

Self-Determination along the Austrian Frontier, 1918-1920:  
Case Studies of German Bohemia, Vorarlberg, and Carinthia

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# Abstract

The First World War led to the collapse of a number of prominent European empires, allowing for the spread of new ideas into Europe. US President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of national self-determination attracted particular symbolic importance because it legitimised popular sovereignty through the use of plebiscites. German-Austrians, like other national groups within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, used self-determination to justify establishing independent successor states after the war. The German-Austrian Republic, founded in 1918, claimed all German-speaking regions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire on the basis of self-determination. This thesis examines claims to self-determination in three different cases: German Bohemia, Vorarlberg, and Carinthia. Representatives from each region took their case to the Paris Peace Conference, appealing to the Allied delegations to grant international recognition. These representatives faced much opposition, both from local non-German populations and occasionally even from the German-Austrian government itself.

German-Austrian politicians in the Czech lands opposed the incorporation of German-majority lands into Czechoslovakia, and instead sought to establish an autonomous German Bohemian province as part of German-Austria. In Paris, Allied delegations supported the historic frontier of the Czech lands, and therefore opposed local German self-determination outright, refusing demands for a plebiscite in German Bohemia. Vorarlberg representatives sought Vorarlberg's secession from German-Austria, hoping instead for union with Switzerland. Vorarlbergers held a plebiscite to join Switzerland on their own initiative, initially with some degree of international support, but ultimately the international community, fearful of the disintegration of Austria, refused to allow Vorarlbergers to realise their wishes. Carinthian German representatives opposed Yugoslav claims to sovereignty over the region, seeking to remain part of German-Austria. Disagreements between and within the Allied delegations over Carinthia resulted in a decision to hold a plebiscite, which showed a majority in favour of remaining part of Austria. The thesis suggests that the implementation of self-determination in the Carinthian case resulted in a more successful resolution of border disputes. Unlike in the other two cases, the new Carinthian border mostly reflected the desires of the local population. Despite idealistic rhetoric, the final Austrian frontier suggested that Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference routinely favoured strategic justifications over self-determination.

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And lastly, to my parents and brothers: thank you for all your love, support, and wise words which helped to keep me going. Although great distance separates us, you never seemed too far away to help.

## Note on Naming Conventions

This thesis has adopted the place name convention: “German name/non-German name”. For reasons of consistency I have decided to acknowledge that multiple names exist, but retain the same order throughout. This style in no way reflects that the German name is dominant, but reflects that my focus lies with German-speakers who tended to use the German name regardless of whether German was the majority language of that particular area or not. As my focus is on German-speakers, I have also used primarily German-language sources, which tend also to use the German name. The usage of multiple names for locations represents an attempt to approach the region inclusively and to accept that many different groups of people held ties with those regions in recent history, rather than to make a political statement about a particular region. Rather than to diminish the importance of non-German languages by using German language names for majority non-German areas, the chosen style is one that seeks to promote inclusiveness of non-German language names where they are not used in German-language sources.

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## Provinces of German-Austria 1918-1919<sup>1</sup>



### Notes on Map

The different coloured regions each represent a German-Austrian province in 1918-1919, as claimed by the government of the German-Austrian Republic. Germans in the Czech lands separated into four provinces: German Bohemia in north-western Bohemia, Sudetenland in northern Moravia and Austria Silesia, the Bohemian Woods in southern Bohemia, and German South-Moravia in southern Moravia. Note that the Bohemian Woods is considered part of the province of Upper Austria, and German South-Moravia part of the province of Lower Austria. Vorarlberg is the western-most province. The frontier examined in the Carinthia chapter includes the territory lying roughly between the cities of Tarvis and Marburg.

<sup>1</sup> Provinces of German-Austria 1918-1919, cited from <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/GermanAustriaMap.png>

# Introduction

The end of the First World War laid the foundations for twentieth-century European politics by popularising the then somewhat radical idea of national self-determination. Understandably, historians of the Paris Peace Conference have placed most of their attention on the Treaty of Versailles and its contribution to the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, historians have neglected the Treaty of St. Germain, which also reshaped Europe's borders. This thesis examines attempts by local German-speakers to claim national self-determination in three cases: German Bohemia, Vorarlberg, and Carinthia. Representatives from each of these three provinces joined the delegation of the German-Austrian government at the Paris Peace Conference, attempting to influence post-war borders through plebiscites, enjoying varying degrees of success.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, of the three cases, Allied delegations implemented self-determination only in Carinthia. The result of this decision led to a more successful resolution of disputed frontiers in the period 1918-1920.

Authoritarian multi-ethnic empires, which had theretofore dominated Central and Eastern Europe, gave way to democratic nation-states. US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points symbolised the new era.<sup>4</sup> Erez Manela labelled this period the "Wilsonian Moment", while Tomáš Masaryk described it as a "World Revolution".<sup>5</sup> Such radical changes in political legitimacy paved the way for the creation and recreation of a number of states. According to Wilson, the future of Europe would instead be decided by the free self-determination of people achieved through "consent of the governed".<sup>6</sup> Representatives from German Bohemia, Vorarlberg, and Carinthia, citing Wilsonian principles, therefore petitioned the Peace Conference to decide the post-war borders through plebiscites. However, despite all the idealistic rhetoric at the Paris Peace

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<sup>2</sup> For example see: A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Athenum, 1961); Victor Rothwell, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Manfred Boemecke, Gerald Feldman, and Elizabeth Glaser, ed., *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Norman A. Graebner and Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and its Legacy: The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> For more on Austria at the Paris Peace Conference see: Jamie Bulloch, *Karl Renner: Austria – The Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and their Aftermath* (London: Haus Publishing Ltd, 2009); Franz Klein, Fritz Felner, Hiedrun Marschl, ed., *"Saint-Germain im Sommer 1919": die Briefe Franz Kleins aus der Zeit seiner Mitwirkung in der österreichischen Friedensdelegation, Mai-August 1919* (Salzburg: W. Neugebauer, 1977); Franz Klein, *Austria and the Peace Treaty of St. Germain* (Vienna: Frisch, 1920).

<sup>4</sup> See: Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points", cited from: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp); for more on Wilson see: Mario Dinunzio, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Arthur Roy Leonard, ed., *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (Boston: The Athenum Press, 1918); Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Tomáš Masaryk, *Světová Revoluce* (Prague: Orbis, 1925).

<sup>6</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Permanent Peace", 5 March 1917, cited from Arthur Roy Leonard, ed., *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (Boston: The Athenum Press, 1918), 8; Woodrow Wilson, "Second Inaugural Address", cited from: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson2.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson2.asp).

Conference, the Allied delegations refused plebiscites.<sup>7</sup> This thesis examines why Allied delegations granted self-determination in Carinthia, and why they denied it in the other two cases.

### **Austria and the Evolution of “German” Nationalism**

Ideas about “Germanness” motivated many German-speaking politicians to seek self-determination after the First World War. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy removed the obstacle for the promotion of nation-states, and national groups competed against one another to extend the border of their new states as much as possible. Defining and highlighting different historic understandings of the terms “German” and “German nationalism” is important in understanding German-Austrians in the period 1918-1920, since, as Franz Szabo and Charles Ingrao argue, “to speak of ‘Germans’ and ‘Germany’... means to enter into the debate on German identity”. The historic scholarly underuse of the term “Germanophone” as exists for speakers of other languages complicates discussions of German nationalism. The failure of this term to enter popular usage creates difficulties in that the term “German” typically refers to citizens of the German state centred either in Berlin or Bonn, whether Wilhelmine Germany, Weimar Germany, Nazi Germany or its successor states. However, the term “German” is also used to refer to people identifying as German living outside Germany or to German-speakers who do not identify as German. Szabo and Ingrao note that in 1910 almost twenty-five percent of German-speakers in Europe lived outside the borders of Imperial Germany.<sup>8</sup> “Germans” therefore inhabited many geographic and political locations, both in Central and Eastern Europe. This uncertainty over definitions applies especially to German-speakers in the Habsburg Empire prior to the creation of an independent Austrian state and Austrian national distinctiveness.

The creation or use of new terms has assisted with the problem posed by terminology in discussions of German nationalism. *Reichsdeutsche* [Imperial Germans] is used post-1871 German unification to refer to German citizens of Imperial Germany and its successor states, while *Volksdeutsche* [ethnic Germans] typically refers to German-speakers outside these borders.<sup>9</sup> Many Habsburg Germans opposed this binary definition

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<sup>7</sup> For more on consequences of the failure to implement self-determination see: David A. Andelman, *A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price we Pay Today* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Franz Szabo and Charles Ingrao, “Introduction”, in Charles Ingrao and Franz Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Szabo and Ingrao, “Introduction”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 3; For general histories of Germany see: W. Carr, *A History of Germany 1815-1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987); G. A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); G. A. Craig, *The Germans* (New York: Putnam, 1982); J. C. G. Röhl, *From*



of “Germanness”, and promoted a distinctive “Austrianness” at the end of the nineteenth-century, which will be discussed later in this section. For the sake of consistency this thesis refers to Germans of the Habsburg Empire as Habsburg Germans, and Germans of the Austrian crown lands [Cisleithania] as Austrian Germans. From late-October 1918, the Austrian successor was officially known as German-Austria, and citizens of this state were known as German-Austrians. After the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain on 10 September 1919, German-Austrians became simply Austrians, and the state’s name reverted to Austria. The Germans discussed in this thesis are those living in the Czech lands (hereafter referred to as German Bohemians), Vorarlbergers, and Carinthian Germans.

The period in which German nationalism first appeared is disputed by historians.<sup>10</sup> Hans Gatzke and Harold James highlight the importance of the Wars of Liberation against Napoleonic France and the revolutions of the 1840s in the development of German nationalism.<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Drage agrees, arguing that Napoleon was primarily responsible for creating the idea of a German nation.<sup>12</sup> This idea of a “German nation” initially encompassed all German-speakers based around the formation of *Grossdeutschland* [Greater Germany]. The Greater German vs Smaller German problem reached a pinnacle during the 1848 revolution but declined in importance in the following decades, largely falling out of popular thought after German unification in 1871.<sup>13</sup>

Ideas of what *Grossdeutschland* entailed attracted different opinions. Michael Hughes argues that the definition did not include Swiss Germans or Germans isolated from the core German-speaking regions, such as the Transylvanian Saxons.<sup>14</sup> However, as Gatzke notes, some pan-German enthusiasts envisioned a federation not only between the various German-speaking states, but also with other “Germanic people” in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Advocates considered cultural, ethnographic, and historical arguments the most important justifications for this “reunion”.<sup>15</sup> Opinions also varied as to whether Germans should be united under a single state, or were

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*Bismarck to Hitler: The problem of continuity in German history* (London: Longman, 1970); A. J. Ryder, *Twentieth Century Germany: From Bismarck to Brandt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> For more on the creation of nations see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): A Study of Germany's Western War Aims During the First World War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), 3; Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770 to the present day* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 38, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Drage, *Austria-Hungary* (London: John Murray, 1909), 533.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the German Question see: Robert Billinger, *Metternich and the German Question: States' Rights and Federal Duties, 1820-1834* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1991); Wilhelm Röpke, *The German Question* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig Mises Institute, 2008); Wilhelm Schmidt, *Eine praktische Lösung der Deutschen Frage* (Nuremberg: Wilhelm Schmidt Verlag, 1862); Stefan Wolff, *The German Question since 1919: An Analysis with Key Documents* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West*, 3.

numerous enough to form several German states.<sup>16</sup> *Grossdeutschland* proposals also gained support later from the “pseudo-scientific racial theories” of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain.<sup>17</sup> Given such endorsements it is perhaps worthwhile to note that Robert Kann refers disparagingly to pan-Germanism simply as “day dreams of beer-consuming German secondary-school teachers”.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of German unification in the development of German nationalism is also disputed. Christian Jansen argues that “continuous national political movements” appeared only after German unification in 1871.<sup>19</sup> As with much of German history such a date, however, suggests a Prusso-centric view of German nationalism. Other historians oppose the idea that the unification of Germany represented a truly German unification. Hughes argues that German unification created a “Reich without a nation”, failing both to promote unity and to receive popular legitimacy. This state instead represented “a division of the German nation”.<sup>20</sup> According to Hughes, unification instead represented a Prussian colonisation of German states. He argues that nationalism “was more a consequence than a cause of unification”.<sup>21</sup> James also argues that Imperial Germany “stood halfway between a Prussian dynastic and a modern nation-state”.<sup>22</sup> Jansen importantly also notes the existence of individual state nationalism, as in the case of Prussian and Bavarian nationalism.<sup>23</sup> The growth of German nationalism, therefore, resulted not from German unification in 1871, but from the earlier growth of the pan-German movement.

Many Imperial Germans remained opposed to a merger of the German and Austrian branches of the German nation. Until the First World War the German state based in Berlin, whether Prussia or Imperial Germany, viewed the unaltered retention of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as beneficial. Otto von Bismarck, mastermind of German unification, argued: “The German Austrian is justified to aspire for political leadership and should safeguard the interests of Germandom in the Orient, serving as the tie of contact between Germans and Slavs by hindering their collision”.<sup>24</sup> Bismarck opposed Austro-German unification partly over fears of Austrian Catholicism, stating that even

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West* (, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 499.

<sup>19</sup> Christian Jansen, “The Formation of German Nationalism, 1740-1850”, 234-259, in Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 101-102.

<sup>22</sup> Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770 to the present day* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>23</sup> Christian Jansen, “The Formation of German Nationalism, 1740-1850”, in Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook*, 235-236.

<sup>24</sup> Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 384-385.

acquisitions of provinces like Austrian Silesia or parts of Bohemia would not strengthen what he referred to as “the Prussian state”.<sup>25</sup>

The government of Imperial Germany also often downplayed its Germanness. Hughes argues that “[t]he power of the German state, not sympathy for members of the German nation, dominated policy-making”.<sup>26</sup> Bismarck repeatedly opposed Germany’s definition as a German state. When the Russian ambassador to Germany, Peter Alexanderovich Saburov, described the Baltic provinces as “German provinces”, Bismarck angrily responded: “Call them Lettish provinces. In any case they are not German lands as we understand that term”.<sup>27</sup> Such attitudes explain why Bismarck and other Imperial Germans opposed the concept of *Grossdeutschland*.

Pan-Germanism attracted less support in the Habsburg Empire than it did in Germany.<sup>28</sup> According to Drage, pan-Germanism began to appear in Cisleithania from 1871, several decades later than in other German states.<sup>29</sup> The pan-German movement grew in Cisleithania through the 1870s, culminating in 1882 when Georg von Schönerer, perhaps the most prominent pan-Germanist in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, founded the Pan-German People’s Party.<sup>30</sup> However, Julie Thorpe argues that few Habsburg Germans supported von Schönerer, Austro-German unification, pan-Germanism, or even Germanisation.<sup>31</sup>

Other historians note that some Habsburg Germans considered themselves nationally German.<sup>32</sup> For example, in 1900 Otto Bauer, Social Democrat and post-war German-Austrian Foreign Minister, wrote that Austria-Hungary was “politically and culturally a German state”.<sup>33</sup> Although German national sentiments increased amongst Habsburg Germans from 1871, Hughes argues that they nevertheless remained “socially and politically divided”.<sup>34</sup> Helmut Walser Smith notes that the unity of the German nation often suffered from both religious and political divisions.<sup>35</sup> The fact that increasing numbers of Habsburg Germans identified as German should therefore not give the false impression of any great unity among this population.

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<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Drage, *Austria-Hungary* (London: John Murray, 1909), 535.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 170.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Der Bagdasarian, *The Austro-German Rapprochement, 1870-1879: From the Battle of Sedan to the Dual Alliance* (London: Associated University Presses, 1976), 307-308.

<sup>28</sup> For more on Habsburg pan-Germanism see: Andrew Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools: Georg Ritter von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); F. L. Carsten, *Fascist Movements in Austria: From Schönerer to Hitler* (London: Sage Publications, 1977).

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Drage, *Austria-Hungary* (London: John Murray, 1909), 535-536.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 169.

<sup>31</sup> Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 21-25.

<sup>32</sup> For example see Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 192; Werner Conze, *The Shaping of the German Nation: A Historical Analysis* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1979), 64.

<sup>33</sup> Otto Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000), 196.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 165.

<sup>35</sup> Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

The proposed political union between Germany and Austria, known as *Anschluss*, consistently reappeared in the history of “Germans” in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. *Anschluss* regained popularity after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and featured prominently in the immediate post-war period and throughout the 1930s. Despite the strength of the pro-*Anschluss* movement in Austria in the period covered by this thesis, the issue has intentionally been avoided, as it has been addressed by many historians already.<sup>36</sup>

Interpretations of Germanness among Habsburg Germans changed a great deal over time. In the early-nineteenth century, most Habsburg Germans associated nationalism with ideas of “personal, communal, political, and social freedom”.<sup>37</sup> Werner Conze argues that culture and linguistics defined local understandings of Germanness as much as politics.<sup>38</sup> Hughes notes that family, class, occupation, locality, region, state, and church all defined individual Germanness as well.<sup>39</sup> In the nineteenth century, most Habsburg Germans felt themselves culturally a part of a German nation only in that they were concerned for its welfare. This meant that although Habsburg Germans sympathised with other German-speakers, they remained loyal to the Empire and the dynasty, feeling that it best served their interests.<sup>40</sup> Based on historical, linguistic, and cultural similarities, Lonnie Johnson argues that “German-speaking Austrians considered themselves Germans: not Prussians but Germans, just as the inhabitants of Bavaria or Hamburg were Germans and not Prussians”.<sup>41</sup> As a result of this loyalty, Cisleithania remained officially non-national.<sup>42</sup>

Understandings of “Germanness” varied greatly depending on the region in which one lived. Pieter Judson argues that individual definitions of Germanness were shaped by different local conditions. For example, staunch Catholicism defined Germanness in Tyrol, scepticism towards Catholicism and opposition to Slovenian priests defined Germanness in Styria and Carinthia, while opposition towards Habsburg hegemony

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<sup>36</sup> For example see: Arthur Kogan, “Genesis of the Anschluss Problem: Germany and the Germans of the Hapsburg Monarchy in the Autumn of 1918”, *Journal of Central European Affairs*, vol.XX (1960); Alfred Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919 and the Paris Peace Conference* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1974); Stanley Suval, *The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era: A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918-32* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974); M. Margaret Ball, *Post-War German-Austrian Relations: The Anschluss Movement, 1918-1936* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1937); Jürgen Gehl, *Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss 1931-1938* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); Klaus Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).

<sup>37</sup> Pieter Judson, “Changing Meanings of ‘German’ in Habsburg Central Europe”, in Charles Ingrao and Franz Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East* (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 115-116.

<sup>38</sup> Werner Conze, *The Shaping of the German Nation: A Historical Analysis* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1979), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 15.

<sup>40</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>42</sup> Pieter Judson, “Changing Meanings”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 119.

defined Germanness in Bohemia.<sup>43</sup> Traditional conservatism in Tyrol meant the nationality question failed to influence Tyrolers as much as it did Carinthians and Styrians. Arnold Suppan argues that although German-Slovene tensions never reached the height of German-Czech tensions, anxiety amongst German minority groups remained largely responsible for centralising national tendencies throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>44</sup> However, Judson notes that only rarely did regional Germanness have political connotations. For this reason Judson argues that it is inaccurate to speak simply of “Germans” in East Central Europe in the nineteenth century, explaining that it is more accurate to “speak of those Tyrolers, Upper Austrians, Styrians, Bohemians, or Moravians who also considered themselves to be German”.<sup>45</sup>

Habsburg Germanness changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Slavic-speakers increasingly challenged the pre-eminent position of German language and culture in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>46</sup> Use of the German language declined as Slavic linguistic nationalism intensified, even though German remained the official language of the imperial bureaucracy.<sup>47</sup> One of the important resulting changes was the politicisation of place names.<sup>48</sup> As a result of Slavic nationalism, the way in which Habsburg Germans viewed Germanness changed. Although the number of Habsburg Germans identifying as German had increased by 1900, no uniform definition existed of what this meant. According to Pieter Judson, by 1910 nationality had become a “fixed personal identity”, and the function of language lost its importance as a determinant of this identity.<sup>49</sup> Instead, regional loyalties remained important in defining Germanness.

Regional Germanness also came to influence the creation of a distinctive “Austrianness” in the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the late nineteenth century. Prior to 1866, Suppan argues that “the Germans of the Habsburg Empire were ‘Austrians,’ and Austrian citizenship did not amount to denial of German nationality”. However, “Austrianness” and “Germanness” gradually came into increasing conflict, and Greater Germanism declined as a movement in Austria-Hungary after German unification. Nicholas Der Bagdasarian and Michael Hughes both argue that after 1871 Austria-

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 113; Arnold Suppan, “Germans’ in the Habsburg Empire: Language, Imperial Ideology, National Identity, and Assimilation”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 171-172.

<sup>44</sup> Arnold Suppan, “Germans’ in the Habsburg Empire”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 148; For more on the artificial creation of political contention to counter non-German nationalists see: Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Pieter Judson, “Changing Meanings”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 113-117.

<sup>46</sup> For example see: Paul Vyšný, *Neo-Slavism and the Czechs, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

<sup>47</sup> Judson, “Changing Meanings”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 120.

<sup>48</sup> For an example of this see: Peter Bugge, “The Making of a Slovak City: The Czechoslovak Renaming of Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok, 1918-1919”, *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol.35 (2004), 205-277; Pieter van Duin, *Central European Crossroads: Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867-1921* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 163-331.

<sup>49</sup> Judson, “Changing Meanings”, in Ingrao and Szabo, ed., *The Germans and the East*, 122-124.

Hungary rapidly lost any of its original German character.<sup>50</sup> Like the pan-German People's Party for pan-Germanists, a political party arose in Austria-Hungary representing those Germans who favoured this "Austrianness". Karl Lueger, future mayor of Vienna, founded the Christian Social Party in 1889 to represent such Germans. The Christian Social Party differed from von Schönerer's pan-German Party in a number of important ways. Although pro-German in a linguistic sense, the Christian Socials lacked German nationalism as a core policy. The party instead remained loyal to the Empire and the Catholic Church, focussing more on social issues.<sup>51</sup> The policies adopted by the Christian Socials proved popular amongst Habsburg Germans.

Habsburg Germans consistently defended Austrian distinctiveness against pan-Germanism. Hughes argues that many Habsburg Germans considered themselves distinctively part of a *Staatsvolk* [state nation].<sup>52</sup> For example, in 1919 some Vorarlbergers defended Austrian distinctiveness as the *Ostmark* [Eastern March], viewing a powerful Austria as an important bridge between Germany and the Balkans.<sup>53</sup> The concept of Austria as the *Ostmark* helped foster Austrian distinctiveness within the German nation from the late nineteenth century. The creation of Austrian distinctiveness also later helped secure Austria's independence in the interwar period, despite widespread support for *Anschluss* with Germany.

Regional Germanness proved particularly important in the cases examined by this thesis. Interestingly, German-speakers in the Czech lands identified as German Bohemians rather than as Austrian Bohemians, and sought union with German-Austria in 1919 rather than Germany. Austrian distinctiveness encouraged German-speakers along the German-Austrian frontier to advocate for self-determination in order to allow political union with German-Austria. In the period 1918-1920, German-Austrians sought to use plebiscites to give legitimacy to their own regional interpretations of "Germanness".

## Historic Understandings of Plebiscites

Allied delegations favoured plebiscites as the most objective way to implement national self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>54</sup> Exploring the influence of self-determination therefore requires an understanding of the origins of plebiscites.

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<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Der Bagdasarian, *The Austro-German Rapprochement*, 298; Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society*, 167.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 170-171.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

<sup>53</sup> "Gedanken zur Anschlußfrage," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.204. (6 September 1919), 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> For an excellent discussion of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference see: Tom Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity: The Principle of National Self-Determination, The Question of Territorial Sovereignty in Carinthia and other post-Habsburg Territories after the First World War* (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2000).

Plebiscites had been used before the conference, but Wilson's rhetoric led to their reappearance in 1919. Although many discussions of modern plebiscites exist, this thesis focuses exclusively on nineteenth and early twentieth century understandings of plebiscites.<sup>55</sup>

A number of scholars have distinguished between plebiscites and referendums. Although similar in practice, Johannes Mattern differentiates plebiscites and referendums by defining a referendum as "the practice or principle ... of submitting a question at issue to the whole body of voters", and a plebiscite as "a direct vote of the whole of the electors of a state to decide a question of public importance".<sup>56</sup> In 1882, Émile de Laveleye made a similar distinction, defining plebiscites as "direct legislation by the people" and referendums as "the acceptance or the rejection, by universal suffrage, of the laws voted by the deputies".<sup>57</sup> According to these definitions, referendums asked broad opinions on a general subject, while plebiscites asked specific questions about a particular issue. Defining terms often proves difficult though, and some scholars have even distinguished between different kinds of plebiscites.<sup>58</sup> For the sake of consistency, this thesis has adopted the approach of using the term plebiscite throughout to refer to the popular votes held to express self-determination.

Prior to the Paris Peace Conference, governments generally opposed the use of plebiscites to determine borders. Mattern argues that plebiscites threatened the very existence of states by promoting secession. He explains that, while it makes sense for a government to advocate for a plebiscite in a region if the result is likely to end favourably, it makes equal sense for a government to oppose plebiscites when the result is likely to be unfavourable. Mattern argues:

It is thus easy to understand that a multi-national, or multi-racial, state like the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, or Turkey, or Germany with the Polish, the Danish, and the Alsace-Lorraine problem, or Great Britain with her colonies and dominions and hostile Ireland, or in fact any federated state body, should in principle or practice be opposed to the doctrine of popular consent.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For more modern discussion on plebiscites see: David Butler and Austin Ranney, ed., *Referendums: A Comparative Study of Practice and Theory* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978); Antonio Cassese, *Self-Determination of Peoples: A Legal Reappraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David Raič, *Statehood and the Law of Self-Determination* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> Johannes Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite in the Determination of Sovereignty* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1920), 11.

<sup>57</sup> Émile de Laveleye, "La démocratie et le régime parlementaire," *Revue des deux mondes*, volume. LIV (1882), 47, cited from Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 11-12.

<sup>58</sup> See Charles Borgeaud, *Histoire du plébiscite...Le plébiscite dans l'antiquité - Grèce et Rome* (Geneva: H. Georg, 1887), xiii; Francis Lieber, "De la valeur des plebiscites dans le droit international", *Revue de droit international et de législation comparée*, vol. iii (1871), 140-141.

<sup>59</sup> Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite* 168-169.

In 1901, Henri Bonfils similarly argued that plebiscites set a dangerous precedent for other regions to secede from their state, questioning whether that region would then change allegiance again.<sup>60</sup> Felix Stoerk argued a similar point in 1879, noting “the principle of the plebiscite as hostile to the state and as theoretically untenable - because its first and next consequence is the dissolution of all state existence”.<sup>61</sup> Criticisms of plebiscites essentially outlined the fact that plebiscites represented the voluntary division of the state, and should therefore be opposed. Such concerns about plebiscites later re-emerged at the Paris Peace Conference.

Plebiscites had been used on only limited occasions in the nineteenth-century. Mattern notes that plebiscites were uncommon prior to the twentieth century, arguing that “the prevailing opinion expressed before the [First] World War was to the effect that the rules governing the intercourse of states do neither demand nor recognize the universal application of the plebiscite in the determination of sovereignty”.<sup>62</sup> Sarah Wambaugh also argues that the use of plebiscites “has suffered great fluctuations of fortune”. Wambaugh traces the use of plebiscites back to the determination of popular support for government policies during the French Revolution. Napoleon later abandoned the use of plebiscites, but their revival followed the revolutions of 1848. Plebiscites remained popular during the following 20 years, supported by important political figures such as Count Cavour, Lord Russell, Napoleon III, and Bismarck.<sup>63</sup>

During the mid-nineteenth century, European politicians used plebiscites to resolve territorial disputes on a number of occasions. Examples include the British cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1863, Article Five of the 1866 Treaty of Prague between Austria and Prussia to solve the dispute over Schleswig, and the incorporation of Rome into unified Italy in 1870.<sup>64</sup> Diplomats had also unsuccessfully sought to use plebiscites to resolve the Schleswig question at the Congress of London in 1864.<sup>65</sup> However, after the popularity of plebiscites in the 1860s, their usage notably declined.

Plebiscites virtually vanished from the political sphere after the mid-nineteenth century. During the next fifty years only one plebiscite was held in Europe, in 1905 when Norway voted to separate from Sweden. However, although politicians, diplomats, and lawyers had rejected the value of plebiscites, the idea of self-determination remained

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<sup>60</sup> Henri Bonfils, *Manuel de droit international public*, no. 3 (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1901), 570, cited from Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 169-170.

<sup>61</sup> Felix Stoerk, *Option und Plebisit bei Eroberungen und Gebietscessionen* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1879), 67, cited from Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 170.

<sup>62</sup> Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 171.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*, vol. I (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), 3.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Collier, *Italian Unification, 1820-71* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2003), 83; Wesley J. Reisser, *The Black Book: Woodrow Wilson's Secret Plan for Peace* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 53.

<sup>65</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 3.



popular among many national groups. Wambaugh argues that the term self-determination entered the English language during the First World War from German, where it had first appeared in radical philosophical writings in 1848.<sup>66</sup> Wilson revived the popularity of self-determination in a 1916 speech, and was subsequently “looked to as their leader by those who believed that the new frontiers drawn at the Peace Conference should be based on self-determination”.<sup>67</sup>

Wilson gave his famous Fourteen Points speech on 8 January 1918, re-popularising the concept of self-determination. Point Ten of Wilson’s Fourteen Points directly addressed Austria-Hungary, stating that all peoples of the empire “should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development”.<sup>68</sup> Although Wilson did not specifically mention the phrase “self-determination” in this speech, it featured in a speech he gave on 11 February, in which he argued: “[n]ational aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril”.<sup>69</sup> Thomas Bailey argues that self-determination appealed to Wilson because it “was so closely in harmony with American tradition as embodied in the Virginia Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence”.<sup>70</sup>

Although Wilson is popularly associated with the proposal during the war to implement self-determination, the method in which self-determination would be implemented came from a different source. The Decree of Peace, adopted on 8 November 1917 by the All-Russian Convention of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies, promised plebiscites in the Soviet Union. Leon Trotsky agreed to peace with the Central Powers on the basis of this peace announcement, leading to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which withdrew the Soviet Union from the First World War. According to Sarah Wambaugh, “[a]lthough the word ‘plebiscite’ had not been mentioned either in the Allied or German statements, it was anticipated by a large body of public opinion that the method would have an extensive use at Paris”.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, John Milton Cooper Jr. argues that, in many cases, Wilson had proposed plebiscites to determine local loyalties.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>68</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Fourteen Points”, cited from: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

<sup>69</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “The First Principles of Peace”, cited from Arthur Roy Leonard, ed., *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (Boston: The Athenum Press, 1918), 106.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1963), 332.

<sup>71</sup> Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 6-9, 12.

<sup>72</sup> John Milton Cooper Jr., ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), 236-237; See also Robert M. Saunders, *In Search of Woodrow Wilson: Beliefs and Behavior* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).

Mattern spoke of the Paris Peace Conference as a groundbreaking moment in the history of plebiscites. Prior to the Conference, “the plebiscite had been employed in international affairs only in individual cases and with the consent of or upon pressure from the power or powers directly or indirectly interested in each instance as it presented itself”. Following the First World War, increasing unhappiness on the European continent with the existing system meant that “the Allied and Associated Powers found it expedient to offer a settlement of the aspirations of the freedom-seeking peoples on the basis of the principle of national self-determination”. The Allied Powers therefore included national self-determination among their war aims, and, as a result, the peace treaties ending the war included provisions for holding plebiscites.<sup>73</sup>

The Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference favoured the use of plebiscites to determine local sympathies after the First World War. However, the criteria used to allow the implementation of plebiscites varied in each case, and the Allied delegations often refused self-determination. In some cases the creation of successor states, labelled subsequently by Hobsbawm as “Wilsonian petty states”, limited the implementation of self-determination in other regions.<sup>74</sup> For example, Johnson argues that the Paris Peace Conference quite clearly ignored self-determination in cases where it concerned Germans.<sup>75</sup> Based on the perceived inconsistency of applied self-determination at the Conference, historians differ in opinion as to how successfully Wilsonian ideas were implemented.

### **The Influence of Self-Determination at the Paris Peace Conference**

Disagreement exists over the extent to which the principle of self-determination influenced peacemakers at the Paris Peace Conference. Delegates themselves were widely divided over the importance of self-determination, and this varied in different cases. This variation explains why self-determination was implemented only in limited cases. Nevertheless, some historians view the implementation of self-determination at the conference as a great victory, praising the effectiveness of the Conference, while others criticise it, arguing that it was a great failure.

Supporters of the effectiveness of the Conference argue that Allied delegates genuinely sought to apply self-determination. For example, Daniel Smith argues that Allied delegations made “a great effort to adhere to principles of nationality, on the

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<sup>73</sup> Johannes Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 128.

<sup>74</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 130.

<sup>75</sup> Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 196.

grounds of justice and of a lasting settlement". Smith notes that although Wilson's plan was perhaps overly idealistic, self-determination "was generally honoured in the drawing of the boundaries of the new states".<sup>76</sup> Thomas Bailey argues that in many instances violating principles of national self-determination was unavoidable, but that "on the whole the Paris settlement was a victory for self-determination. This principle was far more often honored in the observance than in the breach".<sup>77</sup> Hobsbawm notes "the utter impracticability of the Wilsonian principle to make state frontiers coincide with the frontiers of nationality and language". However, he also argues that the peace conference "actually translated this principle into practice as far as was feasible". He argues further that "no equally systematic attempt has been made before or since, in Europe or anywhere else, to redraw the political map on national lines".<sup>78</sup> Historians defending the use of self-determination therefore praise that genuine efforts were made in some instances, but that the implementation of self-determination was not possible in every case.

Historians have more often criticised the Paris Peace Conference for failing to permit self-determination in more cases, condemning the Conference for failing to live up to the expectations politicians like Wilson created for it. Marston argues that despite the unique position of dominance the Allied delegates found themselves in, they "were quite unprepared to make full and immediate use of the tremendous opportunity presenting itself".<sup>79</sup> The sheer number of cases to consider overwhelmed the Allied delegations. Shotwell notes that it was "simply impossible for the Fourteen Points to be applied, even by those who accepted them theoretically, without creating grievances".<sup>80</sup> According to Shotwell, the Allied delegations "made the inevitable mistake of yielding too much to the insistence of those able to present their case in Paris". Shotwell argues instead that the Peace Conference was a great failure of self-determination.<sup>81</sup> The distinction between the two schools of thought, with regards to the effectiveness of the Paris Peace Conference, can be explained by the fact that the Allied delegations applied self-determination selectively, opening themselves both to praise and criticism.

The Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference applied self-determination where it suited their interests or those of states they supported. Occasionally Allied decisions regarding self-determination were pre-empted, such as the Italian occupation of

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel M. Smith, *The Great Departure: The United States and World War I, 1914-1920* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 162-164, 175-176.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963), 316.

<sup>78</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 132-133.

<sup>79</sup> F. S. Marston, *The Peace Conference of 1919: Organization and Procedure* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 230.

<sup>80</sup> James T. Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 39.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 50.

South Tyrol and the Czechoslovak occupation of German Bohemia. However, the Allied delegations ultimately supported these actions at the Peace Conference. Allied delegations often had limited opportunities to consider the possibility of implementing self-determination to change borders. When self-determination threatened Allied interests delegates opposed its implementation, instead favouring historic, geographic, or strategic arguments. In these cases, Allied delegations did not necessarily prevent self-determination intentionally, but considered other justifications more important. The argument of this thesis is therefore not that Allied delegations ignored self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, but that other priorities often superseded their desire to implement it.

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This thesis examines three regions of political contention along the German-Austrian frontier after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>82</sup> These regions are German Bohemia, Carinthia, and Vorarlberg. Other cases of politically contentious regions exist, but these three best represent different approaches taken by German-Austrians and Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference. South Tyrol is the most notable omission, because it is the case most frequently cited for abuse of self-determination. However, South Tyrol shares many similarities with the German Bohemian case. In both regions the Allied delegations at the Conference rejected plebiscites for German-majority regions, which were subsequently attached to other countries. Salzburg, meanwhile, shares a number of similarities with Vorarlberg. These regions both held unofficial plebiscites in the post-war period, resulting in overwhelming majorities expressing their desire to secede from German-Austria. In both cases the international community ignored the results of the plebiscites. Finally, Burgenland shares similarities with Carinthia. Both regions contained mixed ethno-linguistic populations, subject to claims from competing states. Allied delegations permitted plebiscites in both cases, and a majority of people chose to remain with German-Austria.

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<sup>82</sup> There exist many excellent histories of Austria, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and/or its collapse. For example see: Robert Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Robert Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977); Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966); Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); Hugh Seton-Watson and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London: Methuen and Co., 1981); Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918* (London; New York: Longman, 1989); András Gerő, *The Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, 1867-1918* (London: New Holland, 2008); A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952); John W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (London; New York: Longman, 1997); Barbara Jelavich, *Modern Austria: Empire and Republic, 1815-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Chapter one examines German Bohemia, a case in which the Allied delegations denied local German claims to self-determination and refused a plebiscite. In the Czech lands, Czechoslovak independence threatened local German predominance. Germans living in the Czech lands therefore sought their self-determination in order to create an autonomous German Bohemian province which could be joined to German-Austria. However, German Bohemian politicians failed to reach a compromise in negotiations with Czechoslovak officials, leading the Czechoslovak military to occupy the province. At the Paris Peace Conference, German-Austrian and German Bohemian politicians requested that the Allied delegations allow plebiscites in the Czech lands, arguing that such plebiscites would legitimise German Bohemia's right to exist on the basis of self-determination. However, Allied delegations rejected these requests on the basis of their support for the historic borders of the Czech lands, and the German Bohemian province subsequently became part of Czechoslovakia.

Chapter two examines Vorarlberg, a case in which the Allied delegations recognised the legitimacy of a local plebiscite, but refused to permit the implementation of self-determination. In Vorarlberg, serious economic decline as a result of the First World War prompted a search for union to another state. Vorarlbergers subsequently sought to leave the German-Austrian Republic, favouring union instead with Switzerland as a means of securing their economic future. The Pro-Switzerland movement rallied large number of Vorarlbergers to support their campaign, notably receiving support from Vorarlberg's governor, Otto Ender. The movement succeeded in holding a plebiscite in Vorarlberg on 11 May 1919, in which 81 percent of Vorarlbergers voted in favour of union with Switzerland. However, the German-Austrian government refused to accept the results of the plebiscite, and the Pro-Switzerland movement subsequently sought international recognition at the Paris Peace Conference in support of Vorarlberg's campaign to become part of Switzerland. Ender attended the Peace Conference as Vorarlberg's representative, seeking to have Vorarlberg's right to self-determination confirmed by the Allied delegations. The Allied delegations, German-Austrian government, and the Swiss government ultimately opposed Vorarlberg's self-determination for a number of reasons, despite its plebiscite successfully representing the self-determination for which Wilson had campaigned.

Chapter three examines Carinthia, a case in which the Allied delegations recognised Carinthian claims to self-determination, culminating in the successful implementation of self-determination after a plebiscite was held on 10 October 1920. In 1918 the province of Carinthia faced competing claims of sovereignty from both the German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments. Local sympathies became contested, and

Yugoslav troops occupied much of southern Carinthia in 1919. Increasing violence influenced both the German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments to petition the Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference to resolve the dispute. Allied discussions concerning Carinthia raised dissenting opinions both between and within the Allied delegations. Uniquely amongst the examined cases, both US and Italian delegates offered their support to the German-Austrian delegation's requests for a plebiscite in Carinthia. Failure to reach a unanimous decision at the Peace Conference meant the Allied delegates agreed to hold a plebiscite in Carinthia. The results of the plebiscite showed 59 percent support for union with Austria. The border established after the implementation of self-determination closely resembled the will of the local population in Carinthia.

## German Bohemia

This chapter examines the case of Germans in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>1</sup> Czechoslovak independence threatened local German dominance, resulting in the creation of autonomous German provinces in the Czech lands. Although initially willing to compromise over conflicting sovereignty, relations between German Bohemian and Czechoslovak politicians became openly hostile as neither side felt prepared to concede any of their ambitions, namely the establishment of Czechoslovakia for Czechoslovaks, and self-determination in the Czech lands for German Bohemians. The chapter explores the German Bohemian declaration of autonomy in October 1918, Czechoslovak opposition to this autonomy, German Bohemian attempts to have their autonomy recognised, and subsequent opposition from Allied delegations to German Bohemian requests at the Paris Peace Conference for a plebiscite in the Czech lands. Ultimately the Treaty of St. Germain enshrined the historic borders of the Czech lands as the borders of the new Czechoslovak Republic, rejecting German Bohemian self-determination.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk fostered the idea of an independent Czechoslovak state in Allied countries during the First World War, spending time in London, Paris, and the United States. Austro-Hungarian officials cracked down strongly on leaders of the Czech independence movement during the war, arresting many and charging them with treason.<sup>2</sup> Although the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire may not have come as a great surprise to Germans of the Czech lands, these Germans rapidly needed to acclimatise themselves to the prospect of no longer holding predominance in Bohemia and Moravia. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire created problems relating to who held legitimate political power in the Czech lands. Several entities simultaneously attempted to fill the power vacuum. Most importantly, this power vacuum allowed the Czechoslovak National Committee [*Tschechoslowakische Nationalausschuss/Národní výbor československý*] to declare Czechoslovakia's independence, based on Point Ten of US

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<sup>1</sup> For more on German-speakers in the Czech lands see: Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Heinrich Rauchberg, *Der nationale Besitzstand in Böhmen* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1905); Mark Cornwall, "The Struggle on the Czech-German Language Border, 1880-1940", *The English Historical Review*, vol.109, no.433 (1994), 914-951; J. W. Bruegel, *Tschechen und Deutsche, 1918-1938* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1967); Mark Cornwall, "National Reparation?: The Czech Land Reform and the Sudeten Germans 1918-38", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol.75, no.2 (1997), 259-280; Mark Cornwall, "Dr Edvard Beneš and Czechoslovakia's German Minority, 1918-1943", in John Morison, ed., *The Czechs and Slovak Experience* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Czech independence movement during the war see: H. Louis Rees, *The Czechs during World War I: The Path to Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

President Wilson's Fourteen Points. However, many Germans in the Czech lands also looked to the Fourteen Points with hopeful optimism.

Despite Allied support for an independent Czechoslovak state based on the historic Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, Germans in the Czech lands remained confident they could achieve alternative arrangements for the areas they themselves inhabited. This confidence largely resulted from Wilson's Fourteen Points, which Germans incorrectly understood applied also to themselves. As Germans understood them, the Fourteen Points guaranteed that they would also gain self-determination and could therefore avoid integration into the Czechoslovak state. Germans in the Czech lands subsequently established four autonomous provinces in territory claimed by Czechoslovakia.

The provisional governments of these four German provinces in the Czech lands each set separate goals. Germans in the south, comprising the new provinces of the Bohemian Woods [*Böhmerwaldgau/Šumavská župa*] and German South Moravia [*Deutschsüdmähren/Německá jižní Morava*], assumed they would be able to join the neighbouring provinces of Upper Austria and Lower Austria, respectively, as part of the new German-Austrian Republic. The Sudeten Mountains lent their name to a third province, the Sudetenland [*Sudetenland/Sudety*], established by Germans in northern Moravia and Silesia. It is worth noting that in this period "the Sudetenland" encompassed only northern Moravia and Silesia. Caitlin Murdock explains that German Bohemian irredentist nationalists only began to use the term to refer to all German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s "in an attempt to create a unified national, territorial, and political identity".<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Germans in north-western Bohemia declared an autonomous province of German Bohemia [*Deutschböhmen/Německé Čechy*], establishing a provisional government and various committees to organise and govern this territory.<sup>4</sup> The governor of the new province of German Bohemia, Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, quickly came to represent the interests of all Germans in the Czech lands who opposed attempts by Czechoslovak politicians to integrate these German provinces into Czechoslovakia.

From November 1918 the official reactions from Czechoslovak officials to the creation of these provinces led to fear and panic amongst Germans in the Czech lands. Czechoslovak officials began to target remnants of the imperial power structure, especially local German authorities who now represented the new German provinces of the

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<sup>3</sup> Caitlin Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 15

<sup>4</sup> For more on this period of history see Robert Freissler, *Vom Zerfall Österreichs bis zum tschechoslowakischen Staat* (Berlin: Hela-Verlag, 1921).



German-Austrian state. Masaryk and other Czechoslovak political leaders emphasised the indivisibility of Bohemia and Moravia, stressing that German Bohemians must abandon their separatist activities.<sup>5</sup> Germans in the Czech lands did not take these declarations seriously, using self-determination as justification for their actions. Some Czechoslovak leaders, notably František Tomášek, initially encouraged German leaders to join in the task of creating a true multinational Czechoslovak state.<sup>6</sup> However, German Bohemian and Czechoslovak leaders failed to reach any arrangement for compromise.

The Czechoslovak military eventually occupied the German provinces, which resulted in a hardening of attitudes from both Czechoslovak and German political leaders. Czechoslovak politicians like Karel Kramář subsequently highlighted the ethnic Czechoslovak foundation of the Czechoslovak state, while German leaders voiced their opposition to Czechoslovak actions and continued to proclaim their right to national self-determination, appealing to the Paris Peace Conference in order to have this right recognised. Lodgman and other German Bohemian political figures attended the Paris Peace Conference with the German-Austrian delegation to seek recognition for German-Bohemian self-determination. German-Austrian and German Bohemian representatives sought a plebiscite to prove that German Bohemians opposed Czechoslovak citizenship. Ultimately the Allied delegations favoured the position of the Czechoslovak government and rejected German claims to self-determination in the Czech lands. However, the Paris Peace Conference succeeded somewhat in softening attitudes amongst Czechs and Germans in Czechoslovakia, at least in the 1920s.

### **The Implementation of Czechoslovak Independence**

The Czechoslovak National Committee declared Czechoslovakia's independence in Prague on 28 October 1918.<sup>7</sup> Direct motivation for the declaration came from Austro-Hungary's defeat to Italy at the battle of Vittorio Veneto, which began on 24 October. Eduard Beneš had led a Czechoslovak delegation to Vienna and Geneva several days earlier, so the task of issuing the independence declaration fell to the other leaders of the Czechoslovak National Committee, namely Antonín Švehla, Alois Rašín, František Soukup, and Jiří Strábrný. These four members issued a number of articles relating to Czechoslovak independence, assisted at times by Vavro Šrobár, an important Slovak

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<sup>5</sup> "10 February 1918 proclamation in *Národní Listy*", *Independent Bohemia* (Teddington, Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006), 30; Eva Schmidt-Hartmann, *Thomas G. Masaryk's Realism: Origins of a Czech Political Concept* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1984), 20.

<sup>6</sup> See for example: J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich: The German minority problem and British appeasement policy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 8.

<sup>7</sup> "Proklamierung des tschechoslowakischen Staates", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.296 (29 October 1918), 1.

member of the Committee. The Austro-Hungarian governor of the crown land of Bohemia, Maximilian von Coudenhove, strongly opposed the National Committee's declaration.<sup>8</sup> Johann Wolfgang Bruegel describes the actions of 28 October as a "bloodless revolution". During this early period the Czechoslovak government concerned itself primarily with protecting the indivisibility of the Czech lands, and ensuring the incorporation of Slovakia into the new state.<sup>9</sup>

Although the First World War complicated the Czechoslovak movement for independence by encouraging Austro-Hungarian loyalty, the war fundamentally contributed to the achievement of Czechoslovak independence. Czechoslovak nationalists such as Karel Kramář faced lengthy jail terms during the war. The Austro-Hungarian government initially sentenced Kramář to death in 1916 for high treason, only to later grant him amnesty.<sup>10</sup> The progression of the war gradually encouraged Czechoslovak independence activists to continue progress towards independence. Czech deputies of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Council issued the Epiphany Declaration on 6 January 1918 calling for Czechoslovak independence. After prolonged inactivity in early 1918 the Czechoslovak National Committee reconvened from 13 July, encouraged by Central Power military defeats.<sup>11</sup> Allied victories gave great hope to activists that Czechoslovak independence would be achieved. Czechoslovak independence therefore resulted both from the weakness of the Austro-Hungarian government, and the strength of the Czechoslovak movement for independence.

Masaryk had initially declared Czechoslovak independence in Paris on 18 October 1918. This earlier declaration came as a result of a proposal made on 16 October by Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl to allow further federalisation of the Empire.<sup>12</sup> This proposal was an attempt to thwart the collapse of the Empire. Although Masaryk described Karl as "a drowning man clutching at a straw", he feared that Karl's proposal could increase loyalty towards the Empire. Masaryk therefore responded by declaring Czechoslovak independence earlier than he had planned, and by establishing a provisional Czechoslovak government. Masaryk later explained his declaration as a tactical action, "for by the time the Emperor's manifesto was published, the colors of the free

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<sup>8</sup> "Der Tag in Prag", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.296 (29 October 1918), 1; Eduard Beneš, *My War Memoirs* (New York; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), 451-454, in Alfred J. Bannan and Achilles Edelenyi, ed., *Documentary History of Eastern Europe* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 264-268; Nadya Nedelsky, *Defining the Sovereign Community: The Czech and Slovak Republics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 60-61.

<sup>9</sup> J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich: The German minority problem and British appeasement policy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*: 17; Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 1974), 489.

<sup>11</sup> Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 170.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Czechoslovak State were already flying from the house where I lived as President of our Provisional Government”.<sup>13</sup>

The independence of Czechoslovakia caused drastic changes to local politics in the Czech lands. This thesis examines local changes through the lens of a single city, Pilsen/Plzeň in western Bohemia. Representatives from Czech political parties established a national council for the Pilsen/Plzeň representative district on 27 October. The primary focus of the national council concerned the prevention of high food prices, but it also sought to maintain peace and order. The Pilsen/Plzeň national council formed its own national guard on 28 October, reportedly with “commendable prudence”. Such foresight allowed the national council to prevent rioting later that evening, after large groups of Czechs massed in the main areas of the city to attack German buildings.<sup>14</sup> Such actions highlight the importance placed on maintaining law and order during this transition period.

The local Czech population held large rallies in Pilsen/Plzeň on 28 October to celebrate Czechoslovakia’s declaration of independence. News also spread of a special American peace offer to end the war, which further encouraged the population. The celebratory demonstrations continued and intensified throughout 29 October. According to the *Pilsner Tagblatt*, “thousands and thousands were on the streets all day long, and in the afternoon the *Ringstrasse* and nearby lanes resembled a rolling sea”. Some outbreaks of violence occurred as demonstrators began to target old symbols of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, particularly anything considered German. Members of the crowd destroyed the heads of double-eagle edifices from a number of important buildings in the city, and also destroyed the German-language inscriptions on businesses and former government offices. Men replaced the imperial rosettes on their caps with Czech tricolours. A number of people gave speeches in front of the town hall, which demonstrators responded to with the singing of national songs. By the end of 29 October, red-white Czech flag bunting adorned all houses and shops and many of the statues and memorials.<sup>15</sup>

Czechoslovak officials rapidly achieved control over local law and order in Pilsen/Plzeň. The National Guard in Pilsen/Plzeň held a meeting on 29 October to discuss and determine the functions of the security services. As a response to the demonstrations, the security services decided to arm members of the city council, the community committee, the Sokol, and the workers’ sports clubs. The Pilsen/Plzeň security services ordered the National Guard to remove all German inscriptions from

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<sup>13</sup> David F. Strong, *Austria*, 96-97.

<sup>14</sup> “Ein tschechischer Nationalrat in Pilsen”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.296 (29 October 1918), 1.

<sup>15</sup> “Kundgebungen in Pilsen”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.297 (30 October 1918), 2.

buildings.<sup>16</sup> Through this action Czechoslovak officials therefore supported and aided popular anti-German initiatives.

The Czechoslovak National Committee began to acquire complete control in Pilsen/Plzeň, as elsewhere in the Czech lands. The Pilsen/Plzeň branch of the Czechoslovak National Committee claimed that, despite assurances from civil and military authorities to assist with public affairs and to help maintain order, many imperial authorities had passively resisted fulfilling these obligations. The National Committee argued that the imperial authorities in Pilsen/Plzeň had intentionally provoked disorder and rumours spread about a possible reactionary coup. The national committee therefore demanded that all local authorities immediately fulfil the obligations, or Czechoslovak authorities would take action against them.<sup>17</sup> Not content with issuing such instructions, the national committee decided to take further action against local authorities.

Czechoslovak authorities in Pilsen/Plzeň stressed their desire for adherence to peace and order. Local authorities referred specifically to a speech given on 29 October by national committee chairman Matouš Mandl and his secretary, Luděk Pik, in which they declared: "Citizens! Brothers! Do not let yourselves be carried away by violence. Preserve peace and order, and do not destroy the property of others! Do not tear off or damage proclamation signs, and do not bother the citizens of other nationalities!"<sup>18</sup> Czechoslovak authorities strictly opposed any retaliatory actions against Germans, despite earlier support for such action by the local National Guard.

Local authorities sought to further assert their control and crack down on competing organs of power. On 1 November the Pilsen/Plzeň branch of the Czechoslovak National Committee issued an order to greatly reduce the number of people with the power to issue orders.<sup>19</sup> Presumably the order attempted to undermine German officials in the city. The national committee centralised all nutrition matters under control of district rationing commissions, thereby further solidifying local Czech control.<sup>20</sup> On 2 November, representatives from the Pilsen/Plzeň Czechoslovak National Committee arranged for at least twenty political prisoners to be released from local prisons. The overwhelming majority of those freed were Czechs, and most had been convicted of high treason and sentenced to heavy imprisonment of ten to twenty years.<sup>21</sup>

Czechs in Pilsen/Plzeň greeted Czechoslovak independence enthusiastically. As they did elsewhere in the Czech lands. Czech representatives dedicated a 1 November

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<sup>16</sup> "Die Frage der deutschen Aufschriften", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 3.

<sup>17</sup> "Eine Warnung des Pilsner tschechischen Nationalausschusses", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 4.

<sup>18</sup> "Die Frage der deutschen Aufschriften", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 3.

<sup>19</sup> "Der Národní Výbor in Pilsen", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 3.

<sup>20</sup> "Ernährungsfragen", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 3.

<sup>21</sup> "Freilassung politischer häftlinge", *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 4.

meeting of the Pilsen/Plzeň district to the “historic world events of the last few days, the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state, and all those factors that dedicated their efforts to achieving that goal”. The announcement also targeted Germans of the Czech lands by requesting that all people, regardless of nationality, should fulfil their obligations and duties as citizens of the new state. Representatives proposed renaming the ring road and nearby streets with names of prominent people associated with Czechoslovakia’s independence, such as Wilson, Masaryk, and Kramář.<sup>22</sup> Such actions in Pilsen/Plzeň occurred elsewhere across the Czech lands, which demonstrated that local Czech authorities had taken control from the Austro-Hungarian administration and had established themselves in the dominant position.

### **The Development of German Bohemian Self-Determination**

Official and unofficial Czechoslovak actions in the Czech lands triggered a response from the new German-Austrian government. German politicians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire initially responded to Czechoslovak independence by establishing a provisional National Assembly for German-Austria on 21 October.<sup>23</sup> The National Assembly established a German-Austrian government, and claimed sovereignty over all German-speaking territory of the Empire. The German-Austrian government remained especially eager to include southern Bohemia and southern Moravia as part of Upper Austria and Lower Austria, respectively. The German-Austrian government almost immediately renounced its claims on the Sudetenland province as well as so-called language islands like Brünn/Brno and Iglau/Jihlava, despite retaining a demand for their right to self-determination.<sup>24</sup> The government hoped that such actions would increase the chances of retaining other territory.

Czechoslovak independence failed to trigger universal acclaim in the Czech lands, prompting a response from local German representatives as well. Germans in the Czech lands had foreseen the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by late-1918, and had begun their own self-organisation. On 25 October, the German Bohemian Association established a committee to hold the first convention of its assembly.<sup>25</sup> The German Peoples’ Council for Bohemia held its own conference in Aussig/Ústí nad Labem on 27 October. This conference determined the steps towards realizing an “independent and

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<sup>22</sup> “Bezirksvertretungssitzung”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 170.

<sup>24</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 30-31.

<sup>25</sup> “Die deutschböhmisches Frage”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.293 (26 October 1918), 2.

free German Bohemia”.<sup>26</sup> The Executive Committee of the Middle Bohemian Woods also convened a meeting on 27 October, at which members spoke in favour of a German state in Bohemia. The committee planned mass rallies to show support for such a state, and formed committees to organise local businesses and to ensure the distribution of food supplies to its districts.<sup>27</sup>

In response to Czechoslovak independence, German Bohemian deputies of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Council organised a meeting on 29 October at which they officially declared themselves the German Bohemian Provincial Assembly. The Assembly loosely defined itself as “an autonomous province of the German-Austrian State”.<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that this German Bohemian Provincial Assembly only included delegates from northern and western Bohemia.<sup>29</sup> On the evening of 29 October, the Lower Austrian Provincial Parliament constituted German Bohemia as an independent and inseparable part of the German-Austrian state.<sup>30</sup> Even at such an early stage German Bohemians had expressed their self-determination as part of German-Austria.

Following German Bohemia’s lead, Germans in other regions of the Czech lands established their own autonomous provinces. In early November, Germans in districts of southern Bohemia established a separate province known as the Bohemian Woods, with its capital at Prachatitz/Prachatice. The leaders of the Bohemian Woods province immediately made clear their intention to join German-Austria as part of the province of Upper Austria. Germans in northern Moravia and Silesia established the province of Sudetenland on 30 October, with its capital at Troppau/Opava. Local German officials established a separate province of German South Moravia in southern Moravia on 3 November, with its capital at Znaim/Znojmo. German South Moravian officials made clear their intention to join the German-Austrian province of Lower Austria.<sup>31</sup> By early November four autonomous German provinces existed in territory claimed by the Czechoslovak government.

Of the four newly established German provinces in the Czech lands, only German Bohemia established a proper functioning administration. On 2 November, German representatives from north-western Bohemia met in the Pilsen/Plzeň town hall to discuss questions of governance and finance, and the supply of food and coal to the German Bohemian province.<sup>32</sup> The German Bohemian Provincial Assembly initially selected as

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<sup>26</sup> “Eine außerordentliche Volksrats-Tagung”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.293 (26 October 1918), 4.

<sup>27</sup> “Der Vollzugsausschuss des mittleren Böhmerwaldes”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 3.

<sup>28</sup> “Konstituierung Deutschböhmens”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.297 (30 October 1918), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 22.

<sup>30</sup> “Ein freies Deutschböhmen”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> “Deutschböhmen”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.300 (2 November 1918), 1.

governor the leader of the German National Party, Raphael Pacher.<sup>33</sup> However, Pacher fell seriously ill on 5 November, and asked Rudolf Lodgman to travel to Reichenberg/Liberec to assume his duties.<sup>34</sup> Lodgman therefore became the first governor of the German Bohemian province, with Josef Seliger as his deputy-governor.<sup>35</sup>

Despite its long-term planning, the German Bohemian Provincial Assembly existed for a short time, only holding two meetings in its capital, Reichenberg/Liberec. At its opening meeting on 29 October the assembly made a declaration expressing itself “anxious to preserve the right of German-Bohemia to self-determination without rejecting any justified Czech demands”, and instructed Lodgman “to take up contacts with the representatives of the Czech people with a view to creating a special provisional administration in those communities which are clearly of a mixed national character until such time as conditions are finally settled”.<sup>36</sup> Despite later criticism of Lodgman because of his failure to negotiate with Czechoslovak officials, Robert Kann describes Lodgman as a “moderate” who “strove honestly and vainly for a German-Czech compromise making no claims for German cultural superiority”.<sup>37</sup> German Bohemian officials immediately recognised Czechoslovak sovereignty over Czechoslovak-majority regions, realising that it would be impossible to govern without consultations with local Czech representatives.

The political power vacuum left in Cisleithania gave way to the German-Austrian State Council, which the German-Austrian National Assembly established in Vienna on 30 October 1918. The State Council passed a constitution which gave it executive power for the entirety of German-Austria, including the four German provinces of the Czech lands.<sup>38</sup> The German Bohemian Provincial Assembly accepted the provisional constitution of German-Austria, which required the German-Austrian State Council to take over administration of all German regions. With this in mind, representatives of the German Bohemian Provincial Assembly declared that “it is unanimously the will of the German people for the German-Austrian state to become a living reality, and that this state will henceforth be self-governed by freely elected and trustworthy German men”.<sup>39</sup> The official German-Austrian constitution of 22 November also included the German Bohemian territory of the Czech lands as part of German-Austria.<sup>40</sup> German Bohemian

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<sup>33</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> “Aus Deutschböhmen”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.255 (6 November 1918), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Leo Epstein, ed., *Studienausgabe der Verfassungsgesetze der Tschechoslowakischen Republik (Study Edition of the Constitutional Laws of the Czechoslovak Republic)* (Liberec, 1923) 56, cited from Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 499.

<sup>38</sup> “Gründung des deutschen Staatsrates”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 1.

<sup>39</sup> “An das deutsche Volk in Oesterreich”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.299 (1 November 1918), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Tom Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity: The Principle of National Self-Determination, The Question of Territorial Sovereignty in Carinthia and other post-Habsburg Territories after the First World War* (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2000), 139.

officials therefore declared the province of German Bohemia a part of German-Austria on the basis of self-determination.

Once in de facto control of the four German provinces in the Czech lands, the German-Austrian State Council sought to acquire international support for their continued existence. As Suppan explains, the Czechoslovak and German-Austrian governments “faced each other from the beginning with mostly antagonism and distrust”.<sup>41</sup> The State Council therefore sent a note to President Wilson on 30 October asking for arbitration to solve the border disputes between German-Austria and Czechoslovakia. The note outlined German-Austrian claims to the German provinces as well as Czechoslovak counter-claims, requesting that a plebiscite be held under the observation of neutral powers in order to resolve the issue. The note concluded with a direct appeal to President Wilson on the basis of his Fourteen Points: “Under the impression that the President is against the governments of the Central Powers, but did not lead a war against the German people, the appeal is addressed to him to use his authority to grant the right of self-determination for the German nation.”<sup>42</sup> Given their precarious control, Germans in the Czech lands hoped to further secure their right to self-determination.

### **The Failure of German Bohemian-Czechoslovak Negotiations**

The Czechoslovak National Committee’s claims to sovereignty in the Czech lands created difficulties for German Bohemian self-determination. The National Committee subordinated or replaced local German authorities and implemented new laws which threatened the political legitimacy of the new German provinces. Germans in the Czech lands realised that a final settlement regarding their provinces and the new frontier between German-Austria and Czechoslovakia would only be reached at the Paris Peace Conference. Germans therefore realised that in the meantime they would have to adapt to the changing situation.<sup>43</sup>

Despite a shift in the balance of power, German Bohemian and Czechoslovak officials attempted communication only twice in late-1918. On 30 October, Lodgman entered into negotiations in Prague with the Czechoslovak National Committee. The two sides made little progress as neither could concede their overlapping core objectives: the Czechoslovaks that German Bohemia must be part of the Czechoslovak state, and

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<sup>41</sup> Arnold Suppan, “Austrians, Czechs, and Sudeten Germans as a Community of Conflict in the Twentieth Century”, *Center for Austrian Studies* (2003), 8.

<sup>42</sup> “Die deutsche Nationalversammlung”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.297 (30 October 1918), 1.

<sup>43</sup> “Die Deutschen im tschechoslowakischen Staate”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 3-4.



Lodgman that German Bohemia must achieve autonomy from Czechoslovakia.<sup>44</sup> Given their differences, further discussions between German Bohemian and Czechoslovak authorities failed.

Discussions between German and Czechoslovak representatives fared better in Moravia however. On 29 October, local Moravian members of the Czechoslovak National Committee entered into discussions with the Austro-Hungarian Governor, Karl von Heinold-Udyski. After negotiations with German-Austrian officials in Vienna, Heinold-Udyski accepted Czechoslovak demands to relinquish control over provincial administration, but insisted the National Committee include Moravian Germans in the new provincial government. The negotiations resulted in the establishment of an Executive Committee comprising six members: four Czechs and two Germans. This division represented a decline in German influence in Moravia, although Germans still retained more representation than their share of the population warranted. Czechoslovak negotiators also demanded that Moravian Germans recognise “the constitutional union of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia”. Moravian German authorities refused this last point, and the new provincial administration therefore retaliated by excluding German representation in the Moravian Executive Committee.<sup>45</sup> German exclusion from power in the new Czechoslovak state again resulted largely from the unwillingness of local German officials to compromise with Czechoslovak officials.

The German Bohemian National Assembly recognised Czechoslovakia’s right to self-determination, but simultaneously asserted that German Bohemians had a similar right. German Bohemia’s Assembly strongly opposed incorporation of any part of German Bohemia into Czechoslovakia. Highlighting the hypocrisy of Czechoslovak claims on German Bohemia, the *Pilsner Tagblatt* declared:

The Czechs refer to the fact that German Bohemia historically belongs to their state. But yellowed parchments cannot cancel out the living rights of the German people in Bohemia. The Czechs themselves demand Slovakia on the basis of the Hungarian nationalities principle, although it has not historically belonged to their state, and have no right to violate the same nationalities principle to the detriment of the German people in Bohemia... But no people have the right to violate another people to give themselves economic benefits or to secure favourable borders.<sup>46</sup>

The *Pilsner Tagblatt* therefore argued that self-determination outweighed historic rights, an argument similar to one later made by German-Austrian representatives in Paris.

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<sup>44</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 28-29.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>46</sup> “Ein freies Deutschböhmen”, *Pilsner Tagblatt*, no.298 (31 October 1918), 1-2.

The Czechoslovak National Committee took further opportunities to assert its control in the Czech lands through the formation of an official government. On 1 November, Antonín Švehla declared that the Czechoslovak National Committee would assume control over all local government in the Czech lands.<sup>47</sup> The Czechoslovak National Committee adopted a provisional constitution on 13 November, formally establishing a Czechoslovak National Council. This National Council elected Masaryk as the first President of Czechoslovakia on 14 November. The Council also officially recognised Kramář as the first Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, and accepted the legitimacy of his government.<sup>48</sup> With an official government established, Czechoslovak representatives sought to encourage German Bohemian participation in the Czechoslovak state.

The absence of German Bohemian representation at the first session of the provisional Czechoslovak parliament on 14 November 1918 drew much commentary. The President of the Assembly, František Tomášek, opened the session by commenting on the lack of Germans:

I cannot fail to note that the representatives of our German fellow-citizens are still absent from our midst. It would be pointless to invite or lure them here. Not our words, but our actions will persuade them that they have no cause to fear the future... I am convinced that the time is not far distant when they too will find the way to join us in the common task.<sup>49</sup>

Czechoslovakia's first Prime Minister, Karel Kramář, speaking after Tomášek, also commented on the German question:

In the name of the first Government of the free Czechoslovak Republic I am able to declare here that the German people living within the borders of our State need not harbour the least fear for their national development. Faithful to our own past and our democratic traditions we shall put no obstacle in our fellow-citizens' path towards the fulfilment of their cultural and linguistic aspirations, provided they loyally recognise the State. It is true that our State will be a Czech one, because we have achieved our aim by our blood and suffering. But it would be our wish and pride to know that nobody here, who is not a Czech, need feel oppressed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Todd Huebner, *The Multinational "Nation-state": The origins and the paradox of Czechoslovakia 1914-1920* (Columbia University, 1993), 77; Edgar Young, *Czechoslovakia: Keystone of Peace and Democracy* (London: V. Gollancz, 1938), 59.

<sup>48</sup> Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 171-172.

<sup>49</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Czechoslovak politicians therefore continued to hope that Germans living in the Czech lands would agree to compromise and participate as equal members of the Czechoslovak state.

German and Czechoslovak officials continued their efforts to negotiate and reach a compromise regarding political power and legitimacy. Josef Seliger, the deputy governor of German Bohemia, travelled to Prague on 4 November to arrange with the Czechoslovak National Committee to supply German Bohemia with food. The Czechoslovak representatives warmly welcomed Seliger and promised that Germans would be treated the same as Czechs with regards to the supply of food.<sup>51</sup> On 7 November, trade and industry representatives from Reichenberg/Liberec met to discuss the relationship between German Bohemia and Czechoslovakia, noting the importance of food in this difficult period. These representatives agreed that, given the food shortages in German Bohemia, the German Bohemian government should reach an immediate understanding with the Czechoslovak National Committee.<sup>52</sup> However, Czechoslovak officials refused to continue negotiations, based on the refusal of German leaders in the Czech lands to agree to Czechoslovak demands about ceding political control to Czechoslovakia. German Bohemian representatives responded that Czechoslovak leaders had refused to recognise the legitimacy of their autonomous provinces. After failed negotiations, the Czechoslovak National Committee decided to use military force to occupy the four autonomous provinces created by Germans in the Czech lands between October and December 1918.

### **Decline and Opposition in German Bohemia**

Many Germans in the Czech lands expressed outrage at the Czechoslovak decision to occupy their provinces. According to Rudolf Laun, German Bohemians held large public demonstrations across German Bohemia on 8 December. These demonstrations unanimously adopted the following resolution:

A people in distress, we vow to bear our distress together, freely and proudly and of one accord, and to defend man by man our home and native country... We want to direct our schools, our culture and our administration ourselves and to become a united and happy people without alien influence, without further dismemberment and without national hatred... we will leave

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 29-30.

<sup>52</sup> "Deutsch-böhmen", *Marburger Zeitung*, no.258 (9 November 1918), 2.

nothing undone to obtain by right or might a free country for our children - a country of rest, peace and independence. This we vow.<sup>53</sup>

The vow made by German Bohemians on 8 December represented their strong desire to achieve national self-determination in the Czech lands.

On 8 December 1918, prominent German Bohemians also rallied in Reichenberg/Liberec to protest against Czechoslovak government actions. At the rally Lodgman directed a defiant speech at the Czechoslovak government, declaring that “we will never submit to the Czech knout”. Karl Kreibich, a German Bohemian Social Democrat, also spoke defiantly at the rally, threatening strikes and possible armed resistance. Kreibich’s appearance symbolised the bipartisan approach taken by German Bohemians towards support for their national self-determination.<sup>54</sup>

German Bohemians sent a resolution to President Wilson appealing for self-determination, outlining that the vast majority of German Bohemians opposed joining the Czechoslovak state. According to the resolution, German Bohemian leaders would agree to reconciliation if Czechoslovak leaders granted self-determination to German Bohemia. The resolution concluded: “By an objective study of these facts every friend of humanity, whatever his nationality be, must be induced to hope that the principles of national freedom and not national imperialism may triumph”.<sup>55</sup> By this resolution, German Bohemian representatives first expressed their desire for self-determination to international audiences.

Despite diplomatic efforts, Czechoslovak troops continued to occupy the German provinces in the Czech lands. As Czechoslovak troops neared Reichenberg/Liberec, the German Bohemian capital, the government of the German Bohemian province fled to Vienna via Saxony. Robert Freissler, the governor of the Sudetenland province, surrendered his province voluntarily even before Czechoslovak troops entered Opava/Troppau.<sup>56</sup> Reichenberg/Liberec finally fell to Czechoslovak troops on 16 December and the Czechoslovak military occupied Eger/Cheb on 17 December.<sup>57</sup> With the fall of Reichenberg/Liberec and Eger/Cheb, German Bohemian self-determination in the Czech lands essentially ceased. The Czechoslovak military occupation occurred rapidly

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<sup>53</sup> Rudolf Laun, *Czecho-Slovak Claims on German Territory* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1919), 24.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 25-26.

<sup>56</sup> J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich: The German minority problem and British appeasement policy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 27-28.

<sup>57</sup> “Reichenberg und Trautenau besetzt”, *Prager Tagblatt*, no.291 (16 December 1919), 1; “Eger, Komotau und Falkenau besetzt”, *Prager Tagblatt*, no.292 (17 December 1919), 1.

and largely without incident.<sup>58</sup> Not all German Bohemians originally supported German separation from Czechoslovakia, however.

Indeed, some German Bohemians enthusiastically supported the Czechoslovak occupation of the German Bohemian province. Bruegel argues that when rioting occurred in the predominately German-speaking towns of Leitmeritz/Litoměřice, Komotau/Chomutov, and Aussig/Ústí nad Labem, the German mayors of these towns appealed to Czechoslovak officials for help in suppressing the riots.<sup>59</sup> German Bohemian industrialists also appealed directly to Czechoslovak officials to complain about the conduct of the local German Bohemian administration.<sup>60</sup> Based on this evidence, the Czechoslovak occupation represented a legitimate response to German Bohemian pleas for help, rather than an invasion.

Many politicians also noted German Bohemian opposition to separation from Czechoslovakia. Botho von Wedel, the German ambassador in Vienna, argued that German Bohemians lacked both unity and any real enthusiasm for separation from Czechoslovakia. Von Wedel also reported that a number of German Bohemians argued instead that “one would just have to make the best of things, get on with the Czechs and learn Czech”.<sup>61</sup> According to a note sent on 12 December 1918 from Karl Renner, the German-Austrian Chancellor, to Otto Bauer, the German-Austrian Foreign Minister: “if the Czechs offered autonomy to the Germans, 99% of them including the workers would opt for Czechoslovakia. Since similar views reach us from German-Bohemia in large numbers, I am anyway worried that we may suffer shipwreck”.<sup>62</sup> Such fears provide an insight as to how the German-Austrian government would later approach the Peace Conference. Renner later wrote that most Germans in the Czech lands accepted Czechoslovak sovereignty shortly after its independence and they “sincerely collaborated not only in its economic development but in the central and local government”.<sup>63</sup>

Among German Bohemian industrialists, economic concerns greatly contributed to fears of separation from Czechoslovakia.<sup>64</sup> According to Suppan, the Czechoslovak government had an immediate advantage over the German-Austrian government and the German provinces in the Czech lands because it controlled sugar and coal production.<sup>65</sup> Opposition from industrialists to German Bohemia’s separation became clear at a 17

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<sup>58</sup> Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian*, 176.

<sup>59</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Karl Renner, *Österreich von der ersten zur zweiten Republik* (Vienna, 1953), 211-212, cited from Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 52-53.

<sup>64</sup> See: Paul Molisch, *Die sudetendeutsche Freiheitsbewegung in den Jahren 1918-1919* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1932).

<sup>65</sup> Suppan, “Austrians, Czechs, and Sudeten Germans as a Community of Conflict in the Twentieth Century”, 8.

November 1918 meeting in Krummau/Krumlov to celebrate the incorporation of the Bohemians Woods into Upper Austria. Despite the celebratory atmosphere of the meeting, Bruegel reports that:

No industrialists or farmers spoke at the meeting. Industry, fearful for its supply of coal, was not anxious to see the province attached to German-Austria and certainly did not support the liberation struggle, while the farmers disliked the more stringent food supply regulations in force in Upper Austria.

Although the German Bohemian Chambers of Commerce supported the movement for self-determination, the industrialists they represented generally agreed that economic arguments favoured union with Czechoslovakia.<sup>66</sup>

German Bohemian support for Czechoslovak sovereignty steadily increased, although not without difficulties. On 4 March 1919 the newly elected German-Austrian National Assembly held its first meeting in Vienna. The national assembly lacked German Bohemian representation because Czechoslovak officials had prevented German Bohemian officials from holding local elections. Supporters of German Bohemian self-determination therefore held a number of demonstrations across German Bohemia on 4 March to protest the Czechoslovak actions. In their efforts to disperse the demonstrators, Czechoslovak military and police killed 54 people and wounded 84.<sup>67</sup> Despite this bloodshed, von Wedel reported on 29 April 1919 that German Bohemian industrialists almost universally supported integration into Czechoslovakia, and most other German Bohemians at least accepted Czechoslovak sovereignty.<sup>68</sup> Suppan argues that Germans in the Czech lands increasingly came to accept Czechoslovak occupation of their provinces during the winter of 1918-1919, noting that, as part of Czechoslovakia, Germans avoided the hyperinflation suffered by Germans living in German-Austria.<sup>69</sup>

Czechoslovaks naturally viewed the occupation of German Bohemia more positively than German Bohemians. The French, British, Italian, and American governments gave complete support to the Czechoslovak government in restoring the historic borders of the Czech lands, which gave Czechoslovak authorities a great deal of confidence in their actions. Not only did the Czechoslovak military face little resistance to their occupation from the local population, many local German Bohemian authorities had requested Czechoslovak military support and therefore welcomed such actions. Friedrich von Gebssattel, the German Consul-General in Prague, argued that despite the “obstinate”

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<sup>66</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> For more on the events of 4 March 1919 see: Michael Walsh Campbell, “The Making of the ‘March Fallen’: March 4, 1919 and the Subversive Potential of Occupation”, *Central European History* (2006), 1-29.

<sup>68</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 32-33.

<sup>69</sup> Suppan, “Austrians, Czechs, and Sudeten Germans as a Community of Conflict in the Twentieth Century”, 9.

Czech view of the indivisibility of the Czech lands, the Czechoslovak National Committee felt some loyalty towards Germans of the Czech lands. Gebtsattel therefore opposed German Bohemian separation, arguing that “if German towns such as Komotau and Leitmeritz can turn to the *Národní výbor*, there is no reason why other places should not do so”.<sup>70</sup>

Czechoslovak opposition towards German Bohemian self-determination hardened after the completion of the occupation. Kramář gave a speech on 20 December in which he emphasised that the Czechoslovak government no longer encouraged support or political involvement from local Germans. This attitude represented a massive shift from his speech on 14 November. Instead, Kramář emphasised that the Czechoslovak government would make all the decisions and would dictate these to the Germans of the Czech lands. Kramář specifically emphasised the indivisibility of the Czech lands, arguing that “the indivisibility of geographical Bohemia is regarded as a palladium and the Germans must accustom themselves to the idea that it is Czech policy which decides in this case”.<sup>71</sup> Kramář emphasised that the Czechoslovak government and Allied Powers considered the matter already settled by early 1919, describing German Bohemia as “an unconditional part of the historical kingdom of Bohemia and the Sudetenland a part of the historical margravate of Moravia”.<sup>72</sup>

Official German Bohemian reactions to Czechoslovak actions in German Bohemia also intensified after the Czechoslovak occupation. Governor Lodgman replied specifically to Kramář’s speech on 28 December, arguing that:

The only palladium, by which the Germans of Bohemia are bound to be guided in upholding their political attitude, is the free, unfettered will of the nation! ... The only safe basis for the foundation of modern states is the free determination of a nation: It will be the task of modern policy to organise and bring this about after the war.<sup>73</sup>

Lodgman emphasised that although German Bohemian claims to national self-determination in the Czech lands had been temporarily defeated, they had not been permanently destroyed.

Lodgman’s speech of 28 December represented one of the major criticisms of Czechoslovak actions against German Bohemians in the Czech lands. Having been forced to flee by the Czechoslovak occupation of German Bohemia, Lodgman gave this speech

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<sup>70</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 27-28.

<sup>71</sup> Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, *The right of the Germans of Bohemia to dispose of themselves*, 5-6, cited from <http://archive.org/stream/rightofgermansof00lodgrich#page/n1/mode/2up>.

<sup>72</sup> Suppan, “Austrians, Czechs, and Sudeten Germans as a Community of Conflict in the Twentieth Century”, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Lodgman, *The right of the Germans of Bohemia to dispose of themselves*, 11.

to the German-Austrian National Assembly in Vienna. Lodgman's key arguments reflected his belief that the province of German Bohemia had the right to self-determination and that Czechoslovak actions could not be justified. Lodgman heavily criticised the approach taken by Czechoslovak politicians towards the formation of the Czechoslovak state. He felt that Czechoslovak politicians had failed to negotiate with German Bohemian politicians as equals, and had instead presumed they would concede to overwhelming force and join the new state willingly.<sup>74</sup> Lodgman therefore rejected the arguments made by Czechoslovak politicians who blamed the occupation on German Bohemian refusals to recognise Czechoslovak sovereignty.

Lodgman ended his speech by attacking Masaryk, specifically in labelling him an imperialist. Lodgman also attacked Masaryk's promise since the occupation to grant rights to German Bohemians in Czechoslovakia. Lodgman viewed anything less than complete freedom of self-determination worthless. Lodgman concluded on a note of optimism, stressing the importance of national self-determination. He argued that "the future destiny of German-Bohemia is not yet decided", also stressing that "the ultimate fate of a people depends solely upon its own doing".<sup>75</sup> Although the Czechoslovak government invited Lodgman and other German Bohemian representatives to join the National Assembly in Prague, Lodgman refused. Lodgman sought instead to maintain German Bohemia's separateness from Czechoslovakia, and was convinced that the Paris Peace Conference would grant German Bohemia its right to self-determination.<sup>76</sup>

### **German Bohemian Self-Determination at the Paris Peace Conference**

After earlier failures to secure German self-determination in the Czech lands, German Bohemian and German-Austrian representatives placed their hopes on the Paris Peace Conference to achieve this goal. Karl Renner led the German-Austrian delegation to the Conference, which included a number of Germans from the Czech lands. Hieronymus Oldofredi joined the delegation as an expert on South Moravia, Anton Klement as an expert on the Bohemian Woods, Lodgman and Seliger as governor and vice-governor of German Bohemia, and Freissler as governor of the Sudetenland.<sup>77</sup> Each of these representatives went to the conference assuming they had the support of the German-Austrian government in seeking a plebiscite for their respective province.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 1, 4-5.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 8-9, 11-12.

<sup>76</sup> Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 77.

<sup>77</sup> "List of Members of the Austrian Delegation to the Peace Conference," in Nina Almond and Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The Treaty of St. Germain: A Documentary History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1935), 52-55.



However, the German-Austrian government gave only selective support with regards to German self-determination in the Czech lands. Renner had earlier described “[s]elf-determination as autonomy, not as sovereignty”, perhaps emphasising that the German-Austrian government did not seek sovereignty over German provinces in the Czech lands after all.<sup>78</sup> Renner later revealed the goals of the German-Austrian delegation in his autobiography:

Hardly anybody expected that the newly constituted provinces of German-Bohemia and Sudetenland, which were so far removed from the Alpine lands of Austria, could in the long run remain politically joined to them. It was intended, with the assistance of local representatives, to ensure that these areas received a measure of autonomy acceptable to both sides.<sup>79</sup>

Oldofredi, the representative for southern Moravia, outlined selective support even more clearly when he wrote of the experts: “[t]o Lodgman, Seliger and Freissler [Renner] has not got much to say. Their Provinces - German-Bohemia and Sudetenland - are bound in his opinion to Czechoslovakia. He was not quite so pessimistic about Southern Bohemia and Southern Moravia but warned his colleagues not to hope too much”.<sup>80</sup> Renner therefore realised that initial German-Austrian demands on Czech lands had been unrealistic, but continued to support plebiscites in southern Bohemia and southern Moravia so that these regions could still be assigned to German-Austria.

The first actions of the Paris Peace Conference regarding the Czech lands involved the formation of specific committees which would be responsible for decision-making. On 5 February 1919, the Council of Ten established a Committee on Czechoslovak Questions, also known as the Commission on Czechoslovak Affairs. The Committee contained two representatives each from Britain, France, Italy, and the US, whose role involved making recommendations for solutions to issues concerning Czechoslovakia.<sup>81</sup> On 27 February the Committee decided that the Czechoslovak delegation should be consulted if the Committee had specific questions, but decided against consultations with the Germans of the Czech lands.<sup>82</sup> From the outset the

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<sup>78</sup> Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity*, 37-38.

<sup>79</sup> Karl Renner, *Österreich von der ersten zur zweiten Republik* (Vienna, 1953), 24, cited from Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 52.

<sup>80</sup> Hieronymus Oldofredi, *Zwischen Krieg und Frieden* (Vienna: Amalthea-Verlag, 1925), 70-71, 75, cited from J. W. Bruegel, 42.

<sup>81</sup> “Committee on Tchecho-Slovak Questions (a) Resolution of the Council of Ten setting up this Commission”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 438.

<sup>82</sup> For more on the Czechoslovak delegation at the Paris Peace Conference see: Hermann Raschhofer, *Die tschechoslowakischen Denkschriften für die Friedenskonferenz von Paris 1919/1920* (Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1937).

Committee members agreed that apart from minor strategic adjustments, the 1914 boundaries of Bohemia and Moravia would be maintained.<sup>83</sup>

The first ruling of the Committee on Czechoslovak Questions occurred when it submitted a report on Czechoslovakia's borders on 12 March 1919. The Committee decided unanimously that the German-Austrian border with Czechoslovakia should "coincide with the administrative boundaries which formerly separated Bohemia and Moravia from the Austrian provinces", thereby agreeing that the historic borders of Bohemia and Moravia should be maintained. The Committee also ruled that a Boundary Commission should decide Czechoslovak claims for minor adjustments of this border.<sup>84</sup> In draft clauses for the peace treaty, the 12 March report also tentatively proposed awarding to Czechoslovak the northern half of Gmünd/České Velenice, part of Lower Austria, and the entirety of the March/Morava River. The Committee established a Boundary Commission comprising the five principal powers, plus German-Austria and Czechoslovakia, to discuss the proposed frontier.<sup>85</sup>

Discussions concerning the border between German-Austria and Czechoslovakia continued on 9 May in a meeting of the Council of Five. The Council reiterated the Committee on Czechoslovak Questions' unanimous ruling that the historic borders of Bohemia and Moravia should be maintained. The Council also noted the recommendations made by the Czechoslovak Committee concerning Gmünd/České Velenice and the March/Morava River. In a 12 May meeting the Council of Ten confirmed the findings of the Council of Five, highlighting once more that only two small changes to the historic border would be made.<sup>86</sup> Neither Council acknowledged receipt of German-Austrian complaints to the proposal.

The German-Austrian delegation issued its first complaint about Czechoslovak actions in German Bohemia on 2 April 1919. The German-Austrian Foreign Ministry sent a letter to the French Foreign Minister containing a note protesting against the Czechoslovak government, which had "occupied not only the German enclaves in the country of the Sudetians [sic], but also the coherent domains of the German race in Bohemia and Moravia". The German-Austrian Foreign Ministry argued that the Czechoslovak military occupation of German provinces in the Czech lands represented a "flagrant violation of the principles formulated by Mr. Wilson", which until that point had

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<sup>83</sup> "Committee on Tchecho-Slovak Questions (b) Organization and Procedure of the Committee as agreed upon at its meeting on February 27, 1919", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 438-439.

<sup>84</sup> "Reports of the Committee on Tchecho-Slovak Questions (a) Report on the Austro-Czechoslovak Boundary (e) Frontier with Austria", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 439-440.

<sup>85</sup> "Reports of the Committee on Tchecho-Slovak Questions (b) Draft clauses concerning Czechoslovakia to be inserted in a preliminary treaty of peace with Austria", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 440-441.

<sup>86</sup> "Discussion by the Council of Ten of the Austro-Czechoslovak frontier", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 445-446.

been upheld by German-Austrian officials. The note also criticised the Czechoslovak treatment of these German-Austrian officials, forcing them to swear an oath and submit themselves to Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>87</sup>

Renner and the German-Austrian delegation submitted a further complaint to the Peace Conference on 12 June after hearing that the Peace Conference sought to maintain the historic borders of the Czech lands. Renner argued strongly against the proposed frontier, viewing it as a great injustice that three and a half million German-Austrians would be separated from Austria: “The Allied and Associated Powers are in the course of committing a flagrant injustice towards the population of the above-mentioned territories and towards all German Austrians and to drag the Czecho-Slovak people itself into an adventurous and disastrous policy”. Renner felt instead that Czech and Slovak-speaking districts would be sufficient to comprise the new Czechoslovak state. Renner argued that the existing proposal would prove to be disastrous: “if these German regions are united to Czecho-Slovak territory against the wishes of their inhabitants, the former Austria would be replaced, in so far as the Germans and the Czecho-Slovaks are concerned, by two small states continually struggling with one another”. Instead, Renner summed up the view of German-Austrians as: “Let us leave this house which is burning, and let us join our country of origin”.<sup>88</sup>

The German-Austrian delegation continued its attack against opposition to German Bohemian self-determination. The delegation compared the situation of German Bohemia to that of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871. The German-Austrian delegation argued that the Czechoslovak government acted against the principles of self-determination in occupying German Bohemia and replacing its elected representatives. The German-Austrian delegation therefore requested that self-determination be restored in German Bohemia to allow free elections to re-establish provincial assemblies.<sup>89</sup> German representatives from the Czech lands also outlined their official view of the situation, issuing a memorandum to the Allied and Associated Powers. The 15 June memo concluded with the following proposal: “The question as to which State the German population wishes to belong shall be decided by a Plebiscite to take place in the German Districts of the Sudetians [sic] by Communes under neutral control, in the absence of

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<sup>87</sup> “Certain correspondence bearing on relations between German Austria and Czechoslovakia as emanating from the German-Austrian government and transmitted to the peace conference through the Swiss legation at Paris”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 442-443.

<sup>88</sup> “Note from Austrian delegation, June 15, transmitting a memorandum by the representatives of the German parts of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 448-449.

<sup>89</sup> “Note from Austrian delegation, June 15”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 449-451.

Czech troops and in accordance with a procedure to be settled”.<sup>90</sup> Such a proposal represented one of many attempts by Germans to have a plebiscite permitted in German Bohemia.

On 16 June, the German-Austrian delegation complained that the proposed frontier between German-Austria and Czechoslovakia failed to conform to the linguistic frontier. The German-Austrian delegation claimed that arguments used to justify historic frontiers were imperialistic and that local people should be granted the right to self-determination. The German-Austrian delegation accepted it would be unfeasible for German-Austria to claim all Germans in the Czech lands, but argued that the two provinces of the Bohemian Woods and German South Moravia should be assigned to German-Austria.<sup>91</sup> On 13 June, Bauer argued that claims on German Bohemia should be withdrawn due to “geographic impossibility”. Continuing German-Austrian claims on German Bohemia weakened their other, more feasible claims. Bauer instead sought only the Bohemian Woods and German South Moravia, asking the Peace Conference for plebiscites in these regions.<sup>92</sup>

Beneš responded to German-Austrian complaints about the proposed border by submitting a memo to the Secretary General of the Peace Conference. Contained within this memo included a new clause concerning the importance placed on railroads by the Czechoslovak delegation.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly Beneš submitted his memo some two months after the Committee on Czechoslovakia Questions had proposed awarding the railway along the March/Morava River to German-Austria. The Czechoslovak delegation submitted a proposed amendment to the frontier clauses of the treaty, which attempted to guarantee Czechoslovak control of the railway in Gmünd/České Velenice.<sup>94</sup> Although the Allied delegations refused German claims to self-determination in the Czech lands, they were happy to reverse decisions in favour of Czechoslovakia when requested by the Czechoslovak delegation. On 19 June, Beneš and Masaryk disputed the earlier claims made by the Austrian delegation. In their view, German Bohemian opposition to

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<sup>90</sup> “Note from Austrian delegation, June 15, transmitting a memorandum by the representatives of the German parts of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia; Annex “A”: Memorandum submitted by the representatives of the German districts of the Sudetians in reply to the conditions of peace of the Allied and Associated Powers”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 452-460.

<sup>91</sup> “Reply of the Austrian Delegation of June 16 to the Allied conditions of June 2 concerning the Austrian Frontiers (a) Note no. 311, Transmitting the memorandum on the boundaries of Austria”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 276-277.

<sup>92</sup> Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity*, 139-140.

<sup>93</sup> “Memorandum from the Czechoslovak delegation regarding the exploitation of certain border railway lines”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 446-447.

<sup>94</sup> “Proposed amendment to the Czechoslovak section of the frontier clauses of the Austrian treaty by the Czechoslovak delegation”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 447-448.

Czechoslovakia had lessened, many German Bohemians had abandoned the idea of achieving independence, and many had come to support the Czechoslovak state.<sup>95</sup>

The German-Austrian delegation submitted additional counter-proposals on 10 July to the proposed peace treaty section concerning Czechoslovakia. The German-Austrian counter-proposals rejected the proposed border, instead requesting all decisions concerning frontiers be based instead on the results of plebiscites. In the event that the Conference upheld Czechoslovak claims, the German-Austrian delegation emphasised the importance of granting the German population of Czechoslovakia additional political rights.<sup>96</sup> Such a proposal indicated that the German-Austrian delegation viewed their chances for claiming German Bohemia pessimistically.

The German-Austrian delegation's primary counter-proposal to the draft peace treaty involved the establishment of a so-called "cantonal regime". According to the proposal, each nation in Czechoslovakia would have self-autonomy: "The domain of each of the nationalities inhabiting the Czecho-Slovak State will be subdivided into cantons. The inhabitants of all the cantons forming the domain of the same nationality, may constitute themselves into corporate bodies called upon to represent them in all questions concerning their national interests". Under the German-Austrian proposal, the Czechoslovak government would retain responsibility for defence, foreign affairs, and all matters of state importance, while the domains and cantons would retain control over all other matters, such as local administration and education.<sup>97</sup>

Federalisation certainly had practical historical precedents during Austro-Hungarian rule, as many Cisleithanian Minister-Presidents sought to achieve political consensus in the Czech lands. For example, the German-Austrian delegation's canton regime proposal somewhat resembled Eduard Taaffe's proposed Point of Agreement plan of 1888, Ernest von Koerber's temporary reforms of 1900-1904, and Paul Gautsch's proposed reforms of 1905, all of which essentially sought to grant self-autonomy to Czechs and Germans in the Czech lands.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Moravia had functioned for some time under a federalist system after the Moravian Compromise of 1905, orchestrated by the governor of Moravia, Karl Emanuel von Zierotin-Lilgenau, in which the government established dual parallel systems of Czechs and Germans within

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<sup>95</sup> "Note from Mr. Beneš, relative to the German Austrians in Bohemia", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 460-466.

<sup>96</sup> "Counter Proposals of the Austrian Delegation of July 10 to 'Part III, Section III, Czecho-Slovak State' in the Allied Conditions of June 2", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 534-535.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 536-538.

<sup>98</sup> For more on domestic politics in the Czech Lands during this period see: John W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (London; New York: Longman, 1997); Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004); Fredrik Lindström, *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).

Moravia.<sup>99</sup> Federalisation of the Empire had earlier origins of course. Aurel Popovici notably proposed a United States of Greater Austria in 1906.<sup>100</sup> Popovici based aspects of his proposal on Swiss politician Johann Caspar Bluntschli's work of 1878. Czech politician František Palacký also notably advocated further federalisation of the empire in the 1860s, seeking to establish a three-way division of the empire rather than the dualist system established by the Compromise of 1867.<sup>101</sup>

Another key point of the German-Austrian delegation's counter-proposal concerned the town of Ostrau/Ostrava, located in the Sudetenland province near the border with Austrian Silesia. The German-Austrian delegation first made a case for a neutral, internationalised territory to be established in the Ostrau/Ostrava region under the control of the Council of the League of Nations on 15 June.<sup>102</sup> The German-Austrian delegation proposed again on July 10 that, given its economic importance to nearby countries and its mixed population, the Ostrau/Ostrava region should form a "perpetually neutral territory", self-governed by the people who lived there. The German-Austrian delegation also suggested that, given its importance as a Danube port, Pressburg/Bratislava also form a multi-national neutral canton.<sup>103</sup>

The justification used to support the German-Austrian delegation's claims on German Bohemia relied on a plebiscite held on 10 July 1919. The Austrian delegation claimed that the results of this plebiscite clearly showed that "the inhabitants of all the territories... have professed with every desired clearness their German nationality". The official plebiscite results released by the Czechoslovak government indicated that Germans comprised 33 percent of Bohemians, 21 percent of Moravians, and 67 percent of Silesians, amounting to 31 percent of the total population of the Czech lands. As a response to these results, the German-Austrian delegation argued "it must thus evidently be recognized that, even under the present regime, a third of the territory of the three countries, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, claimed in their extent by the Czecho-Slovaks, is really inhabited by German electors". Using this justification, the German-Austrian delegation argued that German Bohemia should be consulted by a plebiscite to show they supported becoming part of German-Austria.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Jeremy King, "The Municipal and the National in the Bohemian Lands, 1848-1914", *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. xlii (2011), 107.

<sup>100</sup> See: Aurel Popovici, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich* (Leipzig: Elischer Nachfolger, 1906).

<sup>101</sup> See: Iulian-Nicușor Isac, "The United States of Greater Austria - a step towards European Union?", in Ion Stanciu and Silviu Miloiu, ed., *Europe as Viewed from the Margins: An East-Central European Perspective during the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Iărgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2006).

<sup>102</sup> "Note from Austrian delegation, June 15", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 451.

<sup>103</sup> "Counter Proposals of the Austrian Delegation of July 10", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 538-541.

<sup>104</sup> "Observations of the Austrian Delegation, August 9, 1919, on 'Part II, Frontiers of Austria,' in the Allied Conditions of July 20", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 310-314.

Ultimately the Allied delegations rejected German self-determination in the Czech lands. On 25 August, the Allied delegations sent a final message to the German-Austrian delegation which read:

The Allied and Associated Powers...believe that the German-speaking people living on the borders of these provinces (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia) ought to remain connected with the Czech people in order to co-operate with them in the development of that national unity in which history has associated them”.<sup>105</sup>

The German-Austrian delegation protested against the decision of the Allied delegations. In particular, the German-Austrian delegation protested against the decision to exclude German Bohemians from the German-Austrian state, “with whom they have formed for centuries a political and economic unity”. Instead, the Allied decision meant German Bohemians would be “deprived of their national liberty and subjected to the foreign domination of a nation which in this very Peace Treaty recognizes itself as their enemy”.<sup>106</sup> Despite all efforts and arguments used by the German-Austrian delegation, the Allied delegations did not change their original opinion and refused a plebiscite.

During the Peace Conference, the Czechoslovak delegation submitted eleven documents outlining its territorial claims on the Czech lands, but Bruegel suggests that these had little impact on negotiations. Bruegel argues instead that the Peace Conference even ignored many of the Czechoslovak proposals, including those concerning the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav corridor, expansion of Slovak borders, and several changes to the border with Germany. Fortunately for the Czechoslovak delegation, its claims to the indivisibility of the Czech lands received almost universal support from the Allied delegations. The Commission on Czechoslovak Affairs recognised that the inclusion of such a large number of Germans would prove problematic for Czechoslovakia, but unanimously agreed that the separation of Germans from Czechoslovakia would “not only expose Czechoslovakia to great dangers but equally create great difficulties for the Germans themselves”. The Commissions ruled therefore that “[t]he only practicable solution was to incorporate these Germans into Czechoslovakia”.<sup>107</sup>

In March 1919, Archibald Cary Coolidge, who led the US team to survey areas with disputed borders, suggested that many German-Austrian proposals at the Paris Peace Conference concerning the Czech lands could have been accepted. Coolidge heavily

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<sup>105</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 47.

<sup>106</sup> “Austrian note no. 1176, September 6, reporting instructions received by the delegation (Renner) to sign the treaty of peace (with Annexures)”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 76-77.

<sup>107</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 45.

criticised Czechoslovak hypocrisy for demanding historic frontiers for the Czech lands but rejecting historic frontiers in favour of nationality rights in Slovakia. Coolidge personally favoured nationality rights, arguing that “[t]o grant the Czechoslovaks all the territory they demand would be not only an injustice to millions of people unwilling to come under Czech rule, but it would also be dangerous and perhaps fatal to the future of the new state”. Coolidge predicted that even if the Peace Treaty did include German Bohemia within Czechoslovakia, the League of Nations would eventually overrule this decision, stating “such a League is not intended to perpetuate the existence of Alsace-Lorraines”.<sup>108</sup>

Coolidge rejected Czechoslovak justifications for retaining German Bohemia, arguing that most German territory should be removed despite its traditional historic and geographic unity. Coolidge proposed that Lower and Upper Austria should be extended northwards into southern Bohemia and Moravia until they reach the ethnic border, the region around Eger/Cheb should be permitted to join Bavaria, northern Bohemia could be joined to Saxony if the population favoured it, and autonomy could be granted to the Sudetenland region.<sup>109</sup> In all these cases Coolidge supported the use of plebiscites to gauge popular support. However, Bruegel argues that Coolidge insisted that the comprising the province of German Bohemia should remain part of Czechoslovakia due to its industrial significance. Regardless, despite Coolidge’s status as an expert on the subject, the US delegation ignored his recommendations and proposed entirely different modifications.<sup>110</sup>

German Bohemian representatives continued to vow that they would never surrender their right to self-determination. Much of the local population did not feel this way however. Many Germans in the Czech lands took the opportunity to vote in elections on 15 June 1919 as Czechoslovak citizens. It is important to remember that this election represented the first democratic elections for Germans as well as for Czechs. The German Social Democratic Party won 44 percent of German votes in the Czech lands, and declared its willingness to work with the new Czechoslovak state. However, the party refused to give up its demand for German territorial autonomy, angering the Czechs.<sup>111</sup> Such disagreements hint at the future of Czech-German relationships, which would deteriorate further still in the 1930s.

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<sup>108</sup> Memorandum by A. C. Coolidge, “The New Frontiers in Former Austria-Hungary”, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Volume XII* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 273-274, cited from: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1919Parisv12>

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 43- 44.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 51-52.



## Conclusion

The Allied delegations ultimately refused self-determination for Germans in the Czech lands. Wilson later claimed that Masaryk had never informed him that the large German population in Bohemia sought to be exempt from joining the Czechoslovak state.<sup>112</sup> Gullberg claims that French opposition was the decisive factor for the decision ultimately reached at the Peace Conference. The Italian delegation supported the French position because it set a precedent for Italian claims in South Tyrol.<sup>113</sup> The British delegation never considered the option of applying self-determination for Germans in the Czech lands, largely because it saw the value of a powerful Czechoslovakia.<sup>114</sup> The Allied delegations unanimously favoured the independence of Czechoslovakia using the historic borders of the Czech lands.

The failure of German Bohemians to achieve self-determination does not lie solely with Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference. German Bohemian politicians could have achieved more autonomy had they been willing to negotiate and reach a compromise with the Czechoslovak government. Given Allied support for Czechoslovakia, German Bohemian autonomy and limited self-government perhaps represented the most they could have hoped to achieve. Evidence also suggests that many German Bohemians felt ambivalent or indifferent about German Bohemian autonomy, and some opposed it outright for fear of German or Austrian economic competition. Some German Bohemians even accepted the positives that local German co-operation with Czechoslovakia could bring. As Victor Mamatey explains, “Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia constituted one of the most natural and best-integrated economic units in Europe”.<sup>115</sup> Renner later wrote that most Germans in the Czech lands accepted Czechoslovak sovereignty shortly after its independence and they “sincerely collaborated not only in its economic development but in the central and local government”.<sup>116</sup>

Despite viewing the Paris Peace Conference with optimism, the German-Austrian and German Bohemian governments had little hope of achieving self-determination for Germans in the Czech lands. German-Austrian officials failed to accept the reality of the situation. Even though the German-Austrian delegation made no serious claims to

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<sup>112</sup> Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 123.

<sup>113</sup> Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity*, 139-140.

<sup>114</sup> Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference 1916-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 258.

<sup>115</sup> Victor Mamatey, “The Establishment of the Republic”, in Victor Mamatey and Radomir Luža, ed., *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 27-28.

<sup>116</sup> Karl Renner, *Österreich von der ersten zur zweiten Republik* (Vienna, 1953), 211-212, cited from J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich: The German minority problem and British appeasement policy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 52-53.

northern areas of the Czech lands, it had hoped for southern areas which bordered Upper and Lower Austria. However, as Bruegel argues, “at no stage during the Peace negotiations was the question of maintaining the unity of the ‘Czech lands’ (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) a subject for discussion. The only point at issue... was whether certain fringes of territory could be ceded to Germany”.<sup>117</sup> The Allied delegations ultimately rejected these proposals as well. According to Gullberg, Wilson argued that “historic Bohemia was best preserved and recognized as an indivisible structure, thereby implying that Wilsonian principles should not be interpreted in ethnic terms”.<sup>118</sup> The Allied Powers and Czechoslovak government maintained the indivisibility of the Czech lands immediately, and would never have relented on this demand. Strategic interests concerning the importance of Czechoslovakia in the post-war period proved more important than self-determination. Although German Bohemians failed to achieve self-determination, and failed in their attempt to hold plebiscites in German Bohemia, Vorarlbergers took the initiative themselves in holding their own plebiscite before the Peace Conference met.

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<sup>117</sup> Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, 38-39.

<sup>118</sup> Tom Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity: The Principle of National Self-Determination, The Question of Territorial Sovereignty in Carinthia and other post-Habsburg Territories after the First World War* (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2000), 140.

## Vorarlberg

This chapter examines Vorarlberg in the period 1918-1919, in which Vorarlbergers established a large movement advocating for political union with Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> The early success of the movement advocating Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland allowed a plebiscite to be held on 11 May 1919, in which 81 percent voted in favour of such a union. Otto Ender, the governor of Vorarlberg, personally travelled to the Paris Peace Conference to advocate for international recognition of the union, but the German-Austrian delegation and strategic debates outside Vorarlberg's control prevented any further progress. The Allied delegations eventually opposed Vorarlberg's self-determination, expressed through their plebiscite for union with Switzerland, deciding instead to support the territorial integrity of German-Austria.

Vorarlberg provides an interesting case of the practice of self-determination in German-Austria after the First World War for a number of reasons. Vorarlbergers represented a major local population which wanted to leave the German-Austrian state. While German Bohemians and Carinthians fought for national self-determination in order to secure their right to exist as part of the German-Austrian state, Vorarlbergers had been assured of their inclusion in the German-Austrian state and yet sought to leave. Vorarlberg fits between the other two cases in the continuum of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference. Vorarlbergers held a plebiscite but Allied delegations rejected its self-determination. Vorarlberg is also the least researched of the three cases. The Vorarlberg plebiscite remains largely the subject of research by German-language historians, as few English-language historians have shown interest.<sup>2</sup>

Until the end of the First World War, Vorarlberg had been administered by a governor in Innsbruck as part of the province of Tyrol.<sup>3</sup> On 3 November 1918, Vorarlberg's Provincial Assembly declared independence from Tyrol to become a separate province, maintaining only a "temporary union" with German-Austria.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, although Vorarlberg had declared independence from Tyrol it remained officially part of German-Austria. After provincial independence, Vorarlberg's pre-existing Provincial

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<sup>1</sup> Although the term *Anschluss* typically refers to the union of Austria and Germany, Vorarlbergers also used the term in this period to refer to the union of Vorarlberg and Switzerland. In order to avoid confusion, this thesis uses "union" instead of *Anschluss*, even when primary sources use the term.

<sup>2</sup> Notably exceptions include: Harlan Kurtz Cohen, "The Vorarlberg Question 1918 – 1921: The Failure of the Movement for Union with Switzerland" (MA, Cambridge University, 1975); Kevin Mason, "Building an Unwanted Nation: The Anglo-American Partnership and Austrian Proponents of a Separate Nationhood, 1918-1934" (Ph.D, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 513.

<sup>4</sup> David F. Strong, *Austria (October 1918-March 1919): Transition from Empire to Republic* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 127.

Assembly gained real decision-making power. Vorarlberg's Provincial Government, also known as the Provincial Council, consisted of the Provincial Assembly, a President, and two Vice Presidents. Vorarlberg's political leaders began to seek union with Switzerland almost as soon as they had declared independence.<sup>5</sup>

Although now a separate province of German-Austria, Vorarlberg retained its oath of loyalty to Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl. However, Karl revoked his subjects from this oath on 11 November, which freed Vorarlbergers from their allegiance to him. As historian Harlan Curtz Cohen explains: "The individual Länder [provinces] of Austria were united constitutionally only by their common allegiance to the Emperor. Once the Emperor no longer stood as the Head of State, the Länder could claim with justice that they reverted to a state of full independence".<sup>6</sup> In the absence of a Head of State, therefore, Vorarlbergers felt they had the right of self-determination to secede from German-Austria.

A grim post-war economic situation motivated Vorarlbergers in their decision to secede from German-Austria. The suspension of cotton supplies all but caused the closure of Vorarlberg's textile industry, one of the most important employers in the region.<sup>7</sup> Rapid currency inflation resulted in a decision by the German-Austrian government to institute emergency money.<sup>8</sup> Lack of coal meant the railways ran only sporadically, and shortages in the gas supply also created numerous difficulties.<sup>9</sup> The return of prisoners of war further exacerbated problems in Vorarlberg, worsening food shortages and unemployment.<sup>10</sup> Food shortages represented the worst aspect of the post-war situation in Vorarlberg, and the threat of starvation hung over the population in the winter of 1918. The primary agriculture in Vorarlberg comprised cattle and dairy farming, with 43 percent of land made up of pastures and mountains and only one percent arable land.<sup>11</sup> Vorarlbergers therefore had only a limited ability to feed themselves. An advertisement in the *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, in which a Vorarlberger offered to buy dogs to be slaughtered for meat, highlighted the desperate situation in which Vorarlbergers found themselves.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 513.

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, "The Vorarlberg Question", 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> "Zur berstehenden Warennot", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.236 (15 October 1919), 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> "Vorarlberger Landesrat", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.237 (16 October 1919), 1-2; "Ausgabe des Landesnotgeldes", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.237 (16 October 1919), 3.

<sup>9</sup> "Der Personenverkehr eingestellt", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.252 (4 November 1919), 1-2; "Die Ernährungslage in Deutschösterreich", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.258 (11 November 1919), 1; "Einstellung der Gasabgabe", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.195. (27 August 1919), 2.

<sup>10</sup> "Ergebnis der Landesversammlung zur Verbilligung der Lebensmittel", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.262 (16 November 1919), 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> "Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz wollte", *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (15 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_1.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_1.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.261 (15 November 1919), 6.

The economic decline gave increasing strength to those who advocated for a change in Vorarlberg's political situation. Originally Switzerland provided a substantial amount of Vorarlberg's food deliveries, but the German-Austrian government promised to take over responsibility for the supply of food to Vorarlberg, resulting in the Swiss government halting these shipments. The German-Austrian government proved unable to fulfil its promise, however, resulting in immediate bread and meat shortages in Vorarlberg.<sup>13</sup> The organisation and distribution system between the German-Austrian provinces had broken down when the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, which meant the German-Austrian government could not support Vorarlberg itself.<sup>14</sup> The failure of the German-Austrian government to relieve food shortages in Vorarlberg provoked a feeling of abandonment amongst Vorarlbergers. As Vorarlbergers had no way of relieving the food shortages themselves, they proved willing to entertain new political options.

### **Growth of the Anti-Austrian Movement**

Many Vorarlbergers felt that invoking the right to self-determination offered them more hope for the immediate future. Vorarlbergers initially hoped to purchase food from Switzerland, but the collapse of the German-Austrian currency made this impossible. In Switzerland, however, nearly all foods were freely available.<sup>15</sup> Vorarlbergers could only gain access to this food if they became part of Switzerland. Advocates for union with Switzerland argued therefore, that Vorarlberg needed to join Switzerland in order to avoid famine.<sup>16</sup>

Switzerland had long been viewed favourably in Vorarlberg, and this affection rapidly transformed into a desire for political union. In 1918, supporters of Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland organised an advertising committee to campaign on their behalf. The advertising committee organised meetings throughout Vorarlberg to promote union with Switzerland.<sup>17</sup> Ferdinand Riedmann, a school teacher from Lustenau, helped to establish this committee. Although the pro-Switzerland movement failed to achieve universal sympathy from Vorarlbergers, it also lacked any serious opponents. Even

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<sup>13</sup> "Die Ernährungslage in Deutschösterreich," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.258 (11 November 1919), 1; "Fleischversorgung und Führung der Zählblätter," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.264 (19 November 1919), 4; "Zu den Anleihen," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.266 (21 November 1919), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> "Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz wollte," *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (15 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_1.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_1.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Wanner, *'Liberi e Svizzeri' – die Liebe ging nicht durch den Magen* (Feldkirch: [s.n.], 1990), 156.

<sup>16</sup> "Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz wollte," *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (15 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_1.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_1.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> "Die Ziele des Schwabenkapitels," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.100 (3 May 1919), 1.

criticism against union, such as that from the *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, did not fundamentally oppose the movement.<sup>18</sup>

Some Vorarlbergers opposed union with Switzerland, instead favouring union with Germany based on economic arguments. Although much smaller than the pro-Switzerland movement, the anti-Switzerland movement received extensive support from traders and the business community who used their large financial resources to ensure its participation in the plebiscite campaign. Like Vorarlberg, Switzerland possessed few raw materials and relied on imports whereas Germany possessed its own raw materials and offered a large market for Vorarlberg's industrial products.<sup>19</sup> One Vorarlberger who advocated union with Germany even argued that "[a]ll the interests of our agriculture speak against the *Anschluss* with Switzerland".<sup>20</sup> Economic arguments therefore clearly influenced pro-Germany sentiment, a trend which would also prove important in pro-Switzerland circles.

Vorarlbergers' desire for secession also led to an increase in support for another option. Some Vorarlbergers suggested incorporation into one of the federal German states, such as Württemberg or Bavaria, if union with Germany as part of German-Austria proved impossible.<sup>21</sup> The Swabian Chapter advocated for Vorarlberg's union with a proposed Greater-Swabian state. The Greater-Swabia campaign provided an important counterweight against those who supported union with Switzerland by giving support to its opponents and providing a target they could work towards.<sup>22</sup> Karl Magirus, an Ulm resident, suggested in early February 1919 that Baden, Württemberg, and Bavarian Swabia should unite to form a Greater-Swabian state. Magirus created his proposal on the basis of the historic Duchy of Swabia, which also included parts of Alsace, north-east Switzerland, and Vorarlberg.<sup>23</sup> The Swabian Chapter became the main movement opposing Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland.

The Swabian Chapter's first meeting, held in Bregenz on 3 May 1919, attracted a large audience. The audience comprised industry representatives, local citizens groups, so-called "friends of Greater-Swabia", and surprisingly also many supporters of union with Switzerland.<sup>24</sup> Bruno Karrer, Secretary of the Vorarlberg Chamber of Commerce, opened the meeting, and the audience quickly acclaimed him Chairman of the Swabian Chapter.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz wollte," *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (15 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_1.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_1.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> "Vorarlberger Schwabenkapitel: Gründe gegen den Anschluß an die Schweiz", *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.106 (10 May 1919), 5.

<sup>21</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement*, 350.

<sup>22</sup> "Die Ziele des Schwabenkapitels", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.100 (3 May 1919), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid; see also Jürgen Klöcker, *Abendland – Alpenland – Alemannien: Frankreich und die Neugliederungsdiskussion in Südwestdeutschland 1945-1947* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> "Das Vorarlberger Schwabenkapitel", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.100 (3 May 1919), 1.

The Swabian Chapter received written support from many local organisations, including schools, the railway organisation, and a local newspaper.<sup>25</sup> Although the Swabian Chapter lacked the strength of the pro-Switzerland committee, it nevertheless had many supporters.

Like supporters of the pro-Switzerland movement, supporters of the Swabian Chapter also favoured economic arguments. An industrialist named Julius Rhomberg emphasized the unnatural organisation and the economic evils of German-Austria at the Swabian Chapter meeting held on 3 May. Rhomberg also championed the Swabian Chapter slogan “here Switzerland, here Swabia” [*hie Schweiz, hie Schwaben*], which indicated that members of the Swabian Chapter favoured union with Switzerland or Swabia over German-Austria. Vorarlberg industrialists had brought their declaration expressing such sentiment to the attention of both the Swiss Federal Council in Bern and the Vorarlberg provincial government.<sup>26</sup> Rhomberg’s discussion of the Swabian Chapter’s slogan suggests that many of those advocating for Vorarlberg’s union with a foreign territory, whether Switzerland, Germany, or indeed with Greater-Swabia, had no strong preference for one over the other. Instead, many simply sought to leave German-Austria by joining whichever political entity they could. Therefore, some members of the Swabian Chapter simply preferred union with Swabia rather than necessarily opposing union with Switzerland.

In March 1919, Vorarlberg’s Provincial Assembly attempted negotiations with the Swiss Federal Council regarding a possible union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland. Governor Ender claimed that the Swiss government had refused to receive Vorarlberg’s representatives on this occasion. Ender refused to negotiate with the German-Austrian government because official German-Austrian opposition to Vorarlberg’s union with Switzerland meant that Ender viewed further negotiations as pointless. Equally, however, Ender realised that opening negotiations with Swabia would only be possible if a Swabian government already existed. Vorarlberg could not negotiate for a potential union with Swabia in the absence of a Swabian state.<sup>27</sup> Such difficulties greatly complicated and frustrated Ender and the Provincial Assembly in their efforts to seek secession.

Ender proposed that Vorarlberg should hold a plebiscite on the union with Switzerland in order to assure the Swiss government that a majority of Vorarlbergers supported it. The rise of the Swabian Chapter highlighted that the nature of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “Vom Standpunkte des Industriellen und des deutsch fühlenden Vorarlbergers aus”, *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.100 (3 May 1919), 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> “Aus der Landesversammlung: Zur Frage des Anschlusses Vorarlbergs an die Schweiz”, *Vorarlberger Wacht*, no.104 (7 May 1919), 2.

Vorarlberg question had begun to change, representing an important reason for the early failures to make progress towards union with Switzerland. Ender reported that Swiss newspapers like the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* had alleged that the debate in Vorarlberg had been reduced to a competition between different groups. Although the Swiss government still recognised unconditionally that Vorarlbergers had the right to self-determination, it had therefore moved towards a position of non-interference. Ender felt that a plebiscite would provide Vorarlberg's representatives with the authorisation to advance the question of union with Switzerland.<sup>28</sup> Ender therefore framed the plebiscite as an important step towards achieving union with Switzerland.

Not all Vorarlbergers supported Ender's position on the importance of plebiscites. Vorarlberg's Provincial Council initially viewed the proposed plebiscite with scepticism. On 15 March the Provincial Council maintained that despite the popular support for union with Switzerland, the decision whether to leave German-Austria lay instead with the newly elected Provincial Government. Ender countered that any decision reached must first be written into the constitution, arguing that "[c]hanges to the constitution should only be possible with a plebiscite".<sup>29</sup> Ender therefore argued that despite what the Provincial Council maintained, they must agree to hold a plebiscite in any case.

Members of the Swabian Chapter also opposed the plebiscite, viewing it as an insult to Vorarlbergers. Karrer criticised the plebiscite question because it failed to grant alternative options regarding preferences for union. The plebiscite simply asked opinions regarding union with Switzerland. Karrer argued that many Vorarlbergers would vote in favour of union with Switzerland in the plebiscite simply because they wanted to leave German-Austria, despite holding a preference for union with Germany. Karrer therefore presented a motion to delay the plebiscite in order to prevent people from rushing into a decision. Despite Karrer's efforts, the Provincial Council accepted Ender's application for a plebiscite.<sup>30</sup> On 25 April 1919 the Provincial Assembly passed a resolution agreeing to hold a plebiscite on 11 May 1919.<sup>31</sup> Karrer therefore failed in his attempt to prevent the plebiscite for union with Switzerland from proceeding.

With news of an impending plebiscite, Ender attempted once more to make contact with the Swiss government. Ender reported on 8 May that he had finally held a successful meeting with the Swiss Federal Council. The Swiss Political Department

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Otto Ender, "Vorarlbergs Schweizer-Anschluß-Bewegung von 1918 bis 1924", *Schriften zur Vorarlberg Landeskunde*, no.5, (1952), 10, 63.

<sup>30</sup> "Aus der Landesversammlung", *Vorarlberger Wacht*, no.104 (7 May 1919), 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Stenographische Sitzungsberichte der Provisorischen Vorarlberger Landesversammlung zu Bregenz* (Bregenz, 1919), 11-13, cited from Strong, *Austria*, 127.



informed Ender that the Swiss Federal Council would undergo an assessment of union with Vorarlberg if Vorarlbergers voted in favour in the plebiscite. The Federal Council made this promise despite already knowing that the majority of Vorarlbergers supported union with Switzerland.<sup>32</sup> In this act, the Swiss Federal Council thereby gave implicit support for union.

Ender sought to persuade Vorarlbergers to support the legitimacy of the plebiscite. On 5 May 1919, Ender publically issued the plebiscite question, outlined how the plebiscite would work, and what would happen if the plebiscite succeeded.<sup>33</sup> Ender emphasised that the result of the plebiscite would not obligate Vorarlbergers to that decision, nor would it obligate the Swiss government into negotiations. Vorarlberg and Switzerland would both hold additional plebiscites before any final decisions. Ender also squashed a circulating rumour which argued that union with Switzerland would force the division of Vorarlberg between the Swiss cantons of Graubünden and St. Gallen. Instead, Ender assured Vorarlbergers that union with Switzerland would allow Vorarlberg to become a “fully entitled, independent, and undivided canton”.<sup>34</sup> Presumably Ender intended to allay peoples’ fears about rushing into a decision, and to ensure that Vorarlberg would retain its right to self-determination if the plebiscite went ahead.

### **Disagreement over Vorarlberg’s Future**

Debates in the media among pro-Swiss and pro-German Vorarlbergers intensified as the date of the plebiscite neared. Pro-Switzerland groups solidified support for the union, while those who opposed the union attempted to rally further opposition. Both sides appealed to a number of different arguments, stressing economic and linguistic justifications while also portraying the arguments used by the other side as unrealistic. Both sides realised that most Vorarlbergers favoured union with Switzerland, but vowed to continue their campaigns nevertheless.

In the days immediately prior to the plebiscite, the Swabian Chapter continued to promote opposition to the pro-Switzerland movement. In a campaign organised by Chairman Karrer the Swabian Chapter published advertisements in a number of Vorarlberg newspapers promoting public meetings across Vorarlberg to oppose the plebiscite. The advertisements also stated that opposition to union with Switzerland

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<sup>32</sup> “Der Anschluß Vorarlbergs an die Schweiz”, *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.104 (8 May 1919), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Otto Ender, “Proclamation by the ‘Landeshauptmann’ of the Vorarlberg calling for a plebiscite on the question of union with Switzerland”, in Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, vol. II, 541-542.

<sup>34</sup> “Der Anschluß Vorarlbergs an die Schweiz”, *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.104 (8 May 1919), 1.

would continue after the plebiscite.<sup>35</sup> This statement suggests that Karrer and the Swabian Chapter knew the plebiscite would prove overwhelming support existed for union with Switzerland, but remained determined to continue campaigning for Germany regardless.

Opponents were also concerned with the treatment of veterans and war casualties if the union proceeded. An unnamed journalist, himself wounded in the war, feared that Switzerland would not support Vorarlberg's wounded soldiers if Vorarlberg became part of Switzerland. The journalist dismissed the Swabian Chapter slogan, instead proposing one preferred by those disabled in the war: "here German-Austria, here Swabia" [*hie Deutsch-Österreich, hie Schwaben*]. This slogan instead suggested that veterans felt only countries which fought in the war would feel obliged to support veterans. The journalist continued: "For us invalids, there is only one question: 'either Austria or Swabia'. Paris has yet to utter a word. If Tyrol is split from Austria only one solution remains and that is Swabia".<sup>36</sup> This veteran therefore preferred to remain with German-Austria, but favoured Swabia if German-Austria's survival as a state became unlikely.

Another editorial by "a disabled war veteran" raised concerns about the economic benefits of union with Switzerland. The veteran argued that it was Vorarlberg's economic plight which had forced the plebiscite rather than a genuine desire to join Switzerland. The economic situation in Vorarlberg gave Vorarlbergers no other option but to join a larger political system. However, the disabled veteran doubted that Switzerland could provide the economic benefits which Vorarlbergers hoped. The veteran felt Switzerland would be unsympathetic and unwilling to help widows, orphans, and those disabled in the war, asking whether Switzerland would have a statutory obligation to provide for invalids and veterans. Ultimately the veteran argued Switzerland would not provide for veterans, but Germany would, writing "the choice from this point is not difficult".<sup>37</sup> Clearly a number of veterans remained suspicious about union with Switzerland and continued to oppose the plebiscite.

The *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* put economic arguments for Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland to the test on 8 May. The *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* conducted a comparison of the prices of various staple foods in one nearby town in Switzerland and one in Germany. The newspaper assumed that everything would be cheap and abundant in Switzerland, while the prices would be more expensive in Germany, given the widespread food

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<sup>35</sup> "Das Vorarlberger Schwabenkapitel", *Vorarlberger Wacht*, no.104 (7 May 1919), 4; "Das Vorarlberger Schwabenkapitel", *Feldkircher Anzeiger*, no.37 (7 May 1919), 3; "Das Vorarlberger Schwabenkapitel", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.104 (8 May 1919), 3.

<sup>36</sup> "Was wird mit uns geschehen?", *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.104 (8 May 1919), 1.

<sup>37</sup> "Zur Anschlussfrage", *Vorarlberger Wacht*, no.106 (9 May 1919), 2.

shortages caused by the war. However, the newspaper found that, even after four years of war and blockade, basic living essentials remained cheaper in Germany than in Switzerland. The article concluded: “I for one now know where my stomach longs to be”.<sup>38</sup> The evidence suggests that those who favoured union with Germany also relied on economic factors, although German-Austria’s economic difficulties in 1919 meant most countries would have appealed to Vorarlbergers.

Others argued that the plebiscite served no purpose as it would have no effect. The *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* noted the preliminary nature of the plebiscite, and that the final decision could only occur once the Swiss Federal Council had communicated their conditions for union. The newspaper argued that, regardless of the outcome of the plebiscite, the final decision over Vorarlberg’s future would ultimately be made by officials at the Paris Peace Conference without consulting Vorarlbergers. The *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* concluded by urging Vorarlbergers to vote no in the upcoming plebiscite.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the vocal opposition to the plebiscite in newspapers, Vorarlbergers continued to overwhelmingly support union with Switzerland. The Vorarlberg plebiscite took place on 11 May 1919, asking Vorarlbergers if they wanted their provincial government to begin negotiations with the Swiss Federal Council in order to make arrangements for political union.<sup>40</sup> The *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* published official results of the plebiscite on 14 May 1919. Of 59,106 votes cast, roughly 81 percent voted in favour of union with Switzerland.<sup>41</sup> However, Vorarlberg’s political leaders realised that they required international recognition of the plebiscite results if they hoped to achieve union with Switzerland, and they therefore looked to the Paris Peace Conference to grant their self-determination.

### **Vorarlberg’s Self-Determination at the Paris Peace Conference**

Despite the earlier events in Vorarlberg, the Paris Peace Conference ultimately decided the fate of Vorarlberg’s self-determination, as it did in German Bohemia. Vorarlberg’s Provincial Assembly strove to follow through on the outcome of the plebiscite, sending notes to both the German-Austrian government and to the Swiss Federal Council. The note to Vienna contended that the German-Austrian delegation to Paris should raise the question of Vorarlberg’s union with Switzerland at the Conference.

<sup>38</sup> “Schwaben oder Schweiz? Wo ist das Leben billiger? ”, *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.104 (8 May 1919), 2.

<sup>39</sup> “Warum stimmen wir bei der Volksabstimmung am Sonntag mit nein”, *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.106 (10 May 1919), 1.

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Koch, ed., *Außenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918-1938: Im Schatten von Saint-Germain*, vol.II (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1994), 135.

<sup>41</sup> “Ergebnis der Volksabstimmung in Vorarlberg zur Schweizer Anschlußfrage,” *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.109 (14 May 1919), 3.

However, the German-Austrian government responded that such a request would complicate negotiations, instead suggesting that Vorarlberg's fate might better be settled by an agreement between Vorarlberg, Switzerland, and German-Austria at the League of Nations. The note to Bern asked for a discussion of the terms on which Vorarlberg would be accepted into the Swiss Confederation. The Swiss government responded that Vorarlberg had no legal right to make such a request.<sup>42</sup>

After the failure of the two notes to Vienna and Bern, Ender personally sought to have Vorarlberg's plebiscite results accepted internationally. Ender therefore attended the Paris Peace Conference with the German-Austrian delegation as the representative for Vorarlberg.<sup>43</sup> Ender travelled to Paris on 13 May 1919 where he asked Renner to support Vorarlberg's right to self-determination. Renner responded that it would be beneficial for Vorarlberg to remain in German-Austria, refused to agree to Ender's demands, and stated that the issue would be handled between the governments of German-Austria and Switzerland at a later date.<sup>44</sup> Wambaugh argues that Renner opposed Ender's presence at the conference, "promising that after the peace treaty had been signed the Austrian Government would itself open negotiations with the Swiss authorities".<sup>45</sup> After the failure of discussions with Renner, Ender put his faith in the Allied delegations.

The desire of Vorarlbergers for union with Switzerland first became apparent to the Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference on 8 May 1919. In discussions held by the Council of Five on the new frontiers of German-Austria, Allied officials, initially unsure whether Vorarlberg deserved self-determination, held lengthy debates over its future.<sup>46</sup> Considering unrest in other former Austro-Hungarian provinces, the British Foreign Minister, Arthur Balfour, feared that Vorarlberg joining Switzerland would set a dangerous precedent. Baron Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, argued that Vorarlberg should remain part of German-Austria because he had no knowledge of it historically as separate from Austria. According to Stéphen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, members of the Swiss Federal Council had informed the French government on several occasions that they did not desire union with Vorarlberg. Instead, the Swiss Federal Council would only consider union with Vorarlberg if the plebiscite result practically

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<sup>42</sup> Ball, *Post-War German-Austrian Relations*, 28.

<sup>43</sup> "List of Members of the Austrian Delegation to the Peace Conference," in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 52-55.

<sup>44</sup> Elfriede Auguste Zuderall, "Die Anschlussbewegung Vorarlbergs an die Schweiz 1918-1921" (Ph.D Thesis, Innsbruck, 1946), in "Entschieden wurde in Saint-Germain", *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (29 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_2.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_2.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 514.

<sup>46</sup> Marston, *The Peace Conference of 1919*, 203.

forced their hand.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately the Council decided to leave the question of Vorarlberg to be resolved later.

Further discussions about Vorarlberg were held by the Council of the Heads of Delegations on 19 August 1919. The Council invited the Central Committee on Territorial Questions to consider the possibility of allowing Vorarlberg to join the Swiss Confederation.<sup>48</sup> Elfriede Auguste Zuderall argues that Ender was primarily responsible for raising Vorarlberg's profile enough to be included in discussions by the Territorial Commission.<sup>49</sup> On 23 August 1919, the Territorial Committee issued a resolution concerning Vorarlberg, finding that "in view of the manifestation of the inhabitants of Vorarlberg in favour of the union of their territory to Switzerland, the Republic of Austria, in case Switzerland should formally declare that she accepts such a union, engages to recognize the decision of the Council of the League of Nations to which the case should be presented".<sup>50</sup> The resolution essentially forced German-Austrian to accept the secession of Vorarlberg if Switzerland agreed to the union. However, the French government was reluctant to accept this suggestion, recommending that a decision be delayed until clear expressions had come from Switzerland. Balfour supported the French recommendation to delay a decision on Vorarlberg's self-determination, which the Conference subsequently adopted.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of this recommendation, some Vorarlbergers felt that the German Austrian government and Allied delegations had undermined Vorarlberg's right to self-determination. Two self-declared representatives of Vorarlberg subsequently wrote to Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, annoyed that the Allied delegations at the Peace Conference had made decisions about Vorarlberg's future without input from Vorarlbergers themselves. Paul Pirker and Gustav Neubner, leaders of Vorarlberg's advertising committee with Ferdinand Riedmann, argued that the results of the earlier plebiscite proved that an overwhelming majority of Vorarlbergers favoured admission to the Swiss Confederation, "to which the people of the Vorarlberg feel themselves closely allied by geography, race, historical memories and the common love of liberty".<sup>52</sup> Pirker and Neubner also claimed that Renner had forbidden Ender, as Vorarlberg's

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<sup>47</sup> "Discussion by the Council of Five of the Methods to be used in Defining the Austrian Frontiers", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 275-276.

<sup>48</sup> "Decision of the Council of Heads of Delegations, August 19, Concerning Liechtenstein and Vorarlberg", in Nina Almond and Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain: A Documentary History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1935), 324.

<sup>49</sup> Zuderall, "Die Anschlussbewegung Vorarlbergs".

<sup>50</sup> "Resolution of the Central Territorial Committee concerning Vorarlberg", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 324.

<sup>51</sup> Zuderall, "Die Anschlussbewegung Vorarlbergs".

<sup>52</sup> "Note no.1117 from the Austrian Delegation", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 325-327; Gerhard Wanner, *'Liberi e Svizzeri' – die Liebe ging nicht durch den Magen* (Feldkirch: [s.n.], 1990), 147.

representative, from raising the Vorarlberg question at the Conference. In doing so, the German-Austrian government had denied Vorarlberg's right to self-determination. Pirker and Neubner noted that Vorarlbergers reaffirmed unanimously in public meetings on 10 August their will to secede from German-Austria and unite with Switzerland, "which [Vorarlbergers] regard as our true chosen country." Pirker and Neubner therefore asked the Peace Conference to recognise the right of Vorarlbergers to self-determination.<sup>53</sup>

Pirker and Neubner continued to petition Clemenceau for the right to self-determination. In a later, undated message, Pirker and Neubner asked Clemenceau for permission to present the Vorarlberg question to the League of Nations. They also asked for a passage to be inserted into the peace treaty which recognised Vorarlberg's independence, guaranteed Vorarlberg's right to self-determination, and established a future conference to settle Vorarlberg's relations with German-Austria. Pirker and Neubner argued that the German-Austrian government, although initially sympathetic to the Pro-Switzerland movement in Vorarlberg, was now obstructing the self-determination of Vorarlbergers.<sup>54</sup>

The German-Austrian delegation sent their own note to Clemenceau on 26 August to counter the notes sent by Pirker and Neubner. The German-Austrian delegation claimed that Neubner and Pirker were only "pretending to act in the name of the people of the Vorarlberg," were "not even natives of the country," were "in no way in touch with the aspirations and the true will of the people," and could not therefore "claim any right whatsoever to wish to represent the Vorarlberg or to address the Great Powers in its name".<sup>55</sup> The German-Austrian delegation's argument contained some truth. Although Neubner and Pirker lived in Vorarlberg, Neubner had actually been born in German Bohemia and Pirker's father came from Carinthia. The Allied delegations largely dismissed the self-declared "Delegates of the Vorarlberg", as exemplified by Swiss professor and journalist Gonzague de Reynold, who described Neubner simply as "a fat Austrian with sideburns".<sup>56</sup> None of Vorarlberg's representatives, therefore, had much influence at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Allied delegations eventually omitted Vorarlberg's request for union with Switzerland from the peace treaty. The Treaty of St. Germain, signed on 10 September 1919, fixed in law the existing border between Switzerland and German-Austria, ignoring Vorarlberg's request for self-determination. The German-Austrian delegation successfully

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<sup>53</sup> "Note no.1117 from the Austrian Delegation", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 325-327.

<sup>54</sup> "Telegrams from the 'Vorarlberg Delegates' Pirker and Neubner", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 327-328.

<sup>55</sup> "Note no.1117 from the Austrian Delegation", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 325.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Witzig, "Die Vorarlberger Frage", *Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft*, no.123 (1974), 306.

argued that the loss of one province would lead inevitably to the complete dissolution of the German-Austrian state.<sup>57</sup> Wambaugh argues that the German-Austrian government successfully convinced Allied delegations of the importance of Vorarlberg to the continuing existence of the state.<sup>58</sup> The Treaty of St. Germain therefore represented the loss of official international support for Vorarlberg's proposed union with Switzerland. The treaty contained no indication that Vorarlberg's status would be reviewed in the future.

### Swiss Responses to Union with Vorarlberg

The Swiss government approached Vorarlberg's request for union in a very inconsistent manner. It feared a union between Austria and Germany because it meant a longer border between Germany and Switzerland. For this reason the Swiss government therefore did not initially discourage Vorarlberg's pro-Switzerland movement.<sup>59</sup> Lord Acton, the British representative in Switzerland, reported to the British Foreign Office on 14 April 1919 that Switzerland would first consult the Paris Peace Conference before making any decisions about admitting Vorarlberg to the Confederation. Lord Acton noted that the Swiss Foreign Minister personally preferred an independent German-Austrian state, but thought it might be necessary to allow Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland in order to prevent its union with Germany.<sup>60</sup> The Swiss government therefore considered union with Vorarlberg as an option largely because it viewed the alternative, Vorarlberg's union with Germany, as a threat to its own national security. Additionally, division within the government prevented strong action either way on the issue of Vorarlberg's self-determination. For example, while the Swiss Foreign Minister supported Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland, the Swiss President opposed such a union.<sup>61</sup>

Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland attracted some important supporters inside the Swiss government. Felix Calonder, the head of the Swiss Political Department, strongly supported union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland. Calonder had proposed as early as 2 April 1919 that the Swiss Federal Council accept Vorarlberg's request for a union, based on the fact that most Vorarlbergers supported the plan. Calonder also proposed that the Allied delegations at the Peace Conference insert a clause into the peace treaty which gave Vorarlberg permission for union with Switzerland if the Swiss people

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<sup>57</sup> "Observations of the Austrian Delegation, August 9, 1919," in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 320-322.

<sup>58</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 514-515.

<sup>59</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement*, 393.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

also wanted this. However, many of Calonder's colleagues rejected his proposal.<sup>62</sup> Ender approached Calonder in Bern on 10 June to discuss the possibility of the Swiss government accepting negotiations for union.<sup>63</sup> Evidently Calonder endorsed Ender's plan for union. In a speech to the Swiss Federal Council on 28 June 1919, Calonder asked whether Switzerland had "enough power and sap to be able to graft on a fresh and flourishing branch", arguing that in time Vorarlbergers could become "blood from our blood, flesh from our flesh, spirit from our spirit".<sup>64</sup> Given his enthusiasm, Calonder became the figurehead for Swiss supporters of union with Vorarlberg.

A large Swiss popular movement also developed which supported the proposed union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland. Beginning in August 1919, this movement received support from a number of well-organised committees and press institutions in Switzerland, especially the "*Bund*" in Bern.<sup>65</sup> On 10 and 11 August 1919, thousands of Swiss rallied across the country to advocate for Vorarlberg's right to self-determination.<sup>66</sup> Some Swiss complained that the Allied delegations had made a decision to forbid union without consulting them first.<sup>67</sup> On 18 November, union advocates in Switzerland established a Pro Vorarlberg committee in Rorschach, St. Gallen, near the border with Vorarlberg. This committee worked closely with Vorarlberg's Pro-Switzerland advertising committee in order to promote the union and gather support.<sup>68</sup> The Pro Vorarlberg committee had considerable success in advocating for union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland. Many Swiss hoped that the addition of the rural and conservative Vorarlbergers to Switzerland would help to "form a counterpoise to the Bolshevik element in Switzerland".<sup>69</sup> The *Vorarlberger Volksblatt* argued that Swiss supporters of union with Vorarlberg did not seek Vorarlberg's annexation outright, but instead sought to defend Vorarlberg's right to self-determination and independence. Once achieved, Vorarlberg would be free to join Switzerland at another date. However, failure to take action to support Vorarlberg now would prevent the possibility of a future union between Switzerland and Vorarlberg.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, vol.2 (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1980), 301.

<sup>63</sup> Zuderall, "Die Anschlussbewegung Vorarlbergs"

<sup>64</sup> Felix-Louis Calonder, in Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, vol.2 (Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1980), 300.

<sup>65</sup> Gerhard Wanner, *'Liberi e Svizzeri' – die Liebe ging nicht durch den Magen* (Feldkirch: [s.n.], 1990), 147.

<sup>66</sup> "Frei sein und Schweizer!" *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.183 (12 August 1919), 1; "Das Volk von Vorarlberg spricht!" *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.184 (13 August 1919), 1-2, cited from Gerhard Wanner, *'Liberi e Svizzeri' – die Liebe ging nicht durch den Magen* (Feldkirch: [s.n.], 1990), 150.

<sup>67</sup> Kevin Mason, "Building an Unwanted Nation: The Anglo-American Partnership and Austrian Proponents of a Separate Nationhood, 1918-1934" (Ph.D Thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 70.

<sup>68</sup> "Selbstbestimmungsrecht des Landes Vorarlberg," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.281 (10 December 1919), 1-4; "Selbstbestimmungsrecht des Landes Vorarlberg," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.282 (11 December 1919), 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> Alfred Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919*, 351.

<sup>70</sup> "Bundesrat Calonder über Vorarlberg: Antwort auf die Interpellation Winiger im Schweizer Ständerat," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.270 (26 November 1919), 1-2.



Economic factors motivated Swiss opposition to union with Vorarlberg. Edmund Schulthess, head of the Department of Economic Affairs, represented those in the Swiss Federal Council who opposed union with Switzerland.<sup>71</sup> In an interview with the French ambassador, Schulthess estimated that union would cost Switzerland thirty million francs a year. Schulthess assumed that Switzerland would have to take responsibility for Vorarlberg's share of the Austro-Hungarian war debt, as well as pay Vorarlberg's pensions to war widows and the disabled. Schulthess added: "[u]nder present social conditions, you must realize that the [Swiss] Federal Council could not explain its refusal to take measures intended to improve the conditions of working classes, by arguing the necessity of supporting the charges which the war imposed on the budget of the Vorarlberg".<sup>72</sup> Schulthess's arguments appealed to many Swiss who opposed union with Vorarlberg.

In November, Calonder sought to counter Swiss government opposition by highlighting the financial risks of opposing union with Vorarlberg. Calonder argued that Germany's increasing efforts to influence Vorarlberg, Vorarlberg's worsening economic plight, and the imminent collapse of Austria, all necessitated swift Swiss action. Calonder feared the loss of eastern Switzerland to Germany if Austria succeeded in unifying with Germany. Given the political fears about Germany, Calonder argued that financial considerations used by those who opposed the union had since lost importance. Loss of part of the country would be even more expensive. Calonder also argued that the Federal Council's failure to act would discourage Vorarlbergers, and the pro-Germany movement in Vorarlberg would benefit. Calonder therefore asked the Council to take immediate steps towards union with Vorarlberg before they lost the opportunity.<sup>73</sup>

The Swiss government adopted its final position towards Vorarlberg in November 1919. In response to Calonder's requests, the Swiss Federal Council agreed to send a joint letter to Ender on 14 November. The Swiss Federal Council announced its refusal to interfere in negotiations between Vorarlberg's Provincial Assembly and the Austrian government, viewing it an internal matter. However, if Vorarlberg achieved independence from Austria, "the Swiss Federal Council would, at the request of Vorarlberg, use all its strength to endeavour to support the realisation of its self-determination, either at the League of Nations or at the Paris Peace Conference".<sup>74</sup> In December, a French note to the Council in Paris reported that the Swiss government would only support union with Vorarlberg in the event of Austria's collapse, and only to prevent a German annexation of

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<sup>71</sup> Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, vol.2 (Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1980), 301.

<sup>72</sup> "Résumé of information gathered by the French Chargé D'Affaires at Berne on the Vorarlberg Question", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 329.

<sup>73</sup> Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, 302.

<sup>74</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 149.

the territory.<sup>75</sup> The Swiss government's response to the union with Vorarlberg fell short of Calonder's demands, but represented perhaps all that could be expected given the amount of official and public opposition.

A number of different concerns explained popular Swiss opposition to the union with Vorarlberg. The Swiss government worried about opposition from the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland to the addition of another German-speaking region. The government also worried that Italy might demand compensation and claim the Italian-speaking Swiss cantons.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, Swiss Protestants feared an expansion of Catholicism from the influx of Catholic Vorarlbergers.<sup>77</sup> One Swiss politician even used ethno-linguistic arguments to argue against Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland. On 11 September 1919, the *Vorarlberger Tagblatt* reported on a historical debate conducted in the *Gazette de Lausanne* a week earlier under the title, "Is there a Swiss imperialism?". Albert Bonnard, described by the newspaper as one of the best informed and most clear-sighted Swiss politicians, reportedly stated: "Beyond our borders there is no area that is Swiss at heart, and bound by violence to a foreign state".<sup>78</sup> Vorarlbergers interpreted this quote as an emphatic rejection of their desires for union with Switzerland. Bonnard's viewpoint coincides perfectly with that of Hugh Seton-Watson, who argues that "the French-, German- and Italian-speaking citizens of Switzerland do not consider themselves Frenchmen, Germans or Italians. They violently repudiate any suggestion to this effect. They are Swiss and only Swiss".<sup>79</sup> Vorarlbergers were therefore excluded from this definition of Swissness.

The refusal of the Swiss Federal Council to support union with Vorarlberg resulted from a number of factors. Low argues that opposition from Allied Powers influenced the Swiss government's decision.<sup>80</sup> Cohen argues that the Swiss Federal Council preferred Vorarlberg remain with Austria, but wanted to retain the option for union with Vorarlberg if the situation in Austria changed.<sup>81</sup> Public opposition also undoubtedly helped persuade the Swiss government not to intervene. Although Catholics mostly supported union with Vorarlberg, the Swiss Radical Party, Swiss peasants, and French- and Italian-speakers opposed it.<sup>82</sup> Bilgeri argues that Swiss indifference caused the failure of Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland, writing "[Switzerland] promised

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<sup>75</sup> "Question of Vorarlberg (c) Note from the French Delegation on the Dangers of the Disintegration of Austria," in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 332-333.

<sup>76</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919*, 351.

<sup>77</sup> Mason, "Building an Unwanted Nation", 70.

<sup>78</sup> "Von der Schweizer Presse", *Vorarlberger Tagblatt*, no.207 (11 September 1919), 1.

<sup>79</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945), 275.

<sup>80</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919*, 351.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen, *The Vorarlberg Question*, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 514.

nothingness [*Nichtigkeiten*] and did not even deliver on those promises”.<sup>83</sup> Wambaugh agrees, arguing that, “[h]ad the Swiss Federal Council taken an initiative the opposition might possibly have diminished. The Swiss Government, however, remained absolutely neutral throughout the period”.<sup>84</sup> Vorarlberg’s Provincial Assembly could not achieve the union alone.

### Events in Vorarlberg after the Plebiscite

Although the Treaty of St. Germain prohibited Vorarlberg’s union with Switzerland, historian Gerhard Wanner argues that the months from August to December 1919 played a more decisive role in deciding the question of Vorarlberg’s self-determination. Logically the Treaty of St Germain meant any further attempt at union with Switzerland would be futile, but in actuality the treaty only changed the strategy used. Instead, Pro-Switzerland Vorarlbergers attempted to have Vorarlberg recognised as an independent country. As an independent country, Vorarlberg’s government would be able to contact the League of Nations, which had the authority to approve Vorarlberg’s union with Switzerland via Article 19 of the League’s Covenant.<sup>85</sup> Vorarlbergers therefore continued to advocate for union with Switzerland late into 1919.

The strength of popular support in Vorarlberg for union with Switzerland steadily increased after the plebiscite. As Switzerland celebrated its national holiday on 1 August 1919, Vorarlbergers lit 200 fires high in the mountains of Vorarlberg as evidence of the affinity Vorarlberger’s felt with Switzerland.<sup>86</sup> A wave of Pro-Switzerland activities also broke out in other parts of Vorarlberg. The *Vorarlberger Volksblatt* reported that Vorarlbergers streamed towards Bregenz from the most remote parts of Vorarlberg “as if driven by some invisible force” in order to hear the Provincial Government’s stance on Vorarlberg’s independence. At the same time, rallies took place in almost all communities of Vorarlberg calling for Vorarlberg’s right to self-determination, using the slogan: “Freedom and Swiss” [*Liberi e Svizzeri – Freisein und Schweizer!*].<sup>87</sup>

Despite growing international opposition to their union with Switzerland, Vorarlbergers continued to take the initiative towards achieving it. Ender bent under

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<sup>83</sup> Benedikt Bilgeri, *Geschichte Vorarlbergs*, vol.5 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1987), 85.

<sup>84</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 514.

<sup>85</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 147; Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated: “The Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world”, see Harold Temperley, *The German Treaty* (London: Henry Frowde, 1920), 21.

<sup>86</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 149-150.

<sup>87</sup> This wish had been expressed as early as November 1918 by Vorarlberg prisoners of war who had found themselves in Italian captivity, see “Frei sein und Schweizer!,” *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.183 (12 August 1919), 1.

popular pressure and gave a speech to a mass rally at the Bregenz government buildings on 11 August. Ender announced that the Provincial Assembly limited the actions of Vorarlberg's Provincial Government, whereas "you, as leaders of the union matter, can go a step further than the provincial government". Ender claimed instead that "the initiative for thoughts and actions grows from the people", asking Vorarlbergers to continue the progress towards union with Switzerland themselves. Ender argued that Vorarlbergers remained unified in support of Vorarlberg's right to self-determination, concluding that Vorarlbergers should "be assured that the provincial government will adhere to the decisions of the popular representatives and will not stray from the advised path".<sup>88</sup> Ender therefore gave the task of continuing the fight for Vorarlberg's self-determination to Vorarlbergers themselves.

A number of Pro-Switzerland Vorarlbergers advocating for union sent open letters to Switzerland through Vorarlberg newspapers. One such letter pledged: "We will not rest until we find our rights have been recognised, and we belong to a state that gives us respect and trust like no other".<sup>89</sup> Another message to the Swiss people claimed that Vorarlbergers eagerly looked to union with Switzerland so they could become "a free people". The movement for union received additional support when Vorarlbergers heard that many Swiss supported the movement for union.<sup>90</sup> These letters suggest that Swiss support for union with Vorarlberg gave Vorarlbergers great motivation in continuation to advocate for union with Switzerland.

In early December, Pro-Switzerland Vorarlbergers planned a final action intended to show the strength of the political consciousness and will in Vorarlberg to implement self-determination and achieve independence from Austria. Within a few days, organisers gathered thousands of signatures in Vorarlberg to persuade the provincial government to take action towards independence. The signatories claimed that the government in Vienna had demonstrated its inability to provide the basics of food, currency, and administration. The government's failure had eroded and destroyed the strong patriotism previously felt by Vorarlbergers towards the Austrian state.<sup>91</sup> Given the perceived poor treatment of Vorarlbergers by the Austrian government, many Vorarlbergers felt justified in seeking independence.

Economic motives played an important part in the continuing campaign for union with Switzerland. Vorarlberg suffered a dire economic situation, and although not all Vorarlbergers personally experienced the economic decline, local newspapers kept them

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<sup>88</sup> "Das Volk von Vorarlberg spricht!", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.184 (13 August 1919), 1-2.

<sup>89</sup> "An unsere Landesregierung". *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.183 (12 August 1919), 1.

<sup>90</sup> "An das Schweizer Volk". *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.183 (12 August 1919), 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.277 (4 December 1919).

informed. In late-1919, Vorarlberg newspapers expected Austria to collapse into bankruptcy any day.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, Pro-Switzerland advocates expected union with Switzerland to spark an economic recovery and result in an immediate end to the threat of starvation.<sup>93</sup> Switzerland had already begun supplying Vorarlberg's embroideries with orders for new commissions, reviving Vorarlberg's textile industry.<sup>94</sup> This important economic link already established with Switzerland therefore gave one more incentive towards union with Switzerland.

Opposition towards union with Switzerland grew amongst Vorarlberg's Social Democrats after the plebiscite. Vorarlberg's Social Democratic Party initially took a sympathetic stance towards the movement for union with Switzerland.<sup>95</sup> However, many Social Democrats viewed suggestions of Vorarlberg's independence as unrealistic, and some regarded Vorarlberg's union with Switzerland as treasonous.<sup>96</sup> The leaders of the party gradually proposed a more pro-Germany course, but only under pressure from the party headquarters in Vienna. The official ideological programme of the Social Democrats viewed a victorious revolution as possible only with the help of Germany's revolutionary forces.<sup>97</sup> The Social Democrats regarded themselves as "the guardians of political morality", both in terms of German nationalism and social revolution. The so-called "union opponents" [*Anschlussgegner*], comprising many Social Democrats, argued that material justifications primarily motivated pro-Switzerland advocates. On this basis, union opponents criticised pro-Switzerland supporters as "the movement dictated by the empty stomach" [*Die vom leeren Bauch diktierte Bewegung*].<sup>98</sup> Although members of the pro-Switzerland advertising committee might have proudly agreed with this definition, for the Social Democratic Party ideological justifications trumped economic ones.

Most of Vorarlberg's Christian Socials also initially supported the idea of union with Switzerland. Christian Socials hoped the union with Switzerland would help preserve their Catholic identity.<sup>99</sup> However, many German nationalists and clerics within Vorarlberg's conservative circles began to campaign for retaining an independent Austria. Vorarlberg priest Gebhard Gunz argued:

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<sup>92</sup> *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.262 (16 November 1919).

<sup>93</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 151.

<sup>94</sup> "Zur berstehenden Warennot," *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.236 (15 October 1919), 4-5.

<sup>95</sup> "Stimmen für ein schweizerisches kantonli Vorarlberg?", *Vorarlberger Wacht*, no.45. (8 November 1918), 1.

<sup>96</sup> "Das 'Vorarlberger Tagblatt' und die Anschlußfrage", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.194 (26 August 1919), 1; "Nachrichten aus Vorarlberg", *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.201 (3 September 1919), 3-4; *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.233 (11 October 1919).

<sup>97</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 155.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 150-151.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

An established *Ostmark* is a vital question for the German people, and these “German guards in the East” can only be those ancient ones on the Danube who have proven themselves over hundreds of years of history. Austria must therefore be retained for the German people, which is why we must not weaken it by going over to Switzerland ... Must not we all have in our hearts the future of the German people and the future of the *Ostmark* as a bulwark against the Slavic-Magyar influence?<sup>100</sup>

Conservative Vorarlbergers argued that they had more important “German” responsibilities to carry out from within Austria.<sup>101</sup>

Despite the signing of the Treaty of St Germain, many countries began efforts to influence Vorarlbergers as well. The French ambassador to Switzerland reported on 22 November that the German government had been carrying out “active propaganda” in an attempt to encourage Vorarlbergers to push for annexation to Germany. The report also claimed that the Austrian government continued to support union with Germany even though the Allies had forbidden it, and that the Austrian government had been assisting with their activities. However, despite German propaganda, the report found that “the population of Vorarlberg, with the exception of a small but noisy pan-German local minority, is not deceived by these intrigues. On the contrary, it is every day more and more favourable for an annexation to Switzerland.” German government interest in Vorarlberg forced a response from the Swiss government, which countered German propaganda efforts by offering supplies to Vorarlbergers. Swiss politicians who favoured union with Vorarlberg considered assistance to Vorarlbergers a means of encouraging Vorarlberg’s Provincial Assembly to appeal to the League of Nations.<sup>102</sup>

The Swiss government’s propaganda efforts in Vorarlberg worried the Austrian government. A further French report on 12 December emphasised the Austrian government’s increasing concern about the growing separatist movement in Vorarlberg. Vorarlberg’s Provincial Assembly repeatedly requested that the Austrian government recognise their right to self-determination, and to refer this question to the League of Nations. Although the Austrian government responded that it would allow Vorarlbergers all legal options to achieve self-determination, it also declared that it would be obliged to oppose any action directed against existing laws or treaties.<sup>103</sup> The Austrian government

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<sup>100</sup> “Gedanken zur Anschlußfrage,” *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, no.204. (6 September 1919), 1-2.

<sup>101</sup> Wanner, *Liberi e Svizzeri*, 156.

<sup>102</sup> “Résumé of information gathered by the French Chargé D’Affaires at Berne on the Vorarlberg Question”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 328- 329.

<sup>103</sup> “Question of Vorarlberg (b) Report of the French Delegation to the Council”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 331-332.

therefore relied increasingly on Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain to maintain its independence.<sup>104</sup>

The Austrian government argued that Vorarlberg's secession risked the survival of the state. Austria's representatives at the Peace Conference reiterated on 2 December 1919 that the separation of Vorarlberg from Austria would "lead sooner or later to a complete disintegration of Austria". The Austrian delegation claimed that demonstrations by Vorarlbergers had encouraged separatist activities elsewhere in Austria, especially in Salzburg and Tyrol. In response, the French delegation recommended that the peace conference offer official support to the Austrian government on the Vorarlberg question in order to secure Austria's borders. The French report argued such support would destroy Swiss support for union with Vorarlberg, and would remove the justification used by those who invoked danger of a union between Vorarlberg and Germany.<sup>105</sup>

Allied concerns about the maintenance of Austria's independence led to further Council discussions on 16 December to oppose Vorarlberg's movement for union with Switzerland. Clemenceau's secretary, Philippe Berthelot, argued that Article 88 of the Treaty of St Germain meant separatist activities could not be tolerated without the consent of the League of Nations.<sup>106</sup> However, British historian J. W. Headlam-Morley, present at the peace conference as part of the British delegation, argued that Article 88:

is unfortunately so worded that the reference to the League of Nations seems to apply merely to the 'independence' of Austria and not to its territorial integrity. There is therefore in the Treaty with Austria nothing specifically providing for the hypothesis that certain districts might wish to separate themselves.<sup>107</sup>

Therefore, according to Headlam-Morley, Vorarlberg would be free to secede from Austria provided Austria maintained its own independence.

Given this loophole, the Austrian delegation sought stronger support from the Council to help stop its separatist movements. Fearful of Austria's collapse, the Council subsequently issued another declaration of support to the Austrian government on 16 December. The Council vowed it would stand by the Peace Treaty, opposing "every

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<sup>104</sup> The official English text of Article 88 read: "The independence of Austria is inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. Consequently Austria undertakes in the absence of the consent of the said Council to abstain from any act which might directly or indirectly or by any means whatever compromise her independence, particularly, and until her admission to membership of the League of Nations, by participation in the affairs of another Power," see: Allied and Associated Powers, *Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria; Protocol, Declaration and Special Declaration (St. Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919)*, no. 3 (Canberra: Australian Treaty Series, 1920).

<sup>105</sup> "Question of Vorarlberg (b)", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 332.

<sup>106</sup> "Question of Vorarlberg (a) Discussion by the Council", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 329-330.

<sup>107</sup> "Minute by J. W. Headlam Morley, 16 December 1919," cited from Cohen, *The Vorarlberg Question*, 6.

effort which tends to endanger the integrity of Austrian territory”, or which “would result in compromising whatever manner, directly or indirectly, the political or economic independence of Austria.”<sup>108</sup> The statement of support to the Austrian government represented a more definitive defence of Austria’s territorial integrity, and gave strength to those who opposed further division of the Austrian state. Clemenceau also sent a personal note of support to Renner, vowing to support the Austrian government in suppressing the separatist movements and guaranteeing Austria’s political and economic independence.<sup>109</sup> With Clemenceau’s personal note, there no longer existed any doubt that the Allied Powers opposed Vorarlberg’s efforts to achieve self-determination.

## Conclusion

Despite the success of Vorarlberg’s plebiscite, the Allied Powers ultimately prohibited union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland. The Allied delegations cited the threat of German-Austria’s collapse if Vorarlberg were allowed to set such a precedent.<sup>110</sup> Wambaugh argues that the Allied delegations also opposed Vorarlberg’s self-determination because the Pro-Switzerland movement was recent in origin, and clearly motivated by the recent economic difficulties. The fact that some Vorarlbergers also supported union with Germany made Allied delegations question the longevity of popular sentiment in Vorarlberg. Official Swiss indifference also failed to help Vorarlbergers convince the Allied delegations that they supported union. Opposition from the French and Italian delegations for strategic reasons helped persuade the other delegations to oppose Vorarlberg’s self-determination.<sup>111</sup>

In fact, many reasons explain why Vorarlbergers sought union with Switzerland after the First World War. Much evidence suggests Vorarlberg desires for secession from Austria arose only temporarily due to economic conditions. Kevin Mason argues that economic issues explained Vorarlberg’s preference for Switzerland.<sup>112</sup> Sarah Wambaugh claims that Vorarlbergers had essentially abandoned their desire to join Switzerland by 1922 after economic conditions had begun to improve.<sup>113</sup> Many Vorarlbergers referred to ethno-linguistic justifications. Ender asserted that Vorarlbergers were racially and

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<sup>108</sup> “Question of Vorarlberg (a),” in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 330-331.

<sup>109</sup> “Note from the President of the Peace Conference to Chancellor Renner,” in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 334-335.

<sup>110</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919*, 393.

<sup>111</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 514.

<sup>112</sup> Mason, “Building an Unwanted Nation”, 162-163.

<sup>113</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*: 515.



linguistically more similar to the Swiss.<sup>114</sup> Gonzague de Reynold, Paul Pirker, and Ferdinand Riedmann also highlighted Vorarlberg's close linguistic ties to Switzerland as their justification when seeking union in 1919, as has historian R. J. W. Evans.<sup>115</sup> Others also criticised Otto Ender for the failure to achieve union. Some historians argue that Jodok Fink, German-Austrian Vice-Chancellor and fellow Vorarlberger, helped Renner to convince Ender to abandon his efforts to secure self-determination for Vorarlberg.<sup>116</sup>

As in German Bohemia, the Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference denied Vorarlberg's right to self-determination. In Vorarlberg's case, self-determination was denied even though the plebiscite had shown Vorarlbergers overwhelmingly favoured union with Switzerland. Apart from Vorarlberg, Switzerland and German-Austria had no territorial disputes, nor had any existed historically. According to Alfred Low, if the union between Vorarlberg and Switzerland had succeeded, it would have been a perfect example of a voluntary change of sovereignty, completely in accordance with the principles of self-determination.<sup>117</sup> Instead, the successful implementation of Wilsonian self-determination appeared only in Carinthia.

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<sup>114</sup> Otto Ender, "Vorarlbergs Schweizer-Anschluß-Bewegung von 1918 bis 1924", *Schriften zur Vorarlberg Landeskunde*, no.5, (Dornbirn: Vorarlberger Verlagsanstalt, 1952), 100.

<sup>115</sup> Gonzague de Reynold, *Das Volk von Vorarlberg*; cited from Paul Pirker, *Das Vorarlberg: Schweizer, sind wir eure Brüder?* (Feldkirch: P. Pirker, 1919), 20; Paul Pirker, *Das Vorarlberg: Schweizer, sind wir eure Brüder?* (Feldkirch: P. Pirker, 1919), 13; "Als Vorarlberg zur Schweiz wollte", *Der Alvier*, Werdenberger und Obertoggenburger (15 May 2009), cited from: [http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier\\_vlbg\\_1.pdf](http://www2.comanitas.com/uploads/media/alvier_vlbg_1.pdf); R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 162.

<sup>116</sup> For example see: Daniel Witzig, "Die Vorarlberger Frage", *Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft*, no.123 (1974), 20; Gerhard Wanner, *Der Verbinderte Schweizer Kanton* (Merian: Vorarlberg: 1971); Dietmar Hagen, "Die Vorarlberger Anschlussbewegung an die Schweiz nach dem ersten Weltkrieg – eine politische und ökonomische Analyse" (MA, Vienna, 2003)

<sup>117</sup> Low, *The Anschluss Movement 1918-1919*, 351.

## Carinthia

This chapter examines Carinthia in the period between the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Carinthian plebiscite of October 1920, exploring German-Austrian and Yugoslav competition for the region. From late-October 1918, both sides sought to claim as much of Carinthia as possible for their new states, and violence subsequently intensified. By June 1919, Yugoslav military forces had occupied large parts of Carinthia as well as the neighbouring province of Styria.<sup>1</sup> The Allied Powers intervened, declaring a demilitarised zone in Carinthia and vowing to resolve the dispute at the Paris Peace Conference. As in the case of German Bohemia, the German-Austrian government requested a plebiscite to ascertain local self-determination, while the Yugoslav government sought control of Carinthia without a plebiscite. The Allied delegates proved unable to conclusively rule in favour of either side, with disagreements breaking out both between and within various Allied delegations. The US and Italian delegates supported requests for a plebiscite in Carinthia, and this decision was eventually agreed to by the other delegations. Carinthia represents the only successful implementation of self-determination among the three examined cases, and the border between Austria and Yugoslavia outlined in the plebiscite has endured.

Discussion of the Carinthian plebiscite poses a terminological difficulty because the name and borders of the state in conflict with German-Austria changed a number of times in the period. During the initial collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, German-Austrians referred to the state created by the Southern Slavs of the Empire simply as the South Slav state. After its official founding in late-October 1918, this state became known as the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs [SCS State]. On 1 December 1918, the SCS State united with Serbia, officially becoming the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes [SHS State]. Although commonly known as Yugoslavia since 1918, this only became the official name in 1929.<sup>2</sup> Given these rapid changes, historical actors often referred to the state by any one of these names regardless of its official name at the time. Such inconsistencies are also present in historical documents, rendering it difficult to ascertain precisely which state is being referred to. For the sake of simplicity, this thesis therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Although the focus of the chapter lies predominately on Carinthia and its plebiscite, the discussion of Carinthia at the Paris Peace Conference is often linked with that of Styria because the German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments initially packaged both provinces together in their demands. In order to avoid confusion, this thesis therefore refers to the combined provinces either as the southern German-Austrian frontier or the German-Slovene language frontier.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the state see: Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984); Ivo Banac, "The National Question in Yugoslavia's Formative Years, 1918-1921" (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1975); R. W. Seton-Watson, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs: Correspondence 1906-1941* (London; Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 1976).

refers to the state prior to 1 December 1918 as the South Slav State, and Yugoslavia thereafter.

The 10 October 1920 Carinthian plebiscite has attracted much interest from German-language historians.<sup>3</sup> However, little work has been written in English, despite the availability of English-language primary source documents from the Paris Peace Conference and elsewhere. Furthermore, most English-language work has resulted from interest in plebiscites rather than immediate post-war developments in Austria. The interest has therefore come largely from political scientists rather than from historians.<sup>4</sup> English-language works mentioning the Carinthian plebiscite tend to do so as an afterthought in discussions concerning the birth of the Austrian Republic or Yugoslavia, and simply report results rather than explaining why the plebiscite took place.<sup>5</sup> Vorarlberg and Carinthia lack the same level of interest afforded by scholars to Bohemia. Unlike Vorarlberg, Carinthia does at least appear in a number of accounts of the period.<sup>6</sup>

### Carinthian Germans and the End of the Empire

The rapidly deteriorating situation in the Austro-Hungarian in late-1918 evoked a negative reaction from Germans along the southern language frontier of Cisleithania. In this uncertain period, Germans in Carinthia and Styria worried about their future without the empire. As in German Bohemia, many of these Germans initially opposed the dissolution of the Empire. The *Marburger Zeitung* argued that the Austro-Hungarian government had prematurely capitulated without taking the feelings of German-Austrians

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<sup>3</sup> For example see: Wilhelm Neumann, *Abwehrkampf und Volksabstimmung in Kärnten, 1918-1920* (Klagenfurt: Verlag des Kärntner Landesarchivs, 1970); Martin Wutte, *Kärntens Freiheitskampf, 1918-1920* (Verlag des Kärntner Geschichtsvereins, 1985); Hellwig Valentin, *Abwehrkampf und Volksabstimmung in Kärnten 1918-1920: Mythen und Fakten* (Archiv der Kärntner Arbeiterbewegung, 1993); Helmut Rumpler, ed., *Kärntens Volksabstimmung 1920* (Klagenfurt: Kärntner Druck- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981); Alfred Ogris, ed., *Der 10. Oktober 1920: Kärntens Tag der Selbstbestimmung: Vorgeschichte, Ereignisse, Analysen* (Klagenfurt: Kärntner Landesarchiv, 1990); Albert Reiterer, "Ethnisches Konfliktmanagement in Österreich: Burgenland und Kärnten", in Gerhard Seewann, ed., *Minderheiten als Konfliktpotential in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 332-345.

<sup>4</sup> For example see: Yves Beigbeder, *International Monitoring of Plebiscites, Referenda and National Elections: Self-Determination and Transition to Democracy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994); Johannes Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite in the Determination of Sovereignty* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1920); Sarah Wambaugh, *A Monograph on Plebiscites: With a Collection of Official Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920); Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933); Wilfried Marxer, ed., *Direct Democracy and Minorities* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012); Franz Cede, "The Plebiscites in Carinthia and Sopron-Ödenburg after World War I — two Cases of Direct Democracy in Action", in W. Marxer, ed., *Direct Democracy and Minorities* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> For example see: Fred Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 137; H. C. Darby and R. W. Seton-Watson, "The Formation of the Yugoslav State", in: Stephen Clissold, ed., *A Short History of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 168; Bernhard Wasserstein, *Barbarism and Civilization: A History of Europe in our Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 121.

<sup>6</sup> For example see: Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jill Morrissey, "The Republic of Austria: A State Without a Nation" (MA Thesis, Brandeis University, 2012); Tom Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity: The Principle of National Self-Determination, The Question of Territorial Sovereignty in Carinthia and other post-Habsburg Territories after the First World War* (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2000).

into consideration, nor by consulting with their parliamentary representatives.<sup>7</sup> In this interpretation of events, these Germans considered the collapse of the empire as a betrayal of those who opposed its dissolution.

Many Germans in Carinthia and Styria also found opportunities in the collapse of the empire. The *Marburger Zeitung* argued that the primary concern of German-Austrians remained securing “the existence and artistic preservation of our own folkdom”. Self-determination represented the ideal way for Germans along the frontier to protect what they had. However, many also resented that their deputies did not argue more strongly for self-determination, expressing amazement that their deputies “did not boisterously demand the self-determination of the German people in Austria”, after the Austro-Hungarian government collapsed. Some thought enthusiastically about the possibilities brought by self-determination. The *Marburger Zeitung* argued that German-Austria’s culture, economy, and national order would be greatly improved “if we were free and independent, if we could organise and manage and connect ourselves in the way that our life interests demand”.<sup>8</sup>

Economic issues also helped motivate desires for self-determination amongst Germans along the southern frontier. The *Marburger Zeitung* argued that German-Austrians had subsidised other groups in the empire for too long, but with self-determination Germans “would no longer have to indulge foreign interests”. The national debt should itself be split equally amongst the nations of the empire on the basis of population. The *Marburger Zeitung* spoke confidently of the results of such action, declaring “then we will be able to proceed more easily on our own to German self-determination!”<sup>9</sup> However, German self-determination along the southern language frontier proved difficult to achieve.

Although many German-Austrians eagerly began to discuss their self-determination, Austro-Hungarian leaders continued to avoid the issue. On 2 October 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Council of Ministers met to discuss the possibility of independence for the South Slavs. Maximilian Hussarek von Heinlein, Cisleithanian Minister-President, proposed plans for further federalisation of the empire as a solution to the outcries from German nationalist groups. Hussarek still viewed federalism as “both the most practical and the most realistic option” to save the empire.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, few people in the empire considered the salvation of the Empire as feasible or favourable.

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<sup>7</sup> “Und wir...”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.227 (3 October 1918), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “Und wir...”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.227 (3 October 1918), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Miklós Komjáthy, ed., *Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1914-1918)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), 692.

Uncertainty about the future of the southern frontier encouraged German-Austrian political parties to begin the discussion of possible contingencies. At a German National Association meeting on 3 October, Christian Social and German Social Democratic party representatives discussed the possibility of Slavic rule over German-speaking territories. Social Democratic representatives presented a resolution demanding German rights to self-determination, rejecting the possibility that German territory be subjugated to Slavic rule. Representatives also requested that all German-speaking regions of the Empire be combined into a unified German-Austrian state. Concerned by the implications of South Slav independence on Carinthia and Styria, representatives at the German National Association declared that German-Austrians would defend “with every means” attempts by foreign states to claim German-Austrian territory. Representatives also declared the unrestricted right to self-determination for German-Austrians.<sup>11</sup> Such announcements mirrored those made by Lodgman and German Bohemian leaders. German-Austrian politicians from southern Carinthia and southern Styria therefore supported self-determination and the unity of German-Austria.

German-Austrian political parties met again several days later to discuss German-Austrian relations with the South Slav State. The *Marburger Zeitung* published an initial resolution of the meeting on 5 October, which claimed that the German-Austrian government had asked South Slav representatives to clarify their position on whether they sought negotiations. The *Marburger Zeitung* claimed the resolution stressed for clarification on whether South Slavs wanted self-determination “carried out in strict accordance with its meaning” or if they sought to include German lands in their claims “and wanted to rape them”. The *Marburger Zeitung* denounced claims on German-Austria lands, arguing that such a plan “would encounter the heaviest German resistance, because no German, whether from the north or south of the Empire, whatever party he may belong to, could escape the defensive struggle of the German people”.<sup>12</sup> Germans on the southern language frontier therefore stressed their willingness to fight to defend their unity with German-Austria.

German-Austrian nationalists along the Slovenian language frontier expressed outrage at Slovenian movements towards independence. On 9 October 1918 the *Marburger Zeitung* spoke in favour of local press censorship, citing an article published by the “inflammatory Slovenian national-clerical newspaper” *Slovenski Gospodar* on 3 October. According to the *Marburger Zeitung*, the *Slovenski Gospodar* had written:

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<sup>11</sup> “Unsere Selbstbestimmung”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.229 (5 October 1918), 2.

<sup>12</sup> “Selbstbestimmungsrecht auch der Deutschen”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.229 (5 October 1918), 3.

The boundaries of the Wendish [Slovene] state have already been determined... In Carniola and Slovenian Styria they [Germans] are selling their possessions, houses, factories, and large companies. In Laibach [Ljubljana] there are almost no German houses remaining. In Marburg [Maribor], for example, since 1 January some 65 houses have transferred from German to Slovenian possession.<sup>13</sup>

The *Marburger Zeitung* responded angrily to the claims made by the *Slovenski Gospodar*, describing them as “blatant Slovenian incitement”. The *Marburger Zeitung* also accused the *Slovenski Gospodar* of encouraging Slovene persecution and discrimination towards Germans. In response the *Marburger Zeitung* accused local press censors in Marburg/Maribor of treason, arguing that “the behaviour of the Marburg censors can only give the impression that they are no longer a public institution, but are already an organ of the Serbian state”.<sup>14</sup> Such sentiment symbolised local German fears about Slavic domination.

While some southern German-Austrians raised concerns about losing German-speaking territory to the South Slav State, few initially took this seriously. On 21 October the *Marburger Zeitung* argued that the rumour about loss of territories contradicted an earlier statement from Emperor Karl, who promised southern German-Austrian representatives on 25 May that unity of the Austrian crown lands would be maintained. The *Marburger Zeitung* blamed the Bishop of Laibach/Ljubljana, Anton Bonaventura Jeglič, for transforming support for a South Slav Kingdom from a fringe group into a mainstream movement, largely by convincing people that “the national aspiration of the South Slavs is a godly deed”. The newspaper continued: “While so far all Germans of the Styrian lowlands and the majority of Slovenes stand loyal to the Emperor and far from these treasonable goings-on, the authority of a Prince-Bishop might conceivably affect the great masses”.<sup>15</sup> Some Germans remained optimistic of retaining positive relations with local Slovenes.

However, other Germans along the southern German-Austria frontier expressed outrage that parts of Carinthia and Styria might be assigned to a South Slav state. The *Marburger Zeitung* regarded the potential for South Slav annexation of the southern language frontier as a betrayal of local Germans and Slovenes who had fought for the empire during the war.<sup>16</sup> Wambaugh notes that Slovenes generally served the empire loyally during the war, arguing that the Carniolan Assembly favoured union within the empire and that only Southern Slav leaders who had fled during the war supported

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<sup>13</sup> “Das läßt die Marburger Zensur zu!”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.232 (9 October 1918), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Untersteirische Proteste”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.243 (22 October 1918), 1

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Slovene secession.<sup>17</sup> Discussions about South Slav independence therefore fostered a sense of betrayal amongst many Germans along the southern frontier. On 5 November, the *Marburger Zeitung* succinctly summarised German feelings about their defeat in the war, stating: “It is not Italian military victories that have brought about this change but the events in the hinterland, causes that we all know”.<sup>18</sup> According to the *Marburger Zeitung*, blame for the collapse of the empire lay with the empire’s Slavs, and only self-determination could save local Germans from further ruin.

Germans along the southern frontier also began to view South Slav secession as an accidental victory for German-Austria, as the collapse of the empire opened the way for union with Germany. The All-German Party Organisation met in Vienna on 8 October. Organisation representatives spoke positively of the movement towards the end of the monarchy, arguing that it represented a natural and inevitable progression. In a similar way the *Marburger Zeitung* described union with Germany as a natural relationship for German-Austria. Slavic independence would allow German-Austria’s union with Germany, which would allow it to become nationally and economically secured. The *Marburger Zeitung* remained so optimistic that it eagerly anticipated Slovene apologies for Slav betrayal of the empire: “Perhaps soon after such events [*Anschluss*] the Slovenian peasantry will look with envy at our country and regret that they followed Serbophile pied pipers”.<sup>19</sup> Contemplating union with Germany allowed German-Austrians to take positives from the collapse of the empire.

Germans along the southern frontier of Cisleithania initially viewed the collapse of the empire negatively, but they gradually came to focus on its positives. German self-determination would allow the population to break away from the Slavs of the empire, who were viewed with increasing hostility given their perceived betrayal of the empire. Self-determination also offered the possibility for German-Austrian union with Germany. The focus on union with Germany meant Germans along the southern frontier of German-Austria underestimated the political and military strength of the Southern Slavs. Carinthian Germans therefore failed to realise the danger posed by Slav claims on territory also claimed by German-Austria. German-Austrians proved completely unprepared for the coming Yugoslav occupation of the southern frontier.

### **Changes along German-Austria’s Southern Frontier**

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<sup>17</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 170.

<sup>18</sup> “Der Zusammenbruch”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.254 (5 November 1918), 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Der Anschluß”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.232 (9 October 1918), 1.

German-Austrians eagerly sought self-determination to maintain the unity of the German-speaking lands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. On 31 October the German Peoples' Council for Austria held a conference in Vienna for the German minority population of German-Austria. The meeting sought to ensure and reassure German-Austrian minority population in neighbouring countries would be instead incorporated into the German-Austrian state.<sup>20</sup> Carinthian and Styrian Germans issued declarations to stress their support for the unity of German-Austria, and also their opposition to South Slav claims to sovereignty along the southern German-Austrian frontier region.

Faced with claims from Southern Slavs, Germans in along the southern language frontier sought self-determination to emphasise their loyalty to German-Austria. The community council of the German-speaking city of Cilli/Celje unanimously adopted a resolution on 20 October, declaring that:

[T]he local council of the German city of Cilli [Celje] hereby staunchly protests against any position to build a Slovenian national state which is to be established even in mixed language areas of Styria. Those Germans and Slovenes who have lived together in Lower Styria cannot be used for the operation of a unilateral Slovenian right to national self-determination.<sup>21</sup>

The resolution also highlighted the historic unity of Germans and Slovenes in the region, and therefore opposed South Slav efforts to destroy this. The Cilli/Celje declaration continued:

We hold firmly to our unbreakable Styrian homeland with every fibre of our heart. So in this decisive hour we urge our representatives... to mobilise everything so that the planned attacks on the Germandom and unity of Lower Styria may be stopped, and the Lower Styrian folkdom retain their national component secured on their ancestral soil.<sup>22</sup>

German expressions of self-determination in southern Styria therefore relied on regional interpretations of Germanness, but also a wider sense of "Styrianness" which they shared with the local Slovene population.

Following the Styrian declaration from Cilli/Celje of the previous week, the National Committee of Carinthia issued its own declaration on 29 October. The Carinthian declaration read: "Taking the view that, excluding Seeland [Jezersko], the Slovenes in Carinthia do not live in closed settlements and the land finds its natural limit

<sup>20</sup> "Tagung der deutschen Minderheiten", *Marburger Zeitung*, no.248 (27 October 1918), 3.

<sup>21</sup> "Untersteirische Proteste", *Marburger Zeitung*, no.243 (22 October 1918), 1

<sup>22</sup> "Untersteirische Proteste", *Marburger Zeitung*, no.243 (22 October 1918), 1



through the mountain ranges to the south, the National Committee declares Carinthia indivisible”.<sup>23</sup> This declaration represents one of the few cases in which German-Austrians claimed regions based on geographic considerations. Typically German-Austrians had been able to rely solely on historic or ethno-linguistic arguments. Nevertheless, such declarations attempted to discredit increasing South Slav claims on the southern frontier region.

The city of Marburg/Maribor also issued a declaration in support of German-Austria. The Community Council of Marburg/Maribor unanimously adopted a resolution on 30 October, which stated:

The freely elected local council of the German city of Marburg declares that, on the grounds of President Wilson’s established right to self-determination of peoples, the city of Marburg together with its German and economic associated environment is an integral part of the newly created German-Austrian state. Fellow Slovenian citizens are assured on the basis of reciprocity, in accordance with the declaration of President Wilson, the freedom of action of their economic and national interests.<sup>24</sup>

All the declarations issued by local German officials appeared as a response to increasing claims by Southern Slavs along the southern German-Austrian frontier. However, despite the number of public declarations aligning Carinthia and Styria to German-Austria, the situation on the ground slowly shifted in favour of pro-Yugoslav activists.

German-Austrian claims on the southern frontier highlighted the fragility and lack of control in the region. Josef Schmiderer, the mayor of Marburg/Maribor, issued a request for the maintenance of law and order in the city. Schmiderer argued that violence had the potential to negatively impact ongoing negotiations about Marburg’s status, as well as the larger status of Carinthia and Styria: “I therefore turn to the whole population of Marburg, who for our own good always want to act so that peace and harmony will not be disturbed by noisy demonstrations, because such is not likely to favourably influence or to help support the upcoming negotiations”.<sup>25</sup> Schmiderer’s request implied that violence had escalated in recent time, and threatened to undermine German-Austrian claims in the region.

Both German-Austrian and South Slav representatives responded to the situation by strengthening their position along the language frontier. German-Austrian political parties responded to the power vacuum by organising local committees. On 31 October the three main political parties of Styria, the German Nationals, Christian Socials, and

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<sup>23</sup> “Kärnten unteilbar!”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.249 (29 October 1918), 2.

<sup>24</sup> “Kundgebung der Stadtgemeinde”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.251 (31 October 1918), 2.

<sup>25</sup> “An die geehrte Bevölkerung des Stadt Marburg!”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.251 (31 October 1918), 1.

Social Democrats, each appointed five representatives to a committee to work with the welfare committees and prepare for the formation of a large Styrian provincial assembly.<sup>26</sup> South Slav activists also asserted more power along the southern frontier as the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, just as Czechoslovak activists had in German Bohemia. The *Marburger Zeitung* reported on 5 November that the South Slav government had removed a number of German officials from their positions, including Heinrich Christian von Attems-Heiligenkreuz, the Carniolan Provincial President.<sup>27</sup> Actions by German-Austrian and South Slav representatives highlighted the desire by both governments to claim the disputed frontier regions.

Despite recent actions, relations between German-Austrians and South Slavs did not deteriorate immediately. David Strong argues that little friction existed between German-Austria and Yugoslavia initially, describing relations between the two as “less acute” than between German-Austria and its other neighbours.<sup>28</sup> The *Marburger Zeitung* attempted to reassure the population of Marburg/Maribor about the possibility for its annexation to the South Slav state, reporting on 3 November the recent success of negotiations between German-Austrians and Slovenians. The *Marburger Zeitung* viewed such progress optimistically and sought eagerly to protect it, warning against provocations and violence which could disrupt negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

The German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments also made some efforts to relieve tensions. On 7 and 8 November the Styrian provincial government held consultations in Graz with representatives from the German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments. A major topic of the discussions concerned the supply of food and the maintenance of a dialog between the respective countries.<sup>30</sup> The consultations concluded on 25 November with an agreement to temporarily divide the region between German-Austria and Yugoslavia until the Peace Conference could make a final decision.<sup>31</sup> This decision sought to prevent conflict from escalating into violence.

Despite some successes to ease tensions, friction between Germans and Slovenes eventually developed as some people turned to more violent options to achieve their goals. As a result of increasing violence, German-Austrian authorities began actively requesting public support for protecting lands they claimed. The German-Austrian State Council appealed to Germans in Marburg/Maribor for help on 5 November, warning

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<sup>26</sup> “Landesversammlung für Steiermark”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.251 (31 October 1918), 2.

<sup>27</sup> “Entfernung deutscher Beamten”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.254 (5 November 1918), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Strong, *Austria*, 160-161.

<sup>29</sup> “An die Bevölkerung Marburgs!”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.253 (3 November 1918), 3.

<sup>30</sup> “Deutsch-südslawische Verhandlungen”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.258 (9 November 1918), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Strong, *Austria*, 160-161.

them of the threat to German-Austrian claims on the city.<sup>32</sup> Appeals appeared in the *Marburger Zeitung* calling all able-bodied men to sign up with the Marburg/Maribor militia [*Schutzwehr*].<sup>33</sup> Another appeal appeared on 9 November.<sup>34</sup> On 12 November the Marburg Council announced conscription of all males aged 18-50 into the militia.<sup>35</sup>

As in Pilsen/Plzeň, attempts to create a militia in Marburg/Maribor proved prudent, as violence intensified along the southern frontier. On 12 November a Slovenian military unit on patrol in Marburg reportedly began throwing grenades, causing widespread damage to many of the surrounding houses.<sup>36</sup> According to a militia witness, Slovenians opened fire unprovoked and then threw the grenades.<sup>37</sup> Although this report is not verified elsewhere, it emphasises the general tensions and escalating violence of the period, especially between local Germans and Slovenes. Escalations intensified further when the South Slav government announced mobilisation in Laibach/Ljubljana and Agram/Zagreb. Otto Bauer strongly protested against these orders, as did the *Marburger Zeitung*, which stressed that the armistice forbid mobilisation in areas whose borders had yet to be determined, like Marburg/Maribor.<sup>38</sup> Such protests presumably sought to prevent the South Slavs from securing further control over these regions.

As indicated by the Slovene patrol in Marburg and South Slav mobilisation, South Slav military presence along the German-Slovene language frontier grew rapidly after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Five hundred Serbian officers arrived in Laibach/Ljubljana on 8 November to organise the South Slav garrison.<sup>39</sup> Serb officers and soldiers also arrived in Marburg/Maribor on 9 November.<sup>40</sup> However, despite the arrival of Serbian troops, Austro-Hungarian troops technically remained in control of the frontier. The Austro-Hungarian military commander of South Styria, Rudolf Maister, held a reception in Marburg/Maribor as late as 5 November.<sup>41</sup> The survival of Austro-Hungarian sympathies would prove short-lived however. An Austro-Hungarian Major, Maister also held Slovenian loyalties. Judson claims that “Slovene nationalist militia units” under Maister’s command had seized control of the three centres of South Styrian German nationalism, Marburg/Maribor, Cilli/Celje, and Pettau/Ptuj, as early as 1

<sup>32</sup> “An das deutsche Volk in Oesterreich”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.254 (5 November 1918), 2.

<sup>33</sup> “An alle wehrfähigen Männer von Marburg”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.255 (6 November 1918), 2; “Aufruf”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.255 (6 November 1918), 4.

<sup>34</sup> “Marburger Schutzwehr”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.258 (9 November 1918), 2.

<sup>35</sup> “Alle Bürger für die Marburger Schutzwehr verpflichtet”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.260 (12 November 1918), 2.

<sup>36</sup> “Furchtbare Verwüstung durch handgranaten”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.262 (14 November 1918), 3.

<sup>37</sup> “Die handgranatenwerferei in der Seitzerhofgasse”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.265 (17 November 1918), 3.

<sup>38</sup> “Protest gegen die südslawische Mobilisierung”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.265 (17 November 1918), 2.

<sup>39</sup> “Serbische Offiziere organisieren Laibach”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.257 (8 November 1918), 2.

<sup>40</sup> “Serben in Marburg”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.258 (9 November 1918), 2.

<sup>41</sup> “Die Empfänge beim herrn Generalmajor Maister”, *Marburger Zeitung*, no.254 (5 November 1918), 2.

November.<sup>42</sup> The chaos of October and November 1918 meant Maister found himself in a great position of strength in a very short amount of time, and he sought to quickly use this new strength to exploit the power vacuum along German-Austria's southern frontier.

Maister exploited continuing unrest along the southern German-Austrian frontier in late-1918. South Slav soldiers under Maister's command entered Carinthia on 5 November, occupying most of the region by 30 November except for Klagenfurt, its capital.<sup>43</sup> Soldiers also advanced northwards across the Mur/Mura River in late November to occupy German-speaking towns in Central Styria. Maister's soldiers faced little resistance, as the provincial government in Graz proved unable to organise a military response. Maister had by this point been appointed a General in the Yugoslav army. Maister established himself in Marburg/Maribor in January 1919 and consolidated his control. According to Judson, "[Maister] replaced striking German railway and postal workers with Slovene nationalists, fired Austrian civil servants, requisitioned their homes, and, fearing resistance, began taking hostages among German nationalist citizens of Marburg/Maribor".<sup>44</sup> Maister sought to remove German influences from the area in preparation for the region's annexation to Yugoslavia.

In response to Maister's occupation of the frontier region, the Carinthian provincial assembly decided on 5 December to begin armed resistance against South Slav occupation in what became known as the Carinthian Defensive Struggle [*Kärntner Abwehrkampf*].<sup>45</sup> Carinthian German militia repulsed a South Slav attack on Klagenfurt on 14 December, and on 6 January 1919 militia from the Gailtal/Ziljska dolina region, including a number of ethnic Slovenes, launched a counter-attack. Local Slovenes also supported Carinthian German militia in Rosental/Rož, forcing South Slav troops there to retreat as well.<sup>46</sup> By early May Carinthian militia had almost completely driven South Slav troops out of Carinthia, but counter-attacks reversed the situation and South Slav troops occupied Klagenfurt on 6 June.<sup>47</sup>

Violence in Carinthia led the Council of Ten at the Paris Peace Conference to establish a neutral zone between German-Austria and Yugoslavia.<sup>48</sup> The first decision reached by the Allied delegations on the matter of Carinthia implemented a demilitarised

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<sup>42</sup> Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 236.

<sup>43</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebisites since the World War*, 171.

<sup>44</sup> Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 236-237.

<sup>45</sup> Rolf Steiniger, Günter Bischof, Michael Gehler, *Austria in the Twentieth Century* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 91-92.

<sup>46</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebisites since the World War*, 172.

<sup>47</sup> Steiniger, Bischof, Gehler, *Austria*, 91-92.

<sup>48</sup> "Discussions in the Council of Ten of the Yugoslav Boundary Claims (b) Creation of a Neutral Zone in Carinthia", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 363.

zone in the region, and South Slav troops withdrew from Klagenfurt at the end of July.<sup>49</sup> Yugoslavia's occupation of the frontier, and German-Austria's political and military weakness, forced German-Austrian politicians to appeal to the Paris Peace Conference as a last resort for securing self-determination for this as part of the new German-Austrian Republic.

### **Confusion Reigns in Paris: Plebiscites for the Frontier?**

Despite the Yugoslav occupation of the German-Slovene frontier region, the German-Austrian government remained determined to claim as much of this territory as possible. The German-Austrian delegation to the Peace Conference included two Carinthian experts, Vinzenz Schumy and Martin Wutte, and an expert on South Styria, Franz Kamniker.<sup>50</sup> The German-Austrian delegation emphasised historic, economic, and geographic claims to Carinthia and Styria, while the Yugoslav delegation emphasised ethno-linguistic claims. Committees established by the Allied delegations debated how to divide the regions. The dispute over Carinthia and Styria featured prominently amongst discussions of the Treaty of St. Germain at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Yugoslav delegation submitted proposals for its new border with German-Austria to the Council of Ten on 18 February 1919. Rather than using Austro-Hungarian government census data, which the Yugoslav delegation declared untrustworthy, the Yugoslav delegation based ethnicity on spoken language as determined by local parish registers.<sup>51</sup> The Yugoslav delegation also favoured data from the census of 1849-1851, claiming that statistics gathered before Germanisation better reflected ethnic realities.<sup>52</sup>

The Yugoslav delegation claimed all areas containing a Slovene-speaking population on the basis of "forcible germanisation practised since 1850". Ivan Žolger, a member of the Yugoslav delegation, cited numerous cases of Germanisation in the region. Commenting on Žolger's Germanisation claims, the Council of Ten declared: "In fixing the frontier between Yugo-Slavia and German Austria, the result of this policy should not be perpetuated. Wherever it was possible to show that 50 years previously the Slovenes had been in possession, [Žolger] claimed that they should have ownership restored to

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<sup>49</sup> Steiniger, Bischof, Gehler, *Austria*, 91-92.

<sup>50</sup> "The Austrian Delegation (a) List of members of the Austrian Delegation of the Peace Conference", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 54.

<sup>51</sup> For more on the Austro-Hungarian census see: Z. A. B. Zeman, "The Four Austrian Censuses and their Political Consequences", in Mark Cornwall, ed., *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary, 1908-1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> "Statement of Yugoslav Delegation in the Council of Ten regarding the Austro-Yugoslav Frontier", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 359.

them”. Using this justification, Žolger claimed not only Carinthia and Styria for Yugoslavia, but Eastern Tyrol and Lower Austria too.<sup>53</sup>

Following the Yugoslav submission, the Council of Ten met to discuss Yugoslavia’s boundary claims. After some initial Italian opposition, the Council established a Territorial Committee to examine German-Austrian and Yugoslav claims on their shared frontier.<sup>54</sup> The Territorial Committee examining the border between German-Austria and Yugoslavia decided on 6 April to divide the area into two separate regions. The Committee subsequently established the Marburg basin, representing southern Styria, and the Klagenfurt basin, representing southern Carinthia.<sup>55</sup> The future of the two basins would henceforth be examined separately.

Initial discussions on the Marburg basin began shortly thereafter. In the first discussions the US, British, and French delegates agreed that Slovenes predominated in the Marburg basin. The three delegates also agreed that the Marburg basin shared “close economic relations” with the south, and therefore proposed the Marburg basin be given to Yugoslavia. The dissenting Italian delegate declared Marburg a German city however, dependent on economic ties with German-Austria for its survival.<sup>56</sup> Despite Italian opposition, the 6 April 1919 draft articles of the peace treaty awarded the Marburg basin to Yugoslavia outright, while tentatively proposing the Klagenfurt basin also be given to Yugoslavia provided the population consented.<sup>57</sup>

Discussions concerning the Klagenfurt basin reached a different conclusion than the draft articles of the peace treaty. In continuing discussions on 6 April, the US, British, and French delegations recognised that the Klagenfurt region contained a mixed population, highlighting that “important Slovene elements” constituted a dense population particularly in the east. The delegations also recognised that the Karawanken/Karavanke Mountains separated the entire Klagenfurt basin from the south. Klagenfurt itself shared close economic ties with the rest of German-Austria as part of an economic unit. Despite this, the three delegations determined that they had insufficient evidence to determine “the national aspirations” of the Klagenfurt basin. Again the Italian delegation dissented, arguing the Klagenfurt basin should be awarded to German-Austria.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 360.

<sup>54</sup> “Discussions in the Council of Ten of the Yugoslav Boundary Claims (a) Procedure Regarding Yugoslav Claims”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 361-362.

<sup>55</sup> “Reports of the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia and the Central Committee on Territorial Questions on the Austro-Yugoslav Frontier (a) Report of April 6 of the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 363-364.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Reports of the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia and the Central Committee on Territorial Questions on the Austro - Yugoslav Frontier (b) Draft Articles proposed by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia for insertion in Treaty with Austria”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 364-366.

The US, British, and French delegations recommended a plebiscite be held in the Klagenfurt basin in order to offer the population an opportunity to express their support for union with Yugoslavia, despite evidence suggesting the basin shared much stronger ties to German-Austria.<sup>58</sup> This 6 April report represented the first indication that a plebiscite should be held in Carinthia.<sup>59</sup>

Disputes arose again between Allied delegates in a 9 May Council of Five meeting over the assignment of the Klagenfurt basin. Although remaining neutral in their outlook as to which state the Klagenfurt basin should be assigned, the US, British, and French delegates no longer assumed the region should go to Yugoslavia. Once again the Italian delegation argued that the Klagenfurt basin belonged to German-Austria.<sup>60</sup> Unable to reach a decision, and with strong Italian opposition to any proposed solution, the Allied delegates sought an alternative method for reaching consensus.

No longer tentatively proposing the Klagenfurt basin be awarded to Yugoslavia, the US, British, and French delegations began formulating plans for a “local enquiry or consultation” in the Klagenfurt basin. The original purpose of this consultation was to ascertain whether the local population opposed union with German-Austria and instead supported union with Yugoslavia. This phrasing suggested that the delegations had come to favour the Klagenfurt basin’s union with German-Austria. Rather than asking if local people supported union with Yugoslavia, the delegates now proposed asking if local people opposed union with German-Austria. At this stage the Italian delegation opposed a plebiscite in Carinthia on the basis that Yugoslavia’s claims might be accepted. Ultimately the 9 May meeting ended without a final decision, and the Council of Five agreed to reconvene on 10 May to discuss ethnic and economic considerations submitted by the territorial committee.<sup>61</sup>

The Committee on Yugoslav Affairs submitted another report on the German-Slovene frontier on 10 May, reassessing Italian opposition to its decision on the Klagenfurt basin. Italy proposed awarding larger portions of southern Carinthia to German-Austria. The Committee accepted some of Italy’s arguments but noted that under Italy’s plan some 50,000 Slovenes would be assigned to German-Austria. The Committee also ruled on the Tarvis/Trbiž/Tarvisio district, disputed because of its important railway. The US, British, and French delegations proposed assigning the region to Yugoslavia, while Italy proposed assigning it to German-Austria. The Committee

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<sup>58</sup> Report of the Committee for the study of territorial questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia on the Klagenfurt district (B): District of Klagenfurt”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 504-505.

<sup>59</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 174-175.

<sup>60</sup> “Discussions by the Council of Five of Austro-Yugoslav Boundary Questions (a) Discussion of May 9”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 369.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 369-373.

proposed instead to award the region to Italy. The Committee also resized the Klagenfurt basin to ensure the railway line would run through German-Austrian territory even if the basin voted in favour of union with Yugoslavia. This decision represented another success of Italian counter-claims, resulting in a region containing 60,000 Germans being removed from the plebiscite basin and being assigned directly to German-Austria.<sup>62</sup> Such outcomes proved that Italian support for German-Austrian claims benefitted both German-Austria and Italy by preventing Yugoslavia from achieving its own claims.

The Council of Five reconvened on 10 May to discuss the Committee's report. Sidney Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, reaffirmed that it would be justified to attribute small numbers of Slovenes to German-Austria to simplify matters, especially given some 20,000 Germans in Marburg had already been ceded to Yugoslavia. Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, considered it unfair to assign Slovenes to German-Austria, while Robert Lansing, the US Secretary of State, accused the Italian delegation of hypocrisy given its support for topographical justifications over ethnographic justifications in South Tyrol, which they now disavowed in Carinthia. Sonnino ultimately agreed to accept the recommendations made by the Committee on Yugoslav Affairs, provided the important railway between Italy and German-Austria remained outside Yugoslav territory.<sup>63</sup> This response highlights that Allied discussions at the Conference often concerned themselves more with strategic interests of the delegates rather than the desires of the populations concerned.

After Council of Five discussions on the Committee's report, the Council of Ten met to discuss it on 12 May. All delegates now agreed with the proposal to hold a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin. According to the plan, the southern part of Carinthia, Zone A, would vote first. Only if Zone A voted for Yugoslavia would a vote be held in the northern part of Carinthia, Zone B, around Klagenfurt. Sonnino argued that plebiscites should also be held in the Marburg basing and other disputed regions along the frontier. However, the other delegates felt that further plebiscites lacked justification, and therefore the plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin should be an "isolated case". Unsure of how to define the area in which the plebiscite would be held, the Council of Ten adopted the policy of the Council of Five by ultimately agreeing to accept the frontiers proposed by the Committee on Yugoslav Affairs.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "Discussions by the Council of Five of Austro-Yugoslav Boundary Questions (a) Discussion of May 9; Annexure A: Report submitted to the Council of Foreign Ministers by the Committee on Jugo-Slav Affairs", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 377-380.

<sup>63</sup> "Discussions by the Council of Five of Austro-Yugoslav Boundary Questions (b) Discussion of May 10", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 373-377.

<sup>64</sup> "Discussion by Council of Ten, on May 12, of Austro-Yugoslav Boundary", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 380-383.



## Dissenting Opinions about Self-Determination

Although the Council of Five and Council of Ten had reached consensus on the recommendations made by the Committee on Yugoslav Affairs, a number of individual US delegates issued a complaint on 27 May about this consensus. The delegates complaining included Clive Day, Charles Seymour, Sherman Miles, and Douglas Johnson. These delegates expressed concern over the frequency with which delegations had changed their opinion regarding the Klagenfurt basin. For example, American delegate Charles Seymour proposed in November 1918 to award the entire basin to German-Austria for geographic reasons. However, by February 1919 Seymour instead proposed dividing the basin between German-Austria and Yugoslavia, in line with recommendations made by various committees. Shortly thereafter the Miles Mission presented its findings and Seymour and others such as Douglas Johnson decided instead to back the findings of this report, which again proposed the assignment of the entire basin to German-Austria.<sup>65</sup>

The Miles Mission, also known as the Coolidge Mission or the American Commission of Study, led by Sherman Miles and Archibald Cary Coolidge, travelled to German-Austria in December 1918 to assess the local frontier and make recommendations to the Peace Conference. On 22 January, German-Austrian and Slovene representatives meeting in Graz agreed to Miles' proposal that a plebiscite should determine the wishes of the population of southern Carinthia. Beginning on 28 January, Miles and others spent ten days travelling through southern Carinthia. The mission submitted several reports in February, which "reversed its original opinion that the Basin should go to Yugoslavia, for it found that an overwhelming majority of the people did not wish Carinthia to be divided". Instead, the report viewed the basin as a geographic and economic unit that "should be given to Austria, as the majority of the people, even of the Slovene inhabitants, so desired". Wambaugh argues that the reports from the Miles Mission "greatly strengthened the view to which the majority of the American experts at Paris had been tending, namely, that their former proposals should be revised and the whole Basin left to Austria".<sup>66</sup> The Miles Mission reports provided a great boost to German-Austrian claims to southern Carinthia.

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<sup>65</sup> "Memorandum to the American Commissioners to negotiate peace", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 505-506. For more on the Miles Mission see Siegfried Beer and Eduard Staudinger, "Grenzziehung per Analogie: Die Miles Mission in der Steiermark im Jänner 1919: Eine Dokumentation", in Stefan Karner, ed., *Als Mitteleuropa zerbrach: Zu den Folgen des Umbruchs in Österreich und Jugoslawien nach dem ersten Weltkrieg* (Graz: Leykam, 1990).

<sup>66</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 172-174.

Based on the findings of the Miles Mission, Day and Seymour criticised the decision reached by the Allied delegations to divide the Klagenfurt basin. They argued that the Council of Five and Council of Ten regularly approved recommendations made by the Territorial Commission unanimously without questioning its merit.<sup>67</sup> The delegates argued that the Miles Mission report represented “the most trustworthy evidence” available regarding national sympathies in the Klagenfurt basin. Day and Seymour note:

Colonel Miles considers that the evidence available on self-determination is that the majority of the people of the Klagenfurt basin desire to remain with Austria, and that, until this evidence is reversed by a free expression of the people of the whole basin, the admitted economic and geographical unity of the basin should not be destroyed by an arbitrary and artificial political frontier.

Day and Seymour outlined their support for Miles’ findings that “a majority of the Slovene-speaking people in the Klagenfurt basin would prefer not to be separated from this historic Austrian province of Carinthia”.<sup>68</sup> The delegates therefore argued against the planned plebiscite, suggesting the entire basin be awarded to German-Austria without a plebiscite rather than risk dividing the basin in half.

Despite initially supporting the findings of the Miles Mission, Johnson later reverted to the Yugoslav proposal to divide the basin, which had by this point also been endorsed by the British, French, and Italian delegations.<sup>69</sup> Johnson disagreed with Day and Seymour, arguing that the Miles Mission failed to accurately register Slovene sympathies. Despite the Miles Mission discovering widespread Slovene sympathies for German-Austria, Johnson argued instead: “[t]he presumption that the Slovene majority has Slovene sentiments should be accepted, and the region left with an allied power rather than an enemy power”. Johnson recognised that “geographic and economic considerations favor assignment to Austria”, but noted that such matters held less importance in “agricultural regions like the Klagenfurt basin”. Johnson agreed with the recommendations made by the British and French delegations, arguing that “[e]thnographic, strategic and political considerations all favor assignment of the area to Jugo-Slavia”.<sup>70</sup> Despite the appeals made by Day, Seymour, and Miles on the basis of local self-determination, the Allied delegations accepted Johnson’s position and continued with their plan for a potential division of the basin.

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<sup>67</sup> “Memorandum to the American Commissioners to negotiate peace”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 506-507

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 507.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 505-506.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 508.

The Yugoslav delegation also expressed its opposition to a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin. Seeking a compromise, the delegation abandoned claims on northern and western areas of the basin but asked for southern and eastern areas to be assigned to Yugoslavia without a plebiscite.<sup>71</sup> On 31 May, Nikola Pasič, the head of the Yugoslav delegation, argued that the frontiers agreed by the Allied delegations not only failed to acknowledge Yugoslavia's "original claims" or their subsequently "reduced demands", but in some areas outright contradicted their claims. Pasič claimed the Yugoslav delegation "is under the depressing impression that an effort is being made to exclude their state from Carinthia".<sup>72</sup>

According to Wambaugh, such Yugoslav pressure was so great that it forced the British, French, and Italian delegations and the Commission of Yugoslav Affairs to modify the agreement reached on 6 April. The new proposal assigned southern Carinthia to Yugoslavia outright, removing the plebiscite "in order to avoid the agitation which must necessarily be caused by a consultation of the population". However, the American delegates of the commission continued to support the original decision to hold a plebiscite, perhaps based on the Miles Mission report. The national leaders held similar views to their national delegations. Wilson supported a border along the south of the basin, while Clemenceau and Lloyd George supported division of the basin.<sup>73</sup> The Allied delegations agreed to the original decision to hold a plebiscite, based largely on US opposition to the assignment of the basin to Yugoslavia without a plebiscite.

### **Indecision regarding the Plebiscite Decision**

After lengthy initial discussions about the German-Slovene language frontier, the Allied delegations began the difficult task of finalising plans for a plebiscite in Carinthia. After much negotiation amongst the Allied delegations, and after hearing claims presented by the German-Austrian and Yugoslav delegations, the Council of Four began further discussions about the Klagenfurt basin in early June 1919. The main purpose of these discussions was to establish a plan for holding the plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin.

Yugoslav representatives continued their opposition to a plebiscite in Carinthia. On 4 June, Milenko Vesnić, another of the Yugoslav delegates, cited his fears of potential "confusion and unrest" resulting from the plebiscite, repeating claims that the Allied delegations should give Zone A to Yugoslavia outright. Wilson disagreed, arguing it would

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<sup>71</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> "Memorandum from the Yugoslav Delegation regarding Austro-Yugoslav Boundary Questions", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 383-384.

<sup>73</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 176.

be fairest to allow self-determination for the inhabitants in a plebiscite. The Council of Heads of Delegations agreed with Wilson. On 6 June, Vesnić proposed a compromise to award Zone A to Yugoslavia and Zone B to Austria outright, with an allowance to hold plebiscites within 6 months if the local population desired.<sup>74</sup> The Council ignored this plan because it simply reduced the likelihood of a plebiscite and went against the principles of self-determination which they had agreed on.

Although the Allied delegations ignored Vesnić's proposal, they tentatively supported the idea of provisionally awarding the plebiscite zones. This provisional awarding of Zone A to Yugoslavia and Zone B to German-Austria would allow the region to be governed while the Allies organised the plebiscite. Once again the Italian delegation upset consensus, arguing that Zone A and B should be divided vertically rather than horizontally. The delegations finally reached a consensus whereby the plebiscite would proceed, and the two zones would be governed locally by Carinthians prior to the plebiscite, rather than by the German-Austrian and Yugoslav governments.<sup>75</sup>

Events in June spurred the Allied delegations to make final preparations for resolving frontier disputes in southern Carinthia. On 18 June 1919, the Council of Five raised concerns about breaches to the demilitarisation of the plebiscite zone. Reports indicated that the Yugoslav military had broken the armistice and advanced north to reoccupy Klagenfurt. The Council immediately demanded the Yugoslavs leave Klagenfurt and withdraw from Zone B of the plebiscite zone.<sup>76</sup> The Yugoslav reoccupation of Carinthia was motivated by the decision to hold a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin, which Yugoslav officials interpreted as an Allied rejection of Yugoslav claims on the region.<sup>77</sup> Yugoslav troops slowly began to withdraw from 13 June after Italian troops arrived in Carinthia.<sup>78</sup>

On 21 June the Council of Five ordered German-Austria and Yugoslavia to respect the demilitarisation of the two zones. The Council proposed to hold the first vote in the plebiscite in Zone A within three months of the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain, followed within three weeks by the second vote in Zone B if Zone A voted for Yugoslavia.<sup>79</sup> On 16 July 1919, the Council of the Heads of Delegations finalised the

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<sup>74</sup> "Annotations on the discussions of the Council of Four on the Klagenfurt area", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 508-509.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 509-510.

<sup>76</sup> "Evacuation of the Klagenfurt basin and the meeting of the Council of Five on June 18 (a) Minutes of the Council Meeting", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 511.

<sup>77</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 176-177.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>79</sup> "Annotations on the discussions of the Council of Four on the Klagenfurt area", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 510.

Carinthian frontier to be used in the peace treaty.<sup>80</sup> It took until 29 July before German-Austria and Yugoslavia agreed to evacuate Zone B of the Klagenfurt basin in preparation for the plebiscite, with Yugoslav troops agreeing to withdraw from Klagenfurt. The frontier decided on by the Supreme Council on 23 June went into effect on 31 July.<sup>81</sup> Yugoslav troops finally left Klagenfurt on 31 July.<sup>82</sup>

The German-Austrian delegation welcomed news of the plebiscite in Carinthia. However, the German-Austrian delegation now requested a plebiscite in southern Styria as well, “on the basis of the right of nations to self-determination”, arguing such a plebiscite would reveal overwhelming support in favour of union with German-Austria.<sup>83</sup> The German-Austrian delegation viewed the circumstances in Carinthia and Styria as similar, and questioned why requests for a plebiscite had been refused in Styria: “In what concerns Carinthia, it seems quite evident that the principle of economic unity has determined the decision of the Peace Conference; in regard to Styria, this same principle was however abandoned”. The German-Austrian delegation abandoned claims on the city of Pettau/Ptuj to increase its chances of success elsewhere, but reaffirmed its demand on the Marburg/Maribor basin. German-Austrian delegates argued that the Peace Conference had accepted that Carinthia formed a unit tied to German-Austria, and argued that same was also true for Styria. The German-Austrian delegation proposed dividing Styria up into plebiscite zones as had occurred in Carinthia, hoping to retain at least parts of southern Styria which would otherwise be awarded to Yugoslavia.<sup>84</sup>

The Yugoslav delegation responded critically to the German-Austrian delegation’s claims to the Klagenfurt and Marburg basins. The Yugoslav delegation opposed a plebiscite in the Marburg basin primarily because it felt plebiscites unfairly favoured German-Austria. The delegation countered that the Marburg basin shared closer ties with southern Styria than with central Styria, and should therefore remain with Yugoslavia.<sup>85</sup> On 26 August, Pasič and the Yugoslav delegation reiterated Marburg’s historic role as the

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<sup>80</sup> “Resolution of the Council of Heads of Delegations regarding the Austro-Yugoslav Boundary”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 389-390.

<sup>81</sup> “Telegram from the Inter-Allied Military Representatives at Klagenfurt relative to the execution of the decision of the conference”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 520.

<sup>82</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 181.

<sup>83</sup> “Memoranda of the Austrian Delegation of June 16, on Styria and Carinthia (a) Memorandum on the Frontiers of Styria”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 385-387.

<sup>84</sup> “Observations of the Austrian Delegation, August 9, 1919, on ‘Part II, Frontiers of Austria,’ in the Allied Conditions of July 20<sup>th</sup>”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 314-319.

<sup>85</sup> “Remarks of the Serb-Croat-Slovene Delegation concerning the remarks presented by the Austrian Delegation on the ‘Peace Conditions’ with Austria in general, insofar as these remarks concern the territorial boundary between Austria and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 395-398.

capital of Slovene-speaking southern Styria, and southern Styria's historic ties as separate from central Styria.<sup>86</sup>

Discussions about Carinthia's frontiers encountered numerous problems because several committees examined the same issue at the same time and reached different conclusions. On 27 August, the US, British, French, and Japanese delegates from the Council of Heads of Delegations announced that they had abandoned the idea of holding a plebiscite in Styria. The Italian delegate "reserved his agreement".<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, the Commission on Romanian and Yugoslav Affairs issued its own report on 28 August, which considered a plebiscite in southern Styria still possible. The British and French delegates in this commission opposed the proposed Marburg basin plebiscite area, arguing that it was arbitrary, politically motivated, and that it divided the Marburg basin. However, both the American and Italian delegates accepted the German-Austrian outline of the Marburg basin plebiscite zone, opposing the British and French proposals "because this arrangement would unbalance the vote in favour of the Jugo-Slavs and would impose a plebiscite upon peoples who do not desire it, and for whom no one has requested it".<sup>88</sup> At the same time, a further resolution by the Council on 29 August confirmed that no plebiscite would be held in Styria.<sup>89</sup> The existence of multiple committees was therefore clearly problematic.

Disagreement broke out between the Allied delegates to the Commission on Yugoslav Affairs over holding a plebiscite in Styria. The British and French delegations continued their opposition to a plebiscite in the Marburg basin, while the US and Italian delegations continued their support. The British and French delegations argued that too many Slovenes lived in the Marburg basin for them to consider awarding the region to German-Austria, and noted that the Central Territorial Commission and the Supreme Council had already ruled out a plebiscite. However, the US and Italian delegations countered these claims, arguing that it was entirely possible that Slovenes would vote in favour of union with German-Austria. The delegations also attacked British and French arguments that a plebiscite would disadvantage the Yugoslavs, arguing instead that "the disadvantages are all on the side of the Austrians". The US and Italian delegations concluded by stressing the value of allowing people to express their self-determination.

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<sup>86</sup> "Note from the Serb-Croate-Slovene Delegation protesting against the plebiscite for Styria", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 400-402.

<sup>87</sup> "Resolutions of the Council of Heads of Delegations on a plebiscite in Styria (a) Resolution of August 27", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 406.

<sup>88</sup> "Report of the Commission on Rumanian and Yugoslav Affairs on the plebiscite in Styria", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 402-403.

<sup>89</sup> "Resolutions of the Council of Heads of Delegations on a plebiscite in Styria (b) Resolution of August 29", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 406.

They proposed that the already established Klagenfurt Plebiscite Commission could also organise and manage a plebiscite in Styria.<sup>90</sup>

The Allied delegations reached a final decision about holding plebiscites in the Marburg basin of Styria on 2 September. The Allied delegations recognised the role played by Germanisation in undermining Slovene language and culture, determining that Slovenes ought to join Yugoslavia. The Allied delegations also argued that the Marburg basin belonged geographically, ethnographically, and economically to Yugoslavia. They felt the dominance of Slovenes in rural areas outweighed the dominance of the German population in urban areas, and that the rural population represented the more natural historic population of the basin. Therefore the Allied delegations decided to assign the Marburg basin to Yugoslavia without a plebiscite.<sup>91</sup>

The Allied delegations viewed the Klagenfurt basin of Carinthia differently however. They regarded the mountains along the south of the Klagenfurt basin as a clear and obvious border with lands to the south, orienting the basin naturally towards German-Austria. However, Slovene minorities existing in the east and south convinced the Allied delegations that a plebiscite was necessary to gauge local sympathies. The Allied delegations therefore adopted the plans earlier proposed to divide the basin into two zones. In their explanation the Allied Powers claimed both zones to be ethnically homogenous, which explained the justification for the zones to be separated for the purposes of the plebiscite.<sup>92</sup>

The Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference took many months to decide how to deal with the frontiers of Carinthia and Styria. Despite much disagreement, the delegations eventually decided to hold a plebiscite in Carinthia. More disagreements occurred regarding the terms of the plebiscite. Other disagreements occurred regarding a possible plebiscite in Styria, but the delegations eventually rejected this proposal and awarded the Marburg basin to Yugoslavia without a plebiscite. After these two decisions had been reached, the Allied delegations handed over control of the Klagenfurt basin to the newly created Klagenfurt Plebiscite Commission, which would organise the plebiscite.

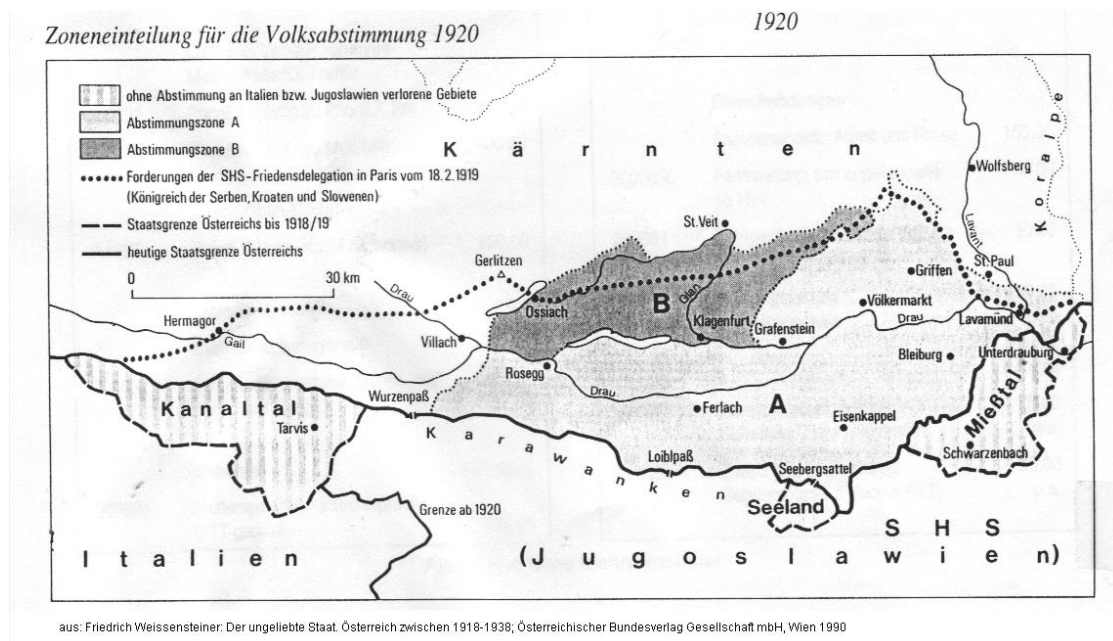
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<sup>90</sup> "Report of the Commission on Rumanian and Yugoslav Affairs on the plebiscite in Styria", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 403-405.

<sup>91</sup> "Reply of the Allied and Associated Powers on September 2, 1919, to the Observations of the Austrian Delegation on the Question of the Boundary between Austria and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 409-410.

<sup>92</sup> "Reply of the Allied and Associated Powers on September 2, 1919, to the Observations of the Austrian Delegation on the Question of the Boundary between Austria and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 410-411.

### Zone Divisions for the Carinthian Plebiscite<sup>93</sup>



### Organising Self-Determination

The Treaty of St. Germain, signed on 10 September 1919, confirmed that a plebiscite would determine the new border in Carinthia separating Austria and Yugoslavia. Article 49 of the Treaty outlined the resolution of the Klagenfurt basin, stating: “The inhabitants of the Klagenfurt area will be called upon, to the extent stated below, to indicate by a vote the State to which they wish the territory to belong”. Allied delegates appointed the members of the Klagenfurt Plebiscite Commission in April 1920, with British army officer Sydney Capel Peck as President.<sup>94</sup> Britain, France, Italy, Austria, and Yugoslavia each had one representative in the commission, while the US abstained.<sup>95</sup> Prior to the plebiscite, Carinthia would be under the control of the Plebiscite Commission, “entrusted with the duty of preparing the plebiscite in that area and running the impartial administration thereof”. In the meantime, the Austrian government remained responsible for the administration of Zone B and the Yugoslav government for Zone A.<sup>96</sup>

On arrival in Klagenfurt on 21 July 1920, the representatives of the Plebiscite Commission announced their intention “to preside over a work of wisdom and justice”.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Voting Areas in Carinthia 1920, cited from <http://www.geschichteinchronologie.ch/eu/oe/karten-oesterreich.html>

<sup>94</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 184.

<sup>95</sup> Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 528.

<sup>96</sup> “Text of the Territorial and Political Clauses of the Treaty of St. Germain, with preceding drafts”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*), 138-141; see also “Extract from Part III of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associate Powers and Austria, signed at St. Germain-en-Laye, September 10, 1919”, in Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, vol. II, 124-126.

<sup>97</sup> “Proklamation an die Bevölkerung des Kärntner Abstimmungsgebietes”, in Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*: vol. II, 128-129.



Peck initially sought to rectify problems created by the demilitarisation of the Klagenfurt basin. The Plebiscite Commission sought to free up the movement of goods and displaced persons between the two zones, and return confiscated property to their original owners.<sup>98</sup> The Commission eventually succeeding in reopening the border between the two zones, an action which both the Yugoslavs and French opposed for fears it would strengthen Austria's campaign.<sup>99</sup> On 3 August 1920 the Austrian government removed barriers between the two zones. In response, the Yugoslav government reinforced their garrisons, prevented refugees from crossing back into Zone A, temporarily imprisoning some 3000, and also stopped British and Italian trucks from transporting food north to Klagenfurt..<sup>100</sup>

Efforts by the Plebiscite Commission to improve security in the Klagenfurt basin reflected previous outbreaks of violence. A Carinthian administrator complained of increasing Yugoslav violence in Zone A as early as 7 September 1919, prior to the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain. The Yugoslav government refused to agree to Allied demands placed on it in Zone A, including the withdrawal of troops. According to the unnamed administrator, Yugoslav troops continued to conduct a "reign of tyranny" in Zone A of the Klagenfurt basin, ultimately claiming it would be impossible for the population "to express their true wishes by a plebiscite". The Yugoslav government had also continued to deport German-speaking officials and citizens from Zone A, and refused to permit displaced German-speakers who had fled Zone A during the fighting to return. As a solution, the Carinthian Provincial Government requested that forces from the Allied Powers occupy the entirety of the Klagenfurt basin until after the plebiscite.<sup>101</sup> The Commission asked for a month in absence of troops prior to the plebiscite, and insisted on evacuation by 10 September so the plebiscite could be held 10 October. Yugoslavs began withdrawing troops on 1 September 1920, completed by 14 September. However, some remained behind in a civilian capacity.<sup>102</sup>

Demilitarisation succeeded in calming events in the Klagenfurt basin until immediately prior to the plebiscite. On 26 September 1920, a Yugoslav gendarme attacked an Italian officer in Bleiburg/Pliberk in southern Carinthia. The Italian officer had attempted to calm an excited crowd when the incident occurred. The Klagenfurt Commission feared that, given the limited forces it had under its command, it would be

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<sup>98</sup> "Note from the British Embassy regarding a note from the President of the Plebiscite Commission of Klagenfurt to the Conference of Ambassadors", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 524-528.

<sup>99</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 185-186.

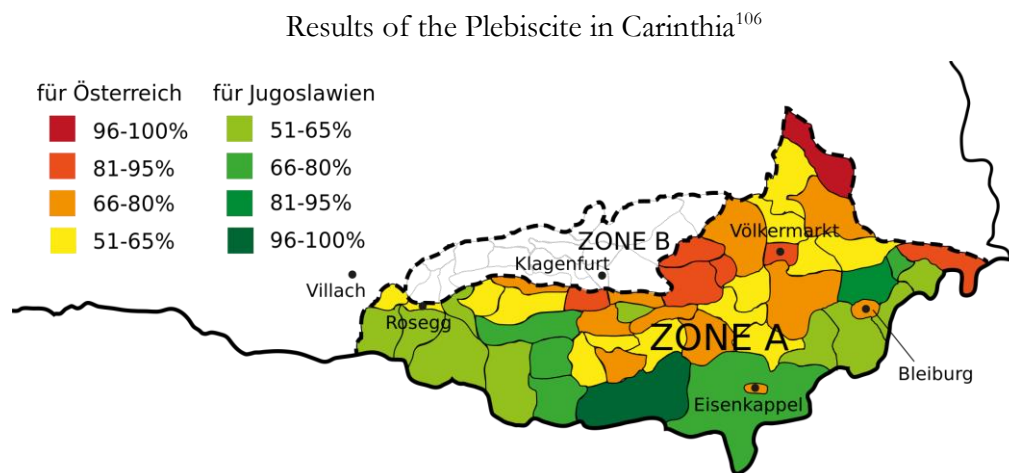
<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 188-190.

<sup>101</sup> "Communication from the Administrator of Carinthia to the Inter-Allied Commission at Klagenfurt concerning the plebiscite", in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 521-523.

<sup>102</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 191.

unable to guarantee that order could be restored and maintained by 10 October, the planned date of the plebiscite, or even by 16 October, the latest date the plebiscite could be held. The Klagenfurt Commission therefore proposed sending 300 additional troops each from Italy, France, and Britain to ensure the smooth running of the plebiscite. The Austrian government also asked for additional officers to be present on the date of the plebiscite.<sup>103</sup>

Despite Allied intervention, Yugoslav officials and military forces continued attempts to influence the outcome of the plebiscite. Peck reported on 30 September 1920, less than two weeks before the plebiscite, that Maister remained in the plebiscite zone and continued to spread propaganda, despite the demilitarisation of the zones. The commission asked that he return immediately to Belgrade. Additionally, Peck reported that, although the Yugoslav military had officially withdrawn from Zone A, many soldiers had remained behind in civilian clothing.<sup>104</sup> Almond and Lutz report that, “between May 22, 1919, and October 16, 1920, the Austrian Delegation sent at least forty-one separate notes to the Peace Conference protesting against Serb-Croat-Slovene activities in Carinthia and Styria, especially in Klagenfurt and the region of Radkersburg”.<sup>105</sup> Yet despite their efforts, Yugoslav actions failed to disrupt the plebiscite.



The Klagenfurt plebiscite proceeded as planned on 10 October 1920. Mattern and Wambaugh report a different number of total votes, but both agree that roughly 59 percent of voters in Zone A voted in favour of union with Austria.<sup>107</sup> The fact that Zone

<sup>103</sup> “Telegram from Colonel Peck to Lord Derby relative to situation at Klagenfurt”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 530.

<sup>104</sup> “Telegram from Colonel Peck to Lord Derby, Klagenfurt, September 30, 1920, concerning events in the plebiscite zone”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 531.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Results of the Plebiscite in Carinthia, cited from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/59/Volkabstimmung\\_K%C3%A4rnten\\_1920.svg/2000px-Volkabstimmung\\_K%C3%A4rnten\\_1920.svg.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/59/Volkabstimmung_K%C3%A4rnten_1920.svg/2000px-Volkabstimmung_K%C3%A4rnten_1920.svg.png)

<sup>107</sup> Mattern, *The Employment of the Plebiscite*, 150; Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 198-200.

A voted in favour of union with Austria meant a plebiscite in Zone B was not necessary. The Klagenfurt Plebiscite Commission issued a final report on the plebiscite on 27 October 1920. The Commission reported no problems on voting day, and expressed surprise at the 96 percent voter turnout. Although the “scrutiny” of the votes continued until 13 October, the Commission had encountered no problems. Similarly, both the Yugoslav and Austrian representatives on the Plebiscite Commission, Jovan Jovanović and Albert Peter-Pirkham, accepted the results.<sup>108</sup> Jovanović later admitted that no irregularities has occurred during the plebiscite.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the outcome of the plebiscite, Yugoslav troops and police immediately began reoccupying the Klagenfurt basin on 13 October. A Yugoslav representative informed the Commission that he had given the order to reoccupy the basin because he felt the plebiscite had been “disadvantageous for us”. The Klagenfurt Commission ordered the Yugoslav troops withdraw immediately.<sup>110</sup> The Commission reiterated the importance of Yugoslav troops withdrawing from the basin, requesting that the Ambassador’s Conference take action to achieve this.<sup>111</sup> Yugoslav actions throughout the border dispute negotiations only further supported German-Austrian claims that much of the Slovene population supported union with Austria.

The Commission argued that one of the reasons for the success of the plebiscite resulted from the fact that the Austrian and Yugoslav governments both felt confident of success.<sup>112</sup> Austria’s victory surprised the Yugoslav government because this meant “10,000 Slovene-speaking voters and twenty-one of the predominantly Slovene communes had voted for Austria”. Wambaugh also notes that: “There can be no doubt that the plebiscite was conclusive, for the advantage in Zone I [A] lay with Yugoslavia through the fact that the administrative officials and the laws in force there were her own”. Overconfidence meant that neither side seriously sought to undermine the plebiscite, allowing for free expression of self-determination by the inhabitants of the Klagenfurt basin. Wambaugh suggests that the result of the plebiscite hinged on the indifferent 20 percent of the population, largely composed of ethnic Slovenes. Wambaugh argues that this group voted overwhelmingly for Austria primarily for economic reasons and out of loyalty to Carinthia and Austria. Voters were also swayed because the capital of

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<sup>108</sup> “Report of the Commission to the Supreme Council on the taking of the vote in Zone I”, in Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, vol. II, 159-162.

<sup>109</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 200.

<sup>110</sup> “Telegram from Colonel Peck to Lord Derby regarding the results of the plebiscite”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 531-532.

<sup>111</sup> “Decipher of telegram from Colonel Peck, Klagenfurt, to Lord Derby concerning the evacuation of the plebiscite zone by the Serb-Croat-Slovene troops”, in Almond and Lutz, ed., *The Treaty of St. Germain*, 532-533.

<sup>112</sup> “Report of the Commission to the Supreme Council on the taking of the vote in Zone I”, in Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, vol. II, 162.

Yugoslavia was in Belgrade rather than Ljubljana or Zagreb, the majority of its citizens were Orthodox and not Catholics, and because Yugoslavia had implemented military conscription. Wambaugh also suggests that the violence of Yugoslavia's occupation of Carinthia dissuaded many Slovenes.<sup>113</sup>

## Conclusion

The case of Carinthia differed in many ways from German Bohemia and Vorarlberg during the same period. In German Bohemia, the Allied delegations had decided on the borders of Czechoslovakia even before the war had ended, and therefore found it easy to refuse German Bohemian requests for self-determination. Despite Vorarlberg's plebiscite, the Allied delegations also found it easy to ignore Vorarlberg's requests for self-determination. Plebiscites in German Bohemia and Vorarlberg risked Allied support for Czechoslovakia and Austria, respectively. Meanwhile, the result of the Carinthian plebiscite did not threaten Austria's existence, nor could it substantially change the size and power of Yugoslavia.

Allied delegations made an important contribution to the successful implementation of Carinthian self-determination. Both Strong and Wambaugh argue that Italian support for Austrian claims in Carinthia resulted not from any feelings of friendship, but rather because Yugoslav territorial claims threatened Italian strategic interests. Supporting Austria proved to be the most effective way for Italy to counter Yugoslav aims at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>114</sup> The Miles Missions report crucially influenced US delegates to support self-determination in Carinthia as well. The influence of US delegates ultimately helped to convince the other delegations to support a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt basin.<sup>115</sup>

The Allied Powers approached the situation in Carinthia far differently than they did in Bohemia. The Czechoslovak political leadership proved to be far more effective and persuasive than the Yugoslav delegation. Indecision resulting from the more contested claims led the Allied delegations to grant German-Austria a plebiscite in Carinthia, despite strong Yugoslav objections. Unlike in Vorarlberg, the Allied delegations at the Peace Conference regarded the plebiscite in Carinthia as binding, and based the new frontier borders on the wishes of the local population. Carinthia therefore represents a

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<sup>113</sup> Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 200-204.

<sup>114</sup> Strong, *Austria*, 219; Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 171.

<sup>115</sup> For more on the US delegation's support for a plebiscite in Carinthia, see: Claudia Kromer [Fräss-Ehrfeld], *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und die Frage Kärnten 1918-1920* (Klagenfurt: Geschichtsverein für Kärnten, 1970); Claudia Fräss-Ehrfeld [Kromer], "The Role of the United States of America and the Carinthian Question, 1918-1920", *Slovene Studies Journal* 8, no. 1 (1986), 7-13.

unique case in that the Allied delegations accepted requests to hold a plebiscite, and accepted the results of the plebiscite as a legitimate expression of self-determination on which to determine political borders, unlike the two cases in German Bohemia and Vorarlberg. Despite the difficulties and complications of the Carinthian frontier, history suggests that the majority of people have subsequently supported the decision made in 1920. As Franz Cede argues, the plebiscite in Carinthia represents an example “in support of the argument that disputes over borders in ethnically mixed areas can be managed though the means of direct democracy”.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Franz Cede, “The Plebiscites in Carinthia and Sopron-Ödenburg after World War I — two Cases of Direct Democracy in Action”, in W. Marxer, ed., *Direct Democracy and Minorities* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), 15-21.

## Conclusion

Despite the ubiquitous rhetoric of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, Allied delegations rarely relied on local self-determination when creating new borders. In contrast to Manela's claims of a "Wilsonian Moment" in 1919, this moment more accurately represented the failure to implement Wilsonian principles. Allied delegations never seriously sought to implement self-determination on a just and even basis. On the one occasion where Allied delegations did implement self-determination, in Carinthia, it proved to be a great success. Allied delegates instead looked to the post-war balance of power, and applied whichever justifications benefitted them the most in each case they examined. Rarely were the same arguments made in different cases, highlighting the inconsistency of decision-making at the Paris Peace Conference. Allied delegations admittedly faced pressures from a number of sources, such as their own domestic populations. Nevertheless, had the principle of self-determination been implemented evenly in 1919, with plebiscites permitted in all disputed regions, the Paris Peace Conference might have resulted in the true "World Revolution" which Masaryk had envisioned.

The failure of Allied delegates at the Peace Conference to implement self-determination in 1919 prompted notable criticism from Albert Schweitzer, 1952 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Schweitzer argues that the delegates at the peace conference "could not aspire to establishing relations between peoples on a just and proper basis". Allied delegates instead focussed on preventing "the most unreasonable of the demands made by the victors from becoming reality", promoting compromise wherever disagreements arose.<sup>117</sup> The difficult circumstances of the post-war period forced Allied delegates to balance competing and often contradictory goals. While they might have sought to implement national self-determination universally, they also conceded that the people of the victorious countries demanded harsh treatment of certain groups because of the war.

The Allied delegations ultimately failed to balance their competing obligations. The delegates gave too much weight to their own interests, those of their state, and those of states they supported. According to Schweitzer,

Not enough thought was given to the realities of historical fact and, consequently, to what is just and beneficial... Historical reality is trampled

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<sup>117</sup> Albert Schweitzer, "Nobel Lecture: The Price of Peace", cited from: [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1952/schweitzer-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1952/schweitzer-lecture.html)

underfoot if, when two peoples have rival historical claims to the same country, the claims of only one are recognized.

Despite the potential for self-determination to create what Schweitzer refers to as “a just and objective solution”, Allied delegations at the Paris Peace Conference were either prevented or refused from pursuing such a solution.<sup>118</sup> Gullberg argues that, “[i]ronically, the doctrine of self-determination had become a leading principle in the peace process precisely through the traditional diplomatic games that Wilson wished to eradicate”. Gullberg argues instead that self-determination was used only as a “prop”.<sup>119</sup> Allied delegates did not necessarily reject self-determination outright, but abandoned it often to favour alternative criteria. Despite idealistic rhetoric, the final Austrian frontier determined at the Paris Peace Conference suggests that Allied delegates routinely favoured strategic arguments over self-determination.

In the three cases examined in this thesis, self-determination as determined by plebiscite was implemented only in Carinthia. Allied delegates refused German Bohemian claims to self-determination in the Czech lands and ignored the results of Vorarlberg’s plebiscite to join Switzerland. In Carinthia, Allied delegations allowed a plebiscite to verify Carinthian political loyalties, and the implementation of this self-determination resulted in a more successful resolution of local borders. The new Carinthian border therefore uniquely reflected the desires of the local population. In both German Bohemia and Vorarlberg, by contrast, Allied delegations refused to allow German Bohemians to express their political sympathies in a plebiscite and refused equal weight to Vorarlberg representatives to present their case for self-determination.

Allied delegates frequently cited strategic justification in their decision-making, especially referring to historic, geographic, and economic arguments. Historic arguments proved particularly popular when assigning territory at the Paris Peace Conference. Claims to historic borders proved very subjective, however, and in all three cases historic justifications could arguably have been used to support both sides of the same argument. Allied delegates also selectively invoked geographic justifications. The strategic location of mountains and rivers were routinely cited in some cases but ignored in others, and economic arguments concerning the locations of railways and dams were similarly applied in some cases more than others.

The German-Austrian delegation noticed such inconsistencies but lacked the political strength to present its counter-claims, negotiating often from a position of

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Gullberg, *State, Territory and Identity*, 191-192.

weakness. David Strong argues that the German-Austrian government failed to press its claims out of fears that Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia would cut off supplies of food and fuel. According to Strong, “[t]his dependence upon the neighbors for food forced German-Austrians to adopt a meticulously legal attitude toward territorial questions”.<sup>120</sup> Restraint meant the German-Austrian delegation failed in pressing its claims in German-Bohemia, but not in Carinthia. However, the German-Austrian delegation could argue against Vorarlberg’s union with Switzerland from a much stronger position, as it was able to attract the support of Allied delegations which feared the collapse of the German-Austrian state.

Internal conflict within the German-Austrian delegation at the Conference directed the focus of its negotiations away from self-determination for German Bohemia and Vorarlberg. Although the German-Austrian government offered support to Lodgman and Ender’s efforts on behalf of German Bohemia and Vorarlberg prior to the Peace Conference, the German-Austrian delegation opposed these efforts once the Peace Conference had begun. The German-Austrian delegation worried that support for Lodgman would compromise its claims on the Bohemian Woods and German South Moravia, while support for Ender would only encourage separatist movements elsewhere in German-Austria. The German-Austrian delegation’s support for Carinthia meant that Carinthia’s representatives had little need to make an impression at the conference. Such unequal support between representatives suggests that the German-Austrian delegation decided to pick its battles carefully.

The contrast between the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav delegations illustrates how decisions at the Conference were rendered. The Yugoslav delegation simply failed to generate as much support for its cause as the Czechoslovak delegation. The charisma of Masaryk and Beneš proved greatly beneficial to Czechoslovakia, while Pašić was unable to generate similar support for Yugoslavia. Instead, Yugoslavia’s conflict with Italy over disputed territories in Carniola and Istria meant that the Italian delegation at the Conference used its influence to support German-Austrian claims on Carinthia. Greater Allied support for the Czechoslovak delegation in the Czech lands, meanwhile, meant German Bohemian representatives won support only from the German-Austrian delegation, and even this proved limited. In Carinthia, therefore, the Italian delegation became an important ally to the German-Austrian delegation, while German Bohemian representatives found no such support.

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<sup>120</sup> Strong, *Austria*, 155-156.



Local German-speaking indifference towards self-determination also somewhat eroded the mandate of their representatives at the Peace Conference. Although German Bohemian politicians stressed the unity of German Bohemian sentiment, widespread indifference for self-determination helped to limit Allied sympathy for German Bohemian self-determination. Both Vorarlbergers and Carinthian Germans, however, overwhelmingly supported their representatives, pressuring the Allied delegations to support self-determination in Vorarlberg and Carinthia. The crucial distinction between these two regions, therefore, is that the German-Austrian delegation convinced the Allied delegations to later abandon their support for Vorarlberg's self-determination. Of the three cases, the German-Austrian delegation received support both from the local population and the Allied delegations only in Carinthia, which explains why they won support for a binding plebiscite.

Czechoslovak, Swiss, and Slovenian public opinion also influenced Allied delegations at the Conference. German Bohemian politicians considered their province to be a German one, which prevented any possible support from local Czechoslovaks who might otherwise have supported an autonomous German Bohemian province. Efforts to achieve self-determination in Vorarlberg and Carinthia were meanwhile encouraged by substantial support from the Swiss and Carinthian Slovene populations. The Swiss Federal Council's initial openness to union with Vorarlberg allowed the Allied delegations to offer their support. However, after the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain, the Federal Council maintained its neutrality after repeated requests by Vorarlbergers for union, which meant Allied support evaporated. Carinthian Slovene sympathies with the German-Austrian state, made prominent at the Peace Conference by the Miles Mission, helped persuade the US delegation in particular that Slovenes did not automatically favour union with Yugoslavia. The US delegation subsequently convinced the other Allied delegations that a plebiscite should determine the borders of Carinthia. No evidence suggested a similar Styrian Slovene affinity with German-Austria, perhaps explaining the lack of success for a plebiscite in Styria.

Decisions reached at the Paris Peace Conference have had great political significance in subsequent years. Events outside the period 1918-1920 lie beyond the scope of this thesis, but the borders of German Bohemia and Vorarlberg have both been revisited since the decisions reached at the Paris Peace Conference. Disputes over the status of German Bohemia caused more than a decade of violent conflict between Germans and Czechoslovaks. Although Vorarlberg's borders have remained stable since 1919, recent polls suggest that half of Vorarlbergers continue to favour union with

Switzerland.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, the Carinthian border has enjoyed lasting stability. Wambaugh notes that Carinthian Slovenes in 1930 focused on cultural autonomy within Austria rather than separation, suggesting the success of self-determination in 1920.<sup>122</sup> The Carinthian plebiscite therefore represents a rare instance of successfully implemented self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, an ideal which the Paris Peace Conference promised but ultimately failed to deliver.

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<sup>121</sup> “Jeder zweite Vorarlberger wäre lieber Schweizer”, *Tages Anzeiger* (11 June 2010), cited from <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/Jeder-zweite-Vorarlberger-waere-lieber-Schweizer/story/26084604>.

<sup>122</sup> Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*, vol. I (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), 204.

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