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Making Austria German Again

Austrofascist 'Home Guards' against Nazi 'Austrian Legionaries', 1933–1934

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Abstract

Years before the Second World War, there emerged an Austrofascist *Ständestaat* [Corporatist State] to the south of Nazi Germany. This *Ständestaat* would be subsumed into Germany during the *Anschluss* of 1938. Subsumption of Austrofascism into Nazism has also occurred in understandings of fascism. This article centers two paramilitary organizations—an Austrian Nazi Legion based in Bavaria and the Austrian-based *Heimwehren* [Home Guards]—to argue that German-speaking fascists functioned via internecine violence over Austria's sovereignty. Fighting between the *Heimwehren* and Austrian Nazi Legionaries based in Bavaria culminated in a quasi-war across the Austro-Bavarian border, studied here from 1933 to 1934. This article showcases how fascist obsessions with total control came with an uncontrollable need for conflict over this contested borderland space. This tension undermined their claims of supremacy yet undergirded their supporters to fight harder against, ironically, other German-speaking fascists. As such, division was critical to their very formation. By taking this granular perspective, we acquire a better understanding of the convoluted history prior to the notorious *Anschluss*.

Keywords

Germany – Austria – Austrofascism – *Heimwehren* – Austrian Legion – Nazis – paramilitary organizations – border conflicts

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Introduction: Historiography, Intervention, and Background

Austria receives scant historiographical attention in comparison to Germany. Non-specialists are familiar with Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, and, of course, Nazi Germany. Yet only a smaller audience knows the nuances of the Dual Monarchy, the First Austrian Republic, and the so-called Austrofascist *Ständestaat* [Corporatist State]. This scholarly eclipse is particularly true concerning the history of German-speaking fascists. Conversations about far-right German extremism in the interwar period invariably—and often teleologically—point to ‘the rise of Nazis’. Indeed, as far as Austria is concerned, the Nazis subsumed it into their Greater Germany in the infamous *Anschluss* of 1938. So goes the societal narrative of Austrian subordination, both in the past and in our discussions about it.

The 1938 Nazi annexation was not foreordained. On the contrary, uncertainty ran rampant over who would claim the fascist mantle in German-speaking regions. A few years prior, an increasingly fascist paramilitary entity in Austria—the notorious *Heimwehren* [Home Guards]—published an official history of their movement. Their propagandists boasted about how the *Heimwehren* ‘has made Austria German again’, seeking to tether nationalist Germany glory to Austrian pride.¹ Despite such a unifying rallying cry, this *Heimwehren* was dizzyingly disparate. It was a loose patchwork of alliances and antagonisms, a fission-fusion network of fascists with shifting situational friendships and feuds stemming from misunderstandings, megalomaniac personalities, leadership squabbles, and regional rivalries. The division of their branches often ran along and thus reinforced regional fractures, as the activists created a different division for each of Austria’s main federal states.²

This pluralization of *Heimwehren* raises questions of taxonomy. Echoing such right-wing splintering, the historiography has done what it is wont to do: retreat into a myopia of pluralized typologies. This set of fascisms/fascists for interwar Austrian movements includes ‘Austrofascism’, ‘*konkurrenz* [com-

1 Die Propagandastelle der Bundesführung des österreichischen Heimatschutzes, *Heimatschutz in Österreich* (Vienna: Zoller, 1934), 321.

2 It was the *Heimatwehr* in Tyrol, the *Heimatdienst* in Vorarlberg, the *Heimwehrdienst* in Salzburg, the *Heimwehr* in Upper Austria, and the *Heimatschutz* in Styria and Carinthia, though the two were technically distinct. For coverage of the organizational confusion in this ‘movement’, see C. Earl Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918–1936* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), 1–149. See also Jason Engle, ‘A Legion of Legacy: Tyrolean Militarism, Catholicism, and the Heimwehr Movement’ (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 2017), 1–152.

petitive] fascism', 'clerical fascist', and even 'semi-fascist', just to name a few.³ Fundamentally, each label remains relative to how each scholar conceptualizes it, such that this pedantry over typology generates unproductive tautologies. In the process, scholars have all but dissected 'fascism' into oblivion.⁴

While the historiography's extant toolkit of various 'fascisms' might describe fascism, it does not really explain it. Thankfully, newer scholarship has moved to embrace 'fluidity' rather than the rigidity of such 'prescriptive terminologies and typologies'.⁵ I work from adaptable conceptualization of fascism, conjoined with historiography that frames fascism as an emotional experience and a relative process.⁶ I invoke fascism not as some historical agent in its own right, but rather as a dynamic agglutination of politically-motivated beliefs. Its adherents situationally combined, separated, and re-coagulated any of the following: espousing objectives both revolutionary and right-wing, using conflict both as means and transcendental ends, coupling both nationality (even race) and geographic landscape, and/or placing zealous faith in hierarchical leadership.⁷

We should treat interwar paramilitary activists who openly embraced the affective power of fascist movements as such, regardless of whether they adhered to set ideological rubrics. These paramilitary men often viewed themselves as fascist in a unifying way, or received labels as 'the seed of fascism, which must first be developed'.⁸ I take such primordial fascism seriously as

3 For 'Austrofaschismus' [Austrofascism], see Florian Wenninger and Lucile Dreidemy, 'Einleitung,' in *Das Dollfuß/Schuschnigg-Regime 1933–1938: Vermessung eines Forschungsfeldes*, eds. Florian Wenninger and Lucile Dreidemy (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 7. For 'konkurrenz fascism' and 'clerical fascist', see Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 8 and 233, respectively. For 'semi-fascist', see Martin Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 274. For a summary of modifiers, see Emmerich Tálos, 'Das austrofaschistische Herrschaftssystem,' in *Austrofaschismus: Politik—Ökonomie—Kultur 1933–1938*, eds. Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (Vienna: LIT, 2014), 416.

4 Gilbert Allardyce, 'What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept,' *The American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1979): 367–370, 378–379, 385–387, 388 (for direct quotation), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1855138>.

5 Tim Kirk, 'Dictatorship, Fascism and the Demise of Austrian Democracy,' in *Austrian Studies Today*, eds. Günter Bischof and Ferdinand Karhofer (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2016), 124, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.cttn2txjc.12>.

6 George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), x–xi; Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933–1938* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 4, 6, 233.

7 See also the conceptualization of the label 'Black' in Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918–1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 6.

8 Anonymous writing under the name Fabritius e.h., 'Gedanken und Richtlinien,' Page 1, Tiroler Landesarchiv Innsbruck (TLAI), Bestand: 'Bundesleitung der Österreichischen (Alpenländischen) Selbstschutzverbände' (Heimwehr) VIII. Sammelakten aus den Jahren 1925–1926, VIII/1 Sammelakt (organization) 1–37 Fol.

fascism, regardless of its nascent or supposedly inchoate stage. Or, as scholar George Mosse rightly suggested in *The Fascist Revolution*:

Fascism considered as a cultural movement means seeing fascism as it saw itself and as its followers saw it, to attempt to understand the movement on its own terms. Only then, when we have grasped fascism from the inside out, can we truly judge its appeal and its power . . . The cultural interpretation of fascism opens up a means to penetrate fascist self-understanding, and such empathy is crucial in order to grasp how people saw the movement, something which cannot be ignored or evaluated merely in retrospect.⁹

We must embrace such relativist, contextualized conceptualizations rather than imposing austere parameters to assess ‘true’ fascists. No such monolithic definition exists, nor should it, as fascists included a diverse array of adherents.¹⁰ More elastic conceptualizations include groups with proto-fascistic leanings while still demarcating delineations with conservatives, restorationists, and reactionaries, many of whom castigated fascists as rabble-rousers yet also embraced the seductive dynamism of fascism by the 1930s.¹¹ Taking the words of such extremists seriously does not mean accepting their sources uncritically, as exaggeration and outright fabrication were often staples of their public (and private) discourse. Especially after 1934, when freedom of the press and expression more broadly was severely curtailed in Austria. But exaggerations and fabrications were still significant to the internecine co-dependency among fascists, as such statements push public conversations and perceptions in an ever-radical direction.

Furthermore, as Julie Thorpe states in her monograph, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933–1938*, we should start understanding fascism as ‘a larger process of fascistization’, to which the *Heimwehren* studied here became integral.¹² Immersed in dynamic radicalization, fascists blended the right with the far right and the institutional with the revolutionary. Aristotle Kallis best described a complex web of such regimes as ‘para-fascism’, which pairs well

9 Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, x–xi.

10 Mosse also criticizes previous scholars for trying ‘to look for a single key to unlock the secrets of fascism’s existence and success’. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, ix.

11 For this process in Germany in the 1920s, see Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5. For this process in Austria, see Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 4.

12 Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State*, 233.

with his emphasis on ‘mobility’ pointing toward ‘better routes to navigate those still challenging borderlands between fascism and authoritarianism.’¹³ Indeed, *Heimwehren* paramilitary men often remained vague and obscure about their own political goals.¹⁴ So we ought not simply look for some ‘smoking gun’ manifesto of fascist credentials.¹⁵ We should instead focus our attention on tracing the radicalization of fascistizing troopers, who manifested their machinations via clumsy fits and starts, radicalized their techniques via trial and error, and destabilized democracies via pokes and prods over time.

This article explores the *Heimwehren*’s fraught, often outright violent, relationships with the Nazis. But not just any Nazis: a very particular, ragtag group of Austrian Nazis who fled across the border into Bavaria, organizing and operating against Austria as an *Österreichisches Legion* [ÖL; Austrian Legion]. Like the *Heimwehren*, these legionaries were hellbent on making Austria German again. But they had drastically different conceptualizations of what exactly that objective meant. If many in the *Heimwehren* wished to channel German nationalism for Austrian patriotism and autonomy, then the ÖL wished to channel German nationalism for Austria’s subsumption and dissection into their Greater German Reich. To the legion, making Austria German again meant Nazification. Thus, the *Heimwehren* cadre often aimed their fascist German nationalism against domineering Nazism, both in affect and in action. All the while, certain ranks of the *Heimwehren*—particularly in the Austrian Land of Styria—increasingly became Nazi loyalists.¹⁶ Fascists thus experienced simultaneous fraternization and fragmentation over differing conceptualizations of

13 Aristotle Kallis’s chapter traces the origin of the term ‘para-fascism’, as coined by Roger Griffin in his 1993 *Nature of Fascism*. Cited in Aristotle Kallis, ‘Working across Bounded Entities: Fascism, “Para-Fascism”, and Ideational Mobilities in Interwar Europe,’ in *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin*, eds. Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 90.

14 Leader of the Tyrolean *Heimatwehren*, Richard Steidle, declared a list of fascistizing objectives in a 1930 speech, now known as the ‘Korneuburg Oath’, which has received scholarly assessments for its fascist elements. Edmondson, *Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 97–102. Bruce F. Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis: A History of Austrian National Socialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 73–75.

15 Gerhard Botz’s work even claims the Heimwehr was the ‘only openly Fascist factor in the emerging Christian *Ständestaat*’, which, on the one hand, helps inform this paper’s treatment of them as fascist. On the other, it in many ways reifies the very schema of ‘true’ vs. ‘false’ fascists away from which I seek to move. Gerhard Botz, ‘The Short- and Long-Term Effects of the Authoritarian Regime and of Nazism in Austria: The Burden of a “Second Dictatorship”’, *Historical Social Research, Supplement* 28 (2016): 192, <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.suppl.28.2016.191-213>.

16 Bruce F. Pauley, *Hahnenschwanz und Hakenkreuz: Steirischer Heimatschutz und österreichischer Nationalsozialismus, 1918–1934* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1976), 10, 172.

German nationalism and authoritarianism. This is why it is essential to bring Austria into the story well before the infamous 1938 *Anschluss*.

To that end, the First Austrian Republic was born out of defeat in the First World War. As such, it faced a litany of baptisms by fire: imposed upon a population that, quite frankly, did not want it, landlocked and shorn of its imperial holdings and grandeur, ensuing crises of national and cultural identity, violent territorial disputes with neighbors, the brink of insolvency and dependency on western loans, and domestic political upheaval.¹⁷ Indeed, from 1920 to 1933, the Austrian Republic saw fourteen chancellors, but all ruled coalition governments centered on the Christian Social Party (CSP), often in ramshackle, unstable alliances with fringe parties.¹⁸ The center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP) remained in perpetual opposition. Party cleavages ran along and reinforced regional lines: the SDP ran the state government of 'Red' Vienna, in strong contradistinction to the CSP-dominated provincial state governments of Tyrol, Salzburg, Carinthia, Styria, and Vorarlberg.¹⁹

Paramilitary organizations further complicated the political situation. The *Heimwehren* emerged as key players following their role in suppressing a 1927 left-wing uprising in Vienna.²⁰ By 1929, the various *Heimwehren* had about 350,000 members on paper, though the number of men who received weapons and instructions for their usage amounted to one-tenth that number.²¹ Until 1934, the *Heimwehren* could never offer a definitive conclusion to its ongoing rivalry with the socialist *Republikanischer Schutzbund* [RS; Republican Defense

17 For doubts about its functionality at its origin, see Rolf Steininger, *Austria, Germany, and the Cold War: From the Anschluss to the State Treaty 1938–1955* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 3, 139. Tim Kirk reminds us to take stock of the relatively robust components of the First Republic, which is also fair, depending on perspective or focus. Tim Kirk, 'Ideology and Politics in the State that Nobody Wanted: Austro-Marxism, Austrofascism, and the First Austrian Republic,' in *Global Austria: Austria's Place in Europe and the World*, eds. Günter Bischof, Fritz Plasser, Anton Pelinka, and Alexander Smith (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2011), 82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1n2txkw.7>. That said, even if the republic itself was stable, it was certainly on a very rocky road.

18 C. Earl Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918–1936* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978), 43, 74–75, 80–83.

19 Hence the label 'Red Vienna', an abstraction that so agitated and scared conservatives and other right-wing agents. Vienna was also a hotbed for right-wing thinkers, who viewed themselves as overwhelmed by their long list of nemeses: cosmopolitan socialists, Bolsheviks, and Austro-Marxists, all often coded in very antisemitic terms. See Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 1–14, 223–226.

20 C.A. Macartney, 'The Armed Formations in Austria,' *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 8 no. 6 (1929): 622–624, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3015677>. Edmondson, *Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 44–48.

21 See footnote 4 in Krondert, 'The Rise and Early History of the Heimwehr,' 86–87.

League].²² Each of these two factions fought with the other in paramilitary calls and responses. RS and *Heimwehren* members spent 1927 to 1934 coming to blows at public events and labor rallies, and *Heimwehren* men often tried to intimidate strikers to return to work.²³

While 1933 was certainly a critical year for the Nazis in Germany, it was also the year that CSP Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss launched his country on a parallel fascistizing trajectory. The CSP had a long history of right-wing, authoritarian, Catholic antecedents, from *fin-de-siècle* Viennese Mayor Karl Lueger's infamous antisemitism, to party leader and ordained church official Ignaz Seipel's anti-democratic philosophizing and political platform. Indeed, starting in 1930, the CSP added its own right-wing paramilitary group, the *Ostmärkische Sturmsharen* [Stormtroopers of the Eastern Mark], into the already crowded paramilitary arena.²⁴ Dollfuss emerged as Chancellor from this hierarchically-inclined Catholic milieu, and in 1933, he closed the Austrian legislature on a procedural technicality.²⁵ He then set to work building a staunchly Catholic authoritarian regime, replete with guidance from Mussolini and the Pope's blueprint for corporatist economic systems in his *Quadragesimo anno* papal encyclical.²⁶ Despite the emergence of two similar regimes in German-speaking Europe, right-wing paramilitary men from both regimes engaged in an unofficial quasi-war across the Austro-Bavarian border. Indeed, across the mid-1930s, German-speaking fascists on both sides of their shared border fought this fratricidal feud. While this intra-fascist, German-speaking border war might seem puzzling, it starts to make sense when we examine it historically, reconstructing the motivations behind the various agents in their historical context.

22 Macartney, 'The Armed Formations,' 622–624. Edmondson, *Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 55–56, 141.

23 Macartney, 'The Armed Formations,' 622–624.

24 For each group's potential advantages, see Edmondson, *Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 243–244.

25 Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, *Between Hitler and Mussolini: Memoirs of Ernst Rüdiger Prince Starhemberg* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1942), 108.

26 For the role of Catholicism and papal encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* on Austrofascist efforts, see Georg-Hans Schmit, "Im Namen Gottes, des Allmächtigen": christlich—deutsch—berufsständisch: Ausgewählte Aspekte über den Stand und die Perspektiven der Forschung über das christlichsoziale Lager in den Jahren 1929 bis 1938,' in *Das Dollfuss/Schuschnigg-Regime 1933–1938: Vermessung eines Forschungsfeldes*, eds. Florian Wenninger and Lucile Dreidemy (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 153. Botz also discusses this dictatorial process and its Catholic elements in Botz, 'The Short- and Long-Term Effects of the Authoritarian Regime and of Nazism in Austria,' 192–193.

I argue that we need to frame the internecine dynamic among these German-speaking fascists as baked into their fascist beliefs. Their ideological infighting was a dark yet logical outgrowth of a constitutive fascist contradiction: the need for continuous contestation to prove their uncontested mastery over themselves. It was not enough to be locked in brawls with left-wing paramilitary groups and labor unions centered in 'Red Vienna'. The peripheral border regions with Nazi Germany itself became the center of this radicalizing, intra-fascist contestation, specifically because these German-speakers fought over, and about, the very border that divided their shared sense of nation into two political states. The Alpine border served as both battleground and additional impetus for conflict, compounding the intra-fascist fault lines. All the while, fascistizing leaders jockeyed discursively and physically for the trophy of German fascist hegemony. Rank-and-file right-wingers cheered them on and exchanged bets in the form of allegiance and violence, never exactly certain which horse to back. What remained certain, however, was the chaos that ensued when rival right-wingers were off to the races.

Centering Montane Margins: An Austrian Legion across the Bavarian Border, 1933

Following Hitler's 1933 assumption of power in Germany, Austria immediately faced aggression from its Nazi neighbor. The first main blow to Austrian sovereignty actually came from an administrative transition within Germany. The Nazi *Gleichschaltung*—their synchronization of bureaucratic, juridical, and academic policies and personnel with the Nazi agenda—also saw the dismantling of federalist privileges traditionally afforded the once 'Free State of Bavaria.'²⁷ With the sublimation of Bavaria to Nazi unitarism, Bavaria became a stronghold for Nazis and a base of operations for their meddling in Austria. The Nazi assault on German federalism even provoked a brief Austrian mobilization on the Bavarian border. In March 1933, Bavarian Justice Minister in Munich, Hans Frank, gave a provocative address, warning the Austrian government not to persecute Nazis in its territories.²⁸ According to Karl Polanyi,

27 Thomas Schaarschmidt reminded us that supplanting the federalist system was the *Gleichschaltung*'s original purpose. Thomas Schaarschmidt, 'Multi-Level Governance in Hitler's Germany: Reassessing the Political Structure of the National Socialist State,' *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 2 (2017): 220, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44234960>.

28 'Der bayerische Justizminister für die österreichischen Nationalsozialisten,' *Innsbrucker*

Frank then stated that ‘General [Franz Ritter] von Epp [the Nazi representative in Bavaria] would be, perhaps, entrusted with looking after matters in Austria’, an intimidating intimation. Polanyi further reported: ‘The Vienna Government promptly instituted cooperation between the army, gendarmerie, and *Heimwehr* in defence of the frontier, and reservists were called up.’²⁹ The same English-language paper even reported that Frank’s comments on a Munich radio station amounted to having ‘threatened a Bavarian invasion of Austria.’³⁰ With its subsumption to the Nazi political system, Bavaria warped into staging grounds for Nazi incursions into Austria.

Two months later, Frank then accepted an invitation from Austrian Nazis for a tour of speeches across Austria. The headline for *Die Stunde* on 10 May clearly labelled Frank’s tour as an ‘Unwanted Visit’. Bad blood still festered from his ‘radio broadcast that badly offended the Austrian government and advertized a forcible intervention of Bavaria against Austria.’³¹ During the visit, the *Heimwehren* held a rally at Schönbrunn Palace.³² Upwards of forty thousand paramilitary members attended, in addition to autocrat Dollfuss. The Austrian fascists constructed a fantastical narrative—‘Austria’s glorious past’—meant to galvanize and harness affective support for the Dollfuss regime. The *Heimwehren* simultaneously sought to flex in front of the unwelcomed Nazi representative, ‘to cherish the sacred Austrian tradition with the *Heimatschutz* and with all means to struggle for a free independent Austria.’³³

Der Wiener Tag reported that, just ten days later, Frank spoke to a crowd of university students in a Berlin rally framed as ‘For Greater Germany and against Dollfuss’. Frank chastised Austria’s leaders and proclaimed, ‘we want to

Nachrichten, March 20, 1933, 5, available at *ANNO Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften*, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ibn&datum=19330320&seite=5>.

29 Karl Polanyi, ‘Austria and Germany,’ *International Affairs* 12, no. 5 (1933): 586, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2601779>.

30 ‘Chronology,’ *Bulletin of International News* 9, no. 23 (1933): 13–14, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/25639163>.

31 “‘Unerwünschter Besuch’: Schärfster Protest des Regierungsorgans gegen die geplante Wienreise deutscher Minister: Verweigerung der Einreisebewilligung für den bayrischen Minister Frank?’ *Die Stunde*, May 10, 1933, 1, available at *ANNO*, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=std&datum=19330510&seite=1>.

32 ‘Der deutsche Ministerbesuch in Wien: Der Heimwehraufmarsch in Wien,’ *Freie Stimmen: Deutsche Kärntner Landeszeitung*, May 14, 1933, 1, available at *ANNO*, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=fst&datum=19330514&seite=1>.

33 ‘Die Türkenbefreiungsfeier des österreichischen Heimatschutzes in Schönbrunn,’ *Alpenländische Rundschau*, May 20, 1933, 1, available at *ANNO*, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=alp&datum=19330520&seite=3>.

struggle for the *Zusammenschluss* [consolidation] of Austria and Germany as a historical bridge into the future of the German *Volk*. And we want to lead this struggle with all legal-judicial means'. But his claims of legality shifted to more pugnacious rhetoric about Austria: 'We expect the cooperation of the German academic youth. Prepared to die, you are the living power of the German *Volk*. You are the storm troopers of Hitler . . . the entire world should hear it, that there can be no second Germany next to Hitler's Germany'. The next speaker, *Bundeschulungsleiter* [Federal Education Superintendent] Johann von Leers, even eradicated any Austrian sense of self from his Nazi nationalism: 'Black lords [the clerical influences of the Dollfuss regime] gossip there [in Austria] about a special Austrian *Geist* [spirit]. But there is none. There is only a German *Geist*'.³⁴ He had already carried out a mental *Gleichschaltung* of Austria, discursively subsuming southeastern regional loyalties to Nazi nationalism.

The Nazi bravado and calls across the Bavarian border proved alluring. By the end of summer 1933, the *Österreichisches Abendblatt* reported that Austrian police apprehended 'four young people with packed backpacks on the streets of Salzburg', who planned to cross the Bavarian border to join 'An Austrian Legion' [ÖL; *Österreichische Legion*]. This paramilitary group offered haven in Bavaria to Austrian Nazis fleeing the Dollfuss regime.³⁵ The Nazis seeking refuge in this Bavarian-based, Austrian-composed ÖL had 'smuggled' themselves over the border to a Nazi militia camp on the outskirts of Munich.³⁶ The *Salzburger Chronik* reported a *Nationalrat* member's speech, in which he denounced the ÖL for its plans to come back to Austria to create disorder. The German Foreign Minister reportedly had assured that the ÖL would be 'dissolved and its members broken up into work camps'.³⁷ In a sense, the German Nazis upheld part of the minister's promise. They sent the ÖL to Dachau, but not to the infamous camp therein. Instead, the German Nazis established training grounds

34 Bold in original. "Für Großdeutschland und gegen Dollfuß": Eine überhebliche Studentenkundgebung in Berlin—Der Justizminister Dr. Frank halt eine provokante Rede,' *Der Wiener Tag*, May 21, 1933, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tag&datum=19330521&seite=1>.

35 'Oesterreichische Hochverräter-Legion in Bayern,' *Oesterreichisches Abendblatt*, August 4, 1933, 5, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=oab&datum=19330804&seite=5>.

36 'Der Schandfleck der "österreichischen Legion",' *Salzburger Chronik*, August 24, 1933, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19330824&seite=1>.

37 'Das Schicksal der "österreichischen Legion",' *Salzburger Chronik*, October 3, 1933, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19331003&seite=2>.

for the ÖL elsewhere in the town, such that upwards of 1,500 Austrian Nazis resided on Bavarian soil.³⁸ According to the *Allgemeiner Tiroler Anzeiger*, the Austrian *Schutzstaffel* (ss)—responsible for the ‘organization of terror campaigns in Austria’—received an office in Munich.³⁹ But true to the internecine logic of fascists, the relationship between the German Nazis and this ÖL was far from seamless.

German and Austrian Nazis had a long history of disunion, both before and after their ‘triumph’ in the 1938 *Anschluss*. German Nazis, especially higher-ranking officials in Berlin, often saw Austrian Nazis as an undisciplined rabble, lacking the foresight to win a complex long game that required at least some diplomatic tact. That German Nazis rolled their eyes at Austrian Nazis for being *too* over-the-top, crass, and heavy handed speaks to the rabidity of the Austrian Nazis and the lasting impact of negative regional stereotypes.⁴⁰ Thus, German Nazis monitored the erratic plans of the Austrian Nazis, whom the Germans sheltered and trained in Bavaria, as these plans might embarrass the German Nazis diplomatically.

A communiqué from German Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath included a note that reported again on official Austrian grievances about the ÖL. In response, the Nazi state assured that it would place the Austrian Nazi émigrés in ‘work camps in northern Germany’. Even so, the Austrian state complained this legion remained ‘well armed and militarily trained’ in the border region, particularly in the Bavarian border town of Freilassing across the Saalach River from Salzburg. The same Nazi memorandum openly admitted that Germany fueled ‘the National Socialist terror in Austria’ with armaments and educational paraphernalia whose provenance proved to be ‘incontestably’ of ‘German origin’.⁴¹

38 ‘Verhastete Nationalsozialisten: Der Urheber der Bombenfabrik gefunden?’ *Neues Wiener Journal*, September 3, 1933, 7, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwj&datum=19330903&seite=7>. For the numbers see ‘Die Landesleitung Oesterreich nur getarnt,’ *Tiroler Anzeiger*, August 13, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tan&datum=19340813&seite=2>. Pauley stated the October 1933 ÖL membership was about 4,500. By the end of 1934, he says it reached a high-water mark of about nine thousand before dropping back down to three thousand come 1938. Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis*, 144–145.

39 ‘Die Landesleitung Oesterreich nur getarnt,’ 2.

40 Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis*, 115–117, 124–125, 133–137. His chapter on Nazi tensions after annexation is ‘The Great Disillusionment’. Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis*, 216.

41 N[eurath], ‘Memorandum by the Foreign Minister, Berlin, January 17, 1934, RM 65. [Enclosure] Berlin, January 17, 1934. Note,’ in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945*:

The ÖL also got to work planning an actual strike across the border. Writing to the Nazi Foreign Office in January 1934, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Austria included a report from Lieutenant Wolfgang Muff, a military attaché in Austria. Muff reported that clandestine agents in Munich planned for a twofold incursion against Austria in less than two months. The Munich activists pushed the now-underground Austrian SA to start a domestic uprising, while 'the Austrian Legion is to invade Austria'. The Munich agents knew such a brash gamble might provoke the ire of Nazi German statesmen. So, these Munich agents attempted, unsuccessfully, to keep their plans a secret. The report encouraged Nazi German officials to take immediate action against the ÖL 'to prevent an irreparable disaster'.⁴² Among the Nazis, the distinction between Austrian and German could matter greatly, despite (perhaps because) of their adamance that it did not.

A further irony emerged when Dollfuss outlawed the Nazi Party entirely, which did not eliminate Nazism so much as further disperse Austrian Nazism across the border into Bavaria. The banned Nazis of Salzburg, for example, established their new headquarters in the Bavarian town of Freilassing, a mere stone's throw away from their Austrian hometown.⁴³ The Austrian Nazis clearly found haven in Bavaria, but not without contestation with their German Nazi comrades. Persecuted in their native Austria, the ÖL members turned to the Nazi regime in Germany for refuge, training, and logistical support. While they created more than a few diplomatic headaches for their Reich German hosts, they positioned themselves at way stations along the Bavarian border, poised to make their move.

A Paramilitary Border War: Fascist (In)Fighting in the Borderlands, 1933–1934

Set against the border agitation from without, Austria was intensifying fascistization from within. By spring of 1933, Dollfuss closed the Austrian Parliament on a technicality, complete with a police barricade around the building

From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry. Series C (1933–1937): The Third Reich: First Phase: Volume 11: October 14, 1933–June 13, 1934 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), 371.

42 Erbach, 'The Chargé d'Affaires in Austria to the Foreign Ministry, Telegram: No. 8 of January 31, 1934,' in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C, Volume 11*, 437–438.

43 Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis*, 108.

itself. Austrian Nazis responded to this Austrian strain of radicalization the only way they knew how: with further radicalization of their own. A foreign observer discussed the first months of Dollfuss's Austrian dictatorship thusly: 'The lists of acts of Nazi violence in Austria during the spring and summer [of 1933] is a long one, too long to print. Shootings, intimidations, assaults, bombings, slanders and libels, were of daily occurrence'.⁴⁴ The Austro-German border itself became a point of contention when Nazi Germany started charging 1,000 marks for each tourist crossing from Bavaria into Austria. To this tariff on tourism, 'Dollfuss retaliated by closing all the Brown Houses [SA centers] in Austria, forbidding the Nazi uniform, and arresting some hundreds of Nazi agitators'.⁴⁵ In reporting on this border escalation, the *Berlin Morgenpost* conceded the 'intensification of the antagonism'.⁴⁶ The Nazis strove to eliminate the border in the future by, paradoxically, buttressing it with an exit tax in the present.

Chaos and confrontation only escalated, as these fascists—boasting of their German nationality—agitated along the border to advance their vision of Germandom.⁴⁷ A British observer claimed these groups also extended the conflict into the Austro-Bavarian airspace:

and then began a war, one of the queerest wars ever known anywhere, a war fought bloodlessly (except for casualties in minor border frays) but a war nevertheless. The Nazis invaded Austria. They crossed the frontier—through the air. Their planes dropped propaganda leaflets . . . the tension increased until the Great Powers found it intolerable; first Dollfuss was given permission to increase his army by 8,000 men to full treaty strength; then France, Britain and Italy protested in Berlin.⁴⁸

The same month, the *Salzburger Chronik* labeled this quasi-war among Germans of different regional backgrounds and with divergent fascist impulses as 'the most unnatural conflict in the world'. According to the paper, Germandom suffered from such German-on-German violence: 'the conditions on the Austrian border' became so noxious that they 'slapped every German sensibility

44 John Gunther, 'Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,' *Foreign Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1934), <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030587>.

45 Gunther, 'Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,' 310.

46 'Reisesperre nach Oesterreich: 1000 Mark Gebühr für Ausreise-Sichtvermerk,' *Berliner Morgenpost*, May 28, 1933, 1.

47 Gunther, 'Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,' 311.

48 Ibid.

in the face'. According to the Salzburg news source, 'brown-red Munich' emitted such toxicity along the Austro-Bavarian border. Bavaria became the melting pot in which German Nazis and exiled Austrian Nazis—'the so-called "Austrian legion" . . . which in Bavaria people want to support or have supported'—all blended together to launch incursions into Austria.⁴⁹ Though not a traditional war, this 'queerest' of wars across the borderland embroiled the Austro-Bavarian region in daily tumult, maybe not always severe, but enough to keep the inhabitants on edge.⁵⁰

The 'border forays' across this borderland might have seemed relatively 'minor' from spatial and temporal distance. But the stakes escalated to fatal heights.⁵¹ According to the Salzburg government's official reports, one of these 'border incidents' occurred when members of the *Heimwehren* shot and killed a German soldier. This incident coupled with another event, when 'an armed *Heimwehr* patrol, four to six men strong, was seen on Bavarian territory'. Because of these incidents, Austrian authorities in Salzburg feared the 'border population on the Bavarian side' might retaliate against 'Austrian officials and *Heimwehr* men'. The Austrians proclaimed a restriction on Bavarian border crossings into Austria, except for Bavarians who offered 'proper documentation issued' from 'qualified Bavarian police officials'.⁵² This border lacked stability specifically because of the men stationed there to impose their contested fascist versions of order.

But it was not just threats from Bavaria that the Salzburg agents feared; the city itself was inundated with brawls. Salzburg Governor Franz Rehrl described how the Nazis had made enemies of everyone else.⁵³ Governor Rehrl reported

49 'Zwei Lesearten,' *Salzburger Chronik*, August 10, 1933, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19330810&seite=1>.

50 Gunther, 'Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,' 311.

51 Ibid.

52 Other exceptions included Bavarians who worked in Austria, Bavarian officials ('Gendarmerie, Police, Customs Officials') who had to attend to duties in Austria, Bavarians with a legitimate reason or who owned 'property in Austria', and children traveling on the way to school. 'Bezirksgendarmeriekommando Salzburg. E. Nr. 3273 Vom Grenzzollamte Hammerau wurde am 28./11/1933 folgendes in Erfahrung gebracht,' Landesarchiv Salzburg (LaS), Rehrl Akten RehrLP 1922–1938, RehrLP-1938/0045, Landeshauptmannschaft Salzburg: Grenzverkehr mit Bayern: Al. Grenzverkehr, Ausflugverkehr, Durchreiseverkehr Tfg. – Reichen hall-Lofu, etc., 1933–1936, 1938 29a/358, Bezirkshauptmannschaft Salzburg eingelangt am 28. Nov. 1933 No. 44354.

53 The report from Salzburg governor's office is listed as 'undatiert' [undated] and could be from 1922 to 1938. However, it mentions the *Ostmärkische Sturmsharen*, which emerged in 1930 and thus narrows the likely date range from 1930 to 1934. Furthermore, the document

on ubiquitous confrontations among paramilitary groups, creating ‘the question of the *Kmapf* [*sic*, typographical error for *Kampf*] in the city, in the town and outside of the inhabited localities’. From his perspective, this situation differed greatly from ‘a conventional war’. Instead, it felt like living ‘in a small war, in street fighting, in a civil war’, in which the SA amounted to nothing short of a ‘civil war group/ troop [unclear based on transcript]’.⁵⁴ As per Dollfuss’s May 1933 decrees, SA men were ‘not allowed’ to wear their stereotypical brown-shirted attire, instead wearing ‘civilian clothes’, a policy that perhaps backfired as SA members could blend into crowds.⁵⁵ Rehr reflected on possible options to re-establish order in the streets. If a ‘clash occurs in the open street’ and ‘it comes to a fight’, he commented simply that he ‘must clear the street’. But if ‘the adversary is marching in order to occupy an important objective . . . I must preempt the adversary in a forced march!’ He then outlined his ‘Principles To Fight for the Movement [Austrofascism]: 1.) surprise the adversary! 2.) grab them firmly and enforce the law upon the adversary! No negotiating! 3.) advance ready for battle! 4.) identify early on where the weakest positions of the adversary are: deploy the main part of the attack there!’⁵⁶ The Salzburg governor’s dramatic policies demonstrated the daily exchanges of street violence. These fascist regimes in German-speaking Europe, whose national and ideological stars aligned, quickly became star-crossed. Border violence seemed possible at any given moment. And this ‘most unnatural conflict’—this ‘queerest’ war—would only intensify.⁵⁷

As before, the Nazi government knew about this border strife caused by the Austrian Nazis they were harboring. Internal German documents listed Austrian complaints about how the Austrian state ‘has today invoked all well-meaning patriotic inhabitants of Austria to a common end struggle against a minority of irredeemable enemies of state and terrorists, who obstinately and feloniously want to disturb the peace and order of our homeland’.⁵⁸ If the Ger-

describes the SA uniform as forbidden, which would date this document after Dollfuss’s May 1933 decree. The document is also full of typing mistakes, suggesting it was probably an early draft. Franz Rehr, *Der Strassenkampf*, LaS, Rehr Akten RehrLP 1922–1938, RehrLPolitica (undatiert) (1–11), RehrLP-0000/0006, 1–6.

54 Rehr, *Der Strassenkampf*, LaS, Rehr Akten RehrLP 1922–1938, RehrLP-0000/0006, 1.

55 *Ibid.*, 2.

56 *Ibid.*, 6.

57 ‘Zwei Lesearten,’ 1; Gunther, ‘Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,’ 311.

58 ‘Der “Politischen Korrespondenz” gehen in diesem Zusammenhange folgende Mitteilungen zu: In Aktionen der Nationalsozialisten in Österreich, Einschleusung von Propaganda- und Sprengmaterial sowie Einmarschpläne der “Österreichischen Legion”; Notenaustausch Jan.–Feb. 1934. BaBL, R 43- 11/1477, (fol. 1-), Reichskanzlei, 376433 Akten betreffend:

man and Austrian Nazis failed to see eye to eye on the use of tact versus radical measures, then the right-wingers in Austria also had a shaky coalition. The German consular representative in the Austrian city of Innsbruck pointed out the oddity that internal fissures also marred the Austrian autonomists. Official documents from the German consulate there pointed out the irony that it was the presence of the Nazi threat that kept the Austrian autonomists together. Reporting at the start of 1934, the German consulate agent claimed that during a momentary decline in the ‘hatred of the [Austrian] government against the NSDAP’, the Austrians in Tyrol turned on each other. He reported back to Germany: ‘thereby the security director, federal police commissioner and the *Heimatwehr* have entered into competition with each other. Hundreds of people are arrested, convicted.’⁵⁹ As George Mosse showed, fascists rely upon enemies, and so the decrease of external threats meant Austrian fascists found new ones from within their own ranks.⁶⁰ All the while, such infighting did not hamper fascist success. The German agent described ‘the ruling turmoil in Tyrol’, meaning an environment of uncertainty that fascists fought to rectify. All the while, they contributed to and thrived in this exact political ecosystem.⁶¹ Such tumult allowed them to intimidate their rivals and to bolster their support by seeming to work toward order amid their own chaos.

By February 1934, the internal political situation in Austria came to head, marking a watershed moment for the fledgling fascistizing regime. Pushback from the Austrian Social Democratic Party and its own paramilitary RS culminated in the Austrian Civil War. The Dollfuss regime violently suppressed the socialists and outright banned their political party and paramilitary unit. His declaration of a new constitution in May 1934 gave him even more executive power, and the country changed from the First Austrian Republic to the *Ständestaat*. This regime constituted the government’s attempt to strive for what has become known as Austrofascism—the Austrian strain of interwar fas-

Oesterreich, A.A., Band 3, vergl. Band 4, (Auswärtiges), Austria Nazi machinations Jan-May 1934, 27.10.45, Bandnummer 13, Seite 1 RK 412 34 376437 37.

59 H. Saller, ‘Durchdruck, DEUTSCHES KONSULAT INNSBRUCK. Innsbruck, den 5: February 1934, 147, 4 Berichtsdurchschläge. Inhalt: Politische Lage in Tirol & Vorarlberg. An das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin,’ 1, BaBL, R 43- 11/1477, (fol. 1-), Reichskanzlei, 376433, Oesterreich, A.A., 3, vergl. 4, (Auswärtiges), Austria Nazi machinations Jan-May 1934, 27.10.45, 13, A.A. eing. – 7. Feb. 1934, II Oe 355, Rk 1491, 376475, 203.

60 Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, 43.

61 Saller, ‘Politische Lage in Tirol & Vorarlberg: An das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin,’ 4, BaBL, R 43- 11/1477, (fol. 1-), Reichskanzlei, 376433, Oesterreich, A.A., 3, vergl. 4, (Auswärtiges), Austria Nazi machinations Jan-May 1934, 27.10.45, 13, A.A. eing. – 7. Feb. 1934, II Oe 355, Rk 1491, 376478, 206.

cist, corporatist, mobilizing ideologies now charged with Catholic fervor and fealty. The gravity of this civil war cannot be overstated; Gerhard Botz claims that the ‘deep wounds’ of this left-right conflict festered even during and well after the Nazi years.⁶² It would also have serious repercussions for the ongoing right-right conflict.

Having swept the field of their opponents to the left, Austrian right-wingers were clear to focus on their opponents to the right, who made it clear they were not going anywhere anytime soon. A German Nazi report from that same month enumerated Nazi transgressions against Austrian sovereignty: displaying swastikas publicly, setting off ‘gas bombs’, launching ‘attacks with explosive devices’, wreaking havoc with ‘firecrackers’, bombing a train in Vienna, and attempting to dynamite a Vorarlberg *Heimatdienst* meeting and a Tyrolean *Heimwehrführer’s* residence.⁶³ Also during the same month as the Austrian Civil War, ÖL posturing on the Bavarian border led Dollfuss to place official state forces and the *Heimwehren* on high alert.⁶⁴ Along his fascistizing march toward the *Ständestaat*, Dollfuss created a new *Vaterländische Front* [VF; Fatherland Front]. This body formed the umbrella organization of the Austrofascist regime, intended as a broad movement to transcend political parties while serving as a reliable militia.⁶⁵ The VF embodied fascist tenets, proclaiming to be the ‘the regenerative movement of Austria’, the ‘regeneration of Austria in every respect’, and ‘stemming from the will of its founder and *Führer*, the chancellor and creator of the new Austria Dr. Engelbert Dollfuß.’⁶⁶ As the name attests, the VF sought to imbue its members with German nationalism for the purpose of maintaining Austrofascist autonomy and Austrian-German cultural supremacy: ‘The *Vaterländische Front* wants . . . an independent, German

62 Botz, ‘The Short- and Long-Term Effects of the Authoritarian Regime and of Nazism in Austria,’ 192.

63 ‘Der “Politischen Korrespondenz” gehen in diesem Zusammenhange,’ *Aktionen der Nationalsozialisten in Österreich*, BaBL, R 43- 11/1477, (fol. 1-), Reichskanzlei, 376433, Oesterreich, A.A., 3, vergl. 4, (Auswärtiges), Austria Nazi machinations Jan-May 1934, 27.10.45, 13, Seite 1 RK 412 34 376437 37, Seite 2 376438 38, Seite 3 376439 39.

64 ‘Nazis Gathering on Austrian Line: Dollfuss Concentrates Army, Police and Heimwehr as Defense,’ *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 24, 1934.

65 A British observer described the VF thusly: ‘This [VF] was not to be a party. It was to be an organization, a movement rather, above parties, which parties might join. Its program—bold indeed for Austria—was unification of the country on a patriotic basis’. Gunther, ‘Dollfuss and the Future of Austria,’ 31.

66 Anonymous, ‘Entwurf für “Leitsätze der Vaterländische Front”’, end of 1935 (2438/21f.), cited in *Österreich! und Front Heil! Aus den Akten des Generalsekretariats der Vaterländischen Front Innenansichten eines Regimes*, ed. Robert Kriechbaumer (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005), 57.

state under authoritarian leadership . . . a) for uncompromising, true Christianity, b) for the true, cultivated Germandom, c) for the autonomy of the German *Ostmark* [Eastern Mark, a medieval name for Austria]:⁶⁷ The *Heimwehren* paramilitary agents worked contemporaneously with this VF, if not always harmoniously.

Their joint feuds with Nazis made life in Austria one of perpetual uncertainty; brawls, violence, intimidations, mobilizations, strikes, riots, protests, counter-protests, *coup* attempts, and counter-*coup* movements permeated Austria. The *Salzburger Chronik* reported on Swiss border agents who patrolled the Bodensee, the lacustrine convergence of the Bavarian, Swiss, and Austrian borders. These agents apprehended a ship with three men from the ÖL.⁶⁸ Their vessel contained thirty German-manufactured bombs meant for terrorist acts in Austria.⁶⁹ *Heimwehren* leader, Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, later described Nazi agitation at this time as an extension of their ‘terrorist campaign. Every day bombing outrages were attempted, every day explosives or arms, smuggled across the German frontier, were confiscated.’⁷⁰ Ironically, illegally smuggling munitions across the Bavarian border was the very tactic Starhemberg had pioneered during the *Heimwehren*’s initial days in the 1920s. This tactic, when implemented by Nazis, now presented an existential threat to this same *Heimwehren* leader.⁷¹

Armaments smuggling and street-fighting among right-wing groups made for baffling alliances. English-language news reported on cooperation in Austria between Munich-based Nazis and the now-illegal socialist paramilitary agents.⁷² By arming the underground socialists, the Nazis in Bavaria prioritized pragmatism over ideological coherence, all to destabilize their Austrofascist rivals. The *Salzburger Chronik* decried this Nazi-Socialist cooperation as a ‘Red-Brown Terrorfront’, an unholy alliance hellbent on destroying Austrian autonomy. The Nazis not only made the Austro-Bavarian border increasingly porous; so too ‘the border between these two groups [Nazis and Socialists] was already blurred and their adherents have founded a united front of terror and transgressions.’⁷³ Such competition motivated fascist participants to act in dangerous

67 Anonymous, ‘Entwurf für “Leitsätze der Vaterländische Front”’, 58.

68 Though two of the three agents were German citizens.

69 ‘Bombentransport am Bodensee,’ *Salzburger Chronik*, July 24, 1934, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19340724&seite=1>.

70 Starhemberg, *Between Hitler and Mussolini*, 133.

71 Ibid.

72 ‘Chronology,’ *Bulletin of International News* 11, no. 3 (1934): 12.

73 ‘Staatsekretär Karwinsky über die Terrorakte: Rot-braune Terrorfront,’ *Salzburger Chronik*,

ways that also seemed odd and curious. Yet, by situating them in the context of an intra-fascist quasi-war, we can better understand why they did so.

The men in Bavaria tasked with enforcing border security also undermined it most actively. In an effort to ameliorate the tension, Nazi German officials reassured Austrian diplomatic representatives that they would forcibly move ÖL members away from the Austro-Bavarian border 'to various camps in central and northern Bavaria'.⁷⁴ In reality, the Nazi state doubled down on the ÖL as a borderland paramilitary force. A document from Nazi Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath revealed the Nazis dispersed these six thousand men to camps along 'the Bavarian-Austrian frontier'. No longer just training and arming these exiled Austrian Nazis, the Nazi state also employed them as a 'special border service' meant 'to maintain peace and order in the frontier region, conduct counterespionage, control border crossings from Austrian federal territory to the territory of the German Reich, and finally to prevent the unauthorized return of Austrian refugees to Austria'. Issued guns and official uniforms of the SA and SS, these thirteen units now patrolled the Austro-Bavarian border.⁷⁵

The *Heimwehren* robustly guarded the opposite side of the same border. Presenting Germany as ever-the-victim, Neurath reported 'irresponsible firing by these *Heimwehr* people—even across the border—and . . . more and more bomb-throwing across to Bavarian territory'. To him, 'the Bavarian border population has with reason become nervous and anxious' because of the *Heimwehren* violence. The Nazi official further expounded: 'conditions on the German-Austrian frontier have in the past weeks taken such a critical turn that serious developments must be expected at any time'.⁷⁶ The perception was emotionally paradoxical and paralyzing: something uncertain would certainly happen soon. What exactly was anyone's guess. But something.

Set within this malaise of some impending yet indiscernible maneuver, the fascist fighting across the border escalated to an international crisis. On 25 July 1934, Austrian Nazis launched a *Putsch* and assassinated Austrofascist Chan-

July 24, 1934, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19340724&seite=1>.

74 Köpke, 'Memorandum by the Director of Department II, Berlin, April 10, 1934,' in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C, Volume II*, 737.

75 Neurath, 'The Foreign Minister to the Reich Ministry of the Interior, Berlin, May 24, 1934,' in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C, Volume II*, 840. A Nazi report dated 10 April 1934 said 'Austrian Legionnaires had been used for a considerable time as patrols and for frontier control.' Köpke, 'Memorandum by the Director of Department II,' in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C, Volume II*, 737.

76 Neurath, 'The Foreign Minister to the Reich Ministry of the Interior, Berlin, May 24, 1934,' in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C, Volume II*, 839.

cellor Dollfuss. While the Nazi *coup* collapsed, the Austrian Nazis succeeded in sowing uncertainty and chaos. Indeed, the öL tried to invade Austria to buttress the *Putsch* from without—they boarded trucks in Bavaria and rode to the Austrian border. The *Neues Wiener Journal* reported on the mobile units of Bavarian-trained, Austrian Nazis hoping to initiate ‘a general revolution.’⁷⁷ Southern Bavarian inhabitants reported this mobilization to Nazi German officials. Though Hitler’s agents had actively planned parts of the *coup*, his regime strove to save face by distancing itself from the failed putschists.⁷⁸ The official Nazi government in Bavaria closely monitored the Austrian Nazis’ Munich base of operations, and it eventually closed ‘all roads leading to Austria’. Furthermore, ‘five hundred s.s. men were moved to the frontier to prevent the legionaries in the Freilassing camp from marching to Salzburg.’⁷⁹ The Austrian and German Nazis split themselves on this *Putsch*, as they were at odds over how to respond to the failure.

About ninety kilometers west, border mayhem ensued near the Austrian town of Kufstein. On the Bavarian side, the German military intercepted an öL convoy and forced the participants to surrender their arms. However, Nazi German officials did not always arrive on time.⁸⁰ Forty Austrian Nazis actually crossed the border, but Austrian soldiers awaited and repelled them.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the *Tiroler Anzeiger* acquired and printed a Bavarian report clarifying what the Austrian Nazis had planned: ‘five hundred Legionnaires should stand by prepared for the invasion.’⁸² The *Salzburger Chronik* likewise reported that the öL planned ‘to break the resistance of the [Austrian] troops and *Heimatschutz* who remained loyal [to Austria].’⁸³ Three days after the Nazi

77 ‘A.E. Frauenfeld—der geistige Urheber des Kanzlermordes: Der Ueberfall auf das Bundeskanzleramt schon vor einem Jahr geplant: Von einem früheren österreichischen Nazi-führer,’ *Neues Wiener Journal*, July 28, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwj&datum=19340728&seite=2>.

78 For a statement of consensus that Nazi Germany had been involved in the planning, see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 96–97.

79 ‘Chronology,’ *Bulletin of International News* 11, no. 3 (1934): 24.

80 *Ibid.*, 25.

81 *Ibid.*, 15.

82 ‘Wie die Oesterreichische Legion Kollerschlag erobern wollte: Eine Aktion großen Stils war geplant,’ *Allgemeiner Tiroler Anzeiger*, August 2, 1934, 6, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tan&datum=19340802&seite=6>.

83 ‘Aus Deutschland sorgsam vorbereitet,’ *Salzburger Chronik*, August, 4, 1934, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=sch&datum=19340804&seite=1>.

attempt, the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung* reported a ‘shootout’ between *Heimwehren* men and Austrian ‘refugees’ near the border in Kollerschlag. Presumably, such ‘refugees’ consisted of Austrian Nazis seeking asylum in Bavaria. Austrian and German border officials alike arrived to restore order and make arrests.⁸⁴ This scuffling even caused German Nazis to close the Bavarian border with Austria on four occasions in the weeks following the assassination.⁸⁵

To distance itself further from the *Putsch*, the German regime disavowed the Nazi agents responsible for Dollfuss’s 1934 assassination.⁸⁶ Nazi Germany reversed its policy of opening Bavaria to Austrian Nazis escaping the Austrofascist regime. An English-language observer recorded: ‘Nazi refugees were being welcomed into Bavaria prior to the *putsch*, whereas those who tried to cross the frontier’ after the *putsch* ‘were promptly arrested’, while ‘an armed Austrian legion . . . fed, housed and drilled in Bavaria . . . was subsequently forbidden its uniform and demobilised’.⁸⁷ Reporting from Passau, just on the German-side the border, *Der Morgen* reported an intra-Nazi gunfight. When Bavarian SS agents demanded the ÖL surrender their guns, Nazi squads supposedly exchanged gunfire that led to the deaths of legionnaires. The Austrian Nazis—under command of a former Captain of the Austrian army—simply refused to give up their armaments to their fellow Bavarian Nazis.⁸⁸

The death of the Austrofascist Chancellor likewise sparked chaos in Austria. Supporters of the Austrofascist state had projected their hopes for a viable Austria onto this fascist dictator, so his assassination a year after his assumption of power did not bode well. Thus, we might also read the ensuing martyrdom of Dollfuss, which the literature has already discussed, as an indication of Austrian emotional insecurity.⁸⁹ Compounding the sense of political

84 ‘Oesterreichische Flüchtlinge an der deutschen Grenze verhaftet,’ *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*, July 27, 1934.

85 ‘Chronology,’ *Bulletin of International News* 11, no. 4 (1934): 16.

86 Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II*, 98.

87 E.M., ‘The Independence of Austria,’ *Bulletin of International News* 11, no. 4 (1934): 6.

88 ‘Kampf zwischen Nazi und bayrischer s.s.: Zwei österreichische Nazi erschossen [sic],’ *Der Morgen: Wiener Montagblatt*, July 30, 1934, 3, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dmo&datum=19340730&seite=3>.

89 The Austrian population coped with the loss of their beloved Dollfuss by constructing an image of him as Austria’s martyr, one who fought the good fight against the Nazis and sacrificed his life for Austria. See ‘Sein Mut und Seine Tatkraft haben den neuen Geist und das neue Blühen erweckt: Der Dollfuß-Mythos,’ in *Österreich! und Front Heil! Aus den Akten des Generalsekretariats der Vaterländischen Front Innenansichten eines Regimes*, ed. Robert Kriechbaumer (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005), 223–237. For visual renditions of the sense of martyrdom, see Robert Kriechbaumer, *Ein Vaterländisches Bilderbuch: Propaganda, Selbstinzenierung und Ästhetik der Vaterländischen Front 1933–1938* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002), 173–199.

instability, uncertainty abounded over Dollfuss's rightful successor as Austro-fascist dictator. Leaders of various paramilitary organizations jockeyed for position. Presumably, leadership went to Vice-Chancellor Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, *Führer* of the *Heimwehren*. But during the *Putsch*, he was galivanting in Venice, trying to secure support from Mussolini.⁹⁰ Upon learning of Dollfuss's death, Starhemberg returned to Vienna, and he attained the leadership position. His *Heimwehren* also helped quell the Nazi insurrection.⁹¹ But his tenure as Austrofascist leader lasted just days. In his stead, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg—less volatile, more palatable, and not beholden to the rambunctious *Heimwehren*—secured the Chancellorship.⁹² It was Schuschnigg who would then spend the next four years trying to navigate the fine, and ultimately untenable, line between appealing to German nationalism and Nazi browbeating.

Conclusion: Internecine Interactions and Fascist Formation(s)

What are we to make of this textured analysis of fascist infighting across a contested border? While ideological splintering and infighting is perhaps a stereotype of the left writ large, so too were right-wingers unable to escape this siren call. We simply must keep in mind that such feuding also bedeviled far-right, fascistizing formations in interwar Austria and Germany. Such internal

90 Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 240, 242. See also 'Rückkehr des Vizekanzlers Fürst Starhemberg,' *Oedenburger Zeitung*, July 27, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=oed&datum=19340727&seite=2>.

91 'Starhemberg übernimmt die Leitung der Regierungsgeschäfte: Amtlich wird verlautbart,' *Der Wiener Tag*, July, 27, 1934, 4, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tag&datum=19340727&seite=4>. 'Die Heimwehr mobilisiert,' *Oedenburger Zeitung*, July 27, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=oed&datum=19340727&seite=2>. See also Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics*, 242–243.

92 'Bundeskanzler Dr. Schuschnigg,' *Der Wiener Tag*, July 31, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tag&datum=19340731&seite=2>. 'Dr. Kurt Schuschnigg—Bundeskanzler! Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg bleibt Vizekanzler,' *Der Morgen*, July 30, 1934, 1, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dmo&datum=19340730&seite=1>.

While Starhemberg was in Venice during the botched *Putsch*, Schuschnigg was on the ground in Vienna serving as interim leader. See 'Minister Schuschnigg interimistischer Leiter der Regierung,' *Oedenburger Zeitung*, July 27, 1934, 2, available at ANNO, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=oed&datum=19340727&seite=2>. See also, 'Starhemberg übernimmt die Leitung der Regierungsgeschäfte,' 4.

division was often damning for the left, but it was formative and constitutive for fascists. It generated the very masculine, militarized struggle they so idealized, both providing them with and validating their *raison d'être*. Such rivalries also provided resistance against which to radicalize. Overlaid atop the contested Austro-Bavarian border, these rival security squads let their insecurities run wild into an outright paramilitary showdown in the borderlands.

As Nazi control over the German government waxed, Bavaria's federalist privileges waned—with the *Gleichschaltung*, the Nazi *Gaue* eclipsed the traditional Bavarian governing structures. For all intents and purposes, Bavaria's longstanding regional autonomy fell. Meanwhile, right-wing Austrian patriots closed ranks around Dollfuss against Nazi bullying. Austrian loyalists in the *Heimwehren* relied more heavily on policies that solidified the physical and mental borders between these two German countries, while Austrian Nazi Legionaries relied more heavily on practices that undermined that same border, often to the chagrin of the Germans Nazis. Ironically, both sets of paramilitary troopers never lost faith in their conviction that they were making Austria German again. They were just doing so in opposite ways. All the while, the *Heimwehren* men wished to have their *Sachertorte* and eat it too: fight for Austrian autonomy from Germany while adamantly pushing for Austrian pride in being German. These overlapping vectors eventually proved unsustainable, but Austrofascists fought to maintain them for the next four years. Only by centering the complicated histories of interwar Austria can we see that the path from Hitler's 1933 rise to the Nazis' 1938 *Anschluss* was far from certain.

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