The Collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and the Brutalisation of the Successor States

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On 31 October 1918, the Commander of the Adriatic-based Habsburg fleet, Miklos Horthy, sent a final telegram to his Emperor, Charles I, assuring him of his «unshakable loyalty». Minutes later, he surrendered the flagship of his fleet, the SMS *Viribus Unitis*, to the New South Slav State (the future Yugoslavia) releasing the Czech, Croatian, Polish, and German Austrian sailors and officers around him into an uncertain future as post-imperial subjects. For Horthy himself, however, the war was by no means over. Once fighting between the major combatants of World War I had ended, he soon found another project: the cleansing of his native Hungary from those revolutionary forces that had allegedly caused the Habsburgs' defeat and the break-up of their empire. In this respect, Horthy's reaction to the situation of late 1918 was not fundamentally different from that of 37–year-old Brigadier Mustafa Kemal, who – roughly at the same time – returned from the lost Palestinian front to Istanbul. In 1926, when he was already president of the Turkish Republic, he recalled his arrival in the defeated Ottoman Empire's capital as the beginning of his «mission» to transform the «Turkic core» of the empire into a Turkish nation-state. He would achieve this «mission» through a series of violent conflicts and, after halting a Greek advance into Anatolia, the largest expulsion of civilians before World War II.[1]

This article explores the interconnected issues of demobilisation and brutalisation in the collapsing Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the period immediately after 1918, two case studies with intriguing differences and similarities that have not, as yet, been the subject of much comparative historical research. Although it is clear that the Ottoman Empire experienced a far more intense period of violence directed against civilians before, during and after World War I, it is difficult to dispute that much of the violence that occurred in Central-Eastern Europe during and

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1 R. Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire 1912–1923*, Oxford 2009, chapter 2.

after the *Second* World War, to which the Habsburg successor states contributed significantly, cannot be understood without consideration of the transformative, and often traumatic, events of late 1918. The extreme violence witnessed in East-Central Europe after 1939/1941 is indeed intimately connected to the issues that were raised but not resolved by the re-drawing of borders in 1918/1919 and the creation of successor states that were anything but ethnically homogenous. The violent expulsion and murder of Ottoman Christians during and after World War I was mirrored by the process of ethnic unweaving witnessed in Central-Eastern Europe during and after World War II. What they have in common is that the violent un-mixing can be traced back to the period of World War I and its outcomes.

In comparatively exploring the different forms, agents and victims of violence that accompanied the collapse of the Habsburg and Ottoman land Empires, this article can build on a rich body of recent literature. Some conceptual studies have testified to the fruitfulness of comparative research on the late European land empires[2] while others have focused on what Donald Bloxham and others have defined as «shatter zones» of Empire in the transitional phase from imperial rule to nation-states.[3] Comparative studies on the Ottoman and Habsburg cases, however, remain the exception.

On the eve of World War I, the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires were viewed as anachronistic elements of European politics by many contemporary observers, despite the fact that both empires were undergoing significant reforms. The Ottoman Empire – in many ways more autocratic than the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy – had entered its «Constitutional Period» in 1908, embarking on a process (however short-lived) of democratisation and an expansion of citizenship rights. In the case of the Habsburg Empire, the *Ausgleich* of 1867 had transformed Hungary into a sovereign kingdom within the Dual Monarchy (a degree of autonomy not extended to the Czech, Polish and Croatian minorities, let alone the inhabitants of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the two provinces occupied after the Congress of Berlin in 1878) – a reform that some policy-makers in Istanbul in 1916 considered a model for the transformation of the empire into a Turkish-Arab state. Although a *Rechtsstaat* and considerably less violent in its dealings with ethnic and religious minorities than the Ottoman Empire, the outbreak of World War I and the mobilisation of nationalist passions quickly led to the introduction of repressive policies,

2   A. Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914–1923*, London 2001; J. Leonhard / U. von Hirschhausen (eds.), «Multi-Ethnic Empires and the Military, 1860–1918», Special Issue of the *Journal of Modern European History* 2 (2007) 5.

3   D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide*, Oxford 2009; Idem / R. Gerwarth (eds.), *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Cambridge 2011; M. A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908–1918*, Cambridge 2011; R. Gerwarth / J. Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence after the Great War*, Oxford 2012. The concept has recently been adopted by O. Bartov / E. D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, Bloomington, IN 2013.

notably against South Slavs, Ukrainians and Jews. They culminated not only in atrocities carried out against the civilian population in Serbia (like in Šabac on 17 August 1914 or in Lješnica two days later), but also against Austrian or Hungarian citizens in the Vojvodina and Bosnia-Hercegovina. Suspicion against «unreliable» minorities and fears of fifth columns in the rear of the Austrian army led to the execution of some 30.000 people (including women) suspected of spying for the Tsarist army in Galicia. Preventive repression also included the internment of more than 10.000 Serbs, Ukrainians and Italians as well as military trails against several thousand Czechs, Ukrainians, Serbs, Slovenes, and Italians, many of whom were sentenced to death and executed.[4]

It is true, of course, that even these experiences of large-scale violence against civilians cannot be compared to the extent of violence experienced in the Ottoman Empire before, during and after the war. During the half-century that followed the Eastern Crisis of the 1870s, the Ottoman Empire experienced forms of violence that prefigured many of the ethnic conflicts that were to re-emerge with greater vigor after World War I. The dismantling of large swathes of the Ottoman Balkan domains from the 1870s onwards had given rise to aggressively insecure new states with ethnically exclusionist political agendas located between the two empires, states that were prey to each other but also to the agendas of greater powers, to secessionist terrorism and to acts of ethnic murder. Following revolts against Ottoman rule in Hercegovina, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro in 1875–1876, the Ottomans repressed the uprisings with a ferocity that aroused indignation throughout Europe, only to become victims of mass violence and expulsions themselves during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913.[5] In the embattled Balkan lands, paramilitarism in the form of anti-Ottoman guerillas, the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian *comitadji* foreshadowed forms of political violence that would become dominant throughout Eastern and Central Europe after 1917–1918.

At least in this respect, the post-war conflicts in Central-Eastern and Southern Europe as well as in Asia Minor cannot only be seen as the result of World War I or the brutalising effects of defeat. In the Ottoman case, the violence that erupted after 1918 had a longer background and thus formed part of a larger cycle of violence that predated and outlasted World War I. With the benefit of hindsight, many Turkish historians have dubbed the entire period of 1912–1923 the «Ten Years' War» (*on yıllık harb*) while for Serbian nationalist «1914» never marked more than yet another year of armed struggle. Little or no distinction was made between the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), the First World War and – in Turkey – the subsequent «War of

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4 J. Angelow, «Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Neue Fragestellungen und Erklärungen«, in: A. Bauerkämper / E. Julien (eds.), *Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich 1914–1918*, Göttingen 2010, 178–194, here 183.

5 F. Adanır, «Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Army and the Ottoman Defeat of 1912–1913», in: R. G. Suny / F. M. Göçek (eds.), *A Question of Genocide, 1915: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford 2011, 113–125.

Liberation» (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*) or «War of Independence» (*İstiklal Harbi*) of 1919–1922. For Turkish nationalists, the unifying motive in these wars was the «salvation» of the Ottoman Empire, struggling for its very existence. That said, the mass slaughter of World War I and the Wilsonian promise to create ethnically homogenous nation-states upon the ruins of the imperial «peoples' prisons» undoubtedly added ferocity to the conflicts as the serial «rebellions» of former Ottoman and Habsburg subject peoples – including Hungarians, Croats and Slovenes in 1918/1919, Greeks in the Pontos (1920), Circassians and Albanians in the South Marmara (1920), and Sunni Kurds in Diyarbakır in the mid-1920s – were launched by former imperial army officers and soldiers. With the dissolution of the dynastic empires, new aggressive and exclusionist varieties of nationalism emerged in much of central-eastern and south-eastern Europe. As World War I destroyed the dynastic empires of Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Turkey, it left embattled «shatter zones» or large tracts of territory without order or clear state authority.[6] Many of the «rebellions» were repressed with utmost violence, notably in the Ottoman Empire where tens of thousands of people were killed, thousands more deported and hundreds of villages were razed to the ground. In many regions of Austria-Hungary the transition from the imperial administration to that of the national successor states was comparatively smooth and only accompanied by acts of vandalism against symbols of the old order. This was particularly the case in the autonomous crown lands where the administration was already in «national» hands. In ethnically mixed or contested areas such as Austrian Silesia, Southern Carinthia, Western Hungary, Teschen, Galicia, or the Banat, however, violence was far more frequent and wide-spread. Ethnic violence was frequently complemented by revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence, notably in Galicia and in Hungary where communists under Béla Kun tried to emulate the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Here – as in much of East-Central Europe – two competing revolutionary projects overlapped: a national and a social revolution. While the latter followed the nineteenth-century clarity of the barricades of two sides confronting each other in the name of opposing ideologies, the ethnic violence associated with national revolutions was more complicated and much messier. Inter-communal violence between opposed ethnic groups was common not only in the borderlands of the Habsburg Empire but also in the former Ottoman lands, where different actors sought to claim or protect «national» terrain. Post-war violence in the successor states was thus generally most marked in the ethnically diverse borderlands of the shattered Habsburg and Ottoman Empires where irregular Austrian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Slovenian, Croatian, Turkish, Greek, Kurdish, and Armenian militias, «nationalised» through imperial implosion and newly imposed border changes, fought

6 Bloxham, *Final Solution*, 81; Bartov / Weitz (eds.),
   Shatterzone.

against both internal and external enemies for territorial control, material gain, or ideological fulfilment.

In these ethnically diverse and contested borderlands, military conflict continued unabated, often taking a more unconventional (and often even more brutal) form than during World War I because the activists were no longer «restrained» by traditional military discipline. The barbarisation of warfare, manifesting itself in indiscriminate killings, was a legacy of the wars after 1912, which had been ethnic in scope and had targeted civilians and combatants alike.[7] Battling the enemy had included massacring enemy civilians and destroying enemy villages, blurring distinctions between combatants and non-combatants. In these stateless and lawless enclaves, it became possible to realise nationalist ideas that hardly corresponded with ethnic realities on the ground. The violence itself followed a new logic that pointed into the future towards the kind of ethnic warfare against «enemy civilians» that characterised World War II. The purpose of fighting was no longer to defeat the enemy combatant but to expel, permanently suppress or even annihilate the «enemy within». The salvation of the Turkish, Austrian and Hungarian nations would follow a redemptive final reckoning with broadly defined «internal enemies». Locals caught up in the conflict were mostly inducted by more utilitarian or emotional motives for committing violence against the targets, including risks of losing property or fear of victimisation. Due to the lack of effective «breaks» on or disciplining of the violence in these spatially and temporally demarcated pockets, brutalisation took hold on a scale unknown throughout the preceding years. The absence of (military) law thus worked both at the structure and agency level: statelessness generated opportunity for unbridled violence against civilians, and the groups who were enlisted or attracted to these areas were militias hardened by years of (irregular) battle.

The brutalisation of the post-imperial societies of Central and Southern Europe, its origins, manifestations and legacies will be explored in greater detail in this article. More specifically, the purpose is to analyse the ways in which German-Austrian, Magyar and Ottoman veterans and members of the so-called war youth generation made the painful transition from war to peace, and how their search for a post-war project to justify their war-time sacrifices found its expression in the attempted «cleansing of the nation» of social and ethnic elements perceived to be obstacles to a «national rebirth».

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7 W. Höpken, «Archaische Gewalt oder Vorboten des ‹totalen Krieges›? Die Balkankriege 1912/13 in der europäischen Kriegsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts», in: U. Brunnbauer / A. Helmedach (eds.), *Schnittstellen: Gesellschaft, Nation, Konflikt und Erinnerung in Südosteuropa*, Munich 2007, 245–260.

1. Demobilisation and its Adversaries:
Paramilitary Activists

The transitional period of 1918–1919, characterised by the traumatic experiences of defeat and territorial disintegration, had highly divergent effects on the male war-time generation of German Austria, Hungary and Turkey: reactions to war and defeat could range from conscious abstinence from the world of politics to pacifist activism or indeed a violent refusal to accept the new realities in post-war Europe's «cultures of defeat».[8] While the vast majority of the Habsburg and Ottoman veterans returned to peaceful civilian lives in November 1918, tens of thousands of ex-servicemen did not. They constituted a small but very active minority of veterans, committed to solving the problems of post-imperial nation-building through violence. These included a whole range of Habsburg ex-servicemen now organised in paramilitary groups like the Czech Legion, the *Heimwehren* or Hungarian *Freikorps* as well as thousands of hardened Young Turk paramilitaries of the wartime «special organisation», who now joined the covert «Sentry» (*Karakol*) organisation and laid the foundation of the post-war struggle in central Anatolia. Many of these men were demobilised Ottoman officers, others were social bandits, professional criminals and self-stylised «patriots», often without previous war experience.[9]

In October 1918 the Ottoman Empire suffered a major defeat when its Syrian and Mesopotamian front lines (except in the Caucasus) disintegrated. On 30 October 1918 the parties signed a truce that sanctioned unconditional Ottoman surrender.[10] According to most accounts, the defeated inner circle of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) burnt some of their most sensitive documents the next night. The eight men also disbanded it as a political party and fled to Odessa.[11] The liberal Freedom and Coalition Party stepped onto the political scene and ruled the Ottoman Empire during the armistice (1918–1923).[12] The liberals wasted no time in reversing CUP policies: deported Armenians and Kurds were encouraged to return home and orphans were allowed to reunite with their families. The collapse of the CUP regime also brought press freedom: newspapers began exposing and discussing subjects that were taboo under the party, but the rise of the Kemalists nipped this process of reckoning in the bud.

The CUP officially dissolved itself in 1918. However, segments of the party continued functioning under other names and succeeded in launching Mustafa Kemal to organise the Anatolian resistance. After the war, those CUP members

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8 W. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, New York 2003.

9 Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*, 70.

10 J. Keegan, *The First World War*, New York 1998, 415; J. E. Zürcher, «The Ottoman Empire and the Armistice of Moudros», in: H. Cecil / P. H. Liddle (eds.), *At the Eleventh Hour: Reflections, Hopes, and Anxieties at the Closing of the Great War, 1918*, London 1998, 266–275.

11 Ş. S. Aydemir, *Makedonya'dan Orta Asya'ya Enver Paşa*, vol.II (1908–1914), Istanbul 1972, 497.

12 T. Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol.II: *Mütareke Dönemi*, Istanbul 1997, 29–61.

who accepted Mustafa Kemal's authority took up positions in the Republican People's Party (RPP). Over time, the resurrection of these «neo-Young Turk» elites gave rise to the establishment of a modern interwar dictatorship.[13] As such, the Greco-Turkish and Armeno-Turkish wars (1919–1923) can be seen as aftershocks of the campaigns of ethnic unmixing and exclusion of Ottoman Christians from Anatolia. As a consequence of Young Turk resistance against the peace treaties, the Ottoman Empire faced two central problems in the interregnum: a split state sovereignty and power struggle between the Young Turks in Ankara and their oppositionists in Istanbul on the one hand, and the separatist threats of independent Armenian and Kurdish states on the other. In different ways, both posed a formidable challenge to the integrity of the state and both would prove conducive to the commission of mass violence in the period 1918–1923 and beyond.

What the Kemalist movement called the «War of Liberation» (*İstiklâl Harbi*) can be seen as an attempt to repel all foreign (including Greek) occupation of Anatolia. But domestically, it was at the same time a continuation of policies of wartime expulsions and persecutions of Ottoman Christians, including the expulsion of Greeks and massacres of Assyrians and Armenians, but also Kurdish Alevis. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was only launched by the CUP after a similar proposal to Ahmed İzzet Pasha was rejected by the latter. The movement virtually overlapped with the CUP, especially in the interior, where the struggle was financed by the Turkish *nouveaux riches* such as landowners, manufacturers, military officers, and various public officials who had made a fortune in the genocide. The muscle was provided by irregular gangs and paramilitaries such as Topal Osman, Deli Halit, İpsiz Recep, Dayı Mesut, and Yahya Kaptan, who were indicted by the Istanbul tribunal for massacres.[14]

This political dichotomy between Istanbul and Ankara caused confusion among local officials. For example, in June 1919, Diyarbakır Vice Governor Mustafa Nadir was confronted with two governments giving contradictory orders. On 21 June 1919 Mustafa Kemal ordered Nadir to report the military strength in his province. Nadir forwarded the order to the Istanbul government and requested instructions on what to do. Istanbul answered: «Mustafa Kemal Paşa has been discharged from office and his movement is illegal. His orders need to be rejected. Immediately report the purpose of the Erzurum congress.»[15] However, it was too late for words of

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13 E. J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905–1926*, Leiden 1984; P. Dumont, «The Origins of Kemalist Ideology», in: J. M. Landau (ed.), *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, Boulder, CO, 1984, 25–44; S. M. Akural, «Ziya Gökalp: The Influence of his Thought on Kemalist Reforms», unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University 1979; M. Ş. Hanioğlu, «Garbcı-lar: Their Attitudes Toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic», in: *Studia Islamica* 86 (1997), 133–158.

14 T. Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu: İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na*, Ankara 1999, 535–549.

15 Mustafa Nadir to Interior Ministry, 21 June 1919; Interior Ministry to Diyarbakır province, 9 July 1919; Governor Faik Ali to Interior Ministry, 12

reproach: the Erzurum congress, convened by Turkish nationalists, had rejected any external involvement in the empire. A breakthrough in this Ankara-Istanbul deadlock was reached when this resurrected Young Turk movement skilfully monopolised all means of violence and was subsequently accepted by western countries as the legitimate national government of Turkey. The struggle over sovereignty and power between Ankara and Istanbul was settled violently. Istanbul attempted to use the tribunals as a political tool to rid the Ottoman political culture of Young Turks, who in turn resorted to their time-tested method of political assassination against the left, the liberals and the conservatives.

The relationship between the Young Turks and the Ottoman-Turkish communist movement was marked by mistrust and competition for power. The CUP had treated the communists with derision and suspicion, and attempted to sideline and silence them. The Bolsheviks' declaration of self-determination in 1917 and subsequent policies were potentially influential enough for the CUP to fear the spread of Communism in Anatolia. The leader of the Turkish left was Mustafa Suphi (1883–1921), founder of the Turkish Communist Party at the Congress of Peoples of the East, held in September 1921 in Baku. The Congress brought together representatives of the Communist Party from Russia, with over 1800 delegates from over 30 national liberation struggles.[16] In early 1921 Suphi travelled from Baku to Erzurum with fourteen of his consorts. In Erzurum, General Kâzım Karabekir advised them to return to Baku, arguing that a spontaneous «people's demonstration» was ongoing against them and that Suphi would be placed backwards on a donkey and paraded around. As they could not enter the city, the disappointed communists were sent to Trabzon to embark on a ship for Batumi. But in Trabzon too, the local Young Turks had staged a «popular demonstration» and Mustafa Suphi was put on a boat for Batumi. During the night of 29 January 1921, the Young Turk paramilitary boss Captain Yahya and his death squad stabbed the fifteen communists to death and dumped their bodies overboard.[17]

A similar fate befell the Ottoman liberal democrat Ali Kemal (1867–1922), a gifted writer and intellectual educated in Paris, Geneva and Istanbul, who had been persecuted under Sultan Abdulhamid II for his political views. His relationship with the Young Turk party was tense: he criticised its radical Jacobinism and Turkish nationalism. When World War I broke out, the Young Turks prohibited his newspaper *Peyam*, banned him from politics and placed him under surveillance. After the war, Ali Kemal publicised the crimes of the Young Turks, in is particular the mass violence against the civilian population and their embezzlement of property. He also denounced the Kemalist movement and Mustafa Kemal as a

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July 1919; all reproduced in: Y. Nadi, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Anıları*, İstanbul 1978, 95, 107–108.

16 B. Pearce (transl.), *Congress of the Peoples of the East: Baku, September 1920*, London 1977.

17 H. Erdem, *Mustafa Suphi: Bir Yaşam Bir Ölüm*, Istanbul 1999, 219–221.

continuation of the Young Turk party.[18] On 4 November 1922, special organisation operatives kidnapped Ali Kemal from the famous Tokatlian Hotel in Istanbul, ostensibly to try him for high treason in Ankara. He was delivered to the Turkish nationalist general Sakallı Nurettin Paşa (1873–1932) in İpzmit. Two days later, young paramilitary officers from his entourage clobbered Ali Kemal to death with large hammers, dragged his naked body through the streets in broad daylight and finally hung his body from a lamp post at the train station in full view of passers-by. The killers tellingly pinned the note «Artin Kemal» on his body, a racist insinuation that he bore an Armenian name.[19] Within a few years, the Young Turks had murdered the bulk of the communist elite, the constitutional monarchist and reformist heir to the throne (Yusuf Izzettin), and the most prominent liberal intellectual in the country, delivering a strong blow to all sides of the political spectrum.[20] Vastly greater even were the deaths among the Greek communities. All in all, some 70.000 people died violent deaths in Turkey during the decade after the end of the war.

The levels of actual violence in Austria and Hungary were considerably lower: while approximately 1500 people died in Hungary in 1919–1920, the vast majority of the 859 political murders in interwar Austria occurred in the early 1930s, not in the immediate post-war period.[21] In order to explain the relative silence of the Austrian right in the years immediately after 1918, two factors need to be taken into consideration.[22] Firstly, the apparently limited activism of the Austrian right (limited when compared to the situation in Hungary and even more so when compared to Turkey) owed much to the existence of a strong militarised left, most notably the *Volkswehr* and the socialist party guard, the *Schutzbund*.[23] In Tyrol, for example, 12.000 *Heimwehr* men, two-thirds of them armed, faced roughly 7500 *Schutzbund* members in 1922.[24] Both sides kept each other in check and their self-limitation was, in many ways, a strategy for survival since victory in a potential civil war was anything but a foregone conclusion.[25] Hence, throughout the 1920s, both sides largely confined themselves to symbolically charged gestures of military

18 B. Çukurova, «Büyük Taarruz Günlerinde Ali Kemal ve Siyasi Görüşleri», in: *Atatürk Yolu*, 6 (1999) 23, 357–370.

19 E. Akkaymak, «Ali Kemal in Kimliği ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri», unpublished MA thesis, Gazi University, Ankara 1994, 64–67.

20 T. Yıldırım, *Veliahd Yusuf İzzettin Efendi Öldürüldü mü İntihar mı etti*, Istanbul 2006.

21 O. Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, London 1924, 120; B. Bodo, «Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War», in: *East European Quarterly* 38 (2004), 129–172, here 167; G. Botz, *Gewalt in der Politik: Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918 bis 1938*, Munich 1983, 237.

22 J. W. Boyer, «Silent War and Bitter Peace: The

Revolution of 1918 in Austria», in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 34 (2003), 1–56.

23 R. Schober, «Die paramilitärischen Verbände in Tirol 1918–1927», in: T. Albrich (ed.), *Tirol und der Anschluß: Voraussetzungen, Entwicklungen, Rahmenbedingungen 1918–1938*, Innsbruck 1988, 113–141.

24 V. Lösch, «Die Geschichte der Tiroler Heimatwehr von ihren Anfängen bis zum Korneuburger Eid (1920–1930)«, unpublished PhD thesis, Innsbruck 1986, 162.

25 G. Botz, «Handlungsspielräume der Sozialdemokratie während der ‹Österreichischen Revolution›», in: R. Altmüller (ed.), *Festschrift Mélanges Felix Kreissler*, Vienna 1985, 16.

strength such as the largely non-violent *Heimwehr* and *Schutzbund* marches through «enemy territory».[26] It was only in the 1930s, under the impact of both the Great Depression and the interconnected rise of Nazism, that the stalemate between the different camps was overcome and violence was actualised in German-Austria. Furthermore, and this is frequently ignored in historical analyses of interwar Austria, many of the most violent activists of the right spent much of the period 1918–1921 *outside* Austria. Austrian members of the infamous *Freikorps* Oberland, for example, including the future *Heimwehr* leader, Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, helped to crush the Munich Council Republic in 1919. During the third Polish Uprising of 1921, to name another example, student volunteers from Innsbruck University joined the Upper Silesian *Selbstschutz* in its struggle against Polish insurgents.[27] In Hungary, on the other hand, the concrete experience of the Béla Kun dictatorship and the Romanian invasion created a climate in which the desire for violent vengeance seemed much more pressing and feasible, particularly after the victory of Horthy's counterrevolution.

In addition to the quantitative difference in the levels of post-war violence, paramilitary subcultures in the successor states also drew on different personnel. In Austria and Hungary, the leading figures involved in setting up and running paramilitary organisations of the right were junior ex-officers who had been educated and trained in the military academies of the late Habsburg Empire. In Hungary, it was not only Gyula Gömbös's powerful veterans' organisation MOVE (Hungarian National Defence Union) or the Union of Awakening Hungarians, but also the much more sizeable Hungarian National Army that was dominated by former combat officers. Of the 6568 volunteers who followed Horthy's initial recruitment call of 5 June 1919 for the formation of the counterrevolutionary National Army, almost 3000 were former army and cavalry officers and an additional 800 men were officers from the semi-military border guards, the Gendarmerie. Many of them came from rural backgrounds and notably from border regions where notions of embattled ethnicity were much more real than they were in larger cities such as Budapest or Szeged. The large influx of refugees from Transylvania, however, contributed to the further radicalisation of the atmosphere in a capital already militarised by the experiences of revolution and temporary foreign occupation.[28] The vast majority of paramilitary activists in both Austria and Hungary came from

26 A. Krauss, «Revolution 1918?», in: Nachlass Krauss, Kriegsarchiv Wien, B 60, 5e, 1.

27 M. Gehler, «Studentischer Wehrverband im Grenzlandkampf: Exemplarische Studie zum ‹Sturmzug Tirol› in Oberschlesien 1921», in: *Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch* 5 (1989), 33–63; idem, *Studenten und Politik: Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft an der Universität Innsbruck 1918–1938,* Innsbruck 1990,

S. Falch, «Zwischen Heimatwehr und Nationalsozialismus: Der ‹Bund Oberland› in Tirol», in: *Geschichte und Region* 6 (1997), 51–86. H. Steinacher, *Oberschlesien,* Berlin 1927.

28 B. Kelemen, *Adatok a szegedi ellenforradalom és a szegedi kormány történetéhez,* Szeged 1923, 495–496.

middle- or upper-class backgrounds.[29] Born between the late 1880s and the early 1900s, the activists reached maturity in the turbulent years before or during World War I, which remained the crucial experience of their adolescent lives. As the future *Heimwehr* leader, Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, who had volunteered for military service in 1916, emphasised in his memoirs, he had been a soldier «with all my body and soul. For me it was the fulfilment of all my dreams and the self-evident purpose of my upbringing!».[30]

The often glorified experience of combat was inextricably linked with notions of the home front's «betrayal», culminating in the central European revolutions of autumn 1918. In explaining their refusal to demobilise and their determination to continue their soldierly existence after November 1918, Austria's and Hungary's paramilitary activists frequently invoked the horrors of returning from the front in 1918 to an entirely hostile world of upheaval, triggered by the temporary collapse of military hierarchies and public order. Equally important for the remobilisation of Austrian and Hungarian veterans was the experience of territorial disintegration. In the Treaty of St Germain, the German-Austrian rump state was forced to cede South Tyrol to Italy, Southern Styria to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Feldsberg and Böhmzell to Czechoslovakia whilst also being denied the *Anschluss* with the German Reich, a ruling rightfully interpreted by politicians of the moderate left and right alike as a flagrant violation of the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination. Hungary was hit even harder: it lost two-thirds of its pre-war territory and one-third of its population according to the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon.

The situation in Turkey was somewhat different. There, too, the vast majority of paramilitary activists were born in the early 1880s and they also reached maturity in the turbulent years marking the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For most, the Balkan Wars and World War I was the crucial experience of their adult lives. Class backgrounds, regional identities and ethnic origins of the Ottoman paramilitaries differed somewhat: most were sons of craftsmen or small merchants, and although being Sunni Muslims, some were Circassians from the North Caucasus, others came from the Black Sea, or from the Aegean region. Moreover, their relationship with the state was different from that of the Austrians and Hungarians: many Ottoman paramilitaries had been involved in social banditry before the war.[31] Therefore, most of their actions cannot be seen within the narrow framework of wartime combat, but as forms of warlordism. Furthermore, most paramilitary

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29 For Hungary: Kelemen, *Adatok*, 495–496; for Austria: W. Wiltschegg, *Die Heimwehr: Eine unwiderstehliche Volksbewegung?*, Munich 1985, 274–280.

30 E. R. Starhemberg, «Aufzeichnungen des Fürsten Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg im Winter 1938/39 in Saint Gervais in Frankreich», in: Nachlass Starhemberg, Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv Linz, here: 16.

31 M. Hacisalihoğlu, *Die Jungtürken und die Mazedonische Frage*, Munich 2003, 171.

bosses had enjoyed little, if any, prior formal military training at a military academy. Had the Ottoman state not collapsed, it is likely that these men would have continued engaged in social banditry. The prevalence of wars from 1912 on reframed their potential and importance to the central state. Calculations of governments and interests of combatants could coalesce into a sustained campaign of violence against an ethnic minority.

In the Ottoman case, the daunting prospect of further territorial dismemberment also served as a major source of remobilisation. The brazen undermining of Ottoman territorial integrity by the Great Powers, such as in the Sykes-Picot agreement, inflamed emotions and struck a raw nerve in the humiliated Ottoman military and political elites across the board. The Sèvres Treaty, then, was the ultimate nightmare scenario coming true as Allied forces occupied Istanbul. It foresaw the creation of an Armenia, a Kurdistan, Greek lands around Smyrna, and the reduction of the Muslim-Turkish lands to a rump state in West-Central Anatolia. The Young Turk movement rejected the treaty and retreated into Anatolia, from where Mustafa Kemal spearheaded the resistance movement.[32]

This development was almost identical in the former Habsburg lands. At least up until the summer of 1919, and in some cases even later than that, veterans in all Habsburg Successor States (except Czechoslovakia), tried to create new territorial realities through (para-) military action, «realities» that they believed the peacemakers in Paris could not ignore. From November 1918 onwards, for example, Austrian volunteers were militarily engaged with Yugoslav troops in Carinthia.[33] The interconnected experiences of defeat, revolution and territorial disintegration also contributed to the mobilisation and radicalisation, notably in Austria, of the so-called war youth generation, those teenage boys who had been too young to serve in the war and who were to gain their first combat experiences on the post-war battlefields. For many of these young officer cadets and nationalist students, who had grown up on tales of heroic bloodshed but had missed out on their first-hand experience of the «storms of steel», the militias appear to have offered a welcome opportunity to live their fantasies of a romanticised warrior existence. As the Austrian Heimwehr leader Starhemberg correctly observed, many members of the war youth generation tried to compensate for their lack of combat experience through «rough militarist behaviour» which was «nurtured as a virtue in large parts of the post-war youth» and which deeply affected the general tone and atmosphere within paramilitary organisations after 1918.[34]

32 N. B. Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918–1923,* Leiden 1999.

33 *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps,* vols. 7 & 8 (Berlin 1941–1942); and the autobiographical account by

Jaromir Diakow in: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien, Nachlass Diakow, B727.

34 Starhemberg, «Aufzeichnungen», 26.

Together, the veterans and members of the war youth generation formed explosive subcultures of ultra-militant masculinity in which violence was not merely perceived as a politically necessary act of self-defence in order to suppress communist or «ethnic» revolts of Central and South-Eastern Europe, but also as a positive value in itself, as a morally correct expression of youthful virility that distinguished the activists from the «indifferent» majority of bourgeois society unwilling to rise in the face of revolution and defeat. In marked contrast to the upheaval that surrounded them, the militias offered clearly defined hierarchies and a familiar sense of belonging and purpose. The paramilitary groups were fortresses of soldierly camaraderie and «order» in what the activists' perceived as a hostile world of ethnic upheaval and communist take-overs. It was this spirit of defiance coupled with the desire to be part of a post-war project that would give meaning to an otherwise pointless experience of mass death during war, devalued by defeat that held these groups together. They perceived themselves to be the nucleus of a «new society» of warriors, representing both the eternal values of the nation and new authoritarian concepts for a state in which that nation could thrive.[35] It was in the context of World War II that many members of this war youth generation – including prominent Austrian SS men such as Ernst Kaltenbrunner or Odilo Globocnik – would receive the opportunity to act out the violent fantasies they had harboured since 1918. When they did, the consequences were even more lethal than the structurally similar violence which erupted in the Ottoman Empire during and after World War I.

2. Victims

In the defeated Ottoman Empire, the principal victims of post-war violence were ethnic Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds who were directly affected by what is known in Turkish historiography as the «War of Liberation» (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*, in Ottoman Turkish: *İstiklâl Harbi*) of 1919–1922, a term that comprises the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) and the Armeno-Turkish War (1919–1921) as well as the Young Turks' «pacification» campaign against Kurds living on the new periphery of post-war Turkey. For the destitute and traumatised Ottoman Armenians who had survived the genocidal onslaught during the First World War, the Ottoman capitulation of 1918 at first seemed to initiate a brief period of hope: Sultan Mehmed VI's government in Istanbul, hostile to the CUP promised to bring justice to the «brutally massacred Armenians, the deported Arabs, the orphans and widows».[36] These words were put into practice as the government allowed Christians to return to their homes and

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35 J. Reulecke, *«Ich möchte einer werden so wie die …»: Männerbünde im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a. M., 2001, 89–91.

36 For excerpts of Senator Ahmet Rıza's speech in the Ottoman senate see T. Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. III, Istanbul 1997, 199.

tried its best to return Armenian orphans to their community.[37] In addition, in 1919, the government promised the return of confiscated land and goods to be their rightful owners.[38]

Yet the brief moment of reconciliation quickly ended in disillusion: Whereas the Ottoman imperial government attempted to repair ties between Armenians and Turks, the Young Turk movement sabotaged it in every possible way. Internally, they continued their persecution of Armenians under their jurisdiction; externally, they rejected the Sèvres Treaty and launched a war against the Armenia it foresaw. The Armenian-Turkish war, as a perfect example of a conflict fought out in a lawless enclave, was of exceptional brutality. Mustafa Kemal's order to Kâzım Karabekir to assault Armenia on 24 September 1920 included an explicit reference to ignore any white flags.[39] The Turkish army swept across the plain of Kars, driving out Armenian civilians in the process and occupying Alexandropol (Leninakan/ Gyumri). On 8 November a top secret telegram was sent to the eastern front with several important decisions that attempted to settle the Armenian question once and for all. First, it stipulated that «it is necessary to annihilate Armenia physically and politically» (*Ermenistan'ı siyaseten ve maddeten ortadan kaldırmak elzemdir*). This would sever Armenian ties with the Ottoman eastern provinces, eliminate Armenia as a thorn in the side of «a large Muslim region», facilitate a Turkish territorial union with Azerbaijan, or the setting up of Azerbaijan as a buffer state.[40] This scheme was prevented when Armenia accepted Sovietisation. The Red Army moved into Yerevan on 29 November 1920, a few days before Ankara dictated the Treaty of Alexandropol that overruled the Treaty of Sèvres. The Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Kars (13 October 1921) then concluded the political constellation for the next seven decades.

Also in the southern Cilicia region renewed violence erupted between Turks and Armenians. According to the provisions of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement and the terms of the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918), the south was occupied by the French in December 1918. From April 1919 on, French and British troops conducted a disarmament campaign in the province of Adana and expelled all Young Turk officials who resisted the Allied occupation. They also instituted arbitration commissions (made up of a minority of Turks and Armenians, presided over by a neutral, Greek, Arab, or Catholic) to settle the disputes that arose from the complaints of Armenian returnees whose property had been confiscated. Indeed, the French authorities were caught between a rock and a hard place: on the one hand they had made promises to the Armenians, but on the other, they had ambitions for

37 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Ottoman archives, Istanbul, hereafter *BOA*), DH.ŞFR 95/163, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 18.1. 1919.

38 BOA, DH.ŞFR 95/256, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 26. 1. 1919; BOA, DH.ŞFR 96/195, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 15. 2. 1919; BOA, DH.ŞFR 96/248, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 20. 2. 1919.

39 K. Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz*, vol. IV, Istanbul 1995, 1861–1863.

40 Ibid., 1890.

a long-term presence in Cilicia. Alienating the Turkish population was a risky affair and the property issue was an obstacle for gaining their trust. Moreover, rocking the boat could potentially cause a security risk as Turks might pick up arms to defend their newly acquired property.[41]

Indeed, as soon as Armenians began reclaiming their property in the villages and neighbourhoods, conflicts erupted. In Dörtyol, armed Armenian groups assaulted Turks who were living in their houses. They were beaten with sticks and stones and in case of resistance they were shot dead. The return also offered opportunities for Armenians to settle existing scores on micro-level and retaliate against individual Turks they personally knew had participated in the genocide and enriched themselves. As a consequence of the violence, the local Turks organised themselves in bands. A certain Osmanoğlu Kara Hasan Çetin (1891–1936) was the local roughneck in charge of a paramilitary group (*çete*) in the region. His militia had massacred Armenians in 1915 and after 1918 they persisted in maintaining through violence the *fait accompli* of the expropriations. According to a Turkish eyewitness, in the village of Ayas the restitutions had been carried out reasonably fairly and Armenian returnees had resettled without bloodshed.

The violence culminated in 1920 when the Kemalist movement won several decisive battles in the southern cities of Maraş, Anteb and Urfa. Maraş, which was held by the French army and defended by a handful of Armenian legionnaires who refused to surrender, was besieged for three weeks. When the French army, which included Algerians and Senegalese, chose to retreat, the Turkish army entered the city on 10 February 1920, burnt the Armenian quarter and massacred the 10.000 Armenian repatriates.[42] The retreat of the French army generated the opportunity and lawless pocket for high-level officials to homogenise the region, and for ordinary Turks to indulge in unrestricted violence against Armenians. By late 1920, Mustafa Kemal's southern army controlled most of this region, prompting the French government to sign an agreement with the Young Turks on 11 March and 20 October 1921, which stipulated their complete withdrawal from Cilicia in exchange for economic concessions.[43] The region was surrendered to the same officials that the French regime had arrested and incarcerated a few months earlier. With vindictive fervour, these notables perpetuated the nationalist cause and mopped up surviving Armenian communities until the signing of the Lausanne Treaty.[44] By 1923, not a single Armenian school, business, publication, political

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41 V. Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie: aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l'Irak, 1919–1933*, Paris 2004.

42 For an eyewitness account see: S. E. Kerr, *The Lions of Marash: Personal Experiences with American Near East Relief, 1919–1922*, Albany 1973, 99–142.

43 J. E. Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, Nijmegen 1995, 189.

44 See the memoirs of an important Turkish-nationalist notable from Adana: D. Arıkoğlu, *Hatıralarım*, Istanbul 1961, 100.

party, or parish remained in the Adana region,[45] prompting Mustafa Kemal to exclaim in a speech in Adana on 16 March 1923 that the «Armenians have no rights whatsoever in this fertile land. The country belongs to you, the Turks. It has been Turkish in history, is Turkish now and will eternally remain Turkish [...].»[46]

The Armenians were not the only ones affected by post-war violence. The Greco-Turkish war, which culminated in the burning of Smyrna and the largest «population exchange» before World War II, was even more destructive.[47] The cycle of violence began with the Greek occupation of Anatolia, a venture inspired by the Ottoman defeat and the *Megali Idea*, the Greek nationalist fantasy of reviving the Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as its capital. The Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos (1864–1936) was a fervent proponent of the *Megali Idea* and successfully campaigned for the «liberation» of the Ottoman Greeks, which also included the Hellenisation of the territory and the population, meaning the expulsion or forced conversion of the non-Greek population.[48] On 15 May 1919, Greek forces occupied Smyrna and swept across western Anatolia capturing strategic locations and important cities such as Aydın, Bursa, and Eskişehir. This ferocious war generated a sharp brutalisation, largely due to Greek utopian ambitions. The Greek army held superiority in number and equipment, but its advance into Anatolia overstretched its lines of supply and communication. Consequently, it plundered any needed supplies from the locals and killed those who resisted.[49] By the time the exhausted soldiers had reached Ankara province in the autumn of 1921, the Turkish army had gained the strategic upper hand. The stalemate was broken in August 1922 when Mustafa Kemal ordered a counter-attack near Dumlupınar, which ultimately led to the defeat of the Greek army.

The Turkish counter-offensive was as merciless as was the Greek retreat. The Kemalists turned their violence first against their own people: they reestablished the «Independence Tribunals», a political tool to terrorise the Turkish population into maximum compliance and cooperation in the war effort. The tribunals meted out draconian punishments to civilians and soldiers alike.[50] The Greek army, both brutalised and war-weary, ran a scorched-earth policy during its retreat. Soldiers and paramilitaries committed violence against the Turkish civilian population such as indiscriminate massacres, gang rape, large-scale arson, and pillage. A 1921 Red Cross investigation found out that

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45 P. Yeghiayan, *Atanayi Hayots Patmutiun*, Antelias 1970, 871.

46 N. Arsan (ed.), *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, Ankara 1959–1964, vol. II: *1906–1938*, 125–126.

47 P. Ther, *Die dunkle Seite der Nationalstaaten: «ethnische Säuberungen» im modernen Europa*, Göttingen 2011, 69–108.

48 I. Zelepos, *Die Ethnisierung griechischer Identität*, 1870–1912: *Staat und private Akteure vor dem Hintergrund der «Megali Idea»*, Munich 2002, 42–55.

49 M. Llewellyn-Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor 1919–1922*, New York 1973.

50 E. Aybars, *İstiklâl Mahkemeleri 1920–1923/1923–1927*, İzmir 2006.

> [...] elements of the Greek army of occupation have been employed in the extermina-
> tion of the Moslem population of the [Yalova-Gemlik] peninsula. The facts esta-
> blished – burnings of villages, massacres, terror of the inhabitants, coincidences
> of place and date – leave no room for doubt in regard to this. The atrocities which
> we have seen, or of which we have seen the material evidence, were the work of irre-
> gular bands of armed civilians (tcheti) and of organised units of the regular army.
> No cases have come to our knowledge in which these misdeeds have been preven-
> ted or punished by the military command. Instead of being disarmed and broken
> up, the bands have been assisted in their activities and have collaborated hand in
> hand with organised units of regulars.[51]

The Young Turks also turned their attention to the sensitive eastern Black Sea re-
gion, Pontus. It was inhabited by Greek communities that had been relatively
spared during the war. That peace ended in the summer of 1921 when militia
units commanded by the notorious warlord Topal Osman (1883–1923) razed the
Greek villages of the Pontian coast, murdering some 11.000 inhabitants.[52] Here,
the retreat of the Russian army made the Greek community vulnerable to violence
by militias who had gained much experience during the massacres of Armenians
only a few years before. Worse was yet to come. When Mustafa Kemal's triumphant
army marched into Smyrna on Saturday 9 September 1922, the same paramili-
taries that had destroyed the Armenians in 1915 were now given *carte blanche* to
«cleanse» the city of Ottoman Greeks. In a dramatic climax to a war without mercy,
Turkish death squads set fire to the Christian quarters and literally drove the
Smyrna Greeks into the sea. As many as 30.000 Greeks and Armenians were killed
during the great fire of Smyrna.[53] The prominent Turkish journalist and bureau-
crat Falih Rıfkı Atay (1894–1971) wrote in his diary: «Why were we burning down
Izmir? Were we afraid that if the waterfront *konak*s, hotels and taverns stayed in
place, we would never be able to get rid of the minorities? When the Armenians
were being deported in the First World War, we had burned down all the habitable
districts and neighbourhoods in Anatolian towns and cities with this very same
fear.»[54]

Atay fingered the «fanatic», «demagogical» and «vindictive» Major General Sakallı
Nureddin Pasha as the architect of the fire. Nureddin Pasha also orchestrated the
murder of Chrysostomos Kalafatis (1867–1922), the Greek Orthodox bishop of
Smyrna.

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51 A. J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilisations*, Boston 1922, 285.

52 K. Fotiadis, «Der Völkermord an den Griechen des Pontos», in: T. Hofmann (ed.), *Verfolgung, Vertreibung und Vernichtung der Christen im Osmanischen Reich 1912–1922*, Berlin 2007, 193–228.

53 H. Georgelin, *La fin de Smyrne: Du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes*, Paris 2005, 201–226.

54 F. R. Atay, *Çankaya: Atatürk'ün Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar Bütün Hayat Hikâyesi*, Istanbul 1969, 325.

The Greco-Turkish war concluded a decade of extreme violence between states and between ethnic groups. By the end of the decade of social catastrophe, the Ottoman Greek community was nothing but a fragment of what it had been before the war. Greece and Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne in February and March 1923. The treaty institutionalised and legalised a huge population exchange: one and a half million Greeks were exchanged for 500.000 Turks. Many of the former spoke a Turkish dialect, and many of the latter Greek as their mother tongue. But following the Ottoman *millet* system, religious identity took precedence over linguistic identity.[55] The influx of so many «refugees» (*prosfyges*) had a profound impact on both societies.[56] The Greek state, however, was hopelessly overstretched for years and could provide neither proper housing nor sanitation for the destitute families, many of whom continued to die of curable diseases well into the 1920s.[57] The dream of the *Megali Idea* had turned into the nightmare of the «*Mikrasiatiki Katastrofi*».

The war was quickly repressed from memory. In March 1922, Mustafa Kemal denounced the «atrocities» of the «Greek princes and generals, who take particular pleasure in having women raped». He decried these acts of «destruction and aggression» that he considered «irreconcilable with humanity» and, most of all, «impossible to cover up and deny».[58] But after the establishment of the Turkish Republic the tide turned and the accusatory tone of moral indignation was dropped. The 1930s saw a diplomatic rapprochement between Turkey and Greece as relations improved with the signing of several agreements and conventions. By the time the Greek Premier Panagis Tsaldaris (1868–1936) visited Turkey in September 1933, the same Mustafa Kemal now spoke of the Greeks as «esteemed guests» with whom the contact had been «amicable and cordial».[59] Throughout the interwar period, the Turkish and Greek nations were portrayed as having coexisted perennially in mutual respect and eternal peace.[60] And Venizelos, who had once vowed to erase Turkishness from Anatolia, even proposed Mustafa Kemal for the Nobel Peace Prize during his 1930 visit to Ankara.[61] Friendly inter-state relations in the service of the countries' acceptance and stabilisation into the European nation-state system had gained precedence over old grief, without any serious process of closure or reconciliation in between.

55 S. Chrisdoulaki, *Greek-Turkish Exchange of Population*, Norderstedt 2010.

56 B. Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey*, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

57 S. Gauntlett, «The Contribution of Asia Minor Refugees to Greek Popular Song, and its Reception», in: R. Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, New York 2003, 247–260.

58 N. Arsan (ed.), *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, Ankara 1959–1964, vol. I, 241.

59 *Cumhuriyet*, 6./9. 9. 1933; A. İnan, *Düşünceleriyle Atatürk*, Ankara 1991, 162.

60 For a study of Turkish-Greek rapprochement after 1923 see: D. Demirözü, *Savaştan Barışa Giden Yol: Atatürk-Venizelos Dönemi Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri*, Istanbul 2007.

61 P. M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, Edinburgh 2008, 223.

In the former Habsburg lands (except, of course, in what used to be Austrian Ukraine), violence was less intense than it was in the Ottoman Empire. Yet wherever a temporary power vacuum allowed the militia men to act upon fantasies of violent retribution and ethnic cleansing, they did. In post-revolutionary Hungary some 75.000 individuals suspected of Communist leanings were imprisoned and 100.000 went into exile, many of them to Soviet Russia where Stalin eventually killed many of those who had escaped Horthy's death squads.[62]

The principal victims included socialists, Jews and trade unionists, who were often dragged into the barracks and beaten unconscious. «On these occasions», the infamous Hungarian militia leader and temporary head of Horthy's bodyguard, Pál Prónay, recalled, «I ordered an additional fifty strokes with the rod for these fanatic human animals, whose heads were drunk with the twisted ideology of Marx.»[63] For Prónay and many others, the de-humanised («human animal») and de-nationalised (Bolshevik) enemy could be tortured and killed without remorse, because these acts were legitimised and necessitated by the holiness of the cause: the salvation of the nation threatened by a socialist abyss and territorial amputation. Against the background of war and revolution, the activists were convinced that they lived in an age of unfettered violence, in which the internal enemy, who had broken the rules of «civilised» military conduct, could only be stopped through the use of the same kind of extreme violence which their opponents were – rightly or wrongly – believed to have employed during the brief «Red Terror» in Bavaria and Hungary.

The post-war project of «cleansing» the nation of its internal enemies was viewed as a necessary precondition for a «national rebirth», a form of violent regeneration that would justify the sacrifices of the war despite defeat and revolution. The paramilitary world of post-Habsburg Central Europe was a world of action, not ideas. Against whom these actions should be directed was consequently one of the most widely discussed themes in paramilitary circles. For the former infantry general and commander-in-chief of the Habsburg Empire's Eastern Armies, Alfred Krauss, the internationalist enemies were the worst: the «Red International», the «Black International» (political Catholicism) and, «above all», the «Jewish people which aims at mastery of the Germans». All other enemies, Krauss was certain, stood in the paid service of the latter.[64]

Unsurprisingly, given such wide-spread sentiments, the Jews, although a small minority of no more than 5 per cent of the Austrian and Hungarian populations,

62 R. Tokes, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: the Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918–1919*, New York et. al. 1967, 159. See also: G. Borsanyi, *The Life of a Communist Revolutionary: Béla Kun*, New York 1993.

63 P. Prónay, *A határban a halál kaszál: fejezetek Prónay Pál feljegyzéseiből*, ed. by Á. Szabó / E. Pamlényi, Budapest 1963, 90.

64 Krauss, *Unser Deutschtum!*, 7–13.

suffered most from right-wing paramilitary violence after the Great War. As Jakob Krausz, a Jewish refugee from the Hungarian White Terror, observed in 1922, «[...] anti-Semitism did not lose its intensity during the war. Quite the opposite: it unfolded in a more beastly way. This war has only made the anti-Semites more brutal. [...] The trenches were flooded with anti-Semitic pamphlets, particularly those of the Central Powers. The more their situation deteriorated, the more intense and blood-thirsty the anti-Semitic propaganda became. The post-war pogroms in Hungary, Poland, and the Ukraine, as well as the anti-Semitic campaigns in Germany and Austria were prepared in the trenches.»[65] As Krausz correctly observed, one of the main reasons for the violent anti-Semitism in Central Europe after 1918 was that the Jews became the projection screen for everything the paramilitary right despised. Paradoxically, they could simultaneously be portrayed as the embodiment of a pan-Slavic revolutionary menace from «the East» that threatened the traditional order of Christian central Europe, as «red agents» of Moscow and as representatives of an obscure «Golden International» and western democratisation. Anti-Semitism after 1918 was further exacerbated by the widespread perception that a «Jewish conspiracy» was at the heart of the revolutions of 1918–1919. The fact that the intellectual leader of the Red Guards, Leo Rothziegel, and prominent members of the Social Democratic Party such as Victor Adler and Otto Bauer were Jewish was constantly referred to.

In Hungary, too, the revolution and the «Red Terror» of the immediate post-war period were, in the eyes of conservative officers, inextricably linked with Jews, most importantly with the revolutionary leader, Béla Kun and his chief military advisor, Tibor Szamuely. Immediately after the fall of the Kun regime in early August 1919, the lawyer Oscar Szöllösy published a widely-circulated newspaper article on «The Criminals of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat», in which he identified Jewish «red, blood-stained knights of hate» as the main perpetrators of the Red Terror and the driving force behind communism.[66] In Hungary (as in Austria), Jews were also held directly responsible for the military defeat of the Central Powers. According to Gyula Gömbös, Hungary's subsequent prime minister, defeat was a direct consequence of the fact that the Jewish proportion of Habsburg Empire's population was substantially higher («1:56») than in the Entente countries («1:227»).[67]

To proclaim publicly one's anti-Semitism and to pride oneself on having used merciless violence against Jewish civilians subsequently became a common mark of distinction among the paramilitary activists of central Europe. In Hungary,

65 J. Krausz (ed.), *Martyrium: ein jüdisches Jahrbuch,* Vienna 1922, 17. See also: F. M. Schuster, *Zwischen allen Fronten: Osteuropäische Juden während des Ersten Weltkriegs (1914–1919),* Cologne 2004.

66 O. Szöllösy, «The Criminals of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat», as printed in: C. Tormay, *An* *Outlaw's Diary,* 2 vols., London 1923, here vol. II, appendix 226.

67 T. Sakmyster, «Gyula Gömbös and the Hungarian Jews, 1918–1936», in: *Hungarian Studies Review* 8 (2006), 156–168, here 161.

where paramilitary atrocities against Jews were usually carried out with the tacit acquiescence of the authorities, the situation was particularly extreme. Pál Prónay, for example, collected the chopped-off ears of his Jewish victims as lucky charms.[68] At a dinner party conversation, one of Prónay's officers, György Geszay, proudly remarked that he had an excellent appetite that evening as he had spent the afternoon roasting a Jew alive in a train locomotive.[69]

In Austria the situation was far less extreme. However, the language of violence used by Austrian paramilitaries certainly foreshadowed the infinitely more dramatic wave of anti-Jewish violence of the late 1930s and 1940s. Whether the future Higher SS and Police Leader in the occupied Netherlands, Hanns Albin Rauter, expressed his aim to «get rid of the Jews as soon as possible» as a student leader in Graz or Starhemberg attacked the «Jewish war profiteers» as «parasites», the rhetoric of violent anti-Semitism constituted a tradition on which radical nationalists would build in subsequent decades.[70]

What the numerous victims of post-imperial violence in the former Ottoman and Habsburg lands shared was that they were minorities within the aggressively insecure nation-states that had emerged in the spaces left by collapsing empires. Moreover, depending on the proximity to the front, local demographic and socio-economic conditions, it was especially their vulnerability that contributed to their victimisation. Armenians in Anatolia and Jews in Hungary could count on no protection by their respective states. Also the lack of foreign state patronage contributed to their condition of being at the mercy of their attackers, who killed with impunity in a progressively escalating process of deadly violence. The internalisation and universalisation of violence against perceived «community aliens» was undoubtedly one of the most tragic legacies of this post-war period and one that would continue to haunt the territories under investigation for much of the twentieth century.

3. Conclusions

Post-imperial Austria, Hungary and Turkey witnessed the emergence of sizeable paramilitary subcultures shaped by the successive traumatising experiences of war, defeat, territorial disintegration, and revolution, be it in the form of «national» or socialist revolutions. Although the levels of violence in the former imperial territories differed significantly, the logic underpinning violent action did not. Those members of the male wartime generation active in violent post-war subcultures fed on a doctrine of hyper-nationalism and shared a determination to use violence in

68 Bodo, «Paramilitary Violence», 134.
69 Memoirs of Max Bauer's secretary, in: Nachlass Bauer, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NL 22/69, 33.
70 Rauter Nachlass, NIOD, Amsterdam, Doc I-1380

Pr 6–12–97, 46–47. E. R. Starhemberg, «Meine Stellungnahme zur Judenfrage», Nachlass Starhemberg, OÖLA.

order to suppress real or alleged internal enemies and to avenge their perceived humiliations resulting from military defeat.

If the wars of 1912 to 1918 had laid the foundation for the creation of such violent subcultures, defeat in World War I significantly contributed to their radicalisation and enlargement. Even if violence in 1918 did not reach the same levels in the former Habsburg Empire as it did in post-war Turkey, the incompatibility of ethnonational projects and imagined territories in East-Central Europe created enormous potential for an escalation, a final reckoning that eventually came between 1938 and the end of the forced removal of millions of ethnic Germans from the region.

In the former Ottoman Empire, Young Turk officers viewed the population of non-Turkish regions as inherently treacherous and anti-Turkish. Being seen as a permanent «security risk» led to a climate of suspicion that was highly conducive to the harsh treatment of the Greek, Armenian and Kurdish civilian populations and the committing of atrocities. After the defeat, the Greek invasion and the Allied occupation reinforced the impression that the threat to the nation was existential and that all means to repel it were justified. In the former Habsburg lands such notions were matched by a crude combination of anti-Bolshevism, anti-Semitism and anti-Slavism – often amalgamated into a single enemy image of «Jewish-Slav Bolshevism».

Unlike during World War I, violence in both shatter-zones of empire was now primarily directed against civilians and more specifically against those perceived to be «community aliens» who had to be «removed» in one way or another before a «new society» could emerge. If, however, the former Habsburg and Ottoman lands shared the experience of the emergence of violent sub-cultures, the activists differed in their ability to live out these fantasies. Whereas in post-war Hungary and the borderlands of Turkey, fantasies turned into reality on a large scale, Austrian paramilitaries at home either had to «confine» themselves to small-scale fighting in the Austrian borderlands with Yugoslav troops or they had to join forces with German *Freikorps* in Munich or Upper Silesia where violent action against similar enemy groups was possible.

What the former Ottoman and Habsburg lands shared after the end of the Great War was a language (and practices) of violent exclusion of all those they perceived as obstacles to a future national rebirth which alone could justify the sacrifices made during the war. It was this legacy of national redemption through violent exclusion and the logic of the purified community that proved to be of fatal significance. In Central Europe, this logic climaxed in the enormous waves of bloody ethnic unweaving of the 1940s whereas in Turkey the issue of multi-ethnicity had been violently resolved by 1923. Yet the legacies of that process continue to haunt politics until the present day. This is not only reflected in the Turkish state's denial of the Armenian genocide, but also in its fraught relationship with its Kurdish

minority which has always rejected (and continues to reject) the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty that at least indirectly acknowledged the Young Turks' violent redrawing of borders as legitimate. Even a century after the beginning of World War I, the consequences of the post-war period continue to overshadow the relations between Turkey and its minorities and neighbouring states.

ABSTRACT

The Collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and the Brutalisation of the Successor States

This essay explores the interconnected issues of demobilisation and brutalisation in the collapsing Habsburg and Ottoman empires in the period immediately after 1918. Post-imperial Austria, Hungary and Turkey witnessed the emergence of sizeable paramilitary subcultures that were shaped by the successive traumatising experiences of war, defeat, territorial disintegration, occupation, and revolution – nationalist or socialist. Members of these subcultures fed on a doctrine of ethnic nationalism and shared a determination to use violence in order to suppress real or alleged internal enemies and to avenge their perceived humiliations resulting from military defeat. Ex-officers brutalised by wars and infuriated by their outcomes joined forces with, and transmitted their «values» to, members of a younger generation, who compensated for their lack of combat experience by often surpassing the war veterans in terms of radicalism, activism and brutality. Together the veterans and members of the «war youth generation» formed ultra-militant milieux that differed from the «community of the trenches» in their social make-up, their «liberation» from the constraints of military discipline, and their self-imposed post-war mission of destroying external and internal enemies.

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