"BETTER THE FIRING SQUAD THAN THE MINE SHAFT": THE RISE AND FALL OF MILITARIZED LABOR DISCIPLINE IN A MORAVIAN MINING DISTRICT, 1914-1916

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ABSTRACT

JOHN DAVID ROBERTSON: “Better the Firing Squad than the Mine Shaft”: The Rise and Fall of Militarized Labor Discipline in a Moravian Mining District, 1914-1916 (Under the direction of Chad Bryant)

This essay argues that a system of militarized labor discipline meant to mobilize the economic potential of the Habsburg state during wartime broke down in the Ostrava-Karviná district in the spring of 1916, and that this breakdown was one facet of the failure of Habsburg attempts to construct a managerial state during the First World War. Labor mobilization was undermined by privation, and thus after 1916 militarized labor discipline began to reduce the state's capacity to mobilize labor. The increasing tension between unbearable wartime conditions and untenable military demands, in the Ostrava-Karviná district as in the Monarchy as a whole, drove the population to act against the state. The mining population's alienation from the state as well as from the war effort also challenged the legitimacy of the state's power to direct and mobilize its citizenry, and thus influenced the Monarchy's collapse.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for the successful completion of this thesis. For his constant encouragement, assistance, and willingness to read a seemingly endless series of drafts, I am very grateful to Dr. Chad Bryant. For much valued assistance in the Kriegsarchiv, Hofrat Dr. Christoph Tepperberg will always have my gratitude. I would also like to thank my parents, for always supporting my curiosity, J. Kyle Doyle, for being my rock, and Kimberly Kutz, for keeping me sane.
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I. Introduction

On a bitterly cold February day in 1916, the directors of the various mining companies operating in the Ostrava-Karviná coal district met in Moravská Ostrava, the region's administrative center. The mood was dour and the agenda grim. Food was running out. Austria-Hungary in general was facing a hunger crisis, and Ostrava-Karviná was not to be spared. The next harvest was far in the future. There was nothing else to do but to hope for external assistance. To that end, the directors of the coal district's various mining operations sent an appeal to the Imperial-Royal Ministry for Public Works with a simple message – without food, the miners could not and would not work. Their appeal concluded with the prophetic phrase “haste is in this question urgently necessary, as otherwise the course of events in the coal district will present us with a situation that we may no longer master.” The Ministry of Public Works ignored their appeal, and a series of strikes swept Ostrava-Karviná slightly over a month later.

This essay will seek to demonstrate that the system of militarized labor discipline meant to mobilize the war-making potential of the Habsburg state broke down in the Ostrava-Karviná district in the spring of 1916, and that this breakdown was one facet of the failure of Habsburg attempts to construct a managerial state capable of mobilizing all of its resources for war. Initial success in labor mobilization was undermined by the experience of privation. The Ostrava-Karviná strike wave in March and April of 1916

represented an inflection point at which militarized labor discipline began to reduce rather than increase the state's capacity to mobilize labor. Labor mobilization then transitioned from the original system of administrative coercion into piecemeal displays of open violence.

The Ostrava-Karviná district offers a unique window into the success and failure of Habsburg labor mobilization in the First World War, and can reveal much about the Habsburg war effort and its failures. The stresses which the coal district experienced in the First World War were particular to itself but also reflected larger trends. The district was a vital area for Habsburg industry and arms production, and an area long racked by sometimes violent labor unrest. A borderland both ethnically and geographically, Ostrava-Karviná was exposed to Russian invasion and populated by Czech miners, Galician laborers, and German businessmen. Exposed to enemy invasion, populated largely by Slavic peoples, and vital to the war effort, the district's labor was more quickly and more thoroughly militarized than anywhere else in the Monarchy. Its industrial character and geographical separation from agricultural supplies both heightened and accelerated the privation brought about by the First World War. The Czech and Polish working classes were also subject to the widespread anti-Slavic persecution launched and organized by the Habsburg military.

The system of militarized labor discipline imposed on the district at the beginning of the First World War was a legal regime under which labor service became equivalent, in the legal sense, with military service. Motivated by the need to mobilize citizenry on behalf of the war effort and driven by the Habsburg military's grandiose conceptions of military necessity, this framework of militarized labor discipline relied on a regularized
system of administrative coercion characterized by legality enforced by military justice. The threat of violence conjoined with the promise of substinence generally sufficed to maintain labor discipline. This system was zealously enforced by a military establishment pre-disposed to radical solutions and contemptuous of the citizens of the Habsburg state. The 1916 strike wave brought the tension between privation and labor discipline to a head and demonstrated the difficulty of labor mobilization in the face of privation and the limits of coercion. Functionally loyal subjects, radicalized by suffering and deprivation, sought relief from the state. Railway cars immediately clattered into motion, filled not with food but instead with armed men tasked with restoring loyalty by force. The collision of the security of the individual and the security of the state became real not only for the soldier on the front lines but also for the laborer hewing coal. After the 1916 strike wave, the miners of Ostrava-Karviná would mobilize themselves against the war effort instead of being mobilized by the state for it.

The increasing importance of Ostrava-Karviná's anthracite, and the increasing pressure to control the miners, can be found in the nature of total war. Following Roger Chickering, I understand total war to mean the “systematic erasure of distinctions between the military and civilian spheres...Civilians were as critical to the outcome...as were soldiers. Homefronts were essential to the material and moral support of armies, navies, and air forces.”\(^2\) Navigating the frequently conflicting and always complicated demands of maintaining both civilian morale and industrial productivity became equally as important as success in the field. The allied blockade, the overwhelming fact of the economic life of the Central Powers, forced the Monarchy to provide almost entirely for

itself. It created a kind of involuntary autarky.³

The food crisis in the Habsburg Monarchy during the First World War has been well-covered.⁴ Coal shortages, though, have not been equally well treated. In this era, it was a truism that “[p]owerful nations...must possess powerful armaments, and coal is essential to the manufacture of armaments. Without coal the manufacture of iron and steel on a large scale is impracticable, and the by-products of coal distillation are necessary for the production of high explosives.”⁵ Coal's crucial role in the economy as the foundation of both war and civilian industrial production as well as transportation and heat gave it a much greater importance than any other commodity excepting foodstuffs.⁶ Unlike foodstuffs, though, coal required heavy investments in extractive technology and expertise restricted to a very limited geographical area. The Habsburg state sought to control coal as it sought to control food production, but the structural factors involved in coal mining gave the state much wider latitude in its efforts. Why and how it sought to do so, though, remains as of yet mostly unexplored.⁷

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³. Food, raw materials, and industrial products were occasionally available for purchase from Italy, Switzerland, or Romania, but never in sufficient quantities and less and less was available as the war went on, especially following Italy and Romania's entries into the war on the side of the Entente.


⁶. Economic histories of the Habsburg Monarchy have recently tended to argue that the Habsburg economy was in fact stronger, more developed, and more efficient than previously thought, such as David Good, The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). The only study on the Habsburg economy during the First World War argues that transportation inefficiencies and irrationalities were ultimately responsible for the Monarchy's economic collapse in 1918, though he does concede that coal limitations impacted the Habsburg economy. See Robert J. Wegs, Die Österreichische Kriegswirtschaft, 1914-1918, trans. Heinrich Mezlik (Vienna: Verlag A. Schendel, 1979).

⁷. A number of Czech historians have investigated labor movements, but they tended to focus on the
The Habsburg state's attempts to mobilize its population on behalf of the war effort has received some scholarly attention. Maureen Healy's study of wartime Vienna demonstrated that material deprivation in the form of endemic malnutrition played an important role in breaking down loyalty to the Habsburg state.\(^8\) Richard Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner, and Arnold Suppan similarly argue that material deprivation and hunger led the Habsburg army to transition from a loyal to a revolutionary position in the last year of the Monarchy's existence, and that the loss of the military brought down the state.\(^9\) Cristoph Führ has argued that the Habsburg Army High Command met some limited success in their efforts to use the wide powers to mobilize Habsburg society granted to it at the beginning of the First World War to implement a radical German nationalist and centralist agenda.\(^10\) Mark Cornwall argued that the Habsburg militarization of society during the First World War was responsible for delegitimating the war effort and preventing a secondary mobilization.\(^11\)

This secondary mobilization, launched or attempted by all of the belligerent states in the First World War, was a constellation of efforts aimed at rationalizing and and

\(^8\) Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).


mobilizing economic production, manpower, and organization beyond the measures taken at the beginning of the war. It sought to place every resource of the state and its citizens at the service of the war effort.

What is lacking in this literature is an examination of how the interaction of material privation and the militarization of society influenced the Habsburg state's ability to mobilize its resources behind the war effort. The interplay of these two factors provides a much fuller explanation than either alone. As Isabel Hull and Vejas Liulevicius have demonstrated in the context of Imperial Germany, the institutions and practices of the military tend towards irrational and counterproductive applications of violence, whether in open battle or within a dynamic of occupation.¹² These behaviors were not unique to the Wilhelmine Empire, and the interplay between military discipline and material privation in the Ostrava-Karviná district, as in the Monarchy as a whole, begs elucidation. Both factors played a part in the breakdown of the system of militarized labor discipline in the Ostrava-Karviná district.

Chapter One will address the geographic and demographic particulars of the Ostrava-Karviná district and the importance of the coal mining industry in Austria-Hungary. Chapter Two will address the original mobilization of the coal district's labor force in its transition from peacetime labor relations to a system of militarized labor discipline at the beginning of the First World War. Chapter Three will investigate the origins and course of the strike wave of 1916, and the military response. The fourth and final chapter will address the debate among the civilian and military authorities.

Figure 1. Areas under Military Administration in the Habsburg Monarchy. Source: Healy, Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 6.
II. Of Lands and Peoples: Geography and Demography

In Austria-Hungary, as in other industrial states, coal deposits and their surrounding areas became crucial centers of industrial production and economic activity. Russian industry was, for example, heavily concentrated in the Donbrawa and Donetz basins, French industry in the coal basins of northern France, British industry in the Midlands, and German industry in the Ruhr, the Saar, and upper Silesia.\textsuperscript{13} Accidents of nature and geography situated the vast majority of Austria-Hungary's coal in Bohemia and Moravia. Minor quantities were scattered throughout the remainder of the Austrian lands.\textsuperscript{14} Bohemia and Moravia accordingly became home to the most important industrial centers under Habsburg rule, especially in terms of heavy industry. The Škoda works in Plzeň and the Vítkovice steel conglomerate in Ostrava were noteworthy in this regard.\textsuperscript{15}

Austria-Hungary's coal deposits were much smaller than those of the other great powers. Only about three quarters of Austria's coal demands were met through domestic production in 1913, with the vast majority of the deficit covered through German imports.\textsuperscript{16} The types of coal available exacerbated this weakness, as the majority of Austrian coal was the considerably less valuable soft or 'brown' coal (lignite) rather than the much preferred hard or 'stone' coal (anthracite). Although Austrian lignite deposits

\textsuperscript{13} Clarke, "The Influence of Fuel," 110.

\textsuperscript{14} Emil Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich während des Krieges} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925). II-III.

\textsuperscript{15} The Škoda works in Plzeň were fed by the Plzeň-Mies anthracite basin, while Vítkovice was supplied from its shafts in the Ostrava-Karviná district.

\textsuperscript{16} Wegs, \textit{Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft}, 21; Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich}, XXII.
were of a considerably higher grade than was typical in Europe, Austrian lignite was still
less than half as energetic as anthracite, even though it constituted almost two thirds of
yearly Austrian coal output.\textsuperscript{17} Anthracite was critical to steel production, and the Austrian
iron and steel industry devoured virtually the entire domestic Austrian anthracite yield
yearly.\textsuperscript{18}

The most important anthracite field in Austria-Hungary was the Ostrava-Karviná
basin. Divided between northeastern Moravia and Austrian Silesia, it was one of the
richest in Europe.\textsuperscript{19} Centered around the municipality of Moravská Ostrava, the Ostrava-
Karviná basin encompassed thirty-nine mines with a yearly yield of over nine million
tons of high-grade anthracite, a number of coking works with a yearly output of over two
million tons of coke, and the Vítkovice steel works, Austria-Hungary's most important
steel producer.\textsuperscript{20} The coal mines employed 38,493 workers in 1913, with the coking
plants employing an additional 4,490.\textsuperscript{21} The total population of the basin area was
approximately one hundred and twenty thousand, including dependents, and as such over
a third of the population was directly involved in coal production.\textsuperscript{22} Miners and their
families were not, as a rule, allowed any sort of garden plot, though approximately a fifth

\textsuperscript{17} Wegs, \textit{Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft}, 16; Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in
Österreich}, I. 27,461 tons of lignite in 1913 vs 16,336 tons of anthracite.

\textsuperscript{18} Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich}, II; Richard Riedl, \textit{Die Industrie Österreichs

\textsuperscript{19} Norman J. G. Pounds, “The Spread of Mining in the Coal Basin of Upper Silesia and Northern
district was located over the same coal field as the German industrial conurbation of Upper Silesia.

\textsuperscript{20} Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich}, 1. Production numbers referenced are from
1913 figures.

\textsuperscript{21} Homann-Herimberg, \textit{Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich}, XXX.

\textsuperscript{22} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6\textsuperscript{a}, 1916.
117,000 people in 1916.
of the steel workers at the nearby Vítkovice Iron Works were so-called "iron peasants" who supplemented their factory labor with agricultural production.23

The First World War only increased the importance of the Ostrava-Karviná basin. The Austrian Minister of the Interior had urged stockpiling coal supplies as a precaution before the outbreak of the war, but nothing of significance had been done before August rendered the question moot.24 The outbreak of the war and the imposition of a near-total allied blockade against the Central Powers cut off most external coal supplies, but coal imports from outside of the Central Powers bloc were virtually non-existent before the war, and the disappearance of the small quantities of imported British coal shipped through Trieste had little impact. German anthracite exports to Austria fell drastically, and alternative sources of foreign supply capable of compensating for the drop in German exports were not available.25

At the beginning of the war the Silesian half of the district was placed under military law as part of the Zone of Army Operations on the Russian front, and large numbers of workers crucial to coal production took up rifles and rucksacks and went off to fight the foes of the Habsburgs. The War Ministry, though, was cognizant of the centrality of the Ostrava-Karviná area to the Monarchy's coal production and had thus arranged that in the district those men liable to militia service but not liable to


24. Wegs, Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft, 81.

25. Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, XXII. German anthracite exports to Austria dropped from 10,351,000 tons in 1913 to 7,896,000 tons in 1914 and 7,449,000 tons in 1915, a drop of almost 25%.
conscription were not inducted into the army.\textsuperscript{26} Even after such arrangements, the Ostrava-Karviná coal basin sent approximately a quarter (24.6\%) of its mining population into the army during the initial mobilization.\textsuperscript{27} Despite attempts to broaden the labor pool through use of female and POW labor, available labor was never again to reach 1913 levels.\textsuperscript{28} Increased working hours and Sunday and holiday labor, however, led to significant increases in per-worker coal output. By 1915 coal production in the Ostrava-Karviná basin actually surpassed 1913 production figures, though anthracite production in Austria as a whole remained slightly below 1913 figures until 1916. This increase came entirely through longer shifts and the elimination of free days.\textsuperscript{29}

Demographically, the Ostrava-Karviná basin was composed of roughly equal proportions of Czechs and Poles, the vast majority of whom were immigrants. The Polish population stemmed chiefly from Galicia, and the Czech population was drawn from all over Moravia and eastern Bohemia.\textsuperscript{30} According to a local police councillor's report filed in late 1914, those Germans who lived in the coal district were mostly engaged in management and other white collar occupations, but their numbers were few and their political activity was negligible. Their allegiance was primarily to the Liberals (predominantly the Jewish population) or to German nationalist parties. The working

\textsuperscript{26} Die Regelung der ArbeitsVerhältnisse im Kriege, ed. Ferdinand Hanusch and Emanuel Adler (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky). 177.

\textsuperscript{27} Wegs, Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft, 84.

\textsuperscript{28} Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, XXX. POW labor never amounted to much in any case – the most urgent need was for trained mining personnel, very few of whom were among Habsburg prisoners of war. Only approximately 500 POWs were employed in the Ostrava-Karviná district in 1915 and less than half that number in 1916 and 1917. See Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 221.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., II, XXXI. Workers in the Ostrava-Karviná district produced 2458 cubic meters pro capita a year in 1913, 2781 in 1914, and 2934 in 1915. The Ostrava-Karviná district produced in total 9,388,363 tons in 1913, 8,917,922 tons in 1914, and 9,572,771 tons in 1915.

\textsuperscript{30} Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 186.
classes were primarily social democratic, although Czechs and Poles were split along national lines.  

The Czech social democratic movement in the coal district was riven by a bitter feud between centralists advocating an internationalist vision of social democracy and autonomists emphasizing a Czech nationalist approach. Those Czechs outside of the Social Democratic faction were further divided into 'Old Czech', clerical, and progressive (pokrokáři) factions. Of these, only the radical wing of the progressives advocated russophilism or serbophilism. The Czech social democrats were capable of putting together street demonstrations of respectable size, but nationalist parties and groups were seldom seen and quite weak.

Since Ostrava-Karviná was the most important coal basin in the Monarchy, both Vienna and the Army High Command (AOK) in Teschen paid close attention to developments there. The importance of the anthracite supply for transport and industry, Hungary's demands for coal to fuel her industries and heat her cities in exchange for the flour needed to feed the Monarchy's armies, and the necessity of supplying urban areas with heat all combined to make any disturbance in Ostrava-Karviná's coal output a significant concern for the Monarchy's military and economic well-being.


32. Ibid.


35. The Ministry of Public Works negotiated a deal with the Hungarian government to deliver anthracite and coke suitable for industrial uses in exchange for Hungarian foodstuffs for the army. In some instances, coal was also traded for food for the civilian population. See Haselsteiner, “The Habsburg Empire in World War I,” 93-96; Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 216; ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(47). "Direktoren-Konferenz des Ostrau-Karwiner Steinkohlenrevieres." February 24th, 1916; Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, 7.
pressing threat to the stability and security of the Monarchy as a whole. Both the
Ostrava-Karviná district's pre-eminence in anthracite production and its high-capacity rail
connection with Vienna and Austria's main transportation networks made it the optimal
region for supplying anthracite to cover all of these needs.

36. Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, 7; Wegs, Die österreichische
Kriegswirtschaft, 82. As an example, Ostrava-Karviná supplied 33,800 tons of coal to Vienna during the
winter of 1914-1915.
37. Miroslav Havrlant and others, Dějiny Ostravy: Vydáno k 700. Výročí založení města (Nakladatelství
Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 1921, no. 98:40-41. The rail link with
Vienna, established in 1847, was also instrumental in the growth of the Vitkovice works.
Table 1. Anthracite Production in the Ostrava-Karviná District. Source: Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, V.

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III. Severe Unrest: Ostrava-Karviná and Austro-Hungarian Mobilization

In Austria-Hungary, as in the other belligerent states, mobilization was a festival of cheering crowds and patriotic speeches. An outflow of patriotic feeling accompanied the thrill of change; war held out the promise of regeneration. This did not mean everyone was overjoyed to go off to war, but mobilization was carried through surprisingly successfully.\(^{38}\) Several accounts held that the beginning of the war heralded a kind of Bürgfrieden in the Ostrava-Karviná district – a police councillor reported that Germans and Slavs “collectively poured out into the streets and broke out into patriotic songs. Terrified, the subversive elements shrunk away.”\(^{39}\)

All of the extant political and national groupings, even the Czechs, showed themselves to be loyal subjects of the Habsburg crown, though the Czechs in particular were not infected with a great deal of war enthusiasm, the report continued. Russophile elements in the coal district, though, “can not be dismissed. The majority thereof are the radical Czechs...in relation to the remaining population they are a tiny majority”.\(^{40}\) A perhaps less optimistic though probably more accurate account characterized the beginning of the war as putting nationality conflicts on hold, though antagonisms continued to bubble under the surface.\(^{41}\) Unfortunately, lack of evidence impedes a


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 139-140.

\(^{41}\) *Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 202-203.
definitive conclusion, but available accounts suggest that at least the early stages of the
war were mostly devoid of explicitly nationalist conflicts.

Czech units throughout the Bohemian Lands also mobilized just as faithfully as
all other Austro-Hungarian units, despite wide-spread fears of disloyalty and
russophilism. Scattered minor incidents did occur, such as when a Militia conscript in
Prague, one Otokar Luštinec by name, answered his ethnic German comrades 'Long live
Austria!' with his own 'Long live Serbia, and may Austria perish!'. He was promptly
beaten and handed over to the police. Such events were neither widespread nor
important, but governmental and military officials continued to worry that the Czech
population would hinder mobilization.

Important elements of the German Right continued to harbor paranoid fears of
Slav disloyalty even after the successful mobilization. Such fears, and the consequent
calls for the imposition of “that iron fist, which is so potent a guard for those interests that
govern in Transleithania,” would play a significant role in driving the Slavic peoples of
the Monarchy away from their allegiance to the Habsburgs. Habsburg military
authorities routinely accused the Czechs in particular of treason and cowardice, both at
home and at the front.

42. Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, Sborník dokumentů, 1:31-32. The incident occurred in the railway
station Kukus, on the 27th of July, 1914.

43. For instance, see Statthalter Franz Thun's declarations of the 25th and 26th of July, 1914, in Ibid., 23-27.

Armeoorerkommando, 170. For more in-depth treatments of German radicalism and slavophobia in
Cisleithania, see Gary W. Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914-
1918 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Robert A. Kann, The Multi-National Empire: 
Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy (New York: Columbia University Press,
1950).

45. Jan Havránek, "Politische Repression und Versorgungssengpässe in den böhmischen Ländern 1914 bis
1918," in Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen, ed.
Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kovič, and Jiří Maliř (Essen: Klartext, 2001).
The Imperial and Royal government regarded Social Democracy as a potent threat to the war effort as well, taking Marxist rhetoric of class solidarity and internationalism seriously. The left wings of the ethnically divided Austrian Social Democratic parties did contain members who urged a general strike against the war in solidarity with the European working class.\(^{46}\) In all the major parties, though, the leadership announced itself loyal to Emperor and Fatherland and supported the war effort with all their power.\(^{47}\) The German Social Democratic party leadership, for example, exhorted their followers to “show that the men of the class struggle will also give their last breath in service to the flag!”\(^{48}\) Indeed, by 1917 social democratic political organizations had become fully integrated into the state and formed an indispensable prop to its authority.\(^{49}\)

Industrial mobilization for war throughout the Monarchy had pre-occupied political and military authorities in the Habsburg Monarchy since 1908.\(^{50}\) The Balkan Wars impelled a desire to rebuild Habsburg military strength and increase its capacity to assert itself on the international stage.\(^{51}\) The Reichsrat thus passed a series of laws that constructed a new framework for labor mobilization during a time of war. The most important of these, the War Production Law (\textit{Kriegsleistungsgesetz}) of the 26th of


\(^{47}\) See for example the Vienna Police Directorate's report of Nov. 8\(^{th}\), 1914 on the position of the German party leadership in Vienna. AVA Mdl 22i.g.16282, reprinted in: Rudolf Neck, \textit{Arbeiterschaft und Staat im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1918} (Vienna, Europa-Verlag, 1964). 8-11.

\(^{48}\) \textit{Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse}, 3.

\(^{49}\) Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 677.


\(^{51}\) "Der Ausbruch des allgemeinen Balkankrieges", \textit{Die Neue Freie Presse}, October 14\(^{th}\), 1912, Nachmittagblatt.
December, 1912, gave the state the right to essentially nationalize any industrial or commercial operation deemed important for war production. This process converted the workers employed by the nationalized concerns into militia laborers subject to military discipline and military courts. These workers were no longer employed by capital in a free labor market, but were instead in a state of involuntary servitude, subordinated directly to the military. Disobedience became treason, changing jobs became desertion, and striking became mutiny.\footnote{Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder (Vienna: Kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1912). XCIX. Stück, Nr. 236. 1192.} In exchange, though, the state offered guarantees to support the workers militarized under the War Production Law and their dependents. Articles 8 and 34 of the War Production Law guaranteed the same rights to state support to War Production Law workers as were given to those of active-duty soldiers, paid out of the military budget and guaranteed by state funds.\footnote{Ibid.} This grand bargain, intended to discipline unruly workers and mobilize their labor for the war effort, would be imposed on the Ostrava-Karviná district upon the outbreak of the First World War.

While organized labor and its political arm failed to give the state any trouble, and indeed declared itself a strong supporter of the central government, the same could not be said of all workers. A recent regulation issued by mine management in the Ostrava-Karviná district had imposed payroll deductions on the entire mining workforce in the coal district for the purpose of renovating an infirmary, ostensibly for the benefit of the workers.\footnote{“Drohender Bergarbeiterstreik,” Die Neue Freie Presse, July 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1914, Morgenblatt.} The workers themselves, however, would vigorously oppose the measure, continuing their long history of labor unrest and strike movements.
On the 22nd of July, the Reichspost's Troppau correspondent reported that mob violence had broken out, and the crowds of “youths and unsavory elements ...committed various excesses and crimes against property”. When the mob threatened to storm the mine shafts, the district police managed to hold them off, but by later that evening the crowd had swelled to over a thousand people. The mob sought to march on Vitkovice, site of the most important steelworks in the Monarchy, but the reinforced district police force proved sufficient, if barely, to the task of holding them off. Arrests made in the course of attempting to disperse the mob, though, led to multiple attempts to storm the police barracks and free those imprisoned. A hail of stones from the mob was answered by repeated bayonet charges, in which, surprisingly, only two people were injured. An unknown assailant fired several shots at the police and was answered in kind, but the bullets failed to meet their targets.

Upon receipt of the news, the County Presidium in Troppau immediately requested that two battalions of infantry from the garrison at Olomouc be dispatched to the coal district in order to reinforce the police. Troppau issued a further request to Military Command Cracow to send sufficient force to maintain public order, though those forces were not to arrive until the following day. On the next day, the 23rd, over five

56. “Die Deutschfeindlichen Exzesse in Witkowitz und Ostrau,” Die Neue Freie Presse, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt. The Neue Freie Presse sought to characterize the mob violence as motivated primarily by ethnic antagonism, and the violence primarily directed against Germans and German property. The article, though, closely follows Pieter Judson's template for nationality conflict reports, which, as he has compellingly demonstrated, were somewhat less than impartial and objective. There is even a German schoolhouse besieged. See Pieter M. Judson, Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). 19-66.
thousand miners spread over seven mines went on strike, around fifteen percent of the
district's workforce. The unrest was such that a general strike involving the entirety of the
coal district was a serious possibility. Management stemmed the expansion of the unrest
into the Vitkovice workforce by decreeing that “any worker taking part in demonstrations
of any kind may expect immediate termination,” but mine management in the coal district
shied away from similar measures. Whether this was out of fear or inability is uncertain.

The strike, and the threatening possibility of its expansion, went beyond the
ability of the local authorities to handle. The Prager Tagblatt reported that that the
“police and gendarmerie were no longer capable of maintaining order”. Thankfully for
the authorities, that evening the Extraordinary Security Force (Assistenz) sent from
Cracow arrived. Military Command Cracow had dispatched nine companies of infantry,
two machine gun detachments, and two squadrons of cavalry from the Imperial and
Royal 1st Corps, under the command of Major-General von Zaleski. This was a force of
approximately two thousand infantrymen, six hundred cavalry troopers, and four machine
guns. These men were met by a “throng of many thousands, which greeted the military
with derisive taunts”.

The next day, the War Minister ordered von Zaleski's detachment to stand ready to

more men were needed, but the harvest represented an obstacle to immediate deployment of more
manpower, as much of the Austro-Hungarian Army's manpower was released on 'Harvest Leave' during the
harvesting season in order to facilitate crop gathering.
64. For troop strengths of various formations, see Deák, Beyond Nationalism. 15.
enforce a State of Emergency in the industrial region centered on Moravská Ostrava.\textsuperscript{66} The Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, was, however, not consulted. Informed, he wrote, through reading his morning newspaper, that elements of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Corps were being used to suppress labor unrest, he demanded the substitution of a detachment from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Corps, as the 1\textsuperscript{st} Corps were to be trusted with an important role in case of war with Russia.\textsuperscript{67} More likely, though, was that the predominantly Polish men of the Cracow-based 1\textsuperscript{st} Corps were considered less effective in suppressing their co-nationals than the German soldiers of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Corps, recruited from Vienna and Upper and Lower Austria. The highest levels of the Austrian governmental and military establishments, then, deemed it vitally necessary that there be sufficient armed force available in Ostrava-Karviná to ensure public order.

The spiraling crisis with Serbia cast its shadow over the Ostrava-Karviná basin as well, and in this light the labor unrest took on a new and even more threatening aspect. The Ministry of Home Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, in a dispatch to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry in Vienna, expressed their conviction that even a partial mobilization order would meet widespread resistance and enforcement thereof would require not only the full strength of the local police forces, already stretched to their limit and beyond by the escalating civil and labor unrest, but also the immediate deployment of all available military personnel. The military was further to be deployed at the latest by Sunday, July 26\textsuperscript{th}, if the unrest was not yet under control.\textsuperscript{68} The War Ministry took their fears seriously, and ordered the immediate deployment of von Zaleski's troops on the 25\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{66} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(5256). "Assistenzbeistellung." July 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1914.

\textsuperscript{67} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(6214). "Unruhen in Witkowitz; Ablösung der Truppen des 1. Kps." July 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1914.

\textsuperscript{68} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(Präs. 4262-XX). "Abschrift." July 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1914.
of July – three days before the declaration of war on Serbia began the First World War.\textsuperscript{69} The military's show of force sufficed to quell the unrest, as the Ministry of the Interior reported that the riots and strikes were “already ebbing away.”\textsuperscript{70}

The course of events in this strike were representative of the pattern that labor unrest took in the Ostrava-Karviná district before the First World War. Strikes were typically numerically strong and tended towards violence, usually directed against property. Clashes with police and the military occasionally resulted in deaths. Some were quite long – one strike in the summer of 1896 lasted an entire month. These strikes, like the 1914 strike, were driven by economic demands directed against those capital interests which employed the miners rather than against the state.\textsuperscript{71} The local authorities called upon the Habsburg military to maintain order but resolving the strike or compelling the miners to work was not in the military's purview. Their writ ran solely to the maintenance of public order.\textsuperscript{72} The First World War and the imposition of militarized labor discipline in the district, though, was to drastically alter this pattern of labor unrest.

The Austro-Hungarian government had demonstrated both the willingness and the ability to exert large-scale military force against civil and labor unrest in the interests of securing public order and assuring the area's compliance even at the very beginning of the First World War. The prompt application of military force ensured that mobilization unfurled as planned, though it may have been as unnecessary in Ostrava-Karviná as it


\textsuperscript{70} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5. "Bericht." Abt. 10, July 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1914.


was unnecessary in most other areas of the Bohemian lands. As the First World War began, the government would immediately move to exert an even more ambitious level of military control over the miners of the Ostrava-Karviná basin. This regime would rely on military discipline and administrative coercion rather than the direct application of violence.

The concluding report on the strike offered the Ministry's view that “the already-prepared extraordinary measures, to come into effect on declaration of mobilization and under which civilians shall be placed under military justice, ought suffice to ensure peace and order even after the departure of the troops.” The extraordinary measures referenced were a novel and wide-ranging subordination of the Habsburg subject to the disciplinary power of the state. Aimed at ensuring internal security, order, and productivity in war-time, these measures were not limited solely to the miners of the Ostrava-Karviná basin. The largely trouble-free period lasting from the outbreak of the First World War until 1916 would demonstrate, though, that such measures were to prove quite effective at harnessing Ostrava-Karviná's labor to the needs of the state.

This process of subordination and discipline began on the 25th of July, as General Zaleski was crushing the miner strikes in Ostrava-Karviná. Based on the powers granted to the government under §20 of the Constitution, the cabinet suspended articles 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13 of the Constitution and activated articles 3-7 of the 'Emergency Law' of the 5th of May, 1869. In practice, this meant that Austrian civilians partially or totally lost their rights to personal freedom, security of the home, privacy of their letters, freedom of

73. Ibid.

association, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, as well as their right to a jury trial.\textsuperscript{75} The same day also saw an Imperial Decree subordinating civilians to military justice for a wide range of crimes and misdemeanors in “territorial regions in which mobilization has been declared,” which in practice meant the entirety of Austria. The crimes transferred ranged from high treason and lese majesté to robbery, assault, murder, sabotage, interference with public officials, disturbing the peace, and rioting.\textsuperscript{76}

The mining population, though, was under even stricter control than the general population. Immediately upon the outbreak of war, the entire coal district was militarized under the War Production Law.\textsuperscript{77} The employees of the various mining companies operating in the coal district, all of which had been declared war production facilities, were under article six of the law "obligated to remain in their current service or labor position until the situation of application ceases to apply".\textsuperscript{78} Functionally, this meant that every single miner in the coal district was under a legal obligation to remain at his position until the end of the war.

The majority of coal miners in the Ostrava-Karviná district faced a slightly different type of militarization than the War Production Law, however. According to the Militia Law of the 6\textsuperscript{th} of June, 1886, all males between the ages of nineteen and forty-three were liable to service in the militia in a time of war.\textsuperscript{79} A further decree of the 20\textsuperscript{th} of December, 1889, elaborated on this language, expressly allowing the use of militia

\textsuperscript{75} Führ, Armeeoberkommando, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{76} Reichsgesetzblatt (1914). LXXI. Stück, Nr. 156. 821.
\textsuperscript{77} Havrlant, Dějiny Ostravy, 401.
\textsuperscript{78} Reichsgesetzblatt (1912). XCIX. Stück, Nr. 236. 1192.
\textsuperscript{79} Reichsgesetzblatt (1886). XXXI. Stück, Nr. 90. 297-299.
conscripts in civilian industrial positions. Article 19 of the Ministry for Home Defense
Decree of the 27th of July, 1912, further allowed the use of mobilized militia laborers in
all stages of arms production. Such labor, though, had to be producing for the war
effort. In situations wherein a group of War Production Law or militia laborers were
assigned a military commander, disobeying him was considered equivalent to an enlisted
man refusing orders in a war zone. Needless to say, every shift of mine laborers
received their own military commander at the beginning of the war.

The position of an Ostravan coal miner after the beginning of the First World War,
then, was one of helpless subordination to the state, enforced by a legal regime which
equated mine labor with military service and correspondingly equated protest or
resistance to any measures aimed at increasing or rationalizing production to high
treason. Those workers younger than nineteen or older than forty-three and thus not
liable to militia service were nonetheless subject to the War Production Law. Strikes were
expressly forbidden, and labor unrest was punishable by imprisonment, being transferred
to front-line service, or even in extreme cases execution for treason. The costs
associated with defying the militarized regime under which the miners were forced to
serve were very high. That it took years of suffering before resistance began to surface is
not surprising. What is surprising was that it surfaced at all.

80. Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 40-41.
82. Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 43.
83. Havrlant, Dějiny Ostravy, 401.
84. Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 5.
85. Ibid., 189.
IV. Calamitous Methods of Compulsion: The Ostrava-Karviná Strike Wave of 1916

By the beginning of 1916, coal shortages were becoming dire. Demand for anthracite for Austrian iron and steel production alone had increased by almost four million tons over the 1914 figure, and one of the coldest winters on record spiked demand for heating coal throughout the Monarchy. 86 Despite reduced effectiveness, the Austrian railroad system consumed almost half a million tons more coal in 1916 than in 1913. 87 The Hungarian half of the Monarchy began to experience industrial slowdowns due to coal shortages, and these slowdowns would later blossom into full-fledged industrial stoppages and widespread unemployment. 88

Coal shortages, like food shortages, could not be easily remedied through purchases from foreign markets. It would seem that coal would be less problematic than other commodities, as the vast majority of the coal necessary to cover the difference between domestic production and demand was imported from German mines in Upper Silesia. 89 After the imposition of the British blockade, however, German coal demand could no longer be met from more convenient sources in northern France and Britain, and Germany was thrown back to relying solely on domestic supplies for coal. Shipments

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86. Riedl, Die Industrie Österreichs, 275. Iron and steel industry figures are 21.6 million tons for 1914 and 25. 4 million tons for 1916.

87. Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, XXXIX. 7,803,000 tons in 1913 v 8,470,859 tons in 1916.


89. Homann-Herimberg, Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich, 6.
from Silesia never entirely stopped, but they were sharply curtailed. German imports plummeted after the outbreak of war and never recovered.\textsuperscript{90} These unpleasant realities looked even more threatening when juxtaposed with the Austrian production figures, which showed a net increase of approximately 1.3 million tons of anthracite in 1916 over 1913 and a drop of no less than 4.1 million tons of lignite produced over the same period.\textsuperscript{91}

The difficulty of increasing anthracite imports from Germany, the anemic increase in domestic production, and the vastly increasing demand all conspired to ensure that maintaining production became a top priority. In this environment, the coal miners as a group took on a vastly increased importance relative to their peacetime role. Pre-war expectations of a short war had been thoroughly disappointed, and the victor, it seemed, would be decided more by productive capacity than by brilliant generalship. Control over the labor of Ostravan miners, then, became an even more critical strategic asset.

The winter of 1915-1916 was not a good time to be a Habsburg subject, and a still worse time to be a Moravian coal miner. The Ostravan miners had endured the first winter of war, but the progressive deterioration of Habsburg harvests due to lack of labor, lack of imported nitrates for fertilizer, and the progressive tightening of the allied 'Hunger Blockade' led to increasing hardships. The 1915 potato harvest was 82% of the 1913 figures, while wheat was at 71% of 1913 figures and rye was at 62%. Barley and oats were even worse, at 48% and 44% respectively.\textsuperscript{92} Imports from abroad were largely unavailable – some Romanian wheat could be purchased, but Germany was facing its

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 7. German anthracite imports dropped nearly three million tons in 1914, and further in 1915, representing a drop of approximately thirty percent from pre-war figures.


\textsuperscript{92} Hautmann, “Hunger is ein schlechter Koch,” 665.
own food crisis and Italy's entry into the war on May 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1915, cut off supplies through the peninsula. Hungary, being a far more agricultural economy than Austria, maintained a better standard of living for its citizens during the war but refused to sufficiently supply Austria. Hungary sent food shipments to Austria only grudgingly, and sought to wring as much as possible out of the Austrian government for them. Even the 1915 crop failures failed to move the Hungarians.\footnote{Haselsteiner, “The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization of Food Supplies,” 93. This is not to say that the Hungarian population was well-fed, but Hungary was consistently in a much better position to feed its population than Austria was.} The cost of living in the entire Empire was also drastically increasing; by June 1916 the cost of living for the general population had increased by 217\%, and for working-class families such as those of coal miners inflation had increased the cost of living by 282\%.\footnote{Richard Georg Plaschka, “The Army and Internal Conflict in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1918,” in \textit{East Central European Society in World War I}, ed. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1985). 342.}

These general woes were compounded by regulatory shifts that choked off the mine district's ability to procure foodstuffs. Since the beginning of the war brought in its wake “limitless extortion” in terms of food prices, the pre-war practice of individual food purchase was no longer sufficient to supply the miners. The mining companies, therefore, undertook to provide for their workers' needs by purchasing foodstuffs in bulk from wherever possible and conveying them to worker co-operatives (\textit{Konsumvereine}) which sold the foodstuffs at cost directly to the workers. Up until the strike wave broke out, the office established for this purpose by the mining companies had spent 1.5 million crowns on grains, fats, meat, and beans for their workers.\footnote{ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Fragebogen I." April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1916. The situation was described by Senior Mine Councillor Fillunger, chairman of the Director's Conference for the Ostrava-Karvíná coal basin, in response to a series of questions posed by Jaroslav Petr, representing Military Command Cracow.} All available avenues were exploited...
in order to acquire the necessary foodstuffs. The mining firms sent their purchasing
agents abroad, across the border into Upper Silesia or Congress Poland, to purchase from
the black market wherever possible, even trading shipments of coal under the table for
shipments of food.\footnote{Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 214-215. The covert coal trading was almost certainly
undertaken with the government's implicit consent.}

This system worked as well as could be expected during a period of immense food
shortages, but it relied crucially on the possibility of purchasing and shipping food from
other districts and states. The imposition of rationing and food controls in April 1915,
though, threatened that possibility.\footnote{Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 667. Rationing for bread and
flour introduced in April 1915, for sugar in March 1916, for milk in May 1916, coffee in June 1916, and fat in Sept. 1916.}
The Imperial and Royal government, in an attempt to
rationalize supply, decreed on the 16\textsuperscript{th} of September, 1915, that all foodstuffs brought into
the Monarchy must go through the newly erected War Provisions Transfer Agency
\textit{(Kriegsgetreideverkehrsanstalt)}, cutting Ostrava-Karviná off from what German supplies
were available. The progressively worsening food crisis also impelled other counties and
districts within the Monarchy to enact export bans on foodstuffs.\footnote{Riedl, \textit{Die Industrie Österreichs}, 96; Die Regelung der
Arbeitsverhältnisse, 214.}
These bans created
“enormous difficulties” in the provisioning process and left Ostrava-Karviná dangerously
undersupplied.\footnote{ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61-46/6, Nr. 5. "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.}

The coal district's Directoral Conference first brought the worsening supply crisis
to the attention of the central government with the submission of a report of to the
Ministry of Public Works on the 24\textsuperscript{th} of February, 1916. Bread shortages had already set
in, and no improvement was in sight. Such a state of events, they wrote, would not only
decrease coal production but also put pressure on the “disciplined and until now irreproachably patriotic orientation of the labor force...”\textsuperscript{100} It may be more accurate to say that draconian military discipline under the War Production Law had more to do with the "irreproachably patriotic orientation" of the miners than any inherent love for the Habsburg state. The Directoral Conference was correct, though, that privation was quickly breaking down the workers' labor discipline.\textsuperscript{101}

The forecasts had not been sufficiently pessimistic, and by the end of March some mine workers had been reduced to consuming the slop set aside for pigs.\textsuperscript{102} No betterment in the provisioning situation was expected, the work remained strenuous, and the starving miners had reached their limit, despite the draconian penalties for protest. The strikes began in the Silesian area, on Friday, the 31\textsuperscript{st} of March. Forty-seven hungry pushcart operators (\textit{Hundstößer}) and signalmen (\textit{Anschläger}) working the early shift at the Salm shaft refused to enter the mine and begin their back-breaking labor. These workers later persuaded the hewers working the afternoon shift to lay down their tools and join their strike.\textsuperscript{103}

A frantic telephone report was sent to the Military Station Command for Moravská Ostrava along with an urgent request for military support. Depending on the interpretation, these workers were guilty of either insubordination, in refusing commands

\textsuperscript{100} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(47). "Direktoren-Konferenz des Ostrau-Karwiner Steinkohlenrevieres." February 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.

\textsuperscript{101} Huemos, "Kartoffeln her," 260. Before mid-1916, War Production Law disciplinary measures suppressed strike participation. Afterwards, such harsh treatment actually increased participation in strike movements.

\textsuperscript{102} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(Präs. 1658/L). "Bericht." April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.

\textsuperscript{103} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht des k.k. Oblt.-Auditor Dr. Michael Eckstein über seine Amtshandlung in Mähr.-Ostrau." April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1916. 47 men were involved at the Salm shaft at this stage.
to work, or treason, in abandoning their posts. The head of the Military Station
Command, Franz Brandstätter, responded with eighty men under his own command, and
found when he arrived that the nearby Ludwig and Wetter shafts had also joined the strike
– two hundred workers refused to begin work at the Ludwig shaft, and an unknown
number at Wetter. Negotiations with the Ludwig workers failed, but “as the workers
would not resume work willingly, their entry into the mine was insisted upon.”104 By the
time Brandstätter's detachment had threatened and beaten the Ludwig workers
sufficiently to convince them that coal mining was healthier than striking, the workers
from the Wetter shaft had fled the area.

Following receipt of the news, Military Command Cracow sent the Coal Cadre
Inspector for Ostrava-Karviná, Captain of the Gendarmarie Cavalry Josef Woitsch, to the
site. As the plenipotentiary representative of the Military Command, Woitsch was
entrusted with quashing labor unrest throughout the entire coal district. This would not,
however, be an easy task. The next day, April 1st, 1916, the strikes at the Salm, Wetter,
and Ludwig shafts had gained considerable popular sympathy, and Woitsch acted quickly
to stamp out the spark before it could spread further. An additional one and a half
companies of infantry were dispatched and sizeable patrols were sent to track down
striking workers, drag them from their homes, and drive them into their mine shafts, there
to be billeted (kaserniert) in the mine. Woitsch's forces imprisoned approximately three
hundred workers this way.

The sparks, though, had flown wide, and the strikes continued to spread. The next
evening three additional shafts struck – the Johann-Maria, the Trinity, and the Michaelis

104. Ibid., emphasis mine. “Da die Arbeit freiwillig nicht aufgenommen wurde, wurde darauf bestanden, daß eingefahren wird.”
shafts. Another half-company of infantry was brought in to suppress them, and Woitsch dispatched more patrols to break down striking miners' doors, haul them to their mine shafts, and pen them there. Then the Hermengild shaft struck, on the 3rd of April. By then, 38 miners were under formal military arrest, either in the coal district or en route to Teschen for a military tribunal. Hundreds more were living in coal shafts under armed guard. Two companies of infantry occupied seven mine shafts, and the strike wave had yet to reach the Moravian part of the coal district. On the 4th of April, this was no longer the case, as forty-seven youth laborers refused to enter the Alexander shaft, eighty-three men refused to work at the Franz shaft, and another one hundred and thirty-five men assigned to the afternoon shift joined them. The entire afternoon shift at the Georg shaft put down their tools and took up the strike, and minor disturbances marred the change of shifts at the Ignaz shaft. To further discommode authorities, an infantryman engaged in suppressing the strike, the former worker Alexander Pollaczek of Militia Regiment 31, was arrested and imprisoned for sedition.

The 4th of April was the high-water mark for the active stage of the strike wave. Eleven shafts and thousands of men had thrown down their tools by then, and scores were under arrest for high treason with hundreds more held at bayonet point in their mine shafts. The next week was not so heated. There were occasional demonstrations, such as at the Tiefbau shaft and the Alpinen shaft on the 8th. The afternoon shift at the Louis shaft refused to work on the 10th, but after a heated exchange with their cadre commander the majority of the miners resumed work peacefully. A number of workers, typically youths,

105. Ibid.
were arrested during each of these incidents.\textsuperscript{107} The military had broken the back of the protests.

This is not to say that labor unrest in the Ostrava Karwin coal district had ended, but it moved into a more passive phase. Passive resistance in the form of sharply reduced productivity and reluctance to work sharply reduced coal output while avoiding more easily punishable demonstrations or absenteeism.\textsuperscript{108} This transition was likely the result of Woitsch's campaign of terror against the striking workers, but there is no definitive evidence of this available. Complaints, threats, and rumors were rampant, though, and the authorities nervously hoped that they could stamp out the fuse before it reached the powder keg.

The district captain (\textit{Bezirkshauptmann}) brought rumors of a general strike, to be called on Monday, April 10\textsuperscript{th}, to the attention of Military Command Cracow and the State Police Bureau on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of April.\textsuperscript{109} The foreman of the Theresien shaft received an anonymous letter on the 9\textsuperscript{th} demanding the release of the arrested miners and threatening a general strike. A duration of fourteen days was set for a reply, and the message was signed by 'all old mining folk' (\textit{Alle alten Bergleute}).\textsuperscript{110} The same day another anonymous letter was received by the Coal Cadre Commandant of the Kohen-Ecker shaft, demanding general wage increases. The letter concluded with the bold claim that “Martial law does not impress us, as mining folk do not fear death by execution.”\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{107} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1-1/3(9). "Bericht." April 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
\textsuperscript{110} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1-1/3(9). "Bericht." Novák, April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
The labor force was not advancing an unreasonable set of demands. In terms of their formal demands, they requested in some cases the release of their imprisoned comrades but mostly they called on state authorities to more adequately compensate them for their dangerous and backbreaking labor.\textsuperscript{112} Some requests were also received for cheaper food. In one such case, the workers cited an inability to maintain coal output at their current negligible caloric input for more than a week.\textsuperscript{113} This was likely true, as labor-intensive occupations such as mining required workers to consume at least 3900 calories daily in order to maintain their strength.\textsuperscript{114} The State Police, however, understood it as a threat to undertake passive resistance.\textsuperscript{115} Most written demands, though, related only to wage increases. Given the basis for the strikes, and the informal opinions collected by various government investigators, though, it is very likely that wage demands were advanced as a proxy for direct provisioning rather than for their own sake.\textsuperscript{116} Whether such was a conscious strategy, a reflection of lack of faith in government provisioning, or simply habit remains speculative.

Wages had increased between twelve and fourteen percent for all positions from the beginning of the war to the outbreak of the strikes, an increase which “bore no proportion to the price increases for all necessary articles, amounting to 150-200 percent”

\textsuperscript{112} One such instance was reported at the Theresa shaft, where a general uprising was threatened if fifteen imprisoned workers from their shaft were not released. See ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Novák, April 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.

\textsuperscript{113} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.

\textsuperscript{114} Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 669.

\textsuperscript{115} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.

\textsuperscript{116} See for example Jaroslav Petr's summary of worker's demands “collected from conversations with workers of various coal mines”, which focuses almost exclusively on provisioning. ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
over pre-war figures.\textsuperscript{117} Considering the inflation figures, the miners' demands were in fact quite moderate, especially as draconian punishments for insubordination and protest had been consistently exercised to short-circuit demands for higher wages.\textsuperscript{118} The average pre-war (1913) wage for a miner in the Ostrava-Karviná district was five and a third crowns a day.\textsuperscript{119} The wage demands at the Georg shaft, for example, were only for a wage of seven and a half crowns per shift for miners, hand workers, senior machine operators, senior stokers, and similarly situated workers; five to five and a half crowns a shift for junior machine operators, junior stokers, and the like; and for unskilled labor a wage of three and a half to four crowns a shift. The workers at the Francis shaft submitted similar demands, for wages between three and a half and seven and a half crowns daily, as well as a 'War Bonus' of seventeen percent.\textsuperscript{120} For purposes of comparison, Josef Woitsch estimated that lodging and upkeep \textit{(Kost und Quartier)} at this time at between eighty and ninety crowns a month.\textsuperscript{121} All told, their demands constituted an increase of slightly more than fifty percent over the pre-war 1914 figures.\textsuperscript{122} The Ostrava-Karviná labor force did not ask for much. They were to get even less.

The most serious move to placate the miners through concessions rather than to coerce them back into a supine state of obedience took place on the 9\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1916. A ministerial conference took place in Vienna, under the aegis of the Ministry of Public

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "Ad Erlass Präs. No. 6645-IV." April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 189.
\item \textsuperscript{119} “Lohnsteigerung in Industrie und Landwirtschaft,” Neue Freie Presse, Jan. 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1918, Morgenblatt.
\item \textsuperscript{120} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Novák, April 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
\item \textsuperscript{121} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Antrag des militärischen Delegierten des Militärkommandos." Undated.
\item \textsuperscript{122} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(3). "Bericht." April 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
\end{itemize}
Works, aiming to resolve the strike movement. News of the outcome of the conference had reached Ostrava-Karviná by that evening, and the ministers' concessions were singularly unimpressive. The ministerial conference had conceded an additional nine percent wage increase across the board, which brought the total wage increases over the course of the war to between 21 and 24 percent, depending on position. This increase was only wrung out of the mining concerns through pressure from the Ministry of Public Works, which conceded a ten percent increase in the allowed price for a cubic meter of coal to compensate the mining concerns for the increased payroll costs.

In addition, the conference relaxed the rigid military discipline under which the miners labored, though only superficially. The limits on absenteeism were relaxed, in so far as that one could be absent for two full shifts per month before monetary penalties were imposed, and more numerous instances of absenteeism only brought the loss of half of one's supplemental war payment. The previous limit had been considerably sharper, as one absentee shift would be forgiven before the worker forfeited the entirety of their monthly supplemental payment, but the new regulations could not be seen as major concessions to the workers' demands.123

The transition from penury and starvation to a slightly less penurious state of starvation was not a compelling one, especially as there was no real prospect of a loosening of the harsh military regime which ruled the coal district. The State Police Bureau reported that the workers assigned to the Luis shaft “declared themselves in disagreement with the nine percent increase,” and the mood of the workers “was not a

123. ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(8). "Bericht." Novák, April 12th, 1916. The wage increases under discussion (Teuerungszulagen) were administratively distinct from base wages and were conceived of as a temporary palliative to ameliorate inflationary pressures rather than as wage increases, which had a more permanent character.
good one even still." These workers, when told by management of the Vienna conference and its decision, condemned the nine percent wage increase as “far too meager” and only reluctantly entered the mine. Lt. Perl, their Cadre Commandant, ordered them to work in his official capacity, and as disobeying such an order was a military crime, the two young workers who still refused to work were then arrested for insubordination. The civilian district administration was in full agreement with the disappointed workers— the district leadership's conference of the 11th of April, 1916 “found the concessions completely insufficient.”

Regardless of the rumors and threats of a general strike, though, Monday came and went without anything remarkable occurring. The County Presidium in Troppau reported that approximately ten percent of workers were absent for the morning shift, which “perhaps has something to do with the fact that today is Monday. Otherwise everything is peaceful.” By the 12th of April the strike wave was effectively over, though occasional minor disturbances would continue for some time.

In total, the movement had encompassed over forty shafts in sixteen locales, with the most important mining concerns being those of the Vítkovice steel works, the Austrian Mining and Iron Works Society, also a major steel producer, and the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway. At the height of the unrest, the Military Court in Teschen reported that criminal charges had been levied against 1669 persons, though the bulk

124. Ibid.
were released on their own recognizance. Over the course of the strikes several hundred workers were imprisoned or sent to Crakow or Teschen to undergo court-martials.\textsuperscript{129}

The militarized labor regime in Ostrava-Karviná had begun to unravel. The radical transformation in labor relations sparked by the constellation of pre-war labor laws maintained production amid worsening conditions for almost two full years, but starvation and penury had finally eroded the military's coercive labor discipline. This breakdown posed a unique threat to the Habsburg state. Not only was labor unrest in the coal district a threat to industrial output and thus to the Monarchy's security against external adversaries, but the re-definition of the relationship between the state and the miners of the coal district also meant that unrest threatened internal collapse. By defining labor unrest as treason, the 1916 strike wave, in a sense, was an organized rebellion against state authority. By challenging the state's ability to manage, direct, and discipline its subjects, Ostrava-Karviná's coal miners thus threatened the legitimacy of the state and its ability to mobilize its citizenry in service of the war effort.

\textsuperscript{129} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "IV. Bericht der k.k. Feldgerichtsexpositur in Teschen. Erstattet durch k.k. Oblt. Aud. Dr. Steiner." April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
V. A Constant Danger: The Government Response

The threat mining unrest posed to both the external and internal security of the Monarchy demanded a response. The immediate governmental response actualized the threat of armed violence contained within the militarized disciplinary framework put in place at the outbreak of the war. Within the logic of this framework, the striking workers were engaged in mutiny, which had to be suppressed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Immediately upon hearing news of the miners' refusal to work at Salm, therefore, Military Station Command in Moravská Ostrava dispatched eighty men of the 31st Militia Regiment from the local garrison to the site, and as the unrest spread more and more men were sent to stamp it out at bayonet point.

Military action went beyond merely breaking up demonstrations. Infantrymen rounded up absentee workers in their homes and placed them under arrest. These patrols hunted down striking workers, primarily the single workers who formed the bulk of the strike movement and the majority of its ringleaders, and herded them into their mine shafts at gun point. Joining them there were those married miners deemed dangerous to public order. There they would stay until they abandoned their resistance and took up their tools again.

The open application of violence, however, was not a permanent solution. The disciplinary framework functioned best through the implicit threat of violence, routinized and undertaken administratively. Open violence was the last resort, an emergency

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measure undertaken in response to a collective challenge to the authority and legitimacy of the state. The campaign of open and widespread violence presented just as much of a threat to coal production as did the waves of strikes which brought about the necessity for military intervention. The figures for the decline in production caused by the strike wave and the following military response are, unfortunately, unavailable, but was considered drastic by contemporaneous observers. The prospect of a repetition of the strikewave in an even more damaging form was, then, a prospect to be feared. The militarized discipline which had served the state so well since the war began had finally failed to maintain labor discipline. As such, these strikes marked not an isolated episode, but instead reflected a systemic breakdown in the exercise of state authority in the Ostrava-Karviná district. Recourse to violence was the last prop of state power in the district.

As soon as the 31st Militia Regiment managed to reduce the incidence of new strikes to a minimum, the local authorities as well as the central government began a debate over what measures could be taken to eliminate renewed outbreaks of labor unrest. The demands of the miners themselves were secondary to this debate. In keeping with the logic of the state's disciplinary framework, the miners' interests were only relevant in so far as they simplified state management of coal production. Therefore, the guiding question was, as the representative from the Ministry for Home Defence, Dr. Kelewer, put it, “which measures provide the most hope for assuring that the operations of the coal mines will no longer be disturbed?”

The Moravian governor (Statthalter), representative of the central government in Vienna and chief officer of the executive branch in Moravia, urged the imposition of an

even harsher regime of military discipline as the only effective solution, writing to the Minister of the Interior at the height of the strike wave to urge declaration of martial law in the Moravian areas of the coal district. Northern Moravia had been removed from the Zone of Army Operations in October of 1915, due to the crushing Austro-German victories on the Russian Front, a move which represented a symbolic though not a real weakening of militarized labor discipline. The outbreak of the strikes, though, persuaded the governor to formally request that the area be resubordinated to the AOK.\footnote{SUA, PMV/R, sg. 22 gen, čj. 7253/1916, reprinted in: SUA, Sborník dokumentů, 3:107-108. The request was sent on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1916.} The Silesian half of the basin had never left the Zone, and thus that half of the basin remained, as since the Imperial Decree of the 25\textsuperscript{th} of July, 1914, under military law and direct military administration.

The Moravian governor advanced two arguments. The first was that it was a necessary measure towards unifying the entire district in the sense that the administrative and legal regimes applicable would be the same in both the Silesian and the Moravian areas. Even though in practice the miners in the Moravian area of the coal district labored under a system of military discipline just as severe as those in the Silesian area, the administrative routines in each half through which this discipline was exercised were somewhat different. The governor hoped that unifying these practices would create a more efficient and effective system of discipline. His second argument was that this resubordination would prevent a widening of the strike wave into the Moravian area of the district. As this had already occurred by the time the governor submitted his request, it seems superfluous. Further, that the strike wave had originated in the Silesian half of the coal district would seem to contradict his assumptions. Nevertheless, the best
solution, as the Moravian governor conceived it, was to extend and harshen the
framework of military discipline which had sufficed to maintain order and productivity
over the previous two years. How exactly this could be done remained unaddressed.\footnote{134}

Local administration officials agreed with the governor. The district
administration (\emph{Bezirkshauptmannschaft}) felt that the only solution to the problems
plaguing the coal district was to strengthen military rule. Arguing for the imposition of
military law, the district captain advanced the claim that imposition of martial law in the
Moravian area of the coal district would restore equality of treatment between the
workers employed by shafts in Moravia and those in Silesia, since Silesia's continued
incorporation into the Zone of Army Operations meant that workers there were
technically though not practically under more legal constraints than those in Moravia.\footnote{135}

This state of affairs left officials worried that the strike movement would become far
more dangerous in the Moravian area than it had in the Silesian zone, already under
martial law. These fears had been heightened by several instances of sabotage in Silesian
shafts. Finally, the imposition of military law could calm the populace, if the militarized
workers were to be provided with the benefits of military service, namely supplies from
military reserves, to counterbalance the detriments of the draconian disciplinary
regime.\footnote{136}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[135] The Imperial Decrees of the 25\textsuperscript{th} and 31\textsuperscript{st} of July, 1914, gave the commanding theater general in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Dalmatia and the Army High Command on the Russian front the right to issue decrees and orders to the civilian population on any matter within the competence of the civilian head of administration in the region. Furthermore, these decrees gave the military the power to enforce such decrees and required all civil administrators in the regions affected to obey them. The coal cadre system in the Moravian area of the basin, though, was basically equivalent as far as labor discipline was concerned. See \textit{Reichsgesetzblatt} (1914). LXVIII. Stück, Nr. 153. 815; \textit{Reichsgesetzblatt} (1914). XCV. Stück, Nr. 186. 891.
\item[136] ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "IV. Bericht der k.k. Feldgerichtsexpositor in
\end{footnotes}
their opinion serve to reassert the subjugation of the mining population to the state. An appeal to that end was sent to the Ministry of the Interior. Practically speaking, though, the effects of such a shift would have been nil.\textsuperscript{137}

The civilian ministries of the central government, though, were considerably more willing to contemplate solutions which did not involve punitive military discipline. Of course, these solutions were similarly unreal, but the reasoning behind them was quite different. On the following day, the 6\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1916, a conference was convened by telephone, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and under the leadership of one of its representatives, Baron von Handl. Also present were Mine Councillor Reissig and Mine Secretary Novák from the Ministry of the Interior, Section Chief Schober representing the Ministry of Justice, and Dr. Kelewer for the Ministry of Public Works. The agenda had only one item – resolving the Ostrava-Karviná strike wave.

The conclusion of all present was to confirm that “the root of the laborer movement was obviously economic, and that the most pressing issue was clearly the amelioration of the difficulties in the provision and cost of foodstuffs and clothes as far as possible.” The Ministry of the Interior reported that the necessary measures to provision the district with potatoes and beans “had already been set in motion.”\textsuperscript{138} By conceding that the miners had legitimate grievances against the state, the Ministry of the Interior demonstrated a much wider appreciation of the dynamics at work in the relationship between the mining population of Ostrava-Karviná and the state. Military Command Cracow neatly summarized the reciprocal nature of this relationship and the dangers

\begin{flushright}
Teschen. Erstattet durch k.k. Oblt. Aud. Dr. Steiner." April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1916. It remains unclear whether the incident referred to was in fact intentional sabotage or instead caused by incompetence or inattention. 137. Ibid.
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138. ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6). "Amtsbericht." April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1916. Such measures did not, as far as is apparent, have any effect.
\end{flushright}
which a monomaniacal emphasis on military discipline entailed in a report pointing out that, “military coercion without the necessary provision for welfare and existence thereby entailed is a constant danger and apt to evoke severe unrest and to make calamitous methods of compulsion necessary”. The central government's civilian ministries, at least, preferred to make the necessary provisions for welfare and existence rather than hope for the success of calamitous methods of compulsion.

In addition to attempting to emphasize reducing the miners' privation, the conference also debated the local and state administrations' appeals to secure coal production and order by further strengthening military discipline in the coal district. The ministerial conference was strongly opposed to re-attaching the Moravian areas to the Zone of Army Operations, and the appeals were “overwhelmingly rejected”. The most influential arguments against the possibility were that it would be ridiculous on the one hand and superfluous on the other.

The absurdity of declaring that the northern areas of Moravia constituted a front line against the Russian army was self-evident, as the Russian army had at that point retreated beyond the eastern borders of Congress Poland, approximately three hundred miles away. That such a change was unnecessary, though, is the more interesting argument. The assembled officials concluded that “those crimes here considered, typical for mine worker strikes, can be dealt with under the statutes of martial law even if the area in question belongs to the hinterland.” Those mine workers in the service of the Labor Militia (Landsturmpflichtige) were already, due to their legal status, subordinated

141. Ibid.
to military discipline and military justice. They were, in a sense, soldiers on active duty. As such, insubordination, mutiny, or abandoning their post were already punishable by court-martials or summary judgements, and miners were in fact being punished under these clauses both before and after the conference met. 142

Those workers outside of the Militia laborer category were also liable to military justice. The same imperial decree that imposed military courts for a wide range of civilian activities decreed uprising (Aufruhr), malicious damage or arson against industrial plant or facilities, or aiding and abetting such, as military crimes. 143 That these crimes, when committed by members of the labor militia, were military crimes in the strict sense of the word, allowed any aid or co-operation on the part of the approximately fifteen percent of the labor force comprised by non-militia laborers to be punished under the aiding and abetting clause of the Code of Military Justice. 144 That fifteen percent, though generally consisting of youths under seventeen and therefore unable to be inducted into the labor militia, was also under the slightly looser category of laborers under the War Production Law and therefore liable to military justice in cases of abandoning or subverting their labor obligations, which is to say, striking. 145

The effective outcome of these legal categories was that the work force in the Ostrava-Karviná basin was that little remained to be further militarized. There was nowhere left to go. It was this increasing overlap between civilian labor and military


143. Reichsgesetzblatt (1914). LXXI. Stück, Nr. 156. 821.

144. Article 14 of the Austro-Hungarian Code of Military Justice. See Reichsgesetzblatt (1912), LV. Stück, Nr. 130. 443.

service which convinced those present at the conference of the 6\textsuperscript{th} of April that the imposition of military law would be senseless. This view was confirmed by the War Ministry's representative, Auditor-General Killian, and the conclusions of those present were submitted to the Military Commandants of Crakow and of Vienna.\footnote{\textit{ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6).} "Amtsbericht." April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.}

Military Command Vienna agreed with the ministerial conference's conclusions.\footnote{\textit{Military Command Vienna constituted one of a number of Landwehr regional commands responsible for internal military operations.}} Noting that less than a third of the absolute minimum necessary quantity of potatoes had reached Moravská Ostrava in the previous few days, the Military Commandant for Vienna located the cause of the problem in a lack of sufficient provisioning and conceded that “a one-time provisioning will not suffice...especially as the laborers would then believe that it was not a lack of foodstuffs but a lack of the good will to provide them”.\footnote{\textit{ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7).} "Ad Erlass Präs. No. 6645-IV." April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.}

In this view, lack of discipline was not the problem, privation was. It was the state, rather than the miners, which had failed to hold up the implicit bargain underpinning labor discipline in the coal district. Unfortunately, the State Police Office reported on the 13\textsuperscript{th} of April that, despite promises of “great quantities of potatoes and beans already rolling towards Moravská Ostrava...absolutely nothing has arrived”.\footnote{\textit{ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(5).} "Bericht." April 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.}

Ultimately, though, the civilian ministries in Vienna lacked the authority to dictate which measures would be taken to resolve the strike wave and prevent its reoccurrence. More problematic, though, was that they lacked the power to do so as well. The resources and organization necessary to consistently supply the coal district was beyond the reach...
of the Habsburg state in 1916. The initiative, then, laid in the hands of the Army High Command. The AOK consistently spoke out for a military solution, urging the re-attachment of the entirety of the basin into the Zone of Army Operations as the most efficient method of handling the problem.\textsuperscript{150} And before Franz Josef's death, on November 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1916, the Army High Command exercised very broad discretionary authority, and even more informal influence. Accordingly, then, the AOK sent an abrupt notice to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry on the 14\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1916, announcing that as of the previous day “the political region of Moravská Ostrava has been attached to the Zone of Army Operations”.\textsuperscript{151} The district leadership in Moravská Ostrava heard about it second-hand, from the Lemberg Military Command.\textsuperscript{152}

That the decision went to the proponents of further militarizing labor discipline instead of those who argued for fulfilling the terms of the implicit contract underpinning labor mobilization in the First World War accelerated the growth of labor radicalism and weakened the Habsburg state. Though neither the civilian nor the military solutions had any real substance, the victory for militarization proponents carried a symbolic weight, removing whatever small chance there may have been of a co-operative relationship between the Ostrava-Karviná labor force and the state. The privation which had undermined adherence to labor discipline and which underpinned the strike wave was to increase rather than decrease, and reliance on the exercise of naked violence would prove utterly unable to rebuild labor discipline in the face of starvation.

\textsuperscript{150} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "k.u.k. Armeeoberkommando an das k.u.k. Kriegsministerium." April 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.


\textsuperscript{152} ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "Bericht." April 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1916.
VI. In deinem Lager ist Österreich: The Beginning of the End

On the 19th of May, 1917, Military Command Cracow submitted a report to the War Ministry regarding “the renewed strike movements in the Ostrava-Karviná coal district.” The cause, they reported, was “shortage of foodstuffs, especially due to the discontinuous and interrupted delivery of foodstuffs.” Their recommendations were familiar. Military Command Cracow urged continuous imports of foodstuffs, a commission to investigate (and presumably increase) workers' wages, “barracksing of the workers, their supplies, and their clothes, and as most promising of success, transitioning the coal district to full military administration.” This last point referenced the contemplated appointment of a military plenipotentiary to administer the coal district, which was to bear fruit three weeks later. The appointment of Major-General Heinrich von Naumann as the plenipotentiary of Army High Command for the Ostrava-Karviná district took place on the 6th of June, 1917.

The original decision to mobilize Habsburg labor behind the war effort through a system of militarized labor discipline had proved determinative in the evolution of labor discipline in the Ostrava-Karviná district. The breakdown of the system of administrative coercion created by the War Production Law left nothing to take its place other than the exercise of naked force. By 1916, neither the Army High Command nor General von


154. Ibid.

Naumann had the ability to meaningfully alter the dynamic in place in the coal district by 1916 – there are only so many ways to threaten the firing squad.

The very severity of the disciplinary regime originally established in the coal district became counterproductive, with harsh treatment inciting rather than hindering strike movements.\(^{156}\) Though successful in maintaining production during the first stages of the First World War, the disciplinary regime had exhausted its capacity to mobilize labor at the very moment in which Wilhelmine Germany was launching the Hindenburg Program and Great Britain was beginning conscription. State violence against strikes and hunger protests began to increase both qualitatively and quantitatively, and by 1918 the armed forces were routinely firing upon crowds in the Bohemian lands.\(^{157}\)

By 1916 the working population of the coal district, radicalized by privation and violence, mobilized themselves behind peace instead of the war effort and began to openly threaten to cut off war production.\(^{158}\) Strike actions became increasingly commonplace, and coal production in Ostrava-Karviná, as in the Monarchy as a whole, began to sink and finally to collapse.\(^{159}\) This process reached its apogee in January of 1918 when Ostrava-Karviná's workers joined hundreds of thousands of their fellow laborers across Cisleithania in a general strike against the war.\(^{160}\)

The dynamic in play was a microcosm of the progressive estrangement between

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157. Ibid., 262. Deadly force was used 21 times between 1915 and 1916, 78 times in 1917, and 93 times in 1918 before the final collapse.


159. Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 203-204.

the Habsburg state and the peoples over which it ruled. Their concerns dismissed, their suffering ignored, more and more sacrifice for the war effort was required as less and less was provided to compensate them for their exertions. The draconian military regime in the coal district forced the workers there to choose between treason and starvation. The population of the Ostrava-Karviná district was called upon to provide more and given less than many areas of the Monarchy, and thus the breakdown of the original system of war mobilization occurred earlier there than almost anywhere else. Though an extreme case, the district can also be seen as exemplifying the process which was to expand throughout the Monarchy and finally even into the Habsburg military. The tension between unbearable wartime conditions and untenable military demands fueled by grandiose conceptions of military necessity, in the district as in the Monarchy, drove the population to act against the state.

Further, the idea that the application of military coercion could overcome all obstacles prevented the emergence of a partnership between the Habsburg state and its laboring population. The rejection of this possibility even before the First World War began and the substitution of militarized and authoritarian measures destroyed the possibility of a secondary mobilization behind the war effort at the very moment in which it was most drastically necessary. The mining population's alienation from the state as well as from the war effort also challenged the legitimacy of the state's power to direct and mobilize its citizenry. It destabilized war industries and tied up increasing numbers of troops for internal pacification.161

The Ostrava-Karviná district was one of the most important underpinnings of war production in the Habsburg Monarchy, and its labor force was critical to Habsburg

economic mobilization. The framework of military labor discipline set in place there at the beginning of the First World War functioned as long as the state was able to provide a sufficient basis for the material existence of the work force, but by 1916 this system was bankrupt. The threat of violence carried out under a system of administrative coercion was no longer sufficient to maintain coal output, and the only available means of ensuring its continuance was the exercise of violence against the mining population. The government debates over the proper response to the breakdown of the system of militarized labor discipline demonstrated this well. Though proper provisioning would have been optimal, it was also impossible. Patchwork attempts to repair the system of administrative coercion foundered on the difficulty of meaningfully sharpening the threat of violence implicit in the system. Ultimately, though, only recourse to increasing exertions of violence maintained productivity after the breakdown of militarized labor discipline in 1916. Militarized labor discipline thus failed to provide a firm basis for the continuing mobilization of mine labor in the Ostrava-Karviná district.
**APPENDIX ONE: GERMAN TERMS AND TRANSLATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Term</th>
<th>German Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Public Works</td>
<td>Ministerium für Öffentliche Arbeit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthracite</td>
<td>Steinkohle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lignite</td>
<td>Braunkohle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of the Interior</td>
<td>Innenminister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of the Interior</td>
<td>Ministerium des Innern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone of Army Operations</td>
<td>Bereich der Armee im Felde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Ministry</td>
<td>Kriegsminister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army High Command</td>
<td>Armeeoberkommando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Production Law</td>
<td>Kriegsleistungsgesetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Presidium</td>
<td>Landespräsidium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary Security Force</td>
<td>Assistenz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militia Law</td>
<td>Landsturmgesetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militia laborer</td>
<td>Landsturmarbeiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Co-operatives</td>
<td>Konsumvereine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Provisions Transfer Agency</td>
<td>Kriegsgetreideverkehrsanstalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directoral Conference</td>
<td>Direktorenkonferenz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushcart Operators</td>
<td>Hundstößer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signalman</td>
<td>Anschläger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billeted</td>
<td>Kaserniert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Captain</td>
<td>Bezirkshauptmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Police Bureau</td>
<td>Staatspolizeilliches Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Cadre Commandant</td>
<td>Kohlenkaderkommandant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Bonus</td>
<td>Kriegszulage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging and Upkeep</td>
<td>Kost und Quartier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry for Home Defence</td>
<td>Ministerium für Landesverteidigung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Statthalter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Administration</td>
<td>Bezirkshauptmannschaffa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uprising</td>
<td>Aufruhr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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