5 State authorities, municipal forces and military intervention in the policing of strikes in Austria-Hungary, 1890–1914*

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In an interpellation in the Austrian Parliament in 1908, a Social Democratic deputy denounced the actions of the police and gendarmerie in Troppau/Opava during a masons' strike:

> The attitude of district officer Klinger and the municipality of Troppau and its police towards the strikers is absolutely improper and unlawful. Instead of acting impartially, they place themselves at the service of the master builders. This of course damages the trust of the workers and, in general, their perception of justice, and undermines the authority of the officials.[1]

In early twentieth-century Austria-Hungary, in an age of growing democratisation, the expectation that authorities would be impartial in labour disputes had far-reaching consequences. The need to maintain public order, a cornerstone of state duties, increasingly faced competing challenges. From the 1890s to 1914, the number of strikes (and of strikers involved) significantly rose in Austria-Hungary in a context of growing industrialisation.[2] Consequently, employers were putting more pressure on state authorities to intervene in the management of the strikes. At the same time, the push for democratisation (culminating in 1907 with the introduction of universal and equal suffrage in parliamentary elections) and increased calls for constitutional rights to be respected meant that workers' representatives demanded greater accountability from the Austrian government.

This chapter examines how the Austrian state managed these competing demands in the two decades before the First World War. It analyses the regulation of public order in the Habsburg monarchy by examining the interaction between the different authorities at the local level and the centres of power. The interplay between the various levels highlights the discrepancy between central decisions and local practices, as well as the regional differences across the vast Empire. We limit our focus here to the Austrian half of the Empire as the organisation of the police and gendarmerie forces in the Hungarian half was wholly separate and, hence, dissimilar.[3] The much narrower franchise and the systematic persecution of the workers' movement also created a very different context where trade unions were barely tolerated and harsh repression of strikes was consistent with the law.[4] In Cisleithania, however, the expanding public sphere and constitutional liberties

made severe measures more fraught. Through the topic of strikes, this chapter explores the strength of the rule of law on the ground.[5] One of the important components of this discussion was the role of the army in the repression of strikes, both in quelling unrest and in replacing strikers as a workforce. The increased militarisation of the monarchy in the lead-up to the war also had a strong influence on the debate.[6] Detailed examination of administrative correspondence and public arguments reveals the contradictions faced by the Austrian state between demands of impartiality, lack of resources and more repressive attitudes. The examples from the various corners of Cisleithania discussed here are drawn from the archives of the Interior Ministry and Defence Ministry in Vienna as well as local archives to provide a more vivid picture of strike policing across the Empire.

Strikes and public order

As the number of strikes grew towards the end of the nineteenth century, they increasingly became a matter of public order for local authorities in the Habsburg monarchy. The police apparatus in the Austrian half of the Empire had developed progressively since the 1850s. The security forces directly answerable to regional and district authorities were the gendarmerie and the state police. District officers in rural areas and smaller towns relied on gendarmerie units, while in larger cities (such as Vienna, Graz, Prague, Brünn/Brno, Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv, Cracow and Trieste/Trst), police headquarters (*Polizeidirektionen*) supervised public safety.[7] The number of state police centres in Cisleithania rapidly increased in the last decades before 1914: new police commissariats (*Polizeikommisariate*) were established in Przemyśl (1892), Mährisch-Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava (1894), Pola/Pula (1903), Rovigno/Rovinj (1910) and Borysław/Boryslav (1913), and two new police headquarters were established in Czernowitz/Cernăuți/Chernitsvi (1905) and Laibach/Ljubljana (1913). Municipalities all over Cisleithania also employed and funded their own police forces. These municipal forces were frequently involved in the policing of strikes. In contrast to the state police, local police forces were under the authority of the mayor and only assisted the state authorities.[8]

State intervention in the policing of strikes was viewed through the prism of the state's duty to maintain public peace. Local state authorities (district officers and police chiefs) therefore tended to monitor the development of strikes and call for reinforcements when necessary, but only intervened if the strike threatened to turn violent. The mobilisation of forces was gradual: if locally stationed forces were deemed insufficient, district officers called for gendarmerie reinforcements, even if they were not immediately deployed. Some regions, however, suffered from a greater shortage of gendarmerie troops. The district officer in Pisino/Pazin (Istria), for example, explained in 1909 that there were no gendarmes available in the district to be sent to the coal mines in Carpano/Krapan for an upcoming strike, as they were all mobilised elsewhere to prevent sheep thefts.[9] The frequent "concentration" of gendarmes, moving from one district to another or even from one crownland to another, to maintain order during strikes was also expensive

as the gendarmes needed to be transported and housed. For example, during the second half of 1911 alone, 1,700 gendarmes intervened in strikes in 64 locations in Bohemia. The Defence Ministry (which controlled the gendarmerie) charged the expenses incurred during such operations to the Interior Ministry.[10] Costs and available manpower were thus part of the considerations taken by local authorities when making decisions on intervention. Finally, in cases of larger demonstrations or fear of violence, authorities called for the support of army units. Use of the military was officially intended to be the "utmost and last resource to maintain and restore public peace".[11] But in practice district officers sometimes asked for army support if there were insufficient numbers of gendarmes available in the area.[12]

During strikes, one of the main causes of violence – or disturbance to public order in the official jargon – was the interaction between striking workers and "strikebreakers", either workers from the factory who continued to work or imported workers brought in by the employers to replace the strikers. An example of these confrontations can be seen during a strike in 1906 at the large wagon factory in Nesselsdorf/Kopřivnice (Moravia), which employed several thousand workers. When 30 workers decided to resume work, the strikers attempted to dissuade them from going back with insults and shaming. The district officer immediately took preventive measures and commented: "The entire location in its full extent had to be occupied by gendarmes to protect the few willing workers".[13] During the following weeks, gendarmes accompanied the strikebreakers to and from the factory. As the strike continued and the number of strikebreakers grew, several small incidents occurred. On one day, the strikers blocked the road to a nearby town to stop 12 new workers on their way home. When these workers took the train instead, a crowd of 500 people came to meet them at the station, swinging sticks and shouting insults and threats. Other incidents included rotten eggs or excrement being thrown at individuals in the street or outside the factory. Some windows of private homes were broken.[14] The shaming rituals aimed at coercing non-striking workers into compliance with the strike and the frequent verbal threats and insults sometimes turned physical.[15] The tactics against strikebreakers recalled traditional forms of popular justice, such as charivaris, and can be traced back to the rural background of most of the workers at the time.[16] From the employers' point of view, police protection of "willing workers" at all times was essential to maintain their activity: the intention was to reassure the workers and encourage them to come back. In some cases, employers even armed the "willing" workers with revolvers to ensure they could protect themselves. During a lockout in Vienna in 1911, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* mocked the "little performance" of the factory owner leading his new, armed workers outside the factory.[17]

Employers regularly complained of the insufficient protection offered by the police forces to willing workers. In a letter to his district officer, a silk factory owner in Mährisch Trübau/Moravská Třebová (Moravia) outlined his expectations:

> [we ask for] the authorities' protection against the threatening attacks of striking workers, which is due to us as citizens and taxpaying industrialists. . . . We believe we are entitled to the authorities' support in restarting the factory's

> activity with work-willing elements. [This support should consist in] preventive measures to avoid trouble, especially attacks against the work-willing. . . . Without the provision of armed police forces the work-willing could never bring themselves to enter the workplace during the strike.[18]

Furthermore, many employers wanted the state to outright eliminate any attempt by the workers to persuade others to join the strike. They thought that the legal restrictions on picketing did not go far enough. The 1870 law regulating the right of coalition did not ban individuals from standing near the establishment on strike or from giving out information; it merely specified that "intimidation" or violence could not be used for this purpose. In the early 1900s, as employers became more organised through professional associations, a movement emerged to push for reform of the current legislation. A memorandum sent to the Interior Ministry by the Union of Employers in Austria in 1906 asked for picket lines to be forbidden and for better protection of employers from the "terrorism" of striking workers. Numerous letters from employers all over Austria recounting their own experiences of strikes were sent to the Interior Ministry in support of the initiative. A company in Littai/Litija (Carnolia) described a strike in their factory in the previous year where an "ever smaller group of workers terrorised the workers", and demanded that the ministry "remove this unlawful terrorism".[19] A few years later, the employers' mouthpiece still actively campaigned for tougher legislation on picketing in line with English and American laws and blamed the "backward mores and revolutionary excesses" during strikes on "the weakness and timidity of successive governments".[20]

The debate on picketing firmly revolved around the appropriate level of intervention by state authorities. Social Democrat leaders complained of overzealous policing, which prevented workers from simply gathering or protesting outside factories. For example, seven people were arrested by the Trieste/Trst police for "bothering work-willing workers" during a strike of warehousemen in 1907. The Social Democratic newspaper *Il Lavoratore* criticised the behaviour of the police:

> when the strikers spotted a strikebreaker, they would whistle loudly at him, sneer at him and throw his betrayal in his face, then the [police] guards would move nervously, start performing ridiculous and useless "manoeuvres" and the mounted guards would press forward almost at a trot against the groups of warehousemen. . . . And whistling – there are judgments from the court of appeal – is not criminal![21]

Faced with recriminations from both sides, the government often stepped in to defend policing decisions made at the local level. The government's official position, as articulated in a speech by the interior minister in 1908, was to give some leeway to local officials in determining the extent and degree of the "intimidation". While acknowledging the strikers' right to walk about and give out information near the factory, the guidelines nevertheless underlined that pickets were not always "peaceful and harmless", which often prompted intervention from the

police forces. Authorities were entitled to intervene accordingly to maintain public order. Replying to complaints about police action against pickets in Vienna, the minister insisted that they had not substantially deviated from these principles and that only in a few isolated cases had the chief of police needed to remind his men of the general instructions.[22]

By the early twentieth century, police intervention during strikes was a highly political subject and authorities were called to account by both sides. Social Democrats defended the workers' right to strike and to demonstrate based on constitutional freedoms, while employers lobbied for protection of "those workers willing to work" (*Arbeitswillige*). Contesting the very concept of strikebreaking, employers claimed they supported the freedom to choose to work, which should be guaranteed by the state.[23] Discussions and efforts to change the law at the central level constituted only one of the means used to influence policing practices. Another was to exert influence on local officials, whose responses varied greatly throughout the Empire.

The state as umpire? Central principles and local practices

As legislative change was slow and difficult to achieve, employers also attempted to put direct pressure on police forces. Complaints about the partiality of the local police surfaced in many towns throughout Cisleithania, the motives varying according to the political leanings of the municipal council. In Troppau/Opava (Silesia), Czech-speakers deplored the passive attitude of the municipal police against German youth violence.[24] In Pola/Pula (Istria) policemen affiliated with the Italian liberals were accused of mistreating Croatian-speakers and political adversaries. After one such episode, the loyalist newspaper *Omnibus* ran the title: "Down with the municipal guards! Send them all away!"[25] In the case of labour disputes, Social Democrats frequently denounced the collusion between employers and municipal policemen, who, being directly answerable to the mayor, were considered to be more biased than gendarmes or soldiers. During a masons' strike in Neutitschein/Nový Jičín (Moravia), a leaflet published by the strike committee accused the employers of "relying on the help of strikebreakers protected by the local police, whose leader is said to be a relative of the master-builder Blum".[26] Similarly, during the strike at the Witkowitz/Vítkovice steelworks in the Ostrava mining region in 1906, the workers saw the local police as acting on the orders of the management and referred to them as the "cossacks of the Vítkovice Czar".[27] Local policemen were also suspected of taking bribes or being pressured to act as guards for the employers.[28] The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* commented on the case of a policeman who arrested striking laundresses for no reason in the suburbs of Vienna following the threat of an official complaint by the employer: "the police think they are the handmaidens of the employers and execute their orders blindly".[29] The local police's independence vis-à-vis district authorities also meant that official recourse against them was not so effective. After a few incidents during a strike at a bike factory in Eger/Cheb (Bohemia) in 1912, the municipal chief of police decided to ban picket lines and to arrest any worker who tried to persuade

willing workers to stop their activity. When Social Democrats complained to the district officer, the latter retorted that he had no influence over decisions taken by the autonomous police forces.[30]

The fact that the limited municipal forces could more readily defend employers' interests did not mean that employers did not resort to the state authorities or try to influence how they managed public order. The bloody repression of a large Social Democratic demonstration after the elections of 1907 in Przemyśl when the police charged into a peaceful crowd showed that a state police force was by no means a sufficient guarantee of impartiality.[31] In smaller localities, employers often directly requested the local district officer to provide gendarmerie protection or send reinforcements to areas where few men were permanently posted. In 1905, the previously quoted silk factory owner in Mährisch-Trübau/Moravská Třebová went so far as to ask the Interior Ministry to demote the district officer because he had refused to provide additional gendarmes and then call for the army to protect the willing workers. In his letter to the Moravian governor, the owner asked that a man "with more understanding of the situation and interests of the industry be nominated". The district officer had made several attempts at negotiation, which had failed, and claimed that the protection offered was sufficient.[32] As strikes could last several weeks, the costs of maintaining troops from elsewhere weighed on officials' decisions. A letter from the Union of Industrialists to the regional authorities defended the owner of an agricultural machinery factory in the Moravian countryside and requested continued gendarmerie protection during a strike:

> It seems to us out of question that the granting of protection for the work-willing should be somehow tied up with the issue of the costs of further gendarmerie protection. The question of the protection of the work-willing is a public law issue, which cannot be made dependent on the civil law factor of its costs.[33]

The Union of Austrian industrialists created in 1897 often acted as an intermediary to relay complaints of poor public management of strikes. Another local branch of the union sent a telegram to the Moravian governor to request the banning of a worker's demonstration in Sternberg/Šternberk (Moravia).[34] The union also backed a request to the Interior Ministry from a furniture factory in Buczkowice to have gendarmes posted there in order to deter socialist agitators (before a strike broke out). The company offered to house them for free.[35] To solve the difficult question of costs, companies in sparsely populated areas were sometimes prepared to make arrangements themselves to enable the gendarmes to stay. In anticipation of an upcoming strike, a mine owner in Carpano/Krapan (Istria) had built housing for the strikebreakers as well as a separate house for the gendarmerie reinforcements.[36]

For local state authorities, therefore, the relatively swift resolution of strikes had an impact on the mobilisation and use of public forces. The authorities in many cases tried to mediate between employers and workers in order to bring an end to the strike more quickly. This approach, pioneered by Prime Minister Koerber,

who sent the minister of Justice to lead the negotiations during the 1900 coal miners' strike, was a combination of pragmatism and respect for constitutional rights.[37] State officials had often noticed that army or even gendarmerie intervention exacerbated tensions and saw compromise as a more efficient method of conflict resolution. This ideal of mediation was very present in instructions from the Interior Ministry, but in practice it was often flouted in favour of force. Moreover, conceptions in Vienna ministries could clash with interests at the regional or local levels. During the 1904 strike among Borysław oil workers, the Galician governor Potocki, himself an owner of oil fields, defended the oil producers' inflexible stance despite pressure from the Vienna government to find a compromise. Potocki committed to the protection of willing workers with as many military troops as necessary.[38] Even so, employers found the number of soldiers mobilised insufficient and asked for more, promising to cover the transportation costs.[39] One of the oil companies sent a telegram to Koerber requesting additional troops and asked the English consul to also push for stronger army intervention, claiming that they feared for their own safety if soldiers did not intervene.[40]

Furthermore, the necessity for impartiality in labour disputes was perceived differently across the various regions of Cisleithania. District officers in industrial regions such as Bohemia, Moravia, Upper and Lower Austria sometimes published notices limiting picketing or sent out the police or the gendarmerie early on during strikes.[41] But, conversely, there were also complaints of officials who favoured the strikers and examples of serious attempts at mediation. For example, in Marienbad/Mariánské Lázně (Bohemia) during a masons' strike in 1903, the district officer "summoned" to negotiations the masters, who refused to comply and complained about the "improper form" of these summons in parliament.[42] During the aforementioned strike in the Nesselsdorf/Kopřivnice wagon factory in 1906 as the owners refused to recognise the workers' organisation, the district officer negotiated separately over several days with the workers' leaders and the head of the factory to come to an agreement.[43] In contrast, the local district officers' management of the massive field workers' strike in Galicia in 1902 betrays a more immediate willingness to defend the employers' position. The strike was one of the largest labour movements in the Late Habsburg Empire. It started in the early summer and lasted until September, spreading through 18 districts and in 386 towns in the Eastern part of the province.[44] The day labourers, who would usually lend their services to the nearby large estate during harvest time collectively refused to take up the work. The number of "strikers" is hard to estimate since entire villages participated in the boycott movement. To be able to proceed with the harvest, landowners recruited workers from other regions, mostly from the South or West of the province, but also from as far afield as Croatia. Violent incidents against the work-willing broke out in 121 towns. In Czernichowce/Chernikhivtsi when a crowd of around a hundred people threw stones at gendarmes bringing workers back from an estate on a cart, the two gendarmes fired their weapons and wounded one man.[45]

Local authorities often reacted to the strike by requesting army intervention. As a report from the Ministry of Commerce explained, "the authorities had to

commandeer the military to enable the foreign workers to bring in the harvest".[46] Yet, the Viennese government had invited the local authorities early on to find an acceptable compromise for both parties by examining the peasants' demands "strictly impartially" and, in managing public order, to avoid any "measure which could be misinterpreted as a one-sided exertion of influence by the government in favour of one party".[47] Ruthenian politicians, however, complained of the district officials' partiality and asked for employees from the Interior Ministry to be sent instead.[48] In their complaints, they described several district officers in Galicia who put out public notices to dissuade the peasants from joining the strikes and claimed that pressing for better conditions was against the law. The army was supposedly sent to one village before the strike had started.[49] According to Deputy Andrii Kos, an army officer even reported that he had been instructed by an official from the governor's office to "not spare" the population, "to harm them materially", and he had the impression the official wanted to inflict revenge upon the striking peasants.[50] Several episodes of violent repression were also criticised. In a small town in the district of Czortków/Chortkiv a crowd came to drive out the foreign workers who had been hired on the estate. To defend them, the army charged into the crowd and the gendarmes carried out a mass arrest of 137 people, who were locked in a barn for several days before being taken to the district capital for interrogation.[51] In Jaktorów/Yaktoriv, near Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv, the cavalry attacked peasants who tried to prevent a reaping machine from being started up: five suffered light injuries, three more serious injuries, one of whom subsequently died.[52]

Overall, 444 people were arrested during the summer.[53] Local authorities in Galicia did not acknowledge the workers' right to strike and construed the strike as a national insurrection (many of the peasants in the region being Ruthenian-speaking). Some of the measures taken against strikers, such as the forced billeting of soldiers in private houses, were experienced as a punishment against politically active workers. The Galician governor's detailed report to the Interior Ministry, which attempted to deflect criticism voiced in parliament and in the press, plays down the accounts of violence but tends to confirm the officials' sympathy for the landowners.[54] In the eyes of the district officers and the governor, the peasants' claims for constitutional rights of assembly or the right to strike were perceived as fundamentally illegitimate. The governor explained that the movement could not be put on a par with the wage disputes in the Western provinces and that the field labourers had been manipulated by agitators, comments which reflected the Polish landowners' prejudices against the peasantry. He also insisted on the "moral effect" on the population of the appearance of the military. His view was that the goal of army deployment was to show the peasants "the truth" of the situation and contradict the rumours that the strike was sanctioned by the state.[55] He deemed "fairy tales" the brochures that were circulating explaining the workers' right to strike. The automatic repressive measures (unlawful mass arrests, ordering the army to attack before violence had broken out) are confirmed by the reports and contrast with the management of strikes elsewhere. It also clearly emerges that state employees did not try to remain neutral or help to mediate,

but saw their duty as lying in harsh repression of the movement. The notion of labour conflicts as legitimate forms of action and of workers as equal citizens was emerging slowly in Late Habsburg Austria and was not uniformly respected. The variations reflected local arrangements or interests but also more fundamentally, sometimes, as in the case of Galicia, the local officials' lack of recognition of constitutional rights.

Military assistance

The systematic deployment of military units during the agricultural strike of 1902 led to complaints of violence and raised questions about the use of auxiliary brute force (*Brachialgewalt*) in dealing with labour unrest. In spite of its length and territorial extent, the strike resulted in few serious casualties: many peasants were injured, but only one died. However, that same summer in the province's capital, Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv, five men were killed by the army in repressing a construction workers' strike.[56] In the last decades before the First World War, the army was still frequently deployed to quell unrest (strikes or demonstrations) and many citizens still died from the weapons of their own military. Army assistance was supposed to be a means of last resort. Official regulations stipulated that it should only be used when all other possibilities for reinforcement, whether gendarmerie or police forces, had been exhausted. Indeed authorities often resisted calls for army dispatches. For example despite pressure from the population for army intervention following fears of peasant unrest in Bukovina in 1907, the governor insisted on respecting the regulations and not calling the army too quickly.[57] In contrast, local officials in Hungary called on soldiers more readily and army officers themselves deplored what they saw as a misuse of military forces for political aims in the Eastern half of the Empire.[58] Austrian parliamentary deputies also complained about the use of the Common Army to influence elections in Hungary, questioning the burden of such "assistance" on the common budget.[59] In Croatia-Slavonia, too, military reinforcements were a common means of quelling unrest, for example during the 1897 rural protests.[60]

The growing illegitimacy of sending in troops against the home population and the complaints from the Social Democrats meant that army intervention, especially when it resulted in casualties, increasingly had to be justified. In this respect, national unrest sometimes furnished a useful explanation. In the case of the stokers' strike in Trieste, where 14 people were killed by the army, the spectre of irredentist agitators justified the army's prompt and firm response, even in the eyes of the liberal *Neue Freie Presse*.[61] In fact, the strike was led by the local Social Democrats and had no connection to irredentism. Similarly, in Galicia the local administration presented the 1902 field workers' strike as the work of Ruthenian anti-Polish agitators and hence a threat to the state in order to justify harsh repression and the intervention of the army.[62] In reality, even the Ruthenian National Deputy Andrii Kos acknowledged that the strike had purely economic causes and the main demands (higher wages, access to pastures, authorisation to

gather wood) clearly point to classic peasant/landowner issues.[63] The threat of an insurrection or nationalist tendencies allowed justifying *ex post* the heavy-handedness of the repression.[64]

These two examples should not mislead us into thinking that army violence only took place on the periphery or that it was only there that it was lethal. Accusations of subversion or treason as a means to suppress labour unrest had its roots in earlier measures against strikes in the 1870s and 1880s.[65] Moreover, army troops sent to deal with demonstrators led to deaths in Graz during the Badeni riots of 1897, in the Bohemian Lands in 1905 and even in Vienna itself, where four workers were killed during cost-of-living riots in 1911.[66] As Social Democrat deputy Karl Leuthner claimed in 1912, "in Austria and Hungary there is more shooting than anywhere in Europe: for every election, every larger strike, every turbulent demonstration".[67] By 1914, most large cities in the Empire had witnessed a bloody episode of army repression in the preceding 20 years.

The army, for its part, perceived the recourse to military assistance by civilian authorities as potentially damaging to its prestige. In a 1911 note, the Military Chancellery commented on the recent use of military assistance that it had lost its "imposing effect on the people" in the last few years. Instead of dampening agitation, military intervention often exacerbated it and turned the crowd against the military. When weapons were used, there were discussions in parliament as to whether it was justified or not, which were then publicised in the press. Without weapons, the soldiers might have to endure the scorn of jeering crowds for days, which "shattered the troops' standing (*Ansehen*)". The Military Chancellor criticised the use of assistance troops for "scare effect" (*zum Bangemachen*) rather than for the "restoration of public order". Frequent use of army troops inured people to the "scare effect" and they became used to the "harmlessness" of the assistance troops. The note concluded that

> if the civil servant had to be answerable for "fetching the military" to the same extent as the officer is for the use of force, . . . the mob would already scatter at the approach of the military and the number of "victims" would sink significantly.[68]

In the eyes of military leaders, the civilian authorities' overreliance on the army in case of unrest undermined both the standing of the army as an institution and the effectiveness of the assistance itself.[69] The consequences of these interventions could be unpleasant and could aggravate the relationship between the civilian population and the local garrison. In a context of general conscription, it was important to maintain the army's good standing in society. Local commanders might be tempted to mend their relationship with the town's inhabitants after the use of violence. The military command in Brüx/Most (Bohemia) was thus strictly forbidden from giving the press or the municipality "excuses or explanations" as this could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. The decree sent to all military commands acknowledged the difficult position of local officers but asked them in the name of "military dignity" to refrain from expressing their regrets.[70] Finally,

assistance meant that the soldiers would be attacking not a foreign enemy, but workers, sometimes women and children, in defence of private property.[71] The soldiers perceived the task as highly unrewarding and army officers considered it an "unpleasant duty".[72]

The debate on the role of military intervention in strikes concerned not just the casualties induced by the repressive measures. Despite strong Social Democratic opposition to the practice, soldiers still sometimes took the place of strikers to ensure continuity of production. For example, during the highly publicised bricklayers' strike of 1895 in Vienna, which prompted a wider discussion in the press and parliament on army and gendarmerie intervention during strikes (in this case leading to one death) and on the harsh conditions of workers, complaints also targeted the use of soldiers as strikebreakers. The interior minister insisted that only a few men had been hired "in their free time" (even the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* considered it "insignificant"), but it was seen as compromising the government's position. The troops themselves were quickly withdrawn after the parliamentary debate.[73] Officially, posting soldiers for work purposes was condemned and could only take place by express authorisation from the emperor. Whereas in the 1870s it was still accepted in exceptional cases, especially if the food supply was threatened, as it was, for example, during bakers' strikes, a War Ministry decree of 1889 severely limited the provision of soldiers for economic assistance. The decree forbade a military command from taking such a measure without authorisation from the War Ministry and made it contingent upon approval from the imperial military chancellery, which was mostly refused.[74] In practice, however, ad-hoc arrangements and the lending of soldiers still happened, even though they were not part of a systematic policy. In Trieste in 1902, the Austro-Hungarian navy provided the private company Lloyd with stokers to replace the strikers. The Minister of Commerce justified the navy's action by the need to maintain postal traffic in the public interest, claiming that the military stokers only worked on ships also carrying mail.[75] During a citywide strike of textile workers in Reichenberg/Liberec in 1904, a tailor whose workforce was on strike received the help of a few military tailors to complete orders of army uniforms. The governor similarly insisted that the military tailors had not worked on the production of civilian clothes.[76]

Asking for soldiers to perform the work of strikers was increasingly not simply a temporary improvised expedient, but part of a double strategy to defend the national economy in the lead-up to the war, first by ensuring uninterrupted services in key sectors, and second by undermining the Social Democratic movement. The strike wave of 1905 spawned demand for the systematic deployment of soldiers in strategic industries, such as bakeries, butchers, printers, transportation facilities, communication services and gas and water works. The risk of a general strike in the wake of the Russian revolution and the movement for universal suffrage was considered enough of an emergency to call for the use of soldiers to guarantee the continuation of food and energy supplies, as well as official printing presses. The governors in Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv and Linz had turned directly to local military commanders to ask if a military workforce was available to provide

help in the food industries in case a general strike broke out. The Bohemian governor explained the double goal of using the military against a general strike:

> it is on the one hand an important state interest to weaken the effect of this Social Democratic weapon, but also to counter the damage caused to the public by a disrupted food supply and forced stoppage of lighting and water works. It would be a great asset, in this respect, if the most important services could be maintained through the provision of a military workforce.[77]

The War Ministry, however, reminded regional military commanders that soldiers were prohibited from working for private businesses. This position sought to preserve military discipline and military standing and spare the men from possible insults from strikers and also avoid fragmenting forces when they might be needed to restore order. If the situation were to become serious, the ministry was prepared to furnish goods from its own bakeries and stocks rather than a workforce.[78]

The notion that several key activities were too indispensable to be disrupted and that the army should then step in to maintain them came to be further reinforced in the following years. Army troops were indeed used to guarantee continuity of service, especially in larger cities. In 1908, during a strike at the Budapest gas works, 300 soldiers from the Common Army were mobilised to work for the private company while additional troops were sent to maintain order. This massive recourse to common soldiers generated outrage among Social Democrats, who saw the official justification, that the lights could not go out in the second largest city in the Empire, as a mere excuse.[79] Similarly, in Cracow in 1913, 40 soldiers replaced striking gas workers.[80]

The demonstrations and strikes in 1905 had not led to a paralysis of the economy, but the "passive resistance" of railway workers in November of that year had demonstrated the potential damage a general stoppage would cause.[81] In nearby Hungary, the weeklong strike among railway workers in 1904 had been crushed by the Tisza government through mobilisation of the workers into the *Honvéd* (Hungarian army).[82] Faced with the possibility of another movement among railway workers in Cisleithania, the emperor gave preventive authorisation for the partial mobilisation of reservist railway workers in 1907, 1908 and again in 1911.[83] In 1907, the general inspector of railways considered that military personnel should be available as temporary helpers for the good "order of a service so essential for the defence power".[84] A project law was even drafted in 1908.[85] The Railway Ministry pushed for military intervention in the case of passive resistance, as it endangered not only the economy but also the "the fighting capacity of the Empire".[86] By 1912, the War Ministry had somewhat changed its position regarding economic assistance and considered it perfectly valid to maintain train traffic, especially since disruption could create problems for the smooth mobilisation of troops in the event of war. As its preferred solution, however, the ministry recommended passing a law to make "passive resistance" a punishable offence, as was the case in Hungary.[87] In Hungarian law, the concerted refusal to work was a crime for public workers and this provision had been used to arrest the leaders of the

1904 railway strike.[88] Social Democrats denounced the "militarisation of railway workers" entailed in the project to mobilise railway employees.[89] Following a strike among state employees (especially postal workers) in Trieste in 1911, Social Democrat deputy Pittoni questioned the legality of replacing strikers with soldiers to combat passive resistance, calling it an "anti-constitutional measure".[90]

The debate in parliament and Pittoni's interpellation led to an inter-ministerial conference in early 1914 to determine the extent to which the military could be drawn upon to replace state employees. According to the final report, the commission considered that recourse to the military in state services was not a negation of constitutional rights. If "passive resistance" in economic public establishments endangered "public safety, peace and order," then replacement with soldiers was justified. The railway sector fell in this category: it provoked as much disruption as a riot, since it threatened the common well-being through its effect on supply routes, the national economy and social life. The other sectors considered indispensable to the smooth continuation of economic life were coal production in certain cases and the postal and telegraph services. Moreover, "protection of the endangered public interest" required military forces to be drawn on not only to replace state railway employees but also employees of private railway companies in order to maintain operations.[91] These provisions, which made the increased recourse to soldiers to replace strikers acceptable, corresponded to similar measures in France and Italy at the time. They also did not stand out in the context of the increased militarisation of the Habsburg monarchy immediately before the war. The War Production Law of 1912, which laid out plans for potential military mobilisation of the economy, had already given the military substantial control over labour relations in case of war. Measures to use the military to counter strikes of state employees were a logical extension of the militarisation effort driven by preparations for war.[92]

The intervention of authorities to maintain public order during strikes offers a case study in the articulation of the different layers of power in Habsburg Austria. The concrete mechanisms of containing violence during strikes reveal the links between the state as guarantor of public safety, the municipalities and the army. The gradual deployment of police, gendarmerie and army forces left local officials with a wide margin of appreciation within the limits of the general regulations. Many complaints about biases were lodged from both the side of the employers and the side of the workers' organisations. Employers took for granted that the Austrian state would intervene to further industrial interests. An ideal of impartiality on the part of the Austrian state in labour disputes definitely existed and was promoted by the Interior Ministry, at least from the Koerber era onwards. However, state intervention could take a different form at the local level, highlighting the chasm between theory and practice. Sometimes, local officials, as in Galicia, dismissed workers' actions as automatically illegitimate and fell back on earlier methods of discrediting strikes by treating them as state subversion. The Austrian state was not blind to the effects of harsh repression on public opinion and was concerned by its potential for undermining state legitimacy. The public's attitude towards the use of soldiers as strikebreakers provides, in this sense, a

benchmark for the transformations in the last decades before 1914. While the practice was increasingly disdained around the turn of the century, it gained new legitimacy from the militarisation of the economy that wartime necessitated as it was felt that a patriotic emergency trumped considerations of the rule of law. This course would only be further reinforced through the increased military control of society during the First World War.

Notes

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52 The incident is described in the governor's report and mentions injuries but gives no number, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1989, sig. 20/9, no. 7829/02, 9 October 1902; a newspaper article gives the number of injured people, *Die Zeit*, 9 August 1902, no. 6135/02, Ibid., no. 7829/02, 19 August 1902; for the report from the governor on the subsequent death, see Ibid., ad no. 7829, 25 October 1902.
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