. With the added power and status the conflict accorded the army, the changes it desired could (hopefully) be pushed through against the political resistance of both the nationalities and the government bureaucrats. Such an opening could not be missed.\textsuperscript{14} This same vision underlay the efforts by Conrad and the AOK to push through political changes which would


\textsuperscript{14}According to the official historians (who were, after all, attempting to whitewash the army's role in the war), the same consideration drove Arz's later attempt to restructure the army. Knowing that funding after the war would be scarce, he hoped to push through military reform while the army could demand and receive as much funding as it. ÖULK, Vol. VII, p. 53.
renew the Monarchy as a whole.

2. Winning the faith of the nationalities

Before the war, Conrad had concentrated on prospects and proposals for military reform. With little faith in the political leadership, and focused on the military dangers posed by Italy and Serbia, his policy proposals centered around raising the strength and reliability of the army. Even his proposals for political and constitutional change (most aimed at Hungary) were designed primarily to assure the army sufficient funding and support. As the war continued, however, Conrad began to demand significant changes in the way the Monarchy was organized and governed. These demands, sporadic at first, became repeated and insistent following the fall of Serbia. They focused on the need to reconstruct the Monarchy and solve the problems posed by centrifugal nationalism. Unless the long-term problems of the Monarchy were solved, the war would have been both a waste of human life (a significant concern to Conrad, as one of his sons had died during the opening campaigns—a blow from which he never really recovered) and a wasted opportunity. Although the list of problems from which the Monarchy suffered was extensive, the basic difficulty was the tendency of people to reject their identity and role as members of the Monarchy—leading to fractious democracy and, even worse, to
centrifugal nationalism.

Historians usually describe Conrad as an uneasy combination of reactionary and German-nationalist ideas.\textsuperscript{15} These portraits are generally informed by Conrad's postwar writings, which are thoroughly German-nationalist in character. However, the proposals Conrad made during the war (as opposed to his discussion of them after the war) were surprisingly subtle. He will never qualify as a hero of the Czech (or other) national movements. Yet, his suggestions deserve more attention than they often receive.

Conrad's period as Chief of Staff was characterized by a huge number of policy proposals. A micromanager by nature, the sheer range of Conrad's ideas meant that some were inherently contradictory. But, while one must be careful in discussing the nature of Conrad's political ideas, a basic theme soon becomes apparent. The fundamental idea behind Conrad's proposals was that the Dual Monarchy had to instill in its citizens a feeling of "patriotism" that was "above" their "nationalism" if the Empire was to survive. The choice of words here is significant. He did not say that people need to identify with the Empire "instead of" with their nationality, but \textit{in addition to}.\textsuperscript{16} The only way to


\textsuperscript{16}This wording is significant in another way as well. Conrad personally put a great deal of stock in his allegiance Franz
accomplish this was to create an environment in which the nationalities found it more appealing to live as national groups within the Monarchy than to seek independence outside of it. This aim shaped his policy proposals throughout 1915 and early 1916.

First and foremost, the Monarchy had to reverse the progress which nationalism had made before the war. The institutions that had contributed to the spread of nationalism had to be purged. Thus, school teachers and administrators who supported nationalism had to be fired, and people loyal to the Monarchy put in their place. This again implied to Conrad the need to centralize control over the educational system. In the same way, nationalism within the clergy had to be rooted out and destroyed. Nationalist sentiment within the bureaucracy also had to be discovered and eliminated. In general, the government had to take

Josef in particular and the Monarchy as an institution in general. However, he makes little distinction in his proposals between allegiance to the "Monarchy" and allegiance to the "State." He never really addressed this issue in his correspondence. I have discussed this issue a bit in chapter one. Here, I believe that he hoped to make the Monarchy as Dynasty viable by making people identify with and value a centralized Monarchy as the most efficient means of governing their state.

"For instance, Op. Abt., Karton 29, Op. Nr. 12609. This is only one of several examples.


19In addition to vague proposals contained in several letters from Conrad to Bolfras (for example, the quote at the beginning of this article), see Führ, Das Armeeoberkommando, 140-44. Conrad's relationship to Bolfras was close. The
quick and decisive action to suppress nationalist agitation.

However, it was not enough simply to identify and suppress those people and institutions that supported the spread of nationalist sentiment within the Monarchy. There must be positive advantages to be gained from belonging to the Monarchy. The nationalities had to be made to believe that they could exist profitably and peacefully within the Monarchy. Conrad wrote Bolfras in a letter dated 7 June 1915, "For the nationalities of the Monarchy, which aside from a few exceptions have proven with blood their devotion to the Monarchy, may not be suppressed in the future, they must see in the Monarchy their paternal home. . ." In order to achieve this, the schools had to nourish in students a faith in the Monarchy. Moreover, the state and its bureaucracy had to be made more efficient, and must treat everyone equally. Otherwise, the prewar agitation would only worsen, leading in the end to disaster. As he wrote in a letter to Prince Konrad Hohenloeh the newly appointed Minister of the Interior in the Fall of 1915, "If this war does not place the entire Monarchy on a healthy basis, both demands contained in his letters to Bolfras, while rarely closely reasoned, are sincere and a good reflection of what Conrad believed. For an excellent discussion of the politicized nature of the lower ranks of the Monarchy's bureaucracy, see John Boyer, Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna, (Chicago, 1995), 351-6.

Conrad to Bolfras, 7 June 1915. Reproduced in Kundmann Tagebuch, entry of 7 June 1915, in NL Kundmann, B/15.
outwardly and internally, then so much blood has flown in vain, and the immeasurable sacrifices were futile. Who would like to answer for this?"\(^{21}\)

In the context of the AOK's actions against nationalists during the war, one might argue that Conrad was not really interested in providing carrots to the nationalities. Indeed, it is this negative aspect of his policies on which most historians have focused, and understandably so. It is true that his demands to imprison nationalist agitators and purge state institutions were much more detailed and insistent than his vaguer calls for fairness. This was, in part, due to the immediate need to win the war, which was threatened by antiwar propaganda and agitation. It is also true that he was convinced that the unwillingness of the government to punish activities dangerous to the Monarchy had led to the explosion of nationalist agitation before the war.

Still, it is clear that he believed the Monarchy's policy toward nationalism had to offer rewards as well as punishments if it was to succeed.

Conrad was fully aware that his proposals would be controversial. The focal point of the opposition, he indicated correctly, was Hungary. Hungary's drive for independence within the Monarchy had been one of the chief causes of pre-war instability within the Monarchy. Its policy of Magyarization, according to Conrad, had played a

\(^{21}\)Reproduced in Kundmann Tagebuch, 12 December 1915.
large role in the increased nationalism among the Serbs and Croats. Although he had a grudging respect for the willpower and political skill of Istvan Tisza, Conrad was determined that Tisza could not be allowed to block the necessary reforms.22

More to the point, Hungary's special position within the Monarchy was itself an integral part of the nationalist problem. The Magyar drive for independence and suppression of their national minorities was exactly the type of behavior that Conrad wanted to change. He wrote in July 1915

The current war has shown clearly enough the disastrous consequences for the Monarchy of the aspirations of Hungary and indeed the completely unsustainable situation of Hungary in case these principles [the suppression of the Croats, Serbs and Rumanians] are sustained, it shows also the way which the Monarchy must follow so that the

22Conrad's relationship with Tisza is one of the more interesting aspects of Conrad's life. He disagreed radically with Tisza's policies, but admired greatly the Magyar's fiery energy and initiative, and the firm hold Tisza had over the fractious Hungarian political scene. The result initially was a dislike verging on hatred combined with a intense and vocal longing for the emergence of someone with Tisza's qualities in Cisleithania. This changed, like so much else, in the summer of 1915 when Tisza proved willing to support Conrad's efforts to marry Gina. Because Gina was Catholic and divorced, arranging the marriage took much time and ingenuity (And energy). Conrad's letters throughout this period were filled with discussions of ways in which the marriage could be arranged. See, for example, the letters to his former aide-de-camp Franz Putz, in NL Putz, B/35:20. One wonders how, or if, Conrad ever had time to pay attention to the war itself, Hubka in fact alleges that Conrad let Metzgar make many of the decisions during this period. Hubka, "Licht ohne Schatten," p. 20.). Tisza proved key in implementing the strategy eventually employed--allowing Gina to convert to Protestantism by baptism in a Hungarian church, and permitting the two to marry in Hungary as well.

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enormous sacrifices of this war are not in vain.\textsuperscript{23}

To create a stable post-war Monarchy, the dualistic structure would have to be drastically altered. His specific suggestions for this varied over time. However, the one constant was that Hungarian chauvinism had to be subordinated to a fairer distribution of power within the Monarchy. Failure to do so would lead to conflict both within Austria-Hungary and in its relations with other countries. As Conrad wrote in a letter to Burián as early as 10 September 1915,

\begin{quote}
If we do not break with this principle of Hungarian hegemony, we will certainly have to deal with a strengthened Rumanian and especially south-Slav propaganda after the war. We will only be able to counter this acute threat if we give the south-Slavs the possibility of national unification and development within the borders of the Monarchy. Toward this end, toward this vital interest of Austria-Hungary, all other separate aims must take a back seat, if all the immense sacrifices of the war are not to have been in vain.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

In this letter, he proposed the creation of a trialist structure, with the south-Slavs forming the third pillar of the Habsburg state. At other times, he flirted with federalism (although not labeled as such). Whatever the means, only by reconstructing the Monarchy along lines fair to all nations could national agitation be avoided in the


Conrad's response to a Hungarian attempt to expand the use of the Hungarian state colors and national anthem demonstrates clearly his vision of the Monarchy. Early in the war, Hungarian politicians renewed their call for equal status in the military for the Hungarian flag and national anthem with the already existing state symbols. Krobatin and his subordinates throughout the fall of 1915 and winter of 1916 debated the best way to reconcile this with the powers reserved to the Emperor over the armed forces.

Ignored through much of this debate, Conrad made his feelings known in a memo given to Franz Joseph at an audience on 30 March 1916. Here, he argued that, while the army had held together and fought surprisingly well considering the extent of national sentiment\(^2\), such a performance was not inevitable. It was imperative to retain symbols which functioned as unifying, not disruptive forces. Moreover, he argued that to grant the wishes of the Hungarian politicians would imply that Dualism was a permanent arrangement, while

\(^2\)Führ argues that Conrad proposed ending Dualism to Franz Josef only once (in September of 1915), and that in very general terms. (Führ, Das Armeeoberkommando, p. 128) Strictly speaking this may be true. However, Conrad's communications with Bolfras, Burián and other high-ranking politicians show clearly his desire for significant constitutional change. It is likely that Franz Josef was not unaware of Conrad's ideas.

\(^2\)A statement which was ironic at best, and inconsistent and untrue at worst, given Conrad's reaction to the discipline problems among the nationalities.
in actuality, the war and the internal conditions of the Monarchy had shown that Dualism might well have to be discarded. For both reasons he rejected the idea of adopting a flag with Hungarian colors, or of adopting other "national" hymns for use within the army. While Conrad's objections were not given the attention he believed they deserved, they demonstrate his basic approach to the Hungarian problem. In this and other debates, Conrad was unwilling to do anything which would reaffirm the extent of Hungarian power.27

National agitation was not, to Conrad, the only threat to the Monarchy. The inefficient (at best) system of parliamentary democracy in Cisleithania also threatened the funding of the army and the stability of the Monarchy. The perceived danger of anti-military agitation by the socialists also weighed heavily in the minds of the AOK (probably, given the evidence, too heavily). However, nationalism above all else threatened the continual existence and great power status of the Monarchy.

3. Ending the Threat from Outside

Unfortunately, no matter how necessary bureaucratic and constitutional changes were to stabilize the Monarchy,

internal reform would not in itself be sufficient to end the
danger of disintegration. Pan-Slav groups in Russia and
Serbia had nourished and supported nationalist sentiment in
the prewar Monarchy. The feeling was widespread that the
Serbian government itself had promoted the nationalization of
the Monarchy's Serbs, with the goal of incorporating them
into Serbia. Left untouched, it would simply resume this
policy after the war. No matter how successful the internal
changes carried out by the Monarchy, the survival of a
politically independent magnet of Serbs would make it
impossible for the Monarchy to win the loyalty of its own
Serb population.

Thus, whenever Conrad discussed war aims and the
possibility of a peace settlement during the second half of
1915 and the first half of 1916, the incorporation of Serbia
into the Monarchy formed an integral part of his proposals.
Even when, in the spring and summer, Conrad played with the
idea of buying Serbia off, he continued to fantasize about
incorporating Serbia into the Monarchy along the lines of
Bavaria in the German Empire.28 As the military successes of
the summer and early fall decreased the pressure on the

28Letter, Conrad to Bolfras, 31 May 1915, in Nachlaß Bolfras,
B/75. Conrad was by no means the only one in the Monarchy
who harbored annexationist hopes. Several high-level
officials in the Foreign Ministry had also demanded
significant territorial acquisitions in the Balkans. See
Andrei Mitrovic, 'Die Balkanpolitik der Ballhaus-Bürokratie
im Ersten Weltkrieg (1914-1916),' in F. Glatz and R.
Melville, Gesellschaft, Politik und Verwaltung in der
Monarchy, he grew less and less willing to compromise.
Finally, sparked by the collapse of the Serbian army in the
fall of 1915, Conrad, Burián and Tisza engaged in a fierce
debate over war aims in December and January. Implicit, and
occasionally explicit in these discussions is Conrad's vision
of how the Monarchy should look in the future.

Arguing that the war aims had to be drawn up in a way
which was not biased toward (or against) any individual part
of the Monarchy, and stressing the need for cooperation
between the military and the political leadership of the
Monarchy, Conrad outlined his suggestions several times in
notes to Burián, Bolfras, and Tisza. Although he addressed

29 These demands, although undoubtedly sincere, equally
undoubtedly prompted bitterness in Burian, Stürgkh and Tisza,
who probably saw this as hypocritical, given Conrad's
unwillingness to keep them informed about military
operations.

30 The following discussion is based on Conrad to Burian, 5
November 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Geh. Nr. 101 (also in
Conrad NL, 120), Conrad to FJ (AU Vortrag), 22 November 1915,
about a meeting in Vienna on 1 Dec about war aims, in NL
Conrad, 1450:120, Conrad to Burian and Bolfras, 7 December
notes on Burian to Conrad, 10 December 1915, Op. Abt., Karton
520, Nr. 5701 (included in Op. Nr. 18867), Conrad to Burian,
Conrad's discussion with Thurn about war aims, in Kundmann
Tagebuch, 21 December 1915, Conrad to Burian (with copies to
the War Ministry and Bolfras), 22 December 1915, Op. Abt.,
Karton 490, Op. Nr. 19380, Conrad's marginal notes on
Burian's letter to Conrad of 25 December 1915, Nr. 5892,
included in Op. nr. 19380, Conrad to Burian, 23 December
(with a copy to Bolfras), 30 December 1915, Op. Abt., Karton
520, Op. Nr. 19694, the marginal notes on Conrad's copy of
Tisza to Conrad, 30 December 1915, in NL Conrad, 1450:120,
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certainly not repeat such a mistake."\(^{31}\)

However, even if the Monarchy could ensure that Serbia refrained from inciting national discontent, this would not be enough. For Conrad the attraction of nationalism was so strong that the mere existence of a Serbian state, no matter how constrained its power, would serve as a magnet for the Serbs within the Monarchy. As a result, the only possible solution to the Serbian problem was to annex it (and Montenegro). Only this would give the Monarchy the chance to solve the problems posed by nationalism. Although he was initially flexible toward Montenegro, Conrad grew to insist that the Monarchy annex that country as well, for the same reason that it would form the center of post-war irredentist activism if allowed to survive.

Conrad's view of the war as a conflict fought primarily to reconstruct a viable Monarchy was a major factor in determining his position toward the future of Poland as well. In the autumn of 1916, the need for the manpower a strengthened Polish Legion would provide forced him to compromise. Nine months earlier, flush with his recent military success, Conrad argued logically on the basis of his understanding of the character of nationalism. In his letter to Burián of 30 December 1915, he outlined two permissible options. The most desirable would be the annexation of those

\(^{31}\)Conrad's marginal notes on Tisza to Conrad, 30 December 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120.
Polish territories currently under the control of Russia and Germany, which would be joined with Galicia (except for that eastern section of Galicia which was predominantly Ruthenian), and incorporated into the Monarchy as a (Cisleithanian) crownland. The second, less desirable solution was the division of Russian Poland between Germany and the Monarchy. In any case, the creation of an independent Polish state, or the annexation of Russian-Poland by Germany had to be avoided at all cost. An independent Poland, after a brief period of consolidation, would inevitably fall under the influence of Russia and become a steadfast opponent of the Monarchy. And, given the attractive powers of nationalism, such a state would immediately become the focus of Galician nationalism, followed quickly by the loss of Galicia.\footnote{It is notable that Conrad is confident enough that he fails to mention the maintenance of the status quo as a possible solution, although in September he had proposed precisely this. Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 19694. For further details on the debates regarding Poland, see Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy, John Leslie, Austria-Hungary's Eastern Policy in the First World War, August 1914 to August 1915. Ph. D. Dissertation, Cambridge, 1975, and Joachim Lilia, "Innen- und- Aussenpolitische Aspekte der Austropolnische Lösung 1914-1916," Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs, Vol. 3. (1977), pp. 221-250.} Ceding Russian Poland to Germany promised the same danger, despite Prussia's notoriously poor treatment of the Poles. Here, however, another danger existed, for Conrad believed that the German Polish solution would form a permanent source of irritation between the Monarchy and its German ally. It was to avoid
this danger that Conrad was willing to accept a division of Russian Poland between Germany and the Monarchy, despite the disappointment, and thus increased nationalist agitation, such a solution would cause in Galicia.\textsuperscript{33}

Once again, Conrad's proposals ran into the political realities of a multi-national empire. Many of the political leaders in Vienna hoped to revise the constitutional structure of the Monarchy, elevating the new Galicia to a political position similar to that of Hungary and Cisleithania. Others opted for the "sub-dualist" solution, allowing Galicia a certain independence within Cisleithania without drastic constitutional changes. Each solution was based on the fear that a unified Poland within the Monarchy, unless given a special position, would attempt to leave the state at the first opportunity. But Tisza opposed both, fearing that either would dilute Hungary's distinctive

\textsuperscript{33}Conrad to Burian, 14 January 1916, NL Conrad, Chef Geheim 31. This was Conrad's cover letter for the transmittal of two German pamphlets discussing the problem of Poland. The second of these pamphlets argued that Germany should aim to annex all of Russian Poland, despite the problems that would bring with it. Conrad's marginal comments on this are interesting. In response to the argument in the first pamphlet that the conquest of Poland needed to be managed in a way which would not provoke revanchism in Russia, Conrad wrote "The Russians are not following a policy of revenge. They are too sober for that. They have two goals: A. The extension of the Slavs in Europe under Russian patronage. B. A position of power in the near east (the Dardanelles, Asia Minor). . ." Conrad also demonstrated a willingness, almost a compulsion, to fight the Germans at every turn, concluding "It is certainly time to speak plainly with them [the Germans]."
constitutional position and power. Instead, he advocated a minimalist solution, adding the new Polish lands to Galicia without significant constitutional changes, while giving Bosnia to Hungary as compensation. None of the leaders of the Monarchy proved able to cut the knot preventing significant progress on the issue. Significantly, Conrad proved unwilling to compromise with Budapest on this issue precisely because he perceived Hungary as separatist and nationalist.

It is important to note that Conrad's war aims were not entirely determined by his concern for the internal stability of the Monarchy. Conrad did express some interest in the Balkans as an economic sphere of influence for the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{34} Not surprisingly, considerations of the postwar military/diplomatic position of the Monarchy also emerged, most prominently with respect to Italy. Although unwilling

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{34}He wrote in the AU Vortrag of 22 November 1915 that "The Orient (by which he means the Balkans) forms the most natural target (Entwicklungsgebiet) for the economic efforts of the Monarchy." Yet, even here, he followed this with the statement that all parts of the Monarchy must be allowed equal access to the economic rewards of the Balkans, since to deprive any part of the Monarchy with their rightful rewards would lead bitterness and opposition. Op. Abt., Karton 44, Op. Nr. 18260. As Mitrovic points out, suggestions that Conrad was an imperialist miss the point. With the exception of Italy, Conrad had little desire to expand for economic reasons, or to increase the prestige of the Monarchy. Instead, Conrad's demands were directed toward the internal needs of the Monarchy. One implication of this discussion is the way in which Innenpolitik and Aussenpolitik were intertwined. Not only is it impossible to assign precedence to one or the other, attempts to separate the two are destined to fail.
\end{footnotesize}
to specify what the Monarchy should demand from Italy, he consistently opposed the recreation of the status quo ante, let alone a peace based on the lines held by the opposing army in Italy. The Monarchy must, he argued, receive border corrections from Italy which would improve Austria-Hungary's military situation in the Southwest. Moreover, it must prevent Italy from seizing a foothold on the Adriatic coast, thus blocking the Monarchy's only outlet to the Mediterranean. To prevent this, the Monarchy would have to accept a partition of Albania. Early in the fall, Conrad hoped that Albania could be split between the Monarchy and Greece. Later he accepted the need to include Bulgaria. Despite his distrust of Bulgaria, Conrad by late November and early December grudgingly accepted the need to give Bulgaria a share of the loot (including a port on the Adriatic) in order to win its military cooperation in driving Serbian and potentially Italian forces out of the western edge of the Balkan peninsula.

However, Conrad's desire to use the war (and the military success of the Monarchy) as a prod for political

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35 This moderate phrase could at times conceal aims that were quite expansionist. Written next to the heading "Italien" on the war aims memorandum of 4 January 1916 (Op. Abt., Karton 49, Op. Nr. 19830), are the words "bei Tagliamento." The handwriting on this note is not Conrad's, but Conrad likely approved of the sentiment. The movement of the Monarchy's border to the Tagliamento would represent much more than a simple border rectification.

reform, remained his primary motivation. One might argue that he was using his national arguments as a justification for territorial annexations he had supported for years. It is certainly true that Conrad, in a world without nationality problems, would still have demanded harsh punishment for Serbia. But such a world did not exist, and the evidence shows that Conrad's claims are consistent with demands he made throughout the course of the war. Moreover, his marginal comments on letters from Burián and Tisza, made with no calculation as to their political effect, are entirely consistent with his official communications. The need for political reform did indeed form the basis for Conrad's proposals regarding the Balkans.

Conrad's struggles with Burián and Tisza over the administration of Serbia demonstrate his concern for the issue of nationality. The three began squabbling over control over the captured territory almost immediately after Serbia was occupied. Conrad took a hard line in this discussion. To some degree this simply reflected his desire to maintain

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37 Helmut Rumpler, in his article "Die Kriegsziele Österreich-Ungarn auf dem Balkans 1915/16," suggests that Conrad acted as a "Militär," not as a "Politiker." If he means by this that Conrad was unable to accept the constraints imposed on him by the diplomatic situation, this is to some degree correct. However, if he is arguing that Conrad advocated these annexations purely from military considerations, he misses the broader purpose which animated Conrad's proposals—the need for the Monarchy to recreate itself as a stable state (Rumpler briefly alludes to the broader political aims inherent in Conrad's war aims program, but does not discuss these in depth).
control over as many areas of the war as possible. However, he also believed that the administration and governance of the captured territories would play a crucial role in the struggle against nationalism. In essence, he hoped to use the army as a model for future administrative efforts. The only institution of the Monarchy that remained (relatively) unaffected by nationalism, the army would have to restructure and reform the bureaucracy in order to promote the creation of a loyal and satisfied citizenry. To allow the army time and space to act, Conrad had to overcome Tisza's efforts to seize administrative control over the region.

The first conflict came over Burian's nomination of Ludwig von Thallóczy for the position of Adlatus. This was a post which Burian described as being "alongside" that of the Military Governor, to which Conrad noted "Oh no, under him" (emphasis in original) in the occupation administration. Also contested was Burian's simultaneous reminder that administrative personnel active in Serbia were to be drawn from the ranks of the Hungarian civil service. Tisza as well attempted to persuade Conrad to allow Hungarian civil servants to form the majority of the administration in

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occupied Serbia.  

Conrad, however, held firm to his position that administrative authority over the captured territories in the Balkans be retained in the hands of the army.  

Most revealing are the instructions Conrad issued to the Quartermaster Department of the AOK regarding the administration of occupied Serbia. The overall goal was to win over the lower classes while preventing the intelligentsia from recovering the prestige and influence it had possessed before the war. Among the measures to be taken were the centralization of the school system under military control, and the creation of a more skillful and rational (verständiger) administrative apparatus. To accomplish this, he proposed the creation of a school for future bureaucrats (to be drawn from officers wounded during the war and from officials in Croatia and Bosnia), located in Serbia, which would train its students in administration and teach the Serbian language.  

39 Tisza to Conrad, 10 February 1916, in NL Conrad, 1450:123.  


41 Chef Geheim Nr. 12, in Nachlaß Conrad, 1450:123. See also Conrad's discussion with Johann Ulrich Graf Salis-Seewis on 2 January 1916 (Salis would assume administrative control over the captured Serbian region). Here, Conrad suggested that
To the extent to which Tisza hoped to make Hungary an independent state within the Monarchy, linked only by the personal union between the Hungarian King and the Habsburg Emperor, Conrad was implicitly opposed to him. However, the two were also arguing about the ways in which the respective states should treat their minorities and the way in which nationalist feelings were created and could (or could not) be suppressed. Tisza, acutely aware of the numerical weakness of the Magyar power base, maintained that the addition of minorities to the Monarchy would inevitably strengthen the centrifugal forces in the state. The only way to dampen these forces was through forced magyarization (or Germanization, in the case of those south-Slavs in Cisleithania). Indeed, Tisza advocated a policy of "colonization" for those territories to be annexed by the Monarchy. Germans and Magyars were to be settled on the Monarchy's border with Serbia, isolating the south-Slavs within the Monarchy. Conrad and Tisza agreed on the need to repress open expressions of nationalist feelings. Yet, convinced that nationalism could not be entirely destroyed, Conrad believed the Monarchy had to treat everyone fairly in order to prevent the growth of resentment.

the Monarchy should administer Serbia "reasonably", and at the same time attempt to "Croatify" it. He suggested that Tisza would oppose this, and that Burian was Tisza's "hawser (the rope used in mooring or towing a ship)." Kundmann, Tagebuch, 2 January 1916.

42Tisza's comments at the GMR meeting of 7 January 1916, in Komjathy, Protokolle, p. 362-66.
and agitation.

4. Conclusion

In sum, these ideas represent Conrad's "grand strategy" for the Monarchy. One must be careful not to make him appear more systematic and forward-thinking than he was. Conrad's overriding priority was always fighting the war. He never really provided the philosophical justification for his ideas which others were careful to provide. Moreover, he was extremely moody, and his proposals changed quickly depending on his view of the military situation. Yet, viewed as a whole, a consistent strategy emerges. In essence, it amounted to using the war as a prod to force reform. This encompassed both military reform and deeper, more significant constitutional reform. The goal was the creation of a Monarchy both strong enough and stable enough to assume its traditional place as a Great Power. Winning the war, or at least not losing it, was necessary, but alone meant nothing.

Conrad and the AOK, of course, were only one element of a much larger debate about reform. With Stürgkh deciding to leave the Parliament in recess and govern by Paragraph 14, politics became, as historian John Boyer writes, privatised.\textsuperscript{43} Parliamentary deputies and other political figures not involved in the war effort began informally organizing themselves into a variety of small "circles,"

planning ways to utilize the war to fix the problems of the Monarchy and/or their party.

The best known of these efforts are the attempts of the German political parties and leadership to draft programs reshaping the Habsburg Monarchy, specifically the government of Cisleithania, to strengthen the power of the ethnic Germans. This was the focus of the German National Union, under the leadership of Gustav Gross, which throughout 1914 and 1915 wrote and rewrote a proposal for the reconstruction of Cisleithania. In this the National Union had the reluctant participation of the Christian Social Party, which, although split in several ways regarding war aims, felt obliged to support, at least publicly, the idea of German control within the Monarchy. This idea also formed the basis of discussions within a variety of informal groups. Many of these proposals had in common efforts to make German the dominant language within Cisleithania (and especially Bohemia), to create ways to give the Germans more administrative control, and create districts based on ethnic lines.45

44Eventually published in March of 1916 as Der Standpunkt des Deutschen Nationalverbandes zur Neuordnung der Dinge in Österreich.

45Boyer, Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna, p. 383-4. A closer relationship between Germany and Austria formed an integral part of many of these plans. As Joseph Baernreither, a member of an influential circle centered around himself and Gustav Marchet, a German representative from the Herrenhaus, wrote “So it appears to be ... .
What makes Conrad's ideas interesting is the way in which they reflect his military background. As outlined in chapter one, prospective professional officers were brought into the army very early, isolated from civilian society, and trained to think of themselves as separate and above the rest of society. By graduation, these officers possessed a sense of honor and corporateness that remained with them throughout their careers. The separation between officers and civilians, initially enforced, remained in place voluntarily after the cadets became regular officers. Most officers had little experience with or understanding of the outside world, and the ideological foundations instilled during their education remained with them throughout their career. Most officers remained *Kaisertreu* not just from habit, but from a sheer inability to think any other way.

paradoxical, that we need Germany's help in order to remain strong and independent towards Germany." (Quoted in Kapp, "Austro-German Discussions of War Aims," p. 130. Redlich was also a part of this circle, and his diary provides additional details about these discussions) Baernreither himself was somewhat dubious about the benefits of closer economic ties with Germany (Kapp, "Divided Loyalties," pp. 130-1, although Baernreither did forward his second study, entitled "Denkschrift über das wirtschaftspolitische Verhältnis Österreich-Ungarns zu Deutschland," to Bethmann in the early fall.). Others were more willing to tie themselves to their northern neighbor.

"The words people use are often revealing. The word "Kaisertreu" occurred frequently enough to be a cliche. But it had real implications behind it. To be Kaisertreu was to be faithful to the dynasty— to the emperor, his son, and to the ruling family. It is quite revealing that words like "Monarchietreu" or even Österreichtreu were never used. In a similar respect, in the preliminary transcript of the GMR meeting of 7 January, Tisza was cited as saying "hier
This is not to deny that some officers were actively nationalistic, especially after the turn of the century. Many of the reserve officers openly rejected the Kaisertreu ideology of the regular officers. In the same way, many of the officers appointed during the war itself supported the German-national parties. Few of these, though, rose high enough to influence military and political discussions during the war.

A few regular officers, however, did advocate nationalist programs. Many of these were Hungarians, intent on increasing the division between the two halves of the Monarchy. Some, though, pose more complicated problems. Most interesting here are Erzherzog Eugen and his Chief of Staff, Alfred Krauss. Placed in command of the Habsburg forces in the Balkans after Potiorek was relieved, and later transferred to the Italian front, both Eugen and Krauss advocated and implemented measures designed to Germanize the areas under their control. Among these proposals were attempts to enforce the use of German names for towns and provinces, efforts to require the use of German in external as well as internal office correspondence, and a variety of other measures designed to cement the power of German-

lediglich die Interessen der gesamtmonarchie in Frage kommen. . ." However, in reviewing these notes, Tisza crossed out "gesamtmonarchie" and replaced it with the phrase "ganzen Monarchie." [lower case in original in each case] For Tisza, after 1867 there was no "gesamtmonarchie."
Austrians. Indeed, Krauss (who later joined the Nazi party) is properly described as a pan-German nationalist. However, officers such as Krauss were a minority in a pre-war officer corps primarily Kaisertreu in spirit.

This is not to say that Conrad, or the other members of the AOK, should be understood as modern-day multiculturalists. As discussed in chapter four, Conrad was deeply suspicious of efforts by other ethnic groups to raise the national consciousness of their compatriots. As Führ shows in some detail, he advocated the suppression of nationalist agitation adamantly, and at times supported measures that were quite draconian in an effort to root out this discontent. Moreover, when dealing with Italy, Conrad abandoned the ideas of efficiency and toleration he cited so frequently in discussions about Serbia or Croatia. The AOK enthusiastically seconded many of Krauss' proposals regarding the rooting out of nationalist feeling in the Italian areas of the Monarchy.

Conrad, in the end, was trying to extend the example of the army to the state as a whole. The state should treat all citizens equally, regardless of nationality (or class). When this required the introduction of a common language (German), Conrad quickly suggested this. But, when it did not, Conrad

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47 It is when dealing with Krauss and Eugen that Führ's account becomes misleading. By lumping the proposals of Krauss together with those of the AOK, Führ implies that the army as a whole was pan-Germanist. As I argue here, this is not correct.
supported peoples’ rights to use their own language and to worship as they saw fit. In many ways, this was a Josephist conception of the Monarchy. Yet, his views on language, education, administration and (implicitly) identity all diverged from the Josephist emphasis. Accepting the Josephist emphasis on efficiency, Conrad tempered this with the need to treat all nationalities fairly.

Whether any of these ideas was realistic will remain forever unclear. Conrad’s political plans, in the same way as his military proposals, took the form of broad demands rather than detailed proposals. More importantly, political and military realities meant that his proposals would never get a fair hearing. The idea that significant, controversial constitutional change could (or should) be pushed through during a world war was unreasonable at best. Conrad demonstrated an inability to understand (or unwillingness to accept) the realities of the situation.

In any case, Conrad’s hopes rested on military victory. His prestige and power had risen dramatically during the summer and fall as the military situation improved. However, having alienated most of the political leadership, his new position remained fragile. Only continued military success would grant him input into political and diplomatic decisions. The defeats of the spring and summer of 1916 would make many of Conrad’s suggestions irrelevant.
CHAPTER 7

OBSTACLES TO THE CONDITIONS FOR RENEWAL AMID COALITION WARFARE

One of the ways to understand the Monarchy's role in the war is to see it at the center of a two-tiered coalition. One of these alliances was the military tie between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and now Bulgaria. While the goal of all of these powers was to win the war, each had additional aims, many of which conflicted with the hopes of their alliance partners. This is nothing new, conflicting interests characterize most, and perhaps all military alliances. But it meant that Conrad had to consider carefully the effects of his decisions not just on the war, but on the postwar position of the Monarchy vis-à-vis its allies.

But, almost uniquely among the combatant powers, Conrad had to deal with another coalition as well. It is now fashionable to talk about the theory of empires in connection with the Habsburg Monarchy. The Monarchy as
Empire is a useful way to understand the history of Central Europe before 1914, especially from the perspective of the minority nationalities. Yet, the word empire evokes images of political control and uncontested authority, images which do not completely capture the Monarchy in 1915. Instead, Austria-Hungary was made up of a number of power centers. Some of these centers had more domestic influence, some less, but they all had distinct demands and aspirations. Conrad and the army formed just one of these factions, albeit one of the most powerful.

What made Conrad's position even more difficult was that conversation and maneuvering crossed the boundaries between these coalitions. Both Hungarians and Austro-Germans were quite willing to appeal for German assistance if they thought it would help. Germany, conversely, believed it had a right and responsibility to protect the interests of the Austro-Germans within the Habsburg Empire. In both cases, the interests of the Monarchy as a whole were subordinate to those of its components.

Conrad, then, had to maneuver within this system of cross-cutting alliances and coalitions to win support for his ideas, both military and political. He and the army occupied something of a unique position in this system.
Conrad at least believed that the army was the only member of either of these coalitions that had the interests of the Monarchy at heart. As such, it had to protect the Monarchy against the collective assaults of its supposed allies and peoples.

Conrad, during the period from late autumn 1915 until the beginning of the offensive against Italy in May of 1916, focussed his attention on preserving the army’s, and thus the Monarchy’s, autonomy from the demands of its allies and peoples. Winning the war remained crucial. It is significant in this regard that Conrad’s willingness to accept a compromise peace waned as the military position of the Central Powers improved. But he firmly believed that a victory that left the Monarchy economically, militarily and politically dependent on Germany would be worse than a compromise peace. In the same way, a military victory unaccompanied by significant reform to address the problems of nationalism was no victory at all. Conrad set out in the winter and spring of 1916 to ensure that neither of these events came to pass. This brought him head to head with the complex dynamics of coalition warfare.
1. Trying to Create an Alliance of Equals

Jehuda Wallach, in his book *Uneasy Coalition: The Entente Experience in World War I*, offers a typology of wartime coalitions.¹ One type of coalition is an alliance in which the members are at least nominally equal partners. Although in reality these states may have radically different status within the coalition, at least in name each partner has an equal say in decision making and execution. The second type of coalition is one in which at least one of the partners has a clear superiority of power within the alliance. Wallach terms this state the senior partner in the alliance. States that are inferior in power or influence Wallach labels the junior partner. Naturally, in a multi-party alliance, some states may be junior in relationship to some and senior to other states within the alliance.

It is quite clear that, measured in terms of power, the Monarchy assumed the role of junior partner in its relationship with Germany. Wallach identifies three areas

which determine the relative power within an alliance: manpower, economic power, and financial resources. In all three, the Monarchy lagged far behind the German Empire. Its position vis-à-vis Bulgaria and Turkey was more ambiguous. But its inferiority to Germany is clear.

To Conrad and his compatriots, however, the Monarchy was by definition a Great Power. Accordingly, although Germany might outnumber or outproduce Austria-Hungary, the Monarchy had to remain Germany's equal in prestige and influence. But it became quite clear during the war that substantial elements of German society aimed not just at pushing the Monarchy out of the ranks of the Great Powers, but at actually breaking the Monarchy up. Conrad could not permit neither. Somehow, he had to win the war while simultaneously maintaining the Monarchy's independence and

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2 I have already discussed the disparity in manpower. The Monarchy also lacked supplies of a number of essential raw materials and a manufacturing infrastructure that would allow it to turn these materials into weapons, munitions, and supplies. As a result, the Monarchy depended on imports of both materials and expertise from Germany to make its industries work. For an example of how this played out in one industry, see John H. Morrow Jr., German Air Power in World War I, (Lincoln, 1982), chapter 8, appropriately titled "The Inept Ally." Financially, too the Monarchy depended on subsidies from Germany, in the amount of 100 million Marks per month for much of the war. Even this did not suffice to cover wartime expenditures. Holger Herwig, The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918, (New York, 1997), p. 231.
stature. The course he chose at the turn of the year 1915-1916 was to abandon joint operations with Germany and act independently.

The shadow cast by Germany became increasingly threatening during the second half of 1915. Conrad in many ways had exploited his position as the weak ally to gain influence in military policy. Unfortunately, the Monarchy’s control over its relationship with Germany became increasingly tenuous as the battlefield situation improved. Both operationally and diplomatically, Germany seemed intent on reducing the autonomy of Austria-Hungary. This threatened every hope Conrad had for the post-war reconstruction of the Monarchy.

The long-term threat took the form of increasing German (and Austrian) pressure for closer ties between the two states. Abandoning hopes of a separate peace with Russia, both Bethmann-Hollweg and Falkenhayn began to consider other ways to shift the strategic balance of power. In doing so, each tapped into an active discussion among German intellectuals, politicians, and journalists regarding the shape of postwar Central Europe. Initially
hesitant, Falkenhayn in the late summer finally proposed his own version of Mitteleuropa. Convinced that the war had become one of attrition, Falkenhayn believed the Central Powers had to demonstrate to the world their willingness to fight until exhaustion. The best way of underlining this determination, he suggested to Bethmann in late August, was to strengthen publicly the bonds that already existed between the Central Powers, making the alliance into something more like a confederation. The new ties (to be offered to Sweden, Greece and Switzerland as well) would include not just military and diplomatic agreements, but also closer economic and cultural coordination. This would signal the Entente that Germany was able and willing to fight a long, attritional conflict.\(^3\)

Falkenhayn's proposal was instrumental in nature, intended simply as a means of military strategy. However, his suggestions both provoked debate and raised interest in

discussions about a German-led Mitteleuropa already underway. Bethmann, initially dismissive, soon rethought his opposition, and the Foreign Office jumped in as well, led by Zimmerman, the consistent expansionist, and the usually more conservative Jagow. At almost the same time, the public debate reached an entirely new level with the publication of Friedrich Naumann's book Mitteleuropa in the first days of October. Significantly, Jagow, Tschirschky and others demanded intervention into the domestic politics

Bethmann believed that a tightening of the alliance had little chance of lowering the morale of the Entente, and warned that stronger ties with Austria-Hungary would simply force upon Germany dangerous obligations without corresponding advantages. (Bethmann to Falkenhayn, 5 September 1915, quoted in Sweet, "Germany, Austria-Hungary and Mitteleuropa," p. 182.) In response, Falkenhayn stressed the temporary nature of this grouping, and downplayed its economic aspects. Ibid, p. 183-4. See also Afflerbach, Falkenhayn, pp. 321-5.


Interestingly, these debates represented a changed view of the post-war future. Hopes for a German victory leading to an extended postwar dominance had disappeared for the moment. Accordingly, the Monarchy became again a player (or a chip, depending on one's perspective) in the European game for power. Thus, Jagow, Tschirschky and others stressed the need for strengthened ties with the Monarchy in order to stand firm against a post-war pan-Slav impulse in Russia. Falkenhayn, on the other hand, warned against any agreement that strengthened Austria, since it was quite possible that the Monarchy would turn against Germany after the war.
of the Monarchy to ensure the dominance of German-Austrians in Cisleithania. In any case, Bethmann's proposal that the two states discuss a closer relationship brought the subject into the open. At meetings held on 10-11 November 1915, Bethmann began a dialogue on the issue that would continue throughout the war.

Such proposals were not limited to Germany. I have discussed above the suggestions of the Christian Social party and the German National Union. More controversial was a memorandum titled Denkschrift aus Deutsch-Österreich. The Denkschrift was the product of a circle of intellectuals centered on the German-Austrian historian Heinrich Friedjung, who distributed it widely among German policy makers.

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7This suggestion was addressed specifically to the problem regarding Poland. The Germans feared that integrating Russian Poland into the existing political structure of the Monarchy would make the German-Austrians a minority, and demanded a more "acceptable" solution. Exactly what would be "acceptable" was never quite resolved. Sweet, "Germany, Austria-Hungary and Mitteleuropa," pp. 188-90. and Jagow's memoranda of early sept, reprinted in Grunewald, L'allamagne, Doc. # 140.

8See the copy of Burián's report about the meeting in NL Conrad, 1450:120. Jagow wrote an account of this meeting as well, which is reprinted in Grunewald, L'allamagne, Vol. I., pp. 218-221.

9Sweet suggests that Friedjung realized that Franz Joseph, Stürgkh, and especially Tisza were unlikely to support his ideas, and chose instead to reach Habsburg policy makers.
Friedjung and his companions proposed tightening the existing alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany. As outlined by Friedjung, the new agreement would first strengthen the military ties, including the coordination of weapons and materials procurement, sharing of intelligence, planning and other information, and standardization of organization and methods of operation. After a transitional period, the two states would form a customs and commercial alliance, in the shape of a tariff union, which could be joined by other states as well. All of this, Friedjung argued, should form the subject of official negotiations between Germany and Austria-Hungary.\textsuperscript{10}

Conrad was at least generally aware of the tightening German grip over the future of the alliance and of the sentiment within the Monarchy in support of closer ties with Germany. At the same time, he was at the center of a heated debate over control of the offensive against Serbia and over

\textsuperscript{10}Details in Sweet, "Germany, Austria-Hungary and Mitteleuropa," pp. 185-7. The ideas in the Denkschrift amounted to a radical change in the governmental structure of the Monarchy. Boyer points out that Friedjung's vision was in many ways a prescription for military leadership of the state (Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna, p. 385). While this would presumably bring the political chaos of the prewar period to an end, it simultaneously represented an admission
the policy to be followed in the Balkans. Together, these debates fed Conrad's sense of being under siege and furthered his determination to go his own way.

Disagreements over the command structure led to friction even before the beginning of the offensive. The defeat of the Schwarz-Gelb offensive left Conrad scrambling for reinforcements to strengthen the eastern front. Agreeing to release Habsburg units from the Serbian offensive, Falkenhayn used this as leverage to reopen negotiations with Conrad about the chain of command against Serbia. Originally, orders decided upon jointly between Falkenhayn and Conrad were supposed to flow through AOK to Mackensen, the overall field commander of the operation. A revised agreement affirmed this chain of command, but stressed German control over German units, and allowed the AOK administrative control over Habsburg units only while they were on Hungarian soil. Falkenhayn's successful demand that the offensive capture Belgrade immediately rather than bypassing it (as Conrad hoped) simply added insult to injury.¹¹

Falkenhayn's demands infuriated an already suspicious Conrad. Yet, there was little Conrad could do. Hampered by

the needs of the eastern front, he was also aware of the inadequate supply of munitions and equipment of the units still deployed in the Balkans.\(^{12}\) Moreover, a substantial percentage of the Habsburg troops were poorly trained and inexperienced Landwehr. With Falkenhayn in the driver's seat, there was little Conrad could do but seethe quietly. Writing to Marterer, who was filling in for Bolfras while the latter recovered from a brief illness, Conrad wrote

> No one is more bitter than I over our dependence on the military assistance of Germany. . . . Unfortunately, as a consequence of our military weakness we must accept this German help if we are not to concede defeat in this world war and thus gamble with the continued existence of the Monarchy. This requires of me the greatest self-control and self-denial, but it is my duty.\(^{13}\)

In the coming months, Conrad would become less and less willing to rein himself in.

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\(^{12}\)The 3\(^{rd}\) (Habsburg) army had asked for more artillery ammunition in September, only to be told by the AOK that none was available (3 AK to AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 36, Op. Nr. 15366, no date, but reply from AOK dated 14 September). A telegram to AOK on 23 September, presumably from the 3\(^{rd}\) army, pointed out that the German units were provided with 3,000 shells per battery of field artillery, 6,000 shells per battery of mountain artillery, and 8,000 shells per battery of mountain howitzers, while the corresponding numbers for the Habsburg units were 1,600, 1,500 and 1,400 shells per battery (this message also included in Op. Nr. 15366).

\(^{13}\)Conrad to Marterer, 16 September 1915, NL Conrad,
One might have expected a relaxation of tensions following the promising beginning of the attack against Serbia. In contrast, success added fuel to the fire, for it revealed very different conceptions of the goals of the offensive and how these goals should be reached. Falkenhayn by September had soured on the attack against Serbia and believed that the attack should aim only to open supply lines to Turkey.\(^{14}\) Once this was achieved, he quickly lost interest in the Balkans, and turned his attention to other fronts. Conrad, on the other hand, had accepted the Serbian offensive reluctantly, but soon believed it had to be pushed to its logical conclusion.\(^{15}\) He believed the campaign had to be carried to its logical conclusion. The Central Powers should destroy the Serbian army completely, and strive to influence the

\(^{14}\) Janßen, pp. 148-156.

\(^{15}\) Conrad was especially influenced by the Entente landings at Salonika. Entente intervention was rumored in the AOK as early as 27 September (Laxa to Conrad, 27 September 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 16067) and actually began on 2 October. In the next three days that Entente landed two divisions at Salonika, drawing a public protest but no real action from the pro-Entente premier Eleutherios Venizelos, who was dismissed for his trouble. See Silberstein, The Troubled Alliance, pp. 298-99.
position of Rumania and Greece. Perhaps this would even lead the Entente to consider peace.\textsuperscript{16} If not, the Monarchy (and Germany) would have to continue the struggle.\textsuperscript{17}

This disagreement erupted into open conflict in the first weeks of November. Although the two agreed on 6 November to continue the offensive, and to hold open the prospect of moving into Greece to deal with the Entente forces at Salonika, Falkenhayn insisted on limiting German participation in this attack.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, Mackensen began withdrawing German formations

\textsuperscript{16}In which case, according to Conrad, the war aims of the Central Powers should be moderate, formulated so "that on the one hand our heavy losses do not go unrewarded, but on the other a war à outrance is not unleashed." The citation and much of the outline of Conrad's thinking are drawn from Conrad to MKSM, 27 October 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 17238.

\textsuperscript{17}Even this early, although Conrad refused to specify what he thinks the Monarchy should do next, he divided the possible options into two groups, one for Germany and one for Austria-Hungary.

\textsuperscript{18}Kundmann's notes on this meeting are in Kundmann, Tagebuch, 6 November 1915. The two also argued at this meeting about administrative jurisdiction over the captured territories, with Conrad demanding that the Habsburg army retain authority unless German units were actually present.
the next day, a process that continued despite Conrad's vehement objections.\textsuperscript{19}

Conrad's objections stemmed in part from Falkenhayn's unwillingness to accept his proposals for an offensive against Salonika.\textsuperscript{20} Although Falkenhayn agreed to a four-week pause in the operation, Conrad suspected correctly that the German units would never return. What provoked his anger more, however, was Falkenhayn's habit of making decisions without consulting or informing the AOK. Reports suggesting that Germany was negotiating privately with Serbian leaders to set up a new Serbian state under German control simply aggravated an already tense situation.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19}Kundmann Tagebuch, 7 November 1915, ÖULK, Vol. III., p. 290. By 18 November, 6 German divisions had withdrawn from the front lines.

\textsuperscript{20}Falkenhayn maintained that logistical difficulties prohibited any substantial operation for the next few weeks (see the records of a meeting between the two commanders at Teschen on 20 November, in Kundmann Tagebuch, 20 November 1915) a point which was certainly justified. The weather had deteriorated, and the advancing armies had outrun their railheads. As a result, it was increasingly difficult to advance and, more importantly, to supply the units in the front line. Op. Abt., Karton 42, Op. Nr. 17321 (29 October 1915) provides an example of some of these supply difficulties, ÖULK, Vol. III, pp. 308-10 provides a broader survey.

\textsuperscript{21}Burián had inquired about these rumors through Thurn on 13
Furious, Conrad increasingly abandoned his efforts at rhetorical restraint.\textsuperscript{22}


There were other reports that Germany intended to exploit the Serbian defeat for its own gains. Josef Pomiankowski, the Habsburg military attaché in Constantinople, wrote in early September that there was a widespread belief in the Turkish capital that Germany would follow a successful attack against Serbia with military intervention in Turkey (Pomiankowski to Conrad (Res. Nr. 560), 10 September 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120). Pomiankowski had warned Conrad about German intentions in the near east several times before this, suggesting that Berlin was striving to establish a relationship with Turkey analogous to that of Britain's with Egypt. He wrote in June “They (the German representatives in Turkey and Persia) seem to hold fast to the extremely egotistical point of view that Turkey, Persia and the entire near east must become an exclusively German domain and are more inclined to view us as rivals than as allies.” Pomiankowski to Conrad, 10 June 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:121, see also Bolfras to Conrad (containing an excerpt of a report by Pomiankowski, Res. Nr. 65, 4 February 1915), 16 February 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:121. For a detailed discussion of Habsburg policy in the near and middle east, see Peter Jung, Der k. u. k. Wüstenkrieg, Österreich-Ungarns im Vorderen Orient 1915-1918, (Vienna, 1992).

\textsuperscript{22}Following the 20 November meeting, both Conrad and Metzgar referred to Falkenhayn as a swindler (Gauner). In response, Falkenhayn became increasingly preemptory, adding fuel to Conrad's fire. Falkenhayn ended a note of 22 November by writing, “If I have resorted now and then to lecturing, I ask you to overlook this. I have not been able to make the issues that I have to address clear in any other way.” Falkenhayn to Conrad, 23 November 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 18076/III.
Unable to convince Falkenhayn to commit himself fully to the Balkans, Conrad responded by loosening the ties between the two armies. On 25 November, he informed Falkenhayn that Mackensen would no longer have command authority over Habsburg units. One day earlier, the AOK and the Foreign Ministry had agreed to inform Falkenhayn that the AOK had decided to create a military administration for Serbia in which Germany was to remain uninvolved. They also resolved to ask Germany to cede control over the Serbian railroads as soon as Falkenhayn agreed to the creation of an occupation government.

In the next month, continued disagreements about short-term strategy caused the growing tension to escalate into a complete breakdown of communications between the two commanders. The operational success

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23 Conrad to Falkenhayn, 25 November 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 18380. Falkenhayn's reply argued that Germany, by participating in the Serbian offensive, was simply doing a job which should have been done by Austria-Hungary alone—an accusation which enraged Conrad even more. His extensive marginal notes accused Germany of, among others, planning for a Berlin-Baghdad railroad and thus furthering its own interests in the Balkans (he was, of course, correct). Falkenhayn to Conrad, 26 November 1915, in Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 18380.

24 Kundmann Tagebuch, 24 November 1915.
of the Central Powers, which had persuaded the Serbian commander Radomir Putnik to order an attempted breakout to Salonika on 15 November, had not convinced the Serbian government to concede defeat.\textsuperscript{25} Sarrail’s forces at Salonika remained a danger, but the potential of Greek or Rumanian intervention, or of an Italian landing in Albania threatened the Monarchy’s control over the Balkans just as much. Moreover, Conrad (rightfully) suspected Bulgaria of being more interested in cementing its power in the Balkans than in helping the Central Powers win the war.\textsuperscript{26} In the

\textsuperscript{25}This frustrated Conrad so much that he suggested to Burián on 29 November that the Central Powers should simply declare to the world that Serbia no longer existed. Conrad to Burián, 29 November 1915, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 18357.

\textsuperscript{26}This distrust was exacerbated by repeated Bulgarian demands that Austria-Hungary provide the Bulgarian army with food, clothing and munitions. The tone and content of Bulgaria’s demands, which continued into 1916, demonstrate its power as a needed ally, but more importantly, its understanding of its favored status in German eyes. Conrad’s responses (and the comments of the rest of the AOK) show both a repressed anger at Sofia’s demands, and an increasing resentment at the Monarchy’s weakness. In one of the first of these requests, Bulgaria asked Austria-Hungary to provide 950,000 rifles, 30,000 carbines, 100 million rounds of small-arms ammunition, 270 machine guns with 15 million rounds of ammunition, and 24 mountain howitzers along with 24,000 shells. The Monarchy clearly could not come close to filling such a request. Op. Abt., Karton 36, Op. Nr. 15655.
face of all of these threats, Conrad could see no other answer but to continue the attack in the Balkans until all threats were eliminated. Only then could the allies safely turn to another front. Consequently, Conrad tried again to persuade Falkenhayn to participate.  

Falkenhayn again refused. Without his support, and worried about the danger of drawing Greece into the war, Conrad eventually rejected an attack against Sarrail. The defeat of Montenegro and securing of Cattaro, however, remained essential. To accomplish this, Conrad secretly ordered the Chief of Staff of the Third Army (still nominally under the command of Mackensen) to prepare for an advance into Montenegro.

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27 Initially, in addition to an attack against Mt. Lovcen to protect Cattaro, Conrad hoped to move into Greece and force Sarrail to evacuate his beachhead. The goal of the Balkan operation was to be the "(the) total expulsion of the Entente from the Balkans and their complete discrediting there. . . " Conrad to Falkenhayn, 3 December 1915, O. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 18695.

28 Falkenhayn to Conrad, 4 December 1915, NL Conrad, 1450:120.


Falkenhayn’s rejection of the attack toward Salonika, followed by a demand for the transfer of two more German divisions from the Balkans,\textsuperscript{31} set off a furious exchange of notes between the two which led to a complete breakdown of communication.\textsuperscript{32} The two remained essentially out of contact from 27 December until 26 January. Only the efforts of Cramon, the German military representative at the AOK, and the simple inability to run the war without communicating brought the two together again. The underlying bitterness between the two never really disappeared, despite a surface level cordiality.

The conflict between the two leaders had a number of causes. One of these was simply the emotional


antagonism that had built up between them. With very different styles of communication and personal interaction, the two simply did not get along well. The disagreement over the proper course of action in the Balkans added to this already existing dislike. With both extremely tense, tempers flared quickly and easily.

Just as important, however, was Conrad's belief in the need to carve out a space for the Monarchy outside of German control. The debate over operations in the Balkans was a debate over the Monarchy's future. Falkenhayn's unwillingness to follow Conrad's lead in the Balkans, and the hints Conrad received of German plans for the region after the war, threatened Conrad's entire plan for reconstructing the Monarchy. Accordingly, if Germany would not support the Monarchy in the Balkans, the Monarchy would have to act alone. The same dynamic drove Conrad's decision to attack Italy. There were several reasons why Conrad picked this moment to commit to his long-desired revenge attack, but prominent among them was the need to restore the military credibility of the Monarchy as a way to restore its political and diplomatic prestige.
Conrad and the AOK at the end of October began to think in strategic terms about the Monarchy's options. Unsurprisingly, Conrad, Schneller, the head of the Italian-Group, and Metzgar, Conrad's chief of staff, thought first about finally attacking the hated Italians.\textsuperscript{33} Schneller and Metzgar decided to pursue the issue further in the first days of December and Schneller, on Metzgar's instructions, drew up a report regarding the proposed attack.\textsuperscript{34} Discussing the

\textsuperscript{33}Schneller Tagebuch, 29 November 1915. In his memoirs, Krauss claims that he had also decided at this time that an attack against Italy was desirable, but was unable to convince Conrad to talk with him about his idea. Krauss, pp. 182-4.

\textsuperscript{34}Schneller, Tagebuch, 3 December. The referat is in Op. Abt., Karton 528, Op. Nr. 21200.

Conrad's recent marriage, and his decision to bring Gina with him to Teschen, had changed the internal dynamics at AOK. Many writers have stressed the unprofessional and unbusinesslike atmosphere at Teschen, frequently blaming this on the presence of women. Theodor Ritter von Zeynek, who spent much of the war in staff positions at the front, wrote in his memoirs "The difference in the life at the AOK compared to life with the 7. Army Command was huge. The manner of work and behavior were bureaucratic: one was here a strategist, a diplomat, a politician, writer, draftsman, a creator of documents . . . schemer, courtier or eccentric, rider, tennis player, coffee house visitor or a mixture of all of these, but one was not a real soldier. The older men glowed with self-confidence, the younger through their sharp critiques, all were filled with a feeling of professorial divinity, one was terribly clever, on was infallible, since there was no superior court."

Schneller, admittedly somewhat of a loner and a
proposal with Conrad, the three agreed to attack Italy if they could get German assistance.\textsuperscript{35}

Planning to attack Italy represented a remarkable turn-around from the pessimistic attitude Conrad had displayed in the early summer. While the military victories of the summer and fall had not reversed the Monarchy's material and manpower disadvantage, they had changed the diplomatic situation. If there was

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workaholic, who had left his wife behind at the beginning of the war and lived alone throughout the conflict, commented scathingly "Last evening again to a movie with all of the wives. Ms. Appollonio, as Kless explained to me, is already intimate with Gina. And out there in Görz our brave soldiers bleed. Who thinks of them. . . . I could sure tell the historians something." (Schneller Tagebuch, 12 November 1915). He decided not to call on Gina, although he doubted that Conrad would understand his reasoning. (Schneller, Tagebuch, 16 November 1915).

To what extent this was really a problem is debateable. Many of the problems to which Zeynek refers existed well before Conrad was married. Indeed, in an important way, the marriage may have cleared Conrad's mind to pay more attention to his work. Although he claimed in his letters to Gina that he kept his feelings (which bordered occasionally on clinical depression) hidden from his subordinates, and that they did not impair his work, it is hard to imagine that her absence and inavailability did not weigh on his mind.

On the other hand, Zeynek's critique was indeed on the mark. Conrad made only three visits to the front during his tenure as Chief of Staff. Kundmann, who's role went far beyond that usually accorded to an aide-de-camp, had never been in battle until he came under artillery fire during Conrad's visit to Lemberg in June of 1915. Schneller, in fact, appears to have been one of the few to make frequent trips to inspect the areas under the control of the AOK.

\textsuperscript{35}Kundmann Tagebuch, 3 December 1915.
ever a time when the Central Powers could propose peace without looking like they had lost the will to fight, it was the late fall of 1915. But Conrad after October did not return to possibilities of a compromise peace. Instead, he now favored launching a third consecutive offensive in an effort to knock Italy out of the war.36

As early as 10 December, and twice more in the next week, Conrad pleaded with Falkenhayn to back an attack against Italy.37 But, already having secured Wilhelm’s approval for a winter offensive against Verdun,38 Falkenhayn quickly rejected Conrad’s pleas in favor of his own plan. Importantly, Conrad believed Falkenhayn’s refusal had more to do with a concern for the postwar balance of power than it did with

36It is now clear that Russia would have rejected any peace feelers during this period. What is striking, though, is that Conrad did not suggest even floating a trial balloon, but instead tried to compensate for military inferiority by attacking.


strategic concerns. Germany, Conrad claimed, was either afraid of alienating Italy (leading to postwar trade problems with Rome), or, more likely, did not want Austria-Hungary to become too successful and thus too powerful.39

Conrad’s memoranda to Falkenhayn asking him to join in attacking Italy provide the most direct evidence for the reasoning behind this decision. Conrad argued that the Central Powers had to take the initiative or face defeat. Unable to overpower Russia, only the French and Italian fronts offered the possibility of bringing the war to a rapid end. While an attack on France would be more significant, even Falkenhayn admitted success in the west was unlikely. Moreover, the Monarchy dared not hope that Italy would repeat its mistakes of 1915, and had to assume it would pose a significant threat in 1916. Attacking

39Schneller, Tagebuch, 17 December 1915. The authors of the official history cite a memorandum Falkenhayn wrote to Wilhelm to support Conrad’s fear. Falkenhayn wrote that the Italian operation would benefit the Austria-Hungary but not Germany, and that the domestic opposition to the war in Italy would neutralize the Italian danger. This memo, however, was designed to win Wilhelm’s support for an attack on Verdun, and is not necessarily a true indication of Falkenhayn’s ideas. OULK, Vol. III., p. 595.
Italy, in contrast, launched in March (to avoid harsh winter weather) offered the possibility of driving Italy out of the war completely, or at least rendering it incapable of taking the offensive. Such an operation, according to Conrad, would require only 16 divisions, most of them supplied by Austria-Hungary. After humbling Italy, these units could be transferred to France, where a demoralized Entente could be beaten decisively.\(^4\)

Conrad's public arguments for the proposed attack against Italy were to a large extent truthful, although it is hard to see him accepting a massive transfer of Habsburg troops to the western front.\(^5\) News from the home front arriving during this period accentuated the disintegrating balance of power facing the Monarchy. In December, the Intelligence Department reported that, while the Monarchy's manpower reserve would last only nine more months,


41 Most likely, he never intended to honor this suggestion, which was probably included merely to attract Falkenhayn's attention.
Russia's sufficed for 24. The agricultural sector of the economy was also suffering heavily, and the Hungarian government found it necessary to begin bread rationing for the first time in December. Despite attempts to buy grain from Rumania, these shortages would only grow worse in 1916. Given these problems, Conrad's belief that the Central Powers had to seize the initiative and prevent the war from turning into an attritional struggle was true enough.

However, it would be a mistake to argue that the decision was based entirely on military criteria. In one sense, the decision to attack Italy simply

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42 Schneller Tagebuch, 13 December 1915

43 Although the harvest of 1914 covered 90% of the prewar demand of Hungary, in 1915 it met only 60% of prewar needs. Galantai, Hungary in the First World War, pp. 80-5, 90-5. Even so, Hungary was in a much better position than Cisleithania, and Stürgkh and Tisza fought over grain supplies throughout the war. See, for example, the protocol of the GMR meeting of 12 December 1915 in Komjathy, Protokolle, pp. 315-51, especially 326-30.

44 This desire to maintain the initiative is both telling and typical of Conrad. In contrast, Schneller believed at the turn of the year that the war would last at least a year, and possibly well into 1917, because both sides were so evenly matched. As a result, he wrote, the Monarchy needed to begin conserving manpower immediately and avoiding all actions that did not bring the end closer. Schneller Tagebuch, 1 January 1916.
represented an extension of the policy of the summer. Conrad had chosen to focus on Russia in the spring because Falkenhayn insisted and because the battlefield situation of the Monarchy was desperate. In the summer, he had pursued the retreating Russian armies to try and force a separate peace that would allow him to turn against Italy. Now, with Russia licking its wounds and Serbia seemingly driven out of the war, Conrad could finally attack the enemy he believed the most important.45

Finally, however, the issue of German-Habsburg relations also played a key role in his decision. This is best illustrated by Conrad's decision to go ahead with the attack even after Falkenhayn continued to refuse to participate. After he and Falkenhayn resumed communications, Conrad tried at least twice to persuade him to commit German units in support of the attack.46 Despite Falkenhayn's refusal, Conrad decided

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45 Accordingly, Conrad in December and January rejected at least two proposal attacks against Russia, from Cristophori, the head of the Russia Group (Schneller Tagebuch, 16 December 1916), and from Linsingen, one of the leading German commanders in the east. Falkenhayn to Conrad, 10 January 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 490, Op. Nr. 19999.

46 Kundmann Tagebuch, 26 January 1915, 3 February 1915. 322
on the offensive anyway, and preparations began during the second week of February.\textsuperscript{47} The attack, originally planned for the beginning of April, would be postponed until 15 May by predictably bad weather in the mountains forming the deployment areas.

Conrad's willingness to attack without German assistance is telling. On the one hand, this was simply an example of the way his mind worked. Initially realistic about the forces required to attack Italy, he soon let his desire to launch the offensive override any considerations of manpower or logistics. This again was Conrad relying on instinct and "feel" rather than rational policy making.

But Conrad was also thinking here of the post-war relationship between the Monarchy and the German Empire. Especially against its hereditary enemy, the Monarchy had to be militarily successful in order to win the trust and affection of its citizens. Accordingly, Conrad had never meant for German troops

\textsuperscript{47}Schneller, Tagebuch, 8-10 February.
to play a leading role in the offensive. Even in November, Conrad had intended that Habsburg troops carry out the initial assaults. Unlike the Serbian offensive, moreover, the attack against Italy would be commanded de facto as well as de jure by an Austrian. In this way, it would demonstrate clearly the Monarchy's vitality and thus win the support of its citizens.

The friction between Conrad and his German allies simply added fuel to this fire. By January, Conrad's suspicion of his German ally had grown to overwhelming proportions. He commented to Johann Salis-Seewis, soon appointed head of the occupation administration in Poland, "The Germans are brutal, impudent, and high-handed. The tone of a gentleman makes no impression on them. It is best to pay them back in their own coin."48 This anger must have contributed to Conrad's willingness to go it alone against Italy. Logical considerations of grand strategy and the emotional response to German arrogance reinforced each other easily.

48Kundmann Tagebuch, 2 January 1916.
Before he could turn his attention completely toward Italy, though, the problems in the Balkans had to be solved. The Franco-British landings at Salonika and the Italian landings at Valona both threatened the Monarchy's new control over the region. Moreover, Bulgaria repeatedly ignored the limits agreed to in the military convention, leading Conrad to suspect that it hoped to subvert the Monarchy's postwar control over the area. Finally, the willingness of Greece and Rumania to remain neutral was by no means assured. These problems would claim Conrad's attention through much of the winter of 1915-16 and lead him into a political struggle with Burián and Tisza that would reverberate throughout the remainder of his period as head of the AOK.

2. Conrad's Efforts at Political Autonomy

The challenge facing Conrad was considerably more complicated than a simple struggle with Falkenhayn over military strategy. In order to implement his vision of a renewed and reinvigorated Monarchy, Conrad had to win a position of political power within
Austria-Hungary. As with military strategy, this meant negotiating with a number of different coalition members. Although Conrad saw the army as politically neutral and thus somehow "outside" of this coalition, he was in reality simply another contestant for political power. His quest for this power was again made more difficult by the cross-cutting nature of the two coalitions with which he had to deal. The story of the winter of 1916 is how Conrad attempted to strengthen his political position, and secure the long-term interest of the Monarchy, in the face of challenges from within Austria-Hungary and outside of it.

The military victories of the summer of 1915 swung the balance of power between the military and political leaders in the direction of the former. The relationship between the AOK and Vienna (and Budapest) had never been comfortable. Conrad had long blamed the politicians for the war and the weakened condition of the army. Moreover, convinced of the inability of the political leadership and the nationalized bureaucracy to control nationalism, he had repeatedly demanded the
appointment of military officers to civilian administrative positions. Conrad's demands were not new, but the confidence with which he put them forth was. Repeatedly, Conrad clashed with Burían, the two minister-presidents, and others in the bureaucracy. The result was a gradual but quite perceptible increase in the tension between the two power-centers, and an increasing dislike for Conrad among civilian policy makers.

Throughout the late summer and early autumn, Conrad continued to consolidate his power over the prosecution of the war. Thus, he continued to demand that the civil authorities allow the military full control over information. Conversely, he continued to keep the civilian leadership in the dark about events at the front, prompting more complaints from Vienna.

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49 See Führ, chapter one.

50 For example, in Conrad's demand to Heinold, who had asked the governors of Triest, Innsbruck, and other areas near the Italian front for information about events at the front, that all requests for such information should be directed to the military. Op. Abt., Karton 40, Op. Nr. 16938.

51 Bolfras to Conrad, NL Conrad, 1450. Conrad to Bolfras, 10 October 1915, in Kundmann, Tagebuch, 10 October 1915.
Moreover, Conrad in the first days of October again demanded the acceleration of munitions production, regardless of Tisza's rejection of this idea.\textsuperscript{52}

In the same way, Conrad demanded changes in the legal and political system designed to help the army fight the war. Conrad continued to attempt to force changes in how the state was run in the short term in order to strengthen the war effort. Three times in October, for instance, the army accused the government of incompetence in its handling of food production and distribution.\textsuperscript{53} The AOK also expanded its demands for the implementation of severe penalties, including confiscation of property, and even allowing the stripping of the citizenship of the offender, for those convicted of treason and crimes against the war effort (\textit{Kriegsmacht}). Most notably, the AOK hoped to apply these punishments to representatives of the Reichsrat who were out of the country.\textsuperscript{54} Conrad also demanded that measures be taken to restrict the activity of foreigners within the Monarchy,

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\textsuperscript{53}See Führ, pp. 123-4 and the documents cited therein.

\textsuperscript{54}See Führ, pp. 106-7.
which, he argued, had lowered the morale of the army from the first days of the war.  

Similarly, over Stürgkh's objections, the trial of Karel Kramár, a Czech nationalist arrested in May by the army for anti-military activities, began during the fall of 1915. Kramár, active in the (anti-monarchy) Young Czech party before the war, had begun in late 1914 efforts to contact the Russian government, to organize a movement in Bohemia in support of the idea of a Slavic confederation, and to keep in touch with the Czech émigrés working behind the scenes in the Entente states. Unsurprisingly, Conrad and the AOK had taken a dim view of Kramár's activities and had arrested him in March of 1915. Stürgkh immediately contested the army's decision, partly in an attempt to protect his power within the government, but also because he believed arresting and condemning Kramár would only inflame anti-monarchy sentiment in Bohemia. Conrad and the AOK refused to accept, or even to listen to, Stürgkh's pleas. As a result, after a brief trial, Kramár was convicted and sentenced to death by a military

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court (a sentence later commuted by Karl). To Conrad, punishment was, in the short term at any rate, the only possible solution to the anti-military agitation of nationalists like Kramár. Until the Monarchy had solved its long-term problems, appeasement would simply encourage resistance.

Still, although Conrad viewed these short-term measures as essential, the civil-military crisis of the winter of 1916 revolved around issues of war aims and grand strategy. The long-term reconstruction of the Monarchy, bringing about as a consequence the shoring up of the walls provided by the army, remained Conrad’s primary goal. Convinced that he alone (or at least the army) was acting in the interests of the Monarchy as a whole, Conrad ignored the protests of Burián, Tisza, and others. Paralleling the disagreement between Conrad and Falkenhayn (although with less personal animosity), the resulting conflict was an attempt to implement crucial political reforms.

Conrad’s involvement in an attempted coup against Stürgkh in September 1915 was a precursor to this expanded civil-military conflict. On 25 September, Conrad submitted a position paper to the Emperor calling for the replacement
of Stürgkh as Minister-President. Unsurprisingly, this memo reflected his plans for the reconstruction of the Monarchy into a stable body. Thus, he warned against the dangerous spread of nationalism within the army and the state, which, he argued, Stürgkh had allowed to continue unopposed. Indeed, much of the note was a list of regiments and nationalities that had proven themselves untrustworthy during the war (the only nationality he identified as having performed well was the Dalmatians). Moreover, he argued that ensuring the stability of the Monarchy in the future would require skillful and active governance. Stürgkh, he claimed, was unwilling or unable to implement the required changes. Thus, he had to be replaced with someone who would protect the long-range interests of the Monarchy.

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57 For the background to this affair, and a complete copy of the note submitted by Conrad, see Führ, *Das Armeeoberkommando*, pp. 163-69.

58 The note was actually signed by Friedrich. Presumably, Conrad believed Friedrich's name would lend more weight to the proposal. The list of changes Conrad suggested were necessary differed little from those he had demanded since 1907. "In addition to a reform of the organization of the Monarchy, its states and provinces appropriate to the results of the campaign and a careful revision of all international agreements, fundamental reforms must lead to an internal consolidation. The indispensable strengthening of the power of the state and the army is unthinkable without the complete destruction of all forces opposed to the Monarchy, the education of all nationalities in an Austrian patriotism, a generous economic improvement to
There is no doubt that Conrad hoped that Franz Joseph would replace Stürgkh. He had long complained about the Minister-President's unwillingness to adopt and enforce the measures Conrad thought necessary to "cleanse" the state. However, Conrad's involvement in this affair was primarily a result of the urging of Marterer and the Oberhofmeister (one of the highest ranking officials at court and especially trusted by Franz Joseph), Alfred Fürst Montenuovo. Conrad was not at all unwilling to demand changes in the leadership of the Monarchy (he had, after all, fought with Aehrenthal for years before the death of the Foreign Minister). He lacked, however, the political skills and connections necessary to this kind of intrigue. As such, it

achieve a greater human and material resource base by limiting emigration, the creation of one unified, reliable corps from the corps of bureaucrats currently split into national groups, [and] a fundamental change in the laws regarding administration, education and the army. . . ."

59See, for example, Conrad to Bolfras, 21 May 1915, NL Bolfras, B/75.

60The further history of this affair demonstrates this best. Although Franz Joseph did not immediately reject this proposal, he did reject the choice of Hohenloe and several other potential candidates (Marterer to Conrad, NL Conrad, 1450:120). This posed real problems for the conspirators, as they had apparently not thought to come up with a second choice. Replying to this letter, Conrad simply stated that he was too isolated from politics to suggest another option
represented merely the first, tentative escalation in the running political battle between Teschen and Vienna.

With feelings already running high, the need to wrestle with the future of the Balkans set off an explosion. Although Conrad and Schneller were in the beginning of December 1915 already engaged in discussions about an attack against Italy, such an attack could not be launched until late winter at the earliest. In the meantime, Conrad believed, the Monarchy had to clear up the confusion in the Balkans. Abandoning efforts to convince Falkenhayn to join the Monarchy in driving Sarrail’s forces out of Salonika, Conrad decided on a limited offensive into Montenegro and Albania, hoping to capture the heights overlooking the Habsburg port of Cattaro and to limit the threat of an Italian landing at Valona. This attack, begun just

(adside from General Fürst Schönburg, who Franz Joseph had already rejected). This does not strike one as likely behavior for a dedicated conspirator, nor was it simply an attempt to cut his losses. Instead, it underlines Conrad’s secondary role in this scheme. Over the next weeks, Marterer’s group lost momentum and the proposal was eventually rejected. However, other groups took up the campaign leading to a cabinet reshuffle which saw Hohenloe replace Heinold as Minister of the Interior, a change which Conrad praised.

Again, Conrad’s unwillingness to accept ambiguity, whether intellectually or on the battlefield, is noteworthy.
after the beginning of the new year, proved quite successful militarily. Habsburg troops occupied Mount Lovcen, the most significant defensive position near Cattaro on 11 January and Cetinje, the capital of Montenegro, two days later. Politically, however, the situation was more problematic.  

The fate of Montenegro, Albania and the policy the Monarchy should adopt toward the Balkans as a whole formed the root of the trouble. Initially unsure of the best way to deal with Montenegro, Conrad soon decided that annexation was the only acceptable solution to the threat posed by the nationalist agitation from that country.  

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62 The military details can be followed in ÖULK, Vol. IV., pp. 34-65. My discussion of the issues treated in this section is influenced by the detailed study by Rudolf Jerábek, Militär und Politik in der ersten Jahreshälfte 1916, Hausarbeit am Institut für Österr. Geschichtsforschung, (Vienna, 1983). Because Jerábek’s account is quite detailed, I have dispensed with a lengthy chronological narrative and focused instead on issues around which the civil-military conflicts centered.

63 Kundmann Tagebuch, 2 January 1916,

64 Conrad to Burián, 17 January 1916, Chef Geheim Nr. 37, in NL Conrad, 1450:123. Conrad remained at this point willing to at least consider the reduction of Montenegro to a splinter governed essentially by the Monarchy, although he made it clear that he considered even this only marginally acceptable. Any other solution would allow Montenegro to
somewhat surprisingly, had reversed his position and accepted the annexation of Serbia at the 7 January meeting of the Joint Council of Ministers.\(^6^5\) However, he remained determined to limit Habsburg control over Montenegro to some form of protectorate. Informal (or at least incomplete) control, he argued, would yield all the advantages of annexation and avoid the tricky problem of how to integrate the territory into the Monarchy politically. Moreover, a quick and generous settlement with Montenegro would offer important propaganda advantages. It might even make the Entente willing to negotiate with the Central Powers, perhaps leading to a compromise peace. Annexation, on the other hand, would reinforce the Entente's suspicion of the Central Powers, and convince it that the war had to continue until Germany and Austria-Hungary collapsed. Unsurprisingly, Conrad disagreed, arguing that a gentle peace would merely convince the Entente that the Monarchy lacked confidence.

remain a "Bubo (the growth produced by the Bubonic plague) on the body [of the Monarchy]." This phrase is quite striking in the context of Conrad's Social Darwinism.

\(^6^5\)Komjathy, Protokolle, pp. 352-381.
These differences became obvious during the month of January. Despite the ease with which the military rolled into Montenegro, concluding a peace agreement between the two states proved impossible. Initial efforts at a short-term armistice broke down quickly, and negotiations for a broader settlement failed as well. In the meantime, internal discussions over peace terms within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs broke down after arguments between Burian and the representative of the AOK, Colonel Slameczka. With both Burian and the German government advocating


67For these negotiations, see the Chef Geheim series for January in NL Conrad 1450:123. Initially determined to reach an agreement between governments, Conrad first proposed simply announcing to the world that Montenegro no longer existed, then suggested a plebiscite in Montenegro which would affirm publicly the popular support for a Habsburg government (Chef Geheim 69, 24 January 1916).

68Chef Geheim Nrs. 39 (in which Conrad asks Bolfras to intervene with Burian), 41, 47, and 53. Much of this discussion revolved around the conditions of a military convention that Montenegro would be required to sign. Conrad demanded a convention so tight that Montenegro's independence would be simply pro forma, while Burian would yield at least a little decision-making power to the Montenegrin government. Chef Geheim 89, 27 January 1916. See also the guidelines for peace which Burian transmitted to the Habsburg plenipotentiary on 19 January, Chef Geheim 90.
increased concessions to speed up negotiations, Conrad grew increasingly frustrated. In private, he commented that Burián’s position toward the Balkans necessitated his replacement. Although he kept this sentiment to himself, the tension was obvious at a face-to-face meeting between the two on 1 February.

Only the Montenegrin government’s refusal to continue negotiations ended the quarrel. On 18 February, Burián accepted Conrad’s demand for the formation of a provisional military administration for the area, essentially conceding that talks had broken off. Rejecting a plea to keep the formation of a military government as quiet as possible, Conrad was only too happy to remind Burián of his political victory. In a separate note on 23 February, Conrad wrote what was essentially a declaration of victory. Saying he had always been skeptical of Burián’s effort

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69 Burián to Conrad, 22 January 1916, Chef Geheim Nr. 60, in NL Conrad, 1450:123.


71 Jerábek reproduces Kundmann’s stenographic protocol of this meeting in Militär und Politik, pp. 42-44.

72 Chef Geheim Nr. 162, NL Conrad, 1450:123. Burián’s note
to reach a peace agreement, he added, "But the lesson, that in bitterly serious times of war there is no room for diplomatic experiments, will be useful for us in the future. . ." 73

The momentary resolution of the Montenegrin issue offered no opportunity to relax. Instead, the disputed future of Albania demanded immediate attention. The Habsburg offensive had aimed not just at Montenegro, but also to capture the northern half of Albania and forestall (or, later, win a breathing space against) an Italian landing at Valona. However, with Falkenhayn unwilling to commit German troops, Conrad grudgingly accepted the need to call on Bulgaria for assistance. 74 This led to a renewed and intensified conflict between Conrad and Burián over the future of the Balkans.

was dated 18 February, while Conrad replied on 23 February.

73 Conrad to Burián, 23 February 1916, Chef Geheim 165, NL Conrad, 1450:123.

74 AOK, Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 29448 of 23 December 1915. Bulgaria, it should be noted, was not immediately willing to join such an attack. As late as 13 January, Burián proved unsuccessful at persuading Bulgaria (and Greece, which Conrad also hoped to persuade to participate) to advance further into Albania. Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nr. 20476.
The root of the disagreement lay again in their respective views of the Monarchy’s role in the Balkans. Building on the prewar policy of Aehrenthal and Berchtold, Burián viewed Albania as a useful buffer state. Under the diplomatic and economic thumb of the Monarchy, an independent Albania would limit the power of Bulgaria and prevent an Italian intervention into the region. Conrad, on the other hand, believed that an independent Albania would inevitably collapse. The only solution was to annex the northern half of the country and distribute the rest as booty to Greece and, reluctantly, Bulgaria. This would cement the Monarchy’s power in the Balkans, add to the manpower resources the army, and solidify the Monarchy’s access to the Adriatic.

It is worth emphasizing that Conrad’s reasoning about Albania was qualitatively different from the basis for his demands for the annexation of Serbia and Montenegro. Albania, unlike the other Balkan states, posed no threat of destabilizing nationalism to the Monarchy. As a result, Conrad’s calculations were

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based exclusively on strategic concerns. While military considerations were never absent from his thoughts about Serbia and Montenegro (he was especially interested in adding the Serbian population to the manpower pool of the army), the fundamental problem which drove his ideas toward these states was that of nationalism. The difference in his approaches toward these three states speaks volumes about his fundamental obsession regarding the danger of nationalism.

Conrad grew more insistent on maximizing the Monarchy's gains in the Balkans as it became more and more evident that German leaders now intended to establish an independent Poland as a buffer state. Conrad believed such a state would prove disastrous to the future of the Monarchy. Nevertheless, fully aware of the Monarchy's military dependence on Germany, Conrad accepted during the winter of 1916 that hopes of an Austro-Polish solution were dead. The only acceptable alternative was a partition, at worst along the wartime administrative borders then in place, but preferably along the lines of the partition of 1795. In any case, the loss of substantial winnings in the
north made it even more important to solidify Habsburg control over the Balkans. Any other solution, he believed, would imperil the position of the Monarchy as a Great Power.

Unfortunately, Bulgaria’s determination to carve out its own sphere of influence in Albania, meant that Conrad and Burián’s disagreement played out on a very public stage. As early as the middle of January, it became apparent that Bulgaria had no intention of withdrawing from areas both Burián and Conrad believed should remain under Habsburg control. During the last weeks of January and the month of February, Bulgarian forces settled into several key towns (most importantly the towns of Prizren and Pristina) and set up an administrative apparatus that was quickly taken over by Bulgarian civil officials. Tension between these forces and the Habsburg units located nearby ran high, and several times armed skirmishes were barely avoided.

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76 Conrad to Burián, 14 January 1916, Chef Geheim Nr. 29, NL Conrad 1450:123.
The details of the developing crisis are not important here.\textsuperscript{77} What I want to stress instead is how attempts to solve the problem contributed to the growing tension between Conrad and the political leadership in Vienna. Throughout February and March, Conrad consistently blamed Burián for the gaps in the military convention that Sofia exploited. While the agreement laid out specific borders and areas of responsibility east of the Maritsa river, it did not address the fate of the territory west of this line. While Burián (and of course Conrad) always intended that this would fall under the control of the Monarchy, Bulgaria exploited this loophole to claim a role in administering the area. As Conrad correctly suspected, Sofia intended to parlay this temporary administration into permanent postwar control. Although Conrad had not objected to this lacuna during the negotiations, he now felt justly angered by Burián's supposed carelessness, and used this as a weapon against the Foreign Minister.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{77}For a detailed discussion of the course of these developments, see Jerábek, \textit{Militär und Politik}, pp. 32-74.  

\textsuperscript{78}Burián had kept Conrad fully informed of the progress of
Only Falkenhayn’s unwilling intervention to broker a compromise in the last days of March finally brought an end to the crisis, demonstrating that the situation was much more problematic than Conrad’s accusations implied. While Conrad railed against Burián’s inability to negotiate a solution to the problem, the fact remained that the Monarchy, preparing to launch an attack against Italy, simply lacked the military strength necessary to impose its will. This was accentuated by the fact that Falkenhayn, Bethmann and the German Foreign Office clearly favored Bulgaria. As a result, Conrad had no recourse other than demanding that Burián produce a diplomatic solution, and raging at the Germany preference for Bulgaria.

negotiations for a military convention. Although Conrad objected to the amount of territory explicitly promised to Bulgaria, he made no mention of the lack of explicit mention of the area west of the Bulgarian zone. Op. Abt., Karton 520, Op. Nrs. 14810/I (2 September), 14940 (4 September), and 14989 (5 September 1915).

79The Monarchy and Bulgaria divided occupation and administrative rights in the disputed cities and each pledged that wartime administration bore no relation to the eventual disposition of the area. See Kundmann Tagebuch, 23 March-1 April 1916 and Jerábek, Militär und Politik, pp. 93-94.
The areas of tension between Conrad and the political leadership were not, however, limited to foreign policy issues, nor was his anger directed solely toward Burián. In Poland, the unexpected death of the Governor of Galicia, General von Colard, in April reopened the debate about whether the army or the civil bureaucracy should govern the area and to what purpose. Convinced that civil administration would lead to an increase in nationalist agitation, Conrad had fought hard in the first months of the war for the appointment of an army officer as Governor. Stürgkh and Burián utilized the opportunity provided by Colard's death to reopen the question. Debate, often heated, continued into early May. Frustrated again, Conrad resorted to going behind Burián's back to appeal to the Emperor through Bolfras. Although Burián and Franz Joseph eventually accepted Conrad's demands for an officer as Colard's replacement, the struggle simply added to the tensions already present.

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80 See Führ, pp. 63-72.
81 On these debates, see Jerábek, Militär und Politik, pp. 97-110. The subject is discussed extensively in the
Throughout the winter, the conflicts between Tisza and Conrad became more and more significant as well. Tisza, of course, striving to Magyarize the newly acquired Serbs, or at least to prevent the army from turning them against a future Magyar government, continually rejected the annexation of Serbia, checking Conrad at every turn. In addition, even after the army won the right to erect a military administration to oversee the occupation of Serbia, Tisza contested the implementation of this control as much as possible. Conrad was especially incensed over Tisza’s decision to send ethnic Hungarians, unable to speak Serb, to teach in the newly established schools in occupied Serbia rather than Croats who knew the language. The winter also saw the extended debate over the state colors and the national anthem used in the army. Tisza’s complaint that the army was anti-Magyar simply added insult to injury. Observing this

entries of April in the Kundmann Tagebuch. In addition, see Conrad to Bolfras, 15 April 1916, 24 April 1916, and 29 April 1916, in NL Bolfras, B/75,

By Conrad in a discussion with Lieutenant Gellinek, the Chief of Staff of the Military Government of Serbia, cited in Kundmann Tagebuch, 19 February 1916.

Jerábek, Militär und Politik, p. 76.
from Teschen, Conrad remarked to the future emperor Karl on 21 January "One watches from behind the stage as the Monarchy falls apart."^{84}

In a letter to Tisza on 19 February, Conrad made a comment that summarized perfectly his views about government and society. The transformation of Serbia, Conrad wrote, could only succeed if politics were completely excluded from the process. "Politics," by which Conrad meant both the splintering liberal politics of the new democratic governmental system in the non-Hungarian areas of the Monarchy and the selfish efforts of the Magyars to maintain control over the nationalities, had caused the prewar disintegration of the solidarity that (Conrad assumed) had previously characterized the Monarchy. Only by excluding politics from government (a seemingly nonsensical statement to a liberal) could stability be restored.^{85} This meant depending on the army, for, to Conrad, the army was the only institution in the Monarchy which remained above (or perhaps outside) politics.

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^{84}Kundmann Tagebuch, 21 January 1916.

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All of these issues drove Conrad to make his hopes for a change in government more and more explicit. His references to the failings of the political leadership became increasingly frequent and bitter. More significantly, he became increasingly brash in his criticism of Burián. 86 A month later, on 30 March, he began a meeting with Burián with the words “Excellency, I come today in order to express my astonishment to you,” and the exchange, from Kundmann’s record, become quite heated.87

Increasingly confident of his military position, and frustrated with what he considered the diplomatic and political failures of Burián and Stürgkh, Conrad finally called again for Stürgkh’s replacement. He

85Conrad to Tisza, NL Conrad, 1450:123.

86While it is difficult to say specifically how much influence personalities played in the relationship between Conrad and Burián, it was quite clearly important. Conrad’s desire for clear, unambiguous problems and decisive, unhesitating decisions clashed deeply with Burián’s professorial personality and lengthy analyses of the issues at hand. After one extended meeting, Conrad complained to Kundmann “Burián has two systems. Either he avoids everyone, or he immediately seizes the initiative and talks uninterruptedly until the meeting is over and everyone goes away without any idea what he actually said.” Kundmann Tagebuch, 8 March 1916.

87Kundmann’s protocol is reprinted in Jerábek, Militär und Politik, pp. 91-92.
and Hohenlohe had remained in close contact after
Hohenlohe’s appointment as Minister of the Interior,®® and on 13 March the two discussed the possibility of
Stürgkh’s ouster. Conrad made it clear here that the
AOK preferred Hohenlohe as Stürgkh’s replacement.®® However, despite private musings about this matter,
Conrad did not go public with his demand until the
middle of May. Then, just before the beginning of the
offensive against Italy, Conrad pleaded with Franz
Joseph to reconstruct the government of the Monarchy.®° Stürgkh had to go, and Hohenlohe should replace him.
In addition, Conrad defended his treatment of Burían

88 Conrad had invited Hohenlohe to Teschen shortly after his
appointment (a record of their conversation is in kundmann
Tagebuch, 12 December 1915) and Conrad had mentioned to
Karl as early as 21 January that Hohenlohe should replace
Stürgkh as Minister-President. Kundmann Tagebuch, 21
January. Conrad’s association with Hohenlohe was widely
rumored in Viennese circles, See Redlich, Schicksaljahre
Österreichs,

85 See Kundmann’s protocol of this discussion, reprinted in

90 Not nearly as much is known about this incident as about
the attempted coup of September 1915, primarily because no
written plea was ever made. As far as can be discerned,
Burián’s recent failure to persuade the German government
to make concessions in Poland, combined with reports that a
member of the Foreign Ministry had told a Rumanian official
about the impending South Tirol offensive, formed the
immediate spur for Conrad’s action.

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and demanded the reform of the administration that controlled food distribution. All in all, he advocated a complete reconstruction of the political leadership of the Monarchy. Unfortunately for Conrad, Franz Joseph refused, and the two men parted after the Emperor, by Conrad’s account, rushed to reassure Conrad of his trust.¹¹ For the moment, the politicians had warded off Conrad’s attack. But, as long as the military situation remained favorable, the odds of Conrad’s launching another assault were high.

3. Conclusion

Militarily, the period from December 1915 until April of 1916 was relatively quiet for the Monarchy. With Serbia no longer a threat, and preparations for the offensive against Italy precluding any substantial operation elsewhere, the frontlines remained largely silent. Only

¹¹Conrad’s account of this to Kundmann is reprinted in Jerábek, Militär und Politik, pp. 114-16. From his account, the discussion must have been at times quite animated, with Franz Joseph telling Conrad at one point “Stop telling me about Hohenloe!”
the rapid advance into Montenegro and Albania in January broke this stillness.

But diplomatically and politically these months were full of activity. The advances of the summer and fall raised Conrad's confidence to new heights. Emboldened by success, Conrad abandoned his willingness for a compromise peace. Instead, Conrad worked hard to secure and use his military and political autonomy to win the war and secure the political reforms and territorial gains he believed the Monarchy had to have in order to survive. In many ways, Conrad's ideas for the future came through most clearly in the autumn of 1915 and the winter of 1916.

Conrad's position was a difficult one, for he faced opposition both from within the Monarchy and from his supposed allies. In each case, Conrad had to maneuver among a variety of competing forces in order to win support for his decisions, or at least the autonomy to go his own way. The relative weakness of the Monarchy made his task even more difficult. This weakness became a form of leverage in the first months of the war, but as the danger that the Monarchy would drop out of the war receded, so did German willingness to provide active support. With the
Monarchy seemingly out of danger, both external allies and internal factions felt free to press their own agendas.

The Monarchy in this was almost unique among the combatant powers. All of the countries involved in the war were members of military alliances. Only Great Britain, as head of the British Empire, had also to deal with a coalition within the state. Moreover, Britain's task was simpler than that of the Monarchy, for the issues and stakes involved in the British Empire by 1914 were much less weighty than those for the Monarchy. As a result, Conrad (and the other power centers within the army) faced a much more complicated political and diplomatic environment.

Confusing matters even further was the fact that the component power centers of the Monarchy felt free to negotiate independently with Germany, and vice versa. On one level, this was simply practical power politics. Magyar leaders for decades had seen an alliance with Germany as insurance of the great power position of the Monarchy, and thus worked hard to win and keep German friendship. It is not a surprise that Tisza periodically visited the German military headquarters, nor that he met
with Bethmann and Falkenhayn without any real coordination with Conrad.

But the ethnic tie between Germany and the Austro-Germans made affairs even more confusing. Paul Kennedy points to the fact that alliances are not the same as friendships. But, as he acknowledges, some people think they are. For the Monarchy, the fact that many of its citizens would have preferred to become part of Germany made policy and strategy difficult indeed. Ties between German and Austrian writers, businessmen and scholars threatened the Monarchy as dynasty just as much as Serbian or Italian irredentism.

Conrad during the late autumn and the winter of 1915 and 1916 worked hard to gain a position from which he could enforce his political and diplomatic goals. On the one hand, this meant winning the war. On the other, this meant clearing a position within both coalitions from which he could ensure that the reforms he believed essential were put in place, while warding off German efforts to integrate the Monarchy

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into a kind of Greater East European Coprosperity Sphere.

Conrad was thus in an extremely difficult position. In one sense, he dealt with this challenge quite well. Although he had not won German participation in the attack against Italy, he had at least retained the power to make strategic decisions and plans without German intervention. And, although he was unable force Stürgkh’s ouster, his political autonomy and influence in May of 1916 were at the highest point they would reach during the war.

At the same time, Conrad’s position was extremely fragile. His military and political influence depended entirely on continued military success. And here he had set the wheels in motion for a severe military setback. There were good strategic and political reasons to attack Italy. But operationally, Conrad’s long-planned “punitive expedition,” as Conrad called the offensive against Italy, promised disaster. Again, Conrad’s intuitive decision-making and reluctance to consider factors like terrain or logistics resulted in operations which had no real
chance for success. And military failure would leave his political and diplomatic position shaky at best.

But in April of 1916, this lay in the future. For the moment, Conrad, and the Monarchy, seemed powerful indeed. Conrad's latest attempt to replace Stürgkh had failed. But there was no reason to believe that the next attempt would not succeed.
In accordance with my thankless task I must return to the failed offensive against Italy, since I must prove the correctness of my thesis, that the great military-political decisions of our High Command need a controlling supervisor and that this control, if we don't want to follow the road to ruin, must be made real as quickly as possible. Wiesner to Burián, 25 June 1916.¹

[Koerber] agrees with me, that getting out of the war without a catastrophe is hardly imaginable for Austria. Redlich's diary entry of 17 July 1916.²

... I see already the sad consequences of this war and must observe, how German influence becomes ever more insistent—with that highhandedness ... that has made the Northern Germans so hated throughout the entire world. ... Conrad to Gina, 16 November 1916.³

The first week of the "Punitive Expedition," represented the high point of Conrad's career. Although


²Fellner, Schicksaljahre Österreichs, entry of 17 July 1916, p. 130.

³NL Conrad, 1450:367.
bad weather delayed the assault several times (it was initially planned for the beginning of April), the attack, begun on 15 May, seemed initially to promise great success. In Berlin to talk with Falkenhayn, Conrad basked in the attention given him by Wilhelm's wife, who professed to be greatly interested in the progress in the south. In Vienna, rumors regarding the imminent success began to spread quickly. Emboldened by success, Conrad wrote a long, self-congratulatory letter to Bolfras explaining the genesis of the offensive and demanding the centralization of control over the war effort in the hands of the AOK.

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4See the entries in Schneller, Tagebuch, 17 and 19 May 1916. On the offensive in general, see the second half of Pantenius, Der Angriffsgedanke.

5Excerpts of the records of this visit are reprinted in Jerábek, Militär und Politik, pp. 130-132. The conversation between Falkenhayn and Conrad, though civil, remained stuck on the same issues which had occupied them for months, primarily the fate of Poland.

6Fellner, Schicksaljahre Österreichs, 24 May 1916. Redlich wrote "What old Austria after two years of war has achieved!. This will dampen the arrogance of the self-confident men in Berlin a little bit.

7Reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 21 May 1916. See also Conrad to Bolfras, 23 May 1916, NL Conrad 1450:123, where Conrad reasserts the need to grant the AOK complete control over the war effort (although disingenuously writing that
Unfortunately for the Monarchy, the Russian attack in the east brought the hopes of politicians and generals crashing to the ground. Despite Conrad's frantic attempt to shift the blame, the plain fact of defeat could not be avoided. The Brusilov offensive did not represent the final collapse of the Monarchy. One can argue that the Central Powers in the late Fall of 1917 were in an ideal position to conclude a compromise peace under very favorable terms. For an observer in the summer of 1916, however, the Monarchy's future looked bleak indeed.

The temporary military collapse dealt a crushing blow to Conrad's efforts to win control over military strategy and political policy. Conrad fought a bitter and sustained rearguard action to retain his influence, but lost much of his power and prestige during the summer of 1916. Emotionally exhausted, Conrad's response to defeat was confused. After recovering from the initial defeats, though, his actions seem to revolve around a basic theme. By autumn, he reverted increasingly to arguing that the Monarchy had to summon all of its resources for the war effort. Conrad continued to believe that the Monarchy had he was not referring to any individual, but to the AOK as a
to win the war to make itself viable. Largely ignoring the possibility of a negotiated peace, Conrad called for total war in an effort to save the Monarchy. Instead, his demands led to his removal.

But, while Conrad called for total war against the Entente, military disasters persuaded him to call for a compromise peace in the Monarchy's struggle for autonomy within its alliance with Germany. Neither Conrad nor Vienna could ignore the need for German assistance, both military and economic, if the Monarchy was to ward off the Russian attack and stay in the war. Unfortunately, German support came at a price—the increasing control over the Monarchy by German commanders and the infiltration of its army by German troops. Accordingly, Conrad believed that the Monarchy should negotiate a new alliance treaty with Germany as soon as possible to freeze the future political relationship between the two states before the Monarchy's position grew even worse. Although negotiations proceeded slowly, this was in principle a fateful decision. From then on, the Monarchy could perhaps survive defeat. It could not, at least in the form the military believed necessary, survive victory.

whole).
1. Military Disaster

The Russian offensive in the southeast jumped off on 4 June 1916. Facing Habsburg troops who were both overconfident and stale, the Russians utilized careful planning and skillful tactics to break through the Habsburg front line. Already on the night of the attack, the Russian army had penetrated five miles into Habsburg territory. Although the advance was by no means uniformly successful, the collapse of their flanks quickly overwhelmed units who stood and fought. By the middle of June, the entire front from the Pripyets to Bukovina was reeling backward.

The immediate reaction of the AOK to news of the Russian attack was low key. Local intelligence reports had predicted such an effort for several weeks, and the AOK was confident that the army would repeat its defensive success of January. As the news filtered in, Conrad and several others celebrated Friedrich's birthday in Teschen with the Grand Duke and his wife (whom Conrad snidely called the
"real Marshal"). Schneller predicted confidently that the Russians would gain at most a few hundred yards.\(^8\)

However, the full extent of the collapse quickly became apparent. Initially, Conrad and especially Schneller, the head of the Italy-Group, fought hard to secure the continuation of the Italian offensive, pleading with Falkenhayn to send German troops to the east. Already on 7 June, though, Conrad reluctantly acknowledged that canceling the offensive might prove necessary.\(^9\) Hurriedly returning to Berlin the next day to meet with Falkenhayn again, Conrad informally accepted the need to limit the offensive against Italy.\(^10\) Two days later, on the heels of another battlefield collapse in the East, Schneller

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\(^8\)Schneller Tagebuch, 4 June 1916, cited also in Herwig, The First World War, p. 209. Here I should specify that I am addressing Conrad as an individual rather than as a collective "command." The variety of memoir and diary sources available for this period allows a sense as to the divisions and disagreements in the AOK, and these splits make it impermissible to use Conrad's name as an abstract label for the AOK as a whole.


informed Eugen that the AOK believed it must severely limit any further actions in the area.\textsuperscript{11} Conrad on 11 June told Kundmann "Now we are through" and claimed that the Monarchy must make peace.\textsuperscript{12}

Efforts to stabilize the front during the next ten weeks fell victim to shortages of men and equipment and an inability to convince the soldiers that they really should fight for the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{13} The Russian offensive eventually ground to a halt, stopped by a combination of German reinforcements and its own logistical difficulties. In the meantime, however, casualties among the Habsburg army amounted to around 750,000. Tellingly, 380,000 of these were prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{14} Not only did units already

\textsuperscript{11}Op. Abt., Karton 529, Op. Nr. 24969 and 24969/I. The AOK also ordered the transfer of a second division from the Italian front to the east, chosen on the basis of its national composition.

\textsuperscript{12}Kundmann Tagebuch, 11 June 1916.

\textsuperscript{13}Terstyansky, the commander of the 4\textsuperscript{th} Army, bearing the brunt of the Russian offensive, wrote Conrad that morale was very low, and that he had posted reliable units immediately behind the battle lines to ensure that the soldiers actually fought the enemy. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 19.

\textsuperscript{14}This is the figure given by Rothenberg in The Army of Francis Joseph, p. 197, and reproduced by Herwig, The First World War, p. 209. The official history lists Habsburg casualties as 464,382 men and 10,756 officers (ÖULK, Vol.
suspected of national discontent prove unreliable, but formerly trustworthy German and Magyar units also broke and ran. The assessment of members of the AOK that the situation was comparable to that of the Empire following the battle of Solferino in 1859 seemed on the mark.\textsuperscript{15}

The simultaneous collapse of the Russian front and the failure of his long-cherished Italian offensive in the first weeks of June threw Conrad into an emotional spiral, if not a clinical depression. Walking into the 8 June conference with Falkenhayn, Kundmann saw Conrad staring blankly at the map with his head between his hands, being lectured like a schoolchild by Falkenhayn.\textsuperscript{16} In his first letter to Bolfras following the collapse in the East, Conrad angrily denounced the diplomats, who had refused to

\textsuperscript{4, p. 663}). Rothenberg's figure is probably closer to the truth.

\textsuperscript{15}Herwig, The First World War, p. 215. The specific reference which Herwig cites here occurred in September, but the sentiment was widespread much earlier. Schneller's comment is indicative of the despair in the AOK. He wrote in his diary on 18 June "We are unable to appreciate the complete significance of these events that we are in the middle of. Perhaps not only the wire-pullers of the current war will fall, perhaps the entire systems will fall, yet, perhaps humankind will thereby move ahead a step.

\textsuperscript{16}Kundmann Tagebuch, 8 June 1916.
act to compensate for the superiority of the Entente.\textsuperscript{17} One could argue that Conrad was simply trying to shift attention away from the army and his command, and he would indeed do this in later letters. But here it rings true. Conrad’s tirades against the diplomats were too consistent and too impassioned to be cynical. Brought within days from his highest point in the war (if one omits Gina’s decision to leave her husband and marry him in 1915) to a need to beg, hat in hands, from Falkenhayn for reinforcements, Conrad’s world turned upside down. The only reaction he could muster was to rail against the men he had blamed for the Monarchy’s condition for over a decade.

Simultaneously, the splits that had always existed within the AOK now became open and angry. Schneller, upset at the failure in Italy, accused his counterparts in the Russia-Group of failing to warn Conrad about the danger and disparaged the idleness and lethargy inhabiting the High Command. In response, the R-Gruppe charged Schneller with the defeat of the Tirol offensive, and sniping continued between the groups for weeks.\textsuperscript{18} At the same time, the pro-

\textsuperscript{17}Kundmann Tagebuch, 10 June 1916.

\textsuperscript{18}Schneller, Tagebuch, 8 June 1916, and see various entries in July and August.

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German members of the AOK were almost gleeful at Conrad’s need to rely on German support. Conrad could rely only on Kundmann and Metzgar to give him emotional support.

Conrad’s emotional exhaustion contributed to his rapid reevaluation of the Monarchy’s position. Within a matter of days, he completely reversed the optimistic judgement of the Monarchy’s military prospects. While he quickly overcame his initial instinct to call for a compromise peace, he believed that the collapse brought with it a new and dangerous dependence on Germany. Within two weeks of the initial battles, Conrad advised Burián to reach a final agreement with Germany distributing the gains and costs of the war. Although not openly stated, the implication is clear. With the Monarchy’s position vis-à-vis its German ally unlikely to improve, the Monarchy should lock in its gains. In essence, Conrad reverted to his position in the

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19 Glaise, pp. 370-5

20 Kundmann periodically noted his and Metzgar’s attempt to reassure Conrad and shake him out of his lethargy. For example, Kundmann Tagebuch, 11 July 1916.

21 Conrad to Burián, 16 June 1916, Chef. Geh. 131 in NL Conrad, 1450:123. Importantly, Conrad here accepted the need to offer Germany concessions, if not a free hand, toward Poland. As he had argued several times before, the southwest, especially Serbia and Montenegro, were simply more important than Poland for the future of the Monarchy.
summer of 1915. Instead of waging war either for victory or glorious defeat, he again entertained the possibility of a more limited outcome.

This was a crushing blow to Conrad’s desire to reconstruct the Monarchy as a powerful, centralized state. But the demands for control on the part of the political leadership in Vienna and the German military threatened his hopes even more. Believing the politicians incapable of reforming the Monarchy and threatened by the overwhelming power of Germany, Conrad had fought bitterly to gather as much authority as possible in his hands. Now, as the news from the East became worse and worse, both sides tried to limit Conrad’s autonomy. Believing the Monarchy doomed without the kind of reforms only he could implement, Conrad fought back bitterly but unsuccessfully.

With Conrad’s reputation shaken, the politicians went on the offensive. A week after the beginning of the Russian attack, the MKSM sent Marterer to Teschen to investigate the cause of the defeats and to talk with Conrad about the army’s plans for ending the retreat. With Marterer’s dislike for Conrad well known, and his role in the relief of Potiorek widely remembered, rumors began about the possibility of Conrad’s relief.
What actually happened the week following Marterer’s visit is not entirely clear, but there were serious discussions about replacing Conrad. Karl, according to Berchtold’s diary, suggested in Vienna that he should take over supreme command of the Habsburg army.\textsuperscript{22} Herbertstein, Friedrich’s aide-de-camp, while not openly demanding Conrad’s relief, worked behind the scenes to discredit the Chief of the General Staff. Ironically, according to Glaise, it was Friedrich who demanded that Conrad be retained.\textsuperscript{23} In any case, the lack of any acceptable alternative to Conrad remained a stumbling block. Krauss and Boroevic were mentioned by Glaise as successors,\textsuperscript{24} but, as Schneller commented in reaction to a later discussion about the relief of Conrad, “each in his own way worth something, but no one (Conrad’s) superior!”\textsuperscript{25} Nevertheless, although Conrad survived, his authority was shaken.

At the same time, Burián, Bolfras, Tisza and Stürgkh all demanded that Conrad keep them better informed about events at the front. Although Conrad continued to demand

\textsuperscript{22}Hantsch, p. 775.

\textsuperscript{23}Glaise, p. 372.

\textsuperscript{24}Glaise, p. 372.
action of Burián, he rejected out of hand Burián’s appeals for more and better information. Instead, he supplied only very general sketches of the situation in the east. Conrad even refused to attend a number of meetings of the Joint Council of Ministers, the informal cabinet of the Monarchy, in late June and early July, sending along Slameczka instead with only limited authority to discuss military events. Already frustrated, the politicians at one point even marched en masse to ask Franz Joseph to order Conrad to answer their questions.

The fear of the military situation was not the only reason Burián and the others were unhappy. They were also receiving scathing critiques of Conrad’s command and the

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25 Schneller Tagebuch, 21 September 1916.

26 Conrad on 19 June demanded that Burián work to keep Rumania neutral, a demand he would repeat throughout the summer, often with specific actions attached which he demanded Burián carry out. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 5.


28 This occurred following the GMR meeting of 26 June. Tisza in fact threatened to resign if the AOK continued to refuse him access to complete information regarding the battlefield situation. See the account of the meeting in Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 10.
lifestyle of the AOK from several directions. Wiesner wrote an especially caustic indictment of the establishment at Teschen, denouncing Conrad’s inability to do the detail work that could make his grand schemes become reality. He continued,

... that no one here knows about this [about the problems facing the troops in the Tirol] I blame again the Army Oberkommando, which reigns in its shining heights and has lost every connection with the troops and their leaders. When Baron Conrad last saw his army commanders is an open questions. But if he saw some of them since the outbreak of the war, it was during one or two or three representative trips to the front, at which there could be no militarily important conversations. Any personal connection to them, every chance to influence them outside of technical military orders, is lacking. He is just as foreign to his troops, so that he, and with him his entire organization, has no suspicion of their capabilities and desires. The consequence of this refusal to communicate with the commanders and troops is now clear. Has the maligned Hofkriegsrat been resurrected in the form of our AOK, which, hundreds of kilometers away from the front, administers the war by shuffling papers.?

Although Conrad’s insistence that the attack against Italy had not played any role in the collapse of the Eastern

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30 Cited in Peball, Führungsfragen, pp. 432-3.
front was largely correct,\textsuperscript{31} Wiesner's critique found ample applause.

In the clashes that occurred in the next weeks,\textsuperscript{32} Conrad attempted to put off the politicians with mere promises. Only after lengthy efforts to persuade him to yield, and the intervention of Franz Joseph, was Conrad willing to make even slight concessions.\textsuperscript{33} Significantly, Conrad seems to have missed the growing antagonism to him in the MKSM (Franz Joseph's Military Chancery). He continued to complain to Bolfras in their private correspondence about the "meddling" of the Foreign Ministry, even threatening to resign and asking Bolfras to

\textsuperscript{31}Accusations that the transfer of men and material to the southwest had weakened the defenses in the east were largely unfounded. Nor, as Wiesner correctly claimed, were the minority nationalities to blame for the collapse, although Conrad quickly blamed the collapse on unwillingness of the Czechs and Ruthenians to fight. Instead, the Russian success was the result of skillful tactics and a Habsburg assumption that the defensive tactics of January would also succeed in June. Jerábek, \textit{Die Brusilowoffensive}, pp. 590-98.

\textsuperscript{32}See Kundmann Tagebuch, 29 June, 7, 11-13, 19 July, Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh 35 (the record of a GMR meeting, although not formally called such, in Vienna on 13 July),

intercede on his behalf with the Emperor. Tellingly, Conrad continued to intervene in what would normally be considered the sphere of the Foreign Ministry, actions he would never tolerate if directed at him. In response, Wiesner proposed in his memo of 25 June, Burian and others worked increasingly through July and August to support German demands for the extension of German command over the Habsburg portions of the Eastern front.

The politicians' support for German demands was quite possibly the worst possible result for Conrad. As I have argued throughout, Conrad had advocated war based on the belief that the Monarchy had to prove its vitality in order to remain a Great Power. The gradual reassertion of the power of the politicians already threatened his ability to shape political reform. If Austria-Hungary became simply a vassal of its larger ally, the losses of the war would prove, in one of Conrad's favorite phrases, to have been in vain. Consequently, the politicians' support of German

34 Reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 19 July 1916.

35 Suggesting in a letter to Burian of 2 July that the Foreign Ministry's representative in the Hague was untrustworthy and should be replaced. Reprinted in Kundmann Tagebuch, 2 July 1916.
control over the Habsburg army was a direct attack on Conrad’s grand strategy.

Initial discussions regarding the extension of German control occurred within days of the beginning of the battle with no prodding from Vienna. With little faith in the ability of Pflanzer-Baltin, the Habsburg commander of the 7th Army, Falkenhayn suggested appointing Seeckt as Chief of Staff of this army and subordinating the 1st army to Army Group Linsingen. Unwilling to accept this degree of German influence, but needing German reinforcements to construct a new defensive line and hoping to launch what he believed would be a decisive counterattack, Conrad reluctantly accepted the suggestions. This was as far as he would go at the moment, and he rejected Falkenhayn’s subsequent proposal to put the entire front south of the Pripyet Marshes under Mackensen.

Political maneuvering among the German political and military leaders and the urging of Burian reopened the issue in July. This time, an unusual coalition including

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36 Jerábek, Die Brusilowoffensive, pp. 336-7 and Kundmann Tagebuch, 11-15 June 1916. As usual, Conrad’s first impulse was to attack, as indicated in his grand scheme of 15 June to launch a double envelopment of the advancing Russian forces, a plan for which the army lacked men, munitions,
Bethmann-Hollweg, the Foreign Office in Berlin, and Burian and his representative in Berlin Gottfried Prinz Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst combined to support unifying control over the Eastern front south of the Pripyets under the command of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Falkenhayn and Conrad, each determined to maintain his authority, conspired to make such a position purely nominal. However, Falkenhayn backed out of the arrangement at the last moment, and the new command was officially created at 27 July.

It was Rumania’s decision for war that led to the establishment of German command over the Central Powers as a whole. Conrad’s panicked response to the Brusilov offensive was due not just to the threat posed by the Russian advance, but to the diplomatic impact on Rumania.


As a side benefit, such a position would remove Ludendorff from his influential position at Oberost.

The Monarchy's ability to read Italian diplomatic messages offered them a valuable window on Rumanian intentions. By July, it was clear that Bratianu was talking seriously to the Entente. Indeed, on 18 July, the AOK received an intelligence report alleging that the Rumanian King had decided definitively to join the Entente.

Conrad's frantic attempts to forestall Rumanian entry demonstrate both his unwillingness to respect Burián's authority and the extent to which he had lost control over the situation. Conrad demanded repeatedly that Burián, at the least, ensure that Bulgaria would join an offensive against Rumania after that country's declaration of war.

Communications intelligence was one of the strong points of the Austro-Hungarian Army. For much of the war, Russian radio messages (admittedly, often transmitted in the clear) were intercepted and used as the basis for tactical intelligence. In addition, even before the war, the Italian diplomatic code had been cracked, and many of the messages from St. Petersburg to Rome were intercepted and decoded throughout the war. For the exaggerated account of one of the leaders of army intelligence, see Max Ronge, Kriegs und Industrie Spionage, (Vienna, 1930).

Adding further to the tension between the AOK and Vienna. See, for instance, Conrad to Burian, 5 August 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh 58. Even worse, from Burian's point of view, Conrad had instructed the military attaché in Sofia work independently to secure a Bulgarian promise of intervention, clearly encroaching on the Foreign Minister's position. Conrad to Nowak (the military attaché in Sofia), 19 July 1916 Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 39. These instructions were sent the same day Conrad wrote
With little faith in Burián, however, he asked Falkenhayn to intervene in Sofia and Bucharest. As in the previous winter, the Monarchy had lost all credibility with Bulgaria and Conrad was forced to plead with Germany to intervene.

In the same way, Conrad’s efforts to plan militarily for Rumanian intervention suffered from an inability to get anyone to listen to him. Despite being unable to promise any contribution beyond the Danube flotilla and bridging materials, Conrad insisted on taking the offensive against Bucharest. In extensive discussions with Falkenhayn and Bolfras and threatened to resign over the “meddling” of the Foreign Ministry in military affairs. Kundmann Tagebuch, 19 July 1916.

On 10 August he proposed to Falkenhayn that the Central Powers launch such an offensive as soon as news of a Rumanian commitment to join the Entente arrived, without a Declaration of War or any other kind of warning. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 65. Two days later, responding to Burián’s charges that he was encroaching on Burián’s authority (this charge was based on Conrad’s continuing use of Nowak in Sofia for diplomatic ends and was quite accurate), Conrad informed the Foreign Minister that he was considering a surprise attack against Rumania. Burián, symbolically throwing his hands in the air, replied that, since this was a military affair, Conrad should take full control over negotiations regarding such a plan. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 79. Conrad later wrote Burián that he had told the Foreign Minister about this proposed surprise attack first, well before telling anyone else. This was, at best, a mistake, and more likely a blatant lie. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh 86. With rumors of Conrad’s relief again circulating (Ottrobay to Bolfras, 9 Aug 1916, NL bolfras, B/75), and Franz Joseph having demanded information about the plans to deal with Rumania
Zekov, he was unable to win support for this position. Indeed, Mackensen and Zekov decided on an attack into the Dobrudschia without asking Conrad's opinion. Finally, although Conrad was able to ward off Falkenhayn's request to replace Arz, the Habsburg commander in Transylvania, with a German commander, he was forced to accept Mackensen as the leader of the all-important offensive out of Bulgaria. These negotiations demonstrated decisively Conrad's inability to command respect.

Although Conrad's position was extremely weak, he was at first able to ward off renewed proposals for increased cooperation between the allies. However, Rumania's

(Op. Abt., Karton 551, Op. Nr. 28806), it was a dangerous time to be angering the establishment in Vienna.


43 Cramon on 21 August reopened the issue at Falkenhayn's request, a move made more formally two days later by Falkenhayn himself. Falkenhayn's proposal suggested granting the German Emperor (and the German Chief of Staff as his representative) supreme command over allied forces. (Jerábek, p. 459-70, Falkenhayn to Conrad, 23 August 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 85.) While Conrad quickly rejected this proposal (arguing that the Monarchy's need for political independence precluded signing away its operational and strategic autonomy, see Lauppert, p. 352 ff., and Kundmann Tagebuch, 23 August 1916 for the record of a meeting between Falkenhayn and Conrad on that day),
declaration of war on 27 August changed the situation completely. Falkenhayn, who in the face of all the evidence to the contrary had assured Wilhelm that Rumania would remain neutral, was replaced as Chief of the General Staff by the tandem of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Although Conrad briefly held out hope that the new German commanders would let the matter drop, he was quickly disillusioned. Already on 1 September, Hindenburg suggested a new command arrangement to Conrad. Although Conrad opposed this proposal initially, citing the by now familiar refrain about the need to maintain the Monarchy’s political independence, Herbertstein, Bolfras, and Franz Joseph all rejected Conrad’s argument. Completely isolated, Conrad conceded, accepting on 4 September the need to revise the command arrangements. The new agreement, granting the German Emperor the final say in all he was quickly undercut by Herbertstein (who wrote to Bolfras that the agreement would not threaten the Monarchy’s independence, Lauppert, pp. 356 ff) and Friedrich (who told Franz Joseph on 25 August that Conrad was wrong (Jerábek, p. 459)).


strategic and operational decisions, was signed two days later.

Franz Joseph emphasized Conrad's estrangement in his letter of congratulations to Wilhelm, a letter Schneller believed aimed directly at Conrad. Once again, rumors about Conrad's imminent relief began circulating. Franz Joseph on 25 September ordered Karl to take a written position regarding the possible relief of Conrad. Although Karl and Conrad did not see at all eye to eye, Karl concluded that Conrad should stay. He based this decision both on the fact that he knew of no one else qualified to replace him, and on Conrad's great moral authority with the German commanders. Conrad would stay—for the moment.

479 for a discussion of Conrad's meetings with Burián and Franz Joseph on 3 September in Vienna.

46 Schneller Tagebuch, 13 September 1916.

47 Whether Conrad actually had any "moral" authority with Ludendorff and Hindenburg is questionable. Ludendorff especially was unlikely to grant anyone, even in Germany, "moral" authority over him. By the summer of 1915, coalition politics was a game of Realpolitik. On the other hand, it is questionable whether anyone else would have done any better. Krauss was perhaps the most likely to fare well in negotiating with Ludendorff—but then, the two agreed on the fundamental aims and purposes of the war anyway.

48 Schneller Tagebuch, 21 September 1916 and Helmut Hoyer, Kaiser Karl I. Und Feldmarschall Conrad von Hützendorf. Ein Beitrag zur Militärpolitik Kaiser Karls (Dissertationen
Even though Conrad remained, he was to a large extent a commander without a command. The agreement with Germany reserved supreme command to Hindenburg and Ludendorff (even if technically in the hands of Wilhelm), while Germans held most of the important operational commands in the east. Moreover, Conrad had lost any support he had once enjoyed in Vienna and Budapest. Only four months after his triumphant visit to Berlin, Conrad had become largely irrelevant to the military prosecution of the war.

2. Fighting a German Takeover

In view of Conrad’s emotional instability in June and July, one might have expected him to resign in the face of the new command structure and the clear lack of trust from the Emperor it implied. Instead, he reacted quite differently. On the one hand, he fought desperately to

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49 When Conrad contemplated disobeying an order from Hindenburg two weeks later, Kundmann reminded him that Wilhelm would simply ask Franz Joseph to order that the command be carried out. Conrad had no doubt that Franz Joseph would do just that. Kundmann Tagebuch, 20 September 1916.
limit Germany's control over the Habsburg army and the Monarchy. On the other, he argued vociferously for what amounted to total war. Every weapon had to be employed to win the war at any cost. Turning away from his reluctant support of a compromise peace in July, Conrad reverted in many ways to his prewar attitude. Faced with constraints on all sides, his personality demanded action. This emotional need reinforced his perception that the Monarchy required long-term change that could be implemented only after victory. Consequently, the Monarchy had to summon all its energy and its resources to triumph, or, in the unspoken alternative, to perish gloriously.

The danger posed by Germany extended far beyond the unified command. Almost immediately following the first defeats in June, the two armies had begun to meld together. Most obviously, but perhaps of least importance, a number of German generals assumed high-ranking command positions with jurisdiction over Habsburg units. While relations could have been worse, many Habsburg commanders resented the presence of the Germans and the reassignment of the officers they replaced. The Germans, for their part, made no secret of their scorn for their Habsburg counterparts,
and often corresponded directly with Falkenhayn (and later Ludendorff) rather than following the nominal chain of command. These tensions occasionally led to lengthy battles between Conrad and the DOHL over personnel decisions. In these battles, Conrad clearly saw the Germans as the enemy. The triumphant tone of his letter to Terstyanszky after he had overcome Ludendorff's objections to secure the Habsburger's position speaks volumes about Conrad's resentment of German power. Nor was Conrad alone. Karl, unhappy from the beginning with his role as a figurehead, cooperated with Conrad in his attempts to

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50 See Ottruboy to Bolfras, 13 August 1916, in NL Bolfras B\75. Ottruboy refers here to the "repeatedly apparent brusque manner of the Germans." See also the letter written for Karl (signed by him, apparently without any significant changes) to Bolfras of 17 August 1916, discussed in Jerábek, "Die Brusilowoffensive," p. 488.

51 And simply about Conrad's level of inactivity after the introduction of the unified command. Conrad to Terstyanszky, 19 September 1916, Kundmann Tagebuch, 19 September 1916. Karl's role in one of the other major controversies, the German demand for the replacement of Pflanzer-Baltin, is also significant. Although Karl recognized Pflanzer-Baltin's faults, he concluded eventually that removing him would represent too much of a concession toward Germany, and thus supported Conrad's (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts to keep him. Karl to Bolfras, date illegible, but probably between 14 and 17 August 1916, NL Bolfras, B\75.
reverse the infiltration of German officers into command positions over Habsburg troops.\textsuperscript{52}

However, the ongoing integration of the two armies on a lower level was of equal or greater importance. The two armies had by and large fought separate wars since the preparations for the Schwarz-Gelb offensive. However, the need to act quickly during the retreats of the summer had forced the random mixing of German and Habsburg forces down to the company level, without regard for ethnicity or linguistic knowledge. Calls for a more formal exchange of officers came from both sides, and a program was officially instituted over the objections of Franz Joseph. However, for a variety of reasons, it was never really implemented, and the informal merging of the two forces remained much more significant.\textsuperscript{53}

Nevertheless, the mere existence of such a program represented a threat to Conrad's vision of the future of the Monarchy. To Conrad, the army represented the innermost citadel of the state. Ceding control over the army meant opening the gates to the Monarchy, not just to external enemies, but to the dangers of internal revolt. How, after

\textsuperscript{52}Karl to Bolfras, 15 August, NL Bolfras, B\textbackslash75.

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all, could the army maintain the strict discipline needed to control the nationalities if it ceded command over them to the German army? And, even more critical, how could the army persuade the nationalities of the virtues of the Monarchy if it was taken over by Germans—regardless of whether the Germans came from Graz or Hannover? Could the anational culture of the officers corps survive at all in an army dominated by Germany? Yet, at the same time, how could the Monarchy resist German demands for military integration in the face of the disasters in the east? Here again, the demands of coalition warfare clashed directly with the needs of grand strategy.

This time Conrad struggled to maintain a clear separation between the two armies, albeit with limited success. To sabotage the officer exchange program, he insisted throughout the summer that any transfer of officers had to work equally in both directions.\(^{54}\) This would subvert the entire purpose of the German program, which aimed only to stiffen the Habsburg army rather than to institute any real exchange of ideas or experience. Conrad’s claim that the German officers were incapable of


understanding or commanding a multiethnic force was accurate enough, but misleading.\textsuperscript{55} The main object was to prevent an implicit surrender to the Monarchy’s nominal ally. To this end, Conrad tried to limit contact between the two armies as much as possible. Thus, despite his agreement to integrate training facilities, the AOK strove to limit contact between German officers and recent inductees, subverting the whole purpose of the new training arrangement.\textsuperscript{56} Conrad’s efforts to minimize the integration of the two armies were only partially successful, but the speak volumes about his grand strategic priorities.

The intermingling of the two armies drew attention to a worrying split which was developing within the Habsburg officer corps, one which threatened to destroy the political neutrality even of Conrad’s beloved officer corps. The new nationalism had proven attractive to many reserve officers and even a few of the regular officers before the war. Now the apparent Habsburg incompetence and the resulting reliance on Germany pulled a substantial

\textsuperscript{55}After all, as Conrad knew full well, the replacement officers used by the Habsburg army since 1915 were by and large just as limited linguistically and conceptually as officers of the German army.

minority of Habsburg officers away from the Monarchy and toward Germany. People like Krauss and Bardolf had always existed. What happened now was a gradual turn toward the Germans as efficient and confident, both militarily and ethnically. There was of course no outright rebellion, and only a few requests to be transferred to German units, but there remained an uneasy awareness within the officer corps that the old Kaisertreue ethic was disappearing.\(^5^7\)

Such a development would destroy Conrad's entire conception of political reform. He saw the army as a fortress protecting the Monarchy against all threats, regardless of nationality or social group. It was precisely this neutrality that enabled it to administer the Monarchy effectively and impartially. If the army was indeed the only remaining institution loyal first to the Monarchy, its corruption would destroy any chance of survival.

All of these concerns played a role in Conrad's decision in September to urge the clarification of the Monarchy's future relationship to Germany. Germany, he argued in an unfinished memorandum sometime in September,

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even before the war had hoped to subordinate the Monarchy militarily and economically. The ascent of Ludendorff added a whole new factor. Ludendorff, Conrad wrote Bolfras, saw the Monarchy as "Germany’s prize for victory" in a way that Falkenhayn never had, and would pursue this goal with "Bismarck-like ruthlessness." Accordingly, the Monarchy must immediately begin efforts to negotiate a binding state treaty with Germany. However, before this could be done, Austria-Hungary had to reform itself politically, even if this required military intervention. Without political change, Conrad concluded, "then a

58 Unfinished memo entitled "Denkschrift über das Verhältnis der Ö-U Monarchie an Deutschland," no date, but probably written in early September, in NL Conrad, 1450:143. Conrad here recounted a conversation with the Bavarian representative in the AOK, who pointed out the great advantages Bavaria had gained from its inclusion in the German Empire, and suggested that Conrad consider this for the Habsburg Monarchy.

59 The relationship between the two was not improved by Ludendorff’s immediate demands that the Monarchy increase its munitions and agricultural production, and his dispatch somewhat later of a draft of the Hindenburg plan with a demand that the Habsburg Monarchy copy this effort. Conrad, constrained not just by the manpower and material resources of the Monarchy but also by Tisza’s and Stürgkh’s refusal to allow him to plan for a war which would last more than six months, reacted to these communications almost uniformly defensively. Ludendorff to Conrad, 3 September 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 82, Op. Nr. 30361, 14 September 1916, Karton 85, Op. Nr. 31705, 6 October 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 134,
favorable horoscope can hardly be cast for us, and the heavy sacrifices of this most bloody of all wars will have been in vain."  

Even then, however, Conrad approached the issue cautiously. Perhaps provoked by renewed pressure from Germany, Conrad on 30 September produced a draft of a military convention. He gave this to Schneider, who transformed it into a detailed proposal. Significantly, Schneider's proposal specified the need to formalize the new political ties between the states before discussing military agreements, a suggestion with which Conrad heartily agreed. Moreover, Schneider's draft limited the scope of the arrangement in important ways. In the end, despite pressure from Wilhelm, Conrad rejected the idea of

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60 Substantial excerpts of this letter are reprinted in Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, pp. 382-4.

61 Broucek, "Deutsche Bemühungen," p. 451. Bardolff on 19 September sent to Hindenburg a draft of a military convention that reflected Bardolff's extreme German-nationalist ideas. Although Bethmann-Hollweg refused to act on Bardolff's plan, he was receptive to the idea of a military convention, and it is likely that feelers between the two commands occurred in the second half of September.


a military convention without some sort of political agreement. In December, in answer to an inquiry from the MKSM, Conrad denied ever having initiated discussions with Cramon or the DOHL.

The struggle over the future of Poland posed a similar dilemma for Conrad and the Monarchy. Conrad in early 1916 had conceded the need to abandon the Austro-Polish solution, but a firm agreement had never been reached. The Russian offensive in the east put the issue again on the front burner. The reason was simple—the need for more manpower. In the summer and fall of 1916, Germany hoped that creating an independent Polish state would encourage Poles to enlist in a Polish army. The Monarchy, then, had to react.

The prospect of tapping the population of Galica and Russian Poland had enticed Conrad and the Monarchy since the beginning of the war. Already in August 1914, the AOK endorsed the plans of the Polish politician Józef Pilsudski for the creation of a Polish Legion. Few Poles proved

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64 Broucek, "Deutsche Bemühungen," p. 452.
66 This force was commanded by Habsburg generals of Polish ethnicity and kept under the control of the AOK. Before
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persuaded Burián to do just this at a meeting on 11 and 12 August in Vienna, where Burián accepted Bethmann’s demand for the creation of an independent Poland, whose army would be under German control. But neither Burián nor Conrad was willing to concede defeat just yet.

Conrad’s actions over the next months demonstrate just how difficult the situation he faced really was. Conrad was just as excited about the possibility of exploiting the Polish manpower as Hindenburg. In fact, he suggested to Hindenburg in September that Russians of Polish ethnicity in the prisoner of war camps of the Central Powers be recruited into the German or Habsburg army. But both he and Burián were leery about allowing Germany too much control over a united Poland and its army. While Burián

66The loyalty of this force would be guaranteed by the fact that a Russian victory would render the establishment of an independent Polish state null and void.


70A memo to this effect was prepared, but Burián, who heard rumors of the idea, asked Conrad on 30 September not to issue such a request to avoid antagonizing Germany. According to Lemke, Conrad approached Hindenburg anyway (although, as Lemke does not cite a date for this, it may have been before Burián attempted to intervene). From the documents in the records of the AOK, Conrad apparently complied with Burián’s request, although he noted in the margin that there was no intention of putting this into effect until after the declaration of an independent Poland. Op. Abt., Karton 85, Op. Nr. 31599.
argued with Bethmann about the precise terms of the manifesto that would proclaim Polish independence, Conrad (and Burián) acted to solidify Habsburg control over its zone of occupation. In mid-September, Franz Joseph accepted Conrad's recommendation for the transformation of the Polish Legion into a larger Polish Auxiliary Corps, which would carry regimental flags bearing the Polish eagle. Even worse, he asked Hindenburg to allow this new force to recruit in the German-occupied territory of Poland.

But, although both Burián and Conrad hoped to preserve as much power as possible within the new Polish state, each acknowledged the necessity to accept Germany's demands. The two states jointly issued a declaration on 5 November officially proclaiming the new Polish states. Conrad continued his efforts to maintain a substantial influence in the new army, lobbying for an increased Habsburg presence during the training of the new army, and at least

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71 Following the advances of the summer of 1915, Germany and Austria-Hungary had divided administrative responsibilities for the captured areas. Demonstrating the balance of power even that early, Berlin won control of the region centered on Warsaw, leaving the Habsburg occupation government cited in Lublin.
proposing that the lower-level officers of the new army come from the Habsburg army.\textsuperscript{73} In February of 1917, when the military pressure on the Monarchy had eased somewhat, he even suggested (to Joseph Paic, the AOK's representative with the occupation government for Poland) that the new Polish army be kept as small as possible in order to minimize its effects on the Polish population of the Monarchy.\textsuperscript{74} But, fundamentally, Conrad recognized the need to go along with Germany's demands. As he wrote to Burián in December, the Monarchy had to abandon attempts to oppose Germany's demands regarding Poland, since "Every such attempt would only lead to the complete isolation of the Monarchy and the loss of that firm tie with the German Reich which has proved itself so much in this war and is


\textsuperscript{73}Zeynak, \textit{Das Leben eines Ö-U. Generalstabsoffiziers}, pp. 178-83. Zeynek was Conrad's point man on issues regarding Poland during October, November and December.

\textsuperscript{74}Record of Conrad's conversation with Paic in Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 231. The summary, besides dealing with the Polish army, even reserves the hope that the independent Poland could still be integrated into the Monarchy, clearly unrealistic, even as a mere talking point.
alone capable of giving us a militarily acceptable solution for the future.\footnote{Conrad to Burián, 13 December 1916, cited in Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy, p. 105.}

This quote sums up the entire problem facing the Monarchy. German military assistance was essential if the Monarchy was going to survive. Even after the war, German assistance, as unpleasant as it was, would be necessary. But the concessions necessary to win German support were in themselves dangerous to the stability of the Monarchy, both by strengthening Germany and by weakening the cohesion of the state. Again, the complex problems of a dual coalition were almost impossible to solve. Throughout the second half of 1916, Conrad tried desperately to square the circle. With neither political support nor military power, there was little else he could do.

3. Grasping at Straws: the Strategy of Total War

All of Conrad's maneuvering toward Germany represented his desire to preserve the independence of the Monarchy. Although his postwar writings were pan-Germanic and even völkish in nature, during the war, Conrad remained
Kaisertreue. His interactions with his German ally represented a logical continuation of his attempts to return to a world in which the Monarchy was supreme. In fact, virtually all of his plans and arguments after September display the same continuity. In essence, Conrad in 1916 returned to his starting point.

The long-term prospects of the Monarchy in the fall of 1916 were not good. Although the Brusilow offensive ground to a halt in the late summer, the Habsburg Army had taken a beating. Morale, both in the army and especially among civilians, was at a new low. More importantly, the Monarchy was scraping the bottom of the barrel in manpower and materials. Indicative of scale of the difficulties, the AOK for the first time attempted to recall the men it had furloughed as agricultural labor during the harvest season. Industry was also short on manpower, leading the Ministry of War to beg the AOK to release skilled laborers

A series of strikes among civilian workmen represented a new and threatening departure from the otherwise general support for, or at least tolerance toward, the war among the civilians.

from the military to work in munitions production.\textsuperscript{78} Even the Finance Ministry warned the AOK to be cautious about unnecessary use of munitions, since the foreign exchange supply of the Monarchy was almost exhausted and imported materials essential for munitions production would soon be unavailable.\textsuperscript{79}

Yet, Conrad’s response was not to advocate attempts to find a way out of the war, as it had been in June and July.\textsuperscript{80} Instead, he argued consistently that the Monarchy should intensify its efforts to win the war. To some extent this reflected a gradual improvement in the situation at the front. The end of the Brusilow offensive and the successful repulse of an Italian offensive on the


\textsuperscript{79}Op. Abt., Karton 83, Op. Nr. 30711 of September 1916. See also Op. Abt., Karton 91, Op. Nr. 33893 of 8 October 1916. This is a note from the Finance Ministry titled “Grundsätze für den Staatsvoranschlag 1917/18.” Here, the Finance Ministry argued that the growing state debt, and the associated interest payments, made it imperative to be as frugal as possible. The state could take on new obligations only if they raised money, and the income of the state must be raised at all costs. This was true regardless of whether the Monarchy was at war or at peace.

\textsuperscript{80}Conrad did tell Kundmann on 21 October that the diplomats should look actively for peace. However, his reaction to Burián’s peace proposal, about which he learned shortly after this, demonstrates his fundamental devotion to continuing the war. Kundmann Tagebuch, 21 October 1916.
Isonzo (despite the loss of Görz) brought a real reduction of military pressure. The entry of Rumania could have been a catastrophe; instead, the poorly trained and equipped Rumanian army advanced slowly. The ensuing counterattack, even though led and conducted largely by allied troops, restored the integrity of Hungary's frontiers and seemed to compensate for the disasters in the east. Simply on an emotional level, the release provided by Rumania's declaration of war eased Conrad's stress level considerably. Never good at patient, careful diplomacy, Conrad could participate, if only viscerally, in the active thrust and parry of combat. But, in the end, Conrad's demand for the intensification of the war effort reflected his long-term, reasonably consistent grand strategy. The Monarchy had to win the war or go down trying. Any compromise would surrender the Monarchy's great power position and surrender the opportunity to die honorably.

Conrad's response to Burián's peace proposal of December 1916 demonstrates the essential continuity in Conrad's position. With the battlefront in the east stabilized, Burián had finally mustered the courage to suggest to Germany that the Central Powers propose peace
publicly to the Entente. In the process of negotiating the form and content of this note, he wrote to Conrad, informing him of the plan and outlining his proposal and the war aims it would contain.

Conrad's reaction to the idea and to the conditions listed in Burián's draft was almost uniformly negative. Although Conrad accepted the idea in the abstract, he argued that a proposal at that time would look like an admission of weakness (especially if it was sent without attaching specific conditions, as Bethmann urged). If it was indeed sent, it should be accompanied by a statement pledging the adoption (or continuation) of total war including the use of unrestricted submarine warfare if the Entente rejected negotiations. Moreover, Conrad disagreed

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81 For a detailed account of the ensuing negotiations see Wolfgang Steglich, Bündnissicherung oder Verständigungsfrieden. Untersuchungen zu dem Friedensangebot der Mittelmächte vom 12. Dezember 1916, (Göttingen, 1958). In essence, Burián hoped, by making the declared war aims explicit and moderate, at least to win over public opinion and ideally to reach a compromise peace. Bethmann, however, was unwilling to outline his war aims in public, and rejected Burián's proposal wholeheartedly. The eventual note, dispatched 12 December and quickly rejected by the Entente, was simply a collection of vague suggestions.

with Burián’s proposed list of peace conditions. In fact, he claimed Burián’s list made it appear that Germany and Austria-Hungary had fought the war to make Bulgaria (which would get part of Rumania in Burián’s plan) a Great Power. Instead, he asserted again the need to annex Serbia and parts of Albania, and to solve the internal problems of the Monarchy through external acquisitions. Through all of the triumphs and defeats of the past year, Conrad stuck stubbornly to his position.

In fact, Conrad showed himself even more annexationist a month later. Conrad had appealed to Haus, the commander of the Habsburg fleet, for support for his demands for the annexation of Albania and the Iron Gates. Haus replied that, while Valona might indeed prove important in a future

\[\text{\footnotesize 83 These included border rectifications with Rumania and Russia, the annexation of Montenegro, the creation of an independent Serbia minus Macedonia (which would go to Bulgaria) and its ethnically Albanian regions (which would go to an independent Albania)—in other words, the same menu he and Conrad had been discussing for more than a year. The only significant change was in Burián's provision for the creation of an independent Poland. Op. Geh. 173, for additional comments see Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy, pp. 91-5.}\]


conflict, protecting it would require annexing Albania, an act which would be prohibitively expensive. Nevertheless, Conrad reported to Burián that Haus supported his demand for the incorporation of Albania. Furthermore, employing the same logic he had long used regarding Serbia, he argued that an independent Rumania would always threaten the integrity and stability of the Monarchy. As a result, the Monarchy had to override Hungarian objections and annex Rumania.

Taken as a whole, Conrad's reaction to Burián's peace terms demonstrated both the continuity of his thinking and his abandonment of any real hope for a compromise peace. Admittedly, in his December memo to Burián he wrote optimistically about the chances of purchasing peace with Russia by promising it free transit through the Dardanelles. Moreover, his letters to Gina while the two were briefly apart in November demonstrate his longing for peace in the abstract. However, he held out little hope for an immediate settlement. The only chance to create a viable Monarchy for the future was to fight on and hope that the Entente would finally yield.

\[86\text{Conrad to Gina, 15 and 16 November, NL Conrad, 1450:357.}\]
Conrad’s demands for the intensification of the war effort encompassed the full range of war activities. Urged on by Ludendorff, Conrad insisted on the rationalization and optimization of industry and the full exploitation of all manpower resources of the Monarchy. In addition to his usual demands for a more efficient organization of industry he repeated earlier calls for a more centralized and efficient bureaucracy to control the production and distribution of food. Probably at Conrad’s suggestion, his deputy at the AOK Franz Höfer drew up a report in early November discussing the food situation. Concluding that food shortages posed a significant threat to the war effort, Höfer concluded that the government should create a new, Monarchy-wide (including Hungary) central organization staffed by officials with no connection to the present administrative structure. The army would be heavily involved in this effort. The organization would serve as a central gathering point for information about food and agricultural supplies and as a administrative body

87Conrad’s responses to Ludendorff were defensive, but he was perfectly happy to turn around and cite Ludendorff’s arguments to Stürghk and Tisza. Conrad briefed the government on the Hindenburg plan in a memo dated 15 November and argued that the Monarchy should enact a similar program. Op. Abt., Karton 92., Op. Nr. 34192
overseeing food distribution, thus short-circuiting the regions (by which he meant primarily Hungary). Although the AOK dropped this proposal when the government implemented its own plan, its similarity to Conrad’s ideas about the administrative reform of the Monarchy are striking.88

At the front, the manpower and equipment gleaned through these efforts would be used to wage war on land, sea and air. With his army emotionally and physically exhausted, Conrad might reasonably have expected to spend the fall and winter nursing the army back to health. Instead, even before the end of the Rumanian campaign, Conrad began to discuss new offensive possibilities. Schneller, even more optimistic (and protective of his fief), submitted a plan for a renewed offensive against Italy in late September, a plan which Conrad quickly

88Höfer’s report, originally submitted to Conrad on 12 November and forwarded later to the MKSM, is in NL Bolfras, B/75. See also Conrad to Stürgkh, 16 October 1916, in which Conrad wrote that the recent disturbances in Graz threatened the war effort. To combat the food shortages which led to the unrest, the government had to centralize all food distribution. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 140. Similarly, Conrad to Bolfras, 27 October 1916, NL Bolfras, B/75. On the food shortages increasingly striking the Monarchy, see Herwig, The First World War, 273-77.
rejected for lack of manpower. Within months, however, Conrad changed his mind.

He outlined his reasoning in a comprehensive memo titled “The Situation at the beginning of January 1917.” Arguing that the war would be decided in the spring of 1917, the Monarchy must summon all its energy for a decisive campaign. The Entente, he believed, had already

89 25 September 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 529, Op. Nr. 26.900/V and Schneller Tagebuch, 10, 25 and 30 September 1916. Schneller proposed a two pronged attack from the Tirol and across the Isonzo. Conrad realistically responded that the resources for such an attack would become available only if Russia showed that it intended to behave passively or even leave the war. Schneller freely admitted that his plan was not practical at the moment, but argued that planning should begin soon. His optimism is a bit hard to understand, since he and Boroevic both feared that the Italian numerical and material superiority threatened to eat away at the Habsburg position. Schneller’s response was to call for the conservation of manpower through the use of machinery and equipment even though he knew full well that the Monarchy could not support such an effort. Schneller memo titled “Verbesserung der Kampfverhaltnis an der Plateaufront, 10 October 1916, Op. Abt., Karton 530, Op. Nr. 29997, Schneller to Boroevic, 17 October 1916, Karton 531, Op. Nr. 32915, Boroevic to Conrad, 16 October 1916, Karton 531, Op. Nr. 32917.


91 This meant, among other things, that the army must approach manpower utilization and training from a short-term perspective, since the war would be over in a matter of months. Such an approach would leave the Monarchy in an extremely weak position if the war continued into the summer or autumn.
planned a coordinated offensive to begin in the spring. Instead of allowing the Entente to pick its battleground, the Central Powers should instead beat it to the punch with powerful offensive. Such an attack had to be at least regionally decisive, since any offensive would be "playing with the last card, so to speak." Only two areas offered hope of such a war changing victory: eastern Galicia and Italy. Conrad never ruled out an attack in Galicia. But, even though he let Schneller’s next proposal pass with little comment,92 and rejected yet another as vague and unclear,93 his preference for an attack in the south is clear.94

In the meantime, the Central Powers had to do all they could to weaken the Entente. In the early winter of 1917, this implied endorsing the German proposal to begin unrestricted submarine warfare. Conrad had supported unrestricted submarine warfare on the infrequent occasions


94In fact, Schneller traveled to Pless on 23 (or 24) January to discuss plans for an Italian offensive with the German high command. Op. Abt., Karton 531, Op. Nr. 36908.
when the leaders of the Monarchy had discussed the question in the past. Nevertheless, it had never before formed a major plank in his strategic platform. Now, convinced of the need to utilize all possible weapons in an attempt to win the war, Conrad enthusiastically supported its adoption. Although Fleischman and Klepsch-Kloth, the Habsburg liaison officers with Hindenburg, reported in detail about the course of the German debate, there is little evidence that Conrad paid much attention. Instead, his position was largely instinctive. He had already decided that the Central Powers had to wage war with all

95Kundmann Tagebuch, 4 September 1916.

96Hindenburg wrote Conrad on 15 January, asking him to write to Vienna and support the German demand for submarine warfare. Conrad, whose marginal notes were enthusiastically supportive, quickly agreed. Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 225. Significantly, the AOK was well aware of the scale of the material contribution that the United States was making to the Entente, even if the details of this trade were unclear. See the report written by the Ministry of Trade (sent to the AOK on 26 August 1916), Op. Abt., Karton 80, Op. Nr. 29711. Even so, Conrad expressed little concern when informed that the United States was breaking off diplomatic relations with Germany. See Marterer Tagebuch, B/16, entry of 4 February 1917.

the weapons at its disposal. There was no reason to weigh the costs and benefits of each individual weapon once this central conclusion had been reached.

Finally, Conrad's reaction to Stürgkh's assassination by Friedrich Adler in October demonstrated that his approach toward motivation and unrest had only hardened during the war. Following the failure of his foray into politics the previous year Conrad had largely abandoned attempts to persuade Franz Joseph to replace Stürgkh. Now, more than a year later, he saw the Minister-President's murder as an opportunity to press his demands for a harder line. Conrad quickly wrote Bolfras arguing that the assassination had damaged the credibility of the war effort in the eyes of the Entente. As a result, it was even more urgent to appoint a "man who is active, reasonable, neither a member of a party nor obliged to any group, and who is sensible and organizationally gifted." Such a man could only come from the army. Significantly, Conrad suggested (among others) Bardolff, Georgi (who had strongly supported

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98 Who had just received a telegram from Eugen (addressed to Friedrich) advocating the appointment of a strong man as Stürgkh's replacement, a telegram which Friedrich forwarded to Bolfras. NL Conrad, 1450:123.

99 Conrad to Bolfras, 22 October 1916, NL Conrad, 1450:123.
Conrad’s calls for harsh discipline within the army) and Conrad’s first choice Krauss. Unsurprisingly, given extent to which Conrad’s political influence had collapsed, the Emperor ignored Conrad’s memo and selected Ernest von Koerber, a long-time politician as Stürgkh’s successor.

The fact that Conrad was well aware of Krauss’ German-nationalist sentiments demonstrates the importance he attached to this issue, but simultaneously demonstrated the inconsistencies in Conrad’s position. Conrad was Kaisertreue to the core throughout the war. The German-nationalist nature of the measures he proposed to reign in nationalist sentiment reflected his centralism, not the other way around. Yet, at the same time, Conrad did have a clear ethnic consciousness. As the Monarchy’s prospects worsened, his willingness to consider things from a German-national perspective increased. This is reflected most profoundly in a significant but almost unreadable entry in Kundmann’s diary in mid-October. After advocating the removal of Burián and Tisza, Conrad thought aloud to

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100Kundmann’s entries by this point are fragmentary and quite unclear. It is uncertain whether this statement came in the course of a discussion with Fleischman, with Ludendorff, or simply in a personal conversation with Kundmann. Kundmann Tagebuch, 16 October 1916. Tisza’s dismissal was complicated by the fact that his replacement
Kundmann about radically altering the shape of the Monarchy. The power relationship between the two partners had made parity within the alliance impossible. As a result, it might be better to break up the Monarchy, granting independence to Hungary and the nationalities (as well as creating an independent Poland) and incorporating an independent Austria into Germany. Unfortunately, Russia would then threaten the remnants of the Monarchy. Another possibility was to split the Monarchy into three parts and ensure their cooperation with a new version of the Pragmatic Sanction. In any case, something had to be done.

4. Conclusion

Conrad’s contemplation of such radical reforms demonstrates how desperate the military situation of the Monarchy had become. By the end of 1916, direction of the war had been taken almost completely out of Conrad’s hands. As a result, he spent his days dreaming up ways to win the war and regain the control he had lost in the summer. As argued above, although he occasionally suggested exploring the possibility of peace, he concluded by the fall of 1916 would almost inevitably be Julius Andrassy (the younger),
that the Monarchy's only option was to wage total war. The
Monarchy had to exploit all possible weapons in order to
maximize its chance for victory. On an emotional level,
summoning all the remaining resources of the Monarchy
formed the only acceptable alternative. Rationally,
although it remained unstated, only victory offered a
chance to recreate the Monarchy—the goal which Conrad had
pursued ever since his appointment in 1906.

Yet, Conrad's memoranda and calculations carried with
them a certain air of unreality. The bottom line, as
Conrad well knew, was that the Monarchy had lost the war
already, regardless of the eventual outcome on the
battlefield. The military failures of the Monarchy had
granted Germany a degree of power and influence that made
it virtually impossible to implement Conrad's cherished
reforms, a fact that Conrad at heart recognized. His
attempts to ignore this unpalatable truth contributed to
his violent emotional swings of the period.
Simultaneously, his recognition of this fact prompted him
to consider political and constitutional compromises with
Germany he would never have accepted previously. His swing

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even more anti-Habsburg than Tisza.

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toward his post-war German nationalism began during this period.

In any case, Conrad's opportunity to influence the political and diplomatic policy of the Monarchy (although not the military) would soon disappear. The death of Franz Joseph on 21 November was one of the most shattering occurrences of an extremely eventful year. The old Monarch was widely seen as the glue that held the Empire together and the morale of the army and the Monarchy dipped significantly after his death. Karl, the new emperor, had nowhere near the same hold over the Empire.\(^{101}\)

The radically different view which Karl had toward the war and the future of the Monarchy made a clash between him and Conrad inevitable from the beginning. Karl had long been skeptical of the war, and the defeats of 1916 led him to conclude that peace was necessary at almost any price. Where Conrad saw a chance for defeat with honor, Karl saw only the destruction of his Monarchy. As a result, Karl

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was determined to explore any avenue that might lead to peace, regardless of the implications for the Monarchy’s postwar position or its honor. However, he was well aware that the establishment in Vienna and Teschen would never support such an aggressive search for peace. As a result, Karl believed it necessary to consolidate his control over the army and to install his own men in positions of power.

Karl moved quickly to solidify his authority. Within days of becoming Emperor, Karl instructed Conrad to draft an order announcing Karl’s assumption of supreme command over the Habsburg Armed Forces.\(^{102}\) Taking over on 4 December, he immediately alienated the AOK by prohibiting the use of poison gas and incendiary ammunition and making the bombing of rear areas dependent on his personal permission.\(^{103}\) More significantly, he ordered Eugen to

\(^{102}\) Hoyer, "Kaiser Karl I.", pp. 78-83. Friedrich was designated Karl’s personal representative in the AOK, a largely honorary position. One of Karl’s first acts was to demand a revision of the command arrangements with Germany to win more autonomy for the Monarchy. Demonstrating the Monarchy’s weakness, not only did this attempt fail, but Karl had to accept a further strengthening of Germany’s authority. See Op. Abt., Karton 458, Op. Geh. 190 and 193, and Broucek, "Deutsche Bemühungen," pp. 455-6. Broucek wrongly implies that Conrad initiated this attempt. The document he cites is actually Conrad’s response to Karl’s request that Conrad draft a revised agreement.

\(^{103}\) Rauchensteiner, Der Tod des Doppeladlers, p. 398.
reverse previous efforts to change the names of roads, towns, and monuments from Italian to German.\(^{104}\) He also acted quickly to establish his position in civilian circles, replacing Burián with Ottokar Czernin on 22 December. Czernin, a high-strung noble from Bohemia who had been the Monarchy’s ambassador to Rumania before the war, was convinced that the Monarchy had lost the war and needed to find a way out as quickly as possible.\(^{105}\)

Most threatening, however, to Conrad’s power and autonomy, was Karl’s desire to move the AOK from Teschen to Baden, a resort town near Vienna. This was a clear sign

\(^{104}\)Op. Abt., Karton 96, Op. Nr. 35329. Eugen and Krauss were two of the most fervent German nationalists in the Habsburg army. Together, they worked hard to force the nationalities to become German—changing the names of towns and roads in the areas under military control facing Italy, advocating the prohibition of the use of the Cyrillic script (Op. Abt., Karton 20, Op. Nr. 8199. The AOK forwarded this message to Vienna, but simply noted that all passages from Greek Orthodox prayer books, which formed the direct subject of Krauss’ suggestion, which supported loyalty to Russia be removed) and supporting other means of suppressing the minorities. Führ appropriately, makes much of these proposals, see *Das Armeeoberkommando*, chap. 6. However, it is a mistake to generalize the ideas of Krauss and Eugen to the entire army. In dealing with the newly occupied Ukranian speaking territories in the summer of 1915, the AOK ordered both that commands and messages be posted in Ukranian and that they use Cyrillic, a marked contrast to Krauss’ behavior in Italy. Again, one can not call the AOK either German nationalist or multi-culturalist, the truth lies somewhere in between.
that Karl (forced to reside in Vienna much of the time) intended to participate actively in the conduct of the war. Conrad fought the move fiercely, arguing that it would disrupt the direction of the war, disturb ongoing negotiations between the AOK and Ludendorff regarding a future offensive against Italy, and send the wrong message to the Entente. Nevertheless, Karl persisted, and the move to Baden occurred in the first week of January. In a clear rebuke to Conrad, Karl refused to allow wives and girlfriends to accompany the AOK to its new location.

The final collapse of Conrad's authority came quickly. The not unwelcome resignation of Bolfras in January deprived Conrad of his last support among Karl's inner circle. His replacement by Marterer, who had advocated Conrad's removal in 1914 and noted in his diary every mistake or impolite remark made by Conrad in the intervening years, signaled Karl's willingness to look

\[105\] Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy, pp. 105-111.


\[107\] In Conrad's case, this represented a real emotional burden. Gina's presence may not have helped Conrad's military performance (indeed, it perhaps decreased Conrad's willingness to attend to his military duties), but it had certainly helped stabilize his extreme moodiness. Her
elsewhere. Throughout February, talk of Conrad’s replacement occupied the court and he was finally asked to resign. Conrad initially hoped to leave the army completely, but Karl eventually persuaded him to take command of an army group in his beloved Tirol.

Conrad’s replacement on 27 February 1917 signified a complete change in the role of the army in the Monarchy. His replacement was Arthur Arz von Straußenburg, a respected but inconsequential figure. From this point on, strategy and diplomacy would be controlled directly by the Emperor. As a result, the role of the army, conceived by Conrad as the savior of the Monarchy, became merely instrumental. The guiding hand, and the ideas behind it, were now those of the dynasty’s.

sudden absence removed this shock absorber, leaving Conrad even more prone to violent emotional swings.
After the war, Conrad finally was able to enjoy the peaceful life of a retired officer for which he had longed for so long. Yet, ironically, especially after his health began failing, he could not stay away from the writing table that had been his constant companion during the war. He quickly turned to the mammoth task of writing his memoirs. Temperamentally incapable of conceiving any project modestly, he planned a giant compendium of writings, excerpts from documents, and several volumes of maps. At the time of his death, he had completed five large volumes, running from his appointment as Chief of the General Staff until the end of 1914. Between volumes, he managed to find the time to write a book dealing with his experiences in the occupation of Bosnia in 1879, to keep up
a voluminous correspondence, and to record enough of his random thoughts to fill over two hundred typewritten pages.

These writings were very different in tone from his prewar and wartime policy memoranda. Conrad by the end of the war abandoned his belief in the usefulness of a supranational state. In the context of his unwavering faith in the tenets of social-Darwinism, this allegiance had never made much sense anyway. Social-Darwinists believed in a strict coherence between the world of biology and politics. Nations, defined racially, thus functioned as the political analogue of species. But there was no biological analogue of a supranational empire. Such an institution made no sense, and social-Darwinists would have logically rejected such a creation.

But, despite Conrad’s repeated claims that he was a political and philosophical realist, dealing with the world as it was rather than the way he wanted it to be, he was in many ways more of a romantic. Conrad ignored the logical implications of his social-Darwinism and accepted the contradictions inherent in a supranational state. Indeed, for him the utility, and the success, of the Monarchy lay precisely in its ability to make such contradictions
tolerable. When the Monarchy could no longer perform this 
magic trick, he cast it aside.

But during his tenure as Chief of the General Staff, 
Conrad believed wholeheartedly in the Monarchy he had sworn 
to defend. The aim of Conrad's Grand Strategy was quite 
simple: to preserve the Monarchy's position as a European 
Great Power and to solidify the basis of the dynasty's 
political power. To do this he had both to win the war, or 
at least find a compromise peace that would save the 
reputation and political position of the army and the 
Monarchy, and to solve the political problems facing the 
Monarchy--the challenge of nationalism. He and his 
subordinates at the AOK thus faced simultaneously two very 
different challenges.

Making their task even more difficult, the AOK had to 
work within an extraordinarily complicated constellation of 
forces. In essence, Conrad saw the war as a battle against 
three separate groups of opponents. Most obviously, the 
army had to defeat Russia, Serbia and Italy on the 
battlefield, or do well enough to leave its reputation and 
that of the Monarchy intact. Simultaneously, however, 
Conrad (and, to be sure, the rest of the leaders of the 
Monarchy) had to protect the Monarchy's independence and
prestige vis-à-vis its German ally. Germany's military and economic assistance was essential to the survival of the Monarchy as a Great Power. But its continental ambitions threatened the very heart of the Monarchy's power and prestige. Finally, Conrad also had to win the political influence and space necessary to impose his military and political reforms over the almost certain objections of the politicians. Certainly, political infighting and interest groups are common. But, as an empire without the power to enforce its will over its constituent parts, the Monarchy itself was more a coalition than a unitary state.

Thus, Conrad had to manage a two-tiered coalition—one in which members of each coalition had and used the ability to call on the support of members of the other. No other state in the war, with the possible exception of Great Britain, had to make policy and strategy in such a complicated environment. Making matters worse, the Monarchy's weakness, although useful in times of severe danger, gave Conrad little leverage when times were good.

The Monarchy's claim to Great Power status was even before the war questionable. Fundamental to the idea of being a Great Power was the ability to ignore the actions of countries that did not merit this status. The fact that the Monarchy believed itself threatened by Serbia or Bulgaria almost by definition meant that it was no longer deserved the label. Conrad never accepted or even contemplated this, but his actions demonstrated his concern. Again, Conrad
It is important to understand just how the Austro-German (and later Turkish and Bulgarian) alliance worked. Although one can argue that all alliances are simply a group of states running parallel wars for (sometimes) similar objectives, this was especially true for the Central Powers. Germany and Austria-Hungary made little effort to coordinate prewar planning. After the war began, no decision-making superstructure existed until the summer and fall of 1916. Instead, Conrad and Falkenhayn coordinated policy through informal discussions. When they could not reach an agreement, they went their separate ways. Nor was there any real effort to share information. In fact, the two sides lied to each other openly about their strategic and operational intentions. Finally, no effort was ever made to coordinate industrial production, logistics, or manpower requirements on anything more than an ad hoc basis. One need only compare the relationship between Falkenhayn and Conrad, which formed the major hoped to take the Monarchy backward in time.

institutional tie between the two states until the summer of 1916, with the large number of standing committees created by the Entente to ensure coordination between Britain, France, and eventually the United States to understand the difference between the two alliances.³

Within this relationship, Conrad managed to get his way surprisingly often. With a clear disparity in power between the two states, it is often assumed that Germany played the leading role in the alliance. In reality, Conrad throughout most of 1915 got what he wanted. Using the weakness of the Monarchy as leverage, exploiting the disagreements within the German military leadership and simply insisting stubbornly on his ideas, Conrad won Falkenhayn's agreement for the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive and its continuation throughout the spring and summer of 1915. Moreover, instead of conceding defeat after Falkenhayn withdrew from the Balkans, Conrad went ahead with

³Wallach lists 25 separate standing committees including at least two of the Entente powers. Wallach, The Uneasy Coalition, appendix C. This list does not include the Supreme War Council, the body created late in the war to coordinate military strategy. For a detailed examination of allied relations in the Entente, see David Trask. The United
operations against Montenegro and Italy. These may not have been the wisest of choices strategically, but they demonstrate clearly the Monarchy's ability to maneuver within the alliance to get what it wanted.

Conrad's military inadequacy radically diminished his leverage toward Germany. Conrad never learned the tactical lessons offered by the war, continuing to believe in the efficacy of the offensive long after most commanders had abandoned this prewar mantra. Only rarely visiting his army commanders, let alone the front, he had no appreciation for the limitations imposed by terrain and weather, nor for the ability of his troops to carry out the tasks he had entrusted to them. Making decisions by instinct rather than by careful evaluation and analysis, almost all of his operations were bitter defeats.

But Conrad's ability to maneuver within the military alliance finally collapsed only when Conrad's political power within the Monarchy collapsed as well. In order to retain control, Conrad had to ensure that his position on at least one of the three fronts was secure. During the first half of 1915, Conrad had the

States and the Supreme War Council. (Middletown. 1961). 419
(reluctant) support of the policy makers in Vienna. As a result, he could defy German demands confident that he would not be undercut from the rear. Between the spring of 1915 and the late spring of 1916, the military situation steadily improved. With his strategic and operational ideas apparently successful, Conrad could afford to alienate the decision-makers in Vienna and ignore Falkenhayn's calls for military cooperation. But, when the military situation turned against the Monarchy again in the summer of 1916, his support both in Vienna and in Berlin had disappeared. Consequently, Conrad could do little other than attempt to minimize the concessions necessary to win German assistance.

Conrad's efforts to manage the internal coalition were somewhat less successful. In military matters, Conrad simply overrode the objections and rejected the suggestions of Tisza, Stürgkh and others. But Conrad's inability to treat others with respect, his unwillingness to provide the political leadership with accurate, up-to-date information about the war, the unmilitary atmosphere at Teschen and his very public air of superiority won him no friends. As a result,
Conrad was unable to persuade Stürgkh to institute the measures the AOK believed necessary to halt antimilitary agitation, or to win political support for many of the personnel appointments he supported. In the end, his high-handed treatment led the political leadership to support a German supreme command in the east as a way of limiting Conrad's power.

How successful Conrad might have been is the kind of counter-factual question that historians frown on. But what is clear is that the challenges facing the Monarchy in the war would have impressed the best leader-political or military. Austria-Hungary was stronger, and its hold on its citizens tighter, than many of its leaders predicted. But it remained the junior partner in an alliance that many wanted to make into a permanent bond. Conrad's operational blunders cut the Monarchy's safety margin, but it was thin from the beginning.

But winning the war would not have been enough. Instead, Conrad had to stabilize the Monarchy politically. In this arena, his performance is much more interesting, if no more successful. Conrad never wavered from his prewar understanding of the needs of the Monarchy and the role of the army. The problems the Monarchy faced were
fundamentally associated with nationalism and politics. The army, which had always had a privileged place as the protector of the dynasty and the state, was the only institution that remained faithful to the Monarchy’s anational tradition. Consequently, Conrad and the officer corps believed it their responsibility to lead in reforming the Monarchy. The army would serve both as the model for and agent of this reform. Only in this way could the Monarchy as both dynasty and state survive the threat of nationalism.

Nationalism formed the main, even the only, lens through which the officer corps viewed the world. Good social-Darwinists, Conrad and the others complained bitterly about the dangers of socialist anti-military agitation. But socialism did not pose the same threat to an anational Monarchy as nationalism. One can imagine a Monarchy in which the social and economic, if not the political, goals of turn-of-the-century socialists were met. But the continued coexistence of centrifugal nationalism and a dynastic empire was logically impossible.

Most officers also feared and opposed the increasing importance of “politics” to the Monarchy. But politics, to the army, had a specific meaning. Conrad believed
"politics" inevitably implied division and discord, with interest groups using the political process to win special rights and privileges for their specific constituency at the expense of the whole. And, at least in the Monarchy, the constituency of political parties was almost always national. In contrast, Conrad believed firmly that the army could somehow operate above politics. Indeed, moving beyond politics was his fundamental solution to the problems of the Monarchy.

Conrad's ideas about reform are more interesting than many have portrayed. Conrad envisioned a Monarchy in which all nationalities were treated equally. To do this, the central government had to wrest control over schools, churches, and other institutions away from the provinces. These institutions, along with the bureaucracies of the central state and the parties, had to be purged of all nationalist elements, who would be replaced by people trained to identify themselves first as citizens of the Monarchy. Notably, Conrad accepted the fact that they might still consider themselves part of their ethnic group. He was much more flexible in this than one would initially suspect. But their ultimate loyalty had to rest in the Monarchy.
These political ideas were directly influenced by Conrad's experience in the Habsburg officer corps. Entering the army at a young age, and trained in an environment that was determinedly anational, Conrad's understanding of the world and his place in it derived much from the culture of officership in the army. Indeed, in a fundamental way, he wanted to make the Monarchy look like the army. Importantly, despite his claims to realism and modernity, Conrad's policy was fundamentally shaped by his image of the way the Monarchy used to be. Implied in proposals is a desire to recreate the Monarchy as it had been, a Monarchy untroubled by ethnic tensions or political conflict. It seems redundant to point out that such a Monarchy had never existed. But Conrad, influenced by the history he was taught in the military academies, clearly thought it had, and based his hopes for the future.

But to impose these reforms on an unwilling Monarchy, Conrad had to win the war, or at least do well enough to give the army the political weight to impose reforms over the heads of the politicians in Vienna. He thus had to make the nationalities fight for a Monarchy he assumed they disliked. Even after the war, the army would have to suppress nationalist agitation until Conrad's broader
reforms could win their loyalty. The answer in the short, and even the medium term, was discipline. Censorship, isolation, the imposition of draconian punishment for minor offenses and the use of Germans and Hungarians to oversee Czechs and Serbs all formed a vital part of Conrad's efforts to suppress any display of nationalist sentiment. Such measures could not stop at the battlefield, and Conrad demanded that the government punish sternly any hint of nationalist activity.

Here again, the experience of officership in the aristocratic and even autocratic Habsburg officer corps guided the ideas of Conrad and his subordinates. Kept under strict control as a cadet, Habsburg officers had no reason to be less harsh on their men. The clear caste distinction drawn between the officers and the rank and file, exacerbated by the limited education and knowledge of the world displayed by the latter, simply reinforced the faith in discipline over persuasion. Hubka's suggestion that Conrad, "... the son of a soldier and a soldier himself from a young age, was convinced that strict discipline in the state could and indeed had to suppress all discontented subjects" is quite correct.¹

Quite understandably, this is the element of Conrad’s ideas that has received the most attention. His proposals to repress nationalism are detailed, numerous, and quite clearly reliant on the Germans as the bulwark of the Monarchy. But one should not ignore the long-term ideas either. Although his demands for discipline and deterrence drowned out his nebulous and less insistent proposals for long-term change, he clearly hoped to put the Monarchy in a position where strict discipline and constant attention would no longer be necessary. Proposing centralist, Josepist reforms, the minorities might well have perceived his version of equality as repression. But he was still more tolerant of ethnic identities than many have supposed.

What is striking is the degree to which Conrad perceived nationalism as unstoppable. Conrad’s demands for the annexation of Serbia (and eventually Rumania) and his attitude toward the future of Poland were based on the fundamental belief that people’s desire to live in states organized along the principle of nationality could not be overcome. This conviction was not universally shared. Czernin, shortly after becoming Foreign Minister, argued quite differently. In a memorandum to Arz supporting the
annexation of Rumania (as compensation for the loss of Russian Poland to Germany), Czernin maintained that military force, and thus the ability to thwart the desires of other states, would decide the fate of Transylvania and the Trentino, not the ethnic minorities. He wrote “Therefore, our military strength, the power of our state, will in the future determine if we will lose provinces or not, not the irridenta, which will be an attribute of the Austro-Hungarian state as long as it exists.”\textsuperscript{5} Conrad the lifelong soldier never accepted this. In this he seems typical among the Habsburg officer corps, not unusual.

Winning the war thus formed a key element of Conrad’s hopes for reforming the Monarchy. To be sure, Conrad was willing to consider, during the spring and summer of 1915 and again immediately after the beginning of the Brusilov offensive, a compromise peace. But even this would be a temporary armistice rather than a lasting settlement. An agreement that simply returned the Monarchy to its position in 1914 was unacceptable except in moments of utter desperation. Victory, according to Conrad, was a

prerequisite to survival as a great power and as a multi-ethnic Monarchy.

Nationalism proved so strong a magnet for the attention of the officer corps that Conrad, at least, simply ignored issues that obsessed the military leaders of other nations. Despite his willingness to experiment with airplanes and machine guns before the war, Conrad never really grasped the importance of economics and the Industrial Revolution. He certainly complained enough about shortages of munitions and material, but he never really understood the long-term implications of these problems. Conrad almost never discussed the need to build an industrial base to strengthen the Monarchy over the long-term. The immediate threats of nationalism and military weakness always won out over the long-term danger of financial exhaustion and economic inferiority.

Beyond the relevance of these points to military historians and to historians of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Habsburg experience suggests interesting questions and insights about the nature of multi-ethnic armies. One such area lies in the appeals and weaknesses of anationalism. It is often assumed that the nationalism and anationalism are opposites, and that intentionally employing the latter
is the only way to counter the influences of the former. This may well be true in some ways and in some cases. But the Habsburg experience leads to two significant caveats to this assumption.

The first is the reminder that anationalism and nationalism are not the sole options in a binary system. Instead, the choices of allegiance and identity available to the officers interacted in complex and unpredictable ways. In the Habsburg case, anationalism meant that a social-Darwinistic officer corps saw itself as the embattled defender of the Monarchy as dynasty and as state. In this case, the caste identity of the officer corps frequently but not always strengthened the Monarchical identity of the officer corps. It does not have to work this way, however.

Just as or more importantly, anational values and training suggest that officers insulated from nationalism will not understand or know how to deal with nationalism from a position "outside" it. Indeed, one can argue that the isolation of the officer corps and the army, intended partly to prevent their exposure to nationalism, actually led the officers to internalize a view of nationalism which impeded their ability to function effectively. Conrad and
many others had well before the war accepted the very picture of nationalism as that put forward by nationalists themselves—that nationalism was so convincing that anyone exposed to this virus would almost inevitably succumb. Accordingly, although professing to be anational, Conrad and the AOK made decisions based upon the assumption that ethnic groups were already and inevitably nationalized, and that the actions of individuals could be predicted by their ethnic identity.

This assumption meant that Conrad never really understood the root causes of the Habsburg military failure. To be sure, the national loyalties of some men and even some units overrode their allegiance to the Monarchy, or, more commonly, made them unwilling to take the initiative on the battlefield or to take risks they perceived as unnecessary. But I believe the root causes of the military failures on the battlefield, at least before the middle of 1917, were different: the extreme shortage of officers, the difficulties of commanding a multi-lingual unit, the manpower shortage and the consequent inability to allow new inductees more than six or eight weeks of training before they were sent to the battlefront, and the serious shortages of weapons, munitions, and supplies of
all kinds. Some officer correctly referred to these problems and protested against the AOK’s predisposition to blame the nationalities for every defeat. But to Conrad, any explanation other than nationalism was literally inconceivable. As a result, he believed it necessary to repress any sign of nationalism severely, a policy that only exacerbated the minorities’ unwillingness to fight for the Monarchy, leading to more repression in an ever-tightening feedback loop.

The Habsburg experience also suggests ways in which the tension between operational effectiveness and measures designed to contain or eliminate nationalism can lead to conscious tradeoffs between the two goals. Before the war, the army, despite periodic debate, consciously chose to optimize mobilization time (by stationing units near their recruiting areas) at the risk of exposing the units and new recruits to nationalist agitation. During the war, Conrad quickly reversed this priority. Replacement battalions were sent to different units, agitators were removed from their unit and inserted into German or Hungarian regiments, suspect formations were purged or even broken up, all in the name of dampening nationalist agitation (no one thought, of eliminating it in the short-run). Conrad was
quite aware that these measures had clear operational costs, but believed them worth paying in order to prevent desertion or treason.

Finally, the Habsburg army in the First World War serves as a case study for contrasting short-term and long-term approaches toward the use of the army for political ends. Conrad certainly had a long-term strategy for restoring the health and viability of the Habsburg army. But it is noteworthy how this plan ignored possible positive uses of nationalism. Conrad never used nationalism as a motivational tool—challenging Czechs to fight better than Hungarians or offering future rewards as incentives for performance on the battlefield. Instead, nationalism in the short term was only an enemy, never an ally.

In contrast, the way in which nationalism played out within the British Empire was quite different. The Canadian and Australian governments sought to use the war to weld their nation together—either amplifying an already existing national identity or forging a new one through battlefield accomplishments. Accordingly, both struggled to persuade the British military to employ the Canadian and Australian forces as distinct national units under their
own national commanders. Canada and Australia intentionally and successfully exploited the war as a nationalizing instrument, and the British Imperial structure was able to accommodate them sufficiently.®

The Habsburg Monarchy generally and Conrad specifically could not do that. Indeed, in so far as Canada and Australia were somewhat analogous to the Czechs or Slovaks within the Habsburg Monarchy, this was exactly what Conrad was striving to prevent. There is a great difference between many languages and multiple religions on the one side and a consonance of language and only one major religion on the other. Adding India and the United Kingdom (with its Irish problem) into the British mix makes the situation more comparable. The two alternatives form endpoints of a spectrum along which militaries might attempt to treat national impulses. As such, they offer valuable comparative material for those investigating other multi-ethnic forces.

Given the constraints on the solution to the problems of grand strategy facing them, one is led to ask why Conrad

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“For this paragraph I have relied especially on an unpublished lecture by Gunther Rothenburg titled 'For God, King and Country: Multinational Armies and the World War: The Habsburg Army and the Canadian and Australian Forces.' My thanks to Professor Geoffrey Parker for providing me with
and the army officer corps wanted war to begin with. The basic answer is simple. Any action, no matter how dangerous, was better than watching their world fall apart around them. Defeat would at least offer honor. Inaction, in contrast, was in their opinion guaranteed to fail. Trained to see themselves as the guardians of the Monarchy, and imbued with a feudal system of values, they opted for a quick and glorious war rather than a slow, and probably fatal, collapse.

a copy of this lecture.
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