

## Comments

Even though during the past few years considerable research has been done on the history of the First Republic, little light has been shed on the early history of the Austrian self-defense organizations, which are usually referred to under the collective name of "Heimwehr." This lack of knowledge can in part be ascribed to the state and whereabouts of the relevant documents. A very large number of them are housed in the Austrian provincial archives, and some of them—for instance, those in Carinthia—are still not accessible to scholars. Another reason for the paucity of information is that during its early stage of development the Heimwehr had extremely close ties with foreign countries, especially Germany and Hungary.

Edmondson's method of approach was successful. Starting with an examination of already published documents, he then tracked down important original documents of German and British origin. Especially significant were his successful interrogations of prominent Heimwehr leaders such as Walter Pfrimer, Count Revertera, etc., who have since died. He was also able to make use of Ludger Rape's basic dissertation on "The Austrian Heimwehr and its Relations with the Bavarian Right between 1920 and 1923" (University of Vienna), which unfortunately still has not been published.

As a point of departure Edmondson rightly chose the roles played by Richard Steidle in the Tyrol and by Major Waldemar Pabst. He was able not only to make use of the latter's statements to support his arguments but also to draw helpful inferences from them. Edmondson also clarifies the important role in Heimwehr affairs played by Ignaz Seipel who, Rape has said, played an extremely significant role in obtaining the support of the Christian Social Party for the Heimwehr. Only through the assistance of this party was it possible in 1919-1920 to build up a kind of cover organization, on the model of the Bavarian defense formations, to provide a shelter for the badly disunited Heimwehren. By acting in conjunction with the Bavarian units and with assistance from Hungary, this umbrella organization definitely would have been able at a favorable moment to precipitate a revolutionary movement

to overthrow the Renner government. However, the fortuitous change in the political situation brought about by the resignation of the Renner government made it impossible to put these putsch plans into effect. Consequently, as early as 1921 the various Heimwehr groups, differing considerably from each other, were beset by a painful crisis, which, nevertheless, did not end with the movement's falling to pieces. On the contrary, Waldemar Pabst used his connections with Seipel and with industrialists to urge them to finance the Heimwehr formations during the years 1922-1925, even though at that time the internal situation in Austria was such that a putsch was no longer possible.

The year 1927, with its catastrophic events that led to a virtual civil war, was a stroke of good luck for the Heimwehr. The burning of the Palace of Justice and the fighting in July of that year made it possible for a movement that was already showing signs of disintegration again to offer its services as the strongest factor in domestic politics. The employment of the Heimwehr in the Tyrol as well as in Styria unleashed that broad political offensive which for the first time made it possible for the Heimwehr to become a dangerous movement in Austria. This was all the more true because after 1927 an effort was made for the first time to formulate an ideology for a party that was still anything but a homogeneous group.

Unfortunately, in discussing developments after 1927 Edmondson was not able to make use of Gerhard Botz's unpublished University of Vienna doctoral dissertation, "Contributions to the History of Political Violence in Austria between 1918 and 1933." Yet, despite his failure to examine this important study, he has very accurately assessed Johann Schober's attitude towards the Heimwehr. He points out that, although Schober ostensibly promoted the Heimwehr, he was resolved to assign to it only an insignificant political role and that by doing so he incurred Waldemar Pabst's mortal enmity.

Especially commendable are Edmondson's efforts to determine the numerical strength of the Heimwehr, which in 1925 amounted to 31 district brigades and approximately 100,000 men. Another meritorious aspect of his study is its discussion of the period between 1924 and 1927, about which little research has been done, in which the author throws new light on the quarrels within the leadership cadre.

A few omissions in Edmondson's article, however, should

also be pointed out, if only to supplement the important information given. The author has overlooked military organizations which were offshoots of paramilitary formations "imported" directly from Germany and which, because of their elite character, played a role that was by no means insignificant. Among them, for instance, was the Oberland Society, which was organized throughout Austria as a branch of the German free corps that had the same name and was very active in university towns. Such prominent later Heimwehr leaders as Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg and Finance Minister Dr. Ludwig Draxler were among its members and fought in its ranks in Upper Silesia. Similar was a kind of branch organization of the notorious Erhardt Brigade called "Deutsche Wehr," which existed in Austria and was led in Vienna by the former German Lieutenant Commander Walter Krüger. This formation was very well armed and recruited members especially from the federal army. A number of July, 1934, putschists came from its ranks. Moreover, the Deutsche Wehr was a kind of private army of Captain Erhardt after he settled in Vienna.

It should also be pointed out that, in addition to the Heimwehren and the Frontkämpfer groups (with which Edmondson dealt only briefly) the so-called "Vaterländische Schutzbund"—as the SA and SS of the Austrian National Socialist German Workers' Party were called—was also active after 1919 and played a very important role, working, to some extent, side by side with the Heimwehr. The Ostara Free Corps also operated in Vienna and Lower Austria until around 1920, although it was overshadowed by these larger organizations.

In spite of omissions, Edmondson's study without doubt represents an important step in the treatment of an extremely difficult, though very interesting, subject. It again shows that the phenomenon of armed political associations in Austria and Bavaria, as well as in Hungary, constitutes one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the postwar era.

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